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In Search of the Americanization: Candidates and Political Campaigns in European General Election

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ABSTRACT

The digital platform has deeply changed the electoral campaigns, producing a consequent evolution of political consulting. Social networks have become the mainstream media so that the digital strategist and the big data analysts have achieved a special place in the “war room,” next to the campaign director and the pollster. In 2012, Obama’s election has marked the entrance in the “Fast Politics”: resulting, on one hand, in 24 hours news, a large amount of auto-generated contents produced by the voters through digital media, fragmentation, instantaneous transmission of messages and, on the other hand, a reduction of the attention threshold. Once again, similarly to the past, the evolution of the media (2.0) ends up changing the nature of election campaigns and political consulting request. What happens in Europe? The objective is to carry out a comparative analysis on the professionalization of candidates’ electoral staff. We wanted to verify if the American model has been imported in Europe with special focus on the techniques and the style of election campaigns management. In particular, within a comparative approach among the European states, the study analyzed the usage of political consulting and the degree of “digitalization” during last general elections: an ancillary practice or, on the contrary, a new tool for consensus? The comparative analysis among European states exploited the data provided by Comparative Candidates Survey (CCS 2013) and constructed synthetic indexes on the professionalization and digitization campaigns, conducting a quantitative and qualitative analysis.

KEYWORDS

Americanization; convergence; digitalization; personalization

Americanization or convergence

Usually, a political campaign is a strategic occasion to overview the evolution of political institutions and the changes of political elites. In particular, the parties show their state of health and their strategies in the political system. The digital platform has deeply changed the electoral campaigns, by producing a consequent evolution of the political consulting: social networks have become the mainstream media so that the digital strategists and the big data analysts have achieved a special place in the “war room,” next to the campaign director and the pollster. In 2012, Obama’s election has marked the entrance in the “Fast Politics” producing, on one hand 24 hours news, a large amount of auto-generated contents produced by the voters through digital media, fragmentation, and instantaneous transmission of messages and, on the other hand, the

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reduction of the attention threshold. Once again, similarly to the past, the evolution of the media (2.0) ends up changing the nature of election campaigns and political consulting (Serazio 2014).

This last element becomes another interesting point of transformation of political campaigns. In particular, scholars propose digitalization as a further element of “Americanization” hypothesis. The United States have anticipated a single model that was destined to be realized later in Europe (Semetko et al. 1991). This hypothesis is largely supported by the same American political consultants that highlights the role of American benchmark overseas in the world since seventies (Plasser 2000; Schafferer 2006; Baines, Scheucher, and Plasser 2001). The essential points of “homologation” process are: (A) the personalization of political campaign; (B) a scientific approach and the rise of political consultants; (C) the media logic; (D) a candidate-centered campaign with personal organization. In the recent years, the digitalization has become a distinctive and additional point of the Americanization process. The postulated transformation is one-side from U.S to other countries: the United States anticipate a single model, destined to be realized later also in Europe. The mechanism of homologation is essentially based on the imitation of a “successful” model (Fabbrini 1999), but there are other slightly different interpretations: for example Plasser and Plasser highlight the strength of American model in globalized world (Plasser and Plasser 2002; see also Scammell 1998, Swanson and Mancini 1996). The appreciation of the American model may result in two situation: (A) the “adoption model,” with a simple translation of techniques and of consultants, (B) or, in alternative, the “shopping model” that entails an adaptation and contextualization of the American approach (Plasser and Plasser 2002).

The risk of this point of view is evident: media focus on highly spectacular campaigns, unique in the world. The American campaigns seem to be a winner and mainstream model, destined to enlarge over the world. The studies could limit to observe and identify emergent phenomena by comparing the American model and other campaigns. The adoption of Americanization approach has some consequences: in Europe, these studies limit their selves to recognize in each country what is already known in the American context. Therefore, the differences in the process of professionalization (see Strömbäck and Kioussis 2014) highlight the limits of the hypothesis on the “Americanization model.” According to thesis of modernization-convergence, indeed, in Europe, similarly to the United States, shared trends occur, due to systemic modernization processes consisting into personalization and presidentialization, crisis of ideologies, transformation of parties, media environment and new technologies (Negrine and Lilleker 2002; Sampugnaro 2006). Many conditions common to USA and Europe produce similar transformations in electoral campaigns. However, this does not exclude bidirectional influence between the two continents (Blumler and Gurevitch 2001). Overall, these “catalysts” elements have succeeded first in USA, producing in this country an anticipatory change in political campaigns: personalization of communication and professionalization of campaign management. The change in electioneering is not determined by American hegemony on European parties: Americanization is “an option and not an obligation. But this convergence of choices has encountered ... formidable institutional constraints, especially in government system” (Fabbrini 1999, 146). At same time, this approach can explain why there is “no convergence” by utilizing elements in political systems: for example the relevance of parties, a dissimilar selection of political personnel or the peculiarities of electoral systems.

Together with the institutional elements, it is relevant to consider the diffusion of specific technology transformations. For example, media transformation changed campaigning deeply, opening a new “market of skills” (Mancini 1999, Farrell, Kolodny, and Medvic 2001). While former television changed electoral mobilization and campaign, now digital platform revolutionizes political communication. “Disruption” is as Newman defines his arrive so that some scholars presuppose that a 4° era of political campaign is just arrived. In the past, television gives the possibility to political actors to communicate directly with citizens, bypassing party structures. Later the possibility to manage large databases for mobilization revolutionized electoral campaigns. Now digital platform produces new transformations in electioneering with a consequent evolution

of political consulting. Social networks have become the mainstream media so that the digital strategist and the big data analysts have emerged as important players in the campaign such as the pollsters and the campaign manager.

According with convergence-modernization approach, in each context, these trends give rise to different outcomes in part due to the specific cultural and systemic constraints characteristics (e.g., different electoral systems, different institutions, parties system, etc). In Europe as in the United States occur shared trends due to systemic modernization processes (Sampugnaro 2006).

The digital platform, political consulting and the electoral campaigns

The digital platform is a constraint but also a great opportunity for parties and candidate in this era (Lilleker and Jackson 2011). Regarding digital opportunities, the studies interpreted their role by two principal and divergent hypothesis: one propose the key of normalization role for new technologies and sustains persistence of power relations with a reproduction of political actors differences in new context; the innovation hypothesis inclines for transformation of political communication with “fresh” opportunities for new political actors (Anstead and Chadwick 2009), able to use new technologies (Carty 2012). As far as parties, we can affirm that old organizations redefine relation with supporters while new organizations construct their selves on the web. According with Lilleker and Jackson (2011: 7-8), many factors can shape the using of the internet in election campaigns: from political system to ideology, from electoral rules to party size. We also consider diachronic elements, for example the perception of voters’ needs and the uncertainty of the electoral results. For the parties, it is very difficult to keep in touch with electorate for many reasons. The central point (Revelli 2013) is that parties and politicians see electorate as “shadowy mass in constant fibrillation, animated by changing moods, and above all, opaque.” The dealignment is a critical point for traditional parties but it is an opportunity for new political actors (Dalton 2008, 190). If parties’ crisis and classical participation decrease is evident, there is a parallel participation: the world of sub-politics, life politics e so on. Parties have to deal with the process of political individualization and with a consequent manner to interpret participation. Therefore, new forms of participation can be thematic, intense, and transitory so that party can mobilize someone on specific issues, for a range of time but not forever. The new state of affiliation is often at time, on specific issues or for a specific campaign on limited issues (Scarrow 2013, 2014). New strategies have to put together opportunity of digitalization and political individualization without producing any unique solution. This carries on a change in political campaign, especially in strategies but not homologation. Response of parties and of candidates is very different because the interpretation of crisis and the subsequent strategies depend by political traditions, by resources and by parties’ “residual” structure.

Regarding parties, many of their activities, before performed by their complex unitary organizations, are now carried out from their borders: study of policies, élite formation and communication. From our point of view, we observe the management of election campaign and political communication. As highlighted by Norris (2000), postmodern campaign must be of a long-term activity that party organization is not able to implement without external resources. Some functions are delegated to other agencies or associations outside the party and there is a practice of building networks of actor, in many cases, without top-down relations. We can observe different solutions for outsourcing of campaign activities. The studies on postmodern or third age political campaign (Blumler and Gurevitch 2001; Norris 2000) highlight full externalization of some campaign activities: polls, publicity and, in many cases, mobilization.

If outsourcing is a common trait, there are many different interpretations: the logic is the same but the shape of delegating is variable. As far as communication and mobilization functions, there are two ways (not always alternatives) to solve 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. The parties are compelled to rely on specialized professionals (political consultant, media strategist, pollster) 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).

A process of professionalization of political communication, therefore, is a necessary consequence and, in different times and in peculiar ways, affects the political parties (Michalska et al. 2014). Professionals help politicians to attract voter’s support by creating a “product” that people would want: the message (and often the policy) is designed to meet their needs. Politicians tailor their political products for a specific segment of electorate. Also in “sales or market driven campaigns” (Lees-Marshment, Strömbäck, and Rudd 2010), the political parties and leaders still exercise at least partial control over communication content.

The second model developed later. 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 Gezgor 2010; Mair and Van Biezen 2001). In the network society of late modernity, organizations lose their grip on individuals and are replaced by broad and fluid social networks (Castells 2000). Parties do not find resources inside organization: economic resources and the number of members are declining. New solution has to be cheaper and more suitable in this condition. 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. Parties are not more a negarchical structure but a relevant node of a network. We can imagine now an archipelago of medium, small and tiny islands with a central hub and with complex relations (bridges) between actors.

Between the two forms of outsourcing, there is another fundamental/central difference: the first operates in a “persuasive” logic that considers the voter as a person to convince; the second form leads to indirect activation in which the party gives up control over contents. In a new optic, more next to “relational” (Johansen 2005) or “inductional” (Guido 2015) marketing approach, parties and leader build alliances with electors that became co-producer of services: programs, policies, slogan and materials for mobilization. In this new context, Bennett and Segerberg (2012) speak of “connective action” in Web 2.0. The platform allows the user to produce and distribute content: parties think to take advantage by activating people able to product and deliver messages and photos autonomously. New technologies e individualization of action can became fundamental resources for parties, also in presence of a strong personalization. The leader stimulates directly his supporters without support of political organizations. The “outside campaign” is based on co-creation, co-communication, co-campaigning together with the citizens. As a “political consumer,” voters became co-producer of campaign, of political program or of mobilization. The forms of collaboration among leader, parties and informal group – especially in the web – is growing. If traditional party structure is insufficient for mobilization, parties build permanently volunteer oriented organizations. The engagement is a central point in differentiated and depoliticized societies because volunteers are able to keep in touch with apathetic or critic segments. The fundamental elements are the sharing of “personalized ideas, plans, images, and resources of network.”

All that is possible thank to the availability of new technologies and the propensity to 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. The goal is to increase the number of individuals, skillful in exercising mobilization and acting independently in an electoral campaign with innovative contents

and tools, to enable wider networks than those of the parties. Social network are very decisive in this contest for individual mobilization and for possibility of message segmentation.

According to political partnership model, new electoral campaigns is that “To convince people, you must include people”¹: moving from a “market driven” to a “political partnership model” means that parties and candidates build permanent volunteer-oriented organizations, develop engagement to suit the user, and view volunteers as partners in the campaign (Lees-Marshment 2013, 227; Sampugnaro 2015). Also in this new contest, political consultants are relevant figures but new professional profiles can be different from the past.

Research and methods

The objective of this research is to understand if the process of political campaign transformation interested homogeneously also the Europe. What happens in the old World? We wonder if it is true that the digitalization is a “must” and if there is a rising professionalization of political campaign and a diffusion of scientific approach. Are typical characters of Americanization, so widespread throughout Europe? This study deals only with a specific section of political campaigns, that of candidates for general election in Europe. In this era, individual politicians with their activities, attitudes and beliefs, have become a most attractive and encouraging research focus to study the evolution of political communication (Negrine 2008). We observe the shift from party-centered campaign to personal-centered campaign with an individualization of electoral activities. In general, it is possible to distinguish personal and party campaign and what and how much candidates run autonomously from their parties. The candidate’s role is enhanced, partly because of recent changes in the functioning of political parties as intermediaries between citizens and the state. A specific point of view can give us some insights on digital tools and on professionalization of political staff.

Study’s objective is to carry out an analysis on the professionalization of candidates electoral staffs, in order to verify how the American model, his techniques and style of election campaigns management have been imported in the European context. The study uses data from Comparative Candidate Survey project. The project is a response to the growing number of candidate surveys in the Anglo-Saxon world and beyond. The aim is to harmonize dispersed efforts and give them a cross-nationally comparable core. The research, coordinated by Hermann Schmitt, is a joint multi-national project with the goal of collecting data on candidates running for national parliamentary elections in different countries using common tools. Candidates for general election are normally the elite of political parties, also if the “lateral entrance” is more diffused than in recent past (Crouch 2003).

The researchers used a common core questionnaire to allow for cross-country comparison. Data collection² comprises surveys among candidates as well as relevant context information concerning the constituency of the candidate and the political system at large. The core questionnaire focuses on the relationships between the candidate, the party and the voters. Although many domains (representation, democracy, recruitment, ideology, issues and carrier patterns, issues) are included in questionnaire, the major topic are the mobilization activities and, in particular, the electioneering.³ We wonder if a homologation process is on and where we can observe a deep change in political campaign. In particular, the focus is on new media: an ancillary use or, on the contrary, a new tool for consensus? Can we read campaign change through technological determinism (as sub hypothesis of Americanization process) or through convergence/modernization approach?

The research concerns only on countries belonging to European continent ($n = 20$, see Table 1), regardless European Unions. It includes, for example, Switzerland.⁴ Selected candidates ($n = 12,924$ cases) have participated to last general election in their countries. Our analysis focus on three elements of Americanization model: professionalization of candidate staff, digitalization of

Table 1. Size personal campaign.

| Country | Size personal campaign (mean) | | | Staffers paid by the party (mean) | | | Staffers paid by candidate |
|----------------|-------------------------------|------|---------|-----------------------------------|------|---------|----------------------------|
| | Mean | Moda | Min/Max | Mean | Moda | Min/Max | % |
| Austria | 8.1 | 2 | 1/500 | — | — | — | — |
| Belgium | 10.3 | 5 | 1/450 | 0.1 | 0 | 0/2 | 100 |
| Czech Republic | 7.0 | 5 | 1/80 | 0.7 | 0 | 0/4 | 86 |
| Denmark | 22.0 | 5 | 1/500 | — | — | — | — |
| Estonia | 8.0 | 2 | 1/100 | — | — | — | — |
| Finland | 20.0 | 10 | 1/600 | 0.1 | 0 | 0/5 | 99 |
| Germany | 9.0 | 5 | 1/150 | 0.6 | 0 | 0/10 | 90 |
| Greece | 10.0 | 5 | 1/150 | — | — | — | — |
| Hungary | 50.0 | 5 | 1/500 | 1.4 | 0 | 0/10 | 86 |
| Iceland | 7.0 | 1 | 1/30 | — | — | — | — |
| Ireland | 53.4 | 20 | 1/250 | 7.2 | 0 | 0/100 | 84 |
| Italy | 7.0 | 3 | 1/80 | 1.7 | 0 | 0/5 | 100 |
| Malta | 21.0 | 20 | 1/150 | 1.3 | 0 | 1/10 | 91 |
| Netherlands | 4.0 | 2 | 1/26 | — | — | — | — |
| Norway | 5.0 | 5 | 1/55 | — | — | — | — |
| Portugal | 22.0 | 1 | 1/200 | — | — | — | — |
| Romania | 34.0 | 10 | 1/400 | 2.2 | 0 | 0/20 | 83 |
| Sweden | 1.0 | 1 | 1/1 | — | — | — | — |
| Switzerland | 8.1 | 5 | 1/220 | — | — | — | — |
| UK | 18.6 | 10 | 1/500 | 0.3 | 0 | 0/11 | 95 |
| Total Sample | 16.9 | 5 | 1/500 | 0.9 | 0 | 0/100 | 95 |

electoral campaign and personalization of campaign. To summarize, the hypotheses that we want to evaluate are as follows:

H1: The transformations of political campaign hasn't a unique benchmark model. In particular:

H2: The fundamental elements of American Campaign (personalization, rise of political consultant, digitalization) aren't always correlated in European country model.

H3: The context has a significant influence on selected methods of electioneering. Therefore, acting in areas with a particular electoral competition (electoral system, party system, ...) implies a significant increase in professionalization of staff, in personalization of campaign and in digitalization.

H4: The structural characteristics relating to individuals (gender, age, education level, partisanship) also affect the propensity to realize professionalized campaign.

Candidates and election

The political campaign is a topic moment for each politician: in general, he mobilizes each personal and collective resource to obtain the seat but the commitment can be very different because of numerous elements: electoral system, party rules, constituency. We must do not forget that “party elites need to have some working theory about what matters to voters when they cast their votes” (Strömbäck, Grandien, and Falasca 2013, 42). Analysis of their perception is fundamental to understand strategic actions: candidates and parties plan campaign action looking at imagined profile of electors (Ekengren and Oscarsson 2011a). It is possible also to identify and to differentiate “working theory of voting behavior” (Ekengren and Oscarsson 2011b) for single candidate. Thought data do not contain specific items on strategic behavior, we know some elements of the profile of candidates. They are very different from country to country (Table 1). In our sample, men (66.7%) are more women (33.3%) with some relevant differences in Norway, Iceland and Belgium where woman are above to 44%. In addition, the mean of age is different: candidates are older than average in Hungary, UK, Sweden, Greece, Finland and Ireland. As far as political career, the “lateral” entrance is very limited: the 79% of the sample had experience as volunteers in local activities (party on the ground) with percentage higher than 90% in Sweden, Norway and

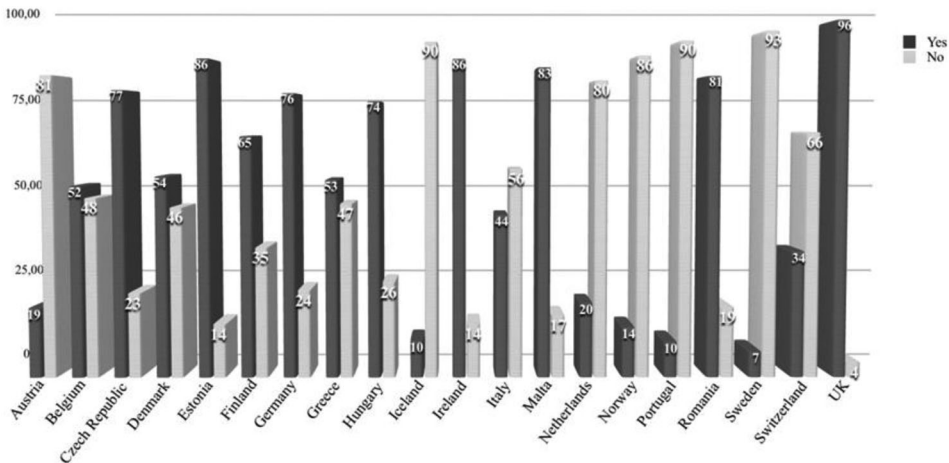


Figure 1. Presence of personal campaign team (%).

Denmark and up to 80% in Czech Republic, Belgium, Germany, Hungary, Netherlands and Portugal. Also other political experience (party in the office) is relevant (56.08%) with a more pronounced variability between country: from 21% in UK to 97.8% in Norway. The experience as staffer in political party is less diffused with only 12.7% for staffer in “Central Office” and with 12.7% for positions in institutional staff of party. The quota of incumbents is low in the sample: less than 10%.

The choice to run for the election does not involve necessarily the constitution of a personal team (Figure 1). The presence of personal campaign team is very low in presence of electoral system with blocked list: Italy (44%), Norway (14%), and Portugal (10%). Nevertheless, this element does not explain the variability between these states. The presence of personal staff is more enhanced in presence of single seat electoral district (UK, 96%; Germany for some district, 76%; Romania, 81% and Hungary 74%) but also where there is single transferable vote (Malta, 83%; Ireland, 86%). The situation of states with open or flexible lists is composite: from 86% (Estonia) to 10% (Iceland).

Regarding only to politician with an electoral team, candidates have medium-small staff (Table 2). The variability is high from 50 persons (Ireland, Hungary) to very small group (Italy, Netherlands, Czech Republic, Norway, Sweden). In this case, a reliable measure is the mode because this gives a realistic size of personal staff, mitigating the extreme cases (party leader with a large staff and candidate “without much conviction”). In this case, only Malta, Ireland exceeds 10 units. The other candidates have medium staff (from 5 to 10 units) with the exception of Sweden, Italy, Netherlands, Iceland, Estonia and Austria (less than five units). In order to focus on the composition, the electoral staff consists of personal advisers, volunteers or party staffers. The most of them are linked directly to candidate rather than to parties. The weight of personal ties is prevalent and inversely proportional to the strength of the parties. In the staff, the percentage of party staffers is very low in general and, in many countries, there are not party staffers (Table 2) in the team.

The campaign is for “amateurs.” In presence of a personal team, we observe low presence of professional consultants (Figure 2). Partial exception is the Eastern European countries in which already other studies show a large presence of professional staffers, especially in presidential election. Some data are counterintuitive: expect the more professionalized staffs are more important in the presence of single-member districts rather than in systems with blocked lists. Data show, indeed, that also in the UK, with a pluralitarian system, the presence is very low. A portion of candidates declares the relation and the presence of political consultants in personal campaign

Table 2. Sample's characteristics.

| Country | Age class % | | | Gender % | | Level of education | Current employment status % | Political career % | | | | | |
|----------------|-------------|---------------|-----------|----------|-------|--------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|---------------------|---------|
| | To 45 | From 46 to 55 | 56 and up | Men | Woman | | | Staffers for party | | Party | | Party in the ground | Elected |
| | | | | | | | | in the office | Central office | in the office | Central office | | |
| Austria | 42.6 | 30.2 | 27.2 | 68.90 | 31.10 | — | — | 15.90 | 12.20 | — | — | — | — |
| Belgium | 50.8 | 28.7 | 20.5 | 55.50 | 44.50 | — | 91.60 | 22.40 | 11.80 | 79.70 | 87.90 | 16.10 | 16.10 |
| Czech Republic | 50.0 | 32.1 | 17.9 | 74.90 | 25.10 | 78.40 | 86.70 | 6.80 | 7.30 | 73.20 | 85.20 | 14.20 | 14.20 |
| Denmark | 45.7 | 28.0 | 26.3 | 64.00 | 36.00 | 74.00 | 57.90 | — | 13.10 | 68.00 | 93.40 | 9.90 | 9.90 |
| Estonia | — | — | — | 75.20 | 24.80 | 79.70 | — | — | — | 74.60 | 52.10 | — | — |
| Finland | 39.8 | 24.4 | 35.8 | 63.60 | 36.40 | 50.10 | 62.30 | 4.60 | 9.80 | 48.50 | 78.30 | 6.00 | 6.00 |
| Germany | 43.9 | 33.0 | 23.0 | 69.40 | 30.60 | — | 68.40 | 16.50 | 7.70 | 61.80 | 82.30 | — | — |
| Greece | 33.6 | 35.9 | 30.5 | 65.90 | 34.10 | 81.30 | 84.20 | 15.50 | 2.20 | 37.30 | 62.00 | 6.20 | 6.20 |
| Hungary | 2.9 | 13.0 | 84.1 | 90.10 | 9.90 | 0.00 | — | 5.70 | 8.50 | 50.40 | 80.30 | 7.00 | 7.00 |
| Iceland | 53.7 | 27.3 | 19.1 | 49.90 | 50.10 | 58.10 | 78.20 | 4.90 | 7.00 | 28.90 | — | 8.10 | 8.10 |
| Ireland | 40.4 | 28.1 | 31.1 | 79.30 | 20.70 | — | 84.40 | — | — | 72.20 | 76.20 | — | — |
| Italy | 45.7 | 29.3 | 25.0 | 72.50 | 27.50 | 68.40 | 84.60 | 13.50 | 14.80 | 55.70 | 65.80 | 8.80 | 8.80 |
| Malta | — | — | — | — | — | 83.30 | — | — | 10.30 | 60.00 | 62.50 | — | — |
| Netherlands | 50.6 | 31.9 | 17.5 | 66.10 | 33.90 | 65.90 | 90.90 | 10.70 | 11.90 | 62.40 | 83.50 | 12.90 | 12.90 |
| Norway | 43.0 | 31.0 | 26.0 | 54.80 | 45.20 | 40.30 | 85.70 | 42.10 | 20.10 | 87.50 | 97.80 | 14.00 | 14.00 |
| Portugal | 46.9 | 30.7 | 22.4 | 68.10 | 31.90 | 85.80 | 87.40 | 9.50 | 6.30 | 77.40 | 80.50 | 32.40 | 32.40 |
| Romania | 51.6 | 30.4 | 18.0 | 82.30 | 17.70 | 95.30 | — | — | 4.90 | 65.40 | 79.70 | 24.10 | 24.10 |
| Sweden | 36.9 | 26.1 | 36.9 | 68.90 | 31.10 | 49.20 | 61.80 | 13.90 | 21.90 | 83.30 | 93.10 | 8.20 | 8.20 |
| Switzerland | 56.0 | 24.2 | 19.8 | 66.10 | 33.90 | 66.20 | 73.90 | — | — | 39.10 | 72.70 | 6.00 | 6.00 |
| UK | 32.9 | 27.6 | 39.5 | 77.40 | 22.60 | 62.70 | 78.30 | 8.50 | 8.70 | 21.00 | 61.40 | 7.60 | 7.60 |
| Total Sample | 43.2 | 27.9 | 28.9 | 66.70 | 33.30 | 60.10 | 75.50 | 12.70 | 12.60 | 56.08 | 79.00 | 9.80 | 9.80 |

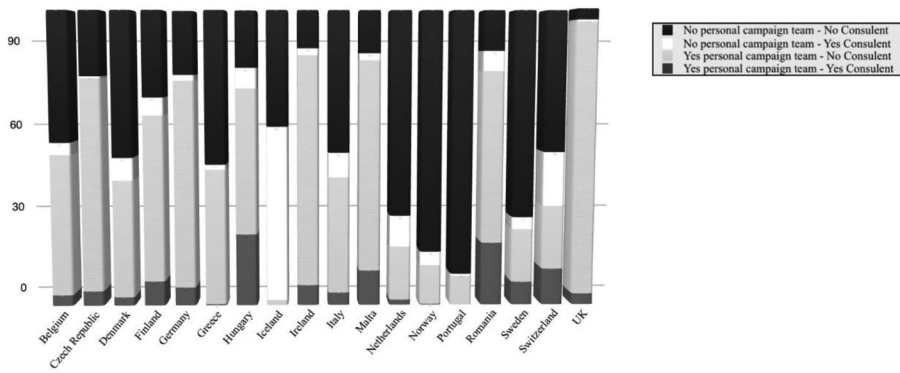


Figure 2. Professional consultants in personal campaign (%).

but not their integration in a team. In this case, the presence, especially in some countries (Switzerland, Netherlands, Iceland) is more relevant. In general, candidates do not show to need political consultant but manage their campaign with small team without specific specialization.

Is there a prejudice on consultants? They are too influential with respect to the parties? Only 29% in the sample agrees with the statement “Pollsters and political strategists have too much influence.” As the data shows, the orientation of the judgment is not related to the axis right-left.

Regarding electioneering, digital and traditional means of communication are joint in post-modern political campaign. The list of digital tools,⁵ included in the questionnaire of CCS, is limited but suggests some reflections: digitization is more extensive in some areas of Europe⁶ with some peculiarities (Figure 3): Central and Scandinavian areas have more low value regard utilizing of digital tools; polygons representing Southern Europe and the Anglo-Saxon Area are slightly larger. The 1.0 modes, such as e-mail or static personal site, are prevalent. The more interactive tools – e.g., “conducted online chats with voter” – are very limited. The investments on web (“offered a personal campaign spot”) are not high: it is sign that is not considered so important. In general, the expected web 2.0 overtaking has not happened: not only the web tools. 1.0 has not gone into “the attic” but the new digital tools are not widely diffused among candidates. As we will see later, it does not mean that low digital approach is related to low intensive campaign.

How these digital instruments of communication are combined with other more traditional instruments? We try to explore intersection of instruments, utilizing a correspondence analysis. On the first column of Table 3, we see different type of communication for different prevalent target: guaranteed communication directed to membership: promoted communication directed to generic supporters, multiplied communication for generic electors; selective communication directed to specific target. On the top of Table 3, there are channels of communication in mobilization activities: traditional tools, media and digital tools. The variables in questionnaire are written in normal font. We constructed some indexes (two or three nominal variable), one for each gray cell. For the analysis, we consider presence of political consultants in personal campaign and as illustrative variables, the countries.

With correspondence analysis, we observe how indexes are associated. The first axis shows two polarities: weak campaign (with low modalities of indexes) vs intensive campaign. It is more complex to interpret second dimension: we find medium indexes modalities in negative pole while high e low modalities in positive axis. From this preliminary analysis, we can identify some types of association between variables and the relation with illustrative ones. The presence/absence of political consultant is weakly associated with each index. Regarding discrimination measure, the most relevant variables for definition of first axis, are three indexes of traditional tools (T_Mol 0,736, T_Pro 0,598, T_Sel 0,547) and only next the index for media campaign (M_Mol 0,483). One among indexes of digital tools (D_Mol, 0,397) ranks next and is weakly relevant on first

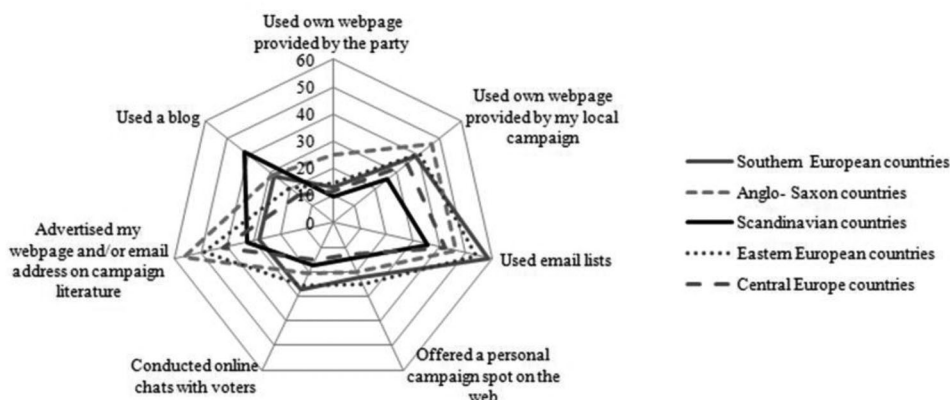


Figure 3. Diffusion of digital tools.

axis. The same variables characterize second axis but with less intensity. From correlation table, it highlights a significant correlation among indexes of traditional tools of communication, except for tools of guaranteed communication. Also index of media tools are correlated especially with two form of traditional communication (T_Mol 0,432; T_Sel 0,413). Less correlated are the indexes of digital tools both among each other and with others indicators. From the plot it is possible to observe three areas: on the left, we see elements that characterize low intensive campaign: very limited use of all means of communication without distinction between direct mobilization, use of media mainstream or of digital tools. The countries associated are Czech Republic, Switzerland, Austria, Iceland.

In the middle of first axis, there are traditional campaigns (Italy, UK, Belgium and Sweden, Portugal, Norway, Netherland; Denmark, Sweden), without consultants and with a moderate use of a mix of instruments. Intermedia modalities are prevalent with one exception: 1.0 digital tools (web page, party mailing list). There is a compresence with a new logic: many instruments and a stratification of tools (in Italy without strategies: the more the better). For a little number of countries (Germany, Romania, Ireland, Greece and less Hungary and UK) the campaign is very intensive. In this case, the political consultants are present. In addition, in this case, we observe a use of 2.0 digital tools: the presence of personal campaign spots on the web and the interactions with voters through chat. In sum, there are different levels of digitalization for area with a general low digitalization. The analysis of the services used for the realization of the campaign shows a use that can be defined primarily “residual” more than strategic. In addition, we observe a stratification of traditional, media and digital “tools” for electoral campaign rather than a real selection.

Professionalization, personalization and digitalization

The analysis shows that there is not homogeneity in electoral campaign in Europe. Regard this initial data; we observe compresence of traditional and largely digitalized electoral campaigns in Europe. In addition, the intensity is very different: from low intensity campaign with few tools to very intensive ones. What explains this difference?

We can articulate variables that influence electoral campaigns in three levels: macrosystemic (country), mesosystemic (party), microsystemic (candidates).

In electoral studies, there is a long tradition about relation between campaign and electoral system (Shugart and Wattenberg 2001, Shugart 2001a, 2001b) that investigate the relation concerning rules and parties’ and candidates’ strategies. According to Farrell (1997, 161–162), there is a perspective that assesses the micro-level effects of electoral system: “the concern is less with electoral effects of electoral system and more with their strategic effects” on politician’s and

Table 3. Campaign Communication Tools.Campaign Communication Tools²

| Communication | Traditional | Media | Digital |
|---------------------------|---|---|---|
| Guaranteed (membership) | Party Meetings, <i>phone calls</i> (T_Gua.). | <i>Party Press.</i> | <i>Access to reserved area site.</i> |
| Promoted (supporters) | Public Meeting (2) ¹ , fund raising meeting, phone calls, poster (T_Prom.). | <i>Paid communication on "area" press, radio, television ...</i> | Web site by the party, web page by my local campaign, party mailing list (D.Prom.). |
| Multiplied (all electors) | Door to door, street markets, flyers, events in culture, sports and business Cultural (2), <i>generic mailing</i> (T_Mol.). | Non paid media (Interviews), paid Communication on press, radio, television and cinema (spot, ads and (M_Mol.). | Personal campaign spot on the web, blog, personal web site (D_Mol.). |
| Selective (target) | Micro meeting with small o selected groups (2), direct mailing (T_Sel). | | <i>Social network</i> , on line chats with voters (D_Sel.). |

Note: 1 = number of indicators; 2 = corsive character shows not present indicators; 3 = adapted from Sampugnaro (2007).

voter's behavior Some studies focus on campaign style and communication strategies (Plasser and Plasser 2002; Farrell and Webb 2000, Norris 2000).

In our analysis, we consider many aspects, using some traditional categories.⁷ The relationship between political campaign and election rules shows that "while the candidate-based electoral systems facilitate country styles individualized and decentralized focusing on the district level, the electoral system based on party stimulates concentrated party, centralized, nationwide, campaign strategies to maximize the election results" (Plasser and Plasser 2002: 80 et seq; Farrell 2003). The first is the basic difference between types of electoral system (Legislative type): majoritarian, proportional or mixed. The second is the magnitude that refers to number of seats in a constituency.⁸ The third element concerns the principle orientation to candidate or to party. In particular the difference between the votes for a blocked party list or the vote with preference for a candidate inside a party list or in single seat constituency. There are three main types of party list: closed party lists, open party lists, and free party lists. In a closed party list, which is sometimes known as a non-preferential or blocked list, the order of candidates elected is determined by the party itself, and voters are not able to express a preference for a particular candidate. In particular, the electoral system model with closed list influences the election campaign approach and weakens the campaign. In these systems, "the principal 'voting-constituency' of the individual politician is non the voters but rather the 'selectorates' who determine whether he or she appears on the list, and in which rank position" (Farrell 2003, 162). In a closed list system, political parties receive seats in proportion to the number of votes that they obtain using a quota or divisor electoral system. The first seat won by the party goes to the candidate listed first on the party list, the second seat goes to the second candidate, and so on. Differently in an open party list (also preferential or unblocked list), voters can indicate not just their preferred party but also their favored candidate within that party. The order in which the party seats are allocated among the individual candidates on the list is determined by the number of total votes (personal and party) that are credited to him. In a free party list, voters have multiple votes that they can allocate either within a single party list or across different party lists, selecting party and candidate.⁹ For the same reason, the single seat constituency is aggregated to this last category: also, in this case, the possibility of election depends by personal profile of the candidates and by individual mobilization. The last variable about electoral system is between models with intraparty competition and models without intraparty competition. In this case, single seat constituency is similar to blocked list (Personal_Party).

We consider at macro level also the number of parties in competition. In this case, we have used the method of Taagepera (1997), by regrouping in two categories.¹⁰

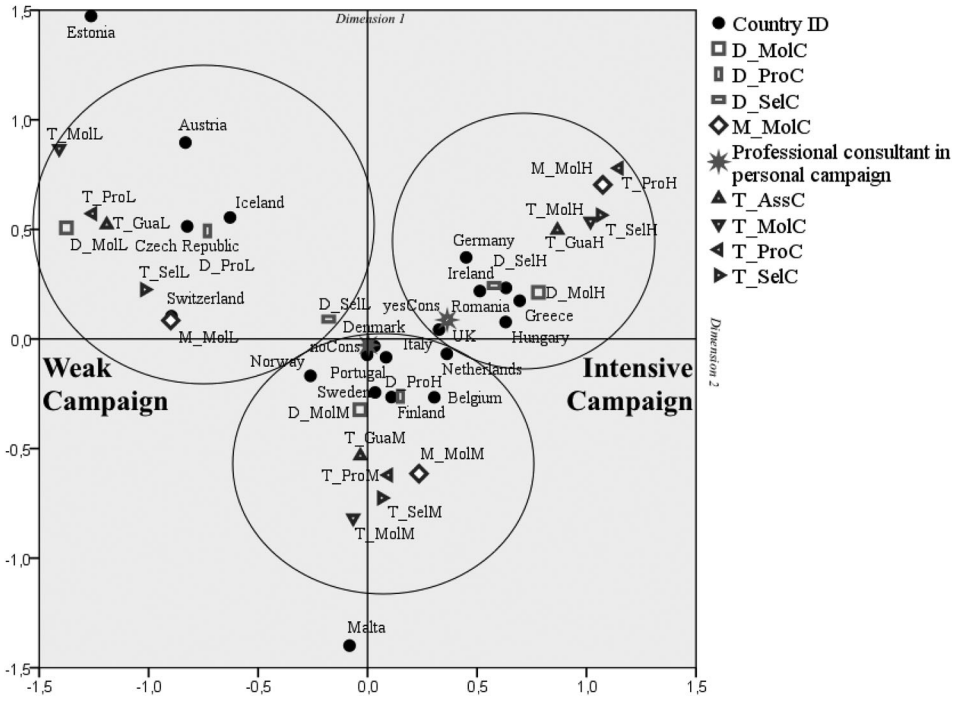


Figure 4. Multiple correspondence analysis. Note: H = High; M = Medium; L = Low. Source: Our own elaborations of CCS data (2° wave) – Cronbach's alpha 0.801 (first dimension).

In the meso-level, there is party position in left-right axis: single candidate selects a position for his party. In this case, too, there is a dichotomization in two categories.¹¹

The third level concerns individual characteristic: structural variables (gender, age), left-right personal position, political career (previously a candidate in elections, incumbent, party in the office, central office, staffers for party in the office, party on the ground).

The dependent variables, related to Americanization process, are the presence or the absence of political consultant in electoral process, personalization of electoral campaign,¹² dichotomization of an index of digitalization.¹³

Utilizing the analogous independent variables in a logistic regression (Table 4), the three indicators are inside different models of regression. For the first element, presence of consultant in personal campaign, we observe the almost exclusivity of independent variables linked to macro political system: majoritarian system or proportional system (the Mixed System is not a significant modality), a party system with few parties and a medium electoral constituency with few seats. Belonging to a left party is less relevant in the model as well as no being a party staffer. The relation with “incumbent” is weekly negative. The personalization of campaign is more linked to a proportional system and is dependent by party system (few parties). In the model, there are less relevant variables as left orientation of candidate and negatively the absence of precedent experience in local government and in the central Office. The model of high digitalization in third column (Figure 4) is very interesting. The number of variables included in the model is higher than in other two models: twelve are significant. Therefore, many variables have a B in the opposite direction. The “majoritarian” is important also in this third model but is less relevant. We find the “medium constituency” and less strength “party vote.” In the opposite direction, there are “few parties,” “Left candidate,” and the precedent experience as candidate: in this case B value of “incumbent” is positive. Personal elements are present in the model, also if the single B value is not high: positive influence on digitalization have absence of specific experience (No Paid

Table 4. Binary Logistic Regression Analysis.

Dependent variables: Political consultant presence, personalization of campaign and digitalization

| | Political Consultant Presence ¹ | | | Personalization of campaign ¹ | | | High digitalization ² | | |
|---|--|----------------|-------------|--|----------------|-------------|----------------------------------|----------------|-------------|
| | <i>B</i> | <i>Exp (B)</i> | <i>Sign</i> | <i>B</i> | <i>Exp (B)</i> | <i>Sign</i> | <i>B</i> | <i>Exp (B)</i> | <i>Sign</i> |
| Majoritarian system | 3,428 | 30,820 | 0,000* | 0,808 | 2,224 | 0,000* | 2,481 | 11,952 | 0,000* |
| Proportional system | 5,376 | 216,254 | | 3,094 | 22,067 | 0,000* | −0,157 | 0,856 | 0,630 |
| Medium Magnitude of Constituency | 1,520 | 4,573 | * | – | | | 1,802 | 6,063 | 0,000* |
| Party Vote | | | | | | | 0,378 | 1,460 | 0,000* |
| Few Parties | 3,183 | 24,131 | 0,002* | 1,499 | 4,477 | 0,000* | −1,302 | 0,272 | 0,000* |
| Left Parties | 0,293 | 1,340 | 0,011* | – | | | | | |
| Left candidate | | | | 0,210 | 1,234 | 0,002* | −0,528 | 0,590 | 0,000* |
| Just Candidate in other general elections | | | | | | | −0,278 | 0,757 | 0,000* |
| Incumbent | − 0,559 | 0,772 | 0,000* | | | | 0,768 | 2,155 | 0,000* |
| No Paid Staffer (Office) | 0,550 | 1,734 | 0,000* | | | | − 0,201 | 0,818 | 0,058** |
| No Central Office | | | | − 0,487 | 0,614 | 0,000* | 0,239 | 1,270 | 0,015 ** |
| No Party in the Office | | | | −0,165 | 0,848 | 0,016* | 0,410 | 1,507 | 0,000* |
| Age: until to 45 | | | | | | | 0,713 | 2,040 | 0,000* |
| Age: 46–55 | | | | | | | 0,452 | 1,571 | 0,000* |

Binary logistic regression with stepwise method:

¹10 iterations.² 4 iterations

**p < 0,05 *p < 0,001.

Staffer, No party in the Office) and belonging to specific age classes: being younger than 45 have an more influence than belonging to other classes.

In general, regarding variables in the first and in third model, we observe different direction (positive versus negative) for some variables and elements of candidate profile: this can explain because we observe, for example, a elevate digitalization without utilizing political consultant. The two distinctive elements of “Americanization” follow different logic. The rise of political consultant is linked mainly to structure of political system, to number of parties and to the lack of other political experience: no incumbent and no paid staffer. Other variables determine the digitalized campaign: we find the institutional context as electoral system and parties’ system but the direction is not the same (negative) as regards “proportional system” (it is with sign. 0.630) and “few parties.” Also in the case of individual features, we find opposite direction for “Left candidate,” “no paid staffer,” and incumbent. In the model, other variables appear as “just candidate,” “no-central office,” “no-party in the office.” There is also the modalities “Party Vote” that include electoral system with closed lists or single seat constituency but his weight is very low. Expected results are the linkage between digitalization and phase of life so that the digitalization is explained by belonging to younger age classes: more for the youngest (until to 45), a little less for the second class of age (46–55). In sum, the propensity to digitalization concerns more majoritarian system, medium constituency and multiparty system but a complex of individual features influences the choice of 2.0. campaign. We can hypothesize a profile of those who select digital tools: they are more inclined to right parties, are younger than the mean of candidates, are outsiders (no-party in the Office, no central Office, no candidate in other general elections) that need to increase quickly their popularity and their reputation inside medium constituency. The presence of “incumbent” could be explained by other elements: many MPs have small staffs that sustain parliamentary work and that just have digital skills.¹⁴

Conclusion

The analysis of candidates’ campaigns shows that there is not a unique benchmark model. The supposed homologation is not obvious in Europe: very different types – both within a single

political system and among political systems – coexist in same period. By analysis of correspondence, it is evident that old tools have been not archived and that old and new tools cohabit in personal campaign. Digital tools do not weaken traditional mobilization on the ground (e.s. canvassing or meeting). In new campaign, the stratification is diffused: in general who employs digital tools, does not give up also old instruments; direct and indirect channels are present, building a “hypermedia campaign” (Howard 2006). The elements of “Americanization” process are in European campaigns but we observe that they are not present in the same time and that they are differently developed. For example: the personalization of electoral campaign implicates the presence of personal team, which candidates do not have often. If the team is present, this depends directly (also economically) from the candidates. The weight of parties is very low in personal team. The rise of political consultants and of “scientific” basis still is less widespread: not only the presence is low but also, in many cases, they have direct relation with candidate without the direction of a personal team. As well, the digitization develops patchy: 1.0 digital instruments are more diffused but without regarding all the candidates. When candidate choice to be “on the web,” he prefers to manage directly digital tools; better personal web site than party portal to construct personal profile. The diffusion of 2.0 tools is low in general with some exceptions.

The candidate acts strategically to obtain the best result and, for this reasons, we have to control many elements that can affect the choice. The imitation of best practices – American model in particular – is surely an important element but it is not the unique. The models of logistic regression highlight different explicative element for the three indicators of Americanization: the rise of political consultants, the personalization of campaign, the digitalization. In the first two models, the systemic factors are definitely relevant: the presence of political consultants and the personalization of campaign is linked to political system both to methods of seats assignment and to constituency peculiarity. The individual characteristics are less relevant than the systemic factors. The high digitalization follows different explicative logic. The majoritarian system and magnitude of constituency are important but we need to consider other elements: the candidate’s age, the previous experiences in election and in party. From our point of view, this explains that “Americanization process” includes many phenomena, which are not always correlated. Analysis of data confirms that there is not a unique model of political campaign and that many variables contribute to change its shape. The Americanization does not help to understand the change and the peculiarities because it levels out the differences among countries.

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