

STUDY on POLITICAL PARTIES with SUCCESSFUL experiences

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Executive summary

The analysis of the evolution of different political parties, some “new” such as the coalition which gave rise to the Broad Front in Uruguay, and others with a long tradition, such as the British Labour Party or the Scottish National Party, some formed since their creation as political parties, such as the American Democratic party and others arising from the evolution of social movements, such as the German Green Party, some driven from the centre and others from the periphery, demonstrates different starting points on the common path toward increasing the influence of these organizations in the definition of political parties and on a country’s political agenda.

It is considered that a party’s capacity for influence, beyond the specific electoral arithmetic which temporarily increases its negotiating power, will depend on its electoral support and this depends on the possibilities that the party has to represent (today more than ever given the nature of our democracies, which we can describe as audiences), the preferences of the median voter. The path toward the median voter, which is at the same time the path toward increasing the organization’s influence, while taking into account the cultural and historical particularities, has common tendencies. These can be summarized around the axes on which this study was designed:

- The internal key: political parties are driven and formed by their members and supporters, the main support of the initial growth. However, once in power, there is a necessary centralization process. The party needs to increase its speed of response both as regards decision-making and as regards its media exposure. It needs a structure of trained people and an effective mechanism allowing it to respond to immediate problems.
- The centralization process – the limits and the scope of which are variable -, makes a series of conflicts emerge around the political positioning of the party, which confronts those who are pragmatic with the idealists, and often leads to a crisis of legitimacy arising from the growing further away from the

grass roots caused by the internal centralization and hierarchical structuring process.

In this process the parties have to solve a crisis of legitimacy which allows them to balance the different interests. The key elements of these rebalancing processes are:

- *the candidate selection mechanisms*: there are no magic formulae. As the democratic primaries show, a very high degree of autonomy and openness increases the levels of internal legitimacy but at the same time makes it more difficult to come to power because of the polarization between candidates. The contextual characteristics and the structure of incentives needs to be assessed strategically with care, considering the political regime, the electoral system and even the political tradition in order to propose, negotiate and create “the best system” for the party.
- *the programme defining processes*: the experiences analyzed show that a certain centralization process has to be combined with mechanisms to control the organic structure which prevent the party from growing away from the important problems of the grass roots. The new technologies, the support in the mass media and the work of intermediate officials can be vital to achieve a maximum efficiency and representation.
- *the dynamics of coordination between voters, professionals, members and supporters*: this is of key importance in the both internal and external communication strategy that is developed. Despite the fact that it may not always be possible to reconcile the desires of those who are most radical with those of the median voter and the professionals, a good communication strategy which considers the conflicts in ideological terms, minimizing the importance and the visibility of personal interests, is an initial step to open up a space for negotiation. In any case, the analysis demonstrated the importance of not underestimating this conflict at all.
- *the strategic vision which allows the historical opportunities to be promoted*: the windows of opportunity which favour more or less the possibilities of successfully obtaining transformations also depend on historical (contextual) processes, and it is necessary to be quick to take advantage of them, as symptomatically they can be associated with a large number of successful experiences.
- *the crises*: these should be understood as processes open to dialogue, negotiation and construction, not with fragmentation and polarization between sectors. Creating a common base around this principle can allow us to evade the temptation of ruptures internally. Creating a set of incentives to build together seems to be another key to success.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In this study our intention was to examine the elements and the logics which can be associated with a situation of success for a political party, understanding **success** as meaning that it can develop its objectives as fully as possible, either forming part of a government or influencing it.

The possibility of a party achieving these objectives should initially be linked to the need, in the context of present-day democracies, for it to come as close as possible to the median voter¹, which in less technical terms tends to refer to **centrality** in the electoral space. It should be stressed that this approach is in two directions and refers both to the party's ability to influence the voters and to its ability to reflect their interests. The parties do not just allow access to power and represent groups; they also organize them. The way in which they shape the political agenda, giving a voice to certain interests and conflicts while simultaneously attenuating others, enhances or reduces the possibility of an effective government and a stable democracy. In this respect, they reflect and at the same time also create the political, economic and social structure.

The political parties are **fundamental elements of the democratic system** and their good health is a guarantee for the party and for the citizens overall. Contemporary democracies attribute a whole series of functions to these groups which require for complete fulfilment that at their heart there can be a certain balance between social representativeness through membership (aggregation of interests) and the ability to create unitary platforms (coordination of interests), a selection of competitive elites in the struggle to hold government positions and their effective control².

Through a comparative perspective we will examine the processes of evolution of different parties along these lines, and at the same time we will consider the mechanisms that they have set up to **balance** the different trends and profiles of actors which make up the life of these political parties. Returning to our initial objective, we can consider that the success of a political party (measured as its ability to influence the design of policies) lies in a series of **internal and external factors**, such as the type of internal structure and its relations with other organizations, and the context shaped by its position in the electoral space and the historical situation (context in the broadest sense).

¹ The median voter (in accordance with the definition of the statistical term "median"; not to be confused with average) is that which ideally would be situated right in the middle of all the voters ordered ideologically on an axis in accordance with their respective positions. In other words, they would have as many voters to their (ideological) right as to their left.

² It is no coincidence that there is increasing discussion on the regulation of political parties, the financing of election campaigns, etc., and that even in countries such as Germany, Finland, Norway and the United States the candidate selection mechanisms are regulated by law.

To summarize, the following factors can thus be highlighted:

Structure

1. Internal: decision-making mechanisms and internal control.
2. External or “social support belt”: relations with other organizations, sources of funding, means of communication and study centres.

Context

3. Electoral system: key influence when it comes to encouraging one or another type of leadership and its control.
4. Position of the party in the electoral space: situation of the political party in the system of “cleavages” or important socio-political axes in the electoral processes.
5. Historical situation: historical circumstances which can favour internal processes of reorganization or which favour the movement toward the median voter (collapse of the Berlin wall, devolution, economic crisis, etc.).

As already mentioned, we wanted to focus on the processes developed by some parties on facing this necessary balance and which have led them to a **strengthening** which has been reflected in an improvement of their possibilities of accessing political power, often after situations of extreme weakness due to bad management of these tensions. It is no wonder that some processes of institutionalization of social movements which take shape in the formation of parties can be analyzed in these terms: whether an environmental movement, a pro-independence movement, or a workers’ movement.

In order to centre the subsequent analysis of cases, below we include a short theoretical framework in which we spell out the sources of tension that all parties are obliged to confront. After examining these **tensions and challenges** we will carry out an empirical analysis of cases, while focusing the perspective in accordance with the previously mentioned elements.

II. STRUCTURE OF A POLITICAL PARTY: TENSIONS TO CONFRONT

1. Internal structure and social support belt

1.1 Internal: two axes of tension

The tensions characteristic of and inherent in any political party are basically triggered along two axes:

a) Organizational axis

The decision-making and the selection of members for positions can be carried out paying attention to different mechanisms which move between two extremes: maximum horizontality and the participation without distinction of all the members in all the decisions, and maximum verticality and hierarchical structuring with decisions taken by small nuclei chosen by the members. The following concepts and situations can be positioned around these two axes:

Horizontality	Verticality
Participatory logic	Representative logic
Coordination different preferences	Generation common preference
Assembly system	Hierarchical mediation

b) Political positioning axis

When it comes to shaping the contents of the policies that the party will defend and its public positioning we find, again, two divergent poles which are under mutual tension: maximum respect for a desired model of country and of policies to implement, with everything that this represents, on the one hand, and the maximum opening to exchange and transactions with other political forces in order to influence and participate, as far as possible (however little this may be), in the collective parliamentary or government decisions:

Idealism	Pragmatism
Radicalism	Pactism
Coherence of approaches	Realism of approaches
Negotiating inflexibility	Tolerance of modifications

One axis depends on the other (the possibilities of one or another type of political positioning will depend on the incentives and limits imposed by the organizational system) but conceptually we can distinguish them: one makes us focus on the organizational mechanisms and has a more internal logic, and the other on the contents defended with a more external logic.

The internal organization of the party, however, cannot be understood as unconnected to external factors. For example, a study by Lundell (2004: 39-40) on the selection of candidates shows the influence of cultural factors and of political tradition on the organization of parties: the north European parties use more decentralized selection systems than those of southern Europe, which are more centralized. The size of the party can likewise become an explanatory factor: bigger parties present more centralized methods than smaller parties. Smaller organizations are often characterized by open and flexible political processes, which offer better opportunities for participation. Big organizations, on the other hand, are often distinguished by their complexity, hierarchy and bureaucracy, which is associated with a higher degree of centralization. While big organizations appear, in general, to be better prepared to offer efficient and effective answers (despite their size), the smaller ones show more legitimacy thanks to their democracy and internal transparency³.

Whatever the case, the good operation of a political party can possibly be analyzed as a case of success in the search for an efficient balance between these poles of tension, so that the benefits of each method can be taken advantage of and the disadvantages offset. In conflict resolution it is important to realize that there are **four different types of actors** involved in the dynamics of political parties which present different logics on seeking a solution to these inherent tensions.

1.2. *Four types of actors*

We can situate the positions of four types of actors linked to any political party, with different profiles, preferences and interests, on these two axes⁴:

- *The professionals*: members with positions of political representation inside and/or outside the party, which represent their main source of economic remuneration and the centre of their professional life.

³ A study by Weldom (2006:475) shows that as organizations grow there is a reduction in two types of participation: the affiliation and activism of the members in the parties. But the relations observed are not linear. The effect is stronger among the smaller groups and gradually reduces as the size of the organization grows.

⁴ A classical view of this interrelation can be found in Steven J. Brams (1978): "Los partidos políticos, monstruos con tres cabezas" (trans. in *Lecturas de teoría política positiva*, Madrid: Instituto de Estudios Fiscales, 1991). Brams, however, only distinguishes three actors without including the supporters, an increasingly key element.

- *The members*: affiliated to a political party to which they devote part of their time and/or a portion of their income (as fees), in exchange for being able to contribute in some way to the (organizational and programmatic) decision-making.
- *The supporters*: non-members close to the ideas of the political party who, unlike its voters, accept some different degree of involvement between elections, whether through specific donations, or specific direct or indirect participation (creation of opinion, etc.) in the generation of decisions. Unlike the members, they are not subject to any organizational discipline.
- *The voters*: citizens who opt with their vote for a specific political party.

Each of these types of actor will tend to act in accordance with the logic of their position in relation to the political party and, therefore, in different ways. They have sometimes been represented as successive rings of involvement, with the professionals at the core and the voters in the outer ring, but this representation can lead to confusion if it does not take into account the different casuistry on the proportions that each of these groups represent in relation to the others (for example, a very similar number of members to that of professionals – and, therefore, with coinciding circles –, or a very small number of supporters in relation to the members, etc.). The image of a population pyramid therefore appears to be more effective, with the voters at the base and professionals at the upper vertex which, like those for generations, can show us more clearly the different proportions between groups.

In general (see, for example, Brams, 1978), **the members are considered to have more extreme ideological positions** (further from the social ideological centre or, what amounts to the same, from the median voter) than the professionals and the majority of the voters.

From the theory of rational choice (which conceives the actions of individuals as the result of a certain cost-benefit relationship for the individual), this extremism (or “radicalism” in the philosophical sense) can be understood as the logical consequence of the type of “investment” made by the **member**: who has accepted costs without this implying any “remuneration” and therefore they will be **less willing to compromise**. Therefore, their sole or main “benefit” arises from obtaining representation in the ideological terrain.

The logic of the **professionals**, on the other hand, is more conditioned by the benefit of maintaining the position, either from the power which arises from winning elections, or from that which arises from controlling the party in the sense of ensuring that they remain in an internally designated position.

From the organizational point of view, the assembly mechanisms (or those of maximum horizontality on the first axis) increase the importance and ability to influence this logic compared with that of the professionals. This confrontation of logics is sometimes expressed in the face of some possibility of negotiation with other political parties to participate in a government. The “**coherent-member**” logic would indicate: “Better in the opposition than in government if we have to abandon our programme”. The “**pragmatic-professional**” logic: “Better in the government than in the opposition if we can influence government action in some way”⁵.

It is not easy to unite the two logics. If the professionals, in search of the median member, move away from the median voter, it will be more difficult for them to win elections. If they seek to interpret the preferences of the median voter to come closer to them, they may not win the selection process held by the members.

With a greater degree of involvement, but very variable depending on the organizational

models and countries, the figure of the supporter is half way between the members and the voters. In this respect they can be considered as a figure which can alter or influence the tension between the preferences of the members and the professionals (Appendix A develops the action logics of the different types in more detail).

1.3 Selection of the candidate

The tensions between the two logics mentioned (coherence vs. pragmatism) may be amplified depending on the internal democracy mechanisms that a party has, which can represent an obstacle for the professionals who seek to move the party toward the median voter. This should not, however, make us forget an essential function, beyond the selection of elites, of this internal democracy (the absence of which can likewise generate problems in the organization): **the flows of information**. Without efficient mechanisms of internal democracy it is not possible to guarantee the flows of quality information necessary in order to carry out an effective control of the elites and, in the other direction, to have first-hand information on the social preferences closest to the party.

Therefore, on a social level, these mechanisms have often been interpreted as the prior step of control exercised by the voter on the politicians in power. At the same time, these systems make it possible to increase the legitimacy “lost” by the parties at a time when the voters perceive them, increasingly, as organizations removed from society and closer to the state (in what Katz defined as the “cartel party”) (Hopkin 2001; LeDuc 2001, Katz 2001). The elector assumes that the first step of this **control** is exercised by the members of a party and the congresses of the parties are analyzed as indicators of the solvency of the leaders proposed. In political science terms it can be said that greater internal democracy in the parties is a way of increasing the overall accountability⁶ of the system.

⁵ We are always talking about logics, ideal types, or trends which can be counteracted or overcome depending on the determinants which arise from a specific context.

⁶ Ability to control a system.

The **public utility of the parties** and the belief that the internal democracy of the parties is a guarantee for the system as a whole and not just for the members themselves is a fundamental principle, for example, of the American system which regulates the internal organization of the parties very strictly, despite the diversity of methods used. The American primaries are characterized by the fact that the whole process is regulated by laws and is controlled by the public authorities, that the citizens can participate (in different manners depending on the states) and that they are held in the same premises as the elections.

In Spain, on the other hand, the political parties are conceived half way between the public and the private sphere and there are scarce regulations beyond the generic statement that the Constitution contains on the necessary democratic structure of political parties.

Although it may be assumed that primaries are the most democratic method of candidate selection, the results are more complex. Some studies point out strong points and weak points. In particular, Hopkin (2001: 345-347) shows that the primaries were initially designed as a way of encouraging the participation of citizens, but the high levels of abstention in the United States make this argument less valid. On the other hand, it is considered that the primaries put the voter in a position of responsibility on choosing the candidate they want and, therefore, that they give the members and supporters more options. It is also mentioned that this system could favour retrospective responsibility, on providing a useful resource to control their policies. In short, it is a strong incentive to avoid distance between the preferences of the supporters and voters and the actions of the politician.

One of the strongest arguments against the primaries in the US model is that they act as a disincentive to the member and they weaken the party. They weaken it because, on the one hand, the politicians can conceive their victories as the result of personal merit (not merit of the party) and, on the other hand, this system leads them to respond to the voters irrespective of party discipline. This fragmentation can mean that the parliamentarians focus on the distribution of benefits to their own geographic areas rather than developing a broader, ideologically defined, programme.

The primaries can moreover reduce the incentives of the members, accentuating the downwards trend in membership observed in the majority of developed countries. The question then, is: Can a party without members survive? This will depend on the financial support system and on the degree of professionalization of its structure. Without financial support which does not depend on the members, the opening up to supporters may weaken the structure of the party without compensation (loss of membership and of the source of financing and voluntary work that this involves) although, at the same time, it may bring the party closer to the median voter, which may in the future favour greater financing thanks to an increase in the share of power (more public financing and new donations from supporters)⁷. In this respect, the power of the public administration (in the form of resources)

⁷ The current structure of opportunities could bring into coexistence, like in the seventies, a scenario of disaffection with the party with the need for the people to express themselves on specific subjects. The researchers talk about this loss of members as a majority trend among European parties. Some figures of this evolution can be consulted in appendix 2.

and that of the supporters limits the power of the members and contributes to the professionals finding it easier to address the voter without internal determinants.

Other types of primaries, such as those promoted by the PSOE in the nineties, combine greater control of the party with the participation of the members. Undesired results are, however, also observed in this case, such as the possibility of fragmentation or extreme confrontation within the party being replaced by a reduction of conflict or ideological confrontation until the decision becomes a choice between two images rather than between two ideological options or two options of political content. This second option can arise not just from the party's control over the process, but also from the need to carry out two campaigns at the same time, one within the party and another for the electorate as a whole, which leads to a neutralization of the ideological debate (for more details on this point, see the section dedicated to the PSOE below).

In spite of this, there is a new tension between accountability and the ability to hold power in a firm manner, showing unity and management capacity, which is to do with the ability to add and to respond to different preferences (related to the responsiveness, or representativeness, of the system) without collapsing. From this viewpoint the party congresses also tend to operate as an indicator for all citizens of its capacity to manage diversity and at the same time its ability to take firm decisions.

These two qualities are not always valued equally. Indeed, firmness as an indicator of a possible good governmental management often exceeds the representative capacity in valuation. We could give the example, in this respect, of the United Kingdom under the conservative government of Margaret Thatcher, when the voters thought that Neil Kinnock, the leader of the labour party, was more concerned than his Tory rival by the interests of all the social groups (29.3% compared with 20.6%) but that the latter had more capacity to govern (59.9% compared with 20.3%). The election result was that 42.9% voted for Thatcher and only 29.6% for Kinnock (Health *et al.*, 1992).

The addition of social preferences can be displaced (and occur) on different levels:

- within the party: tends to occur in majority and presidential systems (USA): the social debate is very lively intra-party
- within the Parliament: when there are clear majorities (favoured by not very proportional systems): parliamentary regimes
- at the heart of the government: in coalitions (parliamentary systems with high proportionality and/or fragmentation)

2. Context

2.1 *The political regime and the electoral system*

The supporter-member-politician balance does not only depend on the party structure, but also on the institutional context, and especially on the electoral system, which is probably one of the most crucial non-party forces in this relationship.

The power of the party over its leaders also depends on the opportunities of influence offered by the type of regime (parliamentary or presidential) in which this leadership is carried out. Thus, Cheibub and Przeworski (1999, pp.231-235) showed that out of 70 peaceful changes of president recorded between 1950 and 1990, only 4 (4.7%) were due to removal by the party itself. On the other hand, in parliamentary regimes, out of 310 peaceful changes of prime minister, 148 (47.7%) were due to the internal politics of the parties or to crises in the governing coalition.

We could say that the **influence of the members** over the leader of the party increases with the following scale (**type of political regime**):

presidential, non-proportional parliamentary system (not coalition), very proportional parliamentary system (coalitions)

Likewise, as regards the **electoral system**, in majority systems the members (or the local elites) tend to be stronger, while in the parliamentary systems the structure of incentives and regulations leads to the dominance of a centralized elite.

With this panorama, it is not easy to see that it is difficult to impose a **system of primaries** to select the leadership of a party within a proportional system with closed lists in districts with several names, as in the case of Spain. This system thus gives great power to the organizational leadership which prepares the electoral lists in a centralized manner and represents too important a counterweight to the logic of openness represented by the primaries. A winner of primaries without the support of the party can hardly do anything in this context (Borrell case in the PSOE).

On the contrary, a majority system with single-name districts, such as the British system, tends to favour the members, although as we will see in the case of Labour this trend can be counteracted by the strength of the partisan organizations (unions, etc.), although, in any case, it initially favours the weakness of a centralized elite. This occurs more clearly in the conservative party.

A presidential system with the election of delegates in single-name districts with a majority system would be the paradigm of strengthening of the grass roots, in relation to a partisan oligarchy. The system of primaries in the United States is fairly close to this model. The above can all be summarized in the following table which shows the trends favouring one or another actor of a political party.

Factors which strengthen the:

	Member/ elector	Party oligarchy
Political regime		
Presidential	x	
Parliamentary		x
Electoral system		
Majority (single-name districts)	x	
Proportional (multi-name districts)		x
Open lists	x	
Blocked lists		x
Selection elites		
Primaries	x	
Centralized selection		x

If we add internal to the contextual elements we find that:

The grass roots members have maximum influence in the election of the leaders and the policies when:

- Context: Parties which compete in single-name districts (many districts, and not closed lists organized by the party).

Internally there are:

- Primaries
- Decentralized resources for the campaigns

Result: more active internal politics and more multicentric distribution of power

Danger: the party can be transformed into confederations of powerful and independent local leaders. (This is the case, for example, of the British Conservative Party which for a long time was organized as a confederation of notables as revealed on numerous occasions, some as important as, for example, when Margaret Thatcher was replaced by John Major. Although she continued to be prime minister, the party notables believed that she was an electoral liability).

On the other hand,

The power of the oligarchy (party position + professionals) is greatest when:

- Context: Multi-name constituencies, closed lists

And internally there are:

- No primaries, block lists
- Concentrated campaign resources

Result: powerful internal organization, much lower influence of the members.

Danger: non-existence of good flows of internal information (less possibilities of control and of quickly taking on changes in social preferences).

In any case, we cannot conceive the political and social world as a space of determination. There are always exceptions and spaces for changes, sometimes motivated by new elements associated with a structure of political opportunities as showed, for example, by the alliance which gave rise to the Broad Front in Uruguay. This was a successful case, in a presidential system, of incentives for the association of parties which since the year of their coalition stand with their own lists (for each party) for the Parliament and with a joint list for the Presidency. This coalition is a good example of the negotiating capacity of many parties with different positions (all in the centre and centre left of the political spectrum) which led to a change in the traditional Uruguayan dynamics, with a system with two hegemonic parties, White and Colorado, leading to the government of Tavaré Vazquez in 2004.

The Swiss political system is also exceptional. The direct democracy works at the same time as a disincentive for active participation in political parties and even in elections (given that the citizen has the possibility of becoming organized in order to repeal a law if they do not like it, as often occurs in this country) and, moreover, as an incentive to maintain the mobilization in local and regional parties active, as they participate actively, as one more actor, in the promotion of referendums.

2.2 Position in the electoral space

Another element which can affect the internal dynamics of the parties is their situation on the axes of electoral conflict. The pragmatism of the professionals will make them try to win votes, but this objective may be more or less linked to a movement toward the median voter, and have more or less probabilities of success, depending on the position occupied by the party in relation to the others on the key axes of **electoral positioning**.

Thus, if an attempt at moderation in the approaches is perceived as unproductive, the relations between professionals and members can be very firm in an environment of political results previously accepted as of limited scope. (For many years this was the situation of the Scottish National Party which did not seek major electoral results, or even to have capacity to influence a non-Scottish parliament, the British one: the link between grass roots and leaders began to break when, among others, the context began to offer new possibilities).

An attempt at moderation when this cannot achieve major electoral results because there is a nearby party which occupies a more central position in the electoral space and which cannot be beaten may end with the punishment of both the members and of the loyal electorate (without achieving new gains from the more centrist electorate which will choose the better-placed option). This has been the cases of the Communist Parties in Spain and Italy (Sánchez-Cuenca, 1999).

In its 19th Congress in 1990, the PCI tried to begin a process of moderation of its ideological approaches with the support of the members⁸ but the election results did not reward it. In 1987 it obtained 26.6% of the votes, while, already converted into the PDS, in 1992 it only obtained 16.1% (a third of the traditionally communist vote followed the orthodox faction of the PCI, Communist Refoundation). Until 1996 it did not form part of the government, joining a broad coalition and obtaining 21.1% of the votes. Neither the position of the party on the electoral axes, nor above all the electoral system, allowed ideological moderation to be transformed easily into an electoral gain.

The same can be said of the Communist Party of Spain, in this case with the electoral position element having greater influence. Its moderation of approaches from the first elections of 1977 came up against the more centred position of the PSOE to its right, especially after its respective moderation. The socialist or social democrat parties have thus been the main obstacle to the paths of moderation taken by communist parties in many countries, and this environment is significant subsequently to explain the type of relations which occur in these parties between members and professionals.

When there is little to gain electorally, why lose members with certain decisions? Likewise, if there are options for sociological changes of the electorate or new windows of opportunities (changes in the institutional context or in the systems of parties which can lead to new opportunities of gains) the internal tension may increase. It is not that before there was no potential tension, but it could not be seen (the energy was potential not kinetic: there was no movement but...). In all social movements, once already institutionalized (environmental, pro-independence, workers' movement), at one time or another this expression of the previously accumulated tension is observed in a context which did not aid its expression.

2.3 Historical situations

Finally, there are historical situations which influence the structure of opportunities of a party. The German Green Party (Die Grünen) is a good example of taking advantage of the structure of opportunities. This party was formed starting from the association of social movements based on an assembly structure. It was an alliance of activists united around opposition to pollution, the use of nuclear energy and NATO strategy, among others.

Its main initial strength was the "civic initiatives" organized by the pacifist and anti-nuclear movements. Their success in terms of mobilization was explained for reasons relating to the specific moment: when they arose there was no real political expression for social protest.

⁸ Only 21% of the delegates supported the expression "My party should always be loyal to its principles and objectives, even if this implies a loss of votes", compared with 44% who indicated that they agreed with the statement "My party should obtain the maximum number of votes to represent the interests of a larger number of voters".

The three main parties (Christian Democrats, Social Democrats and Liberals) had alternated in power and even formed a coalition in the seventies (which was blemished by cases of corruption), contributing to generate a defined space for disaffected voters.

In 1983 the Greens reached the federal parliament, with considerable support and good prospects for growth. The unity was maintained for a decade until, finally, in 1991, the conflict exploded between the "realists", who wanted to promote the green agenda through the institutions, and the "fundamentalists", who did not want to renounce the basic principles of grass roots democracy and environmentalism. The conflict was resolved in favour of the former and the party became fully incorporated into the life of political parties, modifying its structures. The party continued its evolution and also adapted to the changes due to German unification and to the evolution of the political agenda. At present, this party does not have exclusive possession of the environmental agenda, given that the social democrats and even the liberals are opening up to the new ideas raised by the social movements.

To conclude, this brief approach shows the need to evolve if the organization wants to continue growing and increasing its influence in the definition of public policies. There are different paths to take for this and also costs to accept.

The case studies, which will support the conclusions, are developed below.

III. FORMULAE OF RESPONSE TO THE TENSIONS: A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Cases:

1. The American Democratic Party: the importance of the primaries
2. British Labour Party: 40 years of give and take between the leaders and the members
3. The German greens: strategic evolution and historical opportunity
4. The Spanish Socialist Workers' Party: centrality and centralization
5. The experience of the Broad Front: winning coalitions
6. Scottish National Party: the triumph of gradualism

1. The American Democratic Party: the importance of the primaries

In 1972 the American Democratic Party began a process of transformation of the regulations to choose its candidate for the country's presidency which would lead to the current situation. The traditional method of conventions and caucuses was progressively replaced with the election of delegates with the number fixed by the central organization in a very standardized process of primaries, although in some states the conventions and caucuses still remain as a formula to designate delegates which in a unique process will end up being added to the rest of the delegations to choose the presidential candidate.

Indeed, the tradition of maximum openness to the decision of the members in this respect is consubstantial to the establishment of the democratic party when, in 1832, the grass roots opposed the candidate proposed by the elites and began a campaign of support for the unofficial candidate who ended up being (the seventh) president, General Andrew Jackson. The organizational structure which was created to support the candidature of Jackson, "the man of the people", whose "presidency was robbed by the corrupt aristocrats of the east", was the basis on which the Democratic Party, possibly the oldest party in the world still operating, was built⁹.

This does not mean that the current system of primaries comes from that time. The first time that this method was used in an American state was in 1905 in Wisconsin. The use of primaries to select delegates gradually grew from the end of the 60s: in 1968, 17 states were holding them, representing 37.5% of delegates. Nowadays, 36 states hold them (which in 1996 represented 62.8% of delegates at the convention).

⁹ The symbol of the donkey representing the Democratic Party also comes from this very early period: when Jackson's detractors played with his name and that of an ass (*jackass*) to insult him.

1.1. Primaries: in search of the member/supporter

There is a very broad casuistry of procedures in the different states, as regards both the organization of the caucuses and conventions and, although maybe a little less, the organization of primaries. Two different types can basically be distinguished:

- Open: all the voters registered in that state can participate in the primaries of any party to contribute to choosing their preferred candidate, without being a supporter. However, they can only vote in the primaries of one party.
- Closed: it is necessary to register for one or another party previously (with vary different limitations which can allow, in some cases, registration on the day of voting) and then, as supporters of the party, they can vote in its primaries.

The process begins in the state of Iowa where, in this case, the selection of candidates is carried out using the caucus process. In this case, the caucus system includes assemblies of voters in over two thousand districts to speak about the candidates and election issues. These assemblies in turn choose delegates for a series of county conventions which, in turn, elect delegates for the state convention who choose the delegates who will go to the national convention. The New Hampshire primaries are held one week after Iowa.

More and more states are trying to bring forward their primaries as, due to their influence, these first contests are more important than the later ones and the candidates pay more attention to them. They represent the starting point and the first opportunity to view the candidates and positions is very important. To end this pressure to bring forward the calendar¹⁰ the Democratic National Committee established a series of new rules in 2008 which newspapers such as the *New York Times* considered to be “the most important reform of presidential candidate selection of the last 30 years”. Among others, it is established that the cycle of primaries will begin almost one year earlier than on other occasions and that states from the west and the south will be included among those which hold the primaries first, in order to balance this “presentation” effect with a more territorial component.

This year the National Convention of the Democratic Party will be held in Denver, in August. The convention will finally be attended by 4,049 delegates who will have to choose the presidential candidate (the vice-presidential candidate is chosen by the presidential nominee and together they form the so-called “ticket”). Therefore, they need 2,025 delegates in order to win. However, of the 4,049 delegates, 3,253 (80%) are “committed” delegates, who came from the state primaries, and 796 (20%) are the so-called “superdelegates”.

¹⁰ Proof that the states are progressively bringing forward their calendar of primaries to this end is that in 2008 at least 22 states had voted in their primaries before the so-called “Super Tuesday” due to the quantity of primaries held then (8; on 5 February). In 2004 “Super Tuesday” was on 2 March (and only 9 states had already voted before 5 February).

1.2 The aristocracy of the members: the superdelegates

Half way between the logic of the grass roots member and the party apparatus we find the so-called “superdelegates”.

The superdelegates are delegates chosen by the Democratic National Committee. They are closer to the apparatus, but they are completely free to vote who they want, even if they have supported a candidate for whom they do not end up voting. According to the party theory, they represent the good sense, the professionalism, that the members may have lost (the delegates are obliged to vote for the candidate for which they were chosen in the primaries). The superdelegates, as mentioned, are not committed to any candidate. Indeed, for example, in 2004 the candidate Howard Dean in principle had more support from superdelegates but, in the end, they voted for John Kerry who was the winning candidate in the Convention.

This figure was created in 1982 to give more weight to “those who know” from the apparatus of the Democratic Party on deciding who is the best candidate to confront the rival from the Republican Party in the presidential elections.

Who are the superdelegates? All the Democratic governors and senators, members of the Democratic National Committee, and pre-eminent politicians and civil servants, among whom the ex-Presidents Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter and the ex-Vice President Al Gore currently stand out. Other people are also included in recognition of their history or their influence in certain sectors (sometimes also not very remarkable leaders in order to cover vacancies). Therefore, they have not all been chosen in elections, but many have (previously). Amongst those who have not, there are superdelegates who represent trade unions, Hispanic minorities, and Afro-Americans who represent key social sectors in the support of Democratic campaigns.

What would happen if the superdelegates ended up inclining the balance in favour of the candidate with least support of the delegates? It would be completely legitimate and legal. However, as here there are two confronting legitimacies (those who are more and those who know more) it is always possible to discuss. This is what happens when the differences between two candidates are small and one appears to have more superdelegates than the other. During the campaign, the candidate Obama stated that “I believe that if we end up winning more states and more delegates (...) it would be problematic for the superdelegates to go against the decision of the voters”.

Hillary Clinton, on the other hand, stated that “the superdelegates, by their very nature, are supposed to exercise an independent judgement”. And she added: “but, of course, if senator Obama and his campaign continue to support this position, which is totally contrary to the historical definition of a superdelegate, I will expect the support of senators [Edward] Kennedy and [John] Kerry [who until now have supported Obama].”

In the sense of defending the most democratic logic (as opposed to aristocracy, the best), *The Wall Street Journal* stated that “it would be a nightmare for the party if the presidential candidate ended up being chosen by partisan chiefs instead of by the voters.” It is difficult to predict what the “losing” democratic voters would do if their candidate were defeated by the votes of the superdelegates. They could abstain or even vote for the Republican Party candidate if during the campaign he manages to include some of their aspirations.

The last time that the “superdelegates” were decisive was two years after their introduction (1984). Then the superdelegates gave widespread support to Walter Mondale, who became the democratic candidate to the detriment of Gary Hart, with whom he had been in close competition. It is important to remark that historical experience and the statistics demonstrate that when the party reaches the convention divided it is more likely to lose the election against the Republicans.

The system of primaries has always been criticized because it is not clear whether the winning candidate will be the one most capable of winning the election, or is just the best to represent “the soul of the party”. Again, where is this system taking us? – we could wonder – toward the median voter? or toward the median member?¹¹

2. British Labour Party: 40 years of give and take between the leaders and the members

The British Labour Party can be conceived as the institutionalization, in the sphere of political competition, of the workers’ movement which developed during the 19th century in the United Kingdom. After various attempts by the unions to organize coordinated actions to support members of parliament who would defend their ideas in the House of Commons, a group of parliamentarians with socialist ideas was finally organized, in 1906, which called itself the Independent Labour Party, from which the current Labour Party originated.

On analyzing this party we would like to highlight the period which goes from the 60s to the 90s, which exemplifies the tensions which can occur between members and leaders, and the mechanisms and contexts which have made it possible to establish a type of party organization which has been 11 years in government.

¹¹In this sense it is curious that, in the last primaries held in Spain, those organized by the PSOE in 1998, in a poll published in *La Vanguardia*, 37.7% of socialist electors preferred Almunia and 35.7% Borrell. The situation was reversed among the members of the PSOE: 33.7% preferred Almunia against the candidate who finally won, Borrell, who was preferred by 43.4% of the socialist members.

2.1. The first movement toward the centre: autonomy of the leaders and first renunciation of nationalizations

For years there was no confrontation between the National Executive Committee which obeyed the parliamentary leaders and the conference of delegates. From 1948 to 1960, there was only one minor confrontation in 1950. The delegates voted in the congress with the imperative mandate of the affiliate organization that they represented with a very important specific influence of the unions.

This situation of balance between “the notables” and the grass roots (which despite the obvious ideological differences between the Labour Party and the Conservatives positions them within the same organizational model) began to be disturbed after the great defeat of Hugh Gaitskell, in the 1959 election, which led to the first major confrontation between the party and its leader in the 1960 Conference.

Gaitskell, to improve the party’s possibilities of success, tried to end the traditional economic programme of extensive nationalizations of companies and of unilateral nuclear disarmament which had characterized the Labour movement of the immediate post-war period. When his attempt did not prosper, he rejected the resolution of the party conference and defended the independence of the Labour parliamentary party calling on the principles of the MPs who “cannot vote in favour of what they honestly believe will harm the country” (reproducing the old discussion between imperative mandate and freedom of vote).

One year later, Gaitskell succeeded in changing the position of the party and the party’s electoral attraction began to improve starting from June 1962, when it began to win the successive by-elections until returning to power in 1964. In this first episode of tension between the members and the leadership of the MPs it was clear who won the battle: the leaders. On behalf of democracy they had defended the independence of the professionals and this had a productive result in terms of electoral success.

It has, indeed, been argued that strictly speaking full democracy at the heart of the parties in which they can control the leaders who have a position of political responsibility is incompatible with the democratic legitimacy arising from the Parliament (McKenzie, 1982: 195). This is even more so in the British case, in which there is no supreme law which regulates the system and all the sovereignty arises from the Parliament (not from the people)¹². Also – and still in relation to the case of Labour – it was written that the members tend to be “extremists” (in any party) and that it was necessary to moderate their positions (Crossman, 1963). There is a well-known statement, in this respect, by Sidney Webb, one of the prominent figures of the British Labour movement, who in 1930 defined the constituency groups as “non-representative groups of insignificant people, dominated by fanatics, maniacs and extremists”.

¹² Although, as we have seen, the opposite could also be defended: without control of the citizens they cannot be sure of the fulfilment of the election promises which guarantee the grass roots of the party.

2.2. *The new tension which will lead to the defeat of the 80s*

Under the Labour governments of Harold Wilson there were again tensions between the party and the leader. Between 1964 and 1969, the government suffered from 12 defeats in the party conferences, on issues as important as: employment, price policies, the payment of National Health Service prescriptions, the Vietnam War, military deployment in the Suez Canal, and the reaction to the military coup in Greece (Maravall, 2003:140). This situation, which would subsequently lead to a considerable break in the traditional collaboration between unions and party, is often considered to be the first step which led to the election victory of Thatcher (1979) and the arrival of a long period of conservative governments.

The 60s and 70s were years of opposition between leaders and members of the Labour Party. Traditionally, the leaders had closely supervised the selection of candidates to Parliament and those who already held a seat could not be replaced by the constituency labour parties. Likewise, internal factions were banned. But the confrontations of the 60s allowed the organization of tendencies and the relaxation of party discipline. The *Campaign for Labour Party Democracy* was set up, and later the *grass roots Mobilization Committee* with the aim of reducing the power of the leadership. The key issues under discussion were the election of the party leader (how to do it) and the ability of the constituency labour parties to replace as candidates those who had won a seat (between 1973 and 1976, the constituency labour parties rejected 4 candidates for MP; these tensions did not occur in the conservative party).

The 1979 defeat was interpreted by the left wing of the party as a result of the great independence that the leaders still had and the lack of control by the grass roots. In the 1980 Blackpool conference, the requests for greater internal democracy and control were heard and it was established that the MPs would compulsorily be subjected to a process of re-election by the constituency labour parties, and the leader and deputy leader would have to be chosen by a broader constituency than until then (until then they were chosen by the labour parliamentary party. From then on, an electoral college would appoint them, in which 40% of the votes were held by the unions, 30% by the parliamentary party, and 30% by the constituency labour parties).

These measures of internal democracy were accompanied by a radicalization of the party's programme, which did not bring it any closer to the working classes (according to the polls of voters held in the following elections in 1983). The election results were disastrous (the worst since 1918).

2.3. *The long march to the new centre*

Neil Kinnock was party leader for 9 years (1983-1992). In this period there was a new movement in favour of internal discipline and centralized authority which was introduced gradually by the new party leader. The parliamentary labour party regained supremacy, and the party followed it. The 1986 conference expelled Militant tendency, the organization's

most radical sector. The electoral recovery would, however, be slow. In 1987, Kinnock launched the *policy review* campaign which cut the most radical proposals from the former programme. Direct voting by the members (as opposed to the constituencies) was also introduced and the "one member, one vote" formula began to be defended as a way to limit the most critical activists under the protection of affiliate organizations which vote in equal parts (and not in accordance with their respective contribution of members).

Kinnock did not succeed in defeating either Thatcher or Major, but is seen as the creator of an internal organization which facilitated the final reforms of Tony Blair to obtain the New Labour Party.

Organizational changes led by Kinnock (and which his successor, Smith, would continue):

- removal of radical or extremist groups: struggle against what was satirically described as the "looney left".
- strengthening of the party leadership's power.
- growth in party membership: involve more women in the party leadership and thus seek the traditionally conservative female vote.
- in-depth ideological changes: beginning of the process toward social democracy.
- the "National Policy Forum" was created in 1990 to prepare the programme formed by 194 people working in commissions: if its proposals are approved in the annual conference by two thirds they go directly into the party's election manifesto.

John Smith, in his short leadership (1992-94; he died from a heart attack) finally managed to pass the "one member, one vote" clause, weakening the strength of the smaller, more radical, organizations and trade unions.

All these transformations paved the way for Tony Blair's leadership and the return to power in the 1997 election (Flores, 1998). The great movement toward the centre from an ideological and symbolic point of view took place when, in 1994, Blair dared to reform the famous clause 4 of the party's ideological ideas which demanded public ownership of the means of production¹³. Blair likewise began a crusade in favour of a new form of liberal social democracy described as "the third way", in accordance with the theoretical formulations of the sociologist Anthony Giddens. Once the term "socialism" had been adequately qualified, this allowed it to be reintroduced into the definition of the party which since 1992 is defined as "a democratic and socialist party", although the election manifestos have never included this term.

The changes that Kinnock began did not lead to good election results until the grass roots of the party itself were fully convinced of the need for this modernization. Without convinced members it is not possible to convince the electorate.

¹³ The clause was originally drafted by Sidney Webb in 1917 and was adopted by the party in 1918, becoming untouchable. It said this: [The objective of the party is] "To secure for the workers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange, and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry or service."

This is what Tony Blair was able to do and which brought him to power. His centrist position is revealed in expressions such as: “[The labour party] must be governed by everyone, unions and businesses, because it is governing for the country”. It is true that the unions had lost a lot of social influence due to their weakening as a result of Thatcherite policy, but the internal structural reforms are also a key to explain the path of moderation. In the year of Blair’s first election victory, 1997, only 3% of voters considered the Labour Party as too extremist, compared with 30% who thought this in 1983.

In short, and summarizing the fundamental aspects of the party’s evolution, we can highlight the following keys:

- Strengthening of the organizational structure at the same time as relaxing the more traditionally radical ideological elements (renunciation of clause 4).
- The party stops defining itself as the defender of a sector of the electorate and addresses the whole population, thus reducing the unilinearity of the election programme, now broader and vaguer.
- The periods of maximum renewal (new ideas, new faces), not always immediately rewarded, tend to occur when the party is in opposition. Electoral mistrust gives its leaders arguments to undertake these changes. On the other hand, the requests for internal democracy are not curbed by a strong partisan oligarchy, as the distribution of selective incentives can only occur when the party is in power.
- A balance is obtained between the extraparliamentary party and the organization of the MPs traditionally dominant in any party of the British system. Given the origins of Labour, the tension between them has been constant in its history.
- The influence of the trade union organizations on Labour Party policy is reduced. To a large extent, this is achieved by expanding the number and the possibilities of participation of the individual members (without the mediation of the original organizations to which they belong).
- The internal democracy stimulated by the movement described above also strengthens the charismatic leadership¹⁴.
- This leadership can be projected more easily on the population as a whole, especially if it has the support of the media, as was the case of “the media idyll” which was established during the first years of leadership by Tony Blair and the sensationalist newspaper *The Sun*.

¹⁴

The connection between membership and leader on the margins of the party apparatus occurs on certain occasions when introducing changes. In this respect it is worth recalling the outcome of the primaries in the PSOE when the winning candidate, Josep Borrell, obtained more support precisely where the party structure was weakest (Boix, 1998).

3. Green Party (Die Grüne): strategic evolution and historical opportunity

If we consider as a criterion of success that a political party achieves power or can develop its own policies, it should be indicated that the German green party achieved both (in coalition with other parties as regards coming to power). However, it should also be clarified that the success was obtained in a process of negotiation which involved considerable reforms within the party's internal structure.

Internally, one of the most important modifications is the change from the assembly model which characterized the organization until the 1991 crisis and which, from then, evolved toward the centralization of decision-making, the consolidation of a more hierarchical model of internal organization and selection of leaders, focused on the party Convention. Having said this, it is also necessary to consider that to a certain extent the party gradually adapted to the profound economic, social and even political-territorial (with German reunification) changes and also to the changes in the profile of its voters, members and supporters who initially corresponded to a more homogeneous profile and who have gradually diversified.

In short, the Green Party arose at the end of the 70s as an alliance of activists united around their opposition to pollution, the use of nuclear energy and the strategy of NATO, among others. Formally, its creation was in 1979 (with the slogan "Die Zukunft ist grün", "The future is green"), in a Convention with 1000 delegates. The main initial force was the "civic initiatives" organized around the pacifist and anti-nuclear mobilizations.

Its success in terms of mobilizing a considerable number of citizens can be explained for reasons relating to the specific moment: at the time of its emergence there was no real political expression for the social protest. The three main parties (Christian Democrats, Social Democrats and Liberals) had alternated in power and even formed a coalition in the seventies, which created a well-defined space for disaffected voters.

The scandals on the political financing of the parties¹⁵ which occurred in this period and which affected the main parties increased the desire of some groups for a new political space. On the other hand, "the political structure of opportunities" also favoured the creation of a party, because, among others, the German electoral law guarantees considerable income for a party which obtains 5% of the votes, the percentage necessary to enter Parliament. This circumstance influenced the strategy of unification of the environmental movements, which until then had been divided.

¹⁵We can mention the Flick case, which led to one of the most notorious accusations of the period. Flick had shares in Daimler Benz which he sold to the Emirate of Kuwait with tax exemption of millions of marks. It was reported that these profits were granted for the donations that the consortium distributed among all the parties in the Bundestag at that time, which were the Christian Democrats, Social Democrats and Liberals.

3.1 "Realists" and "fundamentalists": toward the construction of a political party

The result of this strategy obtained almost immediate benefits. In 1983 the greens reached the federal parliament, with considerable support and good prospects for growth. The increasing electoral successes of Die Grünen, with the consequent entry in the regional and federal parliaments, gave rise to a series of contradictions between the "logic of the grass roots representation" and the "logic of the electoral contest", the demands for "substantial policies" – from the basic demands of the party ideology – and the adoption of "parliamentary policies" – specific and gradualist proposals –, which resulted in an open crisis in the federal assembly of Hamburg in December 1984 between the so-called "realists" and "fundamentalists"¹⁶.

The conflict was resolved in favour of the former, and the party remained in the hands of an alliance of centrist and pragmatic people. In the extraordinary federal assembly of Hagen in June 1985, the possibility of forming government coalitions was approved for the first time. A few months later, in the state of Hesse, the first "red-green" government was formed – a coalition between the Social Democrats and the Greens – in force until February 1987. Joschka Fischer became Environment and Energy minister.

The party regained its strength in the nineties, when it returned to the federal parliament and obtained positions in the local and regional governments, above all in Berlin, Frankfurt, Bremen and Hamburg, where in some cases it governed in an alliance with the Social Democrats. The decision-making continued to maintain a balance between the hierarchical structuring of the party, to make it more efficient, and the meeting of the members and associations to take the most conflictive decisions. Despite this, the party suffered from many crises both due to the adaptation of its processes of internal democracy and to its movement toward pragmatism in the ideological aspect.

3.2 Decision-making

In the origins of the green movement, the representatives elected for the positions rotated and made the majority of the decisions in assemblies. The acid test of the pragmatic policy undid these experiences a few years later, after the 1990 election failure. The fall of the Berlin wall and German reunification led to a circumstantial fall of Die Grünen in the 1990 election, on only obtaining eight seats and thanks to its alliance with Bündnis 90 -Alliance 90-¹⁷.

¹⁶ There were also conflicts on the right wing of the party, when in 1982 a group separated to form the Ecological Democratic Party. Those who remained in the Green Party were more anti-military and gave greater priority to the struggle for gay and lesbian rights. They also tended to identify themselves more with a culture of protest and civil disobedience, frequently clashing with the police in their demonstrations against atomic weapons, nuclear energy, etc.

¹⁷ The gap between the voters on each side of the divided Germany remained for a long time. In the first quarter of 1998, the Greens had 46,474 members in West Germany (including Berlin), but only 3,076 in East Germany. In 1997, in East Germany, the Länder of Saxony had 978 members; three Länder had between 500 and 540 members each; Mecklenburg-Vorpommern had only 403 members [cited in Roberts 1999].

But the party recomposed itself again and the results of the elections of October 1994, with 7.3% of the votes and 49 seats for the alliance Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, demonstrated the consolidation of the greens in the German party system.

After the election defeat of 1990, the influence of the “realists” was reaffirmed in Die Grünen, in the Neumünster and Cologne congresses held in 1991, in which the abolition of the rotation of parliamentary positions and the strengthening of the federal presidency were agreed. The majority, organized around the realist current and the Linkes Forum – situated in an equidistant position between realists and fundamentalists –, ended up displacing the fundamentalists, who continued to abandon the party. In May 1993, Die Grünen and Bündnis 90 merged in the same organization, consolidating the Bündnis 90/Die Grünen party.

On the Greens’ path toward moderation and organizational restructuring, another key event was the discussion which began in 2002 on whether the members of parliament should be allowed to become members of the party executive. Two party conventions rejected a change of statutes until in 2003 a referendum was held on the issue which approved the reform, eliminating the incompatibility, which is only maintained for ministers. The referendum was the second in the history of Bündnis 90/Die Grünen. The first one dealt with the merger of the Greens and Bündnis 90.

Despite the fact that the party conventions were planned and regulated, the grass roots have sometimes applied pressure for a convention to be called to define the party’s position, such as in 2003, with the positioning in relation to the Agenda 2010, an essential reform of the German social security planned by Schröder.

3.3 Profile of the voters/supporters

At the time of creating the party, the majority of green voters were young, students, teachers or members of other categories not related to production, whether unemployed (subsidized by the government) or governmental workers. Their agenda included ecology, peace, defence of freedoms, protection of minorities and immigrants, feminism and participatory democracy. Two thirds of the leaders of the Green Party were active participants in different social movements in the 80s. Indeed, Die Grünen presented itself, in the words of Petra Kelly, as an “anti-party party”, which has “a policy based on a new conception of power, a ‘counterpower’ which is natural and common to all, which has to be shared by all and used by all for all” (Cited by Castells 1998)

At present a study has suggested that the socio-demographic profile of the green voter has gradually increased its income. The same study showed that the greens receive less votes from the unemployed population of working age, receive more voters from the 34-42 age group than from any other age group and young people are generally more active in the

party activities than the elderly.¹⁸

The Greens receive more support in urban areas than in rural areas, with the exception of a small number of rural areas with environmental concerns linked to mining or to the deposits for radioactive waste. The cities of Bonn, Cologne, Stuttgart, Berlin, Hamburg, Frankfurt and Munich have the highest percentages of green voters in the country. As an organization of organizations, the party has the support of many groups, such as the organizations of gays and lesbians or even of companies oriented toward developing renewable energies.

3.4 The changes to the agenda and participation in local government

The greens began to act in a framework in which they did not have electoral power, and they now have to confront a new scenario in which the majority of parties have modified their agendas to include environmental issues and other demands raised by the social movements. There is also now a party created to its left (Die Linke, "the left ") which in the 2005 election won a similar percentage of votes to that obtained by the greens (8.1%).

On the other hand, participation in the government led to conflicts with the grass roots more than once. One of the most important arose from Germany's participation in the Iraq war, which was highly unpopular among the German public, and occurred when the greens were in government. Despite this, in the following election, the Greens quickly recovered their electorate. Some analysts explain that, despite the fact that many supporters disagreed with participation in the war, they considered as positive the openness with which the green party informed about its position and its internal debate.

According to some analysts, part of the greens' formula for success was its widespread participation in local governments in which the degree of politicization is lower than in regional or national governments. Personal contacts and reputations can often be more important than membership of the party or ideology, and the small number of activists of a local branch can carry out important work to build grass roots democracy. Consequently, the experience in local executives contributes to making their management decisions and their limitations more understandable, reducing the criticism of the party's politicians who form part of the federal government (Poguntke 2002: 134).

3.5. The greens in a comparative perspective: the risks and opportunities of entering the government as a minority party

On analyzing the organizational change followed by the environmental parties beyond the German case, we find two complementary models. On the one hand, the parties decide to adapt their structure to the institutional frameworks because they foresee the need for centralization which will arise on joining the national government. On the other hand, they reform their organization after joining because they soon realize that their "time of reaction" has been drastically reduced and that

¹⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ARD_%28broadcaster%29

they need more centralized leadership structures (Poguntke 2002: 136).

Almost all the environmental parties have to some extent experienced the need to perfect their party structure after entering the national government. Even the parties which have had important coalition experiences with the regional governments (such as the German and Italian Greens) realized that entering the national government is a completely different project. The first element of pressure is the grass roots democracy. Despite the fact that many parties have found formulae to avoid losing their capacity of mobilization, entering the government represents a deployment of resources which require greater centralization in order to facilitate decision-making, exposure to the media and the same need to develop a party structure capable of providing answers. As significant as the sudden changes were the gradual processes resulting from adapting to the new role as a party of government. Coherently, the connections between new social movements and environmental parties have played a secondary role once the latter formed part of the governments (Poguntke 2002: 137).

An important discussion concerns the strategic role of these parties which govern in a coalition or with knowledge of the limits of their possibilities of growth. Using departure from the government as a threat depends on their own options. The Greens are often in an uncomfortable strategic position. On the other hand, their power as a party to govern in a coalition is also restricted by their positioning on the political spectrum, given that their potential coalitions are limited. They are clearly part of the left wing, maybe even joining a bipolar model of power between party and coalition formation in some European countries (Mair, 2002).

It is not easy to draw conclusions on how environmental parties are affected by entering the government in terms of members and supporters. Those who have claimed that the environmental parties in the national government would necessarily lose support because they would inevitably disappoint the hopes and aspirations of their followers are mistaken. The Finnish Greens managed to increase their percentage of vote and won an additional ministry during the first two years of the new government. The Italian Greens, on the other hand, experienced their worst election in their history. The Belgian and French Greens have acted reasonably well according to the opinion polls since they have been in local governments and Parliament, but for the final test it is necessary to wait for the next election.

Whatever the case, the process of evolution of the greens has followed a coinciding path which has led them to reduce the power of the grass roots and to centralize the decision-making, bureaucratizing the party. But the experience of the German greens could also show a change in the preferences of the voters of these parties, and even a permanent tension between the limited results of the policies implemented and a growing pragmatism of the potential electorate. In the case of Die Grünen, it has been observed that the lack of convincing success, especially in the basic area of nuclear power, generated an inevitable degree of disappointment among green voters. However, on the other hand, many studies have demonstrated over the years that the green voters tend to be reformist and accept the limitations inherent in their government participation.

This is reinforced because there were also many local-level coalition governments which made it possible to generate a coalition learning prior to entering the federal government. In 1998, the party was falling into a crisis for the issue of German participation in the actions of NATO in Kosovo. The numerous anti-war members of the party resigned their membership with the first deployment, after the war, of German troops in a military conflict abroad and which occurred under a green government. This marked the beginning of a long series of defeats in local and regional elections.

4. The Spanish Socialist Workers' Party: centrality and centralization

The PSOE offers us a case of double evolution both in the ideological and organizational sphere with very similar forces to those described for the Labour Party, so we will not study it in depth. The most important aspect is precisely an observation of the model being repeated.

The expansion of the PSOE between 1976 and 1979 (in which its membership rose from 8,000 members to 101,000) was accompanied by an absorption of a whole series of small left-wing groups: members of the Communist Party of Spain (PCE), of Socialist Convergence (CS), of the Popular Socialist Party (PSP), of the Federation of Socialist Parties (FPS) and of the Popular Liberation Front (FLP), which contributed to obtaining great internal pluralism in the party. In the face of this, the PSOE's main organizational concern was to maintain the unity of the party (especially bearing in mind the factionalist past of the Republican era).

Two episodes marked the tension between internal democracy and discipline. One with the PSOE in opposition and another when already in power. The first began in 1979 and is focused on the famous episode of the party's rejection of the definition of Marxist consisting of two parts: the presentation of this proposal by its secretary general Felipe González and in the face of the rejection received (with 61% of the votes against), his decision not to stand for re-election as secretary general; and the subsequent acceptance by the members accompanied by the introduction of organizational changes with the coordination of Alfonso Guerra. This process was closely linked to these organizational reforms, as in the extraordinary congress which was held a few months later and in which the proposal was approved, the radicals, who represented 40% of the membership of the party, only obtained 10% of the representation with the changes introduced (Gillespie, 1988).

Again, the argument was the need to move toward the centre. As he said in his speech to the party congress, "to transform the situation democratically (...) it is necessary to have the support of the majority of society". The first congress of 79 included the reform of the party statutes starting from which the delegates no longer represented the local groups as they had until then, but rather the much bigger provincial organizations which would finally be absorbed by the 17 federations of the autonomous communities. At the same time it was established that there would be block votes, the delegates from the different federations would have a single voice, that of their regional secretary general (only the members of the party's Federal Committee which supervises the policies of the Federal Executive Committee vote in a nominal manner). The Federal Executive Commission thus accumulated more power, with the ability to reward or to sanction on having final control of the closed and blocked lists of election candidates, in accordance with the election system established in Spain.

In the following congress, some months later, Felipe González was re-elected as secretary general of a much more disciplined party than before and which had finally abandoned the Marxist principle. In 1982 he won the election with 48.4% of the votes (in 1979 they had obtained 30.5%).

The second episode is related to the change made by the PSOE in the government in relation to Spain belonging to NATO. González used the 1984 congress to offer explanations to the members, and only afterwards called a referendum to ratify the new position. In this case we observe once again the need to convince the members of the changes taking place in the party's ideological position before they can be convincing for the general electorate.

The principle of discipline which was imposed on the PSOE in the 80s was very good to win elections but weakened the elite's control mechanisms and the warning mechanisms in the face of cases of corruption or internal problems. This blew up with all the corruption scandals which came to light starting from 1990 (Juan Guerra case, Filesa, etc.) and which meant that in 1994 only 14.2% considered the PSOE to be a united party compared with 66.1% in 1990.

In the Labour Party, Kinnock used the least engaged or radical members in his favour (to bring the party to the centre). The tandem formed by González and Guerra did it through an increase in the oligarchic control and centralizing the decision-making (also adding, nevertheless, the support of a membership very enthusiastic with the latest triumphs).

The long occupation of power increases the professionalization of the members (above all those who have possibilities of influence within the party). In the 1990 PSOE Congress, after eight years in government, 67% of the delegates who attended held public positions. As already explained, the internal elections to choose delegates was controlled (after the progressive centralizing reforms of the era in which Alfonso Guerra was secretary general of the party) by the majority principle and by a block vote system: the most voted list wins everything (there are no nominal elections). In this framework, the progressive oligarchization of the party (until the general unease due to the corruption cases starting from the 90s) will result in a very broad support for the government's policies, with figures of around 80% of the delegates.

It could be said that the percentage of members with a position (within and outside the party) out of the total members could be considered as an indicator of this party's ability to move pragmatically around the electoral space. This does not appear to vary greatly depending on whether the party is left or right wing: the proportion of positions among the delegates at the People's Party congress held in 2002, when it was in government, was 60% (ABC, 25 January 2002).

A third element to be mentioned in relation to the internal democracy of the party, but already outside its first episode of ideological centring, is the promotion of primaries to select the candidate to prime minister which occurred in 1998 and which was valued positively by a

good part of the Spanish citizens.¹⁹

The arguments in favour, in the most generic sense, which were cited on assessing the process (Boix, 1998) were that on breaking with the solid discipline that the party imposed on its members, the primaries promote the introduction of new ideas into the public debate, encouraging it. Likewise, on breaking with the oligarchic practices imposed by all political organizations, the primaries would make it possible to banish the corruption association with the internal selection system which had dominated the party until then. Despite this, this author also indicated the perverse effects which could occur with primaries, such as the possibility of fragmentation or extreme confrontation within the party or, on the contrary, in response to that potential danger, a reduction of the conflict or ideological confrontation to the extent of converting the decision into a choice between two images rather than between two clear options.

The following element to consider is that primaries require two different campaigns, one aimed at the members and the supporters, as appropriate, and another subsequent one aimed at the whole electorate. If the primary becomes too intense, this can be counterproductive for the subsequent campaign as the candidates could radicalize their discourse in accordance with the party's median member instead of the general electorate. In this context, indicates Boix, ambiguity is the safest strategy to avoid alienating either the members or, especially, the voters in the future general election. The author adds that the socialist primaries which confronted Josep Borrell and Joaquín Almunia were a good example of this.

True competition, moreover, requires the candidates to mobilize the maximum possible number of financial and human resources and support. This type of primaries thus leads to giving each candidate full autonomy to form the work team that they desire and to obtain the funds necessary at their risk. With this model, the traditional political parties, created to mobilize interests, attract funds and win elections, may experience a great weakening given that the candidates chosen in pure primaries depend to a scarce extent on the organizational apparatus. One option to counteract these problems is for the party to coordinate the campaign and distribute the resources between the candidates.

¹⁹Various reasons were given to explain this change inside the party, which did not have continuity. Vargas Machuca (1998) indicates that the cases of corruption discovered in the second half of the nineties led to certain changes in the perceptions of an important part of the party apparatus and above all of the members and voters, sensitive to an increasingly widespread opinion on the link between the scandals and the type of political socialization developed by the PSOE as the predominant party. Mistrust toward the "party culture" (which did not prevent these episodes) reorientates the debate toward the internal institutional design, although briefly, and approaches the problem in terms of structural malfunctions which the attempt at primaries will seek to solve. It is likewise necessary to point out the unexpected refusal to continue leading the party by the until then secretary general, Felipe González, without a clear succession having been established, as one more factor of explanation.

This was the system chosen by the PSOE, in any case, determined by the Spanish electoral system in which the key elements, (closed) lists and (centralized) resources, are located in the hands of the party structure. Without modifications to these elements the possibility of introducing a more open system of primaries, with true effects, is greatly limited. We should recall that the most voted candidate, Josep Borrell, unexpectedly defeated the candidate of the apparatus, Joaquín Almunia, then the party's secretary general, but that the latter did not resign from his position as he had announced that he would do if he lost²⁰ and, finally, a Borrell with scarce internal resources, and weakened by a new scandal indirectly related to him, ended up resigning as the PSOE candidate for the general election²¹.

5. The experience of the Broad Front: winning coalitions

A third case of success along the same lines as that indicated above – Labour Party and PSOE – occurred with the Broad Front, which won the 2005 election in Uruguay.

The Broad Front was established in 1971 with a coalition of left-wing parties formed by the Socialist, Communist and Christian Democrat parties, in addition to other smaller left-wing sectors, and also groups of dissidents from the two main parties in Uruguay for a good part of the 20th century, the White and Colorado parties. Article 1 of its statutes defines the party:

The Broad Front, a political force for change and social justice, the permanent historical creation of the Uruguayan people, of a national, progressive, democratic, popular, anti-oligarchic and anti-imperialist conception, is made up of all those political and civil sectors which adhere to the principles and objectives established in the Constituent Declaration of 5 February 1971, in the Foundation Programme and in the Political Agreement, making up an organization of a coalition-movement nature and which are committed to maintaining and defending unity, reciprocal respect for ideological plurality and observance of the resolutions agreed on by the relevant bodies as stipulated by this Statute. It is open to the incorporation of other political and civic organizations which share the same conception²².

Despite obtaining an initial success with its first electoral appearance, winning 18% of the votes, the coup d'état banned it until 1984. In the first election after the return of democracy, it obtained 22.1% of the votes. In the 1989 national election, the Broad Front obtained 23% of the votes.

²⁰ The separation between party positions and public positions has never formed part of the tradition in the Spanish parties system.

²¹ Since then, in Spain only one nationwide party, the United Left, has held primaries to choose a candidate for prime minister. On 14 November last and for the first time in its 21 years of history.

²² http://www3.ps.org.uy/fa/Estat_FA.doc

In April 1999 the system of internal elections was used for the first time: Vázquez and Astori were candidates, the former winning by more than 5 to 1. In the October election, for the first time the Broad Front obtained 40% of the seats in parliament, becoming the leading electoral force in the country, but in the second round in November, they lost the presidential election to Jorge Batlle.

In 2004 they formed a new coalition with New Space, called Progressive Encounter - Broad Front – New Majority. It won the presidential election of that year with 50.7% of the votes. After this election, and being the government party, all the groups of the Progressive Encounter and the New Space decided to join the Broad Front, this being accepted in the Broad Front's National Plenary on 19 November 2005.

Tabaré Vazquez thus became president with the support of an alliance between Movement of Popular Participation, Socialist Party, Uruguay Assembly, Progressive Alliance, Artiguist Stream, New Space, Communist Party, Popular Current, Broad Front Federal League, Left Current, Party for the Victory of the People, Revolutionary Workers' Party (Trotskyist-Posadist). As can be gathered on observing this broad nucleus of ideological perspectives within the left, the ideological axis has been the most difficult to resolve. The decision-making within the party and the combination of the lists with shared candidates and with own candidates were the basic formula of the understanding. A left-wing party with strong roots in grass roots democracy thus succeeded in coming to power. Two aspects will now be discussed briefly which are relevant for this study: its internal organization and the problems and proposals suggested in the sphere of communication.

5.1 The Political Committee and the National Plenary

In the party Convention²³ it was considered that these leadership bodies were fundamental to lead the political party, and therefore they had to take a leap forward in quality, both in the subjects that they analyze and in the procedures to implement their decisions. These two bodies are expected to have the capacity to generate a discussion on the most important issues of the agenda, the monitoring of the present situation and planning initiatives in due course, avoiding dispersion on less important subjects. These organizations are also expected to operate as a balance between the role of the party in the face of the government, the members and society in general. The last decisions taken in the party Convention included: "we believe that it is necessary to guarantee another operation for our National Plenary, in accordance with its importance as regards leading the political party. We must fulfil a calendar of meetings which respects an established frequency and which makes it possible to advance with the discussion and definition of subjects, also marking stages of unified work on initiatives and activities of mobilization to be carried out. The National Commissions of the Political Committee must be given a hierarchical structure and operate with the integration and the full exercising of the powers established for them in the statutes (Arts. 106 and 107). Their Chairmen will have to be convened in the usual manner to participate in the sessions of the Political Committee".

²³ <http://www.frenteamplo.org.uy/node/112>

5.2 The Party in power: the member becomes a professional

Parties with scarce bureaucratization which come to power confront, among others, the problem of overemployment of their most competent positions. In a short period of time, many members have to carry out tasks in government structures (and at different levels of government) with an enormous dedication of time and effort.

This demonstrates the need to seek a balance and to expand the grass roots of support, generating, for example (as proposed in the convention), another type of authority and convening, based on other affinities or spaces of identification. For example, encounters/meetings between Broad Front professionals, university students, Front workers, small and medium-sized enterprises, farm producers, etc. could be promoted with more assiduousness.

5.3 A space for supporters: The grass roots committees

The grass roots committees are a central column of this movement, centres for meeting, discussion and activity, the basis of the organized presence of the Broad Front. Different stages have passed since its establishment: resistance, reconstruction, opposition, and recognized and tough activist work. At present, with the Broad Front having responsibility for the national government and eight departmental governments, they will have to be central reference points in the life of the Broad Front even more.

The starting point or problem to solve that the party confronts is that the number of members of the Grass Roots Committees has gone down considerably, accompanying the process of reduction in participation. "In our opinion we need to discuss how to direct the main energies of our activist work toward communication with our social environment, how to generate activities which improve our contact and how we reach the ordinary citizens in their different spaces. We must be aware of the need to review our operation, to improve our convening. It is necessary to take into account that the routine of weekly meetings and discussion of our internal reports represents a very limited area of interest, which brings together a small portion of our members, an essential core of colleagues for the political party to operate. We need to consider as essential the activities with more open and attractive contents which can attract the maximum number of colleagues".

The party's statute includes a series of mechanisms which promote grass roots democracy, such as the plebiscites and the internal civic initiatives. On the former, Art. 11 of the statute says:

At the request of 25% of the members officially registered, who have been members for at least 30 days, to promote both political and organizational proposals, which do not introduce modifications into the foundational documents: the Political Agreement, the Foundation Programme and the Statute.

1.2- When for political reasons 2/5 of the members of the National Plenary decide to convene the plebiscite to make a decision, members will participate who have been so for at least 30 days.

5.4 Some suggestions from the case

This party shows the ability of organizations to confront a new scenario, adapting but without abandoning its processes of internal democracy and even without abandoning the identity of each of the organizations which make it up. An in-depth study on this case could provide more elements to consider in order to design party strategies.

6. Scottish National Party: the triumph of gradualism

6.1. From movement to political party

The Scottish National Party was established in 1934 as a result of the merger of the Scottish Party and the National Party of Scotland, and did not have a very promising beginning. It was a marginal party until 1945, when it obtained a single MP. At the beginning of the 70s, in the 1974 election, its representation seemed to shoot up, with 11 MPs, but it again fell in the following 1979 election.

The party was not prepared for this growth and a curious situation ensued: the ideology of the SNP MPs in Westminster did not coincide with the party leaders in Edinburgh. The MPs thought that they should give an image of nationalist conservatives as their closest rivals in the constituencies where they won (and from whom they had managed to win the seat) were from the Conservative Party. These tensions took a toll as did the devolution project prepared by Labour and which made them appear as the main defenders of Scotland. In the following election (1979), the SNP obtained just two MPs.

The first referendum in favour of devolution was held in that same year. The referendum was invalid on not reaching a participation of 40% of the electoral roll, although the *yes* won with 51% of the votes and a total of 1.23 million Scots supporting it. However, only 63% of Scots participated and they would have had to receive a further 240,000 votes for the *yes* vote to reach the 40% required²⁴. A further 18 years would be needed for a new referendum without the forty per cent clause to approve the devolution process with a new Parliament (1997) with 1.77 million in favour (74.3% of the votes) and a participation of 60.4% of the electoral roll.

²⁴ If the 2006 referendum on the Statute of Catalonia had had to be approved by 40% of the electoral roll voting in favour, 224,000 more votes than those obtained would have been needed.

Since the 80s, the SNP has had to confront three main debates:

1. Toward social democracy. Until the 80s, the SNP did not consider itself as either left wing or right wing, but just Scottish. The only political agenda was independence.
2. Gradualism vs. fundamentalism: yes or no to intermediate stops such as having a Parliament with limited powers. The winning position was gradualism²⁵.
3. Inside or outside the EU: after defending positions opposing European unity, the SNP then supported integration seen as a way to balance a possible excessive weight in Scottish politics of its southern neighbour, England.

6.2 The ideological axis: the shift to the left

There has never been a connection between the workers' movement and the SNP, not even at its origin, which either positions it in the sphere of the Labour Party, or even in the south-west (Glasgow), in that of the Conservative Party on being unionist and anti-Catholic. The main source of social support has always been found in the middle classes. Indeed, the party had even considered whether it should exist on achieving independence. When Scotland was independent it would choose whether it preferred to have a liberal, left-wing or conservative government.

The first seats, though, were obtained in districts of the industrial belt which had previously had Labour MPs, although they later won some constituencies with a conservative majority. It should also be added that during the years of Conservative British governments, Labour was more important in Scotland, the Labour Party having very different percentages which were much better than in England.

The SNP had three options. To continue to call upon the whole of society (the Scottish nation without ideological differences), the (minority) conservative voters, or to try to rob votes from the clearly majority force in Scotland, labour. The debate took place in the 80s in a context of industrial crisis, with the closure of the shipyards under the Thatcher governments which had a very negative affect on the Scottish economy. Overall, this contributed to taking an increasingly clear left-wing position.

In this environment, and as already mentioned, the party began to support social democracy more than its MPs in Westminster, who had obtained their seats in districts which had been conservative and who thought that they would not retain them if they went too far to the left.

²⁵ In a similar process to that which occurred at the heart of the Parti Québécois.

The shift to the left was not easy. For decades the party apparatus had preferred to avoid this kind of debate. The "old guard" which had allowed the party to survive during the difficult years did not want to lose control and was trained to understand the SNP as closer to a cultural movement of liberation than with the political strategy of a modern party.

This "non-political" position was questioned after the 1979 defeat by a group of very young members (between 20 and 30 years old) which called itself the "79 group". This group defined itself with three principles: nationalist, socialist and republican.

The reaction to the new group was to accuse it of "factionalism". The party which demanded the union of all Scots against England was not prepared to accept that there could be different ways of conceiving its strategy and positioning at its heart. Many interpreted it as a dispute between generations. The members of the "79 group", formed by many of the party's current leaders, were expelled on refusing to abandon the principles which inspired the group, although some of them were readmitted just 6 months later. In search of unity, during these years another faction was also expelled, of an ultra-nationalist type with Gaelic roots and with members who justified the use of force against the United Kingdom, *Sìol nan Gaidheal*.

How did the left-wing theses end up being imposed starting from the 80s? It is first necessary to point out the arrival of a new generation, as the old guard was already too old to counteract the force of the new generations. Secondly, the harmful effects of the conservative policies of the Thatcher governments on Scotland generated a context in which the shift was easy. The economic crisis left little margin not to identify anti-conservatism and defence of the workers (with growing numbers of unemployed) with the interests of Scotland. Meanwhile, things were going better in the south of England. (Thatcher moreover had a marked southern English accent, which could not be culturally further removed from the Scottish north). In short, it was easier to take a left-wing position to represent the national interests of Scotland thanks to the antithesis represented by the conservative government of Westminster. It would probably have been more difficult without this contrast (Brand, 1990).

The leaders who had fought against the 79 group now positioned themselves - there was no choice - on the side of the workers of a growing number of industries and mines which were closing, thus being linked to the workers' movement, so distant from their origins. They were sometimes even more linked than the Labour Party, which did not want to pay too much attention to leaders who were to the left of their orthodoxy (busy as they were, in turn, with a process of moderation of their positions, as we have already seen). The SNP did not have these problems.

Something else which began to distinguish the SNP from the Labour Party was its immovable position in favour of unilateral nuclear disarmament and against nuclear power stations in Scottish territory, a position which Labour only defended for two years at the beginning of the 60s and beginning of the 80s.

6.3. *The national axis: from everything or nothing to growth thanks to devolution*

Nowadays few question the fact that the devolution of the Parliament to Scotland represented a new window of opportunities for the SNP and the pro-independence positions. But this has not always been the case. Indeed, the definitive victory of the so-called “gradualists” against the “fundamentalists” (against supporting the devolution process which they considered as British interference and as diverting attention) did not occur until the 2000 Congress. The gradualists clearly prevailed three years after the victory of the referendum for devolution and with numerous doubts remaining about the whole process. Two candidates ran to replace the party leader, Alex Salmond, who decided to resign (although he returned in 2004). John Swinney, the defender of the gradualist theses, won with 60% of the votes against Alex Neil, the spokesperson of the so-called fundamentalists without this causing any tension in the party.

Although it can be said that the party has grown, among other things, thanks to the new institutional opportunities offered by a new Parliament, the theses of mistrust of this process are not inexplicable, given the history of the SNP and the former institutional framework. At its origin, as it was not a British-sphere party, it was not clear whether it was worth running for the Westminster parliament, and when it was decided to do so it was necessary to fight against a clear two-party system and tactical voting, which hindered its development, circumstances which have been left behind in the framework of the new Scottish parliament.

Gradualism likewise forms part of an expansion of social support for independence which received a considerable contextual boost when in the 70s important oil reserves were discovered off the Scottish coast, which left without weight the arguments of the Scottish economic elites who had always stated that without British union the Scottish economy would be seriously harmed (Solano, 2007).

Immediately after the defeat of the 1979 referendum, a campaign began in favour of a Scottish Assembly, significantly led by one of the founder members of the “79 group”, Stephen Maxwell, which revealed the interaction between the positions in favour of social democracy and gradualism.

In these initial years after the defeat, the old guard and the party as a whole were disappointed by the other parties, especially by Labour which they considered had not done enough. The theses defended were “independence or nothing”, mistrusting any other movement, including the Constitutional Convention²⁶ which brought together the Labour Party and the liberals, together with churches, civil groups and unions, who worked for a new referendum and which, in the opinion of the leaders of the SNP at the time, was a simple strategy by the Labour Party to win votes.

²⁶ The Scottish Constitutional Convention (SCC) was set up in 1988 and was the heir to the Campaign for a Scottish Assembly, which was set up as soon as the results of the 79 referendum were obtained. On 30 November 1995, Saint Andrew’s Day, the patron saint of Scotland, it presented the document *Scotland’s Parliament, Scotland’s Right* which was a road map toward a second attempt at organizing a referendum for devolution and the establishment of a Scottish Parliament.

As regards the evolution of the position in relation to the European Union, in the 60s and 70s the SNP was clearly against the EEC, arguing that they could not defend escaping the tyranny of London and then accept that of Brussels, which meant they were presented as anti-European. This changed when Jim Sillars, ex-MP from the left wing of the Labour Party, joined the SNP and became the idol of the members of the "79 group". There was another confrontation between the latter and the old guard, the former arguing that only within Europe would it be possible to offset the power of England. In 1984, the left-wing and pro-European position had won in the party.

6.4. The second ring: support around the party

The Scottish National Party has a structure of related organizations which give it support and which covers different aspects of the socio-demographic situation of Scotland. Like the British Labour Party, but without the original burden which the trade union movement represented for the structure of the latter, the SNP has the following related organizations (the members of which do not have to belong to the party, although they cannot belong to any other political party active in Scotland. The delegates of these organizations on the party's bodies do have to be members of the SNP):

YSI (Young Scots for Independence): the official youth branch of the party.

FSN (Federation of Student Nationalists): the student branch of the SNP, active in the majority of Scottish universities.

ANC (Association of Nationalist Councillors): This is an organization which covers all the SNP councillors and which acts as a debating forum and to coordinate municipal councillors on a national level.

SNP Trade Union Group: which has a dual function - to promote the role of the unions within the SNP and the proposals and objectives of the SNP at the heart of the trade union struggle.

The Women's' Forum: open to all the members of the party with the aim of increasing the participation of women at all levels of the SNP.

Asian Scots for Independence: to promote the pro-independence cause among the numerous Scottish community in Asia.

New Scots for Independence: for members and supporters of the SNP born outside Scotland.

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- *Business for Scotland*: promotes independence among businesspeople.
- SNPUSA: a voice for an independent Scotland in the United States.

There is likewise a related (non-party) independently-owned monthly magazine: *The Scots Independent*.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The success of a political party can be understood as its ability to succeed in materializing its principles and objectives in the form of public policies, whether by obtaining positions in government or determining its decisions.

A party's ability to influence, beyond the specific electoral arithmetic which temporarily increases its negotiating power, will depend on its electoral support, and this depends on the party's possibilities to represent (now more than ever given the character of our democracies, which we can describe as audiences) the preferences of the median voter.

This capacity for representation requires the party to have characteristics which allow it to move effectively and as much as possible in search of this voter and to meet their preferences through an election manifesto.

The possibilities of achieving this objective depend, in turn, on the party's capacities and on its internal structure which must be in a position to overcome the tensions inherent in any political party between two opposing logics: the one emphasizing the coherence with an own vision and that which stresses the need to model it in accordance with political strategies outside the party's internal preferences. In short, it is possible to identify the first strategy with that of the model member and the second with that of the model professional or, if preferred, - maybe more accurately – one is aimed at satisfying the median member and the other the median voter. Unity and diversity, coordination of preferences or their addition, power of the oligarchic leaders or of the grass roots may be other ways of identifying this conflict.

Using a comparative perspective we have analyzed different cases of tensions which have ended up being overcome with a good result, or we have simply analyzed some of the original mechanisms that these parties have finally established to appease these types of tensions (primaries in the American Democratic Party). (However, there is no magic formula as revealed, continuing with the case of the primaries, by the questions opened by the last process of the Democratic Party as regards the situation in which they leave the party when it comes to beginning the electoral race against the Republican candidate).

We likewise reached a series of tentative conclusions or noteworthy ideas which we will discuss below. Firstly, in all the cases analyzed, the orientation toward formulations which can influence the design of public policies and/or can bring the party to power (alone or in a coalition) has to confront the need to undertake some kind of centralization process which, initially, can disconcert or put a strain on the members.

Centralization vs. internal democracy: the necessary balance

It is thus inevitable to confront the search for a new balance which will have to be built on the idiosyncratic bases of each party (as demonstrated by the variety of formulae which the cases studied reveal). The requirement for internal democracy, especially as regards the selection of candidates and the definition of the programme, does not just show a preference of the members, but at the same time can become a necessary decision for the democratic system to work correctly, both inside and outside the party. At the same time alternative mechanisms are needed to offer fast answers, achieve selections of human resources capable of confronting the demands of the media and decision-making environment of the audience democracies. Sooner or later, "gradualist", "realist", "centrist", etc. positions end up winning in the party against more or less idealist positions which characterize the parties before positioning them in actual government situations.

Internal and external communication: a key element

A key element of organization that should be pampered is communication inside and outside the party, not understood exclusively as election campaign machinery, but rather as an essential resource to present and explain the reasons of the party's professional sector, first to the members, and also to society as a whole. The communicative influence of the members in their relations with the professions and with society as a whole should not be underestimated. This good communication link is especially essential in the party's reorientation processes.

Together with these two main ideas, starting from the examples examined it is possible to highlight a whole series of lesser but still significant conclusions:

When a party appears to be more representative but gives less guarantees of governing well, the one offering more guarantees wins.

Of course, this depends to a large extent on the degree of unity within the party, and on its ability to offer and to support representatives capable of competent management in the eyes of the electorate. We saw an example of this confrontation in the divergent valuations which occurred between Kinnock and Thatcher at the end of the 80s when the leader of the Labour Party appeared as a representative of broader interests than Thatcher (29.3% thought that he represented all social groups compared with 20.6% who thought the same about the prime minister), but it was thought that the latter had more capacity to govern (59.9% compared with 20.3%). At the time Kinnock headed the drive to unite and moderate the party which did not bear fruit until years later.

The consequences of organizational changes arrive after a few years and tend to be driven at times of electoral defeat.

This statement consists of two parts. The first one talks about the need for the party as a whole to see itself as a winning option thanks to a good internal operation which is capable of generating, without too many costs (and an excessive consumption of human energy), unitary and clearly univocal public approaches (despite the internal debates which can be generated). The organizational changes themselves are not therefore a condition of success (because, indeed, they only affect the members and remain within the party), but rather the production of fixed positions (close to the median voter) which take place subsequent to the organizational changes and have longer *tempos*.

We have seen this with numerous examples, both in the modernization process of the Labour Party, and in the case of the SNP or the PSOE and we observe both very immediate changes in electoral trend (in the case of the PSOE only 3 years pass between the organizational and ideological changes and the election victory) and slower changes such as in the case of the British Labour Party (one decade later) or the SNP (fifteen years later).

The different institutional, electoral and historical contexts are not irrelevant to the diversity of *tempos*. These elements include, for example, the defeat of UCD in the Spanish case (favouring a change of electoral trend), or the generation of a new window of opportunities, as in the case of the new institutional framework established starting from Scottish devolution in 1997.

The opportunity for internal transformation of the party is likewise more feasible when it does not hold positions of power: *a priori* it may appear to be a good time but the forces in favour of the *status quo* are strengthened by the election success (however limited it is) or their power outside the party, and the doubts on the public impact of the changes (which can be easily interpreted as weaknesses) prevent tensions from being resolved. It is not because these tensions are not demonstrated and dealt with that they do not exist. They simply do not succeed in making them visible and resolving them.

When there is no real debate of ideas it is better not to demonstrate the internal tensions of a party.

If the flow of information outside the party is not clear, this debate cannot be attributed a clearly democratic function and it tends to be punished by the electorate which interprets this noise as an internal struggle (and not as a debate of ideas, even when this is its origin), and therefore as a demonstration of weakness of a disunited party.

But if there is an open, public, debate, even with important changes of approach, there tends to be an electoral reward.

On the other hand, there is a reward when there is first a clear debate of ideas at the heart of the party, and then an attempt is made to convince the electorate of the shift in the programme.

Indeed, this logic is what we find and the basis of the American system of primaries which tries to reconcile as much as possible the debate between candidates and the debate of ideas, while offering a public showcase from the start which cannot be abandoned.

In this case the supporters act as a prior indicator of the overall electorate, despite not resolving the divergence between median member and median voter (but, undoubtedly, it is reduced considerably in comparison with other candidate selection systems, much more influenced by internal dynamics which sometimes can be very distant from the optimal decisions on an electoral level).

Whenever an attempt has been made to convince the electorate (above all of a modification of the programme), it has never been achieved without first having the party united around this change (accepting it).

As examples, we can mention two referendums. In the United Kingdom, the Labour government of Harold Wilson and in Spain the socialist government of Felipe González won popular referendums in 1975 (in relation to joining the European Economic Community) and in 1986 (on remaining in NATO), respectively, after important discussions took place among the members on the change of direction of the policies and the leaders of the parties first convinced their members.

The voters tend to think that the members of a party are better informed (on its strength and situation), and the congresses are considered by a significant part of the electorate (not just the supporters) as an amplifier of how the party is working.

In short, if we had to place the different possibilities in order of preference in accordance with the organizational situation of the party and the contents of the debates with a view to favouring a party's possibilities of success, we could say that:

1. Internal transparency + debate of ideas (better situation)
2. no internal transparency + no debate of ideas (struggle between candidates)
3. no internal transparency + debate of ideas
4. internal transparency + no debate of ideas (worse situation)

Or, in other words:

open debate > fast alert > reward

closed debate > desertion/opportunistic factionalism > electoral punishment

There are many ways for a party to be more open to the citizens which do not necessarily involve having more members.

Indeed, we can find very different organizational examples which coincide, on the other hand, with the proportion between voters and members. For example, a case of organizational centralism such as the PSOE with a ratio of 3% (300,000 members/9,000,000 voters) and an assembly-style organizational model, such as ERC, at the other extreme, with a similar proportion of 2.5% (10,000 members/400,000 voters).

In addition to greater transparency which options such as primaries favour, the coordination of cores of organized supporters can be more or less favoured depending on the financing system (regulating the contributions clearly such as in the American system) and on the type of related organizations which exist, although in this case there is a danger that they will end up influencing the internal dynamics in too important a manner (as was the case of the relations between unions and the Labour Party in the 60s and 70s), preventing the party's shift toward the median voter. In other cases, such as the SNP, counting on unions and other organizations can be considered as one more element explaining the expansion of their electoral grass roots.

Three formulae to counteract radicalisms.

We have seen three different organizational formulae generated in response to the tension between professionalism and membership, or between pragmatism and radical coherence. In the case of the PSOE this involved a centralization of the decisions through the establishment of block (not nominal) lists of delegates, abandoning the lower levels of membership (constituency) which favour control by the leadership and unity. In the case of the Labour Party, which started from a different situation, the final blow to the more extreme positions took place on abandoning the implicit assembly organization which meant that all the organizations of members could vote under equal conditions irrespective of their relative weight and moving toward a personal vote. (Therefore, in completely the opposite direction to the model represented by the PSOE.) In the case of the Democratic Party, the system of primaries makes a system of centripetal power approaching the median member necessary, which from the beginning leaves the radical positions outside.

The importance of the institutional context: the electoral system.

Factors outside the parties are essential to explain the system of incentives in which the internal tensions move and are solved. In the majority systems the members (or the local elites) tend to be stronger, while in the parliamentary systems the structure of incentives and regulations aids the predominance of a centralized elite.

Therefore, the logics imposed, for example, by a proportional electoral system with multi-name districts, closed and blocked lists and a system of primaries may be opposing. This system gives great power to the organizational leaders who prepare the election lists in a centralized manner and represent too important a counterweight to the logic of opening up represented by the primaries. Someone who wins the primaries without the support of the party cannot do anything in this context (the case of Borrell in the PSOE).

On the contrary, a majority system with single-name districts such as the British system, tends to favour the members, although as occurred in the case of Labour this tendency can be counteracted by the strength of the partisan organizations (unions, etc.), but, in any case, it initially favours the weakness of a centralized elite. However, this does not mean that the party oligarchy cannot be strong, but rather that it is multicentric. Indeed, for example,

Margaret Thatcher was replaced by John Major despite her electoral victory when the party “chiefs” considered that she could be a future electoral liability and showed their strength.

A presidential system with the election of delegates in single-name districts with a majority system would be the paradigm of confrontation of the grass roots, which can participate actively and with strength, in relation to a partisan oligarchy. The system of primaries in the United States is fairly close to this model. However, as already stressed, the possible leading role of the grass roots may be reduced if the mechanism ends up leading to a fragmentation and strengthening of independent leaders in relation to the party (which a federal system may facilitate).

The weight of the grass roots members in the election of the leaders and the policies is greatest when:

- Context: Parties which compete in single-name districts (many districts, and not closed lists organized by the party).

Internally there are:

- Primaries
- Decentralized resources for the campaigns

Result: more active internal policy and more multicentric distribution of power.

Danger: the party can transform into confederations of powerful, independent, chiefs.

And, on the contrary,

The power of the oligarchy (party position + professionals) is greatest when:

- Context: Multi-name constituencies, closed lists

And internally there are:

- No primaries, block lists
- Concentrated campaign resources

Result: powerful internal organization, much lower weight of the members.

Danger: non-existence of good flows of internal information (less possibilities of control and of quickly accepting changes in social preferences).

The possibilities of reaching the electoral centre do not depend exclusively on a political party's desire for moderation.

The position of the different political formations within a specific party system can allow the moderating efforts to be transformed into electoral victories or prevent this reward. This is the case of the communist parties in Spain and Italy, where the existence of left-wing parties to their right has prevented the pragmatic movements from being reflected in the elections.

The windows of opportunity change with the historical circumstances.

The relations between gradualists and fundamentalists in the SNP and the victory of the former cannot be understood without the context of the new opportunities offered to the party by the new Scottish Parliament and an element as distant from the partisan struggle as the discovery of oil off the Scottish coast. Likewise, the electoral possibilities of the German Greens were considerably marked by the prior existence of government coalitions formed by the three traditional parties in Germany (covering the whole ideological spectrum) which allowed them to stand out clearly as an electoral offer not contaminated by the system.

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Appendix 1. On professionals, members and voters

Comparison of logics of action between the member and the professional

In general (see, for example, Brams, 1978), **members are considered to have more extreme ideological positions** (further from the social ideological centre or, which amounts to the same, from the median voter) than the professionals and the majority of voters.

From the theory of rational choice (which conceives the actions of individuals as the result of a certain cost-benefit relationship for the individual) this extremism (or “radicalism” in the philosophical sense) can be understood as the logical consequence of the type of “investment” made by the **member**: anyone who has accepted a high cost (putting up posters, staying up at night, participating in never-ending meetings, etc.) without this implying any “remuneration” as a position (whether or not desired) will be **less willing to compromise** (accept new costs, in this case of negotiation), so their only or main “benefit” arises from obtaining representation in the ideological terrain.

This ideological representation can actually have two different forms or levels: a public and explicit positioning by the political party on a series of questions (ideal-expressive sphere), or the attainment of a public policy (real-practical sphere), as close as possible to ideological approaches (neither of them necessarily implies the other).

The logic of the **professionals**, on the other hand, is determined more by the benefit of maintaining the position either through the strength which arises from winning elections, or from that which arises from controlling the party in the sense of ensuring continuity in an internally designated position. (Of course we assume that holding this position is motivated, ultimately, by the same desire to influence the public space in accordance with an ideology as the member). Their actions will be determined (or at least framed) by this dual need which tends to have different directions: **to win internal votes (which guarantee their selection as a candidate) it will be necessary to come closer to the position of the party’s median member; to win votes from the general electorate, on the other hand, it will be necessary to approach the median voter.**

From a less rational viewpoint we can also confirm the existence of two logics at the heart of a party as a result of different human characters and profiles. The professional politicians are more accustomed to negotiation, to transaction (indeed, this is the basis of their day-to-day professional activity), which is not the case of the members, with very different professions.

The strength of the members

On the other hand, the non-existence or the secondary role of pragmatic motivations in the case of the members (unlike those who can or want to devote themselves to politics professionally) is counteracted by **the strength of motivations of an emotional nature** which are often associated with the construction of a personal identity.

In many cases of membership personal identification with an organization or with a model of country is a basic element of personal identity, which gives it an important emotional component.

Like any organization, certain models could be identified which act as an implicit entry selection filter and which, together with the shared identity culture, strengthen a certain cognitive framework (a shared series of concepts, symbols, ways of understanding things from which reality is judged). When this becomes too important, reducing the individual capacity to see things with different perspectives, and when the different aspects of the life of a member end up revolving around this identification with the party or a very specific ideological definition, we find what popular language has christened a “freak”. The freak or extreme member would be the one moved by an emotional motivation with a very strong party identity culture for whom the expression and defence of coherence with these ideological traits have an identity function which makes any modification of positioning for pragmatic reasons very costly.

These ideological traits thus lose their instrumental character as guidelines of action for the preparation of public policies and a government action which will have to represent the whole of society (and not an ideological subgroup). **The “overinvestment”** of this type of membership moreover gives it great strength within the party so it is in a position to defend its “purist” positionings with “kamikaze” postures (they do not have anything to lose from the practical point of view, and a lot to win from the point of view of personal reaffirmation). We could call it **“the strength of emotionality”**.

In some cases, another force with which the members struggle to oppose the professionals is that of having more time dedicated to the party (especially when the party positions have to combine this task with public positions). In this case we could talk about **“the strength of chronocracy”** which we can view in the age profile of members (not professionals) of many political parties: young or retired.

The influence of a long history as a member and, therefore, of a high “investment” in the party may lead to resources as social capital (contacts, knowledge, informal networks) which over time the members with the longest tradition have gradually developed and acquired. This can strengthen the feeling of legitimacy of one’s own positions (guaranteeing the orthodoxy and the coherence with the historical path) which again influences the “inwards” strengthening (toward the median member and not toward the median voter) of certain militant positions. It can perhaps be concluded that **“the bigger the investment” (without the reward of a position) the greater the tendency to show the logic typical of the member linked to the extreme idealism on the second axis of conflict (political positioning axis)**.

From an organizational point of view, the assembly mechanisms (or those with the maximum horizontalness on the first axis) strengthen the importance and capacity for influence of this logic compared with that of the professionals.

Sometimes this confrontation of logics is expressed in the face of the possibility of negotiating with other political parties in order to participate in a government. The “**coherent-member**” logic would be: “Better in the opposition than in government if we have to abandon our programme”. The “**pragmatic-professional**” logic would be: “Better in the government than in opposition if we can somehow influence government action”²⁷.

It is not easy to harmonize the two logics. If the professionals in search of the median member move away from the median voter it is more difficult for them to win elections. If they seek to interpret the preferences of the median voter in order to come closer to them, they may not win the selection process led by the members.

Decisive supporters?

Those who take on fewer costs in this process are the voters who only express their preferences on choosing the ballot paper on the day of the elections.

With a degree of involvement which is greater, but very variable depending on the organizational models and countries, the figure of the supporter is half way between the members and the voters. In this respect they can be considered as a figure which can alter or influence the tension between the preferences of the members and the professionals.

The supporter does not have a very strong emotional profile, and does not invest as much (psychologically speaking). They have not gone through the process of psychological selection of the member: they do not have an unbreakable identification with the party, and they have not been modelled by its traditions (we could say that they are not as conditioned by a specific cognitive framework). **The supporter can thus be more diverse than the member:** less taken from the same mould. They may resemble the voter of the party more, given its bigger social base and, therefore, the median voter in society as a whole.

In any case, they seek more involvement than the voter in the shaping of the party, either to influence its positioning or the appointment of candidates, or maybe to be considered, in the future, for the designation of possible positions of public representation not covered by the members. They prefer, though, not to form part of it. There can also be numerous reasons and they can be associated with different levels of involvement: either they do not have free time (professional profiles), their prestige in relation to the party does not arise from their active participation in it (social prestige) or they do not want to come under the discipline of the organization.

²⁷ We are always talking about logics, ideal types, or trends which can be counteracted or surpassed depending on the determinants which arise from a specific context (like the law of gravity can be surpassed by a rocket taking off). Therefore, it is possible that not all professionals have pragmatic positions, and that not all members are necessarily radical. These possibilities are reinforced if the professional does not obtain their power from the electorate but rather from the members (for example, on not being a very competitive party), and the member aspires to be able to hold a position of political representation (for example, on winning an election).

This is thus a third logic, different from that of the member and from that of the professional, which can also play a significant role on resolving tensions.

Conflict resolution paths: organizational design and situations

The key to the success of a political party can be summarized as the possibility of **bringing professionals, members and voters into line** (and thus confronting in the best conditions the organizational and defining tensions mentioned above). In other words, to get these three actors to work for the party with the maximum agreement (the supporters are the only element not strictly linked to the existence of a party although their importance in certain contexts is obvious). The more aligned these vertices of tension are, the more possibilities are opened up for the party. It is not, however, simple to achieve this.

Incentives are needed for the members to situate themselves in the position of the voters, overcoming the cognitive discord, the emotionality, the internal logic, the priority search for shares of power within the party structure. These may take, for example, the form of a “position” and, therefore, an honorary or monetary benefit which brings the member closer to the logic of the professional, and in turn possibly closer to that of the voter. (We are not, under any circumstance, referring to the position in the sense of “purchase”, but rather of having to position oneself with the same decision-making options as the professionals.)

In the professional-member-voter alignment logic we can initially distinguish certain possible situations:

a. Voter = member

On some occasions, professionals and members (and voters) can go hand in hand because winning votes can mean radicalizing the public discourse if this makes it possible to access a segment of voters lost due to demobilization or abstention. In these situations the potential gain from recovering this electorate is considered greater than opening up to new “market segments”.

This may have occurred with voters with profiles close to those of the members which makes them inclined to abstain (they do not choose another party but rather decide to punish), or in a system of parties with two very close groups on a key axis which favours the volatility of a specific part of the electorate.

Danger or limit: In these situations there is no option in favour of moving closer to the median voter and, therefore, it is assumed from the outset that they will not win the election, although the maximum exploitation of a limited segment of the electorate can be achieved, allowing a sufficient number of seats to be obtained in order to influence the government through a coalition or parliamentary support.

b. Professional + supporter = voter

Another option, which involves reducing the opposing force which the members can exercise in search of the median voter, is that of opening up the party's decision-making to the supporters.

One example of this strategy applied by different political parties in the world is the choice of their candidates by primaries in which the supporters (registered on lists, not members) can participate.

Danger or limit: This option may involve the progressive discouragement of the members who do not have any benefits from retaining their membership if the prerogatives of being a member and paying fees are reduced.

The question to be asked, then, is: can a party without members survive? This will depend on the system of financial support and the degree of professionalization of its structure. Without financial support not depending on the members, opening up to the supporters may weaken the structure of the party without compensation (loss of members and of the source of financing and voluntary work that this represents), although, at the same time, it may bring the party closer to the median voter, which may, in the future, favour greater financing thanks to the extension of shares of power (more public financing and new donations from the supporters). In this respect, the power of the public administration (as resources) and that of the supporters limit the power of the members and contribute to it being easier for the professionals to address the voter without internal determinants.

Having said this, it should not be forgotten that a party without members is a party with difficulties of territorial organization which is carried out depending on this public aid and on the weight of the economically influential supporters, which reduces its social strength and programmatical independence. (An example of this loss of autonomy can be seen in the case of the unions in Spain, organizations in which the relatively low weight of the members in relation to the voters in the elections of the works committees – workers not members – and the financial support of the public administrations have had a very negative impact on their strength as organizations).

Appendix 2. On the reduction in party membership

The following table contains the conclusion of the study by Mair and van Beizen (2001: 12) which underlines the downwards trend in party membership in Europe. This is observed to different extents: the percentage of members out of the total electorate (membership/electorate ratio), the change in absolute numbers of members and, finally, the percentage of variation in membership.

Country	Period	Change in M/E ratio	Change in number of members	Change in number as percentage of original membership*
France	1978-1999	-3.48	-1,122,128	-64.59
Italy	1980-1998	-5.61	-2,091,881	-51.54
United Kingdom	1980-1998	-2.20	-853,156	-50.39
Norway	1980-1997	-8.04	-218,891	-47.49
Czech Republic	1993-1999	-3.10	-225,200	-41.32
Finland	1980-1998	-6.09	-206,646	-34.03
Netherlands	1980-2000	-1.78	-136,459	-31.67
Austria	1980-1999	-10.82	-446,209	-30.21
Switzerland	1977-1997	-4.28	-118,800	-28.85
Sweden	1980-1998	-2.87	-142,533	-28.05
Denmark	1980-1998	-2.16	-70,385	-25.52
Ireland	1980-1998	-1.86	-27,856	-24.47
Belgium	1980-1999	-2.42	-136,382	-22.10
Germany	1980-1999	-1.59	-174,967	-8.95
Hungary	1990-1999	+ 0.04	+ 8,300	+ 5.02
Portugal	1980-2000	-0.29	+ 50,381	+ 17.01
Slovakia	1994-2000	+ 0.82	+ 37,777	+ 29.63
Greece	1980-1998	+ 3.52	+ 375,000	+ 166.67
Spain	1980-2000	+ 2.22	+ 808,705	+ 250.73
Poland	2000	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

* The % change is measured relative to the earliest year for which membership is reported in these data.

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