ORGANIZATION STILL MATTERS: *an explanation of the role played by the Catalan parties' characteristics in shaping the interaction in their Facebook pages*

Marc Esteve i Del Valle[i] & Rosa Borge Bravo[ii]

mesteved@uoc.edu   rborge@uoc.edu

Abstract

This paper seeks to analyze the behavior of the Catalan political parties (with Parliamentary representation) and their followers on party Facebook pages, between the 15th January and the 15th February 2013. We consider that party characteristics and, specifically, party organization influences the interaction deployed in party Facebook pages. In order to analyze that, we will examine the relation of the parties' organizational characteristics with the parties' posts on their Facebook pages and with the followers' behavior regarding those posts. Last but not least, we will measure the influence of the Catalan political context on their Facebook behaviour.

Key words: Catalan parties; party organization; online interaction; Facebook; Facebook Followers.

Introduction

In 2002 Friendster appeared, followed by MySpace, LinkedIn, Facebook, Bebo, Flickr, YouTube and Twitter. The shift from Web 1.0 to Web.2.0 (O'Reilly, 2004) is characterized by the move from a passive observation of content by users to its co-production. Web 2.0 gives voters the "chance of entering into a real online dialogue with the representatives" (Mackay, 2010: 23). These interactions allow for the possibility of relationship building (Briones et al., 2011).

Focusing on the perception of the users, Bechmann & Lomborg (2012) highlight three characteristics to define social media. First, the ability each user has to make, contribute, filter and share content means "that communication is de-institutionalized" (p.3). Second, the user is seen as a producer and participant. Third, "interaction and networked" describe the communication between users and their shifting roles (idem).

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[i] PHD student at the "Knowledge and Information Society Program" of the "Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC)" and researcher at the Internet Interdisciplinary Institute (IN3).
[ii] Associate Professor of Political Science at the "Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC)" and researcher of the Internet Interdisciplinary Institute (IN3).

Social Media pose a variety of challenges and opportunities to political parties. On the one hand, the parties' organizational adaptation to Social Media puts pressure on their hierarchical structures (Gustafsson, 2012: 1123) while blurring their classical strategy built on a sharp difference between their members and the citizenry (Margetts, 2001; Gibson, Ward and Lusoli, 2003; Löfgren, 2003).On the other, Social Networking Sites offer the possibility of a level of interaction between political parties and the public that previously was absent. In short, with the arrival of Social Networking Sites political parties have lost some of their control over the online political communication flows on account of an increased role for users.

All Catalan parties represented in Parliament run their own websites and all of them have experienced with microblogging and Social Network Sites. The latter are defined as: "web based services that allow individuals (1) to construct a public or semi public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share connections, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (Boyd & Ellison, 2008: 2).

This paper seeks to analyze the behavior of the Catalan political parties (with Parliamentary representation) and their followers on party Facebook pages, between the 15th January and the 15th February 2013. We consider that party characteristics and, specifically, party organization influences the interaction deployed in party Facebook pages. In order to analyze that, we will examine the relation of the parties' organizational characteristics with the parties' posts on their Facebook pages and with the followers' behavior regarding those posts.

In the subsequent section we introduce, as a context to our study, some explanations related to the present state of affairs of Catalan politics and of the Facebook use of the Catalan citizenry. We then outline the literature on parties and Facebook use. Then we elaborate the research design, the construction of variables and we formally state the research hypothesis to be tested. We then introduce the results of our paper. Finally we discuss the implications of these findings and outline potential avenues for future research in this area.

Context matters

The political context

The last elections to the Parliament of Catalonia were not common elections. After the multitudinous demonstration of the 11th of September in favor of the Independence of Catalonia and the disagreement between Mariano Rajoy (President of Spain) and Artur Mas (President of Catalonia) with regard to the CIU's proposal of a new "Fiscal Agreement" for Catalonia -expressed in a political meeting which took place in Madrid on the 20th of September-, President Artur Mas dissolved the Parliament of Catalonia on the 28th of September and called for elections for the 25th of November.

The 2012 elections to the Parliament of Catalonia were characterized by three factors: (1) President Artur Mas' decision to call on elections two years before ending the IXth Legislature of the Parliament and the positioning of Convergència I Unió in favour of the independence of Catalonia; (2) The dominance of the nationalist cleavage expressed either by the right of Catalonia to hold a referendum on independence or to become an independent state: (3) The discussion around the effects of the economic crisis and the expenditure cuts adopted by the Catalan government.

The results of the elections could be resumed in three elements: (a) An increase of nine points of the participation level with respect to that of the 2010 elections (from 58,8 in 2010 to 67,8 in 2012); (b) A decline of votes and seats of CIU and PSC (as can be observed in Table 1); A huge increase of votes and seats of ERC and C's; A slight improvement of seats of PP and ICV-EUIA; The entry to the Catalan Parliament of CUP and the exit of Solidaritat; (c) The increase in political support of the Catalan citizenry with respect to the independence of Catalonia (as shown in Table 2 and Graphic 1)

Table 1: Electoral Results of the Elections of the Parliament of Catalonia (2012 and 2010)

Parties	Votes in 2012	% Number of valid votes	Seats in the Parliament	% Number of votes in 2010	% Number of valid votes	Seats in the Parliament
CIU	116.259	30,7	50	1.202.830	38,4	62
PSC	524.707	14,4	20	575.233	18,4	28
ERC	498.124	13,7	21	219.173	7,0	10
PP	471.681	13,0	19	387.066	12,4	18
ICV-EUiA	359.705	9,9	13	230.824	7,4	10
C's-PC	275.007	7,6	9	106.154	3,4	3
CUP	126.435	3,5	3	-	-	-
Solidaritat	46.838	1,3		102.921	3,3	4
Others	163.516	4,5		214.444	6,9	
Blank votes	52.898	1,4		91.631	2,9	
Census	5.413.868			5.363.688		
Participation	3.688.310	67,8*		3.152.630	58,8*	
Blank votes	33.140	0,9**		22.354	0,7**	

| **Abstention** | 1.745.558 | 32,2* | | 2.211.058 | 41,2* |

Graphic 1: The perception of the Catalan citizenry with regard to the political future of Catalonia
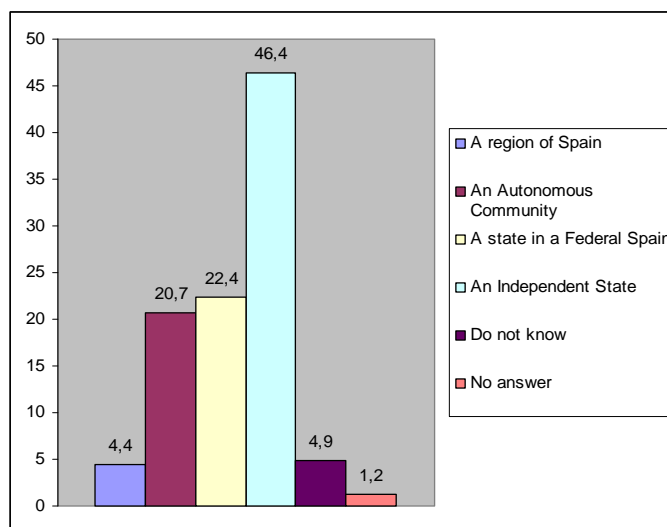
Source: First round of the CEO survey (22nd of February 2013); N=2000; Simple answer %

Table 2: Position of Catalan voters with regard to the future of Catalonia based on the votes to the Parliament of Catalonia in the 2012 elections

Political Parties/ position with respect to the future of Catalonia	PP (57) %	CIU (561) %	ERC (313) %	PSC (134) %	ICV-EUa (203) %	C's (73) %	CUP (68) %
A region of Spain	19,8	1,0	0,0	5,0	1,3	17,0	0,0
A Spanish Autonomous Community	62,4	12,8	2,1	39,4	10,9	61,1	8,6
A State inside a Federal Spain	7,9	16,0	10,5	39,6	53	21,2	19,5
An Independent State	0,9	66,2	86,8	8,7	28,7	0,0	66,0
Do not Know	5,8	3,8	0,6	6,9	6,2	0,7	5,9
No Answer	3,2	0,3	0,0	0,3	0,0	0,0	0,0

Source: First wave of the CEO survey (22nd of February 2013); N=2000; Simple answer %; Weighted Base

Nonetheless, if we want to politically contextualize our period of analysis (15 January-15 February 2013) it seems necessary to point out the different political events that took place after the November elections and that shaped the Catalan political agenda. First, on the 19th of December 2012 CIU and ERC adopted the "Agreement for the National Transition and for the Guarantee of Parliamentary Stability of the Government of Catalonia"[1]. Secondly, on the 23rd of January, the Parliament of Catalonia adopted the "Resolution 5/X which approved the Declaration of Sovereignty and the Right to Decide of the people of Catalonia"[2]. Last but not least, the political agenda of our period of analysis was shaped by two corruption affairs: the *Barcenas*' affair (at the Spanish level) and the *Camarga* affair (at the Catalan level).

The technological context

We consider that the understanding of the political parties' behaviour on their Facebook pages would be somehow difficult without comprehending some of the technological characteristics of the Catalan society in which they are embedded. For this reason, we will point out some characteristics of (1) The Facebook users in Spain by Autonomous Communities; (2) The Catalan's Facebook users by gender and age; (3) The platforms used by the Catalan citizenry to obtain political information (2012-2013).

In that regard, according to a study carried out by Bluemarket[3], Catalonia is the second Autonomous Community of Spain in terms of Facebook users (3.448.980),just behind Madrid and ahead of Andalucía, which takes the third place. Moreover, when talking about the age and gender characteristics of Facebook users in Catalonia, the majority of the Facebook users (734.140) are concentrated between the age bands of 18-24. Indeed, among the Catalan Facebook users of this age band there is a slight predominance of men over women (389.500 men over 344.640 women)

On the other hand, with respect to the way the Catalan citizenry obtains political information, it seems important to point out the fact that according to CEO surveys' figures, in our period of study Social Networking Sites were used by the 18,3% of the respondents, the highest figure of all the CEO's surveys-13th June 2013- (11,9 in the 2nd Round of CEO surveys -13th June 2012-; 13,8 in the 3rd Round of CEO surveys- 30 October 2012).

Furthermore, Table 3 shows the different platforms used by the Catalan voters (of each of the parties with representation to the Catalan Parliament) with respect to the Mass Media and the Internet. Regarding the ways of reaching political information we can observe different facts: First, for the voters of all parties, television is still the

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[1] This Agreement can be downloaded from this web page:
http://www.ciu.cat/media/78434.pdf
[2] This Declaration can be downloaded from this web page:
http://www.parlament.cat/actualitat/R5_X_sobirania.pdf
[3] This study can be downloaded from this web page:
http://www.blog.bluemarkets.es/somos-mas-de-17-millones-de-usuarios-de-facebook-en-espana/

predominant platform for obtaining political information. Second, radio is used by the voters of all parties in a similar way, yet we observe a decline of its use in C's and CUP voters. Third, with regard to the newspapers, we also observe similar figures among voters of all parties, but the PP and the PSC voters use them slightly less. Fourth, we can find the most important differences among party voters when it comes to the internet. In that sense, while CUP (71,7%) and ICV (55,2%) voters occupy the highest positions, the PPC (22,1%) and PSC (24,8) voters occupy the lowest ones. Last but not least, CIU (39,6%), ERC (49,5) and C's (42,1) show similar levels. Finally, with respect to the use of *Friends, acquaintances and relatives* in order to obtain political information, the main difference between parties' voters is with respect to the PPC figures (22,1%) - the other parties have similar levels.

Table 3: Platforms used by Catalan voters in order to obtain political information (2013)

Political Parties/ Media (%)	PPC (57)	CIU (561)	ERC (313)	PSC (134)	ICV-EUIA (203)	C's (73)	CUP (68)
Television (85,7)	93,5	88,5	88,1	88,9	76,5	87,9	64,1
Radio (44,6)	44,8	46,1	52,4	46,2	49,3	40,3	38,3
Newspapers (61,4)	48,5	66,0	66,9	48,2	68,9	65,5	58,8
Internet (41,7)	22,1	39,6	49,5	24,8	55,4	42,1	71,7
Friends, relatives and aqcuaintances (43,1)	26,6	43,6	49,9	41,0	45,8	44,7	54,3
I do not get political information (0,3)	0,0	0,1	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0

Source: 1ST Round of CEO surveys (22nd of February 2013) ; N=2000 (Weighted base)

Finally, Table 4 shows us the position of Catalan voters with respect to the electronic media that they use to obtain political information. In that sense we can observe: First, lavanguardia.es is used by all party voters yet we observe that PPC (18,6) and C's

voters do it in a lesser measure than the voters of the other parties. A reason that could explain this factor is the Catalan nationalist tendency of this newspaper (which at the same time could be an element to understand the CIU voters figure -40 %-). Second, with respect to Elperiodico.com the most interesting elements are the low levels registered by the PPC (0,0) and the CUP (13,6) voters. A reason explaining these low levels could be the Left-federalist tendency of ElPeriodico.com which seems to be contrary to the interests of the PPC and C's voters. Third, with regard to ElPais.com we observe low levels among CIU (19,9), ERC (15,5) and CUP (17,9). These could be explained by the fact that ElPaís.com is a Spanish newspaper with a Spanish nationalist tendency. Fourth, with regard to the Social Networking Sites the most interesting aspect is the high levels reached by ERC (21,1), ICV-EUIA (26,2) and CUP (25,3) in comparison with the other parties.

Table 4: Position of Catalan voters with respect to the electronic media that they use to reach political information

Political parties voters/ Mass Media (%)	PPC (57) %	CIU (561) %	ERC (313) %	PSC (134) %	ICV-EUIA (203) %	C's (73) %	CUP (68) %
www.lavanguardia.es	18,6	40,0	34,4	30,6	28,8	18,2	23,6
www.elperiodico.com	0,0	23,5	26,7	29,7	32,9	33,9	13,6
www.elpais.com	26,9	19,9	15,5	30,9	34,6	22,6	17,9
Social Networking Sites (Facebook&Twitter)	14,7	11,1	21,1	10,0	26,2	10,4	25,3
www.ara.cat	0,0	13,1	33,2	0,0	26,2	10,4	25,3

Source: 1ST Round of CEO surveys (22nd of February 2013) ; N=2000 (Weighted base)

Literature Review

We are witnessing a world where information is the engine of a new socioeconomic system and Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are the chains that link us to that. In this context, the political parties of Catalonia are dealing with some important challenges amongst which should be highlighted the decline of membership (Scarrow and Gezgor, 2010), political disaffection and the necessity to adapt their organizations to the Network Society (Castells, 2000). In fact, the parties' adaptation to the Network Society could be understood as one of the crucial challenges that they presently face for it unleashes a revolutionary change: the pressures for mutation from hierarchical structures to network organizations which place power and agency at the

ends of networks, in the hands of individuals, rather than in central locations like the leaders of formal organizations (Bimber, Flanagin & Stohl, 2012). In this light, and related to the emergence of ICTs, two other processes may be pointed out: on the one hand, and as it has been acknowledged by de academy (Margetts, 2001; Gibson, Ward and Lusoli, 2003; Löfgren, 2003), the Internet offers to political parties an open window for blurring the classical party strategy built on a sharp difference between their members and the citizenry; on the other hand, the Internet adds new technological resources to the parties' organizations and for their electoral struggle.

The Internet and political parties

Since their inception, political parties' organizations have mutated hand in hand with the societal changes unleashed by the appearance of new forms of communication. In fact, this particular political science domain has been one for the most analyzed by the academy, for the understanding of political parties' organizational changes is the basic step to figure out the parties' adaptation to their respective societies and therefore to their political arena. In that sense, there is a vast literature framing this controversy which goes from the elite conceptualization of parties' organizational power of Michels (1911), through the *Mass Party* (1964) of Michels and Duverger, the *Catch-all* party of Kircheimer (1966) or the *Cartel Party* of Katz and Mair (1995) up through the *Franchise Party* claimed by Carty (2004).

Nevertheless, the controversy regarding parties' organizations and communications experienced a revival with the appearance of the Internet and ICTs. The Web shaped the way how these entities of aggregation of societal wills organized themselves both from and internal point of view (the relation between parties and their members) and from an external point of view (the relation between parties and their electoral arena).

With regard to the studies that analyze the organizational transformation of political parties due to ICTs, Gibson & Ward (1999) were among the first authors who observed that the majority of political parties developed interior networks of computerization of their communications. Nevertheless, they discovered that while the majority of parties were very sanguine with respect to the possibilities that ICTs offered to better deliberate and consult with their members, the benefit in this regard was not so evident. All around, according to these authors, parties appreciated much more ICT use as instruments of coordination and information than as tools of internal organizational discussion and debate. Yet, this stance, which could be considered "cyberrealist", was rapidly counteracted by H. Margetts (2001) who with her concept of the "Cyber Party" opened the door to the "cyberoptimist" current with regard to the possibilities that ICTs offered to parties. More precisely, Margetts pointed out that ICTs could modify the parties' organizational structures in a triple sense: 1.- Democratizing their decisions; 2.-Promoting new lax and informal interrelation networks; 3.- Offering new possibilities of fundraising. This same current was followed by Heidar & Saglie (2003), who with their claim of the "Network Party" pointed out that the use of ICTs will promote a decentralization of political parties, which will be based on networks of informal topics (which could even be virtual). According to these

authors, these networks will be more open to citizen demands, to lobbies and to experts on public policies. Indeed, these networks could become a starting point for political debate and the recruitment of new leaders.

On the other hand, with respect to the analysis of the new participation and mobilization possibilities offered by ICTs, even if it is true that the primary results seemed to admit that the "cyberealists" were right, it is also evident that the recent studies carried out under the web 2.0 context (O'Reilly, 2004) are balancing that situation. In this light, the study of the intranet users of the English Liberal Party and Labor Party of Lusoli & Ward (2004) revealed that in both intranets party members infrequently checked the web pages of the parties and that a minority of them did not do it ever. In fact, Sarah Vissers (2009) and her concept of the "spiral of demobilization" among party members also corroborated this behavior. In this same regard, the Pederson and Saglie (2005) study of the behavior and the use of ICTs by the members of the Norwegian and Danish parties revealed that only one out of three of them visited the web pages of those parties. Furthermore, these authors even predicted a sharp division among the active and passive members of these parties concerning their technological use and they argued that this tendency could even empower the elites of these parties.

From a more explanatory perspective, some authors (Römmele, 2003; Padró-Solanet & Cardenal, 2008; Gibson, 2013) have studied the organizational factors or the political environment that could have an effect on the online behavior of political parties (and on their electoral campaigns). Römmele (2003) was one of the first among them in pointing out that ICTs use by the political parties will be not uniform among them and that it will depend on the goals and objectives of the parties (votes maximization, implementation of policies, internal democracy and office-seeking). Therefore, according to Römmele, parties which are focused on maximizing their votes and office will adopt a top-down communication strategy while those seeking to implement policies and to increase their internal democracy will develop bottom-up and participative communication strategies.

A step forward in that direction was made by the studies of Padró-Solanet & Cardenal (2008), Padró-Solanet (2009) and Cardenal (2011). These authors show that in the specific case of the Catalan and Spanish parties, the organizational characteristics of the parties and their position in the electoral market (which is mediated by their ideology and ideological coherence, the type of the party, the degree of centralization of their decisions, the importance of the organization, the existence of internal conflict, and their position either in government or as the opposition) structure the interactive and participative channels that parties offer on their web pages. They also discovered that big parties (above all when they are at the opposition) tend to open more communication and participation channels on their web pages (Cardenal, 2011:95). The paradigmatic example in that sense would be the PP, taking into account the fact that Cardenals' study was made in February 2010, almost a year before the 2011 General elections. By the same token, parties that are less ideologically coherent and have small organizations tend to develop channels of participation and communication (except for those matching with party mobilization –or vertical

mobilization-). This would be the case of CIU, ideologically less coherent and with an extra parliamentary organization smaller than the other cases, such as the PSC or the PSOE which show more ideological cohesion and have big organizations, a fact that triggers a much more important development of the centralized channels to support the party or activate its networks of contacts (Cardenal, 2011: 96-97; Padró-Solanet & Cardenal, 2008: 58,61).

Last but not least, Wall and Sudulich (2011) focus their analysis on one of the explicative factors, the degree of centralization of Irish parties' decisions. In comparison with the two dimensions that Padró-Solanet and Cardenal use to measure the centralization of the decisions (2008:52), Wall & Sudulich use three dimensions (2011:579) more than the former authors an they discovered that in the Irish case, parties which are centralized and have hierarchical organizations developed less opportunities of online interaction on their web pages than parties with a less centralized and hierarchical structures. Last but not least, another promising analytical line is that recently initiated by R. Gibson (2013) in which she studies "Citizen Initiated Campaigns". These are online campaigns launched by sympathizers of parties (who are not necessarily members of these organizations) and that use the web tools created by the parties or the candidates teams (Gibson, 2013: 5). Facebook and twitter, either from parties or sympathizers, are crucial elements of these campaigns.

Political parties and Facebook

Recently there have been numerous authors who have studied the relation between Facebook and political parties from different perspectives, which go from the political participation or mobilization of the Irish Generation Z (Lynch & Hogan, 2012) to the use of Social Media by Swiss parties (Klinger, 2013). In fact, the study carried out by Lynch & Hogan was one of the first attempts to understand the effect of Social Media in political parties. In that regard, the study reveals an extremely interesting dichotomy: while no Irish party regarded social networking as better than traditional communication methods (Lynch & Hogan, 2012: 92), the Generation Z participants of the study felt social networking should form part of a party's overarching communications strategy (Lynch & Hogan, 2012: 95). Following this political participation perspective, Gustafsson (2012) studied the characteristics of Swedish social network users and their political participation. In that regard, his main concern was to study the effect of Social Media on political parties' hierarchies. In fact, this author revealed that Social Networking Sites had eroded internal hierarchies "as collaboration across local party branches had been made easier. As information no longer had to go through central boards, informal networks were perceived as easier to form and maintain" (Gustafsson, 2012: 1117).

From other political science perspectives it seems to us interesting to point out the Mascaro and Goggins article (2011) about the organizational behavior of the Coffee

Party[4] on Facebook. These authors pointed out two organizational characteristics of the Coffee Party which fit well with our research interests (1) they discovered a concentration of the contributions on that Facebook group; (2) they revealed that issue entrepreneurship in social media is structured around roles instead of traditional dimensions of nation, geography or institution (Mascaro & Goggins, 2011: 15). Moreover, in their study of Danish politics, Van Dalen & Skovsgaard find that politicians used Twitter and Facebook to strengthen their position in intra-party competition, and that communication directly with the voters were among the key motivations for being active on social media (Van Dalen & Skovsgaard, 2013). Last but not least, the study of the Swiss parties' behavior on Facebook carried out by Klinger showed how during the 2011 Swiss election, small parties did not benefit from the potential that Social Media offer while the dominant parties with larger number of voters gained more resonance online and were better able to facilitate reciprocal activity on Facebook (Klinger, 2013: 731).

Finally, we believe that it is important to take into account the conceptualization of the party members made by Susan E. Scarrow (Scarrow, 2013), because she develops a new concept of followers that we will also use in our study. In that regard, Scarrow points out that in order to respond to their membership decline, political parties have blurred the boundaries between members and supporters who are not interested in formal membership but who want some kind of party contact. From there, she argues that political parties are presently structured by multiple categories of permanent affiliates, a fact that she defines as "the emergence of a Multi-Speed membership parties". Figure 1 shows us this new "Multi-Speed membership":

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[4] The Coffee party is a political organization in the US that began as a Facebook Group in 2010, as an alternative to the Tea Party movement, but currently is a diverse organization with the aim of increasing participation and political debate, and with members from different ideologies.

Figure 1: Party Affiliation: Expanded Bullseye Model

Activists
Members
Lite Members
Cyber-
Member
Sustainer
Followers
Audience
Voters
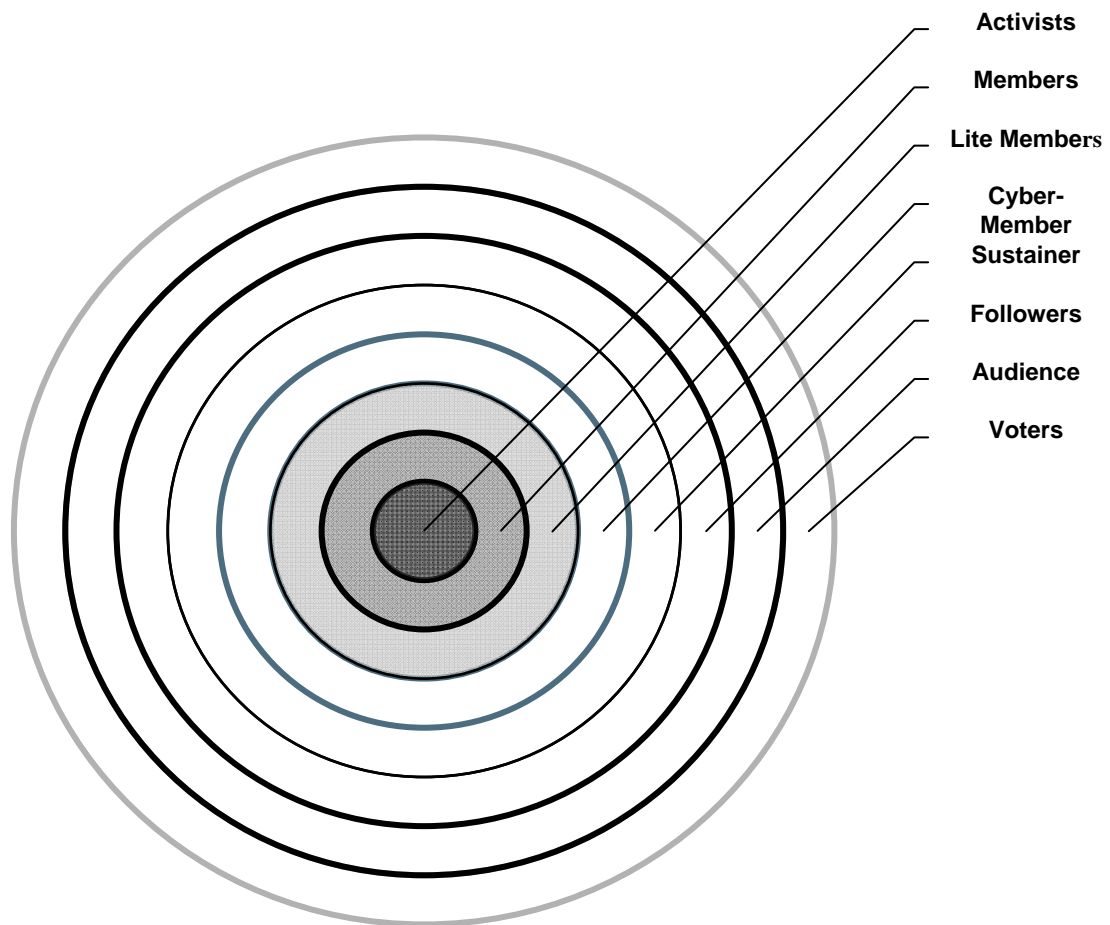
Source: Scarrow, 2013: 9.

In fact, a crucial point to understand these different modes of affiliation is that these affiliates are self-identified supporters: self-identification distinguishes them from party voters who just happen to receive mass mailings or a doorstep political visit. These affiliation modes create new types of contact with the party and may lead to different types of engagement, but one type of affiliate is not per se more actively engaged in partisan activities than others. It is in that sense where the definition of followers made by Scarrow is very suitable to frame our subject. She characterizes them as it follows: "Followers use Social Networking technology to join a party-led communications network; generally they do not pay any fees. They receive messages from the party headquarters or party leader via *Twitter*, a blog, or the party *Facebook* page. Followers may have opportunities to speak back, for instance by commenting on web postings or by taking part-sponsored surveys. They do not have any obligations towards a party, nor is social network "friendship" exclusive: no rules prohibit individuals from following more than one party" (Scarrow, 2013: 15).

Research design and hypothesis

In this research we argue that party organization affects the manner in which Facebook is used by political parties and their Facebook followers. Formally, we will test the following general hypothesis "Catalan parties' organizational characteristics affect the manner in which they use Facebook and their Facebook followers' behavior". More precisely, we will test these specific hypotheses:

H1- The organizational characteristics of Catalan political parties influence their Facebook behavior.

H2- The organizational characteristics of Catalan political parties influence the behavior of their Facebook followers

H3.- The Catalan political parties' behavior on their Facebook pages is influenced not only by the parties' organizational characteristics but also by the Catalan political agenda and the issues at stake.

In order to test these hypotheses empirically we will, first of all, measure some of the organizational characteristics of the Catalan political parties. In this light, following the studies of Padró-Solanet & Cardenal (2008) and Cardenal (2011) we will examine (a) the type of party[5]; (c) the size of the party[6]; (d) the parties' place with regard to the government or opposition; (f) the parties' ideology[7]; (g) the Catalan parties' institutionalization[8]. Notwithstanding, we have added to Padró-Solanet & Cardenal's study two more characteristics which are (h) the parties' interior conflict[9] (i) the parties' political agreements. Last but not least, with regard to the parties' organizational characteristics and following the analysis carried out by Lundell (2004) and Wall & Sudulich (2010), we will measure the (j) centralization of party organizations by adopting a coding scheme based on Janda's (1980) measure of centralization of decision-making.

On the other hand, we will measure the influence of the Catalan parties' organizational characteristics on their Facebook behavior –between the 15 January and 15 February-by analyzing the following dimensions (a) the total number of posts published by the Catalan parties (b) their daily average of posts published (c) the characteristics of their

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[5] We express the Catalan parties' position with regard to the government with a dummy variable: 1.- Yes (The party is at the government): 2.- No (The party it is not at the government)

[6] In order to measure the party size we use a fourth measure: (a) Big parties: parties with more than 30 seats in the Parliament of Catalonia; (b) Semi-Big parties: Parties between 20 and 30 seats in the Parliament of Catalonia.; (c) Medium parties: parties between 10 and 20 seats in the Parliament of Catalonia; (d) Small parties: parties between 1 and 10 seats in the Parliament of Catalonia.

[7] The ideology of the party is measured using the CEO survey of the 20th of June.

[8] We will measure the institutionalization of the parties with a dummy variable: 1.- Institutionalized parties: those with 15 or more years of existence; 2.- New parties: Parties with less than 10 years of existence.

[9] In order to measure the interior conflict of the Catalan political parties we will use an indicator of the cohesion degree of the Catalan political parties' votes in the Catalan Parliament between the 15th of January and the 15th of February.

posts (Video, photos or links) (d) their daily average of the time of publishing the posts (e) the standard deviation of time between their posts.

Then we will measure the influence of the organizational characteristics of the Catalan parties (mentioned below) and the Catalan political agenda on the parties' Facebook from a double perspective: on the one hand, we will outline the different political issues that according to CEO surveys and to our previous work (Esteve & Borge, 2013) have shaped the Catalan politics during our period of study. In this sense, in our previous work we pointed the Declaration of Sovereignty of the 23rd of January as being one of these issues and the CEO surveys of the 14th of February stressed the Barcenas' affair and illegal recordings in Catalonia. On the other hand, we will place each one of the parties' Facebook posts in a fourth category of issues: (a) Nationalism; (b) Corruption; (c) Left-Right (d) Others. Our final aim is then to analyze if Catalan parties have followed the three issues that shaped the Catalan Agenda during our period of study or if their Facebook posts show another type of Facebook behavior.

Last but not least, we will measure the possible relation between the organizational characteristics of the Catalan parties and their Facebook followers' behavior by pointing out (a) the total number of comments of the parties Facebook followers' to their Facebook posts; (b) the total number of likes of the parties' Facebook followers' to their Facebook posts; (c) the total number of likes of the Facebook followers' comments; (d) the total number of shares of the parties' Facebook posts; (e) the engagement (likes + comments + shares) unleashed by the parties' Facebook posts; (f) the ratio of the total likes/engagement of the parties' Facebook posts; (g) the ratio of the total comments/engagement of the parties' Facebook posts; (h) the total number of deleted comments over the total number of comments posted on Facebook by the Catalan political parties; (i) the gender of the parties' Facebook followers who posted comments.

Results

H1: The organizational characteristics of the Catalan political parties influence their Facebook behavior.

First of all we present the results regarding different independent variables related to the organizational characteristics of the Catalan political parties. In this light, Table 5 permits us to demonstrate different aspects linked to the organizational characteristics of the political parties with representation to the Catalan Parliament:

Table 5: Characteristics of Catalan parties with representation in the Parliament of Catalonia

Parties	Type of Party[10]	Party Size (seats)	Governance agreement	Party institutiona-lization	Ideology[11] (0-7)	Conflict[12]	Degree of Centra-lization (0-1)[13]
PSC	Mass party	Semi-Big (20)	No	Institutionalized	3,19	Yes	0,77
CIU	Catch-all	Major (50)	Yes	Institutionalized	4,82	No	0,81
ERC	Mass party	Semi-Big (21)	Yes	Institutionalized	2,26	No	0,70
C'S	Catch-all	Minor (9)	No	New	5,42	No	0,75
PP	Catch-all	Medium-Size (19)	No	Institutionalized	6,2	No	0,81
ICV	Mass party	Medium Size (13)	No	Institutionalized	2,3	No	0,68
CUP	Mass party	Minor (3)	No	New	2,6	No	0,48

Source: Own creation.

First, as it is shown by the table in the Parliament of Catalonia we can find either Mass parties (CUP, ERC, ICV and PSC) or Catch-all parties (C's, PP and CIU). Second, with regard to the party size, we can observe that after the last elections to the Parliament

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[10] This variables is based on the previous studies of Cardenal & Solanet (2008) and Cardenal (2011)

[11] Source: Own creation from the CEO survey of 20th of June. N=2000.

[12] Source: Own creation based on the Catalan parties' votes in the Parliament of Catalonia between the 15th of January and the 15th of February

[13] This index in the following dimensions studied by Janda (1980): Nationalization of the Structure ; SLP: Selecting the leader of the Party; SCP: Selection of the Parliamentary Candidates; FD : Funding Distribution; FP: Formulation of the policies; CC: Control of the Communications; AD: Administration of the discipline; CL:: Leadership concentration; DCD (standardized 0-1): Decisions' centralization degree

of Catalonia there is only one big party (CIU). We have then two Semi-Big parties (ERC and PSC), two Medium-Size parties (PP and ICV) and two Small-Parties (C's and CUP).

Third, regarding the Catalan parties' position with respect to the Catalan government (opposition/government) it can be stated that only CIU is presently at the government. Fourth, with respect to the institutionalization degree of the Catalan parties it can be stated that 5 over 7 are institutionalized parties (ERC, CIU, PSC, CIU and ICV) while C's and CUP are new parties. Fifth, with respect to the governance agreement among the Catalan political parties, it must be pointed that for the first time of the history of the Catalan democracy a left party (ERC) reached a *Governance Agreement* -Agreement for the National Transition and for the Guarantee of the Parliamentary Stability of the Government of Catalonia- with a centre-right Catalan party, CIU. Sixth, according to the CEO survey of the 20th of June, we can state that Catalan political parties diverge a lot on the left-right scale. In fact, CEO respondents rate the Catalan parties from the 2,26 of ERC to the 6,2 of the PP. Seventh, with respect to the internal conflict of the parties, Table 5 shows that during our period of analysis the PSC was the only party that suffered from an interior conflict. Last but not least, with regard to the Catalan parties' degree of centralization of their decisions, Table 5 shows that there three groups of party (a) Decentralized parties (CUP=0,48; ICV=0,68); Semi-Centralized parties (ERC= 0,7; C's= 0,75; PSC= 0,77); Highly-Centralized parties (CIU= 0,81; PP=0,81)

On the other hand, with regard to the Catalan parties' Facebook behavior, Table 6 shows some interesting results: First, in terms of posting activity (Total posts and posting daily average) it can be stated that CUP, ICV and PSC are more active than CIU, C's and PP while ERC and CIU have the same activity level (47 posts). Second, with respect to the concentration of that posting activity of the Catalan parties (Standard deviation of the posts – expressed in hours-), ERC, ICV and PSC have a more concentrated activity than C's, PP and CIU while the CUP (17,5) has a slightly less concentrated activity than CIU (17,29). Third, with respect to the style of the posts we observe a clear difference between the way CIU and CUP communicate with their followers (99% posts with photo in the case of CIU and 47,85% in the CUP case) with respect to the other parties (which mainly use posts with videos or status). Fourth, regarding the deletion of comments we can argue that PP has the highest degree (93,29 %) followed by CIU (31,4) and the PSC (11,93). Last but not least, with regard to the posting time, we observe an important difference between C's (16,5) and CUP (16,5) with respect to the other parties.

Table 6: Summary Table of the posting behavior of the Catalan political parties

PARTIES	TOTAL POSTS	POST/DAY	POST+VIDEO OR STATUS O LINK/TOTAL	POST+FOTO/TOTAL	AVERAGE HOUR POST	STANDARD DEV. POST (HOURS)	COMMENTS DELETED BY THE PARTY (% total co-mments of party)
CIU	47	1,51	1%	99%	14,89	17,29	31,40
ERC	47	1,51	84,70%	15,30%	15,62	17,1	5
PSC	71	2,29	92%	8%	14,68	10,4	11,93
PP	46	1,48	99%	1%	13,63	19,01	93,29
ICV	77	2,48	72%	28%	13,51	13,53	4,10
C'S	35	1,2	82,61%	17,39%	16,5	28,85	5,3
CUP	54	1,74	52,15%	47,85%	16,5	17,5	2,2

Source: Own creation.

In summary, with respect to the relation between the organizational characteristics of the Catalan parties and their Facebook behavior we can state that: (1) Mass parties (3 over 4 –CUP, ICV and PSC-) have more posting activity than Catch-all parties (C's, PP and CIU); (2) Left and Centre-left parties (3 over 4 -ERC, ICV and PSC-) have a more concentrated posting activity than the other Right and Centre-Right parties (CIU, C's and PP); (3) The two parties which reached a governance agreement have the same level of activity (47); (4) New parties such as CUP and C's post later than the other parties; (5) The party in the government (CIU) uses a different style than the other parties; (6) The most centralized parties (CIU, PP and PSC) are also the parties that delete most comments; (7) Two of the three most centralized parties PP and CIU are the less active in Facebook posting (with the exception of ERC). Therefore, from all these statements we can corroborate H1 for it seems clear that the organizational characteristics of the Catalan political parties influence their Facebook behavior.

H2: The organizational characteristics of the Catalan political parties influence their parties' Facebook followers behavior

Regarding the parties' followers Facebook behavior, Table 7 shows us some interesting aspects. First, with respect the comment activity, it is important to point out on the one hand, the low level of comments reached by ICV (218) and, on the other, the high level of comments of C's (1058) and CUP (1071). Second, regarding the total number of likes to the Facebook pages of the Catalan parties, it can be stated that CUP (24194) leads this dimension followed by ERC (8051). The last party in this dimension is the PP

(769). Third, with respect to the parties' followers likes of the comments posted by other followers, it can be argued that CUP (4126) and C's (1585) Facebook followers have a very different behavior in comparison the other parties' Facebook followers. Fourth, in terms of sharing the information posted on the Facebook pages of the parties' we observe that CUP (9830), ICV (5123) and ERC (5096) reach a high level on this dimension. Yet we should not deny also the level acquired by C's (2593). In terms of total engagement again CUP reaches a degree sharply different from other parties (39851) while the PP has a very low engagement in comparison to the other parties (1824); C's, CIU and ERC could be placed in a middle range while the PSC only reaches the sixth position of the seven parties (3822). Fifth, regarding the ratio Likes/engagement we observe a slight predominance of CIU (66,4%) and CUP (60,7%) over the other parties. Sixth, with respect to the ratio Shares/Engagement it is important to note the position reached in that dimension by ICV (55,7%) and ERC (36,2%) compared to the levels reached by other Catalan parties. Seventh, in terms of the ratio of the Likes on the comments over the engagement the PSC (13,65), CUP (13,5) and C's (13,1) reach interesting levels with regard to the other parties. Last but not least, with regard to the gender of the Catalan parties' Facebook followers who posted a comment it must be argued that, above all, there is a predominance of posts published by men. Yet the most balanced party is CIU (48% of the total comments published by women) while the most unbalanced is C's (31,5%).

Table 7: Characteristics of the parties' followers Facebook behavior

PARTIES	TOTAL COMMENTS	TOTAL LIKES	COMMENT LIKES	TOTAL SHARES	ENGAGEMENT	LIKES/ENGAGEMENT	SHARES/ENGAGEMENT	COMMENTS/ENGAGEMENT	LIKE COMMENT/EGAGEMENT	WOMEN COMMENTS	MAN COMMENTS
CIU	629	6831	319	2509	10287	66,40%	24,30%	3,10%	6,20%	48%	52%
ERC	531	8051	366	5096	14044	57,30%	36,20%	3%	3,50%	40%	60%
PSC	662	2094	521	545	3822	54,78%	14,25%	17,32%	13,65%	35%	65%
PP	923	769	11	121	1824	42,16%	6,60%	50,60%	0,64%	33,6%	66,4%
ICV	218	3718	136	5123	9195	40,40%	55,70%	2,37%	1,40%	42,80%	58,20%
C'S	1058	6813	1585	2593	12049	56,54%	21,52%	8,70%	13,10%	31,50%	69,50%
CUP	1701	24194	4126	9830	39851	60,70%	24,66%	4,20%	10,35%	40,40%	59,60%

Source: Own creation.

In summary, with respect to the role played by the organization of Catalan political parties on their Facebook followers' behavior it can be stated that (1) The type of party (mass party/ catch-all party) seems not to have any influence on the behavior of the Catalan parties' Facebook followers; (2) Small-parties (Party Size) such as CUP and C's have more engaged and committed (comments, likes and shares) Facebook followers; (3) In terms of institutionalization, the less institutionalized (CUP and C's) parties have the most active (comments, likes and shares) Facebook followers; (4) The PSC's interior conflict might be one of the elements of its low level of Facebook followers; (5) The government agreement of CIU and ERC could be one of the factors which explains their similar figures in almost all the dimensions of their Facebook followers' behavior; (6)

The centralization of the parties' decisions and their ideology seems to do not have any influence on their Facebook followers' behavior. Therefore, our H2 could be only partially corroborated.

H3- The Catalan political parties' behavior on their Facebook pages is influenced not only by the parties' organizational characteristics but also by the Catalan political agenda and the issues at stake.

During our period of analysis (15th January-15th February) the Catalan political agenda has been shaped by three issues: the Declaration of Sovereignty of the Parliament of Catalonia (Nationalism) and the *Barcenas* (Corruption) and the *Camarga* affairs (Corruption). Therefore, according to our hypothesis the Catalan political parties Facebook behavior should not have been only shaped by parties' organizational characteristics but also by these issues. In fact in Table 8 we can observe different elements: (1) C's (41,17 of posts related to corruption affairs), CIU (58,32 of posts related to the Nationalism issue), ERC (52,17 of the posts linked to the Nationalism issue) and PSC (47,82) seem to follow the Catalan political agenda. On the other hand, ICV, CUP and PP concentrate their Facebook activity on posting about other issues related to the Left-Right aixs; (2) Catch-all parties (C's, PP and CIU) diversify their posting activity (with values in the *Others* dimension of: 50,01; 34,48 and 27,15 respectively) much more than the other Mass-parties; (3) The governance agreement reached by ERC and CIU (based on the Declaration of Sovereignty of Catalonia) seems to have shaped their Facebook behavior for CIU and ERC (as we have mentioned below) concentrated their posts on the Nationalism issue; (4) With regard to party size we observe that Small-parties such as C's (41,17%) and CUP (45,55%) concentrate their posting activity more than the other type of parties; (5) In terms of the role played by the parties' position with respect to the government/opposition dimension the only possible relation that can be deducted from Table 8 is that the party of government (CIU) is the one that published most posts related to the Nationalism issue; (6) In terms of interior conflict, the case of the PSC shows us that since this issue is the source of its interior conflict it has also been the source of the majority of its posts (47,82); (7) In terms of institutionalization we do not observe any relation between institutionalized parties and new parties with respect to their type of posts; With regard to ideology there is a clear relation between some parties such as CUP (45,45), ICV (55,84) and PP (34,6) regarding their posts (Left-Right) and also with the Catalan nationalist parties CIU (58,32) and ERC (52,17). Yet in that dimension we have two fringe cases: PSC (with 47,82 of its posts linked to the Nationalism issue) and C's (with 41,17 of its posts related to corruption). Last but not least, it does not seem that the degree of centralization of the decisions could be linked to the issues of the Catalan parties' Facebook posts. Consequently, taking into account all these statements we can corroborate the H3 hypothesis.

Table 8: The relation between the Catalan political parties posts and the issues of the Catalan political Agenda (15th January- 15th February)

PARTIES POSTS	NATIONALISM (%)	CORRUPTION (%)	LEFT-RIGHT (%)	OTHERS (%)
C's (34)	2,94	41,17	5,88	50,01
CUP (55)	20	9,09	45,45	25,46
ICV (77)	9,09	23,37	55,84	11,7
PP (52)	30,76	15,38%	34,6	34,48
PSC (69)	47,82	7,24	28,98	15,96
CIU (48)	58,32	8,3	6,25	27,15
ERC (46)	52,17	17,39	26,08	4,36

Source: Own creation.

Conclusions and Future Research

This paper has presented an overview of the Facebook behavior of the Catalan political parties. We have measured the Facebook behavior of the Catalan political parties from a triple perspective: 1) The Catalan parties' organizational point of view; 2) The Catalan parties Facebook followers' behavior; 3) The political environment in which the Catalan parties are embedded.

From the organizational perspective we have demonstrated that the organizational characteristics of the Catalan political parties shape their Facebook behavior (H1). With regard to the Catalan parties Facebook fllollowers' behavior, we have concluded that even if it seems to exist a link between their behavior and the organizational characteristics of the Catalan political parties that relation is less clear than the link between the organizational features of the Catalan parties and their Facebook behavior (H2). Last but not the least, we have corroborated that it exists an influence which is exerted by the salient issues of the Catalan political agenda (15th January- 15th February 2013) on the Catalan parties' Facebook behavior (H3).

Notwithstanding, a number of complementary hypotheses remain to be tested. Firstly, it is reasonable to assume that other characteristics of political parties play a role in explaining the Catalan parties' Facebook behavior. For instance, the core goals sought by parties (Römmele, 2003) or the perception of the party leaders with regard to the role that should play the Social Networking Sites (Lynch and Hogan, 2012) in the parties' communication strategy. Secondly, it might be also interesting to identify the socio-demographic characteristics of the Facebook party followers and to deeply research the Facebook interaction activity between parties and their Facebook followers. Last but not least, regarding the role played by the salient issues of the

political agenda in parties' Facebook behavior, it could be interesting to analyze the parties' generation, appropriation and diffusion of these issues.

In a nutshell, with respect to the broader debate on cyber-politics this research implies that Social Networking Sites are blurring the control exerted by political parties over the communication flows on account of an increased role of users (Bimber, Flanagin & Stohl, 2012). Yet it also shows that organization still matters and that influence is also affected by the political environment in which parties are embedded.

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