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### **ST33. Communication politique et mobilisation électorale. Bilan et perspectives des dispositifs d'enquête**

### ***ST33. Political communication and electoral mobilization. State of the art and perspectives for research design***

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### **Why bother? Electoral campaigns development and their effectiveness in the case of the 2009 EU elections**

#### **Abstract**

The activities of candidates in European Parliament election campaigns have been mostly overlooked in the political science literature, partly because of the 'second order' nature of the elections and partly because of predominance of electoral systems that pool votes at the party-level, rather than the candidate level. The 2009 European Election Candidate Study allows us a first opportunity to empirically investigate EP candidates' campaigns in-depth and to assess the extent to which they really are 'second order campaigns'. This paper seeks firstly to explore the effectiveness of candidates' campaigns in terms of electoral gains. We then investigate the influence exercised by ballot structure over campaign effectiveness and three stylized dimensions of candidate campaigning: intensity of effort, campaign focus (party or candidate) and campaign communications strategy (campaign tools). We find that there is no evidence for campaign effectiveness among candidates who compete in closed list electoral systems, but some evidence that campaigns are electorally beneficial in open list systems. We also find that open list campaigns are more personally intense than closed list campaigns.

#### ***Introduction***

This piece of research explores the campaigning activities of candidates in a context where it is surprising that any campaigning takes place at all: we examine candidate-level campaigning in the 2009 European Parliament (EP) elections. The amount of information on EP candidate campaigns at our disposal is currently rather limited, with only few studies having focused on the subject. While two recent studies have re-opened this field of enquiry (Bowler and Farrell 2011; Giebler and Wüst 2011); they come in the wake of a long hiatus going back to the 1979 campaign (Blumler, Fox et al. 1982; Blumler 1983; Blumler and Fox 1983). Moreover, even when candidate studies were conducted for the 1979 EP election, the issue of candidate campaign activity did not feature; Giebler and Wüst (2011) note that 'the 1979 pre-election EP candidate survey did not even contain a single question on campaigning'.

The uninspiring nature of EP elections has been the primary reason for scholarly neglect of the study of EP candidate campaigns. EP elections have been characterized by little interest in the media and in the electorate. A long line of research going back to Reif and Schmidt's (1980) piece has argued that local and European elections have a 'second order' character –

because they do not lead to the formation of a national-level executive: the primary locus of perceived political power in the modern state. This characteristic of EP elections has several empirical consequences, which have been well-researched over the years since Reif and Schmidt's (1980) initial insight (Marsh and Mikhaylov 2008). One observable consequence of this characteristic of EP elections has been consistently low turnout, with recent research even arguing that EP elections may depress turnout generally, as they inculcate habits of non-voting among those not yet socialized into habitual voting (Marsh and Mikhaylov 2008; Franklin and Holbalt 2011; Holbalt and Franklin 2011). A second major consequence of an election being 'second order' is that voters and elites conceptualize its results as being primarily meaningful as a signal to the national government of the day, rather than conferring a mandate for action at the European level to those elected. EP elections are often conceptualized as second order *national* elections (Marsh 1998). In such an election campaign, it appears unlikely that individual candidates will be able to exert too much influence in their own right, as voters and media are disinterested in the campaign, and, to the extent that they care, view it as a referendum on the performance of the incumbent government.

Moreover, for those interested in the effects of candidates' electoral campaigns, EP elections appear to be a particularly challenging context because of the electoral systems in use. After a hugely protracted period of debate, which began when direct elections to the EP were first seriously contemplated in the 1970s, a 2002 Council decision determined that for EP elections in all member states must be based on proportional representation. However, there is a variety of electoral mechanisms that permit proportional representation to be achieved, either via a party list or single transferable vote electoral system; the Council decision did not include guidelines on the type of proportional system to be adopted. While PR-STV pools votes at the candidate-level, list-based PR systems pool votes at the party-level. This means that individual candidates are more directly beneficiaries or victims of their party's overall performance in list systems than in PR-STV. Only two very small countries, Ireland and Malta, who collectively elect a mere 17 MEPs, use a single transferable vote proportional representation (PR-STV) system. In all other countries in the EU, some form of list system is employed (Bowler and Farrell 2011).

Given that, European Parliament elections seem to be a particularly hostile ground for electoral campaign effort. Such a low level of public and media attention towards campaign *per se*, and towards candidates' activities in particular should both depress candidates' campaign effort and the effect of campaigning at large. As such, we would anticipate that, given the preponderance of electoral systems that do not emphasize candidates' individual performances, EP elections should provide candidates with few incentives to engage intensively in the campaign. Secondly, we would expect campaign activities to be rather ineffective in this particular case. The debate on the effectiveness of electoral campaigns has mostly showed that campaigns matter (REF TO BE INSERTED: Gerber APRR, 1998; A. Gerber and D. Green, 2000). However, evidence of very little - or even neglectable - effect of campaigns also exist (Parties without partisans) and the case of EP election may provide further support for such an argument.

With regard to candidates' activities the case of European elections is particularly intriguing. Bowler and Farrell's (Bowler and Farrell 2011) piece looks at the reported campaign activities of respondents to a 2006 MEP survey and they argue that 'for candidates (...) election to the EP may well be of far more than second-order importance and, hence, they are likely to exert genuine efforts to win the elections' (p. 4). They find that over three quarters of MEPs (78%) report that they personally worked 30 hours a week or more on campaigning during the weeks before the 2004 elections.

The 2009 European Election Candidate Study (EECS), the source of data that we analyze in this research, confirms this intuition; candidates engage in campaign effort in the run up to EP elections. In figure 1 below we plot the distribution of self-reported campaign spending by candidates who responded to the EECS. Self reported campaign spending is plotted by type of candidate and election outcome in Figure 1. The amount of money invested by candidates on their campaigns is striking: the average candidate in the 2009 EP election spent just over 18,000 euros on his campaign. Furthermore, among candidates who had a serious chance of winning the election as estimated by the EECS team<sup>1</sup> there is evidence of significantly higher levels of expenditure: the average for candidates who were deemed either ‘safe’ or ‘doubtful’ was 44,306 euros of campaign expenditure.

FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

In a context where systemic elements as well as contingent elements should depress campaign activities, a rather intense form of campaign effort is observed. Put simply, why should they bother to campaign at all? The answer, as we stand, is that we don’t know *why* they bother, but it is clear that they *do* bother. Whether or not candidates’ campaign efforts are then effective at winning votes is our other object of interest in this paper. We therefore provide the first EU-level analysis of whether candidates’ electoral campaigns had any discernible impact on their chances of becoming an MEP using novel data made available by the 2009 EECS. While many characteristics go into a successful campaign, the principal finding from campaign effectiveness research across the world - discussed below- is that spending matters, and we seek to find out whether this was the case in the 2009 EP elections. Overall, there is a relatively strong correlation between spending and winning in these data – as evidenced by the higher levels of spending among successful candidates (compared to unsuccessful candidates) in Figure 1. On average, the 85 victorious MEPs who reported spending figures to the EECS spent just over 60,000 euros on their campaigns, whereas the 928 unsuccessful candidates spent an average of just under 15,000 euros. However, it is possible that this bivariate relationship may simply tell us that expenditure is correlated with candidates’ *pre*-campaign probabilities of winning a seat. Incumbent and serious candidates, as well as candidates from large parties spent more money on the 2009 EP campaign than no hoper or small party candidates (Giebler and Wüst {Giebler , 2011 #363}). In the first part of our analysis we therefore investigate whether reported spending levels correlate with electoral success among CS respondents, when other relevant factors that correlate with both spending and electoral success are held constant.

When looking at campaign effort and its effectiveness, we consider the importance to candidates of electoral system ballot structures, which vary across the candidates competing

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<sup>1</sup> The following excerpt from the CS codebook ( Giebler, Haus, and We\_els (2010) explains how this classification was arrived at by the survey team: ‘This variable presents information on the candidate’s probability to get elected. The categorization is based on the candidates list position in relation to the potential number of seats won by his or her party. For countries with completely open lists or equivalent systems, all candidates were set on the same list position.

The potential seats are based on pre-election seat predictions made by Hix et al. (2009). To incorporate uncertainty, the standard deviation of discrepancy between the predictions and the seats that were actually won was calculated for each country. Candidates with a list position below the predicted seats minus one standard deviation (rounded) were classified as safe. Candidates with a list position above the predicted seats plus one standard deviation (rounded) were classified as unpromising. All other candidates were classified as doubtful’. (p. 203).

in the 2009 EP elections. We hypothesize that candidate campaign effects<sup>2</sup> should be primarily visible in systems employing ‘open’ or STV ballot structures. In these systems, candidates can influence their own fate during the campaign by directly winning votes; hence we would anticipate that campaigning might be electorally meaningful. We argue that campaign effects at the candidate-level should *not* be significant under ‘closed’ and ‘ordered’ list ballot structures. Under such structures the candidate’s opportunity to influence their personal electoral fate plays out before the campaign begins, and relates to their placement on the party list. Once placed, candidates can only seek to influence their likelihood of success indirectly – by boosting their party’s overall vote share. We find empirical support for our hypotheses – there is evidence of a small but significant effect of spending on candidate success in the group of countries employing open lists and PR-STV, but no evidence of campaign effects in the group employing closed and ordered lists.

In the second part of our analysis, we build on our finding that campaign effects differ across ballot structures, and examine the role of ballot structure in explaining why the candidates and their campaign teams behaved as they did during the campaign. We show that, while there are few electoral paybacks accruing from candidate campaigns in closed list systems, candidates nonetheless spend similar amounts of money in closed and open list campaigns. However, we argue that closed list and open list campaigns do differ in several ways. We describe two dimensions of political campaigning: 1) Intensity of expenditure and effort 2) Campaign focus. We demonstrate that, on average, candidates in closed list systems performed quite intensive campaigns, which focused more attention on the party (and less on the individual candidate). Candidates in open list systems, on average, performed more personally intensive campaigns, with more focus on the candidate than those in closed list systems. We conclude the article with some reflections on the relevance of our findings to the ongoing debate about the EU’s ‘democratic deficit’. Both closed and open list candidates acted in a manner that fits with the electoral incentives imposed on them by ballot structure. In the next section, we discuss the EECS data that we use to perform our analysis – outlining some of the strengths and weaknesses of these data.

### ***Data and methods– the challenges and opportunities afforded by the European Election Candidate Study***

The data we use here are the results of the European Election Candidate Study (EECS) 2009. These data represent a hugely promising and novel source of insight for students of EU-level politics. While we focus here on the topic of political campaigning, the questionnaire covers a very wide range of issues of interest to political scientists in a range of sub-disciplines and is well-documented. Bowler and Farrell (2011) pioneered the use of political elites studies to understand campaign dynamics at the EU level. Their analysis illustrates the analytical leverage that candidate studies provide for understanding political campaigns in the EU. However, the scope of the challenge in collecting and analyzing such data are also considerable. We outline here some of the issues related to the dataset derived from the EECS.

A first issue concerns the overall response rate to the survey: approximately 6,500 candidates in the 27 member states were approached by the research team conducting the survey (EES, 2010) but the response rate was only 20%. The final dataset thus contains 1,346 observations

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<sup>2</sup> Which we operationalise as an observable relationship between candidate spending and candidate likelihood of winning a seat, holding other factors constant.

as individual candidates. Giebler and Würst (2011) inform us that ‘there is significant variation by country, ranging from 4.4% in Bulgaria to 42.9% in Sweden, as well as between parties’. As such, the survey data is not entirely satisfactory as representative of the entire population of candidates running for election. As a consequence of the uneven distribution of returned questionnaires the structure of the data results problematic for the analyst. As we know from the ‘second order’ literature discussed above, the EU election is best conceptualized as a set of national-elections used by the electorate to communicate to national governments. This means that national context matters dramatically for understanding the performance of a given candidate in the election – and a strategy or characteristic that is successful in one system may not be successful in another. Therefore, if the country level differences are not properly accounted for, there is a danger of one arriving at ‘false positive’ conclusions (also known as Type I Errors) in data that are clustered in this way. In other words, there is a high risk of thinking that we have found a significant effect, when no such effect actually exists. As such, one must seek to employ statistical techniques that acknowledge these features of the data – although this can be more difficult when the outcome being studied is binary (as it is in this case) and where there are very few observations in some of the clusters (as there are with these data).

Finally, we may ask ourselves about the reliability of responses provided. The variable that we employ in this analysis as a proxy for campaign intensity is the amount of money that candidates report having spent on the campaign. We are unable to provide an independent check on whether candidates are either honest or accurate about the monies that they devoted to the campaign. As we saw in figure 1, there are promising signs that the data are meaningful – successful candidates spend more than their unsuccessful counterparts, and candidates with a serious chance at winning spend more than no-hopers towards the bottom of the party lists. In any case, absent any objectively audited, publicly available EU-wide data on campaign expenditure, the best that we can currently do is to ask the candidates.

While taking these problems into account, we must acknowledge that the EECS data represent the most complete source of information on candidates for EP elections ever made available to date. The questionnaire was sent to candidates on both digital and paper versions; it contained a rich battery of questions on campaign activities. Therefore, we dispose of very detailed information on what levels of campaign intensity and types of activities candidates implemented during the campaign. In the analysis that follows, we seek to exploit this opportunity to learn about candidates’ campaigns for the 2009 EP elections. However, we would urge readers to bear the above limitations in mind throughout our analysis.

Despite the caveats originating from the dataset, the case of European parliament election represents an important test for the ‘money matters’ claims. Finding that such a claim is not falsified in the case of EP elections equates to prove the ‘Sinatra inference’- if I can make it here I can make it anywhere (Evaluating methodology in international studies, pag 144). For national level elections, campaign spending has been a matter of scholarly interest for many years now; a number of US-based studies (Jacobson 1978; Jacobson 1990; Johnston 1997; Gerber 1998; Carty and Eagles 1999) have consistently found that campaign expenditure by candidates is positively related to electoral performance. Further validation of this finding can be found in alternative political contexts, which use candidate-based electoral systems including: the UK (Pattie, Johnston et al. 1995), Canada (Carty and Eagles 1999), Australia (Forrest, Johnston et al. 1999), Ireland (Benoit and Marsh 2003; Benoit and Marsh 2003) and France (Palda and Palda 1998). Benoit and Marsh’s (2003; Benoit and Marsh 2003) work has particularly moved the field forward by separating the causes of spending from its effects. Even when all of the things that we know affect spending are controlled for (party affiliation,

incumbency, party seniority etc.) there is still evidence of a strong relationship between spending and electoral success in national elections using candidate-based electoral systems. As such, there is considerable academic consensus on the finding that, while not being the only predictor of electoral success, candidate spending is positively related to candidate electoral success. To date, the theory has not been tested in particularly hostile cases as the EP election context. In so doing, we aim to contribute to the literature by assessing whether the association between spending and electoral gains is proved true under the ‘Sinata inference’.

## *Analysis*

### ***1. Did campaign expenditure influence electoral success?***

Fewer studies have focused on estimating the mechanisms that relate expenditure to success. Those studies that have done so have focused on the impact of specific campaign tools (rather than overall expenditure) on candidate performance; and a number of research projects have found a positive correlation between the use of certain campaign tools and winning votes in national elections. Gibson and McAllister (Gibson and McAllister 2006; Gibson and McAllister 2008) found that in Australia, party support during the campaign and length of campaign preparation, as well as being active in cyberspace, were significant predictors of electoral success for both the 2004 and 2007 federal elections. Pattie and Johnston found mixed evidence on the effectiveness of door to door and telephone canvassing; the latter playing a marginal role compared to the former in the case of the 1997 local UK election. In a recent study based on data from the 2007 Irish candidate survey, Marsh (2010) found that a number of campaign activities (posters, billboards, attending social gathering and holding clinics) were positively correlated with electoral performance. In a similar study of the 2007 Irish election, this time looking at the entire population of candidates, Sudulich and Wall (2010) found that posters, leaflets and other unsolicited electoral material are significant predictors of electoral success. The same study, while controlling for overall candidate and party spending, was able to indicate that certain electoral activities are more likely than others to bring electoral gains.

However, given the particularly low levels of public interest surrounding EP elections and the overwhelming predominance of party-list PR systems in the elections that we discussed in the introduction, we may expect candidate campaign spending to have little or no impact in deciding the election outcomes. More formally:

H<sub>1</sub>: A candidate’s individual campaign spending in EP elections has little or no significant relationship with that candidate’s chances of winning a seat, *ceteris paribus*.

The *ceteris paribus* qualifier on this hypothesis is an important one, as several factors correlate with both electoral spending and electoral success, and therefore must be controlled for to avoid causal misattribution. The factors that we control for in our analysis are as follows:

- i) Type of candidate – whether the candidate was considered to be ‘safe’, ‘doubtful’ or ‘unpromising’ in terms of their electoral prospects, as determined by the EECS team (method described in footnote 1). Essentially, this variable captures the likelihood that a candidate will be elected, given the predicted size of their party vote and their place on the party list.
- ii) Incumbency – was the candidate an incumbent MEP or not? Incumbent MEPs may be expected both to spend more on their campaign (due to resource availability and professional commitment) and to be more successful in a campaign (due to their recognisability and

loyalty built up during their tenure).

iii) Predicted party seat share – estimated national-level seat share of the candidate’s party pre-election (S. Hix 2009). Overall, members of larger parties may be expected to both spend more on campaigns (greater resources) and receive more votes (large party brand) than members of small parties.

iv) Membership of a government party – one of the major findings of the second order election literature is that government parties tend to be punished at EP elections (Marsh 1998). As government party members may also avail of more resources than non-government party members, we also control for this variable in our analysis.

We employed the campaign expenditure item on the EECs to measure campaign spending. This item read as follows:

*‘Thinking about your campaign budget, what would be your best estimate of the financial resources you use for your campaign (including party funds, donations, and private funds)?’.*

All responses were converted to euro values to ensure across country comparability. In line with the previous work on campaign spending and electoral success cited above, we used the natural log of the reported campaign expenditure figure to prevent outlier values from distorting our analysis and to capture the marginally diminishing returns brought by increases in campaign expenditure. Moreover, we perform a control for national levels of electoral expenditure by dividing individual candidates expenditures by the national average. As the national mean spending varies dramatically from country to country, this type of weighted measure gives a more accurate account of electoral spending.

*Electoral System Type:* We employ a taxonomy developed by Bowler and Farrell (2011) which classifies the electoral systems in the 2009 EP elections according to the opportunities that they afford voters to choose the specific candidates from a party list who will represent them. This classification builds on previous work on the role of ballot structure design on the behavior of voters and representatives (Carey and Shugart 1995; Farrell and Scully 2007). The key distinction here for our purposes separates candidate-based from party-based ballot structures. Party-based ballot structures offer candidates little chance of improving their chances of electoral success once their place on the party list has been determined. ‘Closed list’ systems operate in some of the largest member states, including: Britain, France, Germany, and Spain. Under such systems, the candidate cannot leapfrog the co-partisans above them on their party list by securing personal votes. All votes accrue to the party, and voters cannot change party list orderings. Closed list candidates must hope that their party wins enough seats to see them elected. Thus, the only way that closed list candidates can influence their chance of winning a seat is indirectly – by improving the national performance of their party. ‘Ordered’ list systems operate in the Netherlands, Austria, and Slovenia. Under ordered list systems voters are presented with pre-ordered lists of candidates (with ordering determined by the parties) and can vote either for the party (implicitly accepting the list ordering) or can give individualized support to a candidate. However, candidates need a relatively high number of personal votes to change the party list ordering. Therefore, under ordered list ballot structures, there are some opportunities for candidates to benefit from their personal vote share and move up the party list, but in reality this rarely occurs. In practice then, ‘closed’ and ‘ordered’ list systems have similar effects in terms of the incentives that they offer candidates who seek electoral success, as such we group them together under heading of ‘closed’ systems (Bowler and Farrell, 2011). Under such systems, a candidate’s personal likelihood of being elected is determined by their placement on the party list, relative to the number of seats that the party is expected to win – this is why Bowler and Farrell argue

that closed and ordered list systems can be seen as ‘party based’ (p. 7).

On the other hand, ‘open’ list systems, while still achieving proportionality at the party level, provide candidates with strong incentives to seek a personal vote. Such systems are employed in Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Ireland and Northern Ireland. Hix and Hagemann (2009) define an ‘open list’ ballot structure as one where: ‘several candidates stand in each district for each party, citizens choose one (or more) candidates (rather than voting for a party), and the number of individual votes each candidate receives has a direct influence on which candidates are elected for each party, such as ‘open-list’ PR, or single-transferable vote (STV)’. Under open list systems, while the party’s overall vote share is still highly significant to the candidate’s chances of winning a seat, candidates can nonetheless expect that their campaign activities may improve their personal chances of being elected.

This distinction in ballot structure types leads us to reason that, if there are any campaign effects to be found in EP elections, they are most likely to be found among candidate competing in ‘open’ list systems. This leads us to hypothesize that:

H<sub>2</sub>: A candidate’s individual campaign spending in EP elections has little or no significant relationship with that candidate’s chances of winning a seat when that candidate is competing in a closed list system, but that there may be some discernible (positive) relationship under open list systems, *ceteris paribus*.

Our dependent variable is a simple binary measure of electoral success. All candidates who became an MEP after the election were scored ‘1’ and all candidates who did not were scored ‘0’. To accommodate the structure of the data described above, we employ a logistic regression with country-clustered standard errors. The analysis was implemented using the STATA 10 statistical package, and replication codes and data are available from the authors. Substantively meaningful predicted probabilities were imputed from this regression output using CLARIFY software. In order to cross-validate our findings over model type, we also employ a multi-level model, with mixed effects - grouping observations at county level in order to ensure that standard errors are not artificially deflated. The multi-level models confirm the robustness of our logistic regressions, but the also point to the fact that, while country level differences matter when we apply the model to the 27 European member states, when we split the sample according to the ballot structure, country differences fade away. That seems to reinforce the claim that code/open list system dichotomy plays a key role in determining EP campaigns.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Remarkably, given the electoral systems in use and the level of public and media apathy that EP elections typically generate (Reif and Schmidt, 1980; Marsh, 1998; Percival et al., 2007), we find that there is a small but seemingly significant overall association between campaign spending and candidates’ electoral success in the 2009 election, even when other variables that might account for why candidates spend more in the first place are controlled for – this finding is cross validated across both statistical techniques employed here. Thus, we can reject H1 (that there is no relationship between candidate spending and electoral performance in the 2009 EP elections) with 99% statistical confidence. The effectiveness of electoral spending seems to be proven even in a particularly hostile context as the European Parliament election; the Sinatra inference does appear to hold. But what is the scale of this effect? CLARIFY output indicates that it is relatively small. Moving from the average reported spend (18,000) to the maximum reported spend (80,000) is related to a 9% increase in a candidate’s

predicted likelihood of being elected. As we might expect, a far more significant predictor is one's position on their party list relative to the anticipated electoral size of the party. We can see that 'unpromising' candidates lived up to their label, and had only a 2% chance of winning with all other variables set at their mean, while 'doubtful' candidates had a 7% chance and 'safe' candidates were not as safe as one might expect given their label, with a 33% chance of winning.

Further analysis reveals confirms the intuition elucidated in Hypothesis 2. While the overall analysis suggests a significant relationship, our theoretical account above suggested that ballot structure conditions this relationship. Indeed, we see in tables 1 and 2 above that spending is not significantly related to winning office when we restrict our analysis to candidates competing under 'closed list' electoral rules. However, we do see the relationship (with a slightly larger coefficient than in the overall population) when we restrict the analysis to candidates competing under 'open' list rules. As we explained above, this is to be expected, because electoral systems determine the extent to which the candidate can translate personalized electoral support in personal electoral success.

## **2. Describing and understanding candidate campaigns**

The literature on campaign change has consistently pointed to a tripartite development of electoral campaigns (Norris, 2000; Gibson and Rômmele, 2001, 2009; Farrell, 2006; Farrell and Schmitt-Beck, 2002). Broadly speaking this classification has captured the relationship between campaigning and communications technology. The most famous classification (Norris, 2000) separates campaigns into 'pre-modern', 'modern' and 'post-modern' ideal types, though in reality elements of all three co-exist in contemporary campaigning (Sudulich and Wall, 2010). In this analysis, however, rather than focusing on the use of campaign tools *per se*, we think about how the above-discussed differential motivations presented by closed and open ballot structure may translate into differences in campaign activities. As such, we ask whether and how closed and open list candidate campaigns differ from each other.

A first, and most obvious dimension of candidate campaigning where we may expect differences is campaign *intensity*. Bowler and Farrell (2011) found no effects of ballot structure on how hard candidates campaign. Nonetheless, candidates competing under open lists do have stronger individual incentives to campaign than candidates in closed lists. Intensity may be thought as the amount of effort put into the campaign by each candidate. We can think of this in two ways. We may think of intensity in terms of hours spent working on the campaign trail, as well as in monetary terms. So, we might hypothesize that open list candidates will conduct more intense campaigns – working longer hours and spending more – than closed list candidates. We test this hypothesis by dividing all candidates into two groups, separating 'closed list' from 'open list' candidates. We then examine whether these groups differ from each other in terms of average levels of campaign intensity. The results of this analysis are displayed in table 3.

TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

Our findings confirm those of Bowler and Farrell (2008) in showing that, in many ways, campaign intensity does not differ too greatly across different ballot structures. In fact, we find no significant differences between the open and closed list groups in terms of money spent, with closed list candidates actually spending slightly more than open list candidates. Furthermore, table 3 shows that candidates' estimates of the amount of hours spent working

by their campaign teams per week do not differ. However, as we also show in table 3, there is a difference in terms of the personal workloads of candidates, and the difference here is enormous. Candidates in open list systems report that spend nearly 18 hours more *per week* on the campaign trail than their closed list counterparts – putting in an EU Working time directive-violating working week of 63.4 hours. Closed list candidates still personally put in over 40 hours per week on the campaign in the last month, but their efforts are eclipsed by their closed list colleagues.

A second dimension of difference that we examine here is the *focus* of the campaign. Bowler and Farrell (2011) found that closed list candidates performed more party oriented campaigns, while open list candidates focused more energy on maximizing personal vote share. While we do not expect that closed list candidates will completely neglect to promote their own qualities, we nonetheless anticipate that they should focus more attention on their party than open list candidates. The converse expectation is that open list candidates, while still promoting their parties, should be more inclined to emphasize their qualities as unique individuals, in order to attract the personal votes that they require to be elected. Again, we test these intuitions by dividing the candidates who responded to the EECS into two groups, and examining differences in the average responses of members of each group. We examine two indicators of campaign focus here. Firstly, we look at the activities undertaken by candidates during the campaign. We seek to separate these into activities that are primarily party-focused from activities that are primarily candidate-focused. Candidates were asked whether or not they had undertaken a range of campaign activities. Several of these items were easily identifiable as party or candidate-centered. For instance, in the case of their web presence, candidates could indicate that they had a webpage maintained and designed by the party, or by themselves. We created two additive indices of these activities, which indicate how many party-focused and candidate-focused activities each candidate undertook during the campaign. We identified 9 candidate-focused activities and 3 unambiguously party-focused activities in the EECS dataset. Table 4 shows how these indices were distributed across our two groups, and indicates that, as anticipated, open list candidates engaged in more candidate-centered activities, and slightly fewer party-centered activities, compared to closed list candidates. Both groups use a higher proportion of possible party centered than candidate centered activities.

#### TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

Secondly, we examine the candidates' responses to the following question, which asked each candidate to subjectively evaluate their campaign's balance between party and candidate focus. The question posed to candidates was:

*'What is the primary aim of your campaign? Where would you place yourself on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means "to attract as much attention as possible for me as a candidate" and 10 means "to attract as much as possible attention for my party"? (Tick just one box.)'*

Again, candidates are divided into open list and closed list groups. The results of this analysis are displayed in table 5. There is a significant difference between the two group means, and this distance is in line with our theoretical expectations: open list candidates focus more campaign attention on attracting attention to themselves than closed list candidates. This is not to suggest that open list campaigns are a party free zone; as open list candidates still rate themselves on average to be more party than individually focused in their campaigns (scoring an average of 6.3 on a 0-10 scale). Looking at the evidence in tables 4 and 5, we conclude

that, while open list campaigns are somewhat more individually orientated than closed list campaigns, they are not monopolized by the individual. This is a promising finding for advocates of open lists, as there is no evidence that they have had a centrifugal effect on EP campaigns – as candidates still promote their party in the campaign.

TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE

***Conclusion: Why should we bother? The importance of campaigns in EP elections***

The literature on campaign change indicates that electoral campaigns are widely regarded as crucial activities for political parties (Farrell 2006) and for the political process at large (Farrell and Schmitt-Beck 2002). From a time when campaigns were attributed little or no effect whatsoever; they are nowadays a constant element of party politics. A number of studies have focused on the fundamental changes that have happened in communication and organizational strategies for electoral campaigns (Farrell and Webb 2000; Farrell and Schmitt-Beck 2002; Schmitt-Beck and Farrell 2002; Farrell 2005), emphasizing how European parties borrowed a number of features from American electoral campaigns (Scammell 1997). As a number of scholars have noticed (Norris 2000; Farrell 2005; Norris 2005), we are now in times of permanent campaigning. Moreover, tools and techniques have changed in terms of the three ‘Ts’ of technology, technicians and techniques’ (Farrell 2006). Scholars have recently focused on the developments in campaign efforts by mapping candidates and parties campaign activities in the run up to elections (Zittel 2007; Fieldhouse and Cutts 2008; Gibson and Rommele 2009; Marsh 2010).

For all that we know about the development of national-level candidate campaigns, however, we currently know very little about the development of EP election candidate campaigns. Deeper conceptions of campaigns see them as instances of information exchange (Lupia and McCubbins, 1997). Indeed, competitive campaigns may be conceptualized as an institution that facilitates (and, indeed, necessitates) the ‘linkage’ (Gallagher, Laver and Mair, 2006: 309) role played by political parties in modern democracy. Competitive elections where each voter can make a free choice at the ballot box, and where the rules and procedures concerning the election mean that the outcome cannot be rigged mean that parties and candidates can only compete through persuading voters. And persuasion cannot take place without some exchange of relevant information. There is an extensive literature exploring the broad question of whether political campaigns can be said to ‘matter’ in the sense of changing the vote intentions of large numbers of citizens (see Farrell and Schmidt-Beck, 2002 for a comprehensive discussion) and the role of political information plays a large part in that debate. Since political campaigns are periods of intense interaction between political elites and citizens over matters of public policy (Manin 1997; Jerit 2004; Kriesi 2008), they provide voters with a significant opportunity to gather information about parties and candidates, and provide parties and candidates with incentives to make such information available. Campaigns serve some informative purpose, with citizens typically better-informed about candidates and their policy stances after the campaign than they were before. A growing list of studies demonstrates that media consumption can affect turnout, party support, candidate choice, and political attitudes toward issues during a campaign (Norris 2000; De Vreese and Boomgaarden 2006).

All of this goes to say that political campaigns are vital events in any democratic political institution. And this is all the more relevant for elections to the EP. Indeed, direct elections to the EP were originally introduced with the intention of providing the EU with a degree of

democratic accountability and legitimacy in its decision making. Subsequent to those early elections, the powers of the EP have expanded dramatically, and it is now a co-equal legislator with the European Council in many areas of vital public policy, affecting the lives of over 500 million European citizens. Hix and Hagemann (2009) cite the arguments made by Walter Hallstein, a former President of the European Commission, when he argued that the EP should be directly elected: [Direct election of the European Parliament will] force those entitled to vote to look at and examine the questions and the various options on which the European Parliament would have to decide in the months and years ahead. It would give candidates who emerged victorious from such a campaign a truly European mandate from their electors; and it would encourage the emergence of truly European political parties' (Hallstein, 1972: 74). However, for such a European mandate to be present, candidates and parties must engage in vigorous campaigns that communicate their ideas and beliefs on European issues to voters, who can then make a reasonably informed choice as to which parties and candidates to support.

Sadly, this has not been the case in direct EP elections thus far – campaigns have been lackluster, and EU issues have rarely penetrated the consciousness of nationally-oriented electorates. The argumentation and evidence presented here indicates that ballot structure has a strong role to play in influencing the nature of EP election campaigns, at the candidate level. Simply put, closed list systems provide candidates with no discernible incentive to campaign personally. Of course, candidates may nonetheless campaign in closed list systems out of a sense of duty, or they may use their campaigns as signals to party elites that they are loyal and active politicians – suitable for positions of responsibility which parties assign in the EP. Our findings clearly indicate that closed list candidates do campaign reasonably vigorously – spending large amounts of money and time on their campaigns, and focusing primarily on promoting the virtues of the parties that they are running for. However, it appears that there is nothing in the electoral system itself that encourages this behavior: we find that spending levels are electorally irrelevant in closed list systems. Under open list systems, on the other hand, spending appears to matter for candidates. Open list candidates put considerably longer personal hours into the campaign, and construct campaigns that put comparatively more emphasis on their own qualities (relative to closed list candidates). Nonetheless, open list campaigners do still focus considerable attention on their parties – and the general inclination of campaigns is still more towards a party than a candidate focus. Hix and Hagemann (2009) argue that a move towards open list electoral systems across member states could significantly improve the legitimacy of the EP parliament members by allowing voters, rather than parties, to choose the individuals who will represent them in the EP. They find that voters are more likely to turn out, and exhibit higher levels of knowledge of EU politics, when they live in countries operating open lists (with small district magnitude) than in countries operating closed lists. Our findings confirm the intuition that ballot structure matters for EP elections. They suggest that open lists engender more intense and meaningful electoral campaigns for candidates, and that candidates in such campaigns will be slightly more inclined to focus on their own attributes as individuals rather than party members. Overall, it is difficult to deny Hix and Hagemann's conclusion that open list systems should be adopted as 'best practice' electoral standards, if wish to increase the relevance of EP elections to voters and candidates alike (2009).

**Figures and Tables**

Figure 1. Spending By type of candidate and election outcome

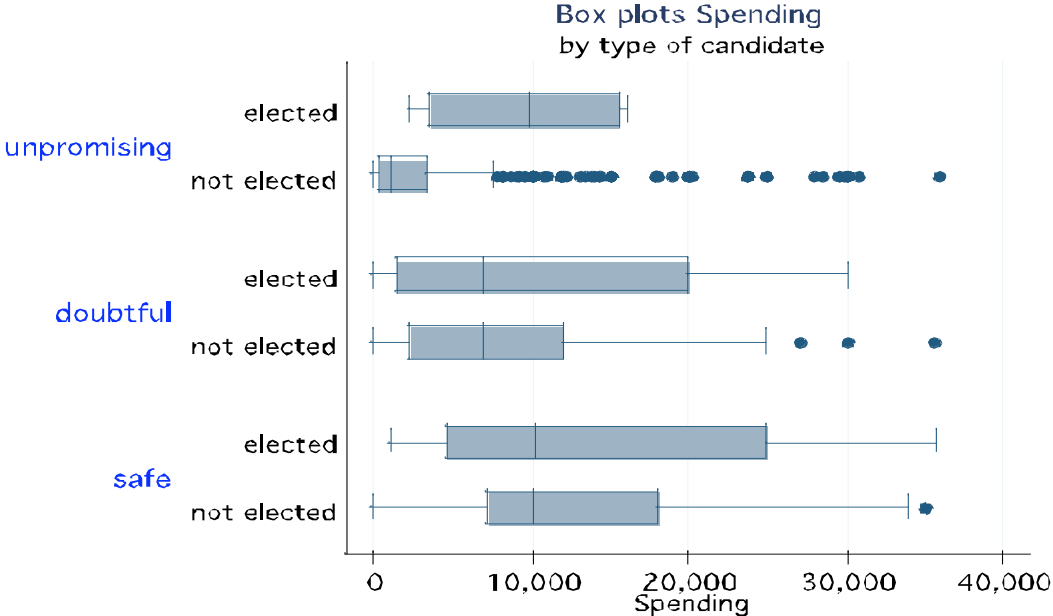


Table 1. Logistic regression likelihood of winning office by electoral system type

	27 Countries	Closed list systems	Open list systems and PR-STV
	(1)	(2)	(3)
<b>Spending (log)</b>	<b>0.356***</b> (0.110)	<b>0.253</b> (0.172)	<b>0.440**</b> (0.188)
Party in Government	-0.0347 (0.500)	-1.132 (1.002)	0.406 (0.568)
Distance from midterm	0.0102 (0.00817)	-0.00838 (0.00766)	0.0108 (0.00957)
Type of candidate	-1.783*** (0.472)	-3.408*** (1.006)	-0.944** (0.443)
Predicted party seat share	3.274 (2.551)	7.899*** (2.667)	2.332 (2.332)
Incumbency	3.493*** (0.612)	3.097*** (0.819)	
Constant	-2.845 (2.001)	2.461 (3.382)	-5.304** (2.497)
Observations	796	509	278
Pseudo R2	.54	.69	.27

Robust standard errors in parentheses \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

Std. Err. adjusted for 27 clusters (country) in model 1

Std. Err. adjusted for 15 clusters (country) in model 2

Std. Err. adjusted for 12 clusters (country) in model 3, incumbency is dropped

#### Predicted probabilities of electoral success

	Predicted probability	Shift
All estimators at the mean	2%	
Shift from $\_$ to $\_+$	4%	+2%
Shift from $\_$ to 90% percentile	5%	+3%
Shift from $\_$ to max	11%	+9%
Toc Safe	33%	
Toc Doubtful	7%	-26%
Toc Unpromising	2%	-31%

Table 2. MLM likelihood of winning office by electoral system type

Standard errors in parentheses \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1  
 In model 3 incumbency is dropped

	27 Countries	Closed systems	Open list systems and PR-STV
	(1)	(2)	(3)
<b>Spending (log)</b>	<b>0.416***</b> (0.123)	<b>0.253</b> (0.166)	<b>0.536***</b> (0.182)
Party in Government	-0.135 (0.462)	-1.132 (0.804)	0.506 (0.599)
Distance from midterm	0.00400 (0.0108)	-0.00838 (0.0102)	0.0194 (0.0204)
Type of candidate	-2.619*** (0.415)	-3.408*** (0.576)	-3.121*** (0.663)
Predicted party seat share	3.241* (1.765)	7.899*** (2.917)	2.375 (2.372)
Incumbency	3.344*** (0.721)	3.097*** (0.835)	
Constant	-1.156 (1.615)	2.461 (2.360)	-1.577 (2.434)
	0.176 (0.321)	-13.53 (363,840)	0.759** (0.336)
Random effects	1.192 (.3829)	1.33e-06 (.482)	2.135 (.7165)
Observations	796	509	278
Number of groups	27	15	12
LR test	***	NS	NS

Table 3. Differences between campaign spending and campaigning time by electoral system

	Closed systems (mean)	Open systems (mean)	Test
Campaign expenditures	19,603€	15,981€	t = 0.9090 p: 0.3636
Team time spent campaigning in the last month (hours per week)	52.4	55.6	t = -0.4368 p: 0.6623
Personal time spent campaigning in the last month (hours per week)	<b>45.2</b>	<b>63.4</b>	t = -5.0647 p: 0.0000

Statistically significance means difference in bold

Table 4. Differences between candidate-focused and party-focused campaign activities, by electoral system

	Closed systems (mean)	Open systems (mean)	Test
Number of candidate-focused campaign activities candidates engaged with Range (0-9)	<b>2.3</b>	<b>3.6</b>	t = -9.0736 p: 0.0000
Number of party-focused campaign activities candidates engaged with Range (0-3)	<b>2</b>	<b>1.6</b>	t = 8.1482 p: 0.0000

Statistically significance means difference in bold

Number of personalized campaign activities a candidate engaged with  
Range 0-9

1. Personal webpage designed / maintained by candidate for the election
2. Personal flyers used for the election campaign?
3. Personal campaign posters used for the election campaign?
4. Personal newspaper ads used for the election campaign?
5. Personal spots on TV used for the election campaign?
6. Personal radio commercials used for the election campaign?
7. Podcasts (audio or video files on the internet) used for the election
8. Weblog (public diary or journal on the internet) used for the election
9. Networking on the net (Myspace, Facebook etc.) used for the election

Number of party-focused campaign activities candidates engaged with

1. Personal webpage designed / maintained by the party for the election
2. Party brochures used for the election campaign?
3. Party posters used for the election campaign?

Table 5. Differences in campaign aims, by electoral system

	Closed systems (mean)	Open systems (mean)	Test
Aim of the campaign Scale 0-10	<b>7.5</b>	<b>6.3</b>	t = 7.4658 p: 0.0000

Verbatim of the question asked in the survey: *What is the primary aim of your campaign? Where would you place yourself on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means “to attract as much attention as possible for me as a candidate” and 10 means “to attract as much as possible attention for my party”?*

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