

Many books and articles devoted to political parties start with an oft-quoted citation from E. E. Schattschneider that „modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of political parties”, which comes from his book published in 1942. Yet already for decades scholars have debated whether parties are in a crisis, whose one of the most visible symptoms is a very low level of public trust, decline in electoral turnout, or decreasing membership figures. Despite this, parties still remain one of the core pillars of modern democracy, and over time they have proven their strong capacity for adaptation to changing environmental conditions. Nowadays the key question concerns parties' relationship with the citizens and the state, and the consequences of tendencies related to the 'anchoring' of the parties to the state, on the one hand, and loosening links with the citizens, on the other. For this reason, understanding the reasons and consequences of party adaptation processes is not only relevant to academic research, but also to the wider audiences interested and engaged or perhaps aiming to get engaged in politics.

The project's research question is: in what ways do political parties adapt to different institutional settings in the same time? So far, the academic literature has studied party adaptation from a diachronic perspective (over time), and the change has been linked to different party models, such as the mass, cadre, 'catch-all' or cartel parties. This project departs from this perspective, because these models are no longer capable of explaining party change, as parties might display different features of different models simultaneously. What is more, the existence of multi-level electoral arenas (such as the national and the supranational ones) shows further the inability of the previous approaches to analyze party adaptation. From these considerations stems the aim of this project, which is to assess extent to which parties organise themselves differently within the same electoral cycle according to the challenges presented by different institutional/electoral arenas. The project will be run in the framework of international cooperation, comprising researchers from five EU member states: Germany, Belgium, Ireland, Italy and Poland. International cooperation will bear fruits both during the project's refinement but also during the data interpretation, analysis and its publication. The leading international partner is Professor Luciano Bardi from the prestigious European University Institute in Florence, Italy.

The research method will consist of the construction of a dataset specifically designed to test five hypotheses derived from the existing literature and concerning the most relevant aspects for the organisation of electoral campaigns (candidates, programmes, professionalization, and finances). In the Polish part of the project, the data will be gathered in 2019 (covering the European Parliament elections and the elections to the Sejm and Senate) and will be both quantitative and qualitative, with the latter resulting from the extensive field work all over Poland.

The findings (in the form of an original dataset the project will produce) and subsequent publications in top international journals have the potential to greatly advance the way in which parties are studied from an electoral perspective, for if the hypotheses are validated, it will focus attention on the impact of institutional environments on parties' organisational natures. This will not only pave the way for a new generation of research into parties, but will provide insights for disciplines that experience similar difficulties in adopting diachronic approaches in organisational analysis, such as economics and sociology