DISCUSSION PAPER

August 2018

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Network parties
A new model to democratise and digitise party politics?

"Progress is the realisation of Utopias." - Oscar Wilde (1854 - 1900)

The following Discussion Paper presents an analysis and attempts to evaluate a new phenomenon on the political scene in Europe – network parties. These political movements distinguish themselves from more traditional and established parties and have managed to shake up party politics in European countries such as Spain, Italy or Poland. This Discussion Paper identifies common features of network parties by looking at best practices and characteristics, especially in the organisational structure and political programmes.

SUMMARY

After a short description of the general context in which network parties arise, this Discussion Paper will list the most characteristic features of *network parties* in comparison with traditional, established parties (based on e.g. a "cartel-party" model[1]). Secondly, a broad definition of a *network party* will be given, and concrete case-studies from Spain, Poland and Iceland will be presented. Finally, the various prospects and challenges related to *network parties* and their innovative style of doing politics will be analysed. The article concludes that there is a deep need to establish an ethical code for the new hybrid ways of doing politics (*online* and *offline*) and ends with certain recommendations for network parties' founders and members, which might limit the potential distortions and abuses related to certain new trends and developments.

1. The term "cartel party" was introduced by Richard Katz and Peter Mair in 1995. It is a term that defines parties with close relation to the state as well as with strong clientelist, coercive, or market linkage. The "cartel party" model was characteristic for the times after 1970 and dominant in the post-industrial societies. The mostly elitist, top-down organisations, with a complex hierarchy and high level of leadership centralisation have rather weak linkages with society.

Thinking ahead.

I. Network Parties and the new paradigm of citizen-centered politics

New *network parties* and their programmes are mushrooming in many crisis-stricken countries in Europe. Innovative political formations that arose from social, grassroots and protest movements, such as *Podemos* at national level and *Barcelona en Comú* at local level (Spain), *Partia Razem* (Poland), or *Píratar* (Iceland) are fundamentally challenging the way public decision-making and civic engagement has been done in the past. These citizen-led political movements, standing out against "professional" politicians and a more traditional way of doing politics, propose alternative models of governance in which citizens change their role from passive members to active decision-makers and equal partners in public administration.

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Tech-savvy leaders and members of these newly emerging movements, together with academics, urban activists and hacktivists, have searched for new ways to open up the processes of public decision-making and to democratise our political system by using instruments of direct citizen participation. In order to develop new ways of doing politics, those *network parties* implement various democratic innovations and experiment with digital tools within their organisation. They aim to facilitate collective decision-making and public deliberation of citizens. Their objective is to effectively fight social exclusion and inequalities, to build democracy open to all, to make use of interactive, participatory digital tools and to build a political sphere not only for the people, but also with the people and by the people.

Placing citizens and their needs at the heart of politics is part of the new paradigm promoted by these new movements and how they do politics. By boosting and using citizens' collective intelligence as well as creating collaborative activist networks at different levels, *network parties* aim to put social change and the common good in the centre of democratic decision-making. Notwithstanding the numerous ideological, structural and organisational challenges, the activity of network parties, their participatory strategies and concrete digital tools have already had an impact on the political landscape and brought new ways of thinking about politics in Europe.

Various progressive political movements emerged in times of the simultaneous and long-lasting economic, political, social and ecological crisis. They promote a new way of thinking about politics and public governance, based on the empowerment of citizens and of decoding and responding to their needs. Their activists portray and perceive themselves as part of the citizenry and define themselves in opposition to political and business elites. They want to be "true representatives" of the people who work for the "common good" and stand up for the rights of the "common people". Instead of maintaining a dichotomy and building strong opposition between state and civil society, their programmes are based on involving citizens and *civil society organisations* (CSOs) in co-decision-making processes on a large scale. They promote collaborative and community-based approaches to doing politics. *Network parties* try to translate the ideals of social justice and democracy into concrete actions. They develop various mechanisms to enact progressive and innovative ideas and their participatory strategies are designed to combat rising inequalities and respond to the negative effects of the crisis in a creative way, by putting into effect democratic innovations.

Thus, based on a collaborative network approach, the development of flat models of organisation, horizontal communication and an active and influential activist base, the *network party* has emerged as a new model for a political party in Europe. *Network parties* are hybrid organisational forms whose activity is based on online participation, public deliberation, crowdfunding, and crowdsourcing. Their structures imitate horizontal, internally democratic movements.

In contrast to more traditional and established parties, *network parties* promote digital collaboration, self-organisation, self-sufficiency at the neighbourhood level and open participation by non-members. The emergence of *network parties* can be considered as a protest against established, traditional cartel-like party politics.[2]

Network parties, founded in the aftermath of economic and political crisis, are following the efforts of mass civic protests to democratise politics and societies. After years of corruption revelations[3] and deepening apathy and political alienation amongst citizens, the founders of *network parties* perceive these phenomena as a threat to democracy as such. They believe that the critical state in which we as humanity find ourselves demands immediate and radical solutions. In response to the widespread (and also widely criticised) 20th century neoliberal trends, in the 21st century local and global civic movements called louder for the replacement of hierarchical social structures, the dominant model of neoliberal economics and continuous GDP growth with alternative models, based on greater cooperation, transparency, new forms of direct democracy and citizen participation, collaborative economy and sustainable development. The ongoing trends in the political, social and economic world trigger not only the "anti-systemic" street protests (such as *Indignados* and the movement *Occupy Wall Street*), but also inspire the creation of constructive projects of socio-political, economic reforms and new models of organising.

The following chapters will look at what this innovative model for parties brings, why is it worth to spread it worldwide and why it should be followed even by old parties.

2. Read more about the "cartel party" model in an article by Katz and Mair from 1995: "Changing Models of Party Organisation and Party Democracy. The Emergence of the Cartel Party".

3. Numerous corruption scandals have been revealed and publicised in all countries where the studied new movements – *network parties* – are currently emerging. The cases from Spain, Poland and Iceland described in the following article show clearly that the occurrence of these scandals motivated and boosted the current leaders and members of network parties to counteraction and getting involved in politics directly. For more information:
https://www.politico.eu/article/spain-corruption-pp-rajoy-never-ending-problem-graft-ignacio-gonzalez/;
https://www.transparency.org/news/pressrelease/20110305_polish_institutions;
https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/28/world/europe/iceland-elections-gunnlaugsson.html.

II. What can traditional and established parties learn from network parties?

One of the most important traits of network parties is the **central role of digital tools**. Those may also be used by more traditional parties for communication, information purposes and campaigning. What is, however, really distinctive for *network parties*, is the broader purpose for which digital tools are used, namely allowing the functioning of democratic, inclusive and participatory co-decision-making procedures and integrating the collective intelligence of party members and citizens into the organisation.

Not only external and internal horizontal communication processes are facilitated by digital tools – they are combined with **mechanisms reinforcing intra-party democracy and collective decision-making**. Direct decision-making processes and public deliberation of members and interested citizens is made possible by online platforms which are interactive and participatory. The use of open-source software and interactive digital platforms allows for greater transparency and accountability. *Network parties* publish regular online reports and use various digital tools to organise general primaries or internal elections, referenda or public consultations. Digital, networked and mobile technologies enable active participation, the co-creation of content, the monitoring of public spending, as well as project tracking. With this digital support, *network parties* establish, maintain and extend their horizontal network-structures, based on local circles, meet-ups, members' assemblies, etc. *Crowdsourcing* and horizontal organisational structures reflect the aspiration of *network parties* to implement more democratic and decentralised models of governance at various levels.

Thanks to this digital "democratic innovation" within the organisation, members, supporters and interested citizens gain real causative power - their voice is considered. Instead of adopting the old passive, static role of mere spectators and passive recipients of public services, citizens involved in participatory processes have

a chance to perceive themselves as co-creators and co-producers of politics. This encourages citizens from all backgrounds to engage, and to take an active part in shaping the party's programme, to develop strategies and to campaign.

"Since network parties emerged in the aftermath of the financial crisis and in opposition to the austerity measures, their roots can often be found in social and/or protest movements."

In contrast to more established parties, whose activities are based on "professional" structures, **network parties are citizen-led political movements in which people – often without previous experience in traditional politics – are in charge**. Since *network parties* emerged in the aftermath of the financial crisis and in opposition to the austerity measures, their roots can often be found in social and/or protest movements.

The new parties often adopt anti-establishment rhetoric and stand against political and business elites. Their anti-establishment ideology is accompanied by a stance towards openness, diversity and pluralism. The conducted discourse and frame analysis, including the rhetoric and language used by the studied movements, demonstrates that *network partie*s construct a universal narrative and spread messages in a more digestible way, combined with a language of inclusion, with frequent references to "the people" or "the society" as a whole.[4]

Network parties' strategy is based on collaboration – creating broad-based alliances and cooperative networks. Often supporting citizen-led initiatives, they promote "issue-based politics" as an alternative to the current competitive party-political system and as response to people who are disillusioned with traditional participation in politics. They also aim at breaking the traditional leftist-rightist divide.

Instead of referring to specific left-wing or right-wing ideologies, the leaders of newly created political movements emphasise "common sense" when taking

political decisions. By reinforcing the voice of "the people" in public discourse, empowering citizens through political education and by means of direct participation, the new political movements' approach can be viewed as an attempt to reinforce democratic values as well as enrich democratic processes. They promote active citizenship and suggest that politicians should act together with citizens, or ideally – all citizens should become politicians in a certain way. Therefore, we can say that the activists of *network parties* act against the "depoliticisation of the citizens".

Another **important feature of network parties is that they are built on grassroots initiatives, crowdsourcing and crowdfunding**. Their political programmes are largely "outsourced" to the membership base, created through an online process, always available to the members and often publicly discussed at all stages of the process. They include party members and citizens in collaborative decision-making processes by designing online participatory platforms and organising offline participatory meetings. This constitutes a great contrast to more established parties in the countries included in this research, with their traditional hierarchical governance mechanisms and pyramidal organisational structures. By bringing the decision-making to the bottom, *network parties* aspire to build democracy construed as the right to participate and decide on all issues of concern to citizens.

"The different form of organisation through horizontal party structures and "network governance" allows the emergence of collective, decentralised and distributed leadership structures."

This different form of organisation through horizontal party structures and network governance allows the emergence of collective, decentralised and distributed leadership structures. Because members of *network parties* favour more direct forms and delegative model of representation, the founders and elected leaders of network parties describe themselves as "authentic" representatives and often see themselves merely as

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4. See fortcoming dissertation of the author.

"spokespeople". **Thus, network parties apply the same strategies as in social movements, e.g. replacing leaders by "facilitators" or "spokespeople".**

Informal relations among the *network parties*' members, who were previously often involved in political and social but non-partisan activity, lean towards assembly-based organisation. The collectively undertaken decisions and other activities planned at the grassroots level are often realised within the extra-institutional area – outside of formal political and social institutions in which social movements operate. This not a fully professionalised way of working, which allows, however, to build various teams of supporters who combine their activity in the party with their working life.

This **citizen-centered perspective** of *network parties* emphasises that not only professional politicians, but also citizens can be decision-makers. In view of network parties, citizens are seen as equally competent as politicians. Network parties believe that the aim of politics is to find solutions and to regulate conflicts in ways which serve all those concerned the best. Power should be shared and politics should be done *with* the people. Thus, politicians should not be members of exclusive established groups ("elites"), such as "cartel parties", but non-exclusive, network-based organisations of citizens. This way, members and leaders of *network parties* go against the procedural vision of democracy, understood merely as a form of government based on popular elections in which politicians govern on behalf of the people. For them, democracy is a form of self-determination and self-government.

Type (model) of a party / characteristic feature	Traditional, established, mainstream, "cartel like" parties in countries included in this research	Network parties in countries included in this research
Organisation and structure	Hierarchical, pyramidal and centralised organisational structures	Horizontal, flat, decentralised and network organisational structures (based on local circles, meet-ups, popular assemblies, etc.)
Leadership	Autocratic and individualistic (usually one-man or few men at the top of the hierarchy), charismatic leaders and group representatives with a free mandate	Democratic, collegial and collective, leaders as facilitators, spokespeople and group representatives with an imperative mandate
Decision making and participation	Mainly top-down decision-making, non-binding consultations, none or pseudo- participation, exclusive and competitive	Mainly crowdsourced decision-making to the bottom membership, based on binding consultations or collective, participatory decision-making, inclusive and consensus-based
Use of technologies and communication	None or privately-owned software, unilateral communication to spread unidirectional information from top-down	Open-source and/or community owned software, participatory and deliberative online platforms, forums and voting systems, multilateral, network based, interactive communication to spread information and co-create content
Style of politics and role of citizens	Professional and technocratic, based on particular interest groups, directed to individual gain, depolitisation and division of citizens, citizens as passive subordinates	Based on volunteering, social activism and community organising, citizen-centered and issue-based, politisation and integration of citizens as co-decision-makers and equal partners
Preferred model of democracy	Representative, majoritarian democracy (sometimes hybrid with direct democracy)	Hybrid of direct, participatory, deliberative and grassroots democracy
Political stand / philosophy	Clear left-right division, often also with conservatism and elitism	Blurred or insignificant left-right division, progressivism and egalitarianism
Gender issues	Male-dominated, promoting and practicing patriarchy	Promoting and practicing the feminisation of politics
Transparency and ethics	Low or none norms and standards of transparency and ethics	High norms and standards of transparency and ethics (ethical codes)
Funding	Mainly dependent on state funding and resources provided by the state as well as big companies	Mainly crowd-funded and dependent on private donations for specific projects

Table 1. Comparison chart: *Network parties* vs. traditional parties

III. Case-studies of network parties

The above-mentioned features describe a model of a *network party*, elaborated on the basis of best practices of new movements and their characteristics. However, considering the complexity of the real-world situations, the model of a *network party* can be considered as a generalisation.[5] How does the ideal features relate to the real case-studies and how does this model of new parties work in practice?

The following description of four cases of *network parties* will help us to better understand the social, economic and political context and conditions in which these new progressive movements emerge. This way, we will also get a wider view of and a broader insight into innovative strategies, procedures and mechanisms by which these movements can be classified as *network parties*.

BARCELONA EN COMÚ, SPAIN

One of the prominent and successful examples of a *network party*, which gained considerable support and won the elections, is *Barcelona en Comú* (*"Barcelona in common"*). This collaborative platform, which arose from the Spanish social, grassroots and protest movement *Indignados*, operates mainly at the local and regional level in Catalonia. The movement was co-founded in June 2014 by a number of social, ecological, feminist, anarchist and left-wing activist groups.[6]

Thanks to their involvement in local politics and their victory in municipal elections in May 2015, Barcelona's political landscape has been changed. Members of this "citizen platform" – a movement that defines itself in opposition to traditional and conservative political parties – experiment with digital tools and design online participatory platforms in order to facilitate direct decision-making processes and public deliberation.

Although the municipal group of *Barcelona en Comú* (formed by the mayor, city councillors and secretaries) has an executive power, an open-structured network of around 1,500 *Barcelona en Comú* activists take strategic and political decisions during the organisation's plenary assemblies held twice a month, what keeps the movement "horizontal in structure and collective in spirit."[7]

Since the Catalan capital is administered by *Barcelona en Comú*, it has been transformed from a city geared almost exclusively to mass tourism, sports events (such as the 1992 Olympics), industry, road infrastructure, private residential housing, and business, trade and finance events into a city that values sustainable development, social entrepreneurship, grassroots civic initiatives much more, with a focus on social policies, investments in public transport and increased participation of locals in decision-making. The progressive electoral proposals were mostly aimed at increasing social security and democratising the city's decision-making. The demand for decentralisation was primarily a response to the inhuman treatment of indebted citizens by state authorities and the favourable treatment of banks, private investors and developers since the collapse of the real estate market and the economic crisis in 2008.

In response to the growing frustration of hundreds of thousands of people throughout Spain, the activist Ada Colau – the co-founder and the main leader of *Barcelona en Comú* – created the *Platform for People Affected by Mortgages*[8], a grassroots organisation that works against evictions and safeguards the rights of tenants. Thanks to her involvement, she has built a vast network of contacts – from social activists, co-workers, NGOs to lawyers, IT professionals and academics. Thanks to her popularity, she was a key personality for *Barcelona en Comú* to win the municipal elections and this led her to become the mayor in June 2015.[9] At present, Barcelona en Comú has Ada Colau as a mayor and 11 members (6 of which are women) as Barcelona City Council deputies.[10]

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5. While the models are intended to "help put the spotlight on broad differences, general tendencies, and dynamic tensions in forms of mobilisation" (Bennett and Segerberg 2013, p. 48-49), the world is, of course, far messier than the model.

6. *Barcelona en Comú* was a merger of various Catalan movements, such as: regional group of *Podemos, ICV – Initiative for Catalonia Greens, EUiA – United and Alternative Left, Procés Constituent and Equo*.

7. Quote from Kate Shea Baird: "Beyond Ada Colau: the common people of Barcelona en Comú" 27 May 2015 in *Open Democracy*: https://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/kate-shea-baird/beyond-ada-colau-common-people-of-barcelona-en-com%C3%BA. More information: https://barcelonaencomu.cat/es

8. In Spanish *"PAH – Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca"*.

9. According to Barcelona's regulations, the mayor is elected indirectly by the councilors on the first plenary session of the term.

10. *Barcelona en Comú* is currently a minority government in the Barcelona City Council composed of 41 members.

In one of her election campaign speeches, Ada Colau explained her approach to politics: "We are the people on the street. We're normal people. We're simple people, who talk to our neighbours each day, who, unlike professional politicians, use public transport every day, work in precarious jobs every day, and who see how things are every day."[11] One of the first decisions taken by Ada Colau and her administration was to reduce the elected officials' salaries – from €140,000 to €28,600 in the case of the mayor – and get rid of privileges such as official cars: "This ending of privileges sends a message that this is the end of a political class removed from the people."[12]

A focal point of the election campaign of *Barcelona en Comú* were the manifesto and action programme elaborated in a participatory, collaborative way with the use of such online tools as *Democracy OS* and *Agoravoting*.[13] The manifesto was based largely on ethical norms, ideas and values and presented an alternative vision of the city whilst addressing the needs and responding to the everyday problems of the citizens. Its main pillars were:

- Meeting the most important social needs of average inhabitants of Barcelona;
- Introducing structural changes in local economy and tourism;
- Improving the quality of life and public spaces;
- Introducing transparent and participatory decision-making mechanisms;
- Fighting against corruption.

Barcelona en Comú promised to follow-up on those electoral promises: "The evaluation and monitoring of compliance with these plans, as well as their transparency, will be a priority. There will be continuous monitoring during the four years of mandate, visible on the municipal website and led by an Autonomous Municipal Observatory with participation of experts and citizens".[14]

How are these programme proposals and election promises currently implemented by *Barcelona en Comú*? Newly elected politicians are primarily concerned with the empowerment of citizens – i.e. strengthening their decision-making power and increasing their political, social and economic competences. The elected representatives and administrative officials of *Barcelona en Comú* involve the citizens directly in the decision-making processes.

In the first year after the elections, this political formation organised and conducted – with the help of public institutions, local NGOs and cooperatives – the largest participatory process in the history of the city.[15] This gigantic participatory experiment aimed at establishing the long-term strategy of the development of the Catalan capital together with its inhabitants ("*PAM – Programa d'Actuació Municipal and PAD – Programes d'Actuació de Districte*"). In the planning phase for the strategy of the city's development until May 2019 (end of the current mandate), residents from different districts and neighbourhoods of the city were involved, including local collectives, experts, representatives of NGOs and public institutions. Citizens were invited to discuss and co-create solutions to the most pressing urban problems. Their task was to identify the main goals and measures to be implemented by *Barcelona en Comú* in the following years. Between January-April 2016, more than 400 meetings with residents, social activists and employees of public institutions were held. They submitted a total of over 5,000 proposals for improving the quality of life in the whole city, in particular neighbourhoods, but also in the areas of: ecology, local economy, good administration and global justice. More than 11,000 inhabitants participated in the offline part of the process conducted and more than 2,000 local organisations were involved. Considering the total number of inhabitants of the city (about 1.6 million in 2016), it did not achieve a "mass participation", but in comparison to previous mayors, Ada Colau managed to catch the attention of inhabitants in topics such as health, public transport, tourism, energy, immigration, culture and housing. The analogue meetings were accompanied by an online platform, *Decidim.Barcelona*. The online platform, which is specially designed for the purpose

11. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/26/ada-colau-barcelona-most-radical-mayor-in-the-world.
12. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/07/barcelona-mayor-colau-feminised-democracy.
13. https://barcelonaencomu.cat/es/programa.
14. In Spanish: "La evaluación y el seguimiento del cumplimiento de estos planes, así como su transparencia, serán una prioridad, por lo que se hará un seguimiento continuado durante los cuatro años de mandato, visible en la web municipal y liderado por un Observatorio Municipal Autónomo con participación técnica y ciudadana." https://barcelonaencomu.cat/es/programa

15. The detailed calendar and description of phases of the process is available online at: https://www.decidim.barcelona/processes/pam/steps?locale=es

of conducting the participatory process, allowed the assessment and discussion of proposals prepared by officials. It also gave the opportunity to the inhabitants (over 26,000 users) to submit their own ideas (over 10,000) and support for them in the form of public comments (over 18,000). The platform also contained a voting mechanism (over 180 thousand votes were cast in favour of the projects)[16] and had a tracking method to see the stage of the submitted proposals.

Although the conclusions reached during the process are not binding for the authorities (they must be first approved by the City Council), the consultations clearly showed that many residents would like to see a more sustainable urban tourism policy. They have also shown that the priority for residents is to find practical solutions to everyday problems such as waste removal and recycling, urban transport, environmental pollution, quality and access to public institutions (such as child nurseries, kindergartens, hospitals or schools), air quality or traffic jams.

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In addition to this first change of paradigm in decision-making in Barcelona, the city also launched the first public anti-corruption platform. In January 2017, *Xnet* – a Spanish hacktivist group which constitutes a part of the Citizens' Advisory Council of the Barcelona City Office for Transparency and Best Practices – together with the Barcelona City Hall, announced the launch of an online platform, which enables Barcelonans to safely report cases of local corruption.[17] This whistle-blower tool allows people to file anonymous claims in a *GlobalLeaks*[18] repository. Their anonymity is protected by Tor[19] and it is the

first time a municipal government has endorsed this *free software* technology. This decentralised watchdog mechanism to report complaints, suspicions and evidences of damaging practices that threaten good governance, aims at building a real collaborative network between public institutions and civil society.

In summary, *Barcelona en Comú* is founded on a new way of doing politics supported by digital tools, the citizens' activity and in collaboration with other movements, organisations and institutions. Members of *Barcelona en Comú* are also obliged to follow the platform's code of ethics.[20] Although the main members of *Barcelona en Comú* originate from leftist movements, their programme is based on identifying and responding to all citizens's needs. People who are invited to participate in collective decision-making processes in Barcelona represent different worldviews and the online platform and physical meetings are designed in a way to ensure the broad access to everyone.

PODEMOS, SPAIN

The movement and new party *Podemos* (eng. *"We can"*) derives, just like *Barcelona en Comú*, from the grassroots movement *Indignados*, which since 2011 has been organising civic protests across the country against economic disparities and corrupt politicians. The movement mobilised thousands of people, who became engaged in online activism and offline actions in Spain and from that, the party *Podemos* was founded in January 2014 and gained countrywide recognition through the use of social media.

Only four months after it had been founded, *Podemos* received 8% of the national vote in the European Parliament elections and five of its members entered the EU Parliament, including its main leader Pablo Iglesias, who at the time was only 35 years old. Almost a year after its creation, it gained 25% support in the Spanish public opinion polls. According to the *Metroscopia* 2017 poll for El País, *Podemos* continues to be the top choice of voters at 21.5%[21]. With over 500,000 official members (as of 2018), *Podemos* is currently the second largest party in Spain and has a big potential in breaking the bipartisan tradition in Spanish politics.[22]

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16. Source: https://www.decidim.barcelona/
17. See *Xnet* official website: https://xnet-x.net/en/whistleblowing-platform-barcelona-city-council/
18. *GlobalLeaks* is a free whistleblowing software intended to enable secure and anonymous initiatives. For more details see official website: https://www.globaleaks.org/
19. Tor is a free software and an open network for enabling anonymous communication. Thanks to *Tor Browser* the user's activity and location online can be hidden by routing all user's browsing through multiple anonymous servers. For more details see official website: https://www.torproject.org/
20. https://barcelonaencomu.cat/sites/default/files/pdf/codi-etic-eng.pdf
21. http://elpais.com/elpais/2017/03/10/media/1489173943_327311.html
22. "The European Parliament Elections of 2014", De Sio et al. (2014): http://cise.luiss.it/cise/2014/07/29/the-european-parliament-elections-of-2014-the-e-book/

Podemos clearly has a populist character in its ideological framework, separating society into two antagonistic groups: "the people" and the "corrupt political elite". *Podemos* refers to the governing elites as a "cast". It is an excellent example of populist demonisation and construction of division between the *in group* and the *out group*, "us" vs. "them". *Podemos* leaders were inspired by Latin American populist movements in their egalitarian struggle against capitalism. Thus, the category of "them" includes both politicians and the business elites.

One of the key factors to *Podemos*' success was its well-planned political strategy and largely based on personalised politics, with the leader Pablo Iglesias acting as "vox populi". Thanks to his regular appearances on TV programmes and his easily recognisable personality, 80% of surveyed Spanish people knew who Pablo Iglesias was before *Podemos* existed as a party. Another fundamental part of the party's strategy was the anti-elitist rhetoric. *Podemos* emphasises its difference from established politics and presents itself as the "real alternative".

"Podemos claims that the direct participation of citizens is indispensable for a system to be called democratic and legitimate."

Podemos claims that the direct participation of citizens is indispensable for a system to be called democratic and legitimate. Therefore, *Podemos* structures are based on "Circles"– local places for citizen participation that are open to all members. According to the party's strategy, informed, active and engaged citizens should be the central actors in politics. The party focused on local and grassroots activity of its members, political education, direct participation, citizen empowerment and inclusion.[23] Around 800 circles scattered throughout the country changed the traditional way parties include citizens and members in decision-making.[24]

In order to provide an unmediated form of representation and close relationship between the electorate and the elected, the leaders of *Podemos* developed various forms of direct digital engagement of citizens. One of the main channels for popular participation is the *Podemos* official, interactive website, enabling online voting and decision-making with the *Participa* platform for citizens proposals. *Podemos* also uses open-source software and various applications such as *Reddit* (adapted by *Podemos* party under the name *Plaza Podemos*), *Appgree*, *Agora Voting*, *Loomio*, *TitanPad* or *Trello*, enabling online deliberation and collaborative work of their members and supporters. Digital tools also allow *Podemos* to get bottom-up support and collect money online. The main sources of *Podemos*' funding are regular citizen donations through crowdfunding platforms. Since transparency and corruption-free politics is one of the party's main pledges, all the party's accounts and balances are published online.[25]

"Effective use of digital tools enables Podemos to build broad channels of communication and stable networks of cooperation between its activists, members and supporters."

Effective use of digital tools enables *Podemos* to build broad channels of communication and stable networks of cooperation between its activists, members and supporters. *Podemos* created its own model of communication online and launched various platforms which help citizens to get involved directly in creating the party's election manifesto and taking key decisions. However, traditional media plays equally important role in communication strategy of *Podemos*, especially television. Iglesias' ubiquitous presence as a talking head on Spanish television spreads *Podemos*' message around the country and contributes to the promotion of a new political brand the party has built around such terms as "new politics'", social justice, political participation and the fight against corruption and elitist politics.

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23. https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/may/27/podemos-citizen-politics-spain-elections-indignados-movement
24. See *Podemos*' official website: https://podemos.info/circulos/

25. More detailed information about digital tools used by *Podemos*: https://podemos.info/releasing-the-code-of-podemos-digital-heart/

RAZEM, POLAND

Enforcing the democratic principles, empowering people and pushing for greater transparency in public governance are also priorities and distinctive features of new Polish political movement *Partia Razem* (eng. *Together Party*). The movement was formed in May 2015 by a group of activists of minor youth political, ecological and feminist organisations, such as the *Young Socialists*, the *Greens*, *Ratujmy Kobiety* (eng. *Save Women*), local initiatives as well as new urban and grassroots movements like *Right to the City*, *Inhabitants' Forum*, the *Housing Movement or Kraków Against Games*.[26] Within months of its formation, the movement gained 3.6%of the total votes in national elections. The number of votes was insufficient (below the 5% threshold) to gain seats in the Polish national parliament, but enough to get the public subsidies from the public budget. Until 2016, all party members were volunteers[27] and their budget came entirely from membership contributions.[28] Affiliated and inspired by the ideology of social democracy, *Razem* can be identified as anew left movement in Poland.[29]

Razem was founded as a reaction to the popular claim that "there is no alternative" and the permanent political conflict between conservative rightist politicians and neoliberal "modernisers" who have been sharing power in Poland since the beginning of the 1990s. The "super-election-years" 2014-2015 (local, state – presidential and parliamentary, as well as European elections) with simultaneous low electoral turnout among Polish voters showed that people are tired of choosing the "lesser of two evils". The lack of a "truly left party", the prevailing neoliberal approach in economics and politics, the regular corruption scandals and dissatisfaction with the "old left" motivated a group of activists to build a new movement and integrating various urban movements, labour unions, diverse minorities and other underrepresented groups. The growing social exclusion of the poor, rising inequalities, a plethora of the so called "trash contracts"[30], poor public healthcare and

social services and the significant radicalisation of the conservative and far-right movements mobilised thousands of people to build a movement calling for more solidarity, democracy and social justice in Poland.

During the founding Congress of *Razem* in May 2015, around 200 activists and delegates from all around Poland gathered together in Warsaw to discuss the policy declaration of the party. As the result, 9 main pillars were elaborated, which were later further developed with the open participation to all the members of the party as well as some support from experts into the full programme of the party. Its objectives focused on supporting workers' rights and labour unions; promoting a fairer tax system; a strong social housing policy; re-establishing and reinforcing public healthcare; supporting culture and education; decentralizing governance and administration structures; as well as supporting innovative entrepreneurship.

"Razem puts a big emphasis on fighting against the growing alienation of political elites and building politics based on proximity with common citizens."

The party also puts a big emphasis on fighting against the growing alienation of political elites and building politics based on proximity with common citizens. One of the postulates of the party is to limit MPs' remuneration to three times the minimum wage and to limit the terms of office of MPs, senators and mayors to two times. *Razem* supports the introduction of the "Single Transferable Vote" system, which allows citizens to vote for individuals rather than parties and ensures greater representation of minorities. The movement is also against the deregulation and privatisation of public services. *Razem* wants to abolish special economic zones in Poland and it opposed the EU's planned free trade agreement with the US, TTIP (*Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership*). Interestingly, *Razem* members practice also gender quotas guaranteeing equal gender representation[31], additionally they support LGBT rights, sex and anti-discrimination education in schools as well as drugs liberalisation policies.

26. The movement against organising the Winter Olympics in 2022, informing citizens about the negative consequences of hosting big sporting events and forcing the authorities of Kraków to launch a referendum in which majority of Kraków citizens refused to organise the Games.
27. There was only one person (responsible for finances and administrative works) employed in *Razem*'s office.
28. https://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/alex-sakalis-rosemary-bechler-adrian-zandberg/interview-with-adrian-zandberg-part
29. The British economist Guy Standing described *Razem* as „the first authentic movement in Poland representing the precariat".
30. In Polish *"umowy śmieciowe"*.

31. Every organ of the party is composed by statute of 50 percent by men and 50 percent by women.

One of the most recognisable faces of *Razem* is the co-founder Adrian Zandberg. His speech just before the 2015 parliamentary elections made *Razem* widely recognised by the media and raised the support for the party from 0,5%-1% before the debate up to 3,6% during the elections. Nevertheless, the members of *Razem* seek to be coherent with their democratic approach and their internal organisation is characterised by collective leadership, which is close to the membership base. *Razem*'s five main branches – The Congress, National Council, National Executive Board, National Audit Commission and National Peer Court of Arbitration – are collegial bodies with shared responsibility and shared governance model. The same organisational structure is mirrored at the local level. There are around 30 local assemblies, boards and councils. Since local units are the most important for the expansion of the party and the promotion of its pro-democratic and pro-social ideas, Razem wants to develop a network of social centres around Poland. Hundreds of formal members and informal supporters are also active abroad in various European countries and the US.[32]

All the internal organisational bodies function in a collaborative way, they are based on the principles of partnership, teamwork and they adopted collegial models of organisation and arbitration. *Razem* is characterised by flat organisational structures and decentralised work based on project and working groups as well as the wide use of digital tools. *Razem* members developed an advanced system of internal horizontal communication, exchange of information and networking based on apps such as *Slack* (an online application for project management and fast communication between members), *Wiki* (an ever-growing collection of internal archives, documents and data), *Internet Forum* (with thematic groups, which serve party members to take common decisions) or *TitanPad* (online tool for collaborative creation and editing documents). Additionally, *Razem* uses the digital voting system Zeus for organising internal online elections. The launch of a special mobile application and online platform for deliberative decision-making based on non-commercial software is also planned.

Since the media coverage of *Razem* is rather low in comparison with other mainstream parties in Poland, the external communication of *Razem* Party is based on alternative channels, including the official website (http://partiarazem.pl/), social media (*Facebook*, *Twitter*, *YouTube*, etc.) as well as online newsletters and newspaper which serve to spread the "alternative narrative" counterbalancing the conservative and neoliberal rhetoric of the current government ruled by PiS (Law & Justice Party). The communication style of *Razem* is based on simple language and messages which allow all citizens to understand the current political issues and to get involved in public debates. The party is recognisable especially by its original infographics illustrating complex problems through simple images. At the same time, their catchy slogans, such as: "Another Politics Is Possible", "On the side of the majority" or "We are the third possibility!" underlie the party's strong aspiration to build a politics based on proximity with the people, going beyond the conflict model of dichotomous divisions on two old political fractions. The similar programme and organisational methods to *Podemos* is the reason why *Razem* is sometimes referred to as the "Polish *Podemos*".[33]

PIRATE PARTIES INTERNATIONAL & PIRATAR, ICELAND

The *Pirate Parties International (PPI)* is an international movement and worldwide organisation formed in 2010, with representatives from 43 countries in 2018.[34] Members of *Pirate Parties* see themselves as part of an international movement that wants to shape the digital revolution. They want to establish a genuine form of direct *e-participation* of citizens closely linked to the democratic principle of transparency. The network of emerging Pirate Parties arranged protests against the *ACTA (Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement)* and expresses in their anti-establishment messages their strong criticism towards any other legislative proposals that might infringe fundamental rights, freedom of expression and privacy.

The first registered *Pirate Party* in the world was the *Pirat Partiet* in Sweden, founded in 2006 by Rick Falkvinge, a Swedish information technology entrepreneur. With the postulates of ensuring the respect for citizens'

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32. Currently around 3 million Poles live abroad. *Razem* has branches in Germany, England/Scotland, France, Belgium, Denmark, Netherlands, Ireland, Spain/Catalonia, Norway, Sweden and the USA.

33. http://temi.repubblica.it/micromega-online/ecco-razem-la-podemos-polacca/.
34. https://pp-international.net/about-ppi/.

rights to privacy, getting rid of the patent system and fundamental reform of the copyright law, the *Pirat Partiet* won a little over 7% of the vote in 2009 European elections and sent two parliamentarians to Brussels. Since then, Pirate Party was adopted as a label by political parties in many different countries in Europe and worldwide.[35] Although each *Pirate Party* differs in popularity and electoral success, their members are united by some universal values and shared references in their programmes, such as: civil rights, direct democracy and participation in government, reform of copyright and patent law, free sharing of knowledge (open content), information privacy, transparency, freedom of information, free speech, anti-corruption and Internet neutrality.

One of the most developed *Pirate Parties* in Europe was the German *Pirate Party*, established in 2006, which used a new system for collective decision-making, the "*LiquidFeedback*" system. With its 13,836 users, it was the largest online community implementing "delegative democracy".[37] *Liquid Feedback* is an open-source, free software, which enables every interested individual to put proposals to the vote and get constructive feedback. It is based on proxy voting mechanism which allows citizens to vote directly or delegate their votes to someone else whom they trust (combining aspects of representative and direct democracy). Thanks to the *LiquidFeedback* system the members of the German *Pirate Party* can create initiatives within specific areas (e.g. environmental policies, education, economy, etc.) Each topic needs first a minimum quorum of supporters in order to be voted upon. The votes can be delegated on three levels: at the global level – i.e. in all areas; on the level of particular areas; and at the level of single issues. The crucial principle of this continuous and decentralized process of decision-making, based on the idea of "liquid democracy", is that the delegated votes can be withdrawn at any time, while actions of every voter are registered and public.

Despite the considerable popular support the *Pirate Party* enjoyed in Germany in 2009, their success did not last too long.[38] The collapse of support for the *Pirate*

Party due to their lack of experience in politics, internal disputes and focus of unfavorable media on making a mockery on the party members and their failures, resulted in a loss of initial enthusiasm.[39] The loss of trust of voters was mostly explained by the eccentric behavior of some party members, their amateurism and campaigns focused on performative talks of individuals instead of a coherent strategy and concrete policy proposals. Nevertheless, the international organisation of the pirate parties, *Pirate Party International*, is not a movement of the past.

"The Pirate Party in Iceland built its programme and campaign around the need to adopt a new Icelandic constitution."

While German *Pirates* dropped out of regional parliaments in Germany (*Landtage*), there is another Pirate Party with an advanced system of participatory governance and standards of democratic and informed decision-making. The Icelandic *Piratar* –promoting the empowerment of direct democracy and the promotion of transparent governance – has managed to get a huge popular support in recent national elections in 2016 in Iceland[40] and won 10 out of 63 seats with 14,5% of the votes in Icelandic Parliament.[41] Although the Icelandic *Pirates* were unable to form a government thereafter, Iceland is currently the only country in the world where the *Pirate* movement has elected MPs sitting in a parliament.

The *Pirate Party* in Iceland has around 1,400 members (as of 2015).[42] The horizontal organisation of the *Pirate Party* bases their activities on the principles of mutual trust and collaboration. Their system for online voting and deliberation allows citizens to propose, discuss, and vote on legislation, thus raising political and civic consciousness and competence as well as pushing for substantive changes in politics. At the same time, their promoted vision of direct democracy is not solely based on the use of modern technologies but transfers

35. *Pirate Parties* were consecutively registered in such countries as: Austria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Poland, and Spain.
36. As of January 2015.
37. The detailed description is available at *LiquidFeedback's* official website: http://liquidfeedback.org/.
38. In 2009, the German *Pirate Party* has won dozens of seats in *Landtag* elections and one seat in European Parliament.

39. Based on the article "The Rise and Fall of the Pirate Party" by J. Huetlin (2016) in *New Republic*: https://newrepublic.com/article/137305/rise-fall-pirate-party
40. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/dec/02/iceland-pirate-party-invited-form-government-coalition
41. https://icelandmonitor.mbl.is/news/politics_and_society/2016/12/02/pirates_given_mandate_to_form_new_iceland_governmen/
42. https://grapevine.is/mag/articles/2015/04/15/how-the-pirates-are-taking-over-icelandic-politics/

certain key values, including "pushing for civil rights and more transparency from companies and the creation of informed decisions."[43]

The *Pirate Party* in Iceland built its programme and campaign around the wish to adopt a new Icelandic constitution. The proposal for a new Icelandic constitution was co-produced in a participatory and deliberative decision-making process which used the collective intelligence of "randomly selected citizens, appointed experts and nationally elected individual representatives".[44] An extraordinary "National Forum" with randomly selected citizens and members of Constitutional Assembly was put in charge of the writing process. Anyone interested in the process was also able to comment on the draft text using social media or e-mail.[45] In total, thousands of people took part in the four-month long consultations and the new draft of the Icelandic Constitution was approved by a great majority of votes (ca. two-thirds of all votes) in a national referendum in October 2012. Nevertheless, it was ultimately rejected by the government. Although many different movements were involved in this crowd-sourced process of constitution making, only the *Pirate Party* has made getting the new constitution – declared "the most democratically crafted constitution in world history"[46] – through parliament a priority.

The scandal around the Panama Papers in 2016 and the consecutive prosecution of high officials in Iceland triggered the largest public outrage and protests in the history of Iceland and led to calls for radical political change. In this context, the *Pirate Party* proposed to implement institutional reforms for more direct democracy, greater transparency in public life and a universal health care system. According to them, providing mechanisms for the general public to propose or veto laws increases governmental transparency, accessibility and accountability.[47]

IV. Risks and challenges for network parties

The success of network parties has considerably changed the European party landscape and offers alternative options to the crisis of representative democracy. They challenge the traditional role of political parties in modern liberal democracies whilst trying to strengthen the links and relations between civil society and government, based on the ideas of self-government, direct, digital, participatory and deliberative democracy. "It's citizens doing politics" as Pablo Iglesias describes it in one interview.[48] As a response to the political and financial crises, *network parties* seek new ideas to strengthen representation and fight the "elitism" of the political class whilst trying to address the precarisation of living conditions and rising inequalities triggered by "neoliberal" policies. By promoting the revival of democratic values and ideals, they remind us that "genuinely democratic" processes are there to meet the needs of the majority of citizens, rather than fulfilling the selective demands of interest groups.

"Network parties challenge the traditional role of political parties in modern liberal democracies whilst trying to strengthen the links and relations between civil society and government."

Network parties emerged as an alternative to traditional parties which do not speak to active, young and well-educated citizens.[49] The lack of internal democracy within traditional parties, the growing frustration about their insignificance within those rigid and bureaucratic structures and the perceived lack of influence led them to create more interactive, flexible structure with horizontal models of organisations. The development of digital tools helped them on their way. According to the Spanish sociologist Manuel Castells, "democracy in the age of the Internet" should not be considered as "the democracy of parties", but as "democracy of citizens,

43. http://time.com/4549089/iceland-pirate-party-general-election-populist/
44. Eirikur Bergmann „Participatory Constitutional Deliberation in the Wake of Crisis: The Case of Iceland" in *Constitutional Deliberative Democracy in Europe* (eds. Min Reuchamps and Jane Suiter), ECPR Press 2016, p. 20.
45. http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/future_tense/2014/07/five_lessons_from_iceland_s_failed_crowdsourced_constitution_experiment.html?via=gdpr-consent
46. https://boingboing.net/2016/10/13/the-astounding-story-of-icelan.html
47. See *Icelandic Pirate Party Election Manifesto 2016*: https://piratar.is/en/election-manifesto-2016/

48. https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/may/27/podemos-citizen-politics-spain-elections-indignados-movement
49. According to *The New York Times* e. g. „About 40 percent of Pirate supporters are under 30". https://nytimes.com/2016/10/30/world/europe/pirate-party-iceland-election.html

by citizens and for citizens."[50] Thus, *network parties* are to be read in the context of a trend towards more *citizen-centered politics*.

The most determined supporters of the fight for a "socialisation of politics" developed the concepts of more direct types of democracy in which everyone could easily engage, with new concepts emerging such as digital democracy, peer to peer democracy, network democracy or liquid democracy. The digital software used by *network parties* has different functions, ranging from collective decision-making and consultations, online deliberation, online voting system, but also with functions such as file sharing, storage and creative collaboration, crowdsourcing and crowdfunding. Therefore, these tools may contribute to greater democratisation of party structures and increase transparency and accountability. However, just like the use of all other tools, there are also risks connected to them.

Some issues arise with transparency and privacy on the one hand, on online security and data protection on the other: How can the parties guarantee that the online participation will be safe and online voting anonymous? How can the party safeguard the online systems and platforms against hacking attacks? How can they avoid the concentration of power of "super voters"[51], the risk of top-down control, and the problem of hidden, uncontrolled forms of manipulation? Finally, there are also questions about the scope of direct democracy required for the different public policies. There's a considerable risk that online participation turns into the constant organisation of referendums, based on simple yes or no questions– a kind of *plebiscitary democracy* inspired by *Facebook*.

One of the challenges connected to that kind of "Facebook democracy" is the general overload of information and fake news and how can the flow of not verified information be stopped. On the other hand, another challenge for *network parties* is the digital divide: not everyone is comfortable using digital tools, and not everyone is "tech-savvy", as some people have never learned how to use ICTs. Therefore, network parties

need to be careful not to end up in "technological determinism", believing that technology itself will revolutionise, repair and give solutions to every policy issue. Real democratic innovations do not lie merely in using technology but in creating a new paradigm of *citizen-centered politics*. The *network parties* should make sure that technology cannot replace physical, face-to-face meetings.

Above all, we have to recognise that the described *network party* is just a constructed model, based on best practices and a set of features. However, the diversity of cases offers multiple explanations and interpretations. Some of the above-mentioned parties may have some characteristic features of a *network party*, but not necessarily all of them. Thus, we should make clear distinction between those parties which meet all or most of the criteria (ref. first section) and which just pretend or aspire to be a *network party*. Established parties might be interested to overtake this label to modernise their appearance, however with no genuine intention of democratising politics in general. Other parties, such as right-wing populist movements might also have network-like structures, but no interest in supporting democratic ideals.

For example, the Italian *Movimento 5 Stelle* (eng. *5 Star Movement, M5S*) which has many traits of an ideal network party, such as network-like organisational structures, spokespeople elected in online elections[52] and use of anti-establishment rhetoric, raises many controversies. Since *M5S*, which was very successful in the last Italian elections (with over 32% of support votes[53]), chose to form a coalition with far-right populist *Lega Nord* (eng. *Northern League*) – whose leaders and members constantly issue openly racist and xenophobic statements – the movement raises suspicions that its innovations might go against the desired democratic ideals and truly progressive thinking. Secondly, its founder Beppe Grillo, a popular comedian, actor and political activist, was often accused of keeping the centralised power in his own hands. Thirdly, the *M5S*'s participatory digital platform, *Rousseau*, is not based on an *open source* software. In fact, it uses a closed, proprietary software and does not contain any system

50. Manuel Castells, "Democracy in the age of Internet" in *Journal of Contemporary Culture*, No. 6 (2011), p.103.
51. The so called "super voters", meaning "users with a large share of incoming delegations" are one of the main problems of the *Liquid Feedback* system used by the German *Pirate party*. See https://arxiv.org/abs/1503.07723

52. In Italian: *portavoce*.
53. http://www.ilsole24ore.com/speciali/2018/elezioni/risultati/politiche/static/italia.shtml?refresh_ce=1

for the verification of the vote. Thus, top-down mechanisms privilege the elected representatives and the movement's top leaders.[54]

V. Conclusions and recommendations for network parties

The biggest challenge in enforcing long-lasting change in politics is to work on our everyday habits, patterns of behaviour, models of governance and decision-making structures. A vast use of digital tools and the focus on technology will not substitute constant, long-life process of democratic education, building social relations and integrating communities, whose dynamics are obviously much more complex than mathematical algorithms and online voting systems.

Online participation should always go hand in hand with more elaborated process of deliberation, thorough examination of different arguments, advantages and disadvantages of alternative solutions. It should be based not only on *collective intelligence* or *wisdom of the crowds* but also on *collective responsibility*. Creating transdisciplinary teams with expertise to tackle complex problems from different perspectives can enhance holistic thinking, forming informed opinion and data- and fact-based decisions. All democratic innovations should be future-oriented, socially-driven and based on humanist approach. Additionally, keeping the old good *precautionary principle* in minds while taking collective decisions, may contribute to better protection of the commons, environment, human beings and other animals.

In order to maintain coherence, democracy should be lived in daily lives rather than only exist as a theory. The innovation of *network parties* lies in transforming democratic and egalitarian ideals into reality. Advocating for social justice, promoting social inclusion, fighting against inequalities and the consequences of ever-increasing concentration of wealth should not remain empty words and mere slogans.

> **"Network parties can be perceived as a productive force and a potential catalyst for a profound reconstruction of party systems. Although many can fear their disruptive effect on the institutional status quo, they have a potential to improve the quality and legitimacy of decision-making."**

Network parties can be perceived as a productive force and a potential catalyst for a profound reconstruction of party systems. Although many can fear their disruptive effect on the institutional *status quo*, they have a potential to improve the quality and legitimacy of decision-making. Their participatory and more direct systems of governance give hope not only for greater satisfaction of citizens, but also enable developing more effective strategies and implementing more efficient public policies.

The success of *network parties* is not always translated in electoral wins – high turnout in elections does not take into consideration many other factors of "success", such as democratic innovations, intra-party democracy, the satisfaction of members, the creation of transformative proposals and the emergence of more citizen-centered, decentralised and digital politics. However, the impact of these movements on the political landscape may be truly transformative.

The new paradigm of *citizen-centered* politics and *open-source governance* requires substantial change of perceiving citizen's direct participation in politics not as a problematic issue or a completely utopian project, but as the core of the democratic system – as a value in itself. It also involves a shift from a "command and control" mindset to one of collaboration, networking, flat organisation and horizontal management. In place of ideological disputes and conflicts, the new participatory paradigm puts at the heart of politics problem solving. Politics defined as responding to people's real needs and constructive cooperation breaks with the traditional, bipolar division based on leftist and rightist ideology.

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54. https://scalingdemocracy.net/2016/10/04/a-preliminary-analysis-of-the-political-values-embedded-in-rousseau-the-decision-making-platform-of-the-five-star-movement-part-ii/

"The new paradigm of citizen-centered politics and open-source governance requires substantial change of perceiving citizen's direct participation in politics not as a problematic issue, but as the core of the democratic system."

Challenges and risks are numerous. The ubiquitous frustration and critique resulting from adaptation problems towards this "new way of doing politics" and the drop of enthusiasm after the "novelty effect" are unavoidable. Therefore, in order to avoid excessive bureaucratisation, hierarchical structures, concentration of power and other distortions in the transformation from social movements to more established parties, it is high time to establish an *ethical code for digital democracy* that includes norms for the digitalisation of politics. It would be really useful to reflect this way on the current and future transformations of our political and economic systems. Looking closer at these new parties and their achievements should not be underestimated. Reinventing democracy may seem a long-lasting process or even never-ending quest, but the transformation process has been started and could bring positive change to politics in Europe.

The Author

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The Democracy Lab

Das Progressive Zentrum launched the *Democracy Lab* in April 2017. It offers a space for creative, interdisciplinary and international exchange as well as network-building. As a collaborative platform, it aims at translating ideas coming from civil society into practical recommendations for decision-makers in the field of democratic innovation. The Lab's projects cover a wide range of topics, from digital democracy, the engagement of young people in politics to the issue of representativity and trust.
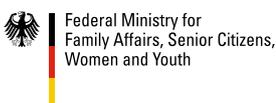
Das Progressive Zentrum

Das Progressive Zentrum (DPZ) is an independent and non-profit think tank based in Berlin. DPZ aims to foster new networks of progressive actors from different backgrounds and to promote innovative politics as well as economic and social progress. To achieve this goal, *Das Progressive Zentrum* involves mainly young thinkers and decision-makers from Germany and Europe in its progressive debates.

The Discussion Papers by *Das Progressive Zentrum* are directed at political decision-makers and those who prepare decisions in ministries, parliaments and parties, but also at stakeholders from academia, economy and civil society. They aim to address urging challenges and deliver concrete advice for progressive and fair politics in Germany and Europe through new perspectives, programmatic ideas and precise argumentations.

Thinking ahead.