

Transformations in second-order campaigning: A German-Finnish comparison of campaign professionalism in the 2004 and 2009 European parliamentary elections



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ABSTRACT: In this article, we address the problem of measuring professionalism of political campaigns in European parliamentary elections. We use a comparative research design with party-level campaign data from two fairly similar EU member states, Germany and Finland, and two elections, 2004 and 2009. Theoretically, our analysis is based on the so-called party-centred theory of professionalism, which puts an emphasis on party characteristics in explaining the variance of campaign professionalism. We hypothesize that besides observing increasing party-level campaign professionalism in time and higher levels of professional campaigning in Germany, professionalism is positively associated with a party's size, its right-wing orientation and recent change of leadership. We found support for the time-effect and party size, whereas evidence in country comparison, ideological orientation and change of leadership was inconclusive, suggesting significant differences among countries and elections. It also seems that the political left harbours the most professional parties. This calls for a re-evaluation of the party-centred theory of campaign professionalism.

KEYWORDS: professionalization, election campaigns, European parliamentary elections, political parties, Germany, Finland



INTRODUCTION

Faced with some fundamental changes in the socio-cultural, political, and media environment, political parties have initiated a number of substantial transformations both in their organizational structures and in their communicative strategies. Previous research suggests that parties have expanded their focus in recent years from a) party to media logic (Strömbäck, 2008) and from b) “selling” to “marketing” (Lees-Marshment et al., 2010). Such transformations, repeatedly discussed under

the catchword of “professionalization,” are most obvious in election campaigns. Yet, although commonly used, the concept of professionalization is still somewhat underdeveloped (Savigny & Wring, 2009).

In addition to theoretical problems, the small number of empirical investigations of the professionalization of political parties’ electoral campaigning can be criticized for a number of other reasons. First, there is a lack of comparative, cross-sectional research, which is needed to detect differences and/or similarities in electoral campaigning of political parties in different countries (Anstead & Chadwick, 2008). Second, research on the professionalization of campaigning has focused predominantly on “first-order” national elections (e.g. Nord, 2006; Negrine et al., 2007). “Second-order” events, such as the European parliamentary (EP) elections, although fundamental in the European integration process, have only recently attracted broader scientific attention (de Vreese, 2009; Gagatek, 2010; Tenscher et al., 2012). Concerning this matter, it has become obvious that political parties have repeatedly mounted “low heated and half-hearted” (Tenscher, 2006) campaigns at EP elections, spending considerably less money and effort in EP campaigns than in domestic ones, and turning them to national events. However, as shown by Moring et al. (2011), repeated studies in Finland of two European parliamentary elections and one intermediate national election confirm that, although parties may not develop their level of professionalism particularly for the European parliamentary elections, they do not fall back to earlier stages just because of the particular nature of this election.

All comparative studies dealing with EP elections up to now have been either case studies or cross-nationally oriented (de Vreese, 2009; Bowler & Farrell, 2011; Tenscher et al., 2012). Yet, longitudinal designs have been rare, although these are necessary for testing developments, such as professionalization (Nord, 2009; Tenscher, 2011). Further, most studies, even the most current ones, approach campaign professionalization descriptively and/or qualitatively (Gagatek, 2010; Negrine et al., 2011). Efforts to quantify campaign professionalization are very limited and often restricted to case studies (Gibson & Römmele, 2009; Strömbäck, 2009; as exceptions: Moring et al., 2011; Tenscher et al., 2012). Finally, existing quantitative comparative studies often refer to countries as units of analyses (de Vreese, 2009; Bowler & Farrell, 2011). While differences at a macro level are quite reasonable due to diverse political cultures and differing political, party, media, and voting systems (Plasser & Plasser, 2003), variations at a meso level seem equally plausible considering distinct party cultures, campaign goals, party structures, and — last but not least — financial and personal resources (Gibson & Römmele, 2001). Respective differences and particularities become obvious when we change the perspective from the macro to the meso level of politics, namely to the political parties and their campaign activities. Some notable efforts in changing this perspective have focused either on single case studies and first-order national campaigns (Gibson & Römmele,

2009; Strömbäck, 2009) or on cross-national studies and EP elections (Moring et al., 2011; Tenscher et al., 2012).

What is still missing is a quantitative, cross-national, and intertemporal comparison of political parties' campaign professionalization. Such an approach would help us test two core hypotheses in contemporary political communication research: Firstly, it is assumed, but yet to be measured, that political parties undergo a process of professionalization in the sense of becoming more professionalized from one election campaign to the next. In this regard, vivid examples from specific campaigns are often substituted for more systematic empirical studies (Nord, 2009). Secondly, it is hypothesized that there are differences between countries and political parties in the degree of campaign professionalization (Gagatek, 2010). However, whether these differences are stable over time and which factor — country, party, or time — exerts which impact on the degree of professionalization have yet to be systematically analysed.

Against the backdrop of these shortcomings, we look at German and Finnish political parties' campaign professionalism in the 2004 and 2009 European elections. In doing so, we are interested neither in single symptoms of campaigning nor in the impact of electoral campaigns. Instead, we investigate modes of professional campaigning, and we look at explanations for differences in EP campaigning. Despite the peculiarities of the "second-order" character of the EP elections, the synchronous timing of these elections offers an ideal opportunity to compare different parties in different countries at different points in time. Assuming that political parties as a rule make use of gained experience irrespective of types of elections, as the study in Finland by Moring et al. mentioned earlier would indicate, EU elections offer valid results when it comes to a comparative test of modes and transformations in professional campaigning (Bowler & Farrell, 2011; Moring et al., 2011; Tenscher et al., 2012). Such a test not only demonstrates differences between parties and countries, but foremost it helps detecting macro and meso level factors that impede or foster professional campaigning.

The countries chosen are quite similar regarding their political, media, and party systems and — to some degree — even the characteristics of their political culture. Germany and Finland belong to the so-called North-Central European or democratic corporatist model of media and politics (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, pp. 143–197) which facilitates comparisons at the meso level of the political parties. Yet, the countries show some relevant differences as well, making country-level analysis also meaningful. Before introducing the empirical findings, we briefly elaborate the concept of professional campaigning from which a model of campaign measurement will be derived. Finally, our findings will be summarized and discussed.

PROFESSIONAL CAMPAIGNING AND THE PROCESS OF PROFESSIONALIZATION

The way electoral campaigns are planned, organized, and conducted has never been static. Rather, they are subject to a long-lasting transformation process. Still,

regardless of the historical dimension, changes in campaigning have attracted special attention over the last three decades (Strömbäck, 2009, pp. 96–97). Research shows that political parties have made remarkable efforts to cater to the needs of the electoral market, voters, campaigns, and electoral success (“marketization,” Lilleker et al. 2007). To accomplish this goal, parties have adapted to a new communicative environment (“mediatization,” Strömbäck, 2008) and striven for an enduring, strategically planned, rational, and sustainable campaign management (“professionalization,” Farrell & Webb, 2000).

Such transformations are indispensable, and they reflect political parties’ reactions and adaptations to modernization-related transformations. Respective changes have repeatedly been assigned to three phases, “pre-modern,” “modern,” and “post-modern,” which are said to be different in their communicative modes, structures, and strategies (Blumler & Kavanagh, 1999; Norris, 2000, pp. 137–147; Plasser & Plasser, 2003, pp. 22–24). However, such a three-phase model, although widely used, can be criticized as being undifferentiated. It neglects contextual aspects such as country and party differences. In fact, it may happen that (a) different political parties in one country simultaneously use “post-modern,” “modern,” and “pre-modern” techniques, and (b) intentionally give up using specific means of communication and focus on others — although they formally belong to other phases. We argue that it is exactly this mix of strategic and structural components from different phases that characterizes professional campaign management today. Therefore, the term “professionalization” does not stand for a specific communication phase: rather, it indicates “a process of change [...] that [...] brings a better and more efficient organization of resources and skills in order to achieve desired objectives, whatever they might be” (Papathanassopoulos et al., 2007, p. 10). Accordingly, if we are interested in the degree of professionalism of a political party’s electoral campaign, we have to examine closely its organization of resources considering the desired objectives. Those objectives might vary from vote seeking to office seeking to policy seeking (Gibson & Römmele, 2001, pp. 26–27).

Drawing from existing campaign research, we have identified a number of contemporary campaigning patterns that are used as the basis of our measuring instrument. In the following, we briefly list these patterns, beginning from structural features of campaigns and followed by campaign strategies.

Campaign structures

- A growing structural, financial, and personal capability for cost-intensive long-term to permanent campaigning (Gibson & Römmele, 2001), which includes the centralization of the campaign organization (Plasser & Plasser, 2003, p. 6) and the use of telemarketing or direct mail for intra-party purposes (Gibson & Römmele, 2009, pp. 269–271). These indicators are transformed into the following items that we use for measuring campaign structures’ professionalism (see Appendix in

Tenscher et al., 2012): 1) the size of the election campaign budget, 2) the size of the campaign staff, 3) the duration of the campaign, 4) the centralization of campaign organization, and 5) the differentiation of internal communication structures.

- Professionalization of campaign activities and actors, including consulting, externalization, and commercialization of specific campaign tasks (Blumler & Kavanagh, 1999; Farrell & Webb, 2000; Plasser & Plasser, 2003, p. 5; Negrine, 2007, pp. 33–35). These facets of professional campaigning are transformed into one item: 6) the degree of externalization.

- A change from “selling” to “marketing” the political product (e.g. Norris, 2000, p. 171; Lilleker & Lees-Marshment, 2005), for example the use of market intelligence, opposition research, feedback tools, and opinion polls (Gibson & Römmele, 2001; Nord, 2007). These indicators are converted into two items: 7) the nature and degree of feedback and 8) the degree of opposition research.

Campaign strategies

- Enduring efforts to influence the media’s agendas and to shape public perception by continuous event and news management activities (“agenda building and priming”) (Manheim, 1991). The respective item for this indicator is 9) the degree of event and news management.

- A focus on free media channels, particularly the broad spectrum of television formats, such as entertainment and talk shows (Norris, 2000, pp. 170–172; Plasser & Plasser, 2003, pp. 4–6). These facets are transformed into two items: 10) the relevance of free media and 11) the relevance of talk shows.

- An additional use of paid media platforms, such as TV or radio spots, posters, ads, etc. (Wring, 2001; Plasser & Plasser, 2003, pp. 294–298; de Vreese, 2009). This is measured by one item: 12) the relevance of paid media.

- A segmentation of the voters into target groups, who are contacted by narrowcasting and micro targeting (e.g. direct mail, direct email, direct calling, canvassing) (Gibson & Römmele, 2009; Strömbäck, 2009, pp. 101–102). These indicators are reflected in 13) the degree of audience targeting and 14) the degree of narrowcasting activities.

- A strategic focus on the frontrunner, who acts as principal agent of the political party (“personalization”) (e.g. Blumler & Kavanagh, 1999, pp. 213–214; Farrell & Webb, 2000, p. 122). Therefore, another item is 15) the degree of personalization.

To compare how these patterns are visible in electoral campaigns of political parties, we need a model that is independent from temporal or spatial conditions, allows international and intertemporal comparisons, and adequately reflects differences between political parties’ campaign efforts. Such a party-related model was first introduced by Gibson and Römmele (2001; 2009) and slightly adjusted later by Strömbäck (2009). However, despite its general applicability, the so-called “CAMPROF Index” is biased towards “new” media technologies, which impedes

intertemporal comparisons. On the other hand, the index looks exclusively at campaign structures (finances, personnel, infrastructure, and communicative resources), thereby neglecting strategic adaptations.

In contrast, we assume that transformations of political parties take place on both the organizational and strategic levels, irrespective of whether it is a first- or second-order election campaign. As a more realistic alternative, we have introduced a modified and expanded index, which consists of two subindices: campaign structures and campaign strategies (Tenscher et al., 2012). Both indices incorporate a number of components, which are measured on different scales and added up to those indices. Generally speaking, the more extensively a campaign element is used, the higher it scores on the indices.¹ The “campaign structures” index consists of the outline’s eight items (1) to (8).² The “campaign strategies” index consists of seven items — (9) to (15) — mentioned above.

We assume that the more these elements are integrated into an electoral campaign, the more “professional” it becomes (Gibson & Römmele, 2009; Strömbäck, 2009; Tenscher et al., 2012). Furthermore, the way and pace in which political parties turn to these components of professional campaigning might reflect, for example, their size, their organizational structure and culture, and even their ideological orientation (Gibson & Römmele, 2001, pp. 37–38; Tenscher et al., 2012). Comparing political parties’ campaign activities results in an investigation of the different ways parties adapt to modernization-related transformations — or in an investigation of the objectives that parties strive to achieve by using specific resources and skills. In doing so, it may be possible to detect the degree of a political party’s campaign professionalism in comparison to that of other parties (Strömbäck, 2009; Gibson & Römmele, 2009; Tenscher et al., 2012). Furthermore, comparisons between two or more measuring times help us see changes in professionalism of political parties’ campaign management, i.e. information about the development of professionalization. The differentiation between professionalism and professionalization is important, especially since most empirical studies measure only one time point (e.g. Strömbäck, 2009; de Vreese, 2009) instead of intertemporal comparisons. Here, both perspectives are taken into account, and they are extended to a comparison of political parties’ campaigns at two points in time in two different countries. Although measurements at two points in time still do not allow for conclusions about trends, we can at least say something about the change that has occurred between these points in time, and we can establish a basis for further longitudinal research in the future.

¹ Theoretically and empirically, it is unclear whether an additive index adequately reflects degrees of professional campaigning. It may be that single components have to be weighted accordingly — or perhaps the occasional intentional withdrawing of components might be a better indicator of professional campaigning than adding elements up. As long as these questions of external validity are open, we should stay with an additive but standardized index.

² Compared to the CAMPROF Index, the set-up of an outside campaign headquarters is not included, notwithstanding its symbolic (but not inherently functional) role.

Our empirical investigation is guided by five hypotheses. The first concerns the general effect of time and the second relates to differences between countries. These hypotheses are more descriptive and provide evidence for a general theory of campaign professionalization. The rest of the hypotheses are explanatory and aim at confirming assumptions that are derived from the party-centred theory of campaign professionalism (Gibson & Römmele, 2001), namely the effect of party size, party's ideological orientation and the effect of change in party leadership.

H1: The 2009 campaign index scores are higher than those in the 2004 elections. This assumption is the backbone of the idea of an ongoing development of professionalization.

H2: Campaign structures in Germany are more elaborate than in Finland. This assumption comes from single case studies concerning national elections in Germany (Tenscher, 2011) and Finland (Moring & Mykkänen, 2009). Since professional strategies are quite cost-efficient and easily available to all modern parties, we do not expect to find differences between countries on campaign strategies.

H3: Bigger political parties score higher on the campaign structure index than smaller parties. The rationale behind this assumption is that bigger parties benefit from their size — concerning both financial resources and the number of members (e.g. Maier et al., 2010; Tenscher et al., 2012). Smaller political parties score almost as high as their bigger competitors do on the campaign strategy index because smaller parties try to compensate their structural shortcomings by focusing on strategies (Tenscher, 2011).

H4: Right-wing parties score higher than left-wing parties do on both the campaign structure and the campaign strategy index. This assumption is based on Gibson and Römmele's party-centred theory of professional campaigning, according to which, right-wing parties tend to rely on outsourcing and marketing tactics more than left-wing parties for ideological reasons (Gibson & Römmele, 2001).

H5: Parties that experience an internal shock in the form of a change in the party leadership before the election will score higher on both structural and strategy indices. Again, this assumption is based on the party-centred theory of professional campaigning: after a change of party leadership, the party is supposed to intensify campaigning to secure the position of the new leadership.

METHODOLOGY AND EMPIRICAL DATA

We wanted to include in our comparison countries that are to some extent similar at the macro level but not identical. This was done in order to reveal differences at the party level, which is our main locus of interest, but also to allow for potential country-level variation.

Germany's and Finland's political, party, and media systems are quite alike. They share a parliamentary political system, their party systems are pluralistic with slight variations, and their media systems are democratic-corporatist (Hallin & Mancini,

2004; Table 1). The most notable differences relate to voting systems and coalition formation. The voting system encourages — in Finland fully, in Germany only partly — individual candidate campaigns. Finland has a tradition of multiparty coalition governments that may bridge the left-right cleavage, whereas Germany follows a block-based government model with a clear emphasis on a left-right split. In addition to that, the countries differ somewhat in their relation to the European Union: Germany is an original member with the largest number of delegates in the European Parliament, whereas Finland, with a much smaller population, entered the EU in 1995. The length of membership of both countries is still long enough to allow parties to develop a relatively stable manner of campaigning in the European elections. Finally, yet importantly, the countries were typical in their low levels of turnout at the last two EP elections: neither made it over the 50 per cent mark.

Table 1. Country characteristics

	Germany	Finland
Entry to the EU	1957	1995
Number of seats in the EP (from 2009)	99	13
Threshold (in per cent)	5	—
Voting age (in years)	>18	>18
Turnout in 2004 (in per cent)	43.0	39.4
Turnout in 2009 (in per cent)	43.3	40.3
Political system	parliamentary democracy	parliamentary democracy
Party system	moderate pluralistic	moderate pluralistic
Number of parties in the EP	6	7
Model of media and politics	democratic corporatist	democratic corporatist
Government formation	Block	Coalition
Parliamentary voting system	First past the post plus mixed member proportional	Proportional candidate/party voting (d'Hondt) ³

Source: authors.

From within these two countries we chose all political parties that had at least one delegate in the 2004 European Parliament as well as those parties that were expected to get at least one seat in the 2009 elections. A total of 12 parties for 2004 and 14 parties for 2009 were selected for data collection. Each country team approached the parties and arranged to interview the campaign managers or their

³ Note that one member (from the Åland Islands) is elected with a simple majority vote.

equivalents immediately after the elections. The interviews were conducted either personally (Finland) or with a semi-standardized questionnaire (Germany) in the aftermath of the EP elections, measuring different aspects of campaign structures and campaign strategies.

Most of these items are objectively measured variables, i.e. the information is publicly available. However, for the strategic side of a campaign, it is not simply the objective “reality” that is relevant, but rather the inter-subjectively shared perceptions of a party’s reality. For that reason, we have included some subjectively measured variables, too, such as the relevance of free media, paid media, or talk shows. Concerning those variables, we turned to evaluations made by the campaign managers in charge. Even though their statements might have been “edited” in light of the electoral outcome, this approach seems to be the most valid way to date to get insights of campaign reality (Gibson & Römmele, 2009; Strömbäck, 2009).

All those components are measured by scores, with 24 points displaying the maximum for the campaign structure index and 26 points for the campaign strategy index (details can be found in the Appendix in Tenscher et al., 2012). For the analyses, absolute scores were first transformed into z-scores, which equalize differences of scales and distributions of single items. Second, as the z-scores have no clear low and high ends, both scales were forced on a 0–100 range. Cronbach’s Alpha was calculated for both indexes. For the structural index, it was .69, and for the strategy index, it was .66. Although these values fall just below the .70 level commonly taken as a standard, we decided to keep the indices intact for theoretical reasons.

EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

General transformations in campaigning

When we first look at the general development of both indices (see Table 2), we detect striking evidence for the idea of an ongoing development of professionalization: In Germany every single party was more professionalized structurally and strategically in 2009 compared to 2004. Obviously, the parties had learned from their half-hearted efforts in 2004 (Tenscher, 2006) and/or the EP campaigns were positively affected by the maelstrom of the general elections which took place just four months later (Tenscher, 2011). This last assumption might especially explain the more professionalized structural setting in 2009, i.e. higher budgets, bigger teams, better communication infrastructures, etc., that enabled election campaigns to be joined together.

Finnish parties, too, operated with more professionalized campaign structures in 2009. There is no exception to that rule. However, the rise in Germany was much bigger (from a lower level) than in Finland. The same holds true for the

strategic side of the campaigns, which was more elaborate in Germany than in Finland in 2009 (but the other way round in 2004). Seen strategically, only three Finnish parties, the Centre Party, the Social Democrats, and the Left Alliance, ran their 2009 election campaigns less sophisticatedly in 2009 than in 2004. Still, aside from these spikes, the trend is remarkable and supports both our first hypothesis and the idea of an ongoing development of campaign professionalization. Statistically, this trend is supported by the moderately high levels of correlation between the election year and the campaign structure index (Kendall's Tau-b = .54, $p < .01$) as well as between the election year and the campaign strategy index (Kendall's Tau-b = .47, $p < .01$).

Table 2. Professionalization index scores for German and Finnish parties 2004 and 2009

Party	Campaign Structures		Campaign Strategies	
	EP 2004	EP 2009	EP 2004	EP 2009
Germany				
Social Democratic Party (SPD)	48.9	99.2	0.0	87.7
Christian Democratic Party (CDU)	32.1	100.0	44.3	100.0
Christian Social Party (CSU)	38.2	42.8	43.0	65.2
Green Party (Bündnis 90/ Die Grünen)	27.9	70.5	35.4	77.0
Leftist Party (Die Linke)	16.5	64.3	23.5	74.6
Liberal Party (FDP)	27.9	67.9	63.5	73.7
Total (Germany)	31.9	74.1	35.0	79.7
Finland				
National Coalition (KOK)	43.9	55.5	47.5	69.6
Centre Party (KESK)	36.3	56.5	55.7	52.8
Social Democrats (SDP)	51.0	67.8	63.8	52.5
Green Party (VIHR)	30.8	57.5	40.5	67.3
True Finns (PS)	n.a.	0.0	n.a.	21.8
Swedish People's Party (RKP)	32.8	42.1	32.6	57.4

Table 2 (*continued*)

Christian Democratic Party (KD)	n.a.	39.4	n.a.	74.9
Left Alliance (VAS)	34.1	60.7	18.9	16.6
Total (Finland)	38.1	47.4	43.2	51.6
Total	35.0	58.9	39.1	63.7

Source: authors.

While these time-effects are indisputable, country-effects are much more complicated. Against our original assumption (H2) the campaign structures — and strategies — of the German parties in 2004 were less developed compared to their Finnish equivalents. However, as mentioned above, between 2004 and 2009 there was a boost that more than doubled the German parties' structural professionalization index, while it was rising only moderately in Finland (Kendall's Tau-b = $-.09$, n.s.). The same happened to the campaign index, which also more than doubled in Germany but was up less than ten percentage points in Finland (Kendall's Tau-b = $-.19$, n.s.). Consequently, German parties nowadays seem to be much more professionalized in a structural and strategic sense than their Finnish counterparts. The other side of this coin is that the potential for professionalizing is much higher in Finland than in Germany, where the political parties have rapidly been approaching the imaginary top level of campaign professionalism, especially concerning campaign structures that were in both election years and in each country more professionalized than the campaign strategies were (Pearson's r between campaign structures and strategies = $.49$, $p < 0.01$).

Party-effects on campaigning

While the election year — that is the elapsed time — has had a deep impact on the degree of strategic and structural professionalization, country-effects are not stable. In a further step, we are interested in how much party size determines political parties' campaign communication. Theoretically, we assumed that there was a positive correlation between party size and the structural campaign setting of a party (H3). This assumption turns out to be correct (see Table 3). For both election years and both countries, structural professionalism increases with party size. The correlation is moderate but statistically significant (Kendall's Tau-b = $.38$, $p < 0.05$). While the differences between the party groups were relatively small in 2004, they were remarkably high in 2009. At that time, the bigger parties in Germany were almost “fully” professionalized with regard to their campaign structures. On the other hand, the medium-sized Finnish parties were — on the same level as the German medium-sized parties — more than twice as professionalized as their smaller opponents.

Table 3. Professionalization index scores and party sizes⁴ 2004 and 2009

	Campaign structures		Campaign strategies	
	EP 2004	EP 2009	EP 2004	EP 2009
Germany				
small (<5 per cent)	16.5	—	23.5	—
medium (5–25 per cent)	31.3	61.4	47.3	72.6
large (>25 per cent)	40.5	99.6	22.2	93.8
Finland				
small (<5 per cent)	32.8	27.2	32.6	51.4
medium (5–25 per cent)	39.2	59.6	45.3	51.8
Total				
small (<5 per cent)	24.6	27.2	28.0	51.4
medium (5–25 per cent)	36.2	60.4	46.0	61.1
large (>25 per cent)	40.5	99.6	22.2	93.8

Source: authors.

The differences diminish or even disappear when we look at the degree of a campaign’s strategic professionalism. Our assumption was that the smaller parties would be able to compensate, at least to some extent, their structural deficits by investing strategically. This assumption holds true for the medium-sized German parties in 2004 that clearly outperformed the bigger parties. Five years later, however, the SPD and the CDU, the two bigger parties, had a strategic boost that noticeably beat the other parties. On the other hand, in 2009 the smaller parties in Finland managed to catch up with their medium-sized competitors, both party groups being slightly above their 2004 index scores. Thus, the empirical evidence is somewhat mixed on the question whether party size affects the strategic conducting of a campaign. The correlation between these two variables is low and not significant (Kendall’s Tau-b = .16, n.s.).

The extent to which professional elements are implemented may be not a matter of party size, but rather of ideological orientation and party tradition. Concerning this matter, Gibson and Römmele (2001) early assumed that a right-wing orientation would facilitate professional campaigning (see also Strömbäck, 2009). We wanted to test this assumption by differentiating again between campaign structures and strategies.

⁴ Party size reflects the average of percentages of votes gained at national elections from 1990 to 2009.

When we first look at the degree of professionalism of political parties' campaign structures, our hypothesis has to be dismissed (see Table 4): Neither in 2004 nor in 2009 and in neither of the two countries did a party's right-wing orientation lead to a well-defined higher degree of structural professionalism. On the contrary, left-wing parties seem to be much more open to organizational improvements than their opponents are. Since these results confirm other cross-national findings about the 2009 EP elections (Tenscher et al., 2012), the priming variable "party ideology" should be removed from respective models, all the more so with the mixed correlation between party ideology and the degree of professionalism of parties' campaign strategies in mind (see Table 4). Concerning this matter, there are almost no differences between the party groups in Finland in 2004 and in Germany in 2009. Yet, while in Finland parties were developing in different directions between 2004 and 2009, their German equivalents were converging at a high level. As a result, there is no clear and significant correlation between party ideology and the degree of professionalism of parties' campaign strategies (Kendall's Tau-b = .15, n.s.).

Table 4. Professionalization index scores and party ideology 2004 and 2009

	Campaign structures		Campaign strategies	
	EP 2004	EP 2009	EP 2004	EP 2009
Germany				
Left	31.1	78.0	19.6	79.8
Right	32.7	70.2	50.3	79.6
Finland				
Left	42.5	64.3	41.4	34.6
Center	30.8	57.5	40.5	67.3
Right	37.6	38.7	45.3	55.3
Total				
Left	35.7	72.5	28.3	61.7
Center	30.8	57.5	40.5	67.3
Right	35.2	50.5	47.8	64.4

Source: authors.

Finally, we looked at Gibson's and Römmele's assumption concerning the impact on the degree of campaign professionalism resulting from a change in party leadership. As mentioned, they assume that such a change would make a party more receptive to structural amendments. This holds true — but only for Finland, where both campaign structures and campaign strategies were, in 2004 and 2009, positively

stimulated by an internal shock (see Table 5). In Germany, however, it is quite the contrary (with the exception of the 2004 campaign structures): those parties not experiencing a new party leader were more open to professional campaign structures and strategies. All things considered, it seems that the relationship between the change in a party’s leadership and its campaign professionalism is highly dependent on the context.

Table 5. Professionalization index scores and internal shock 2004 and 2009

	Campaign structures		Campaign strategies	
	EP 2004	EP 2009	EP 2004	EP 2009
Germany				
No internal shock	32.7	84.0	50.3	86.8
Internal shock	31.1	69.2	19.6	76.1
Finland				
No internal shock	37.2	37.3	39.0	48.1
Internal shock	40.1	53.5	51.6	53.8
Total				
No internal shock	35.3	56.0	43.8	63.6
Internal shock	34.7	60.5	32.4	63.7

Source: authors.

CONCLUSIONS

We found clear indications of the often-speculated ongoing development of campaign professionalization on both the structural and the strategic sides of the campaign. Time has had an independent effect on both our indices. Yet, time, as always, is a proxy variable for something that we did not measure, and as such it is a very rough indicator of professional transformations. While such transformations are obvious, there is no clear impact of a party’s geographic origin. In addition, party factors such as size and ideological orientation are only relevant for the structural side of campaign professionalism. It seems, however, that smaller parties, independent from their geographic origin, rather choose a strategic way to adapt to media logic and to get public attention on a short-term, while bigger parties tend to invest as well in organizational transformations, which promise stable relationships a) within parties and b) between parties and the media/public. It is interesting to see that labour parties also tend to fall into this category, perhaps thanks to their longer tradition of collectivist organization. This organizational approach meets the

criteria of political marketing (Lees-Marshment, 2001; Maier et al., 2010) — but it does not guarantee short-term success on election day. Professional strategies, however, are relatively easy and inexpensive campaign techniques accessible to all parties, including those that cannot invest in big campaign organizations. As these techniques are widely in use, statistical analyses will fail to expose differences between parties.

In terms of methodology, we have to point out the exploratory nature of this study. It is an early attempt to measure and quantify the degree of professionalism and the process of professionalization of political communication activities. Quantification can be seen as a prerequisite for systematic comparisons between political parties and/or countries (Gibson & Römmele, 2009; Strömbäck, 2009; Moring et al., 2011; Tenscher et al., 2012). However, our data analysis is still limited. First, our analyses focus on two subsequent campaigns, which is insufficient for identifying trends. In addition, a five-year time span may be too narrow, and two arbitrarily chosen campaigns may be too few to check for long-term transformations such as the process of professionalization. Notwithstanding the strong empirical evidence that we found, we have to be cautious. The captive trend, for example, could be a phenomenon of two exceptional EP campaigns. Hence, further longitudinal comparisons are needed.

Second, our research is based on a selection of indicators, which require scrutiny concerning the direction of impact; moreover, the weighting has to be checked. Although campaign managers' answers (subjective dimension) and the measurement of some objective information seem to be an appropriate way to tackle the phenomenon of campaign professionalism, the set of indicators still has to be controlled for its validity. We have to leave that open for future cross-national and longitudinal analyses dealing with more cases (parties and/or countries). In that sense, our study is intended to establish a point of reference for further comparative analyses, which might also look at campaigning on first- and second-order elections, testing different speeds of professionalization (Tenscher, 2011).

Finally yet importantly, future analyses must not only look for campaign efficiency but also for the influence of specific campaign features. Such evaluation studies will have to control for the primary objectives of political parties (Gibson & Römmele, 2001) — and they might even have to reflect campaign content with respect to its “tonality.” There is, however, much variation. Campaign “success” might be understood, for example, as high levels of media output, maximizing votes, positive evaluations of campaign pundits, or financial donations. Ideally, all of these aims would have to be measured, and they would have to be put in a causal relationship with specific campaign structures or strategies. That, however, remains impossible now. Yet, it is in the interest of political campaign and party research to follow that route as it provides a solid way to comparatively approach campaign “realities,” their causes, and their consequences.

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