

Section 3 – Politica comparata

Panel 3. The study of political parties between continuity and innovation.

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The empirical analysis of party organisation is fundamental to raise reliable knowledge about parties' different ways to conceive and structure political participation and democratic representation. At the same time, different forms of party organisations are expected to be associated with changing institutional environment and societal circumstances. In fact, despite their perceived decline and the rise of nonpartisan protest movements – in particular in the aftermath of the 2008 economic crisis – political parties are still the key actors in legislatures and governments. The study of the ways in which they build the relationship between citizens, groups and the elected personnel is crucial to understand their vision of democratic legitimacy. Furthermore, different organisational templates may help explaining differences and similarities in parties' capacity to perform crucial functions such as the electoral mobilisation, membership involvement, leadership selection, political communication and policy formulation.

This Panel welcomes empirical contributions that address the major areas of research related to political parties. Particular attention will be given to comparative studies that propose innovative methodological approaches to the analysis of the roles, functions, programs and organisations of political parties, in line with the latest international research projects (see in this regard: <http://www.politicalpartydb.org>). Specifically, the Panel will be a forum opened to scholars interested in the changing relationships between parties, the state and civil society, in order to answer the following questions: 1) is the party in public office, indeed, the predominant face within the parties? 2) what is the current role played by party members and volunteer activists? 3) what are the mechanisms of representation within the party organisations? 4) what are the real powers of party leaders? 5) which actors are involved in identifying crucial issues within the programs? 6) which are the main channels of supply of economic and financial resources of the parties?