

## **Section 4 – Sistema Politico Italiano**

**Chairs: Francesco Raniolo, Filippo Tronconi**

### **Panel 4.5 Italian Political Party Organizations. Resilience, Resistance and Transformation**

Addressing the study of party organizations and their transformations allows to have a clearer understanding of the changes occurring within contemporary democracies. Political parties seem to have failed in their role as legitimate actors of the processes of representation with negative consequences in terms of political trust and citizens dissatisfaction with politics. The detachment from the grassroots – determined by the dismantling of parties' structures – has contributed in feeding feelings of antiparty among citizens and facilitating the development of new political actors pushing on anti-politics rhetoric. The literature on this topic is extensive and it offers precious insights for assessing the impact of these organizational changes.

Italy represents an excellent case study for addressing this aspect. Indeed, Italian parties could be considered as an ideal 'laboratory' for what concerns the evolution of party organizations. In addition, the Italian political parties have often anticipated patterns of development that later have become common also in other political systems. If the First republic represented the golden age of mass parties, the so-called Second Republic was characterized by the weakening of parties' organizations in line with a personalization of politics stressing the role of party leaders. These recent transformations are more difficult to be interpreted by a univocal trend of development. Indeed, different patterns of organizational changes could be identified. Some parties introduced mechanisms of intraparty democracy in order to give a boost to the involvement and participation of their members and sympathizers. However, whether and to what extent these procedures have improved the quality of intra-party democracy is still to be determined. Other parties took advantage of digital communication technologies employing social media as arenas for interacting with their base, strengthening dynamics of disintermediation and – eventually – enhancing personalization of politics resulting into a further weakening of party organization role. New political actors entered the political landscape introducing new forms of (dis)organization, refusing the label of political parties while acting like them (i.e. running in elections) and – moreover – neglecting the very idea of party organization.

Reflecting on political parties' organization development is not just necessary. It is urgent. The aim of this panel is precisely to shed a light on what is going on in the Italian party system with specific reference to the development of their party organization. We thus welcome papers adopting a longitudinal perspective and based on empirical analyses. In

particular, we encourage the submission of papers addressing one of the following levels of changes within party organizations:

- Party on the ground, with reference to party membership rates and territorial party organization
- Party in central office, with reference to internal party organization as concerns the articulation of powers and rights among party bodies as stated in party statutes
- Party in public office, with reference to party cohesion
- Funding and financial resources
- Intraparty democracy
- Party leadership and personalization of politics
- Political communication

Chairs: Antonella Seddone, Marco Valbruzzi