

First- and second-order campaigning: Evidence from Germany

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Abstract

In recent years, political parties have reacted to some far-reaching transformations in their media and sociocultural environment. Respective changes and adaptations, often summarized under the catchword of 'professionalization', become most vivid during election campaigns. However, parties' election campaign professionalism has seldom been 'measured', and it has mostly been exemplified in single case studies so far. Against this backdrop, the article presents an empirical test of the party-centered theory of professionalization. It is an intertemporal comparison of political parties' campaign structures and strategies on the occasion of the two most recent European and national parliamentary elections in Germany. The analyses provide empirical evidence for professionalization-related changes. Plus, it is demonstrated that transformations take place at two different campaign levels, the first-order national and the second-order European level. These exemplary results should be taken into account in future empirical analyses that might reflect our methodological approach, too.

Keywords

Competition, election campaigning, Germany, political parties, professionalization

Introduction

Faced with some fundamental changes in the sociocultural, political and media environment, political parties have been initiating a number of substantial transformations both of their organizational structures and their communicative strategies. There is substantial evidence that political parties have been broadening their focus in recent years, not only from party to media logics (see Mazzoleni and Schulz, 1999; Strömbäck, 2008), but also

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from 'selling' to 'marketing' (see Lees-Marshment, 2001; Lees-Marshment et al., 2010). Such transformations are repeatedly discussed under the catchword of 'professionalization', and become most obvious during election campaigns.

Although commonly used, the concept of professionalization is still somewhat underdeveloped (see Negrine, 2007). In addition to its theoretical flaw, the small number of empirical studies on the professionalization of parties' political communication can be criticized for several reasons. First of all, most studies refrain from intertemporal designs which are required for testing process-related transformations, such as the process of 'professionalization'. Second, there is a lack of comparative, cross-sectional research which is needed to detect differences and/or similarities in election campaigning of political parties in different countries (see de Vreese, 2009; Gagatek, 2010; Swanson and Mancini, 1996). Last but not least, there are insufficient studies that directly compare political parties' campaign engagement during elections on different levels in one country. Most of the empirical work focuses on first-order national elections (see for Germany Holtz-Bacha, 2007; Tenscher, 2005). The few studies dealing with other campaign levels are either descriptive and/or operate with analogies and indirect comparisons to the first-order level of campaigning (see for European elections Bicchi et al., 2003; Maier and Tenscher, 2006; de Vreese, 2009; Gagatek, 2010).

As a consequence, a direct and intertemporal comparison of political parties' campaign professionalization on the occasion of first- and second-order elections is missing. Such an approach would help us to test two core hypotheses of contemporary political communication research. One assumption, that has not been measured yet, is that political parties undergo a process of professionalization, in the sense of becoming more and more professionalized from one campaign to the next. Here, vivid examples concerning one specific campaign often substitute empirical evidence by taking a series of campaigns into consideration. A second assumption is that political parties differentiate between first- and second-order elections by producing differently heated 'campaign arenas' (Reif and Schmitt, 1980; Tenscher, 2006). Keeping in mind the mass media's and voters' commitment to European and other second-order elections this notion seems very plausible (see e.g. Maier et al., 2011). However, it has not been systematically analyzed so far.

Against the backdrop of these shortcomings, we exemplarily look at German political parties' campaigns in the 2005 and 2009 general national elections and the 2004 and 2009 European elections. This intertemporal and cross-sectional design allows us to test both hypotheses as well as the assumption of a time shift between first-order and second-order campaign professionalization. Before we look at the empirical findings, we briefly substantiate the concept of professional campaigning, from which a model of campaign measurement is derived. Finally, our findings are summarized and discussed.

Campaign professionalism and professionalization

The planning, organization and conduct of electoral campaigns has never been static, but is rather a long-lasting process of transformation. Still, regardless of its historical dimension, respective changes in campaigning have attracted special attention in the last three decades (see Papathanassopoulos et al., 2007; Strömbäck, 2009: 96–97). This is due to

some new and highly visible features of the US-American presidential election campaigns that have stimulated both European campaign practice and campaign research. Its most prominent features hereby include the setting-up of ‘war rooms’, the mystified emergence of ‘spin doctors’ and other campaign consultants, or the rising willingness of the political elite to externalize campaign activities and to use TV talk shows for their self-presentation (see for Germany Holtz-Bacha, 2010: 9–13; Tenscher, 2007: 67). Yet, these are only easily observable symptoms of more deep-rooted structural and strategic transformations that parties and other political organizations have experienced, the most important ones being:

- Political parties’ and elites’ tendency to consistently cater to the needs of the electoral market, electoral campaign and electoral success (*process of electoralization*);
- An enduring effort of political parties and other political actors to adapt to journalistic expectations and to media logics (*process of mediatization*); and
- Political parties’ and other political actors’ endeavor for a permanent, professional and strategically planned communication management (*process of professionalization*).

Those transformations point to modernization-related adaptations of political actors facing substantial changes in their political, sociocultural and media environment. Their impact is not campaign-related or temporary, but permanent. Furthermore, it is not restricted to political parties: all actors in the political realm are affected by respective transformations (see Holtz-Bacha, 2010: 13–18). This becomes obvious when we look at organizational structures and daily political communication practices.

The outlined transformations have repeatedly been assigned to *three phases* which are said to be different in their communicative modes, structures and strategies and which are defined as a premodern (party- and organization-centered), a modern (candidate-centered) and a postmodern (message- and marketing-driven) phase (see Blumler and Kavanagh, 1999; Norris, 2000: 137–147; Plasser and Plasser, 2003: 4–7). However, although widely used, this model may be too undifferentiated, especially when it is linked to specific time periods.

For instance, interpreted as a diffusion process (‘Americanization’), the three-phase model could be seen as an evolving transnational pattern of uniformity. Yet, such an assumption neglects cultural and historic path-dependency of modernization processes, i.e. culture- and context-specific impacts on political campaigning (see Plasser and Plasser, 2003: 17). Furthermore, phase models usually set an endpoint: the ‘postmodern’ phase. But what happens with political communication after that phase? Plus, does every country really reach that endpoint irrespective of institutional and cultural limits which might, for example, prevent ‘permanent campaigns’ (Blumenthal, 1980; Ornstein and Mann, 2000)? Phase models usually also refer to countries or wider geographical units such as (sub-)continents, but neglect intra-systemic variances, i.e. differences in political campaigning on the meso level of the political parties. Finally, phase models rather implicitly look at *national first-order* parliamentary or presidential election campaigns. Although this might form the main focus of contemporary political communication

research, it does not cover the level of election-type related differences in political campaigning.

It may happen that different political parties: (a) *simultaneously* use ‘postmodern’, ‘modern’ and ‘premodern’ techniques; (b) differentiate between first-order (national) and second-order (European and subnational) campaigns by choosing communicative tools and channels; and (c) intentionally change their means of communication even though those formally come under other phases. We would argue that it is exactly this mix of strategic and structural components of different phases that characterize *professional campaign management* (see Tenscher, 2007).

Therefore, the term ‘professionalization’ does not stand for a specific communication phase. It rather indicates ‘a process of change ... that ... brings a better and more efficient organisation of resources and skills in order to achieve desired objectives, whatever they might be’ (Papathanassopoulos et al., 2007: 10). Thus, if we are interested in the degree of professionalism of a political party’s electoral campaign, we have to examine the organization of resources and take into account the desired opportunities and objectives. Those objectives might range from vote-seeking to office-seeking or policy-seeking (see Gibson and Römmele, 2001: 36–37).

Obviously, such an approach to the professionalism of electoral campaigns asks for an investigation of the meso level, i.e. the political parties involved. Comparing political parties’ campaign activities results in an investigation of the way in which they are adapting to modernization-related transformations – or in an analysis of the objectives that a party strives to achieve by using specific resources and skills. In doing so, we may also detect the degree of a political party’s campaign *professionalism* in comparison to other parties (see Gibson and Römmele, 2009; Gibson et al., 2009; Strömbäck, 2009). Furthermore, longitudinal comparisons between two or more measuring times may reveal information about the process of *professionalization*, i.e. about changes in professionalism of political parties’ campaign management.

The differentiation between professionalism and professionalization is important, especially since most studies measure only one specific point in time and sometimes extrapolate the results to the process of professionalization. In our study, both perspectives are taken into account, and are extended to a comparison of political parties’ campaigns on the occasion of two elections which a priori have a diverging relevance: a national first-order election and the European second-order election (see Reif and Schmitt, 1980; Tenscher, 2006). By looking at these two campaign types we can test how political parties differentiate in spending their resources, i.e. to what extent their campaign professionalism varies.

While the three-phase model suggests an ongoing process of modernization and professionalization of political parties’ campaign engagement, the second-order hypothesis allows for the assumption that political parties’ professionalism would be lower at second-order elections than at first-order elections. Both assumptions can be illustrated with the help of a hypothetical curve that indicates the degree of a political party’s campaign professionalism arranged in level of election types between the last two European (EP) and national parliamentary (NP) elections in Germany (Figure 1, black arrows). Due to the inherent differences between political parties, processes of de-professionalization between elections of the same type are also plausible in principle: the degree of

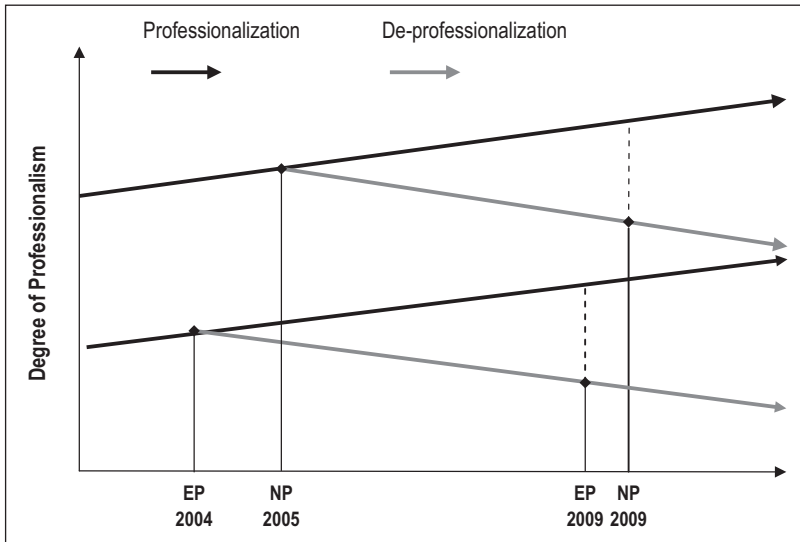


Figure 1. Professionalism and (de-)professionalization of election campaigns.

professionalism at measuring point of time (t) would then be higher than at the following point of time ($t+1$). Grey vectors symbolize such a development.¹

Data and method

There are several indicators for respective changes of professionalization that have become most obvious in first-order electoral campaign times both on the organizational level and with regard to political parties' campaign strategies. Since they have been discussed intensively in campaign literature, we rely on the following indicators to measure degrees of professionalism of campaign structures and campaign strategies:

Campaign structures:

- A growing structural, financial and personal capability for cost-intensive, and long-term to permanent campaigning (see Blumenthal, 1980; Ornstein and Mann, 2000), which includes the centralization of the campaign organization (see Plasser and Plasser, 2003: 6) and the use of telemarketing or direct mail for intra-party purposes (see Gibson and Römmele, 2009: 269–271). These indicators are transformed to the following items that we use for measuring campaign structures' professionalism (see Appendix): (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.
- A process of professionalization of campaign activities and actors, which includes a process of consulting, externalization and commercialization of specific

campaign tasks (cf. Blumler and Kavanagh, 1999; Strömbäck, 2009: 102). These facets of professional campaigning are transformed to one item: (6) the degree of externalization.

- A change from ‘selling’ to ‘marketing’ the political product (e.g. Norris, 2000: 171), which includes the use of market intelligence, opposition research, feedback tools, opinion polls, etc. (see Gibson and Römmele, 2001; Strömbäck, 2009: 103). 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 in influencing the media’s agenda and shaping public images by continuous event and news management activities (‘agenda building and priming’) (see 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 including entertainment and talk shows (see Norris, 2000: 170–172; Plasser and Plasser, 2003: 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. (see de Vreese, 2009; Wring, 2001). This is measured by one item: (12) the relevance of paid media.
- A segmentation of voters into target groups who are contacted by narrowcasting and micro-targeting (e.g. direct mail, direct email, direct calling, canvassing) (see Gibson and Römmele, 2001, 2009; Strömbäck, 2009: 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’) (see e.g. Adam and Maier, 2010: 224; Blumler and Kavanagh, 1999: 213–214). Therefore, another item is: (15) the degree of personalization.

We assume that the more of these elements are integrated into an electoral campaign, the more ‘professional’ it becomes (see Gibson and Römmele, 2009; Strömbäck, 2009; Tenscher et al., 2012). Furthermore, the idea of an ongoing professionalization process is reflected by our first hypothesis:

H1: The professionalism of any party’s campaign on the occasion of the 2009 elections is higher than its respective professionalism at the previous election of the same type. This assumption holds true both for the campaign structure (H1a) and the campaign strategy (H1b).

The idea of first- and second-order campaigning (see Cayrol, 1991; de Vreese, 2009) leads to our second hypothesis:

H2: The professionalism of any party’s campaign on the occasion of a first-order (national parliamentary) election is higher than its respective professionalism at the

previous second-order (European parliamentary) election. This assumption also holds true both for the campaign structure (H2a) and the campaign strategy (H2b).

Testing these hypotheses requires the implementation of a model which is independent from temporal or spatial conditions. It should facilitate international, intertemporal and election-type specific comparisons. It should also adequately reflect differences between political parties' campaign efforts. Such a party-related model was introduced by Gibson and Römmele (2001, 2009) and slightly adjusted by Strömbäck (2009). Despite its general applicability, the so-called 'CAMPROF Index' is on the one hand biased towards 'new' media technologies – which impedes longitudinal comparisons. On the other hand, it is an index that exclusively looks at campaign structures (finances, personnel, infrastructure and communicative resources), thereby neglecting strategic adaptations. As mentioned above, however, political parties' transformations take place on the organizational and the strategic level, regardless of being a first- or second-order election campaign. While the structure (although not stable) reflects the organizational preconditions for campaigning, like 'hardware', the strategic aspect forms a political party's campaign 'software'.

Against this backdrop we propose a modified and expanded index which consists of two sub-indices: campaign structures and campaign strategies (see Tenscher et al., 2012). Both indices incorporate a number of components that are deduced from the indicators mentioned above. They are measured on different scales and added to those indices (see Appendix). This means, the more extensively a campaign element is used, the higher it scores on the indices.² The index 'campaign structures' consists of the outlined items (1) to (8).³ The index 'campaign strategies' consists of the outlined items (9) to (15).

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 only the objective 'reality' that is relevant, but also the intersubjectively shared perceptions of a party's reality (see Gibson et al., 2009: 460–462). Therefore, we include subjectively measured variables too, such as the relevance of free media, paid media, or talk shows. Concerning those variables we turned to evaluations of the German campaign managers in charge. They were contacted with a semi-standardized questionnaire in the aftermath of each of the last four nationwide conducted campaigns. The questionnaire consisted of 20 questions. It was designed to be used either as a thematic guide in personal interviews or in a survey. Even though the statements of the campaign managers might have been biased in the light of the electoral outcome, this method was assumed to be the most valid way to get insights into the campaign reality up to date (see Gibson et al., 2009: 463).

All items are measured by scores, with a maximum score of 24 for the campaign structure index and a maximum score of 26 for the campaign strategy index (details can be found in Appendix). For the analyses, absolute scores were transformed to z-scores which equalize differences of scales and distributions of single items. Cronbach's alpha was calculated for both indices. For the structural index it was .71 and for the strategy index it was .68. Although this value slightly fails to reach the .70 level commonly taken as a standard, we decided to keep the index intact for theoretical reasons. In the end, both indices fit together and they reflect the most prominent components of professional campaigning both in a structural and a strategic sense.

Empirical findings

To test our guiding hypotheses we first look at the campaign structure index. Afterwards we will discuss the strategic positioning of the political parties and their overall professionalism. If we closely examine the development of the degree of professionalism both hypotheses are confirmed – at least concerning five of the six political parties represented in the German Bundestag (Figure 2). As assumed, all parties show higher degrees of professionalism on the occasion of the 2009 elections compared to the previous elections of the same type (H1a). At least to some extent, the unexpected call for snap elections might explain the relatively low levels in 2005: political parties simply did not have enough time to set up professional campaign structures both financially and with regard to their staff members.

In comparison, the national parliamentary election in 2009 took place at the programmed time. Therefore, political parties could not only prepare themselves far in advance and set up more elaborated campaign structures, but they even integrated the European parliamentary campaign as a prelude to the national parliamentary campaign (see Brunsbach et al., 2010). As a consequence, the 2009 EP campaign structures were more professional than in 2005. Obviously, campaign professionalism is highly dependent on timing. But still, these findings point to a trend of professionalization, especially since the degree of structural professionalism increases for almost all parties and all times from one election to the following (independent from its type).

In addition to that, the degree of professionalism of all parties on the occasion of the national parliamentary elections in 2005 and 2009 was higher than the respective degree

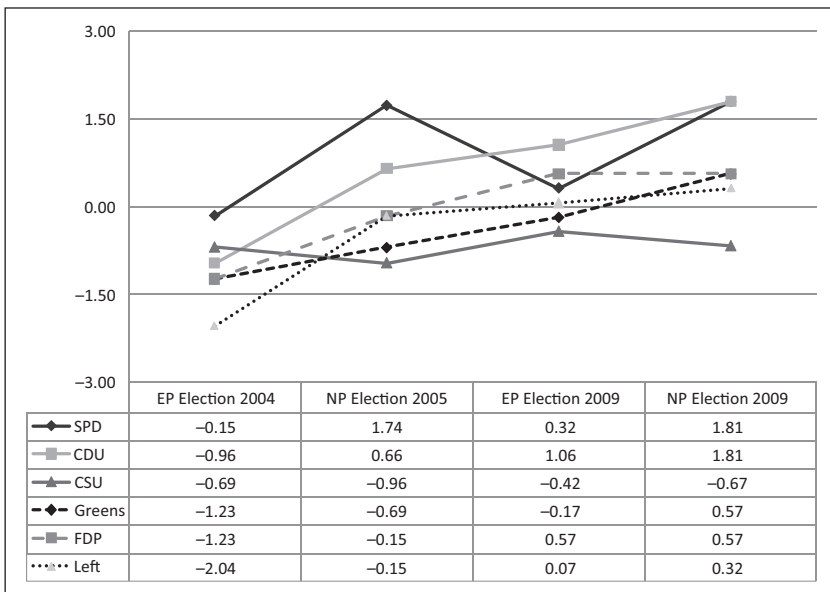


Figure 2. Professionalism of campaign structures 2004–2009 (z-values). SPD: Social Democratic Party, CDU: Christian Democratic Party, CSU: Christian Social Party, Greens: Green Party, FDP: Liberal Party, Left: Leftist Party.

in the 2004 and 2009 European parliamentary elections, with the exception of the CSU's campaign structures. Hypothesis 2a is therefore confirmed, too. The CSU holds a special position due to its geographic confines to the state of Bavaria: it organizes and conducts all national elections as federal state-specific, regional elections, often in coordination with its sister party, the CDU. There is simply no difference between first-order and second-order elections, which also explains the smallest variations and developments of all parties in the campaign structure index.

Figure 2 reveals another important result: the two catch-all parties, the SPD and CDU, could almost always benefit from their structural edge over their competitors, regardless of the election type. They not only have the largest number of members, but they also possessed the most sophisticated campaign hardware. It can be assumed that the smaller political parties would strive to strategically compensate for such structural disadvantages. This assumption is proven partly true when we look at the development of the campaign strategy index (Figure 3): in 2004, the FDP topped the other parties – including the two catch-all parties, the CDU and SPD – in a strategic sense by pushing their top candidate, Silvana Koch-Mehrin. At that time, the Liberals were the most professionalized party, showing the highest degrees of mediatization, target-group orientation and personalization, despite having the smallest budget of all political parties represented in the German Bundestag (see Tenscher, 2006: 129). While the CDU was always one of the two most professionalized parties in a strategic sense, its main competitor, the SPD, only achieved this in the two elections of 2009. Obviously, the Social Democrats had learned from their poor campaigns and election performances in 2004 and 2005 (see Tenscher, 2007). In 2009, the CDU and SPD were able to dominate strategically. This gave them a boost in terms of professionalization, especially in the EP elections.

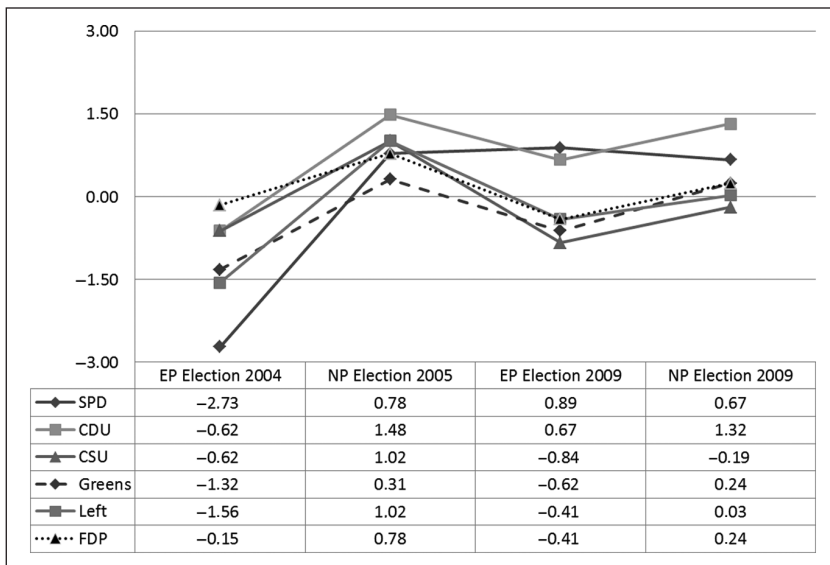


Figure 3. Professionalism of campaign strategies 2004–2009 (z-values).

With regard to the campaign strategies, there is no evidence of a straight trend towards professionalization. In fact, if we compare the political parties' degrees of professionalism at the last two national parliamentary elections in 2005 and 2009, a *trend of de-professionalization* is revealed: in 2009, each party failed to reach the level of strategic professionalism it had in 2005. Thus, the trend rather pointed downward instead of upward, as the idea of an ongoing process of professionalization would suggest. This is remarkable, especially against the backdrop of the snap elections in 2005. Obviously, the timely compressed election campaign at that time required enormous attention to be paid to convincing strategies, whereas the elections of 2009, starting with a grand coalition and faced with the global economic and financial crisis, were often characterized as being 'lame', 'paralyzed' and 'boring' (Krewel et al., 2011: 34). Therefore, hypothesis 1b was not confirmed in our study.

This notion is supported by the fact that the strategic levels of the political parties' campaigns at the 2009 Bundestag elections (except the SPD) only slightly surpassed the earlier EP campaigns in 2009. As a matter of fact: 'the campaigns of the German parties for the European Parliament election were all part and [a] by-product of the campaigns for the general elections in September' (Brunsbach et al., 2010: 91). Thus, differences between first- and second-order election campaigning were much smaller in 2009 than in 2004/2005. Looking back at this time period, hypothesis 2b was confirmed: we found a clear upheaval of the campaign strategies for all political parties represented in the German parliament.

To sum it up, there is neither a straight development between elections of the same type nor between elections of different types, which would have supported the assumption of an ongoing process of strategic campaign professionalization on two separate levels. After the national elections in 2005, professionalism with regard to campaign strategies seems much more constant than the development of campaign structures. This might be a consequence of the specific party constellation and the tiny time gap between European and national elections in the 'super election year 2009'. A second explanation might be that the parties settled at a strategic level in 2005, from which they only slightly deviate further on in time. This explanation would support cross-national findings with regard to EP elections that indicate a 'Western European style' of campaigning (see Tenscher et al., 2012). However, further research into future German elections would be needed to validate this assumption.

Despite the inconsistencies regarding the campaign strategy index, it has to be mentioned that we found a strong correlation between the two dimensions. For all parties and campaigns the two indices correlate positively and significantly ($r = .54$; $p < .01$). Against this backdrop, we finally integrate the two dimensions to one index of campaign professionalism (Figure 4).

The results of the overall campaign professionalism index are unambiguous. They confirm both hypotheses as the curves correspond to the theoretical assumptions (cf. Figure 1). With the exception of the CSU, and the comparison of the two national parliamentary elections, all parties have become more professionalized between elections of the same level. In 11 of 12 possible comparisons, hypothesis 1 is therefore confirmed. Furthermore, the widespread differentiation between first-order and second-order

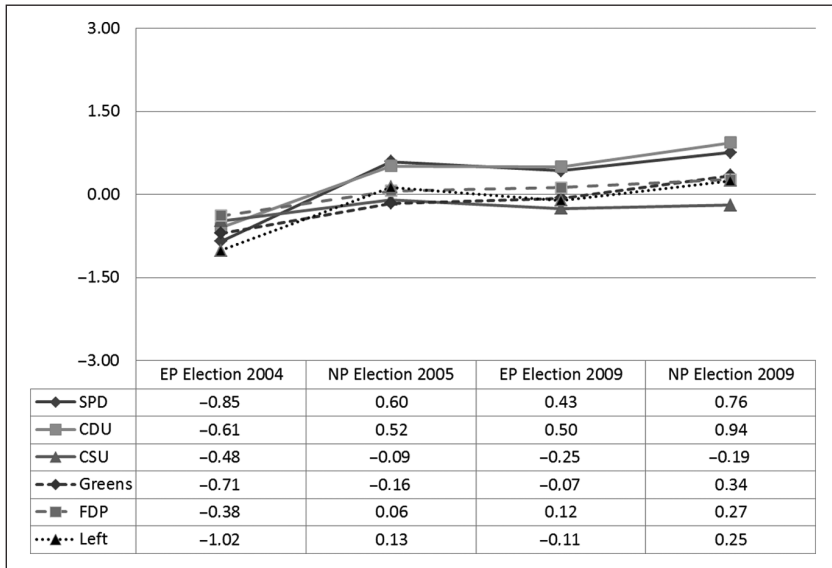


Figure 4. Overall professionalism of campaigns 2004–2009 (z-values).

campaigning receives empirical backing. Every political party was more professionalized at the national elections than at the previous European elections. This is a clear indicator for the parties' rationality: they campaigned in a 'half-hearted' manner in the second-order elections, not least to save resources for the first-order election campaigns. Thus, hypothesis 2 was clearly confirmed, too.

There are two additional findings that deserve attention. First of all, the two catch-all parties have been the most professionalized parties in all campaigns since the national parliamentary elections in 2005. Consequently, they not only benefitted from the highest media attention and their greater human resources, but they were also the best equipped, and conducted the most effective campaigns with regard to media and public attention. Only at the national election in 2005 did the SPD rank first. But in 2004 and 2009 CDU had a clear lead over its main competitor – not only in terms of professional campaigning but also in votes. When we look at the bottom of the ranking, two left-wing parties (Leftist Party in 2004, the Greens in 2005) and one right-wing party (CSU in 2009) brought up the rear. Thus, one core assumption of the party-centered theory of professionalization cannot be confirmed (see Gibson and Römmele, 2001): at least in Germany, right-wing parties are not more open to professionalization than left-wing parties. The professionalization of campaigning in Germany is not a matter of ideology as there is no statistically significant correlation at all (Kendall tau-b = .00; n.s.). It is rather a matter of party size (Kendall tau-b = .37; $p < .05$). The bigger parties are, i.e. the more members they have and the more votes they have obtained in the last election, the more professionalized they are – not only in a structural sense but also strategically. Plus, the

variance between political parties' professionalism has clearly grown from 2004 to 2009. This, again, supports our approach to quantitatively deal with campaigning on the meso level of the political parties. Differences in professional campaigning are more likely to take place within one and the same country, than between different countries (cf. Tenscher et al., 2012).

Discussion

In sum, the results clearly support two core assumptions of contemporary political communication research. First of all, a change towards higher degrees of professionalism took place – especially on the structural level. Second, in Germany this development has taken place on two different levels, at first-order and second-order campaign level. Furthermore, it seems that smaller parties rather choose a strategic way to adapt to media logics and to get public attention on a short-term scale. In contrast, the bigger parties tend to invest in organizational transformations that promise stable relationships, (a) within parties and (b) between parties and the media/public. This organizational approach meets the criteria of political marketing (see Lees-Marshment, 2001) – but it does not guarantee short-term success on election day.

In terms of methodology we have to emphasize the exploratory nature of our study. It presents one of the first attempts to measure and quantify the degree of professionalism of political campaign activities. Quantification is a prerequisite for systematic and direct comparisons between political parties and/or countries (see Gibson and Römmele, 2009; Strömbäck, 2009; Tenscher et al., 2012). However, our data analysis is still limited: we only focused on four subsequent campaigns, two of them first-order and two second-order. That does not allow for establishing longitudinal 'trends'. In addition, a time span of five years might be too narrow and four arbitrarily chosen campaigns might be too few to check for long-term transformations such as the *process* of professionalization. Despite the strong empirical evidence we found, we have to be cautious. The captive trend might rather be a phenomenon of two exceptional general election campaigns: one at a snap election, another three months after the EP elections took place. Hence, further longitudinal comparisons are needed.

In addition to that, our data analysis is based on a selection of indicators. These have to be scrutinized, and the weighting has to be checked. The combination of campaign manager answers (subjective dimension) and the measurement of some objective information seems to be an appropriate way to tackle the phenomenon of campaign professionalism. However, despite the satisfying consistencies of the two indices, the set of indicators still has to be controlled for its validity. We have to leave it open for other longitudinal and cross-national analyses to deal with more cases and countries (see Tenscher et al., 2012). In that sense our study is supposed to set a point of reference for further comparative analyses, which would also have to consider the methodological approach. Besides validity we also have to question the reliability of our findings since some of the indicators (reasonably) reflect campaign managers' subjective evaluations. Inherently, such an approach reduces data quality. That makes it necessary to check both objectively and subjectively collected information in future analyses.

Last but not least, future analyses regarding Germany or other countries have to look not only at campaign efficiency but also at the impact of specific campaign features. Such evaluation studies have to control for political parties' primary objectives – and they might even reflect campaign content, or its 'tonality'. However, there is room for variation. A campaign's 'success' might pertain to, for example, high levels of media output, maximizing votes, positive evaluations of campaign pundits or financial donations. Ideally, all of these aims would have to be quantified and they would have to be put in a causal relationship with specific campaign structures or strategies. That, however, remains an inaccessible task. Nevertheless, it is in the interest of political campaign research to follow that route since it is a promising way to approach a campaign's 'reality', its causes, and consequences.

Appendix: Professionalization Index

The 'Professionalization Index' consists of two additive partial indices measuring the professionalism of (a) campaign structures and (b) campaign strategies of political parties. Both indices include multiple indicators reflecting the most important dimensions of electoral campaigning widely discussed and empirically tested (see Gibson and Römmele, 2009; Norris, 2000; Plasser and Plasser, 2003; Strömbäck, 2009; Tenscher, 2007; Tenscher et al., 2012). The existence, as well as the magnitude of these indicators, is measured by scores. As a general rule, the score for each indicator is generated on the basis of objective criteria. In certain cases (marked with *), these objective criteria are supplemented by an additional subjective assessment by the parties' campaign managers. The maximum score of the overall Professionalization Index is 50 (24 points measuring communication structures and 26 points measuring communication strategies), which would – according to the status quo – reflect a 100% professionalization.

Indicators measuring communication structure (8 indicators, 24 points max.)

Size of election campaign budget

This score is based on the election campaign expenditures of each individual party per eligible voter. Application as follows:

0–10 cents	=	1 point
11–20 cents	=	2 points
21–30 cents	=	3 points
31–40 cents	=	4 points
More than 40 cents	=	5 points

Staff size

This score is based on the number of institutionalized permanent and temporary staff members that are involved in the planning, organization and implementation of the election campaign on the national level. Application as follows:

0–10 staff members	=	0 points
11–30 staff members	=	1 point
31–50 staff members	=	2 points
More than 50 staff members	=	3 points

*Degree of centralization of campaign organization**

This score is based on the degree of centralization of the campaign management (i.e. the organizational, strategic and thematic orientation) in the hands of party leaders on the national level. Application as follows:

Decentralized	=	0 points
Partly centralized	=	1 point
Fully centralized	=	2 points

Degree of externalization

This score is based on the number of temporary dedicated agencies and political consultants/experts occupied with general and/or specific election campaign jobs, such as advertising, news and event management, media planning, opinion polling, targeting, internet campaigning, etc. Application as follows:

No agency/consultant	=	0 points
1–2 agencies/consultants	=	1 point
3–4 agencies/consultants	=	2 points
More than 4 agencies/cons.	=	3 points

Differentiation of internal communication structures

This score is based on the existence and the use of 'new' communication media for internal campaign communication, and the mobilization of party members. The scoring is based on the use (1 point) or non-use (0 points) of the following five communication channels: (a) intranet, (b) direct mail, (c) direct calling, (d) email and (e) SMS/MMS. The maximum score is 5 points.

Nature and degree of feedback

This score is based on the use of two methods employed to test planned campaign techniques, and to measure target-group specific and representative opinions. The scoring is based on the use (1 point) or non-use (0 points) of the following two ways of feedback: (a) commissioned or independently conducted opinion polls and (b) focus groups analyses. The maximum score is 2.

Degree of opposition research

This score is based on the development of independent structures for the monitoring of political opponents: existence of independent structures (1 point), absence of independent structures (0 points).

Campaign duration

This score is based on the overall duration of the preparation, planning and implementation of the campaign until election day. Application as follows:

0–5 months	=	0 points
6–12 months	=	1 point
13–24 months	=	2 points
More than 2 years	=	3 points

Indicators measuring communication strategies
(7 indicators, 26 points max.)

Degree of targeting

This score is based on the number of target groups that have been identified by the party, and are supposed to be contacted and mobilized specifically. Application as follows:

No spec. target group	=	0 points
1–2 spec. target groups	=	1 point
3–4 spec. target groups	=	2 points
5 and more spec. target gr.	=	3 points

Degree of narrowcasting activities

This score is based on the number of activities aiming at the direct communication with target groups. The scoring reflects the use (1 point) or non-use (0 points) of the following activities: (a) direct mail, (b) direct calling, (c) email, (d) SMS/MMS, (e) canvassing/visits, (f) information desks, special events, etc. The maximum score is 6.

*Relevance of paid media**

This score is based on the subjective assessment, done directly by the campaign managers. The persons in charge are asked to rank the significance of different advertising media based on a five-point scale questionnaire (1 = ‘completely unimportant’ to 5 = ‘very important’). Scores are only given to those paid media channels that have been assessed as being ‘important’ or ‘very important’ (score ≥ 4). The following five advertising media are included: (a) party advertisements on TV, (b) party advertisements in cinemas, (c) party advertisements on the radio, (d) posters, (e) advertisements in newspapers and magazines. The maximum score is 5.

*Relevance of free media**

This score is based on the subjective assessment, done by the campaign managers. The persons in charge are asked to rank the significance of the presence of their party, or their frontrunner, in different media formats based on a five-point scale questionnaire (1 = ‘completely unimportant’ to 5 = ‘very important’). Scores are only given to formats ‘exempt from charges’ that have been assessed as being ‘important’ or ‘very important’ (score ≥ 4). The following six formats are included: (a) national daily or weekly

newspapers, (b) regional/local print media, (c) yellow press/tabloids, (d) radio, (e) internet (incl. weblogs, forums), (f) television. The maximum score is 6.

*Relevance of talk shows**

This score is based on the subjective assessment, done by the campaign managers. The persons in charge are asked to rank the significance of the presence of their frontrunner (a) in political talk shows and (b) in entertainment and other non-political talk shows based on a five-point scale questionnaire (1 = 'completely unimportant' to 5 = 'very important'). Scores are only given for formats that have been assessed as being 'important' or 'very important' (score ≥ 4). The maximum score is 2.

*Degree of event and news management**

This score is based on the subjective assessment done by the campaign managers. The persons in charge are asked to assess the degree of the management of media-oriented 'pseudo events' in the party's campaign. Application as follows:

No media targeting of events	=	0 points
Sporadic media targeting of events	=	1 point
Frequent media targeting of events	=	2 points

*Degree of personalization**

This score is based on the subjective assessment done by the campaign managers. The persons in charge are asked to assess the significance of their frontrunner compared to issues in the party's campaign. Application as follows:

Predominantly issue-oriented campaign	=	0 points
Candidate and issue-oriented campaign	=	1 point
Predominately candidate-oriented campaign	=	2 points

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Notes

1. Due to divergent objectives and resources there might be variations in the degree of professionalization or de-professionalization of a political party's campaign efforts. That would be symbolized by different angles in Figure 1. For reasons of clarity, figure 1 only shows one political party (or the aggregate of all political parties).
2. Theoretically and empirically it is unclear if an additive index adequately reflects degrees of professional campaigning. Maybe, single components have to be weighted accordingly – or maybe sometimes intentional withdrawing of components might be a better indicator for 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.
3. Compared to the CAMPROF Index, the set-up of an outside campaign headquarters is not included, notwithstanding its symbolic (but not inherently functional) role.

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