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FOUR FUNERALS AND A PARTY?  
THE POLITICAL REPERTOIRE OF THE ITALIAN RADICALS

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**CLAUDIO M. RADAELLI AND SAMUELE DOSSI**

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## **Abstract**

The transformations brought about by changing patterns of representation, the role of the media in politics, and processes of Europeanization and globalization have challenged the political parties of the West-European Left - and Italy is no exception to this trend. At the policy level, the four transformations have constrained the classic repertoire of the left. At the level of identities, they have pushed some parties to re-invent their core beliefs and re-shuffle their electoral strongholds, whilst other less successful parties have practically withered away. By contrast, right-wing and neo-populist parties have benefited from these four historical trends. These changes are somewhat congenial to them. For Left-wing parties, however, these changing patterns have led to ‘funerals’ of traditional practices and repertoires. In this article we look at the political repertoire of the Radical Party - established as *Partito Radicale* in 1955 in Italy and known today as Non-violent, Transparty, Transnational Radical Party. The Radicals have been able to theorize and approach the four challenges quite pro-actively, possibly because most of these transformations were already in their genetic code. The party, grounded in political liberalism, has produced a repertoire embracing global Gandhian transnational action on human rights, anti-militarism, sustainability and the fight against prohibitionist policies; a libertarian approach to scientific ‘disorganization’ of the classic party apparatus; and a notion of federalism grounded in the critique of the state as institution detrimental to liberties and welfare. We illustrate this original political repertoire and appraise its achievements. We finally critically discuss the repertoire in the broader context of Italian and European politics.

## **Keywords**

Political parties, non-violence, liberalism, Italian Radical Party, Europeanization

## 1. Introduction\*

The transformations brought about by changing patterns of representation, the role of the media in politics, and processes of Europeanization and globalization have challenged political parties. In Western Europe and specifically in Italy, left-wing parties have addressed these four transformations with variable degrees of success. Some parties have withered away. Others have literally re-invented themselves. Amidst failure, adaptations and some successes, the process of change has been hard and painful for the left-wing parties. At the organizational level, the transformations have reduced participatory linkages and have mutated major parties into a component of the state apparatus. At the policy level, the changes have constrained the classic menu of the left-wing, both when in government and in opposition. At the level of identities, they have pushed some parties to modify their core beliefs and alter the electoral base. Right-wing and neo-populist parties have been advantaged by these four historical trends, whilst for the Left they have led to ‘funerals’ of traditional practices and identities. In this article we look at the political repertoire of the Radical Party - established as Partito Radicale in 1955 and known today as Nonviolent, Transparty, Transnational Radical Party ([www.radicalparty.org](http://www.radicalparty.org)). A repertoire is a constellation of political beliefs, organizational choices and strategy. A political repertoire can be discussed in relation to evidence (that is, whether the analysis put forward by a party stands up to social science knowledge) and its internal coherence – this enables us to show whether values reverberate into organizational choice and if the strategy is coherent and mirrors the core beliefs.

The Radicals have been able to theorize and approach the four challenges quite pro-actively, possibly because most of these transformations were already in their genetic code and political tradition. Scholars of new political movements, the 'new left', and the so-called third way have already pointed to examples of political repertoires that address limited aspects of the changes. But it is most unusual for a party of the left arising out of political liberalism to master a repertoire like the one we are about to describe and evaluate.

We illustrate this relatively unique political repertoire, appraise its results (not simply electorally, for reasons that will be clarified in the remainder of the article), and discuss its legacy both for Italian and European-global politics. We first present the four transformations concisely. Next we look at the thrust of the political analysis suggested by the Radical Party, focusing on their assessment of Italian political development. We then move to the repertoire of the party, examining how it has addressed the four changes in representation, the political role of the media, Europeanization, and globalization. Finally, we discuss and conclude. One qualification is in order. In describing the repertoire, we have sought to take the ideas, beliefs and documents provided by the Radical Party in a truthful and respectful way. Our aim in the empirical sections is to describe and explain the Party and its repertoire, not to endorse or criticize it. Our appraisal will be introduced after we lay out the evidence. This way, we hope, it will be easier to distinguish between evidence and interpretation. We will show that although the Radical Party's repertoire looks *prima facie* irrational in terms of our classic propositions on the behaviour of parties (Katz and Mair, 1994), there is coherence and some degree of effectiveness

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\* This paper arises out of a research project carried out at the Centre for European Governance, University of Exeter. We are grateful to Gabriella Fanello of Radio Radicale for access to the Radical Party archives in Rome and to Valter Vecellio for having sent us a whole set of books by the publisher Stampa Alternativa. We wish to express our gratitude to Matteo Angioli, Marco Cappato and Lorenzo Lipparini for having answered our questions during conversations that took place in November 2010 and March 2011. Pietro Migliorati gave us access to the data on membership. Fabrizio Di Mascio kindly made a number of useful suggestions when we met in Rome in November 2010 and by email in March 2011. Our colleague Nicole Bolleyer (Exeter) helped us with the literature on political parties.

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in the scientific disorganization and the ‘suicidal decisions’ of the party,<sup>1</sup> although not without tensions and limitations.

## 2. The four funerals and our research questions

The literature on party politics shows some patterns of evolution that are common to all major democracies. One pattern is the emergence of the cartel party, described as “a fusion of the party in public office with several interest groups that form a political cartel, which is mainly oriented towards the maintenance of executive power. It is a professional organization that is largely dependent on the state for its survival and has largely retreated from civil society” (Krouwel, 2006: 252). The availability of public funding reduces a key incentive for establishing robust links with the civil society – as noted by van Biezen (2003) and the party exists only because it is organically a component of the party apparatus. Kay Lawson (2006: 483) draws on the notion of cartel party put forward by Katz and Mair (1995) to summarize a vast body of research pointing to major parties colluding in cartel, thus becoming “better linked to each other than to those whom they are expected to serve”. Lawson goes on to observe that participatory linkage (meaning that members play a serious role in shaping the decision-making process of the party) “has all but disappeared”. We are not saying that the cartel party is the only model available, but political systems like Italy show a trend towards cartelization.

The representational function of parties is changing. Richard Katz and Peter Mair distinguish between the *party in public office*, the *party on the ground* and the *party in central office* (Katz and Mair, 1995). In all major democracies, Western European democracies included, these three functions are under pressure. The party in public office is damaged by the trend towards cartelization, making the party less distinguishable from the state than in the past. As for the party on the ground, citizens find fewer incentives to become members of a party (Mair and van Biezen, 2001). And cartel parties need citizens less and less. Policy goals are arguably more efficiently secured by joining single-issue movements and pressure groups.

Turning to parties in parliament, there has been a steady increase of the role of executive, in turn created by globalisation, international policy coordination and European integration (a point to which we will turn later on in this Section). Even in Scandinavian countries, European summits have increased the role of the prime minister *vis a vis* the parliament (Arter, 2004). Technocratic policy-making and pressure group politics have also pushed political systems toward post-parliamentary governance (Andersen and Burns, 1996). Richardson observed that in the market for representation pressure groups outperform political parties (Richardson, 1995).

In Italy, the left-of-centre parties have historically specialised in territorial representation, in sharp contrast to Forza Italia. The left has also championed of the role of parliaments in lawmaking. The new populist right has been quicker to take electoral advantage of lighter forms of parties. Both the Northern League and Forza Italia have not worried about the declining role of parliaments and party democracy.

The crisis of party representation goes hand in hand with the rise of the charismatic power of individuals, especially prime ministers and (in France) the President. This is not just a consequence of the EU summits and greater international policy coordination. It is also and arguably more importantly the manifestation of the role of media in shaping political behaviour (Bale, 2008: chapter 7; Semetko, 2006). Television and the media have offered new opportunity structures to political entrepreneurs of the Right and far Right that have amplified the politics of fear (about migration and job loss) and blunt, emotional, slogan-type political messages. The *homo videns* described by Sartori (2000) is not

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<sup>1</sup> These terms have been used in the literature on the party as well by the party leaders. See Ignazi (1997) and Vannucci (2007).



the *citizen* of classic democratic theory. Studies on voting for populist leaders and the far Right have looked at both the demand side, and more recently, the supply side (e.g. Mudde, 2007). It has been noted that in France Le Pen's popularity increased immediately after his participation in the mainstream TV programme *L'Heure de Verite'*. In Austria it was the *Kronen Zeitung* that decided to cover the FPÖ and especially its leader Jörg Haider - thus exposing him to a large segment of the public opinion. Pim Fortuyn's media attraction has also been noted. Silvio Berlusconi is obviously the main reference for the Italian case, both in terms of demand and supply.

Although European integration has not introduced a new cleavage in West-European party systems (Ladrech, 2006; 2010), Europeanization has affected democracy in Europe. European integration has produced politics without policy at the domestic level, and policy without politics at the European level (Mair, 2004). On the one hand, domestic elections are still the main forum for democratic choice at the domestic level. National elections, however, 'decide' less and less in terms of public policy. This is because governments are increasingly constrained by the policies of the European Union (EU) such as the single market, a single currency for the Eurozone members, a common defence and security policy, and commitments taken in the area of justice and home affairs. Thus – the analysis goes on – government and opposition in parliament may well discuss policy issues, but an increasing amount of choices are pre-determined in Brussels. As for 'policy without politics', the EU has now become an important producer of public policy, but European elections remain second-order elections. These elections are not fought by competing parties or coalitions presenting alternative manifestos to their electorates; they do not lead to the choice of an executive in Brussels chosen by the electorate. And they are not contested on the basis of genuinely European issues. For this reason, the EU level, no matter how important it is for the production of public policy, has not become a fully-fledged arena of democratic politics.

Further, negative integration (that is, the elimination of barriers to market integration) has been much greater than positive integration (e.g., the social dimension of Europe). According to Scharpf (1977), there is an asymmetry between market-creating policies and market-correcting policies. Even the rights that the EU has protected the most are the rights that enable the single market to function, such as free mobility of labour and equal pay between men and women, rather than the classic full package of social rights guaranteed by the welfare state as known in West European political systems. For this reason, the parties of the Left have found Europeanisation somewhat uncomfortable and politically difficult to handle. Scharpf and others have also pointed to the consequences of market integration without the complement of a European social dimension in terms of unbridled or harmful regulatory competition –as evidenced by the recurrent fears of decreasing environmental and labour standards, and in short social dumping, from the time of Portugal accession to Europe in the 1980s to the more recent vicissitudes of the directive on the provision of services across Europe.

Although this is a simplified, perhaps tabloid version of Europeanization and there are several caveats and qualifying propositions (Schmidt, 2002, Radaelli, 2004), it is fair to say that Europeanization provides a contested territory where hard trade-offs and policy dilemma have to be solved (Hopkins, 2004). The implementation of European policies has reduced the room for policy choice and encouraged reforms at home in different domains such as pensions, competition policy, and labour market regulation that have been painful for parties like the Italian Communist Party (Maggioreani, 1998), although elsewhere ingenious solutions and clever compromises have been found (Giddens, 1998; Levy, 1999; Visser and Hamerijck, 1997).

Parties of the right-wing have been either supportive of market integration and relatively less concerned about social dumping and the lack of 'social Europe'; or, in their populist version, have seconded anti-European sentiments and found it convenient to blame the European Commission and deep economic integration in Europe for the transformations under way and the increasing uncertainty about jobs and welfare provision at the domestic level.

On the international scene, parties are perceived as less effective than NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) and international organizations (Lawson, 2006). The only transnational parties examined by Lawson are federations of parties and the so-called European parties – that is, the federations active in the European Parliament. After having noted that there is not much to say on transnational parties, Lawson concludes that “even the best-developed of transnational parties, those active in the European Union, do not yet play a stronger role in supranational politics than their national counterparts, nor a more democratic one” (Lawson, 2006: 489). Although the Greens have been successful in pushing some issues on to the international agenda, they have been less than effective in controlling it (Lawson, 2006). Cartelization is also rife at the international level. Lawson mentions “ample evidence” that cartelization “is in fact operative at the international level, a successful parties work in collusion with national governments on behalf of the goals they jointly set” (Lawson, 2006: 489).

At the policy level, globalization blurs the responsibility for policy outcomes (see Fernandez, 2006 and the vast literature cited therein) and puts on the agenda issues like de-regulation of markets, migration, security and anti-terrorism, and the fear of emerging superpowers like China and India. Parties that are strongly attached to national governments and the state apparatus find it difficult to engage with notions of international governance and global democracies, and often support military interventions against the preferences of the majority of citizens. The international arena also forces parties that work hand in hand with governments to enter into arrangements with non-democratic leaders, as shown by the support of the left Democratic Party to the 2008 Treaty between Lybia and Italy signed by the Berlusconi government. Lawson concludes that international politics may transform political parties into “dangerous instruments” for achieving democratic values (Lawson, 2006: 490). Although we cannot generalise, these trends are particularly worrying for the classic values of the Left and the notion that left-wing parties are instruments of democracy and human rights both at home and in the international arena.

This short literature review introduces our research questions. First, can a party respond creatively to the imperative of the party in office, in public office and on the ground? Organizationally speaking, do the choices made by the Radical party about the threefold distinction of Katz ad Mair seem schizophrenic and suicidal – or do they signal that another way of doing things exists? Second, can a party address the four ‘funerals’ and still keep a relatively coherent repertoire? If so, how? Third, how can this repertoire be appraised? Could it be potentially useful to other parties in Europe that are seeking to re-invent themselves and respond with new messages to the wave of anti-European, populist sentiments? After a Section on the history of the Radical Party and the specific literature on this political object, we move on to answer our research questions no.1 and no.3 in Section 4. Section 5 tackles the third research question, before we conclude.

The article is based on the scant literature on the topic, primary documentation, and discussions with the leaders and officers of the party carried out in 2010 and 2011 in Rome, Brussels and Milan. We are not aware of any comprehensive research project carried out during the last decade dedicated to this party. There are however short books and pamphlets on the leader, Marco Pannella (we found Vecellio 2010 to be the most informative), and volumes collecting his speeches at the Italian parliament (Pannella, 2007a; 2007b). The European Parliament has archived the speeches of the MEPs elected in the various electoral incarnations of the Radicals. We also used Radio Radicale, which has archived audio, video, and text material. Additional material from the party archives was stored in electronic format during a visit in November 2010, with permission from the party officer in charge of the different archives of the party and the party leaders. We also tracked down the work of journalist (and member of the national committee of Radicali Italiani) Valter Vecellio, who also collected several articles by Pannella and on Pannella in a precious series of books printed by the publisher Stampa Alternativa in recent years. Finally, we perused two periodicals culturally close to the Italian Radicals, *Quaderni Radicali* and *Diritto e Liberta'* – together with the internet daily paper called *Notizie Radicali* (<http://notizie.radicali.it/>).

### **3. The political narrative**

At the outset, what do we know about this political phenomenon? Previous studies have been limited to the examination of specific periods of Italian political history or the differences between one period and the next. Thus we have seen the Radical Party classified as a single-issue movement of the ‘new left politics’ (Hanning, 1981), a neo-populist party (Tarchi, 2003), a manifestation of anti-politics (Mastropaolo, 2005; Mete, 2010), and distinctions between the ‘old’ liberal Radical Party of the 1950s and the ‘new left’ party of the 1970s (Panbianco, 1988; Teodori et al., 1977). Teodori (1976) situates the PR (Partito Radicale) of the 1970s in the context of the rise of a new Left. Briefly, these relatively old studies and their classifications shed light on some points, but neglect the continuity of analysis provided by the leaders of the PR which is also continuity of the history of this party. Recent studies have shed light on the organizational dimension of party politics (see Ignazi et al., 2010; Ignazi, 1997 on the Italian parties and Vannucci, 2007 specifically on the Radical Party).

The Partito Radicale was established in 1955 as the result of a spin-off of the left of the Italian Liberal Party, one of the historical parties active since the Italian Risorgimento. At its establishment, the PR was already characterised by important historical traditions of liberal political theory that were never denied or changed throughout almost sixty years of existence off the party. The party was rooted in the small (in Italy at least) but culturally non-trivial pockets of liberal-democratic Resistance to Fascism, the radical liberalism of Gobetti’s political magazine *Rivoluzione Liberale*<sup>2</sup> and Rosselli’s Liberal Socialism (Rosselli, 1930 [1973]), anti-clericalism, and European Federalism.

In what sense is this party ‘radical’? Here we look at the political narrative of the Radicals. We argue that there are two ways in which the party is radical. One has to do with globalization, and will be explored later on. Now it is sufficient to say that the party horizon was never confined to Italy. One of the founding fathers of the party, Ernesto Rossi, had already argued in the Ventotene Manifesto that the state had completed its historical mission and was no longer capable of delivering on liberties and growth, indeed the state had become detrimental to freedom and social justice (Spinelli and Rossi, 2001 [1943]). This narrative was epitomized by the decision taken in 1989 to evolve from Partito Radicale to the Transnational Transparty Nonviolent Radical Party, of which Radicali Italiani is a constitutive movement. But we shall look at global political action later on.

Now we turn to the second element of the narrative, concerning the Italian political history. All parties that established the Italian republic in 1948 were glued by a somewhat ambiguous commitment (ambiguous according to the Radical leaders) to anti-fascism. They defined themselves as the antithesis of fascism, and drew legitimacy from this. For the Radical Party, instead, there has been legal and political continuity between the period of fascism and the Italian republic. This theme was present in the early campaigns of the 1950s against the plunder of resources orchestrated in the name of the state by the political class, and became much more fundamental in the analysis of the 1970s, as shown by Pannella’s 1973 preface to the volume *Underground: A Pugno Chiuso* (Valcarengi, 1973; see also Pannella: 2007a: 47.67; 2007b, 41; ) and recently with a documentary project called *La Peste Italiana* (The Italian Plague) published on the website of Radicali Italiani and constantly up-dated.

Whilst the traditional parties saw in the late Italian Social Republic of the last months of WWII and later the Italian Social Movement (MSI) the successors of fascism, the Radicals identified the new ‘partyocratic’ regime that betrayed the 1948 constitution and its values as the new fascism. In this truly radical analysis, continuity is demonstrated by the large amount of laws (inherited from fascism) that contradict the constitution: a body of laws restrictive of rights and individual liberty used by fascism for only twenty years, and for much longer periods by the Republic. Political continuity – the diagnosis carries on – is proved by the patterns of consensual lawmaking in parliament, where the opposition concurs with the majority in the definition of legislation (Giuliani, 1997).

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<sup>2</sup> *Rivoluzione Liberale* is now fully available on <http://www.erasmo.it/liberale/default.asp>. On Gobetti and his ‘heretical liberalism’ see Martin (2008).

Continuity is – the Radicali’s narrative goes on - the result of three factors. One is the systematic, unmitigated, subversive betrayal of the 1948 constitution and its values, to the point of effectively putting in jeopardy the rule of law in Italy. To illustrate, *La Peste Italiana* argues that the constitution gave Italian citizens three opportunities to cast a vote, that is, (a) at national elections (b) for directly elected regional assemblies and (c) at referenda to strike down existing laws, provided that at least 500,000 citizens signed to request a referendum. Only (a) was effectively granted immediately, whilst (b) and (c) were frozen until the 1970s. Not to mention other rights that were either selectively guaranteed for very small constituencies or totally ignored. For this reason, the Radicali have always presented their party as paladin of the constitution against the alleged massacre of constitutional values provided by the Christian Democrats and their allies in the cartelized Italian state.

The second factor - the analysis proposed by the Radical Party goes on - is the transformation of political parties – an element of the Italian democracy, according to the Italian constitution, but not its cornerstone – into a regime based on parties, the cartel-party or partyocracy (*partitocrazia*). For the Radicali, the expansion of publicly-owned areas of the economy after World War II, indeed, has simply magnified the political usage of instruments established during fascism, like the *Istituto per la Riconversione Industriale* (IRI).

The third factor is the political control of the media, in a country where the public TV and radio had already been prioritised as the quintessential tool of political control with Mussolini’s EIAR (*Ente Italiano per le Audizioni Radiofoniche*). With time the close grip of the Christian Democrats on the Italian public broadcaster, RAI, turned into a system of spoil-system with the first TV channel assigned to the DC, the second to the Socialist party and the third to the Communists. For all these changes, though, the overall degree of political control of the media did not vary. Public monopoly of the media was declared un-constitutional by the constitutional court in 1976 – for the PR this was yet further proof that the regime was in defiance of constitutional values. Possibly because of their long historical view on the Italian media, the Radicali have not been particularly impressed by how Silvio Berlusconi has used the media, since they consider him a late manifestation of a pattern and a culture of control that goes back to the 1950s if not to the fascist EIAR.

Because of this analysis, the leaders of the PR present themselves as the custodians of the constitution and the Italian Resistance against a cartel-type regime that for them has last from the 1920s to now. Even today they call themselves *partigiani* (partisans).

To put the Radicali in their historical context, we have to examine two important cultural turns. The first is represented by the counter-culture of the 1960s. Not the violent episodes of social struggle that characterised Europe between 1968 and 1972 (and in Italy 1977 with the armed factions of the so-called *Autonomia Operaia* movement), but rather the culture of the US beat communities, the Dutch *provos*, the European movement of conscientious objectors, the early spontaneous green and libertarian initiatives. For many years, the official Italian Feminist Movement (MLD) had its central offices inside the headquarters of the Radical Party in Rome and the nascent green movement was federated to the party. In a sense, the party was on the wavelength of major transformations of values pointing to the cleavage between authoritarian and libertarian beliefs – in political science terms, the Radicali were closer to Scott Flanagan (1987) than to Ronald Inghart (1987).

This set of libertarian values (individual freedom, liberatarianism in the American tradition of *Resistance to Civil Government*<sup>3</sup>, anti-militarism and anti-establishment values) was melded with the tradition of Italian non-violent Gandhian thinkers. No matter how small the communities of people

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<sup>3</sup> This was the title originally chosen by Henry David Thoreau. On 18 November 2010, Emma Bonino used one of the rare opportunities to address a large readership (an article in the weekly *Corriere della Sera* magazine) to claim the key role of the legacy of Thoreau for the Radicali’s political repertoire, linking Thoreau’s civil disobedience to Luther King and Gandhi, who both admired the American philosopher and writer. See Emma Bonino, *Il Gusto e la Forza della Disobbedienza*, Sette-Corriere della Sera, 18 November 2010.

influenced by Italian Gandhians like Aldo Capitini were, they were intellectually well-represented within the Radical Party. So much so that the leaders of the PR were instrumental in supporting Capitini in his first-ever anti-militarist march in Italy (1961). Thus, on the one hand the Radicals took on some characteristics of the new left in Europe. On the other, these characteristics were rooted in the pre-existing intellectual influence of Gandhian political thought.

The third and perhaps more radical transformation, which leads us to the response to one of the four epochal challenges introduced above, came with the transnational turn. But this is a key element of our narrative on the four 'funerals' and therefore will be addressed in the next Section.

#### **4. Addressing the challenges**

In this Section we show how the political repertoire of the Radicals has addressed the four challenges. We will examine the challenges one by one. Our aim is to present and understand the repertoire, not to appraise it. We will provide a normative appraisal in Section 5.

##### ***4.1 Representation***

There are some unusual features of the responses provided by the Radicals to the decline of traditional parliamentary representation. Most of these responses were in the genetic code of the party as launched in 1955. Hence the representational menu supplied by the Radicals is not really a response to challenges that became evident only in the 1980s and 1990s. Representation is a multi-dimensional phenomenon. Consequently, we examine the 'internal side' of representation first, that is, the *party in central office* and the *party on the ground*. We then move on to discuss the 'external side', that is, how the *party in public office* represents preferences and interests in the political arena.

The principle of non-exclusive membership of the Transnational Radical Party (and reflected in the federated, constitutive movements like Radicali Italiani) is arguably the most characteristic feature of the logic of membership. Members of other parties (and even members of different parliaments in the case of the Transnational Radical Party) can join in and have typically done so throughout the years. When a citizen becomes a member of the party, she does not have to concur with any type of ideology or programmatic thought. All is requested by a member is the commitment to the programme, as decided by the annual party meeting.

At the same time, the party has never manifested an interest in developing a territorial base. There are associations in Italy and abroad, but they are not controlled by a strong organizational centre, indeed they have substantial freedom (Vannucci, 2007). There is no *party on the ground* in the conventional sense of Katz and Mair. Besides, as Pannella is fond of saying "our party offices are the streets where we collect signatures for referenda and engage citizens". Indeed, there is only one main party office in Rome, in contrast to all the other Italian parties and their estate properties across the peninsula. This choice has made the party less vulnerable to the crisis of territorial representation of parties. Being essentially funded via voluntary contribution, the Radical Party has also escaped the trap of becoming too state-dependent. It has not transformed into a component of the party apparatus, thus defying the expectations of the literature on cartelization.

The party has always pushed for a kind of single-issue, rights-oriented representation. With single-issue campaigns to aggregate preferences of citizens around rights like divorce, abortion, conscientious objection to the army, scientific research and so on, the party has represented rights rather than territory. Combined with the principle of non-exclusive membership, this has enabled the Radical Party to gather consensus across and perhaps beyond the left-right divide and to diversify the political supply.

This vision can only work if supported by a coherent (albeit most unusual) organisational choice. Unsurprisingly then, the party has never emerged as a traditional political party. Rather, a small party

nucleus of a few dozens of leaders and limited staff (Vannucci, 2007) have spun off over the years a galaxy of single-issue movements and associations. The party is a kind of holding which is very slim at the centre, where only R&D and key assets are held, and constantly evolving in terms of subsidiaries, depending on the campaigns of the moment. The result is a varied, multi-faceted supply of representation for different types of preferences and rights. Today, for example, the Transnational Transparty Nonviolent Radical Party is accompanied by several constitutive and federated movements and associations, such as Radicali Italiani, the association Luca Coscioni for freedom in scientific research and the right to decide on life-and-death medical decisions, the Association for Esperanto, No Peace without Justice, Hands Off Cain (active against the death penalty), the network Anticlericale.net (against clericalism), and an association fighting prohibitionist policies on drugs (International Anti-prohibitionist League). There is also a Radio that carries out public service duties (such as broadcasting live parliamentary debates and conferences) as well as reporting on the life of the party (Radio Radicale).

Taken together, the libertarian vision and its organisational counterpart provide a response to one of the classic reasons behind the decline of traditional parties, i.e. that citizens can secure selective incentives and effective representation of their preferences by using specific pressure groups and movements rather than parties. The Radicals are indeed a galaxy of single-issue campaigns that mobilise and represent citizens with different ideological preferences but glued by the commitment to a specific cause. The members have substantial input into decision-making according to the statutes of Radicali Italiani and the Radical Party (Vannucci, 2007). The annual assembly is open to all members (there are no delegates) and it is the key decision-making body of the party (see Vannucci, 2007 on organs and statutes of Radicali Italiani and the Transnational Party). Compared to other parties, the Radical Party is open and responsive to its members. In turn, the members are free to organize their local activities as they see fit. In essence, the organization is designed around the libertarian principles of the party. Whether these design principles correspond to the reality is another question (see next Section for an appraisal). When viewed from the angle of traditional cartel party politics, the choice of the Radicals is one of scientific disorganization. Disorganized because the party has not developed a strong centre that controls the party on the ground. But scientific because there is wisdom in the galaxy model, which in a sense replicates corporate structures like the holding and differentiates the political supply.

Instead of investing in the *party on the ground* and the *party in central office*, the party has tried to intercept mass politics another way, using the instrument of the referendum (see Uleri, 2002 on the referendum in Italy). Recall that although disciplined by the constitution, this instrument had been frozen up to the 1970s when the Catholics – at the time hegemonic in government – activated its use to respond to parliament, which had against all odds passed a law to make divorce legal in Europe. The Radical Party was the main driving force behind the law: although at that time not represented in parliament, the party had operated mainly through civil society, the media, and a single-issue movement, the Italian League for Divorce (LID). When the Catholics launched a referendum against the new divorces law, the PR was the only party to accept the challenge of the referendum since the early days of the campaign. In 1974 a referendum backed divorce. This freed up a consistent amount of Catholic vote, as proved by the spectacular success of the Communist party in the second part of the 1970s.

The Radical Party itself benefited from this trend, getting four MPs elected in the 1976 elections. These MPs brought several innovations into the Italian parliament. The MPs elected in the PR list were not subject to any party whip but had to represent citizens (in line with the constitutional mandate, but against current political choice in all Italian parties represented in parliament). They resigned in the middle of their mandate to give other PR candidates the opportunity to enter parliament – thus providing alternation and avoiding the ossification of representatives. And they resuscitated provisions in the parliamentary rules of procedures that had been neglected by all opposition parties, thus re-asserting the power of parliament and exposing the limitations of traditional opposition.

Going back to the referendum, this instrument became a flagship tool in the Radical arsenal, which led again on more than one referendum campaign on abortion and the historical referendum of June 1978 on party funding. As Vittorio Mete observes, aversion to public funding of parties has been a distinctive feature of the Radicali: the 1978 referendum was fought by the PR alone against all the other parties. It was lost in the end, but with 43.6% of voters in favour of the abolition of public funding, the Radical Party secured a moral victory. Mete calls this referendum “the first, eloquent alarm bell for the Italian political class” (Mete, 2010: 43-44).

Between the 1970s and the 1990s the Radical Party used the referenda – often promoted in clusters of 8 and 10 to maximise their potential for change – to break down the legal continuity between the Italian Republic and the most hideous liberticidal aspects of the fascists regime, and to aggregate new majorities of citizens. However, the change potential of the referendum was muted by the jurisprudence of the Constitutional Court – which struck down several proposals declaring them illegitimate - for referendum and by the attitude of the parliament. A case in point was the second (1993) referendum to abolish public funding of political parties, this time won but then nullified by new legislation that effectively re-introduced and indeed increased the total level of funding. Other gambits to mitigate or annihilate the political impact of the referendum were used by the political class, such as limiting information on the media during the referendum campaign to increase the probability of the vote being declared null because below the threshold of 50% turnout. In other occasions, elections were called in a referendum year to buy time and delay the referendum (when there is a national election the referendum is postponed).

Today, according to the Radicals at least, the situation is practically the same it was for the twenty years in which the Constitutional provisions on the referendum were frozen. Recently, however, Radicali Italiani experimented with the instrument of referendum at the local level, e.g. a campaign in Milan to launch a collection of referenda on the environment and public transport in the city, eventually won in June 2011. In the same month, four national referenda passed the turnout threshold and were won by the YES camp. Although these four initiatives did not come from the Radical Party, they have objectively opened a new window of opportunity for the use of the referendum in Italy. We ought to complete this discussion with what for most party is the quintessential form of ‘external representation’ that is electing representatives to parliament. Since 1955, the Radicals witnessed both periods in which they were outside parliament and other periods with their candidates elected either in their own list or as a contingent of Radicals elected within lists representing a broad coalition (see table 1). The Radicals have been the staunchest supporters in Italy of a first-past-the-post system of representation and thus have found it congenial to coalesce in broader electoral lists. After having secured a ministerial portfolio for Emma Bonino in the centre-left coalition (2006-2008), today the Radicals have six MPs in the lower House (*Camera dei Deputati*), three senators (of which one, Bonino, is deputy-President of the Senate), two members of the regional assembly of Latium, and a few representatives on major city councils, including Milan and Turin.

One word on the meaning of ‘participation to elections’ is in order, however. Most of the appearances of the Radicals at national and regional elections over the last decade have been qualified by the argument that there is no sufficient political information and pluralism in the media, especially the public broadcaster RAI, and therefore electoral processes in Italy are not democratic. Consequently, on more than one occasion the Party decided either not to present candidates (and invite the Italians to a vote strike) or to ask citizens not to vote but in any case present lists of resistance for those who did decide to vote (for the nuances of this position, see the events in Partito Radicale, 2003).

Surveys have documented that only a small fraction of the electorate, often below 5%, know that Radical lists are contesting European or national elections. Access to talk shows on prime-time television is practically zero for the Radicals. But this brings us to the political usage of the media, by the Radicals and against them – an issue to which we turn now. Here we conclude with the

observation that for the Radicals the most important issues about elections have been fairness, rule of law, and equal access to the media.

#### 4.2 *The media*

Since the campaigns in the late 1960s and early 1970s for the right to divorce and the de-criminalisation of contentious objection, the Radicals have identified the media as the central political arena for their activity. In 1974 Pannella embarked on a long hunger strike (92 days) with the purpose of being able to speak to citizens on TV: the media, rather than parliament, were already the key arena for the initiatives of the PR of the time and on several occasions with the public broadcaster RAI as main target of the strike. The 92 days of strike were for minimal, pragmatic objectives, such as to secure 15 minutes on TV to talk about divorce (as well as 15 minutes for Giovanni Franzoni, a grass-root dissident theologian). In July Pannella was eventually interviewed on RAI, after a press campaign in his support initiated by PierPaolo Pasolini, a prominent Italian intellectual and columnist on the main daily *Corriere della Sera*. The day after his appearance on TV, the President of the Italian republic received Pannella, and the summer ended with a successful campaign to ask for the resignation of the head of RAI, Ettore Bernabei, who resigned on 20 September.

Either directly or indirectly, the most important campaigns have targeted political information and lack of pluralism in the media as the most negative aspect of the 'regime' they fight as 'partisans'. The public broadcaster RAI (*Radio Televisione Italiana*) has been the most obvious target with an endless string of attempts to gain at least minimum visibility on RAI, including hunger strikes, demonstrations, the activation of the Parliamentary committee exercising oversight on the media, reports to the Italian communication authorities, pacific 'invasions' of RAI buildings, and projecting Pannella's messages on the walls of the RAI headquarters.

The relationship with the media is paradoxical. On the one hand, the Radicals have unleashed their political creativity in trying to perforate the wall of neglect erected by RAI. By doing this they have raised attention for what the party was doing, why the leaders were protesting, and so on. On the other, they have not been successful in increasing the pluralism of the public broadcaster and in getting good quality information and debates during electoral campaigns. The RAI ostracism towards them has been well-documented by public surveys of content analysis on the Italian media.

In terms of creativity, the repertoire of Pannella and the other leaders is rich, as documented by a long series of episodes that have made a bit of history of political communication in Italy. In 1978 Pannella and a very young Emma Bonino used their limited space on TV (30 minutes dedicated to parties to present their positions on a cluster of referenda) to appear gagged and silent for 25 minutes, explaining in the remaining 5 minutes that not them but the freedom of information of Italians was silenced and gagged. The strategy towards the media is constellated by a long string of 'scandals' – a term that for the Radicals is close to the Christian and Gandhian notion of creating scandal by witnessing and researching truth (Satyagraha). Pannella created scandal on TV by giving hashish to the conductor of a talk show during one of his rare appearances on talk shows – asking to be arrested for having distributed drugs. He thus made an important point drawing on classic Gandhian civil disobedience. Episodes of civil disobedience were repeated in public at events organised to campaign for the de-criminalisation of drugs (27 between 1995 and 2004, with 14 sentences to party members). Civil disobedience attracted considerable attention and respect in Italy – a country where laws are disobeyed, but in private and disguise.

When campaigning for elections, the party often made systematic use of candidates who were a scandal because of their history and what they represented. This was they managed to have a single-issue campaign around the scandal-candidate. A case in point is Enzo Tortora, a very popular showman accused of dealing with the mafia on the basis of inconsistent evidence. The fact that he was candidate (with memorable speeches recorded in his house in Milan, where we was confined by the police) and then elected was instrumental to spawning a debate on the unfairness of the Italian judicial



system. Tortora was elected, gave up immunity voluntarily, and was found innocent, going back to his TV studio to receive a standing ovation. The PR also managed to elect Tony Negri, accused of being an architect of terrorism. However, further to his election and contrary to the advise of the party, Negri decided to seek asylum in France rather than give up immunity and face an Italian tribunal (the episode was discussed by Pannella and Negri in an interview with journalist Enzo Biagi, see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C8zPAXTnlMY>).<sup>4</sup>

The hunger strike was used as a non-violence technique to re-establish the rule of law or to denounce illiberal laws that stood in contrast to the Italian constitution. These non-violent initiatives were typically FOR something, in support of specific, often minimal proposals like 15 minutes on RAI or a parliamentary debate on the draft bills for contentious objection to military service or abortion. They were never AGAINST – or pure protest. The strikes were always used in the name and spirit of the rule of law, not for an unrealistic alternative. The Radicali have always put on the table requests that were fully compatible with the rule of law, in a sense asking the regime to stick to its own legal principles.

### **4.3 Europeanization**

The affinity between the Radicals and European integration is deep and oriented towards a libertarian vision of bottom-up federalism, where European political union can thrive alongside forms of local and regional power. The vision for Europe is historically situated in the larger vision of non-violent relations among people, and the creation of a world-wide organization for democracy.

To understand how European federalism belongs to the tradition of this party one has to go back to 1941-1943 when the liberal political theory of Ernesto Rossi encountered the liberal-socialism of Altiero Spinelli in the Ventotene Manifesto (Rossi and Spinelli, 2004 [1943]). Rossi later became a founding father of the Partito Radicale. The Manifesto is frequently cited by Pannella, recently also in connection to the spread of movements for democracy in the Arab world and Albania. Radical MPs such as Maurizio Turco evoked the Manifesto in their declaration on a crucial vote of confidence on the Berlusconi government on 14 December 2010.

So, why is the Manifesto the political compass of this party? For four reasons. Firstly, the Manifesto is anchored to the core value of liberty. This has supported several campaigns of the Radical MEPs in the European Parliament between 1979 and 2009 on rights and freedoms of Europeans as well as on the EU as exporter of human rights. Memorable are their campaigns for an autonomous Tibet in a free and more democratic China. Secondly, Ventotene appeals to the Radicals because of its libertarian nature (Pulvirenti, 2009). The diagnosis proposed by Rossi and Spinelli during the years in which Hitler was effectively on top of Europe (with the exception of the UK; the US was still neutral when the first version of the Manifesto was completed in 1941) was that the state had failed in Western Europe. It had failed to protect human rights and liberties. It had also failed to generate welfare. It was therefore a political and economic failure. Thirdly, once we dispose of the state, one has to provide another concept for the organization of political relationship in the community. For Spinelli and Rossi this new concept was federalism as a fundamental political institution for Europeans. Not a federation of intellectuals and philosopher-kings, but a federation based on the liberties and rights of European citizens – and a leading role played by the working class. Fourthly, the Manifesto argues that the legal-political concept of war has decayed below any possible justification in terms of political or legal theory. Yet the goal of the Manifesto is not pacifism

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<sup>4</sup> The case of porn-star Iona Staller, aka Cicciolina, is different since there was no intention to create a scandal and a campaign around this candidate. As party member, she asked to be on the PR list. The leaders put her at no.49 for Latium, almost at the bottom of the list of candidates, following a strict alphabetical order. Some newspapers, however, ran with the news and effectively created a campaign for her. Perhaps to the surprise of the PR leaders, she was elected MP. Pannella in 2010 went back to his memories of the episode <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TUUjeTL6o8I>.

(Pulvirenti, 2009:86). As historian Pulvirenti puts it in a passionate historical reconstruction of Ventotene, the Manifesto is not a ‘vote for peace’. It is a ‘vote for liberty’. This argument has been magnified by the Radicals by embracing non-violence instead of pacifism and by linking non-violence to the rule of law.

Turning to EU activity, we mentioned that the Radicals have been present for thirty years in the European Parliament, but they have also secured a portfolio for Commissioner Emma Bonino, appointed in 1994 for consumers policy, fisheries and European Community humanitarian office (later, in 1997, her portfolio was expanded to include health protection and food safety). Arguably the major areas of activities of the party lie in the field of EU protection of democracy and human rights, foreign policy and enlargement. On enlargement in particular, the party has been very proactive since it has always been on the side of civil rights in the Central and Eastern European countries – Pannella was arrested in Sofia in 1968 for distributing flyers against the USSR interference with the early democratic movements in these countries. With the fall of the Berlin wall, the activities in Central and Eastern Europe intensified, with events and annual party conferences in Eastern Europe rather than in Italy. The fall of former Yugoslavia saw Pannella, Bonino and others engaged with an ambitious attempt to both increase Europe’s role in this geo-political area and to promote the rights of the ethnic minorities.

Most pertinently perhaps, the European repertoire is interesting because of the usage of the EU institutions. Always a small contingent in the European Parliament, the Radicals have campaigned for specific issues, starting from a small base but gradually attracting consensus and majorities across party federations and different positions (in the Parliament, and often across the institutions of the EU).<sup>5</sup> This is after all the same strategy used in Italian politics: instead of taking ideological positions, the small group of Radical MPs in the Italian parliament has put a number of pragmatic issues on the table and asked other parties and the public opinion to support reform.

#### **4.4 Globalization**

Yet again, to explain the repertoire in relation to globalization we have to go back to the DNA of the party. Since 1989, with the Budapest Congress, the party has become transnational and transparty (that is, a party with MPs from many different countries and parliaments). As a transnational organization, the party does not present lists in national campaigns – although affiliated movements do so, but with their names and symbols. Fig.1 shows the ratio between members recruited in Italy and the rest of world: although the ambition is transnational, the appeal of the party is still stronger in Italy. But let us discuss the switch to transnational politics. One way of interpreting this transnational turn is that the Italian party disappeared and became ‘bio-degradable’ into a new party in 1989. But actually another interpretation is possible, as argued by one the leaders of the party, Angiolo Bandinelli (2011). He notes that this has been an evolution rather than a transformation. The inclusion of the adjective ‘transnational’ is for Bandinelli and the other leaders of the party (as shown by several radio conversations with Marco Pannella we accessed via Radio Radicale) a formal change in the name of the party, not an indicator of a different political strategy.

According to Bandinelli (2011: 4), since (at least) 1962 the party has embraced transnationalism and global politics as a “constitutive and foundational element”. The Radical Party did not choose to add ‘Italian’ to its denomination for a purpose, that is, to avoid any nationalistic or even national connotation to its political activity. In 1967 the resolution of the annual congress – Bandinelli carries on - was grounded in “anti-nationalism and anti-authoritarianism”. Since the 1970s the party has had many non-Italian members – and later became a ‘trans-party’, because over time some 80 MPs of non-Italian parties became party members. In 1978 the party elected Jean Fabre, a total conscientious

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<sup>5</sup> This strategy is praised by the past president of ALDE, the Liberal-Democratic Federation of the EP, Graham Watson (Watson, 2010: 173; 175).

objector, as Secretary; Fabre became President in 1979 and was arrested in France for his anti-militarism. Belgian-born Olivier Dupuis was elected MEP for the Radicals, actively campaigning for human rights in China, Tibet and other regions of the world (he was once arrested in Laos in 2001 on a charge of damaging the country security and stability. When the Radical Party entered the directly elected European Parliament in 1979, it did so with the denomination Group of European Federalists, unlike the other 'Italian' groups.

The transnational choice was grounded in the Ventotene Manifesto (see above). But a global political outlook became dominant in the party activity in 1979, with the launch of a campaign for the step-by-step eradication of world hunger. For this campaign the Radical Party used all institutions in which it had representatives, especially the European Parliament and the United Nations. In the United Nations, the Radical Party is an NGOs with general consultative status represented in ECOSOC. This shows flexibility of this party, which is also an NGO in the UN context, a movement in other contexts, a member of broader advocacy and discourse coalitions in yet other contexts.<sup>6</sup> The UN has been the target of another long-term initiative for a moratorium against the Death Penalty. In this case again the party used all the possible institutional venues. It also generated the association *Hands Off Cain* – set up in 1993 with the goal of abolishing capital punishment by the year 2000. The third committee of the UN General Assembly passed a motion calling for a global moratorium on capital punishment in November 2007. In December the General Assembly approved the call of the third committee with 104 votes. In 2008 the General Assembly passed a new resolution with 106 votes (those opposing the resolution went down from 52 to 46).

Together with starvation and capital punishment, the world-wide campaign for the recognition and protection of universal human rights is the third main global issue in the repertoire. Already in 1994 the initiative 'No Peace without Justice' launched a campaign for the establishment of an international tribunal on war crimes in Yugoslavia. Today, *No Peace without Justice* is an NGO that belongs to the galaxy of the party. It has successfully campaigned for the establishment of the International Criminal Court. Currently the main transnational focus of the party is on the activation of international jurisdictions for human rights – there are several jurisdictions across the world, but most of them are used sparingly and always for the same type of cases, although their remit is potentially wider. Related to this, there is also a focus on discussing how judges and experts serving on the international courts are selected.

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<sup>6</sup> On the different concepts of coalitions in policy theory see Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993) and Hajer (1993).

**Figure 1 – Ratio Italian members / members from the rest of the world**



#### 4. Discussion

The previous sections showed how the Radicals addressed the challenges posed by the changes in representation, the role of the media in politics, Europeanization and globalization. We described the repertoire by drawing on the official documentation and the main ideas put forward by the party leaders. We now have to turn to appraisal and specifically address two questions. First, is the analysis provided by the party *grosso modo* supported by the literature on Italian and European politics? We cannot test all the positions of the Radical Party one by one, but we can say something about their analysis of Italian politics and their federalist approach to European integration. Second, we have to appraise the repertoire: what are its limitations, and what are the strengths, or at least the lessons to be drawn?

Let us start with the narratives about Italian and European history put forward by the Radical Party. Their interpretation of Italian politics is definitively unique. It may sound bizarre. Yet it is not without foundations in social science research. Certainly, the Republic is a democracy and fascism was an authoritarian regime – the two are not the same regime. Yet in his analysis of substantive democracy across countries, Leonardo Morlino considers several measures drawn from the most reliable international sources and shows that Italy is a low-performance democracy in terms of civil and political rights. In his large quantitative comparative project he classified Italy in the category of ‘democracies without quality’ (Morlino: 2011, see chapter 8 and fig.8.9). The Worldwide Governance Indicators continue to single out an Italian exception across European democracies<sup>7</sup>. This dataset maps six areas: voice and accountability; political stability and absence of violence; government effectiveness; regulatory quality; rule of law; and control of corruption. The Democracy Barometer ([www.democracybarometer.org](http://www.democracybarometer.org)) measures 100 indicators on the quality of democracy in 30 major democracies: in 2005 Italy was number 26 out of 30 with deterioration in indicators covering the dimensions of rule of law and representation.

Turning to specific sectors like the media, most scholars of the Italian media would agree with the diagnosis of political control proposed by the Radical Party. There are plenty of official data

<sup>7</sup> See the data at <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/index.asp>.

witnessing the systematic, almost scientific discrimination of the Radicals and the large bias in the public broadcaster's news programmes and talk shows. Possibly the other party that was discriminated against was the Northern League, which however has improved in terms of appearance on the media with its participation in government with key portfolios. Political scientists have documented cartelization in their scientific publications. *La Peste Italiana* (on p.7) quotes the inaugural lecture of Professor Giuseppe Maranini in academic year 1949-1950, in which he lamented that parties had already become "a state within the state", "threatening with their illiberalism the weak liberal-parliamentary state" – in short, cartelization.

As for European federalism, the jury is still out. It is true that the hopes of the early federalists like the authors of the Ventotene Manifesto were dashed by the political developments in the 1950s. The state proved to be quite resilient in the post World War II reconstruction. It did not wither away. The European Union we have today is not the kind of bottom-up federalism envisaged by Spinelli and Rossi. However, inaccurate predictions do not undermine the quality of the analysis about the advantages of federalism. They simply show that the political leaders have attended to the reconstruction of the state rather than devoting their energy to the only cause that Rossi and Spinelli deemed worth engaging with, that is, European politics. Moreover, the current changes under way in the stabilization policies for the Euro-zone and economic governance in Europe seem to suggest that a kind of federal architecture may soon become a necessity, no matter what the plans of state leaders are.

Let us now move to the second question. What are the lessons to be drawn from the repertoire we have discussed? We can quickly establish its originality. No European party we are aware of, has taken classic liberal position to such an extreme, libertarian conclusion, including non-violence as political compass, the connection between disarmament and food, opposition to authoritarianism without distinctions between Pinochet and Fidel Castro, radical internationalism and international human rights – all blended in a classic liberal position about the primacy of rule of law and the obstinate defence of political institutions (a point that differentiates them from anarchist movements).<sup>8</sup> It is also most unusual for parties of the new Left to embrace a liberal vision in economic policy – the Radical Party is for free, competitive, non-monopolistic markets and for (regulated) free trade, in contrast to many formations of the new Left which are suspicious of both markets and European integration-globalization.

In terms of organization and representation, the choices of the Radicals appear 'suicidal' (Ignazi, 1997: 21 cited by Vannucci 2007). Perhaps with the exceptions of the European Parliament, the Radical Party has been more interested in winning campaigns and securing reform goals than in getting representatives elected in local or national assemblies. The central office remains small and resourced by voluntary contributions. There is nothing similar to a party bureaucracy. The statute of the party is still informed by the organizational choices made in 1967 (Vannucci, 2007). With the transnational turn of 1989, the party has not presented lists denominated *Partito Radicale* at any election, although Radicals have been elected in other lists and or in lists with the names of leaders, like *Lista Pannella* and *Lista Bonino-Pannella*. Before 1989, the party did on several occasions decide that the threshold for fair democratic electoral competition had not been met, and therefore did not present lists or invited to vote a strike (Partito Radicale, 2003). Thus this attitude towards elections is explained by a motivation rooted in concerned about substantive democratic quality and rule of law. It pre-dates the 1989 transnational turn. Turning to the *party on the ground*, the Radical Party has not

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<sup>8</sup> There is also a connection between rights and class politics that puts the Radical Party on different tracks from the ones of the traditional Left. Pannella replied on several occasions already in the 1970s to the Communist leaders (objecting to the campaigns on rights as less important than salary and re-distribution) that the battles for rights are class-based. In fact, citizens who can afford it can easily have access to rights (to divorce, abortion, euthanasia and so on) by using the exit option, i.e., travelling to jurisdictions where these rights are protected. A political agenda based on universal human rights - Pannella reasons - is a class-agenda and an agenda for the global South of the world.

pursued any policy aimed at rooting the party in the territory via local party offices controlled by the centre.

All this is not necessarily irrational or suicidal in relation to the goal of building majorities in support of specific reforms. The party has shaped its organization around libertarian values, given autonomy to individual members, and placing members at the centre of the life of the party. At the same time, it has not institutionalized a network of local party clubs and bureaus controlled by a strong central organization - indeed, as we have seen, it has invested in scientific disorganization. Yet this disorganization is scientific in that, it has generated a galaxy of associations and initiatives similar to a corporate holding, with its own media (Radio Radicale). This is rational in relation to the goals of differentiating the supply of political initiatives, thus attracting broad sections of the electorate, NGOs and other political movements on the key issues. Thus, concluding on this point, the Radical Party's originality does not seem suicidal. Had the party pursued the classic goals described by Katz and Mair (1994), it would have become a marginal player in the political territory (campaigns, reforms, mobilization) key to the party strategy.<sup>9</sup>

The repertoire is (at least in principle) a practical way forward for party politics in increasingly Europeanized and globalized arenas. In terms of strategy, the pragmatic approach to select major issues and build majorities around them has produced several results for the Radical Party, well-beyond its consistency in terms of MPs, MEPs and participation in government and international organizations like the European Commission. This is a valuable lesson for other parties of the left that are currently struggling with the four 'funerals' we described earlier on.

However, there are also limitations. First, no matter how effective and coherent the repertoire may be, it has not allowed the party to grow in membership or electorally. Campaigns to get at least ten thousand members have been very expensive in terms of human and economic resources: even when the party increased membership (in Italy or in specific countries, like the Central and Eastern European countries during their democratic transitions) it was impossible to maintain membership levels over the years. As for elections, possibly the only time of possible expansion was in 1979 (18 MPs and 2 Senators). But Pannella rightly notes that only 40-50 MPs would have enabled the Radical Party to become a player by replacing the Italian Socialist Party in the electoral landscape (Vecellio, 2010).

It is fair to say that for the Radical Party the electoral dimension is not the primary focus of activity. More important is the strategy to get results by pooling majorities across left and right, in Italy as well as in European global politics. In Italy, however, a good deal of the achievements of the Radical Party in Italian politics was contingent on the possibility to exploit an instrument like the referendum. History has shown that the political class (or the 'regime' as the Radicals would say) has suffered losses from the referendum in Italy, but it has also been able to close down the window of opportunity - with the future possibly re-opening some windows of opportunities.

Secondly, there has been limited learning. The emphasis on civil rights was well-chosen in the 1980s, but now the problem in most European societies is how to govern a fragmented, perhaps excessively individualized society. Here perhaps the notion of bottom-up federalism as principle of re-composition of individuals and identities is a possible way ahead for the Radicals.<sup>10</sup> Learning has been limited in yet another sense, that is, moving from a political culture of rights to substantive economic issues, where one can encounter again rights, but cast in a different analytical and political framework. The political know how to be effective in the domain of economic policy and more generally evidence-based policy is different from the know-how requested to intervene in the field of human and civil rights (Radaelli, 2011).

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<sup>9</sup> Concretely, the only possibility to turn to this model was the 1979 mini-boom of the party, but Pannella concluded that 19 MPs were not enough to switch to a classic party model (Vecellio, 2010).

<sup>10</sup> We are grateful to Daniele Bertolini for this observation.

We also find learning to be limited in relation to the issue of party government and lawmaking. In the 1970s and the 1980s the Radical Party attacked the ‘partyocracy’ and asked for reforms, typically by using legislation as the main vehicle for policy change. It was historically important to take a firm position against the un-constitutional role of political parties in Italian politics, thus showing how anti-party sentiments are not necessarily channelled by right-wing populist parties. However, in the 1990s the parties collapsed in Italy. True, patronage remains a frequent practice in Italy (Di Mascio, 2011). But a considerable body of research on public policy in Italy (Capano, 2003; Dente, 1990; Dente and Regonini, 1989; Regonini, 2001) shows that (a) parties are not necessarily the main determinant of policy outcomes and (b) management-organizational reforms at the level of public administration are more incisive than changes in legislation, especially if one considers the implementation stage of the policy process, and not only the decision-making stage. There has been limited learning on the part of the Radicals about how exactly this party can contribute to change through instruments that are not the law. The priority given to anti-party sentiments, and the emphasis on the parliamentary arena and reforms via the law are problematic. The Radicals seem to neglect the lessons provided by public policy analysis about the key role of the administrative arena and implementation networks in processes of sustainable change.

Thirdly, the transnational project, connected to the scientific disorganization of the party, is fragile and contradictory. It exposes the issue of capacity and skills to track complex agendas in different fora. The party expanded capacity in the aftermath of the collapse of the Berlin wall, with new members from countries other than Italy. But there was not an explosion of members and party structures outside Italy. The exception is the capacity built around specific organizations of the Radical galaxy, most notably *Hands Off Cain* and *No Peace Without Justice*. The fact that after 30 years the Radicals did not manage to elect a single member of the European Parliament at the 2009 European elections aggravates the capacity problem given the importance of EU politics for this party.

It is not just an issue of capacity to intervene in so many different multi-level governance and parliamentary arenas. Transnationalism and the transparty choice have generated a gap between organizational structures and real-world leadership in the party. The statute of the transnational party (1993) is practically in a vacuum and has not been implemented (Vannucci, 2007). This permanent emergency (to borrow the expression from Vannucci, 2007) has led to a party dominated by a small group and a charismatic leader, Pannella. There is friction between the libertarian vision of the party, the design of complex deliberative organizational architectures, and the concentration of party activities around a small group of people.

## **5. Conclusions**

This article has described and explained the political repertoire of the Radical Party and appraised it. Our findings suggest that the Radical Party is not a curious outlier with suicidal tendencies in the rational theory of parties (Katz and Mair, 1994). The repertoire is rational in relation to a political strategy that is oriented to mobilization, consensus-building, and policy change. This is rational for parties and more generally movements that want to secure results but for structural reasons cannot electorally become a major party. With this repertoire, the Radical Party has provided a challenge to the cartelization processes. As Bardi (1996: 348) observes: “The Radical Party was the first explicit challenger of the cartel-dominated party system and of party per se”. The anti-cartel stance has been effective in securing that anti-party sentiments are not necessarily captured by the populist right and can be channelled towards reform.

Empirically, we have shown that this repertoire provides an effective response to the four challenges of representation, media politics, Europeanization and globalization, with the three important limitations described above. We cannot categorize the party as yet another fringe party, given its position within institutions (including a Ministerial position in 2006-2008; a Commissioner post; the status within the United Nations structure and the current vice-Presidency of the Italian

Senate). Looking at different campaigns and the historical evolution of the Radical Party, we have established that this subject can mutate according to the different contexts and fora: it is an NGO in the UN context, a member of single-issue coalitions (in the case of divorce in Italy or the establishment of the international criminal court), a movement in the campaign for freedom of research, and an active promoter of new discourses that can aggregate different political actors at different levels (think of the battle against prohibitionist policies on drugs in the European Parliament and global-international fora). The results achieved on the death penalty moratorium, female genital mutilation and the establishment of the International Criminal Court also qualify the Radical Party as an exception to Lawson's observation that international and transnational parties 'do little' in global politics (Lawson, 2006).

This leaves us with the question of the future of the party and what future research could usefully engage with. Clearly, the future of the party is a problem - Marco Pannella is the 'the' charismatic leader of the party. Not a dictator, since over the years other personalities have challenged his leadership, but the members have always opted for Pannella at the party conferences where alternatives were feasible. The fact is that it is difficult to imagine how a party based on fragile organizational structures, with a few thousand members in Italy and the rest of the world, can still play a role in the media, Italian politics, the EU and the UN without a personality like Pannella. Perhaps this unique repertoire will be gradually diffused to other parties of the left-wing in Europe, and therefore germinate elsewhere, with new organizational forms and new protagonists. Indeed, if there is a single lesson we would like to draw, it is that the West-European Left has several reasons to look at this experience as a possible way to transform the four 'funerals' into relatively happy parties. Indeed, one question for further research is why this repertoire has not diffused via emulation to other parties.



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