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► To cite this version:

Gersende Blanchard. The use of digital technology by the candidates to campaign from within versus outside of an established party. A comparison between the candidates in the 2017 French presidential election. *Communication, Technologies et Développement*, 2023, 13, 10.4000/ctd.9259 . hal-04473033

HAL Id: hal-04473033

<https://hal.science/hal-04473033>

Submitted on 27 Feb 2024

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Electronic version

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/ctd/9259>

DOI: 10.4000/ctd.9259

ISSN: 2491-1437

Publisher

Chaire Unesco Pratiques émergentes en technologies et communication pour le développement

Printed version

ISBN: 2491-1437

Electronic reference

Gersende Blanchard, "The use of digital technology by the candidates to campaign from within versus outside of an established party. A comparison between the candidates in the 2017 French presidential election", *Communication, technologies et développement* [Online], 13 | 2023, Online since 20 October 2023, connection on 31 October 2023. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/ctd/9259> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/ctd.9259>

This text was automatically generated on October 31, 2023.



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The use of digital technology by the candidates to campaign from within versus outside of an established party. A comparison between the candidates in the 2017 French presidential election

L'utilisation du numérique par les candidats pour faire campagne à l'intérieur versus en dehors d'un parti politique établi. Une comparaison entre les candidats à l'élection présidentielle française de 2017

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- 1 A utilização do digital pelos candidatos para fazer campanha dentro e fora de um partido político estabelecido. Uma comparação entre os candidatos nas eleições presidenciais francesas de 2017
- 2 **Palavras-chave** : digital; campanha eleitoral; candidatos; eleições presidenciais; ativismo; mobilização; partido político; França.
- 3 **Resumo**: Este artigo analisa as semelhanças e diferenças entre a forma como as tecnologias digitais estão a ser utilizadas pelos candidatos para organizar o ativismo nas eleições presidenciais francesas de 2017. O objectivo é verificar se, e em que medida, os candidatos de partidos estabelecidos e os candidatos de partidos não estabelecidos utilizaram a Web de forma diferente durante a campanha para as eleições presidenciais de 2017 em França. Como utilizaram a Web para recrutar activistas e para estruturar a mobilização em linha ou no espaço urbano? Isto levanta a questão da indefinição entre as estratégias de utilização digital dos partidos políticos e as dos movimentos sociais.

- 4 This article¹ analyzes the similarities and differences between how digital technologies are used by candidates to organize activism during the 2017 French presidential election. More precisely, the paper addresses the question how far candidates from established parties and candidates from outside of established parties used their official campaign websites differently to organize mobilization during the campaign.
- 5 It has already been demonstrated that election campaigns have become more and more professionalized and technologically sophisticated (Esser et al., 2000; Plasser, 2009; Gibson, Römele, 2009; Karlsen, 2010; Lilleker et al., 2017; Théviot, 2018 ; Barberà et al., 2021): “web sites have evolved from being static, information-heavy spaces to stripped down, functional campaigning hubs” (Lilleker et al., 2017 : 294).
- 6 Over recent decades, academic literature has identified various changes in French political parties, such as the decline in party membership and in traditional party activism (Ethuin, Lefebvre, 2015; Lefebvre, 2019). Simultaneously, it has been observed that parties have undertaken reforms to open their boundaries and give non-members a greater role, notably through online campaigning (Chadwick, Stromer-Galley, 2016; Gibson et al., 2016).
- 7 While some studies have questioned the role of digital technology in this process, others have gone so far as to speak of “cyber party” (Margetts, 2006) or, more recently, of “digital party” (Gerbaudo, 2019) to characterize new party types and to discuss the transformations of political organizations (Deseriis, 2020; Greffet, 2022; Gerbaudo, 2022). This paper addresses these issues by focusing on how digital technologies – in particular the official website which represents the campaign hub² – are used by candidates to organize their campaign and collective actions, and to design what Remi Lefebvre qualifies as “parties-movements³” (Lefebvre, 2018). How did they use their website to recruit activists and to structure the mobilization either online or in urban space? This is a particularly interesting question with regard to two candidates whose candidacy was not from established parties: Emmanuel Macron, the candidate of the En Marche! movement, and Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the candidate of the La France Insoumise movement. Both these movements were launched to support their respective candidacies, and both were created *ad hoc* “from above (‘top-down’) by self-proclaimed candidates seeking to base their ambition on a collective structure” (Lefebvre, 2018). One of the aims of this article is to examine how these two candidates used digital technologies to organize the mobilization outside a traditional political party and its apparatus, and how it was visible. Beyond the ‘movement’ label they claim, has their use of digital technologies been inspired by the mobilization practices of social movements? Did their use of digital technologies differ from that of other candidates from established parties? To respond to these questions, the uses of official website for campaigning of Emmanuel Macron and Jean-Luc Mélenchon will be compared with the ones of two candidates from the established French right- and left-wing parties: the winner of the primary elections of the Les Républicain party (right), François Fillon, and the winner of the primary elections of the Socialist Party (left), Benoit Hamon.
- 8 My analysis relies on a mixed-methods study which combines a website⁴ feature analysis to identify the types of actions (Greffet et al., 2014) that the candidates proposed to encourage citizens to get involved in their campaign, both online and offline, and qualitative interviews conducted with members of the campaign teams of the four presidential candidates.

- 9 The aim of the website analysis was to examine the various opportunities through which citizens were encouraged to get involved in the candidate's campaign (Bastien et al., 2013 ; Greffet et al., 2014). I therefore look at a range of activities proposed by the candidates on their websites, such as the possibility offered demonstrating active support for the candidate in terms of promoting it across the web and social networks, downloading posters for windows or volunteering cash or time. This thus included the possibility for citizens to produce content, the possibility for citizens to suggest actions in favour of the candidate, or the possibility for citizens to participate in the dissemination of campaign content and material, whether online or offline. Indeed, given that online and offline actions are most often intertwined (Oser et al., 2013), my analysis of website features did not specify where actions proposed by candidates to citizens could take place, online or in urban spaces (Vaccari, 2017: 76). I also examined the uses of advanced technologies in the visibility and in the visibilization of the mobilization: a particular attention was paid to digital tools of visualization (such as maps or geolocation) which candidates' websites used to display the actions that were carried out by supporters in the urban space.
- 10 After the ballots, I conducted 16 interviews with members of the campaign teams of the four candidates studied⁵. As has been done previously (Blanchard 2018), I tried to meet different types of agents involved in the implementation of the webcampaign of the candidate: external consultants, internal staff experts, volunteers but also trainees. The aim was to talk to webcampaign staff at different levels of responsibility and compare the composition of teams⁶, as well as the strategic objectives underlying the use of the web and social networks depending on whether candidates campaign within an established political party or not.
- 11 In this article, I bring questions about the blurring of strategy between political parties and social movements using digital technologies to organize mobilization. The results highlight some differences in the campaign's activities proposed on the websites depending on whether or not those activities concerned candidates who emerged from an established party. The possibility given to supporters to create and upload their own material to campaign, is perhaps the most innovative and a way of involving supporters that is more associated with social movements than parties (Kreiss, 2016).

The issues of using the digital to campaign

- 12 The academic literature on political parties highlights a phenomenon of a decline of party membership that, according to Fabienne Greffet, "*might be associated with more blurred differences between members and supporters, particularly in periods of campaign*" (Greffet, 2013). These changes supposedly correspond to changes in citizens' political participation and engagement observed since the mid-1990s in France, and which Jacques Ion identified and conceptualized using the "*post-it engagement*" model (Ion, 1997). A model that is characterised by temporary engagement, which can be cancelled at any time and detached from membership of the group (Ion in Perrineau, 1994) and which have first been identified in social movements (Ion, Franguiadakis, Viot, 2005; Granjon, 2001). However, it should not be forgotten that, at the same period, several French traditional parties gave their members a more active role in selecting party candidates or party leaders and in decision-making on the revision of the statutes (Andolfatto, 2001: 99-114; Lefebvre, 2011). And more recently, a few of them have gone

even further. They allowed non members to vote for the selection of their candidate for the presidential election: the Socialist Party adopted this strategy for the 2012 and 2017 elections, and the Les Républicains Party for the 2017 elections.

- 13 The use of digital technology by candidates and political parties is thought to support these transformations (Chadwick, Stromer-Galley, 2016) even if this remains a subject of debate. Some scholars argue that digital technologies can renew the relationships between political parties and citizens. As Cristian Vaccari underscores, “*by making it easier to circulate political messages, digital media enable voter mobilization by both politicians and citizens, potentially expanding the ways in which people are asked to participate and the kinds of people who do the asking*” (Vaccari, 2017: 69). Digital technology is considered as the key to enabling the development of personalized repertoires of citizen engagement, which aggregate to enable organizational experimentation: parties would thus renew themselves from the outside (Chadwick, Stromer-Galley, 2016). The 2008 American presidential campaign of the candidate of the Democrat party, Barack Obama, has been analyzed as a “*prototype*” (Kreiss, 2016) of this kind of organizational experimentation and of the exploitation of personalized repertoires of citizen engagement, based on digital technology. His campaign was characterized by the volunteer’s mobilization online platform (mybarackobama.com), used to assist the candidate in organizing the campaign and in mobilizing supporters. Obama thus used the online platform to mobilize people to carry out both online and offline activities for the grassroots campaign, such as door-to-door canvassing or get-out-the-vote initiatives⁷. The online platform was also used to collect data from registered users. This was an opportunity to help the candidate to manage the volunteers during the campaign. Philipp Howard (2006) has already shed light on the use of data with the aim of organizing the management of citizens not affiliated to a political party. For Rachel Gibson (2013), the campaign by Barack Obama, like the campaigns of UK parties in the 2010 general election, show the emergence of a new style of campaigning, a “*citizen-initiated*” model,

“through which parties and candidates transfer the initiative over core tasks such as voter mobilization to their grassroots supporters via digital tools”: “in practice, this means that key tasks such as canvassing voters, raising funds and recruiting other volunteers are outsourced to this new army of online volunteers who, having signed up via a central web hub, are given a capacity for autonomous action and tactical control of campaign operations at the local level on a scale that was not possible in the pre-digital era” (Gibson, 2013).

- 14 My point is that this style of campaigning can be seen as vital for French candidates in 2017 whose candidacy was not based on a pre-existing party before the ballot. This is because they couldn't rely on the party's activists or its locally-based structure for their campaign. They had to recruit, organize and manage their own network of activists. We can assume that the way they use digital technologies to campaign and organize mobilization differs from that of other candidates from established parties.

Similarities and differences in the use of digital technology by the candidates to recruit and to mobilize activists

- 15 **Table 1.** The activities proposed to involve citizens in the campaign on each candidate's website.

Table 1. The activities proposed to involve citizens in the campaign on each candidate's website.

	Candidates from outside est. party		Candidates from est. party	
	Macron	Mélenchon	Fillon	Hamon
Members' section of the website	X	X		X
Downloading digital campaign material	X			X
Downloading offline campaign material		X		X
Inviting friends to campaign	X	X		
Donating money	X	X	X	X
Joining the party/the movement	X			
Signing up for leafleting	X	X		
Signing up for door-to-door canvassing	X	X		
Signing up to attend an electoral rally	X	X	X	X
Signing up for a committee of supporters	X	X	X	X
Creating a committee of supporters	X	X	X	X
Reporting on campaign activity	X			X
Submitting a video		X		X
Submitting a photo		X		X
Submitting electoral material				
Submitting an offline event or activity to support a candidate	X	X		X
Submitting an online event or activity to support a candidate	X	X		
Submitting a text other than comments	X			X
Declaring support for the candidate	X	X	X	X
Participating in electoral program				X

Caption: in the table, "X" corresponds to the activities proposed to involve citizens in the campaign on each candidate's website.

- 16 First, it is interesting to observe that five activities were proposed on all candidates' websites to involve citizens in campaigning: the possibility of donating money; the possibility of signing up to attend an electoral rally; the possibility of signing up for a local committee of supporters; the possibility of creating a local committee; and the possibility for the citizens to declare their support for the candidate (See Table 1). These five activities can be considered as the basic components of a webcampaign. Indeed, previous analyses conducted on candidates' websites since the early 2000s showed the recurrence of these possibilities (Gibson, Ward, 2000; Gibson et al., 2003; Bastien, Greffet, 2009). It is important to note that these activities are not online-specific activities. They all correspond to offline grassroots campaign activities. Therefore, this confirms that digital technology was used by the different types of candidates to manage some basic offline activities. Only one item was absent on all four candidates' websites: the possibility of visitors to the site submitting their own electoral material. This could be seen as a strategy by candidates to retain offline control of electoral material used for the campaign, whereas this militant activity is associated more with social movements than with parties.
- 17 One of the other main findings is that François Fillon's website was very different from that of the other three. Indeed, his website offered only five activities for recruiting activists and organizing mobilization for campaigning: the five activities that were common to all four campaign websites mentioned above. The candidate of Les

Républicains made very limited use of his website in mobilizing his supporters and getting them involved in the campaign. He offered the possibility of increasing involvement through signing up for local committees of supporters of the candidate, but this type of committees was distinct from the local party branches of the Les Républicains party⁸. François Fillon did not provide volunteers with the possibility of signing up for traditional campaign activities, such as leafleting or canvassing. More surprisingly, his website did not offer the possibility of joining the Les Républicains party. It is interesting to note that the other candidate who came from an established party, Benoit Hamon, also did not provide volunteers with the possibility of signing up for traditional offline campaign activities, such as leafleting or canvassing, or of joining the Socialist Party. However, Benoît Hamon offered them several possibilities of becoming involved in the promotion of electoral material (downloading offline and online campaign material) and in the production of different types of editorial content for his campaign. Indeed, the volunteers had the possibility of submitting a text, video, or photo and also of participating in the electoral program⁹.

- 18 In contrast, the other two candidates whose candidacy did not come from a pre-existing party (Emmanuel Macron and Jean-Luc Mélenchon) used their websites to recruit activists for door-to-door canvassing and leafleting, and also to involve them in the recruitment of additional activists (for example, with the possibility of inviting friends to campaign for the candidate). As underlined by the candidate's spokesperson Emmanuel Macron, one of the main aims of the digital campaign for the En Marche movement was to “create a mass party in record time. (...) to have 200 000, 250 000 people in a database immediately and with 15-20% of its members able to go door-to-door, to go to a market, to go to a station, to carry the message of the candidate” (E2). It also means that the volunteers have been trained and given the tools they need to organize canvassing activities, etc. As she explains, some people have been employed for managing things at local level: training the local committees and telling them what was expected of them, "telling them 'here you go, you're going to have to go door-to-door' because it's not always intuitive for someone who has never campaigned before".
- 19 Emmanuel Macron was the candidate who made most use of his website to recruit and organize the mobilization, both online and offline. However, his website hardly allowed volunteers to participate in the production of editorial content and campaign materials, unlike the candidate of the La France Insoumise movement. Indeed, like Emmanuel Macron, Jean-Luc Mélenchon used digital technology to manage the campaign. And, like Benoit Hamon, he also used the web to involve volunteers in the production of different types of editorial content for his digital campaign.

Similarities and differences in using the password-protected section of the candidate's website

- 20 All the candidates' websites studied, except that of the candidate of Les Républicains party, had a password-protected section. This section enabled all citizens who were registered on the website to access a range of tools to assist the candidate in his campaign, both offline and online. Access to this type of section differs according to the candidate's website: it illustrates the differences in the way the link with the volunteers was considered depending on whether or not it was an established party¹⁰. Indeed, on the website of Benoit Hamon, the candidate of the French Socialist Party, the private

section was not reserved for members of the party and there was no link between this password-protected section and the Socialist Party's own website. On the other hand, the visitors to Emmanuel Macron's website had to agree to join En Marche!, this brand-new candidate's movement, to have access to the password-protected section²¹. Joining the movement was free of charge. Visitors merely had to fill in a form with an email address to become member of the new movement created by the candidate and to have access to the private section on the website and the reserved activities. Access to the password-protected section was therefore sufficient to be considered an activist and a member of the candidate's movement. Accordingly, the concept of member or activist no longer corresponds to these defined by Maurice Duverger (Duverger, 1992: 174) because membership or activist status do not come with a membership fee. On Jean-Luc Mélenchon's website, the candidate of the other brand-new movement created to support his candidacy, all visitors were also asked to create an account on the private section of the website. There was no need to be a member of the candidate's movement, or of any party, to create such an account. The visitors who had opened an account on the private section of the website were automatically considered as supporters of the candidate: they were informed by email that opening an account was considered as showing their "willingness" to support the candidate. And, as noted by Rémi Lefebvre, "in May 2017, *La France Insoumise* claimed 539,000 members who had left their details on the digital platform" (Lefebvre, 2018: 7). This was a membership figure well above those of established political parties.

- 21 It is also particularly interesting to check what kind of possibilities were reserved for the volunteers registered on the private section of each candidate's website and to verify if there are any differences depending on whether or not it was a candidate of an established party. Emmanuel Macron and Jean-Luc Mélenchon were the candidates who made most use of the password-protected section of their website to manage both online and offline activities for the campaign (see Table 2). As previously observed on campaign websites (Gibson, 2013), supporters who were registered were allowed to conduct important tasks at the local level, such as creating, or signing up for, a local committee for both candidates and also signing up for canvassing or leafleting for Jean-Luc Mélenchon. The use of a registered section by Emmanuel Macron and Jean-Luc Mélenchon enabled them to identify who were their activists and, in some ways, to make a distinction between volunteers in relation to their level of involvement in campaign activities. The candidates whose candidacy did not emerge from an established party used their website to construct their network of activists using affiliation to the password-protected section. This "multi-speed" membership is associated with digital forms of participation and engagement (Scarrow, 2015). The aim, according to an Emmanuel Macron campaign staffer, was that "all barriers to entry [to the movement] had been removed" and that as a result "it would be simpler to become an activist."
- 22 In contrast, the Socialist Party candidate used the password-protected section only for two activities which allowed visitors to produce content for his campaign's website and for his electoral program. The objective of the private section was explicitly presented as a tool for collecting the "ideas" of supporters to enrich the electoral program of the candidate.
- 23 **Table 2.** The activities reserved for the visitors registered on the password-protected section of the websites of Emmanuel Macron, Jean-Luc Mélenchon and Benoît Hamon.

Table 2. The activities reserved for the visitors registered on the password-protected section of the websites of Emmanuel Macron, Jean-Luc Mélenchon and Benoît Hamon.

	Macron	Mélenchon	Hamon
Invite friends to campaign		X	
Sign up for leafleting		X	
Sign up for door-to-door canvassing		X	
Sign up for a local committee /a committee of supporters	X	X	
Create a local committee/ committee of supporters	X	X	
Submit an offline event or activity to support a candidate	X	X	
Submit an online event or activity to support a candidate/party	X		
Submit a text other than comments	X		X
Participate in electoral program			X

Caption : in the table, « X » corresponds to the activities reserved for the visitors registered on the private section of candidate's website.

Similarities and differences in using advanced technologies in the visibility and in the visibilization of the mobilization

- 24 The campaign websites of the 2017 French presidential election were also used to display (to publicize) the local involvement of candidates' supporters. Three of the four candidates used digital tools of visualization and geolocation on their website to show off the local deployment of their campaign offline across France: Emmanuel Macron, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, and François Fillon. Digital tools of visualization enabled these candidates to promote the success of the mobilization of the campaign offline and to show the extent of their mobilization in the country. For example, on the campaign website of François Fillon, a map of France was used to display where the support committees had been created across the country (in which town, in which district). Emmanuel Macron and Jean-Luc Mélenchon both used maps to display the location of their committees of supporters and of the local events that they were organizing, such as leafleting and door-to-door canvassing¹². As explained by one of the person who manage the webcampaign's tools of Jean-Luc Mélenchon, it's a "map where anyone can post their action group or local event. (...) So it was I who designed it. When I say that I designed it, I mean that I'm the one who coded it" (E16). The campaign websites of these two candidates, whose candidacy did not arise from an established party, were used to show the precise location on a map (the exact street) where the offline mobilization action initiated by supporters had taken place or was planned to take place¹³. Thus, Emmanuel Macron and Jean-Luc Mélenchon used digital technology not only to manage and structure the local deployment of their supporters' offline campaign on French territory, but also to display (publicize) and materialize their field presence in the country (Blanchard, 2020). This is what was indicated on the page showing the map of Jean-Luc Mélenchon's local support groups:
- 25 « To meet people supporting Jean-Luc Mélenchon's candidacy living near you and take part into collective action, please check whether a local group already exists in your town or neighborhood. If not, let us know on this map, specifying the name you have given to your support group and providing a contact e-mail address or telephone number ».

- 26 I thus argue that, for those candidates who did not emerge from an established party, one that was not already locally structured, the use of digital visualization tools helped materialize the existence of their “movement” in the country, as confirmed by this webcampaign staffer of Jean-Luc Mélenchon’s: “The campaign has been launched on the internet. (...) the movement is the website (...) the movement is organized on the website. That means that the only structures of the movement are the ‘groups of action’¹⁴, and they only have an existence by the map which makes them exist on the website (...) the ‘groups of action’ of La France Insoumise are those that can be seen on the website” (E16).
- 27 This illustrates what Paolo Gerbaudo and Rémi Lefebvre have pointed out, namely the role played by the online platform in shaping the infrastructure of the movement, which is used to compensate for their lack of bureaucratic structure that makes up the organisational structure of traditional parties (Gerbaudo, 2022; Lefebvre, 2022).

Conclusion

- 28 This article invites to precisely consider how two candidates from outside of established parties used the web to organize the campaign and collective actions, and to shape the emergence of political organization, whose name is still under discussion, and whose "theoretical characterization is still floating" (Lefebvre, 2022): is it a party-movement, a personal party, a platform party, a network party or more trivially, a simple electoral committee?
- 29 This article therefore proposes, on its own scale, to examine the role of the campaign website in the emergence of these “movements” that reject the 'party' label, in comparison with the uses made of it by candidates from established parties. The study shows that the four candidates used it to manage some basic offline grassroots campaign activities. We also note a homogeneity (a standardisation?) in the use of advanced technologies with the use of the map to materialize the mobilization. However, the results also highlight some differences in the campaign’s activities proposed on the websites depending on whether or not those activities concerned candidates who emerged from an established party. The two candidates who came from an established party (François Fillon and Benoit Hamon) did not provide supporters with the possibility of signing up for traditional offline mobilization activities on their website, whereas candidates from outside an established party (Emmanuel Macron and Jean-Luc Mélenchon) used their website – in particular its private section – to recruit activists for door-to-door canvassing or leafleting and also to involve them in the recruitment of more activists. These differences in the campaign activities proposed on the websites of the candidates tend to confirm the relevance of the use of digital technology in recruiting, organizing and materializing a network of activists from outside a pre-existing mainstream political party. Indeed, my point is that it is important to analyze how digital technology is used not only to foster, but also to materialize (“to make visible”) political engagement in organizations and socio-political contexts where the membership card is no longer the reference for expressing linkage to a candidate or affiliation to a party (Blanchard, 2022).

Appendix 1

List of interviews conducted for each candidate

Macron (3)

E1 - man, external consultant, remotely interview, 04/07/2017

E2 - woman, candidate's spokesperson, face-to-face interview, 14/02/2018

E3 - man, candidate's employee, face-to-face interview, 19/02/2018

Hamon (5)

E4 - woman, candidate's employee, face-to-face interview, 09/11/2017

E5 - woman, candidate's employee, face-to-face interview, 14/11/2017

E6 - woman, candidate's employee, face-to-face interview, 01/12/2017

E7 - man, external consultant, face-to-face interview, 13/12/2017

E8 - man, external consultant, face-to-face interview, 29/01/2018

Fillon (5)

E9 - man, volunteer work, face-to-face interview, 29/11/2017

E10 - man, candidate's employee, face-to-face interview, 29/11/2017

E11 - man, trainee, face-to-face interview, 01/12/2017

E12 - man, candidate's employee, face-to-face interview, 14/12/2017

E13 - man, party's employee, face-to-face interview, 14/12/2017

Mélenchon (3)

E14 - man, external consultant, face-to-face interview, 12/06/2018

E15 - man, external consultant, remotely interview, 18/06/2018

E16 - man, external consultant, face-to-face interview, 28/06/2018

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NOTES

1. This article was supported by the European Center for Humanities and Social Sciences (MESHS-Lille, France).
2. As in 2012 (see Gadrás, Greffet, 2013), for the French 2017 presidential campaign, various online devices were used by the candidates: online social network sites, such as Facebook or Twitter and sometimes Snapchat; and video platforms, such as Youtube and traditional websites. All these outlets were hyperlinked, if not embedded. The official campaign websites therefore represented the campaign hub from which the différents devices were accessible.
3. The notion of "party-movement" is specifically proposed by the French political scientist to characterize the two French initiatives launched in 2016 by Emmanuel Macron and Jean-Luc

Mélenchon, with the aim of differentiating them from traditional political parties and social movements (Lefèbvre, 2018).

4. URL of websites studied during the official campaign: <https://en-marche.fr/emmanuel-macron>; <http://www.jlm2017.fr>; <https://www.benoithamon2017.fr>; <https://www.fillon2017.fr>. The sections of candidates' websites that require registration have also been studied.

5. The 16 interviews have been conducted between the 4th of July 2017 and the 28th of June 2018. This represents 3 for the Macron team, 3 for the Mélenchon team, 5 for the Fillon team and 5 for the Hamon team. See the list of the interviews in Appendix 1.

6. This aspect of the research is not covered in this article.

7. It has however been stated that *“the platform, which gave the impression of a bottom-up, grassroots initiative, was in effect a centralized operation destined at providing internet supporters with scripts, tools and arguments to organize events and carry (the) Obama message online, but mostly offline”* (Giasson et al., 2014). Analyzing the platform of the Five Star Movement in Italy, Paolo Gerbaudo (2019) reaches the same conclusion of the domination of a “top down”, rather than a “bottom up” process.

8. It is interesting to note that the possibility of creating a local supporters' committee was proposed on the site as early as the Les Républicains party primaries, as explained by the person who managed François Fillon's online campaign for the primaries and then the presidential election (E10).

9. The candidate of the Socialist Party was the only candidate who proposed participation in the electoral program during the period of the presidential campaign. Other candidates, such as François Fillon, did this during the primaries campaign.

10. It is interesting to note that *“For the 2012 election, [the candidate of the French Socialist Party] Francois Hollande and [that of the Union pour un Mouvement Populaire] Nicolas Sarkozy, developed their own personalized portals - “toushollande.fr” and “Lafranceforte.fr” - that explicitly followed the U.S. model of online activist recruitment, again with membership being optional”* (Gibson et al., 2016).

11. Wayback Machine offers here an archive of the page from which internet users could log in to the password-protected section or create their account to access it by clicking on "J'adhère à En Marche!" :

<https://web.archive.org/web/20170327003648/http://www.en-marche.fr/espace-adherent/connexion>

12. Wayback Machine offers here an archive of the page on the Jean-Luc Mélenchon website where you'll find the map of local events and local support groups, created by supporters from their account on the private section : <https://web.archive.org/web/20170427002444/http://f-i.jlm2017.fr/carte>.

13. Wayback Machine offers here an archive of the page where local events organized by users who have created an account on the private section of the Macron's website were listed :

<https://web.archive.org/web/20170427040350/https://en-marche.fr/evenements>

14. 'groups of action' is the term used by the La France Insoumise movement to refer to the local committee that supporters could set up.

ABSTRACTS

The article analyzes the similarities and differences between how digital technologies are used by candidates to organize their campaign and collective actions. More precisely, it addresses the question how far candidates from established parties and candidates from outside of established parties used the web differently in the 2017 presidential election campaign in France. How did they use the web to recruit activists and to structure the mobilization either online or in urban space? We thus bring questions about the blurring of strategy between political parties and social movements using digital technologies.

Cet article analyse les similitudes et les différences entre la façon dont le numérique est utilisé par les candidats pour organiser le militantisme lors de l'élection présidentielle française de 2017. Il s'agit de vérifier si et dans quelle mesure les candidats des partis établis et les candidats hors partis établis ont utilisé différemment le web lors de la campagne de l'élection présidentielle française de 2017. Comment ont-ils utilisé le web pour recruter des militants et pour structurer la mobilisation en ligne ou sur le terrain ? Est ainsi soulevée la question du brouillage entre les stratégies d'utilisation du numérique des partis politiques et celles des mouvements sociaux.

INDEX

Mots-clés: numérique ; campagne électorale ; candidats ; élection présidentielle ; militantisme ; mobilisation ; parti politique ; France.

Keywords: digital technology; campaign ; candidates ; presidential election ; mobilization ; activism ; political party ; France.

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