

Four Funerals and a Party? The Political Repertoire of the Nonviolent Radical Party

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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 globalisation have challenged political parties – especially parties of the West European left. We explore a political repertoire that – we submit – provides interesting lessons about how to address these transformations. In particular, we look at the Radical Party – established as the Partito Radicale in 1955 and known today as the Nonviolent, Transparty, Transnational Radical Party (www.radicalparty.org). We present and discuss its political repertoire, and critically appraise it. Our conclusion is that the Radical Party has managed to theorise and approach the four challenges quite pro-actively, possibly because most of these transformations were already in its genetic code and political tradition.

Keywords: Liberalism, nonviolence, party politics, Radical Party, transnational politics

Conventional party politics is under pressure, if not in crisis. Citizens can choose between different channels of representation, and parties are only one among many possible tools to articulate political demand and govern complex societies. The (classic and new) media have re-defined how citizens get information and apportion responsibility for policy outcomes, but have also changed campaigns and party branding, raising the overall cost of political activity. Europeanization has constrained the menu of policy choices, and in the Euro-zone it has led to massive episodes of de-legitimation of domestic party elites, especially in Southern Europe. Politics has become global, but parties remain national, leaving to other actors the task of governing globalisation.

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. Right-wing and

neo-populist parties have been advantaged by these four historical trends in representation, mediatisation, Europeanization and globalisation, whilst for the left they have led to 'funerals' of traditional practices and identities.

The motivation for this article is simple: at a time when party politics needs to be re-invented, it is useful to look at repertoires that provide interesting lessons about how to avoid the four funerals. Granted that lessons come with limitations, caveats and mistakes (no party has a magic wand), we suggest that Italian politics provides an example of how to engage with the four challenges rather effectively. It is the example of one of the oldest parties still active in Italy, the Radical Party, established as the Partito Radicale in 1955 and known today as the Nonviolent, Transparty, Transnational Radical Party (www.radicalparty.org). In this article we discuss and critically appraise the political repertoire of this rather unique entity, concentrating on the responses to the four transformations we have introduced above. We first present the four transformations concisely. Next we look at the thrust of the political analysis suggested by the Radical Party. We then move to the repertoire of the party, examining how it has addressed the four changes.

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 a political repertoire, not to endorse or criticise 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 conclude that our case study provides interesting lessons for the re-invention of party political activity at a time of crisis of conventional models. At the analytical level, we will argue that although this repertoire looks *prima facie* irrational in terms of our classic propositions on the behaviour of parties (Katz and Mair, 1994), it is consistent with the goals of a party willing to tackle the crisis of representation, use the media in a creative way, and govern the complexities generated by European integration and deep economic interdependence. This raises of course the following question: If this is an interesting repertoire, why has this Party remained relatively small in terms of membership and electoral success? We will answer that for a libertarian, policy-oriented party the measure of success is not in terms of organisation on the ground and control of the party by the centre. Neither can it be reduced to the number of seats in the Italian parliament, especially in the case of a transnational party. Thus, we look at success in terms of the type of policy change that has been achieved; the duration of the party, and the lessons provided - balancing success with tensions and objective limitations. Even the scientific disorganisation and the 'suicidal decisions' of the party¹ make sense when we change the benchmarks for success, albeit with qualifications.

The four funerals and our research questions

Representation

The representational function of parties is under pressure. But in Italy, the cartelisation of parties has been especially important in atrophying the linkages between civil society and party politics. The cartel party is ‘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 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 summarise 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’.

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). The party in public office is damaged by the trend towards cartelisation, 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 (van Biezen, Mair and Poguntke, 2012). In Italian politics movements like the MoVimento Cinque Stelle are at the moment more successful than traditional parties. And cartel parties need citizens less and less. Policy goals are arguably more efficiently secured by joining single-issue movements and pressure groups (Richardson, 1995).

Turning to parties in parliament, there has been a steady increase in the role of the executive, in turn created by globalisation, international policy coordination and European integration (a point to which we will turn later on in this section). Technocratic policy-making and pressure-group politics have also pushed political systems toward post-parliamentary governance (Andersen and Burns, 1996).

In Italy, the left-of-centre parties have historically specialised in territorial representation, in sharp contrast to Forza Italia (FI). The left has also championed 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 FI are definitively not worried about the declining role of parliaments and party democracy.

The role of media

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 perhaps more importantly the manifestation of the role of the media in shaping political behaviour (Bale, 2008: ch. 7; Semetko, 2006). Television and other media have offered new opportunity structures to political entrepreneurs of the right and far right (Mudde, 2007) 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 the *citizen* of classic democratic theory.

Europeanization

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). This trend has been accelerated by the decisions taken to rescue the Euro-zone. The Monti government is first and foremost responsive to European targets: parties and parliament are important sources of legitimacy and support, but they do not define the economic policy menu of the current Italian government. 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 conventional analysis concludes – 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). Scharpf (1997) and others have also pointed to the consequences of market integration without the complement of a European social dimension. This is perhaps a simplified version of Europeanization. True, there are several caveats and qualifying propositions (Schmidt, 2002; Radaelli, 2004). But it is fair to say that Europeanization provides a contested territory where hard trade-offs and

policy dilemmas have to be solved (Hopkin, 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 (Maggiorani, 1998), although elsewhere ingenious solutions and clever compromises have been found (Levy, 1999; Visser and Hamerijck, 1997).

Global politics and parties

On the international scene, parties are perceived as less effective than NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations) and international organisations (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 onto the international agenda, they have been less than effective in controlling it (Lawson, 2006). Cartelisation is also rife at the international level. Lawson mentions ‘ample evidence’ that cartelisation ‘is in fact operative at the international level, as successful parties work in collusion with national governments on behalf of the goals they jointly set’ (Lawson, 2006: 489).

At the policy level, globalisation 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 human rights. The international arena also leads the party-in-government to enter into arrangements with non-democratic leaders, as shown by the support of the Democratic Party for the 2008 Treaty between Libya and Italy signed by the Berlusconi government. Although we cannot generalise, these trends suggest that parties are not effective in terms of governing globalisation.

This short literature review introduces our research questions. First, can a party respond creatively to the demands of the party in office, in public office and on the ground and if so, how should the trade-offs among these three representational functions be appraised? Second, can political parties become agile in their use of the media, or are they condemned to be taken over by social movements? Third, can parties of the West European left govern Europeanization and globalisation, and if so how do they balance market-conforming policies with human rights and other values? In our search for answers, we consider the historical lessons provided by the Radical Party – our case study.

In terms of sources, our study 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 dedicated to this party during the last decade. There are however books on the leader, Marco Pannella (Vecellio, 2010), and volumes collecting speeches at the Italian parliament (Pannella, 2007a; 2007b). Radio Radicale has archived audio, video, and text material. Additional material from the party archives was stored, with permission, in electronic format during a visit in November 2010. Valter Vecellio compiled several articles by Pannella and on Pannella in a precious series of books published by *Stampa Alternativa*. Finally, we perused two periodicals culturally close to the Italian Radicals, *Quaderni Radicali* and *Diritto e Libertà* – together with the internet daily paper, *Notizie Radicali*.

The political narrative

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 (Panebianco, 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. Recent studies have shed light on the organisational dimension of party politics (see Ignazi et al. (2010), and 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 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 of 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 *Rivoluzione Liberale*,² the liberal socialism of Salvemini and Rosselli (Rosselli, 1973 [1930]), anti-clericalism, and European federalism. The group formed around the magazine *Il Mondo* in the 1950s provided intellectuals like Mario Pannunzio and Ernesto Rossi – instrumental in the birth of the Radical Party.

In what sense is this party 'radical'? To begin with, the party's horizons were never limited to Italy. One of the founding fathers, 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, 2004 [1943]). This argument was taken to its extreme, indeed radical, consequences with the 1989 decision to transform the party into the global Nonviolent Radical Party, of which Radicali Italiani is a constitutive movement. But we shall look at global political action later on.

More important for readers of this journal is, arguably, the narrative concerning Italian political history. All the parties responsible for establishing the republic in 1948 were united by a 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 the notion of 'regime' applied to RAI (Radiotelevisione Italiana) in the same period. It 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.

In this truly radical analysis, continuity is demonstrated by the large number 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).

Continuity is - the Radicals' 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. The second is the transformation of the political parties into a regime based on parties, the cartel-party or partitocracy (*partitocrazia*). The third is political control of the media. Public monopoly of the media was declared un-constitutional 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, the Radicals 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 regime.

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, especially the culture of the US beat communities, the Dutch *provos*, the pan-European movement of conscientious objectors, the early spontaneous green and libertarian initiatives. For many years, the official Italian Feminist Movement (MLD) and the Italian movement of Lesbians and Homosexuals (called FUORI!) had a federal relationship with the PR. The PR also effectively launched green politics in Italy by championing environmental campaigns in the 1970s. In a sense, the party was on the wavelength of major transformations of values pointing to the cleavage between authoritarian and libertarian beliefs – see Flanagan and Ingelhart (1987).

This set of libertarian values (individual freedom, liberatarianism in the American tradition of *Resistance to Civil Government*, anti-militarism and anti-establishment values) was melded with the tradition of Italian non-violent Gandhian thinkers. The major Italian philosopher of nonviolence, Aldo Capitini, has always inspired the PR, which has chosen nonviolence as its method of political action.

Addressing the challenges

Representation

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 (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 and have typically done so. When a citizen becomes a member, she does not have to endorse any specific ideology or programme of thought. All that is requested of a member is commitment to the policy programme, as decided by the annual party meeting. This is open to all: it is not a congress of delegates. With these rules, the PR has never deemed necessary the creation of control bodies that have empowered but also ossified the central party bureaucracies of other Italian parties.

At the same time, the party has never been interested in developing a territorial base. There are associations in Italy and abroad, but they are not controlled by a strong organisational 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 properties across the peninsula. This has made the party less vulnerable to the crisis of territorial representation of parties. Being essentially funded via voluntary contributions, the Radical Party has also escaped the trap of becoming too state-dependent. It has not been transformed into a component of the party apparatus, thus defying the expectations of the literature on cartelisation.

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, euthanasia, sexual reproduction and so on, the party has represented rights rather than territory.

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 dozen leaders and limited staff (Vannucci, 2007) has 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 Luca Coscioni association, the Radical Association for Esperanto, No Peace without Justice, Hands Off Cain, 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 main reasons for 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 united by the commitment to a specific cause. When viewed from the angle of traditional cartel party politics, the choice of the Radicals is one of scientific disorganisation: disorganised 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 PR has tried to intercept mass politics another way, using the instrument of the referendum (see Uleri, 2002 on the referendum in Italy). Between the 1970s and the late 1990s the Radicals used referenda – often promoted in clusters to maximise their potential for change – to break down the legal continuity between the Italian Republic and the most hideous aspects of the Fascist 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 declared several proposals illegitimate – and by the attitude of Parliament. A case in point was the second referendum to abolish public funding of political parties, won but then nullified by new legislation that effectively re-introduced and indeed increased the total level of funding – a fact that has been acknowledged by the political class only recently, in 2011-2012, in the context of growing criticism of party funding in the main media. Other gambits to mitigate or annihilate the political impact of referenda included limiting information in the media during referenda campaigns to increase the probability of the vote being declared null because of a failure of turnout to reach the required 50 percent threshold. On other occasions, elections were called in a referendum year to buy time (when there is a national election any pending referenda are automatically postponed). However, in 2011 four national referenda passed the turnout threshold and were won by the yes camp. Although not sponsored by the Radical Party, the four initiatives have opened a new window of opportunity for use of the referendum in Italy.

We ought to complete this discussion with what for most parties is the quintessential form of representation: electing representatives to Parliament. Since 1955, the Radicals have witnessed both periods in which they were outside Parliament and other periods in which candidates have been elected either through their own lists or through lists representing a broader coalition. 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 with others. Having secured a ministerial portfolio for Emma Bonino in the centre-left coalition (2006-2008), today the Radicals have six deputies, three senators (of which one, Bonino, is deputy-President of the Senate), two members of the regional assembly of Lazio, and a number of representatives on major city councils, including Milan and Turin.

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, rather than Parliament, as the central political arena for their activity. 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'. RAI has been the most obvious target with endless attempts to gain minimum visibility, including hunger strikes, demonstrations, activation of the parliamentary committee exercising oversight of 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 attracted attention to the party's actions. 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 election campaigns. RAI's ostracism of them has been well-documented by content analysis of the Italian media (www.centrodiascolto.it).

In terms of creativity, the repertoire of Pannella and the other leaders is rich. When campaigning for elections, the party has often made use of candidates who were likely to scandalise because of what they represented. A case in point is Enzo Tortora, a very popular showman accused, on the basis of inconsistent evidence, of dealing with the mafia. His election and subsequent renunciation of his seat in order to face trial, and his judicial ordeal, were instrumental in launching a campaign for a fair judicial system that is even now one of the key themes in the repertoire of the Radicals. Pannella has repeatedly made the point about the link between these battles and issues of social class. In his view, the close contact between the Radicals and citizens in jail – established through hundreds of initiatives, visits, hunger strikes and reports – shows the Italian left where the real values of solidarity are today. In line with Gaetano Salvemini, who defended *gli ultimi invece dei penultimi* (the last, not the penultimate in society), this radical liberalism is effective in tackling class issues ignored by others (note that most inmates are homeless, drug dealers or migrants). The same can be said of the old battles for divorce and abortion fifty years ago, when the PR was saying that this was a way to connect the left with social classes that did not have the means to pay expensive lawyers to obtain divorce via the Sacra Rota or to travel abroad for an abortion. Today we can say the same of euthanasia.

Arguably, one reason why hunger strikes managed to perforate the curtain of silence of the official media was their usage. For the radicals, nonviolent techniques should only be used to re-establish the rule of law or to denounce illiberal laws that conflict with the Italian constitution. The non-violent initiatives are typically *for* something, in support of specific, often minimal proposals like 15 minutes on RAI or a parliamentary debate on bills concerning contentious objection or abortion. They are never *against* – never actions of pure protest. The Radicali have always made

demands that are fully compatible with the rule of law, in a sense demanding that the regime sticks to its own legal principles.

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 organisation 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 (Spinelli and Rossi, 2004 [1943]). Rossi later became a founding father of the Partito Radicale. The key intuition of the Manifesto was that European leaders should attend to building European unity rather than trying to re-build the sovereign nation state in their countries. For Pannella, this has always been the most effective political compass in directing the initiatives of the party. The Manifesto is frequently cited by Pannella, recently also in connection with the spread of movements for democracy in the Arab world and Albania. Radical MPs such as Maurizio Turco evoked the Manifesto in their declarations prior to a crucial vote of confidence in the Berlusconi government on 14 December 2010.

Turning to EU activity, we mentioned that the Radicals have been present for thirty years in the European Parliament. In 1994 they also secured a portfolio for Emma Bonino, appointed as Commissioner responsible for Consumer Policy, Fisheries and the 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 Soviet 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 the former Yugoslavia saw Pannella, Bonino and others engaged in an ambitious attempt both to increase Europe's role in this geo-political area and to promote the rights of ethnic minorities. Today, Bonino is an influential figure in the attempt to create a light federation in response to the crisis of the Euro-zone.

Globalisation

To explain the repertoire in relation to globalization we again have to go back to the party's DNA. 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 organisation, it does not present lists in national campaigns – although affiliated movements do so, but with their own names and symbols. Although the ambition is transnational, the appeal of the party is still stronger in Italy. In 1978 the party elected Jean Fabre, a total conscientious 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's security and stability). When the Radical Party entered the directly-elected European Parliament in 1979, it did so as the Group of European Federalists, unlike the other 'Italian' groups. Today, the party secretary is a lawyer from Mali, Demba Traore'.

The transnational choice was the result of the view that globalisation can be governed by (regulated) free trade, international organisations and courts dedicated to democracy and the rule of law, and by having human rights as political compass in transnationalism. When Pannella launched the campaign for a step-by-step eradication of world hunger, some commentators greeted it with incredulity. But when the campaign progressed, it became evident that it was a project to govern globalisation – with hindsight this is evidenced by the Millennium goal. This vision again recalls the emphasis of the left on class issues, this time in a new, global version. The fight against the criminalisation of drugs can also be portrayed in terms of cosmopolitan values and solidarity with those who are compelled by the imperatives of narco-economics to produce raw products for illegal markets.

Organisationally, the PR is an NGO with general consultative status represented in the United Nations Economic and Social Council, ECOSOC. This demonstrates the party's flexibility: it is an NGO in the UN context, a movement in other contexts, a member of broader advocacy and discourse coalitions in yet other contexts.³ The UN has been the target of another long-term initiative: the Radicals' campaign against the death penalty. In this case too the party has used all the possible institutional vehicles open to it. It also generated the Hands off Cain association – 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 by 104 votes. In 2008 the General Assembly passed a new resolution by 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 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 affiliated to the party. It 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.

Discussion and conclusions

The interpretation of Italian politics suggested by the Radicals is unique. It may sound bizarre. Yet it is not without foundations in social science research. We have to distinguish two arguments, first, the argument about continuity between Fascism and Republic. Although a body of laws and several domains of public administration were transferred intact from one regime to the next, there is a difference between an authoritarian system and a democracy. Democracy, however, comes with adjectives, and one may argue that Italy falls into the diminished types of Collier and Levitsky (1997) – without being an authoritarian regime of course! And here we come to the second point.

What the Radicals call 'the regime' is what political scientists refer to as cartelisation of Italian politics – *grosso modo* the two concepts have several points of contact. Recently Pannella has spoken of 'actually existing democracies' as representing the degradation of democracy – the same way we talk of 'actually existing socialism' in relation to the principles of socialism. In his comparative analysis of the quality of democracy, 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 (Morlino: 2011, see chapter 8 and fig.8.9). The Worldwide Governance Indicators continue to identify Italy as an exception among European democracies.⁴ The Democracy Barometer (www.democracybarometer.org) measures 100 indicators of the quality of democracy in 30 major democracies: in 2005 Italy was in 26th place with deterioration in indicators of the rule of law and representation.

Turning to 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 data, decisions of the parliamentary oversight committee on public television and of the broadcasting regulatory authority AGCOM that point to the systematic discrimination of the Radicals and the large bias in the public broadcaster's news programmes and talk shows. One limitation

of the PR is that it has not been able to get the most out of the new media: its usage of the web 2.0 is rudimentary when compared to other organisations such as the MoVimento Cinque Stelle. As for European federalism, the jury is still out. The current changes under way in the stabilisation policies for the Euro-zone and economic governance in Europe seem to suggest that a kind of federal architecture may soon become necessary, no matter what the plans of state leaders are.

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 positions to such extreme, libertarian conclusions, including nonviolence as political compass, the connection between disarmament and food, opposition to authoritarianism without distinguishing between Augusto Pinochet and Fidel Castro, radical internationalism and international human rights – all blended in a classic liberal position about the primacy of the rule of law and the obstinate defence of political institutions (a point that differentiates them from anarchist movements). 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-globalisation.

In terms of organisation and representation, the choices of the Radicals appear ‘suicidal’ (Ignazi, 1997: 21). Perhaps with the exception of the European Parliament, the Radical Party has been more interested in winning campaigns and securing reform goals than in getting representatives elected to local or national assemblies. The central office remains small. In the past, believing that the threshold for fair democratic electoral competition has not been met, the PR has often refused to present lists or invited voters to desert the polls (Partito Radicale, 2003). This attitude towards elections is rooted in concerns about the substantive quality of democracy and the rule of law. Turning to the *party on the ground*, the Radical Party has not 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 organisation around libertarian values, given autonomy to individual members, and placed its members at the centre of party life. It has, as we have seen, invested in scientific disorganisation, which has enabled it to produce effective campaigns around single issues. If this has drastically limited the coherence and strength of the secretariat in Rome, then it has given the party a practical way forward in increasingly Europeanised and globalised arenas and produced several results for the Radical Party in terms of MPs, MEPs and participation in government and international organisations 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. Membership campaigns have been very expensive in terms of human and economic resources and even when the party has increased its membership (in Italy or in countries like those of Central and Eastern Europe during the democratic transitions) it has found it impossible to maintain the increased levels subsequently. As for elections, possibly the only period of expansion was in 1979 (with 18 MPs and 2 Senators); but Pannella rightly notes that 40 to 50 MPs would have been sufficient to enable the Radical Party to become a major player by overtaking the Italian Socialist Party in terms of size and influence (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, many of the achievements of the Radical Party have been contingent on its ability to exploit institutions like the referendum. History has shown that the political class (or the ‘regime’ as the Radicals would say) has suffered losses from referenda, but that it has also been able to close down windows of opportunity.

Secondly, there has been limited learning. The emphasis on civil rights was well-chosen in the 1980s, but the problem in most European societies now is how to govern a fragmented, perhaps excessively individualised society. Here perhaps the notion of bottom-up federalism as the principle of re-composition of individuals and identities is a possible way ahead for the Radicals.⁵ Learning has been limited in yet another sense, that is, in moving from a political culture of rights to substantive economic issues, where one can again encounter 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 required to intervene in the field of human and civil rights.

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 ‘partitocracy’ and demanded 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 (Dente and Regonini, 1989; Regonini, 2001) shows (a) that parties are not necessarily the main determinant of policy outcomes and (b)

that management-organisational 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 PR about how exactly it can contribute to change through instruments other than legal/institutional ones. The priority given to anti-party sentiments, and the emphasis on the parliamentary arena and reforms via changes in 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 policy change.

Third, the transnational project, connected to the scientific disorganisation of the party, is fragile and contradictory. It exposes the issue of capacity 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 organisations of the Radical galaxy, most notably Hands off Cain and No Peace without Justice. The fact that in 2009, after 30 years, the Radicals failed to elect a single member of the European Parliament 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 organisational 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 Vannucci's (2007) expression) 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 organisational architectures, and the concentration of party activities around a small group of people.

This leaves us with the question of the party's future what research could usefully engage with. Clearly, the future of the party is a problem – Marco Pannella is 'the' charismatic leader of the party. Not a dictator, since over the years others have challenged his leadership, he has always been the members' choice at party conferences where alternatives were feasible. The fact is that it is difficult to imagine how a party based on fragile organisational 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 gradually be disseminated to other left-wing parties in Europe, and therefore germinate elsewhere, with new organisational 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 been disseminated to other parties.

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Notes

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

² *Rivoluzione Liberale* is now fully available on www.erasmo.it/liberale/default.asp (accessed 5 November 2011). On Gobetti and his ‘heretical liberalism’, see Martin (2008).

³ On the different concepts of coalitions in policy theory see Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993) and Hajer (1993).

⁴ See the data at <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/index.asp> (accessed 5 November 2011).

⁵ We are grateful to Daniele Bertolini for this observation.

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