

# “Politics Makes Strange Bedfellows”

## The Internet and the 2004 European Parliament Election in Britain

*Wainer Lusoli and Janelle Ward*

---

This article examines the use of the Internet by a range of political actors in the 2004 European Parliament election in Britain—candidates, citizens, parties, government, pressure groups, and the media. Specifically, it surveys the structure of online political communications and the amount and nature of electoral information and engagement opportunities available to citizens in the framework of recent theories of “third age of political communications.” Methodologically, the article builds on the identification ( $n = 571$ ), sampling ( $n = 100$ ), qualitative annotation, and quantitative content analysis of U.K. campaign Web sites between mid-April and Election Day, June 10, 2004. Evidence provides qualified support for previous findings that the online campaign, or the lack thereof, largely reflects the apathy and disillusionment of the press, national politicians, and the media with a distinctly second-order election. However, there are two important qualifications to this “politics as usual” scenario. First, political parties, candidates, and government agencies provided a considerably wider variety of political information and engagement opportunities than in the past. As only 7 percent of British adults used the Internet for electoral information, one might wonder why online contents were provided at all. Second, online information and engagement opportunities were structured on two underlying dimensions, of which one is overtly political—a public communication versus political communication cleavage—while the other—replication versus innovation of techno-political practice—touches upon the political economy of Web production in the “third media age.”

**Keywords:** *Internet and elections; new media campaigns; Britain; European Parliament; third media age*

---

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

As the Internet has become increasingly entwined in the political communications repertoire of most political actors, issues connected with how election campaigns are fought in cyberspace have attracted scholarly attention worldwide (Norris 2001a). Although new communication technologies, it is argued, interact with long-term trends of political communications (Blumler and Kavanagh 1999), the innovation and change brought about by new media is nowhere more evident than in election campaigns (Corrado and Firestone 1996). In 1992, the idea of the Electronic Town Hall Meeting proposed by independent presidential candidate Ross Perot attracted wide media attention (Nimmo 1994), most of which was critical (Grosswiler 1998). For the first recorded time, bulletin boards were used by campaigns and a restricted number of citizens respectively to disseminate and collate information on candidates, issues, and the electoral race (Hacker et al. 1996). Since then, online elections have spread from the United States to other countries, including the United Kingdom, Australia, Germany, Italy, France, Japan, and South Korea (Gibson 2004).

The rise of the Internet, it was claimed, is intertwined with the evolution of political communication in postindustrial democracies, which is now entering a third, postmodern age. Cyber politics is an important aspect of the "third age of political communications" as it reflects the intensified professionalization, centrifugal diversification, and fragmentation of the audience associated with a changing communications landscape (Blumler and Kavanagh 1999). The Internet has become an integral part of the modernization of the structure and content of postmodern campaigns, as it "has produced an even greater diversity of places to go and things to do, now that about a fifth of the British public is online" (Norris 2001b: 167). Again, the Internet has contributed to an increasingly direct, segmented, and interactive electoral repertoire of parties as campaign organizations. "The third main stage of campaign professionalization can be seen to have coincided with the arrival of new telecommunications technology" (Farrell and Webb 2000: 105). The theses advanced in these three works are not, of course, exhaustive, mutually exclusive, nor perfectly complementary (let alone undisputed). However, they epitomize a recent resurgence of "long-wave" explanations, both theoretical and empirical, of political communications change, which touch at once upon arenas, rules, and players (Stanyer 2003). Such change, it is claimed, is not deterministic; rather, its momentum and direction are shaped, both strategically and discursively, by the interplay of politicians', press', and audiences' strategies in an increasing number of media arenas. One such exemplary arena is the Internet. Whilst Blumler and Kavanagh (1999), Norris (2001b), and Farrell and Webb (2000) set the interplay of Internet and political communications evolution against different analytical backdrops,

respectively the political-media complex, election campaigns, and party campaigns, most modernization accounts agree on the prominence of the Internet in the process of change. Web sites and other Internet applications occupy a hybrid middle ground in the political communications field (Chadwick 2005), spanning both active and passive modes of campaign engagement, on one hand; the local and the national, on the other (Norris 2001b). Hypotheses concerning the potential of the Internet for the provision of increased and enhanced election information, opportunities for voter mobilization, increased engagement, the "professionalization" of campaigns, viral (or embedded) campaigns, the coproduction of contents by the part of the audience, and the subversion of media messages epitomize the Machiavellian (strategic) and discursive nature of the third media age (Blumler and Kavanagh 1999: 225).

Although the Internet implies the redefinition of both strategies and tactics of electoral communications for a range of actors, the bulk of scholarly attention has been limited to political parties in Europe and Asia (e.g., Gibson et al. 2000; Greffet 2001; Newell 2001; Tkach-Kawasaki 2003) and to election candidates in the United States (D'Alessio 2000; Foot et al. 2003; Kamarck 1999; Schneider and Foot 2002). This article begins to explore the arena of online political communications as mapped by extant use by a wider range of relevant political actors: candidates, parties, the news media, government agencies, online content provider, and citizens. Moreover, although "third age of political communication" and postmodern campaigns theses have recently been tested in a range of advanced industrial democracies (Campus 2002; Schulz et al. 2005), they nevertheless originate from and are rooted in the observation of electoral practice in the Anglo-American context. Britain, we propose, is an ideal test-bed for the assessment of the importance of the Internet in a broader theoretical perspective. This article therefore examines the use of the Internet in the 2004 European Parliament (EP) election by a wide range of British political communications players—candidates, citizens, parties, government, pressure groups, and the media. Specifically, this work asks questions about the online structure of political communications, the amount and nature of electoral information supplied, and the engagement opportunities provided through the Internet during election campaigns. More generally, the article contributes to the current debate on the professionalization of election campaigns and the suspected coming of a "third media age."

The next section describes the electoral context and contest of the 2004 EP election. The importance of the Internet for political campaigning in Britain is then discussed, evidence is reviewed, and research questions are formalized. We then introduce the research design, which builds on the identification, sampling, qualitative annotation, and quantitative content analysis of campaign Web sites between mid-April and Election Day, June 10, 2004. Results are reported on the

counts of information provision, engagement opportunities, and the overall structure of political communication. Finally, conclusions are drawn as to the overall import of the Internet in the economy of third-age election campaigns.

### **Electoral Context and Contest**

The 2004 EP elections marked a defining moment in European history, on two main counts. First, the ballot marked the enlargement of the European Union (EU) to include ten additional countries, mostly among the former COMECON (Council for Mutual Economic Assistance) bloc, shortly after the introduction of a common currency in the EU 12. Second, elections took place just days before the European Constitutional Treaty was agreed, following years of negotiations and months of gestation. The treaty provides a common constitutional framework for the signatories. The expectation might have been that such circumstances would interrupt the vicious-circular dynamics of second-order EP elections, plagued since 1979 by dismal turnout rates, scant media coverage, and low profile political campaigning (e.g., de Vreese 2003; Irwin 1995; Marsh 1998; Reif and Schmitt 1980). Britain provides a classic example of the unfolding of these dynamics, as the politics of Europe is more significant a feature of elite political discourse and interparty competition in Britain than in other EU countries (Taggart 2004). First, one of the major British parties, the Conservatives, is Euroskeptic, unlike similar parties in other EU countries where minor parties usually oppose the EU. Second, large sectors of public opinion in Britain have been consistently Euroskeptical since the foundation of the union, in recent times especially so. Even where not overtly hostile, British voters are more responsive to domestic political dynamics, such as parties' positions on national issues, than to EU-level dynamics—for example, the changing role of the EP or the EU enlargement (EU 2004a). This reflects the prevalence of domestic rather than European framing of EP campaign issues by national media (de Vreese et al. 2004). In fact, and third, a large proportion of the “broadsheet” and “tabloid” press are either skeptical of or openly opposed to the EU (Taggart 2004: 3). According to Hall (2004), British tabloids with the highest circulation were “unremittingly hostile” to the EP during the 2004 election. Other press, both tabloid and broadsheet, was appeased by the surprise prospect of a 2005 referendum on the European constitution, which marked a U-turn in Labour policy just days before the election.

Predictably under these circumstances, the campaign contest was uninspiring. The United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) was the only party fighting a European campaign, as its front man pledged “not to set foot in Brussels” if elected, and to try to withdraw Britain from the EU.<sup>2</sup> The UKIP Euroskeptic Manifesto exhorted Britons to “say no” to EU membership and fees, the EU constitution, unlimited EU immigration, and the Euro (UKIP 2004). Extensive

media coverage was secured by the high profile of the party's star recruit, Robert Kilroy-Silk—former Labour MP and presenter of the eponymous TV show *Kilroy*—and by the support of a number of media celebrities, including actress Joan Collins. Kilroy-Silk himself received twenty times as much newspaper coverage as the Labour party front man (Hall 2004). British main parties were rather more concerned with coinciding local elections than with the European election. The Labour Party manifesto tackled domestic economic issues and the Tories more vigorously than it tackled any European issue, its slogan being, "Britain is working—don't let the Tories wreck it again" (Labour Party 2004). Tony Blair made only two appearances during the election, following early polls' suggestions that he would be a liability more than an asset for the Labour campaign. Although European elections have always spelled trouble for large, governing parties (Taggart 2004), the Conservatives did not capitalize on Labour's weaknesses, for three main reasons. First, leading Tories held inconsistent views on Europe, ranging from stark skepticism to pro-Europeanism; second, their call for a vote on the EU Constitutional Treaty was preempted by Tony Blair's announcement of a referendum; third, they faced friendly fire from the right flank, as the UKIP tapped into the Euroskeptic, protest, and right-wing sentiments of large sections of their electorate. The Conservative campaign eventually settled for "Britain first"—a combination of bashing EU "fraud and waste" and red-tape; upholding British political leaderships, economic competitiveness, and "way of life"; and strongly opposing the Constitutional Treaty (Conservative Party 2004). Even the Europhile Liberal Democrats were widely accused of fighting the campaign more on the wave of the war in Iraq than on support for European issues (Taggart 2004). By the end of the campaign "none of the key stakeholders were satisfied: voters expressed dissatisfaction (turnout was low), journalists were unhappy ('the campaigns were boring'), and politicians were unhappy with what they saw as 'malfunctioning media'" (de Vreese 2004: 2). A survey of Britons' attitudes to the EP election concluded that

there was very little recall of political issues at stake with the exception of TV personality Robert Kilroy-Silk standing for election on a UKIP platform, but a considerable amount relating to the possible failure of the authorities to dispatch ballot forms by the stipulated date, or indeed the ability of the postal service to deliver them in time. (Curtice et al. 2004b: 25)

### Internet and Elections in Britain

Evidence concerning the Internet and election campaigns in Britain is largely limited to the use of the Web by parties and candidates, between the 1997 and the 2001 general elections. Such practices largely suggest a "politics as usual" scenario, certainly in tune with the dynamics of second-order elections described

above. Based on content analysis of party Web sites and a survey of party Web managers, Gibson and Ward concluded that 1997 online strategies failed in terms of looks, interactivity, and contents, thus missing the opportunities provided for by the medium (Gibson and Ward 1998; Ward and Gibson 1998). Parties were inept at attracting and engaging voters through their Web sites, which they used mainly as an additional tool for the dissemination of information. Yates and Perrone (1998) assessed the accessibility, interactivity, content, and presentation of five main parties' Web sites at the same election, along with the content of three party-devoted Usenet groups. They found that the Web was "treated as another 'broadcast' communications channel"—reflected in the lack of navigation tools, multimedia elements, interactive features, and creative features more generally. Furthermore, Usenet discussion groups devoted to different parties were remarkably "on message" with party spiel, mainly focusing on Labour policy proposals. Not much changed at the 1999 EP election. A survey looked at the accessibility, campaign commitment, and quality of delivery of twelve major and minor parties' Web sites at four time points during the campaign (Gibson and Ward 2000). In general, parties performed well in terms of information provision and reasonably well concerning mobilization but were almost completely lacking in interactivity. Interestingly, political parties maintained rather than enhanced their routine-times Web sites and did not become more active on the Web in the course of the campaign. Finally, major and minor parties did equally well and considerably better than nonparliamentary parties. The last finding was qualified by Margolis and colleagues (1999), who argued that even though minor parties do well in the United Kingdom comparatively with the United States, larger parties are however more visible as they receive wider media coverage both offline and on the Web. The 2001 general election saw candidates and local parties mount slightly more sophisticated online campaigns (Ward and Gibson 2003). About 25 percent of candidates and local parties set up Web sites, mostly providing baseline information: candidate biographies (92 percent), policy information (64 percent), membership or volunteering appeals (63 percent), and press releases/news—about 50 percent. As in the past, however, interactive opportunities were virtually absent, as only 14 percent of local parties and candidates provided surveys/polls, and half this figure provided online discussion facilities. Central parties, however, moved toward a more professional, marketing-oriented application of the Web technology (Bowers-Brown and Gunter 2002). Although party Web sites displayed a limited use of interactive and dialogical features, Web campaigns were "co-ordinated with 'brand' values, media management and advertising campaigns" (Bowers-Brown and Gunter 2002: 172) Overall, therefore, there was limited development over time in the use of the Web by political parties and candidates in Britain, mainly by national rather than local parties.

### Supply Incentives and Demand Barriers to Online Electoral Campaigns

Against this backdrop of limited innovation, both political and technological conditions might have favored a more widespread, interactive, and innovative use of the Web at the 2004 EP elections. The nature of EP elections, low attention and attendance, different electoral rules, and a softly fought electoral campaign provide a number of possible incentives for new media campaigns to a range of political actors. First, as the EP elections are second-order elections, parties and candidates can tap into a larger number of floating voters than in general elections. Second, proportional representation makes it easier for minor parties and independent voices to be heard, as compared to tightly organized and harshly fought general elections, under the first-past-the-post rule. Third, voting turnout is generally much lower at EP elections, and one can expect central government agencies and local councils, as well as political parties, to try to boost turnout. Finally, governing parties as well as larger political parties tend to suffer electoral losses at EP elections in favor of smaller, opposition parties (de Vreese 2004: 4), which opens up electoral space for less organized forces.

Some of these conditions may indeed have materialized. First, turnout in the EP election was the highest ever in Britain. While turnout has steadily decreased in Europe from 63 percent in 1979 to 46 percent in 2004, with British turnout always below the EU average, the 2004 EP election recorded the highest-ever British turnout of 39 percent. This was due to a combination of factors: the introduction of postal voting, the success of UKIP's aggressive media strategy, concomitant local and London elections, and unusually robust campaigning by local parties (Curtice et al. 2004a). Electoral candidates, especially those of the major parties, canvassed and otherwise campaigned much more in the United Kingdom than any other EU country, except perhaps Ireland (EU 2004a, 2004b). Though this suggests a compression of the available room for maneuver, it also demonstrates a significant potential for candidates, local and national parties, the media, and government agencies to mobilize voters on Election Day, starting from a very low bottom line. In fact, as average interest and voting declined in the enlarged union, citizen engagement increased in countries where parties and governments were more active in reaching out to public opinion. Furthermore, more activity took place and turnout was higher in those countries where Internet penetration is higher (EU 2004a).

Micro-level evidence, however, suggests some caution in forecasting the role of the Internet for political players' overall mobilization strategies. On one hand, the growth of individual Internet access in Britain from 32 percent of the adult population in 1999 to 56 percent in 2004 might suggest cautious optimism for parties and candidates to disseminate their spiel to a growing online public. On the other hand, however, the Internet is still a secondary medium for the supply of most political communication in Britain (Lusoli et al. 2002), as well as for its

consumption (Gibson et al. 2002b). This proved true at the 2004 election. According to EU preelection data, only 10 percent of Britons used the Internet for electoral information in the fortnight preceding the election. This compares most unfavorably with television and radio (80 percent), newspapers (66 percent), and personal discussion—at 41 percent (EU 2004a). A postelection survey found that only 6 percent of Britons in fact used the Internet to gather electoral information: “the public’s experience associated with the electoral campaign [was] essentially passive. In other words, information [was] addressed to the potential voter, rather than the voter seeking it out” (EU 2004b: 33). Finally, according to ICM Research figures, only 4 percent of the population used the Internet for political information (Curtice et al. 2004b: 7–8).<sup>3</sup> Those seeking electoral information online were younger (8 percent eighteen to twenty-four years old), and more likely to be male than female (6 percent vs. 4 percent). Voters were twice as likely as nonvoters to look for information, while those interested in politics were three times more likely than those uninterested (Curtice et al. 2004a: 30). Despite small-scale differences for the already engaged, however, the Internet failed to attract the critical mass of voters possibly required for the efficient and effective production of election content by campaign actors. But was that the case?

### Research Questions and Methodology

This study examines the amount and nature of the supply of information and engagement opportunities using the Web and how any differences between political actors in the provision of online opportunities are modeled on preexisting patterns of campaign engagement. The evidence reviewed suggests four increasingly specific null hypotheses as concerns the online structure of political communications. First, Hypothesis 1 predicts very limited online engagement across the board, as a reflection of second-order election dynamics and demand-side shortage, mitigated however by supply-side incentives; according to Hypothesis 2, run-of-the-mill information campaigns concerned with partisan, vertical dissemination of information will be widely prevalent. As to Hypothesis 3, limited engagement opportunities will build on the interactive, horizontal, multimedia and many-to-many characteristics of the Internet—in fact the “added value” of the Internet for online campaign strategies. Finally, Hypothesis 4 posits that different actors will be unequally active online, providing information and/or engagement opportunities according to the specific role each plays in the campaign. Detailed expectations about a range of actors were derived from the literature review and direct observation during the election.

*H4a:* Parties will outperform candidates, as they have larger resources, and proportional representation party lists discourage individual efforts.

*H4b:* The media will cover the election online to a limited extent, as the level of public attention can be expected to be low.

*H4c:* The government will make use of the Web to mobilize voters, as more people have access to the Internet and the Web is a cost-effective, scalable medium.

*H4d:* Citizens will create Web sites to a very limited extent, which reflects the relatively low profile of the EP election and the relative novelty of blogs.

The research design was articulated in the identification, sampling, and content analysis of Web sites from different producers of campaign information, in the framework of the Internet and Elections Project.<sup>4</sup> The producer types were as follows: election candidates, citizens, national and regional political parties, print and broadcast media, online information portals, election professionals, trade unions, NGOs, educational institutions, and religious institutions. More than fifty hours were spent on the identification of Web sites created by these ten producer types between April 3 and May 7, 2004, on the close of candidate nominations. As a guiding principle for the identification, a Web site was included in the corpus where it had a "realistic potential" to feature election-related content. The identification strategy integrated three different methods: Internet search-engine enquiries, Web site directories enquiries, and ad hoc searches tailored to specific producers. Specifically, Google.com and Yahoo.co.uk were interrogated with multiple syntactic variations on the string "European + parliament + election + 2004 + UK," in turn including each of the ten producers types. The first fifty entries from each query were followed, and the terminal Web site explored for the potential to feature election-related material. Entries listed in Web directories were individually pursued and assessed for the potential to feature election-related material. For government producers, we used the GK Soft portal ([www.gksoft.com/government/en/gb.html](http://www.gksoft.com/government/en/gb.html)), which listed in excess of a thousand Web sites. The same directory was used for party sites and complemented the Electoral Commission Web site and major party sites for lists of regional branches. For NGOs, Web sites were identified using commercial, governmental, and educational directories (e.g., [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk), [www.cre.gov.uk/navigate/links.html](http://www.cre.gov.uk/navigate/links.html), [www.psr.keele.ac.uk/parties.htm](http://www.psr.keele.ac.uk/parties.htm)).<sup>5</sup> For trade unions, we used the comprehensive list on the Trade Union Congress Web site ([www.tuc.org.uk](http://www.tuc.org.uk)). For candidates, we used the BBC Web site, *The Guardian* newspaper Web site, and ad hoc Google searches for "name + surname + EU + election." An ad hoc search strategy was also used for citizens' Web sites—mostly weblogs. In this case, we snowballed from site to site to reach saturation—again according to the criterion of including Web sites that had a realistic potential to feature election-related contents. The use of directories broadened and balanced the topicality and narrowness of direct engine searches and ad hoc investigations; however, it might also have "diluted" the realistic potential of detecting election-related material on included sites. The use of ad hoc strategies

worked in the opposite direction, by uncovering less visible, noninstitutional producers, though also inflating the number of Web sites identified for selected producers vis-à-vis others. For these reasons, all identified links either by directory, engine, or ad hoc searches were individually followed and assessed before inclusion in the corpus.

Overall, 571 Web sites were identified as potentially relevant to the EP electoral Web sphere. For these Web sites, we recorded URL, name of site producer, country of producer, producer type, search strategy, and additional notes where necessary. Ten days before the election a sample of a hundred sites was randomly drawn from the corpus, stratified by producer type. Quotas were set at 30 percent for candidates; 15 percent for parties; 10 percent for government, press, NGOs, and trade unions; and the remainder distributed across other producer types. One week to three days in advance of the election, the Web sites were screened for the presence of election-related material and coded for twenty-seven features and functions, broadly divided into procedural items, electoral information items, technical sophistication items, and electoral engagement opportunities (see the appendix). The coding frame was negotiated within the Internet and Election Project team (Foot et al. 2003; Schneider and Foot 2002) and is consistent with tools for the assessment of online structure of political opportunities in Britain found in previous studies (Gibson et al. 2003; Lusoli et al. 2002; Ward et al. 2003).

Two raters coded the Web sites once before the election. While in the American context there are good reasons to code electoral Web sites repeatedly to capture the evolution of the campaign over time, U.K. and European campaigns tend to be shorter, less eventful, and overall less dynamic (Gibson and Ward 1998). This is also true of local components of electoral campaigns (Ward and Gibson 2003: 200). Equally, we expected media Web sites' contents rather than features to change in the course of the campaign. Intercoder reliability was measured against a master coding of tasks consisting of ten Web sites from different producer types drawn from the common pool of Web sites identified as "potentially relevant" to the election. Coders attained "simple agreement" in excess of 80 percent on each coding item against the master results and were in agreement with each other on average 84 percent of the time. No items were dropped due to low inter-coder reliability, which is a positive function of both the sustained communications between the coders and the training component of the Internet and Elections Project (see Jankowski and Van Os 2004). The coders were instructed to travel the Web sites two directories deep in search of codable features. While the argument was made that the quality of the front page reflects the overall contents of the Websites (Farmer et al. 2001), a strategy that hierarchically explores two levels below the surface of the site was preferred to gauge the structure of the engagement and information on offer, rather than solely or

principally the graphical attractiveness and provision of features. Finally, screen shots of interesting Web sites and qualitative notes were taken during both the identification and the coding, which provide additional contextual information.

## Results<sup>6</sup>

Results from identification suggested that individual candidates and regional branches of parties would be fairly active in the campaign, while other producers would be fairly disengaged, such as information portals, religious and educational institutions (see Table 1). Candidates were the most significant actor in the production of online electoral content, as all candidates in the sample produced a campaign Web site. Somewhat surprisingly, only 64 percent of parties were active in the campaign. Parties without campaign Web sites were actually not fielding candidates at the current election—for example, the U.K. Unionist party ([www.ukup.org](http://www.ukup.org)) and the Official Monster Raving Loony Party ([www.omrlp.com](http://www.omrlp.com))—thus confirming previous results (Gibson and Ward 2000). Though one should infer cautiously for NGOs, possibly oversampled by the use of Web site directories, they contributed marginally to the online campaign. Finally, government agencies provided an additional, important source of campaign-related contents, with local councils and specialized electoral agencies faring much better than central government departments in the provision of both local and EP electoral information. Other producers were conspicuous by their absence. Obvious in the case of educational and religious organizations, often registered as charities, hence outside the political fray, this is more striking of information portal and trade unions Web sites—which made no mention of the EP election on their sites.

### The Online Information Sphere

The online electoral field was deeply segmented by the nature of the information on offer. Overall, almost every producer provided non-election-specific features, such as biographical information (88 percent), contact details (96 percent), and images (94 percent). Conversely, election-specific information, such as discussion of issues, election speeches, and voting information were provided less frequently (Table 2). Within the realm of election-specific information, general issue positions (53 percent), and endorsements of candidates (29 percent) prevailed over campaign-specific information—such as speeches, calendars, and information about the elections, all below 20 percent. As to the technical sophistication of Web sites, there was a great scarcity of audio or video files for download or streaming; neither did content producers appear concerned with the legal aspects of fighting an online campaign, as a minority of sites featured statements of their privacy policy (29 percent) and user rights (32 percent).

**Table 1**  
Basic frequencies by producer type

Producer Type	Web Sites					
	Identified (n1)	Sampled (n2)	Valid (n3)	Featuring Election Content (n4)	Percentage Featuring Election Content (n4/n3)	Percentage Featuring Election Content (n4/n3)
Candidate	78	30	30	30	100	100
Citizen	29	7	7	5	71	71
Educational	4	2	2	1	50	50
Government	81	10	10	5	50	50
Trade union	75	10	10	0	0	0
NGO	120	12	11	3	27	27
Party	95	14	14	9	64	64
Portal	9	2	2	0	0	0
Press	72	9	9	6	67	67
Religious	8	4	4	1	25	25
Totals	571	100	99	60	61	61

**Table 2**  
Electoral information and technical sophistication by producer type

	Information and Technical Sophistication Features											
	About Us/ Biography	Endorse	Issue Positions	Speeches	Calendar	Issue Comparison	Info on Electoral Process	Info on Voting	Images	Audio- Visual Files	Privacy Policy	Terms of Use
All types	88	29	53	19	12	9	10	32	94	16	32	29
Candidate	97	27	70	30	10	7	10	37	100	20	30	10
Citizen	29	29	14	14					57			14
Government	80				40		40	100	80		40	80
NGO	100	33	100					33	100		100	100
Party	100	89	100	33	33	11		33	100	22	11	
Press	100		11			22	11	22	100	22	56	89
Religious	100	25	25			25	25	100	100	25	25	

Note: Figures are percentages of sites including a specific information feature. Empty cells mean nil. "Not clear" features were recoded as "absent"; imported features from other sites were recoded as "present." Trade unions and portal Web sites featured no election content and were therefore omitted; educational organizations were omitted as irrelevant.

Overall, then, a pyramidal hierarchy of contents emerged, from obvious and abundant to topical and scarce, and in parallel also from technically simple to increasingly sophisticate.

Information was also segmented by producer type, broadly following the contents hierarchy. Except government institutions—which do not provide partisan information anyway—producers with higher stakes in the election provided more specialized and sophisticated information. Specifically,

- Position taking on issues was the prerogative of candidates, followed by parties and NGOs († [=  $p < .10$ ]). However, issues were hardly taken on by the press.
- Speeches were most common on candidates' and parties' (†) Web sites.
- Candidate endorsements were widely prevalent on party Web sites; the media were found to be largely neutral.
- Traditional mediators—the government (†) and parties (†)—set the tempo of the election, via calendars of events and diaries.
- Neutral comparison of positions and information on the campaign process were typically found on press Web sites and religious organizations' (†) Web sites.
- Information on voting procedures was mainly provided by government sites, plus a range of other political actors (†).
- Images were widespread, except on citizens' blogs.
- Audio-visual features were uncommon across the board and limited to candidates, parties, and the press.
- Web site users' privacy was the concern of the press and NGOs, but absent on citizen sites.

Overall, then, political parties provided the broadest range of Web information on the electoral campaign. Although they provided little information on the campaign process itself—not their traditional function anyway—parties outlined issues, endorsed candidates, and provided primary campaign resources such as speeches and audio-visual features. Therefore, the main parties tended to replicate online their existing campaign rather than use the Web in innovative ways (Figure 1).

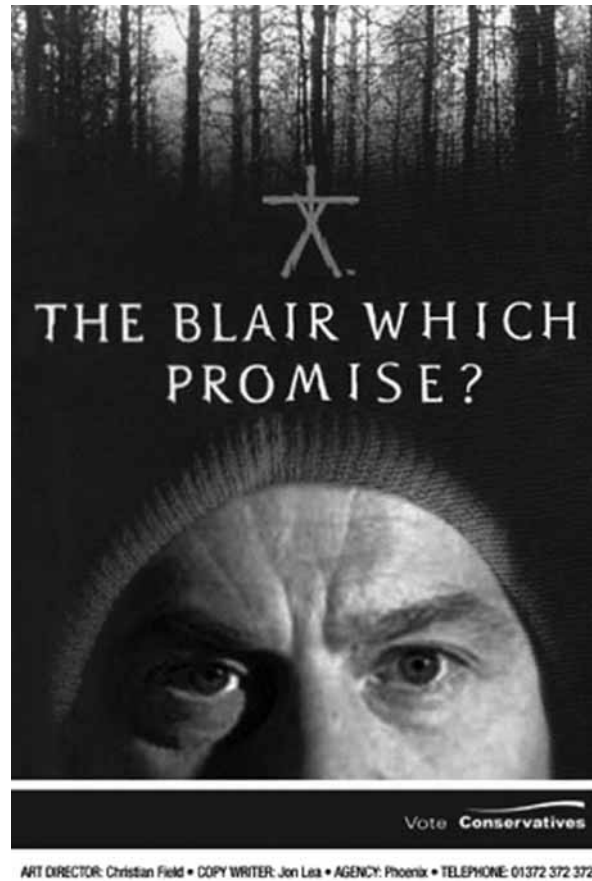
For instance, the main aim of the Labour Party election broadcast was to discredit Conservative leader Michael Howard. The video of the broadcast, embellished with interactive features and some degree of humor, was made available on the Web at [www.michaelhowardscv.com](http://www.michaelhowardscv.com).

The Conservatives joined in the negative campaign, and their Web site “Let Down by Labour” ([www.letdownbylabour.com](http://www.letdownbylabour.com)) featured a call for political posters that harnessed the carnivalesque, coproductive potential of the Internet (Foot and Schneider 2002)—which produced remarkable results (Figure 2). In both instances, however, the election provided a pretext rather than the direct target for online efforts, as national rather than international dynamics were at



Figure 1  
Labour Party Homepage, May 4, 2004

play. Comparatively, government agencies fared much better than parties at creating ad hoc sites and campaigns (e.g., [www.europecounts.org.uk](http://www.europecounts.org.uk)), especially so the Electoral Commission ([www.aboutmyvote.co.uk](http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk)). However, the agency's restricted remit did not allow them to exploit the full potential of the Internet to *engage* citizens in the campaign (Marshall and Lloyd 2004). Reflecting their impartial stance, government institutions gave only information on the electoral process and its timing. Although on a more modest scale, candidate sites also offered a large range of electoral content, in terms of issue positions, speeches, and information about campaigns and voting. The media failed to provide varied electoral information online. With the predictable exception of the BBC (included in our sample), both press and broadcasters' Web sites failed to present and compare issue positions, to inform citizens on the electoral process, or to provide election calendars and links to political speeches. Finally, citizens' Web sites presented personal commentary on the election and politics, some endorsements of candidates, but little in terms of issue comparison or information related to the electoral process. The time of the "monitoring cyber-citizen" seems yet to come.



**Figure 2**  
“Let Down by Labour” Short-Listed Entry

### **The Structure of Online Engagement Opportunities**

As predicted by Hypothesis 3, engagement features rated considerably lower than however patchy information features (Table 3). Overall, contacting the site producer is the only interactive feature consistently on offer, while the possibility of joining the campaign/organization (44 percent) and donating online (38 percent) are only relatively common. Possibly, all three can be found on producers' Web sites in times of routine. The next most common engagement opportunities could be taken advantage of entirely online, such as signing up for e-news bulletins (35 percent), contributing to a discussion forum (24 percent), and sending links from the site (26 percent). Features that offer or require offline engagement strike a somewhat lower key—online electoral registration was provided on 28 percent of Web sites, while campaign material to print and

**Table 3**  
Electoral engagement by producer type

	Information Features									
	Contact Producer	Join/Become a Member	Donate	Get E-Mail from Site	Register to Vote	Online Forum	Offline Distribution of Material	Volunteer	E-Paraphernalia	Send Links
All types	96	44	38	35	28	24	22	22	19	26
Candidate	97	60	53	47	43	10	30	40	27	33
Citizen	86	29	29			100	14		14	29
Government	100			20	60	20			20	
NGO	100	67		33			67			
Party	89	56	56	22	22	11	33	33	22	22
Press	100			67	11	44			11	44
Religious	100	75	75							

Note: Figures are percentages of sites including a specific information feature. Empty cells mean nil. "Not clear" features were recodes as "absent"; imported features from other sites were recoded as "present." Trade unions and portal Web sites featured no election content and were therefore omitted; educational organizations were omitted as irrelevant.

distribute and volunteering opportunities were quite uncommon at 22 percent. In absolute terms, therefore, online engagement opportunities were still relatively uncommon seven years after the first Internet election in the United Kingdom (Gibson and Ward 1998). In relative terms, however, engagement figures compare more equitably now with information provision, whereas recent studies found a distinct prevalence of information (Gibson et al. 2003; Ward and Gibson 2003).

As was the case of information, engagement features were also segmented by producer type. Specifically, we found that

- Joining and donating features occurred very much in parallel ( $n = 58$ ,  $\phi = .82$ , sig.  $p < .001$ ), provided mainly by candidates, then parties ( $\dagger [p < .10]$ ) and NGOs ( $\ddagger$ ).
- Electoral registration opportunities were offered by candidates, and less so by government sites ( $\ddagger$ ).
- On-demand e-news bulletins were most common on press sites.
- Citizen and press sites ( $\dagger$ ) provided online spaces for discussion, unlike candidates, who steered clear of discussion.
- Online to offline activities—such as volunteering opportunities and offline distribution of campaign material—were offered mainly by parties and candidates.
- Online to online activities—for example, screen savers, news-feeds, and links to send—were distributed across a range of actors.

Candidates, parties and the press—the actors traditionally involved in offline campaigns—thus also provided the core of online engagement opportunities. As concerns candidates, two distinct clusters were identified: a majority of candidates offering a wide range of opportunities on their Web sites (60 percent,  $n = 18$ ), and a significant minority of candidates offering no or very limited engagement (40 percent,  $n = 12$ ).<sup>7</sup> Political parties' Web sites varied more in the engagement opportunities they carried. Donations were most common, volunteering and active campaign opportunities were slightly less common, while online discussion was virtually absent. This suggests a campaign strategy aimed at voters' finances and time, rather than at their hearts and minds. Finally, the press provided the widest range of communication functions, including opportunities to send links and e-news services.

Other producers were much less engaging. As could be expected, education and religious sites offered no campaign opportunities. A number of actors—including NGOs, government institutions, and citizens—were engaged in activities limited to their traditional remit. Where we exclude the Electoral Commission, government Web sites were mainly concerned with basic electoral functions rather than more sophisticated attempts to get people to the polls. Local councils might have more cost-effective, offline ways to convince electors to

vote. As well, NGOs have a very limited function in distributing leaflets—mainly PDF files—about their position on issues relevant to the campaign. Citizen Web sites were mainly blogs discussing general political issues, the election being the issue at hand, rather than specialized election fora. They provided limited opportunities to connect to the wider net by sending links and no engagement opportunities except the possibility to “talk back,” refer, and syndicate.

Results from information and engagement indicators thus suggest that the online electoral experience is structured according to hierarchies of contents and neatly segmented by producer type. Ultimately, we were interested in the dimensionality of this electoral Web-sphere, beyond our *etic* distinction between information, engagement, and sophistication. That is, we wondered whether other, cross-cutting dimensions would fit the features producers actually provided better than our a priori distinction. We thus modeled the features with a multidimensional scaling technique to explore the conceptual space of the electoral Web space.<sup>8</sup>

We uncovered two main dimensions, or rationales underlying the provision of discrete Web site features, which are represented in Figure 3. The first dimension is overtly political—a public communication versus political communication cleavage; the second touches upon the political economy of Web production, that is, replication versus innovation of techno-political practice. These dimensions divide the structure of online electoral opportunities—what users might experience online—in four partially overlapping quadrants. A “public electoral space” at the top of the figure builds on Web sites incorporating forums, explanation of privacy and terms of use of sites, information on voting and how campaigns are regulated, contact information for political actors, and e-news bulletins. It strikes one as a vastly “textual” space, where the user is addressed “horizontally.” The “political electoral space” (bottom) is constructed on endorsement of candidates, distribution of electoral material, and opportunities to donate to and join in campaigns and volunteer. This space is truly a space of partisan mobilization and political action. The “replication space” (right) is densely occupied by sites providing bare-minimum features almost “cut-and-paste” from the offline domain, one-to-one as concerns delivery, and essentially static: biographical details, images, contact details, issues and e-news, and the possibility of registering for the election. Conversely, the “innovation space” (left) is made of innovative, dynamic, and discursive features covering both the public and the political domains: discussion fora, comparison of positions, calendar of election and events, audio-visual material, and information on the campaign. In the electoral context, the Web thus provides a hybrid public/political communication space for a broader range of communicators than simply parties and candidates, whereby existing strategies can be replicated and innovative, interactive campaigns can be tested.

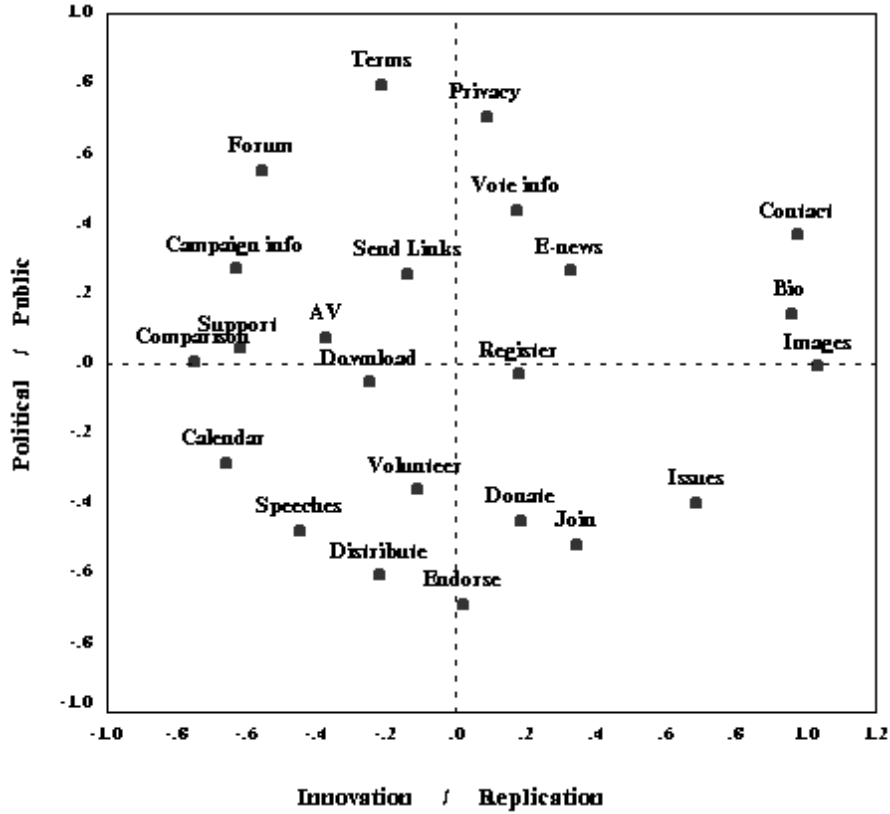


Figure 3  
European Parliament (EP) Web Sphere Dimensions  
*Note:* AV = Audio-visual.

### Discussion and Conclusions

A lethargic EP campaign, only punctuated by efforts of the UKIP, left much to be desired by the citizens. Overall, the results presented here suggest that new media did not escape, let alone reverse, the entrenched production-side deficiencies of EP election campaigns. However, the electoral Web provided a reasonable variety of electoral information to the very few who were surfing, which was a function of their entry point. On the Internet, citizens could easily find out about the candidates and could find balanced information on the voting process. Candidates were the most consistent providers of electoral content; political parties that were actually fielding candidates were as well consistently active; government Web sites made available a wealth of electoral and campaign-related

information for the politically interested. However, citizens found it perhaps more difficult to find out where candidates stood on issues, except for the obvious link to party policies. Partly due to the dynamics of communicating campaigns in Britain, the media failed to provide a comparative assessment of different candidates and candidate lists. This might also be due to the regional nature of context and the scant coverage in the offline media, especially as compared to the local election. Finally, our results suggest that blogs played a marginal role in citizen information and engagement, despite the recent kudos.

Contrary to previous findings on the almost exclusive prevalence of online political information, some engagement opportunities were in fact provided. Two conflicting sets of results emerged. On the upside, joining and donating features were provided by a considerable number of candidates and political parties. Also, a sizeable group of committed candidates and most political parties provided a variety of engagement opportunities. In parallel, registration opportunities were offered by government sites and candidates, though less so by parties. On the downside, the press hardly contributed to citizen balanced information and electoral engagement. Trade unions and NGOs were remarkable for their lack of concern, while government organizations supplied information only about the electoral process and its timing. Citizens' Web sites presented some personal commentary on the election, limited endorsement of candidates, and hardly any issue comparison or information related to the electoral process.

Finally, dimensional analysis suggested that the Web sphere is more complex than the dichotomy information/engagement would suggest. The Internet provides a hybrid public/political communication space for a broader range of communicators, where old strategies can be replicated and innovative, interactive campaigns can be tested. On one hand, it is evident that the Internet has expanded the electoral repertoire of candidates, parties, and, to a limited extent, the media. On the other hand, the import of the Internet for broader trends of communications change is more ambiguous. Our evidence dispels the idea that new media coincides with a tout court increased professionalization of political campaigns; if anything, new media widens the proficiency gap between those actors that have tangible incentives to mount more sophisticated campaigns, such as candidates and parties, and the rest of the electoral pack, including the media, citizens, and the government. Partly related to this, results from the EP election point to a trend of increased diversification, as anticipated by theorists of a "new media age." Dimensionally different "Web spheres" coexist in cyberspace, readily available to satisfy a variety of users' electoral appetites: basic versus innovative, neutral versus partisan. Although we would have liked to add "information versus engagement" to this statement, evidence suggests that political information is still widely prevalent on political interaction via new media. If anything, the supply-side communication of the campaign through new media is

increasingly more direct and segmented by producer type but is hardly any more interactive than “second age” election campaigns (cf. Farrell and Webb 2000).

However, on a more positive note, dimensional analysis also pointed at the existence of new media “spaces” of electoral innovation, public in essence and discursive in structure. Future research should assess whether and how innovative/communicative campaigns develop outside mainstream politics, at the local and regional level, especially for low-intensity competitions where relatively more is at stake. First, we are thinking about how activists and local branches incorporate new media in their campaign repertoires and how this affects turnout, opinion change, and ultimately vote choice. Second, the agenda-setting function, if any, of citizen blogs deserves close attention, while investigation is required of whether and how the Web facilitates the mutual shaping of official/unofficial campaign news. Third, the government, especially through local councils, has a large potential to fulfill with regard to the use of the Internet to increase citizen participation. This is an especially interesting avenue for both experimentation and research.

## Appendix Coding Scheme

---

### a. Procedural

1. Is this site codeable? *YES/NO*
2. Is the correct site producer type listed above? *YES/NO*
3. Does this site provide election-related content? (*see below, coding values, for questions 3-27*)

### b. Information

4. Does this site provide a biography, history, or “About Us” section?
5. Does the site provide contact information for the site producer?
6. Does the site provide endorsements for a candidate or party in an upcoming election?
7. Does the site provide a list of issue positions held by a political actor?
8. Does the site provide speeches by a candidate or party representatives?
9. Does this site provide a calendar or list with prospective election-related events?
10. Does the site provide comparison of issue positions of parties or candidates?
11. Does the site provide information about the electoral campaign process?
12. Does the site provide information about the voting process in the country studied?

### c. Technical sophistication

13. Are there images on the site?
14. Does the site provide audio or video files?
15. Does the site provide a privacy policy?
16. Does the site provide a “terms of use” statement?

**d. Engagement**

17. Does the site provide opportunities for visitors to join or become members of the organization?
18. Does the site enable visitors to register to participate in the election?
19. Does the site provide an opportunity for a visitor to sign up to receive e-mail from the site producer?
20. Are donations encouraged or enabled on or through this site?
21. Can visitors to the site participate in an online forum or other communication space?
22. Does the site encourage offline distribution of electoral campaign or election materials?
23. Is there a feature that specifically enables a site visitor to send a link from this site to a friend?
24. Is there a feature that encourages or enables a visitor to make a public statement supporting a political actor or issue?
25. Does the site enable the user to engage in digital promotion of the electoral campaign, party, organization, or voting in general?
26. Does the site encourage visitors to volunteer for the electoral campaign?
27. Does the site encourage visitors to become involved in the electoral campaign in any way other than the six previous questions have indicated?

**Coding values (questions 3-27)**

- Yes.
  - Yes, but present through a link to a page produced by a different site producer.
  - No.
  - Not clear, due to a broken link, or any other circumstance where coder cannot access the material to be coded.
- 

**Acknowledgments**

A first draft of this article was presented at the 2004 Association of Internet Researchers Conference, 19-22 September 2004, Sussex (United Kingdom). The authors owe a debt of gratitude to Tamara Witschge for her insightful comments and to James Newell for his help to put the final version into shape.

**Notes**

1. Data supporting this research were collected as part of the Internet and Elections Project, using software and procedures developed by WebArchivist.org. The project examines the import of the Internet for electoral campaigns in seven Asian countries, Australia, the United States, and eleven European Union (EU) countries at the European Parliament (EP) election (<http://oase.uci.kun.nl/~jankow/elections>).
2. He was elected with eleven more candidates, increasing United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) numbers in the EP by ten Members of the European Parliament (MEPs).
3. A sampling strategy that underweights London and the southeast may have contributed a smaller quota of people with Internet access and/or who use the Internet for political information (Gibson et al. 2002a).

4. See note 1.
5. NGOs registered only as charities were omitted, as by statute they cannot pursue political aims.
6. Results and differences reported are statistically significant at  $p < .05$ , unless otherwise specified ( $\dagger$ ,  $p < .10$ ).
7. Two-step cluster analysis, all variables binary, Bayesian information criterion of assignment to clusters.
8. Euclidean distances were computed for 23 objects of information and engagement for  $n = 60$ . Proximity matrices were fed to a Proxcal Simplex routine with different numbers of expected dimensions. The two-dimensional model selected as appropriate accounts for 93 percent of the dispersion, stress was .26 (first) .61 (second), and .14 (*S*, Young's). Given the high object-to-case ratio, results should be taken as exploratory.

## References

- Blumler, Jay G., and Dennis Kavanagh. 1999. "The Third Age of Political Communication: Influences and Features." *Political Communication* 16(3):209–30.
- Bowers-Brown, Julian, and Barrie Gunter. 2002. "Political Parties' Use of the Web during the 2001 General Election." *Aslib Proceedings* 54(3):166–76.
- Campus, Donatella. 2002. "Leaders, Dreams and Journeys: Italy's New Political Communication." *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 7(2):171–91.
- Chadwick, Andrew. 2005. "The Internet, Political Mobilization, and Organizational Hybridity." Presented at the PSA Annual Conference, University of Leeds, UK, Apr. 5-7.
- Conservative Party. 2004. *Putting Britain First Putting Britain First—The Conservative European Manifesto*. Manifesto 2004. London: Conservative Party.
- Corrado, Anthony, and Charles M. Firestone, eds. 1996. *Elections in Cyberspace: Toward a New Era in American Politics*. Washington, D.C.: Aspen Institute.
- Curtice, John, Martin Boon, and Melanie Rustin. 2004a. *The June 2004 Election: The Public's Perspective*. London: Electoral Commission and ICM Research.
- Curtice, John, Martin Boon, and Melanie Rustin. 2004b. *Public Opinion and the 2004 Electoral Pilot Schemes*. London: Electoral Commission and ICM Research.
- D'Alessio, Dave. 2000. "Adoption of the World Wide Web by American Political Candidates, 1996-1998." *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 44(4):556–68.
- de Vreese, Claes H. 2003. "Television Reporting of Second-Order Elections." *Journalism Studies* 4(2):183–98.
- de Vreese, Claes H. 2004. "European Elections 2004: The Role of the Media." Presented at the Electoral Commission Media Seminar, London, Aug. 16.
- de Vreese, Claes H., Edmund Lauf, and Jochen Peter. 2004. "The Media and European Parliament Elections: Second-Rate Coverage of a Second-Order Event?" In *European Elections and Domestic Politics. Lessons from the Past and Scenarios for the Future*, ed. Wouter van der Brug and Cees van der Eijk. South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- European Union. 2004a. *European Elections 2004 Barometer*. EB Survey 161. Brussels: European Parliament (DG Information) and the European Commission (DG Press). <<http://www.europarl.eu.int/press/Eurobarometer/pdf/en/vola1.pdf>>.
- European Union. 2004b. *Post European Elections 2004 Survey*. EB Flash Report 162. Brussels: European Parliament (DG Information) and the European Commission (DG Press). <<http://www.europarl.eu.int/press/Eurobarometer/pdf/en/PostEuropElections2004ReportEN.pdf>>.

- Farmer, Rick, Julia A. Spiker, and Richard Fender. 2001. "How Wired Are They? State Parties Online in 2000." Presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, San Francisco, Aug. 30 to Sept. 2.
- Farrell, David, and Paul Webb. 2000. "Political Parties as Campaign Organizations." In *Parties without Partisans*, ed. Russell J. Dalton and Martin P. Wattenberg. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Foot, Kirsten A., and Steven M. Schneider. 2002. "Online Action in Campaign 2000: An Exploratory Analysis of the U.S. Political Web Sphere." *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 46(2):222-44.
- Foot, Kirsten A., Steven Michael Schneider, and Michael Xenos. 2003. *Online Campaigning in the 2002 U.S. Electoral Web Sphere*. Working Paper 2. Political Web Info Project. <<http://politicalweb.info/publications/2002WorkingPaper.pdf>>.
- Gibson, Rachel K. 2004. "Web Campaigning from a Global Perspective." *Asia Pacific Review* 11(1):95-126.
- Gibson, Rachel K., Wainer Lusoli, and Stephen Ward. 2002a. "Online Campaigning in the UK: The Public Respond?" Presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Boston, Aug. 31 to Sept. 2.
- Gibson, Rachel K., Wainer Lusoli, and Stephen Ward. 2002b. *UK Political Participation Online—The Public Response. A Survey of Citizens' Political Activity via the Internet*. ESRC Report, Salford, UK. <<http://www.ipop.org.uk>>.
- Gibson, Rachel K., Michael Margolis, David Resnick, and Stephen J. Ward. 2003. "Election Campaigning on the WWW in the USA and UK: A Comparative Analysis." *Party Politics* 9(1):47-76.
- Gibson, Rachel K., James L. Newell, and Stephen Ward. 2000. "New Parties, New Media: Italian Party Politics and the Internet." *South European Society and Politics* 5(1):123-44.
- Gibson, Rachel K., and Stephen Ward. 1998. "U.K. Political Parties and the Internet: 'Politics as Usual' in the New Media?" *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 3(3):14-38.
- Gibson, Rachel K., and Stephen Ward. 2000. "An Outsider's Medium? The European Elections and UK Party Competition on the Internet." In *British Elections and Parties Review*, ed. Philip Cowley, David Denver, David Russell, and Lisa Harrison. London: Frank Cass.
- Greffet, Fabienne. 2001. "Les parties politiques Francais sur le Web." In *Les parties politiques: quelles perspectives?* ed. Dominique Andolfatto, Fabienne Greffet, and Laurent Olivier. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Grosswiler, Paul. 1998. "Historical Hopes, Media Fears, and the Electronic Town Meeting Concept: Where Technology Meets Democracy or Demagoguery?" *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 22(2):133-51.
- Hacker, Kenneth L., Lori Howl, Max Scott, and Robert Steiner. 1996. "Uses of Computer Mediated Communication in the 1992 Presidential Campaign: A Content Analysis of the Bush, Clinton and Perot Computer Lists." *Communication Research Reports* 13(2):138-46.
- Hall, Ben. 2004. "The 2004 European Elections in the UK—Don't Mention the Parliament." Presented at the Electoral Commission Media Seminar, London, Aug. 26.
- Irwin, Galen. 1995. "Second-Order or Third-Rate? Issues in the Campaign for the Elections for the European Parliament 1994." *Electoral Studies* 14(2):183.
- Jankowski, Nicholas W., and Renée Van Os. 2004. "The 2004 European Parliament Election and the Internet: Contribution to a European Public Sphere?" Presented at the Internet Communication in Intelligent Societies Conference, School of Journalism and Communication, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, July 8-10.

- Kamarck, Elaine Ciulla. 1999. "Campaigning on the Internet in the Election of 1998." In *Democracy.com? Governance in a Networked World*, ed. Elaine Ciulla Kamarck and Joseph S. Nye. Hollis, NH: Hollis Publishing.
- Labour Party. 2004. *Britain Is Working: European Elections 2004*. Manifesto 2004. London: Labour Party.
- Lusoli, Wainer, Stephen Ward, and Rachel K. Gibson. 2002. "Political Organisations and Online Mobilisation: Different Media—Same Outcomes?" *New Review of Information Networking* 8:89–108.
- Margolis, Michael, David Resnick, and Joel D. Wolfe. 1999. "Party Competition on the Internet in the United States and Britain." *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 4(4):24–47.
- Marsh, Michael. 1998. "Testing the Second-Order Election Model after Four European Elections." *British Journal of Political Science* 28(4):591–608.
- Marshall, Ben, and Becky Lloyd. 2004. "Making the Case for Politics." Presented at the Elections, Public Opinion and Parties (EPOP) Conference, Nuffield College, Oxford, UK, Sept. 10–12.
- Newell, James L. 2001. "Italian Political Parties on the Web." *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 6(4):60–87.
- Nimmo, Dan. 1994. "The Electronic Town Hall." In *The 1992 Presidential Campaign: A Communication Perspective*, ed. Robert E. Denton. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Norris, Pippa. 2001a. *Digital Divide*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Norris, Pippa. 2001b. "Political Communications and Democratic Politics." In *Political Communications Transformed: From Morrison to Mandelson*, ed. John Bartle and Dylan Griffiths. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave.
- Reif, Karlheinz, and Hermann Schmitt. 1980. "Nine National Second-Order Elections: A Conceptual Framework for the Analysis of European Election Results." *European Journal of Political Research* 8:3–44.
- Schneider, Steven M., and Kirsten A. Foot. 2002. "Online Structure for Political Action: Exploring Presidential Campaign Web Sites from the 2000 American Election." *Javnost* 9(2):43–60.
- Schulz, W., R. Zeh, and O. Quiring. 2005. "Voters in a Changing Media Environment—A Data-Based Retrospective on Consequences of Media Change in Germany." *European Journal of Communication* 20(1):55–88.
- Stanyer, James. 2003. "Political Communication in Transition: Conceptualizing Change and Understanding Its Consequences." *European Journal of Communication* 18(3):385–94.
- Taggart, Paul. 2004. *The European Parliament Election in the United Kingdom*. 2004 European Parliament Election Briefing no. 14. Brighton, UK: European Parties Elections and Referendums Network (EPERN), Sussex European Institute. <<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/sei/documents/epern-ep2004-uk.pdf>>.
- Tkach-Kawasaki, Leslie M. 2003. "Politics@Japan: Party Competition on the Internet in Japan." *Party Politics* 9(1):105–23.
- United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP). 2004. *Say NO to European Union*. Manifesto 2004. London: UKIP.
- Ward, Stephen, and Rachel K. Gibson. 1998. "The First Internet Election? UK Political Parties and Campaigning in Cyberspace." In *Political Communications: Why Labor Won the General Election of 1997*, ed. Ivor Crewe, Brian Gosschalk, and John Bartle. London: Frank Cass.
- Ward, Stephen, and Rachel K. Gibson. 2003. "On-Line and on Message? Candidate Websites in the 2001 General Election." *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 5(2):188–205.
- Ward, Stephen, Rachel K. Gibson, and Wainer Lusoli. 2003. "Participation and Mobilisation Online: Hype, Hope and Reality." *Parliamentary Affairs* 56(3):652–68.
- Yates, Simeon J., and Jane L. Perrone. 1998. "Politics on the Web." Presented at the Internet Research and Information for Social Scientists (IRISS) Conference, Bristol, UK, March 25–27.

### Biographical Notes

Wainer Lusoli is a lecturer in social and communication studies at the University of Chester. His research focuses on new media and political communication, British politics, and the micro-political aspects of the Internet. He is the author of *Voice and E-Quality*, a volume on the state of electronic democracy in Britain, forthcoming from Hampton Press.

Address: Social and Communication Studies, University of Chester, Chester, CH1 4BJ United Kingdom; fax: +44 (0) 1244 391820; home page: <http://www.lusoli.info>; e-mail: [w.lusoli@chester.ac.uk](mailto:w.lusoli@chester.ac.uk).

Janelle Ward is a Ph.D. candidate at the Amsterdam School of Communication Research (ASCoR), at the University of Amsterdam. Her research interests include young people's use of the Internet and citizenship development. She was a part of the Internet and Elections Project, which reported on the online presence of political actors during the U.K. election campaign.

Address: Amsterdam School of Communications Research, University of Amsterdam, Kloveniersburgwal 48, 1012 CX Amsterdam, the Netherlands; phone: +31 (0)20 525 6174; fax: +31 (0)20 525 3681; e-mail: [j.r.ward@uva.nl](mailto:j.r.ward@uva.nl).