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Fuzzy politics I: The genesis of parties

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Abstract

We propose a novel modelization of the party formation process, in which citizens' private opinions are described by means of continuous fuzzy profiles. Those citizens who show a high level of commitment become politicians, and create a public profile of political tolerance that extends their private profile. The main goal of this first paper is to describe how parties endogenously emerge from the matching mechanism of the private-and-public profiles of politicians. We provide an algorithm for the genesis of parties, and characterize newborn parties that behave as a single politician. Future work on this topic will be devoted to a description of parties' dynamics and voting procedures by using the same fuzzy approach.
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1. Introduction

Political elections are considered the expression of democratic consensus, and their results are usually assumed to represent the true will of citizens. This is the reason why winners are "democratically" empowered to govern, according to constitutional rules. Members of a committee, a board, or an assembly usually decide the final policy outcome according to the coordination that emerges from their voting behavior and their ability to converge as a unique body. Although strategies of aggregation can be more or less durable, the rationale is always the same: the development of "blocks of power". Many examples of this kind are apparent in everyday life, from competing interests within the board of directors of a company, to the strategies decided by the management of an organization, to the formation of parties in a community of citizens, etc.

Strategies of aggregations become even more complex whenever the stability of these blocks of power is also taken into account. In politics, for instance, candidates are a representation of a continuous strategic game, in which each player decides how to relate to the others with the goal of maximizing her/his own prestige and eventually being elected or re-elected. The level of cohesiveness of each party is historically very heterogeneous, going, e.g., from the very factionalist experience of the *Italian Christian Democrats* during the Eighties to the very cohesive features of the

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Swedish Social Democrats. As a matter of fact, differences in the way parties play their "internal game of powers" may possibly lead to very different political performances of the whole democratic system, in terms of the stability of governmental institutions (see, e.g., the abnormal number of Italian governments during the Eighties).

What creates a political party? What makes it stable? Will some of its members ever converge into a faction or even create a new party? Why do politicians form parties and agree to share a political symbol? How natural is the process to entry in or exit from an existing party? These are some of the very natural questions that any realistic model describing the political system should be able to answer. In order to effectively address these questions, in this paper we present a fuzzy model of the party formation process, describing a collectivity whose members endogenously organize themselves according to two personal attributes: (1) their individual commitment to become a politician, and (2) their willingness/tolerance to negotiate.

In truth, the goal of our model is broader, since we aim at providing a full description of the political/electoral system. For the sake of clarity, however, we split the relative analysis in three parts. The first is the subject of the present paper, and refers to the way in which politicians engage themselves in voluntary aggregations, thus creating new political entities, called parties. The second and the third – to be addressed in successive papers based on the same approach – will depict, respectively: (i) the strategic dynamics of parties, with regards to the creation of coalitions and, more generally, of agreements aimed at defining ensembles with political power and electoral appeal; and (ii) the voting process, by discussing the matching process between voters and parties. The reason of such a division of tasks is not exclusively functional, it is also methodological. In fact, here we provide a *positive* description of the process that yields the creation of parties, and successively we shall focus on the *normative* discussion about the reasons and the consequences of such a creation.

Several important aspects of the topic of this paper have already been extensively discussed in existing models of party formation. Some models set the core of the analysis at the interaction between politicians and voters. For instance, Caillaud and Tirole [10,11] describe parties as information intermediaries, and highlight their role in selecting candidates. A similar approach is described in Sneider and Ting [41], who focus on a sort of "brand-effect", which helps voters to orient their opinions. Both these contributions are somehow melted into the rationale of Ashworth and De Mesquita [4], who propose a conceptual association between the value of the political brand proposed by a party and the quality of its candidates: thus, credibility ends up playing a particularly strong role in the electoral process. As [3] puts it, the consensus among the members of a party is managed to choose the platforms to be held. In the same direction, Levy [37] stresses that politicians can take advantage from the existence of the party, which offers a framework with a well-established reputation that cannot be replicated by single individuals.

A different approach to the topic explains the process of party formation by referring to the aggregation of members within an assembly, which in turn yields the rise of coalitions. Examples of this stream of literature – surveyed in Schofield and Sened [40] – are Carrubba and Volden [13] and Fox [20]. For more recent contributions in a similar direction, see Eguia [17,18] and Eguia and Nicolò [19]. Actually, one can argue that the difference between a coalition and a party simply lies in the binding power of the mutual agreement among participants and in the temporal horizon of this agreement. From this perspective, Biondo [8] shows that political agreements may turn into mere instruments of power management rather than being an expression of democratic representation.

Our approach to the topic departs from the main stream of literature, at least technically. In fact, we employ fuzzy sets to represent the private opinions of citizens on all topics of the political debate. A citizen is described by a family of *fuzzy opinion profiles*, where each profile models the way (s)he "sees" a particular topic. However, some members of the community, characterized by a high level of commitment, may decide to become politicians. In such a case, for the sake of their public exposure, they create an additional fuzzy profile for each topic. Thus, in our model, politicians are realistically described by a set of *private-and-public profiles* (for short, *PaP-profiles*), along with a set of indices that quantify the subjective relevance of each topic.[1] The next step of our approach consists of the modelization of the matching process among politicians, which is meaningfully shaped by comparing private and public profiles to each other. The final output of this process is the birth of parties.

[1] In these features, our approach resembles the distinction between candidates' ideologies and platforms, which is discussed in part of the literature dealing with electoral competitions: see, e.g., Kollman et al. [34], Caillaud and Tirole [10], Kingemann et al. [32], Köll and Polk [35], among the many contributions in the field. However, the successive steps of our model depart – not only methodologically – from all classical approaches to the topic.

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