

# Has the digital environment been democratized?: Digital uses in the non-electoral period of government parties vs. opposition parties in European countries and the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP)

*¿Todo lo digital se ha democratizado?: Usos digitales en un período no electoral de partidos de gobierno vs. de oposición en los países europeos y la Comunidad de Países de Habla Portuguesa (CPLP)*

*E tudo o digital democratizou?: Usos digitais em período não eleitoral dos partidos do governo vs. da oposição em países da Europa e da Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa (CPLP)*

# 5

ARTICLE



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RECEIVED: January 10, 2020 / ACCEPTED: May 4, 2020

## Abstract

This article focuses on the digital uses in democracies in Europe and the CPLP of political parties that carry out government functions and the opposition in a non-electoral environment. Under a mixed theoretical and methodological approach, the results show that opposition parties use the participatory paradigm more and government parties use the information paradigm. The most significant differences between the government and the opposition parties lie in the type of content, the actors and the themes. Between Europe and the CPLP, the main differences lie in the objectives implicit to the uses. Democracy reveals trends in digital uses.

## KEYWORDS

*Digital democracy, Government, Opposition, Non-election period, Europe, CPLP.*

## Resumen

Este artículo se centra en los usos digitales, en las democracias en Europa y la CPLP, de los partidos políticos que desempeñan funciones de gobierno y oposición en un entorno no electoral. Bajo un enfoque teórico y metodológico mixto, los resultados muestran que los partidos de oposición usan más el paradigma participacionista y los partidos de gobierno el paradigma informativo; que, entre el gobierno y los partidos de oposición, las diferencias más significativas radican en el tipo de contenido,

los actores y los temas declarados y que, entre Europa y el CPLP, las principales diferencias radican en los objetivos implícitos de los usos. La democracia revela tendencias en usos digitales.

## PALABRAS CLAVE

*Democracia digital, Gobierno, Oposición, Periodo no electoral, Europa, CPLP.*

## Resumo

Este artigo foca-se nos usos digitais, em democracias da Europa e da CPLP, dos partidos políticos a desempenhar funções governamentais e da oposição num ambiente não eleitoral. Sob uma abordagem metodológica e teórica mista, os resultados mostram que os partidos da oposição usam mais o paradigma participacionista e os partidos do governo o paradigma informacional, que entre os partidos do governo e os da oposição as diferenças mais significativas residem no tipo de conteúdo, atores e temas enunciados e que, entre a Europa e a CPLP, as principais diferenças residem nos objetivos implícitos aos usos. A democracia revela tendências nos usos digitais.

## PALAVRAS-CHAVE

*Democracia digital, Governo, Oposição, Período não eleitoral, Europa, CPLP.*

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## INTRODUCTION

The encounter between politics and the digital environment builds a new era: “politics 2.0” (Karpf, 2009), and outlines a “politics 3.0” that implies sophistication, use of robots, big data and fake news (Ituassu et al., 2018, p. 18). The Internet, auguring an episode like “El Dorado” or a “Pandora’s Box”, took advantage of the

transition from the “teledemocracies” of the 1950s to a “digital democracy” (Rodota, 2000, p. 55), rewriting democracy and reaching today to the point of asking “will democracy survive the internet?” (Persily, 2017).

Communication is a condition for democracy. In this sense, democratic political life can be characterized as a continuous communication

effort on behalf of politicians [“permanent campaign”] who want to support their actions, being the main way through which political participation can be achieved (Plesca, 2013). Democracy presupposes the existence of a “transmission belt” that sends political messages, another element that contributes to making democracy the most complex human system (Plesca, 2013). The way in which political communication is carried out directly influences the rules of the democratic game, exacerbating or diminishing its imperfections (Plesca, 2013). This research focuses on this approach.

Putnam (1997) clearly formulates some problems that serve as a framework for research: “If we reform institutions, for example digitally, will political practices follow the same path?”; “How does the environment (especially in the territorial, cultural, communicational and digital spheres) influence the performance of democratic institutions?”

It is in the context of digital political communication (and its uses) in a democratic regime that this article is included. It focuses, in particular, on the digital uses in a non-electoral period of the parties that participate in the government and on the opposition of some countries that lead democratic experiences (full democracies versus imperfect democracies) in two groups of countries: Europe and the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP). The study of party digital communication in non-electoral periods is assumed as an innovative object (for example, Gibson *et al.*, 2003) and the study of government communication has been little investigated, finding itself in a “theoretical terrain type of nobody” (Canel & Sanders, 2012).

The performance to be analyzed refers to on-line social networks (OSN) Facebook and Instagram. Posts by political actors, for example on Facebook, represent “great potential” to increase interaction between citizens and them, to encourage participation (Heiss *et al.*, 2017) and participatory democracy. The cases under study are five democratic states, considering different democratic practices and organized into two groups under the following criteria: a) territorial and political characteristics (Europe-European Union) and b) linguistic characteristics (CPLP - Portuguese-speaking culture). Being these: Portugal (European country and CPLP), the European countries Spain and England (full democracies) and the CPLP countries Brazil and Cape Verde (imperfect democracies).

The article is based on communication theories that offer the theoretical framework, such as: (a) the uses and gratifications theory (UGT) (Rathnayake, 2016) that allows an updated reflection on how the parties (in the government and the opposition) use digital media to their satisfaction, (b) technological determinism: “is the medium still the message?” (McLuhan, 1964). The theory of the permanent campaign (Blumenthal, 1982; Vasko & Trilling, 2019) offers a contribution to political science and symbolic interactionism in a digital context and makes a contribution from the sociological matrix (Chicago school), promoting the interdisciplinarity of the theoretical atrium.

# 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

## 1.1. WHEN DEMOCRACY AND DIGITAL CULTURE MEET

Digital culture, which improves the way of being and behaving in the world, is based on three principles: 1) interconnection (the space becomes an interactive channel, humanity is a continuum without borders), 2) creation of virtual communities (based on the interconnection that is independent of geographical proximity and is based on a free, transversal and deterritorialized human relationship ideal that allows exploring new forms of public opinion) and 3) collective intelligence (an approach to the ideal of an intelligent collective more imaginative, faster, more capable of learning and inventing; creator of synergies of knowledge, imagination and spiritual energies of those connected to cyberspace) (Lévy, 2007, pp. 127-132). Digital media stimulate a new political behavior with the aim of experiencing another type of dialogue with the State and with democracy, which provokes a new political culture (Sader, 2015).

The political opportunities provided by digital uses force “a place at the table for civil participation outside of electoral periods” (da Silva et al., 2016, p. 28). However, this “place at the table” remains a guest and not an effective part of the design of institutions.

In the conceptual sphere of democracy and e-democracy, there is the informative and participatory paradigm (da Silva et al., 2016, p. 24). The right to information tends to be used as a synonym for democracy, therefore, it is a tool to strengthen this form of government (Baskota, 2018). It can be said that “information is power” is a democratic maxim. Lack of information can prevent citizens from achieving aspirations, because it deprives them of the basis to participate in any debate on the decision-making

process (Baskota, 2018). Da Silva et al. (2016) explains that the interactive capabilities and the dense informational framework that the Internet fosters allow direct communication in a plural and independent way (p. 23). In the study by the Special Secretariat for Policies to Promote Racial Equality (SEPPPIR), Farranha and dos Santos (2016) indicate that the government-citizen relationship is improved more efficiently by digital means, given that “the population receives information, interacts and manifests itself with criticism, praise and suggestions” (p. 359). The authors point out that, in the case of SEPPPIR, the OSN is used for informational purposes, to promote events, government events, the minister’s agenda and actions of the states and municipalities (p. 359).

The participatory paradigm, assuming that popular sovereignty must be leveraged by ensuring that legitimate political decision-making occurs through citizen control and participation, assesses the weak influence of citizens in decision-making as problematic. Therefore, this paradigm promotes control and participation in decisions about public affairs.

The notion of “politics 2.0”, introduced by Karpf (2009), can be understood as an advantage due to the low costs of using the Internet (as a means of dissemination to the parties) and its condition of abundance of information, with the aim of build more participatory and interactive political institutions (p. 67). Social movements and political agents use it, transforming it into a privileged tool to act, inform, recruit, organize, dominate and contradict (Castells, 2001, p. 167). The Internet is also becoming an attractive medium for younger members of the electorate at a time when the use of traditional media is declining (Gibson & Ward, 2012, p. 62).

The formula for the success of digital political communication is based on: (1) strategy, (2)

mentality, (3) resources (Thejll-Moller, 2013) and (4) risk (Santana, 2012, p. 94). OSNs, as communication tools, offer advantages such as: a) the possibility that politicians ignore traditional media by directly contacting voters (Garrett, 2016, p. 2; Kalsnes, 2016); b) most politicians are willing to get more involved in the OSNs and feel the need to keep up to date on political discussions and reputation (Stieglitz et al., 2012, p. 10); c) it is possible to know the voters (through chats, surveys and biographical information on each user), promoting better segmentation (Zuiderveen Borgesius et al., 2017); d) the increase in the number of users has changed the way of disseminating information, eliminating costs (Stieglitz and Dang-Xuan, 2013, p. 1277); e) they are a powerful tool when used with attractive messages and with the implementation of good practices and the mobilization of the necessary resources (Thejll-Moller, 2013, p. 38) and f) greater political awareness and offline political participation (Ahmad et al., 2019), which makes democracy more dynamic.

As disadvantages in the use of OSNs, we list: a) “the existence of the media does not increase the use and participation of people” (Sebastião, 2015, p. 9); b) the publications do not have as much credibility as the news or a comment in the media, but they reach many unsuspecting people and can intoxicate public opinion (Ribeiro, 2015, p. 182). There is an obvious convergence between fake news and digital propaganda (Ncube, 2019), which is a dysfunction for democracy.

## **1.2. “USES AND GRATIFICATIONS” AND SYMBOLIC INTERACTION IN THE “PERMANENT CAMPAIGN” IN WHICH THE MEDIUM IS THE MESSAGE**

The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) takes activism in the use of the media in response to needs as a starting point (Rathnayake, 2016). This theoretical framework is useful for studies of digital media, since users access the Internet in a more utilitarian way than as a simple habit, compared to classic media (Riezu, 2014, p. 31). Applying the UGT to digital political communication, and from the voters’ point of view, the functionalities of interaction with the party are favored and they appreciate this communicative-participatory form, since they feel more useful in the political system (Rodrigues, 2014, p. 221).

The “permanent campaign” is a combination of image creation and strategic calculation that transforms governance into a perpetual campaign (Blumenthal, 1982, p. 7). In the extra-electoral period, parties and parliamentary groups that use digital media as a complement to traditional media, exploit digital potentials such as interactivity (Santana, 2012). Through interactivity that has been accentuated (Kalsnes et al., 2017), meanings are constructed in this exchange. These meanings apprehended by citizens converge to collect images about the candidates. Therefore, there is the presence of symbolic interactionism (Fernback, 2019)

in which the human worlds are strongly symbolic in the digital context. In this sense, OSNs created opportunities for “strategic innovations where personal political communication is crucial” (Bimber, 2014, p. 131).

“The medium is the message” (McLuhan, 1964) in the sense that “the personal and social consequences of any medium result from the new scale introduced by a new technology” (p. 7). It is argued that online political communication can increase the political participation of citizens, bringing politics closer to citizens through interactivity and personalization. (Kruikemeier et al., 2013). Therefore, the medium that is interactive and personalized, influences the recipient and generates personal and social effects.

The digital communication of the party in non-electoral periods proves to be an innovative object. Gibson et al. (2003) had already detected this trend: little has been written about what happens in the relationship between parties and the digital world outside the electoral period (p. 140). Lorenzo and Carreras (2010) find that politicians communicate online not only during electoral campaigns, but also in the non-electoral period to improve their reputation. Santana (2012) analyzed Portuguese digital political communication during non-electoral periods, noting that parties were not very interactive and showed resistance in following their voters (p. 87). In a comparative study on the digital communication strategies of the Portuguese and Brazilian parties during May and June 2015, Braga et al. (2017) state that in both countries there is a high positive correlation between the size of the parliamentary bank and the degree of engagement on Facebook, a moderate positive correlation between the potential for mobilization and engagement, and a low positive correlation between ideology and engagement. This association is negative for the Portuguese case due to the absence of the

Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) on Facebook (pp. 348-349).

In a qualitative and quantitative study focusing on the use of Instagram by Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau during his first year in office (after his election on October 19, 2015), Lalancette and Raynauld (2017) point out that the photos show Trudeau mainly when he seems to interact, he does it with a person and uniformly with men and women (p. 15). The data reveals that his Instagram performance focuses on his work in the public sphere, creating a professional and political spirit. A positive, promotional and thematic approach tone in government activities is noted as another result, specifically in official announcements on ministerial policies.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The research is guided by the initial question: How do Facebook and Instagram are used by government and opposition political parties in democratic countries in Europe and the CPLP in a non-electoral period? The central objective is focused on understanding the digital uses of parties in the government and in the opposition, in an extra-electoral and “permanent campaign” context in democratic European and Portuguese-speaking countries.

Facebook and Instagram are analyzed. Facebook is the largest online social network that brings together 2.45 million active users per month (Clement, 2019a) and almost all social network users are on this network (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2019). Instagram is the network with accounts with the most followers worldwide (Clement, 2019b), with Brazil in third place worldwide with 72 million users and the United Kingdom in eighth place with 22.9 million (Clement, 2019c). Being a strongly visual platform,

**Table 1***Type of democracy and internet penetration rate of cases*

Country	Type of democracy 2015 (The Economist)	Type of democracy 2018 (The Economist)	Internet penetration rate (Internet World Stats, 2018-2019)
Brazil	6,96 (imperfect democracy)	6.97 (imperfect democracy)	70,7%
Cape Verde	7,81(imperfect democracy)	7.88 (imperfect democracy)	62,8%
Spain	8,30 (full democracy)	8.08 (full democracy)	92,5%
Portugal	7,79 (imperfect democracy)	7.84 (imperfect democracy)	78,2%
United Kingdom	8,31(full democracy)	8.53 (full democracy)	94,6%

*Source: The Economist (2015; 2019); Internet World Stats, 2018-2019 (2019).*

it works mainly based on the publication of visual resources. An attempt is made to explore a research gap specifically in form, given that the visual aspects of political communication continue to be one of the least studied points (Schill, 2012, p. 119). More research based on Instagram is needed as it is a “very powerful” tool to shape public opinion, especially among young people (Eldin, 2016, p. 256), which captivates 30% of users aged between 18 and 24 years and 35% of users aged between 25 and 34 years (Clement, 2019d).

It is also relevant to study the OSNs, because “people can express their opinions or emotions about almost everything on forums, blogs and OSNs more than ever” (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2013, p. 1286). In addition, messages broadcast on Facebook influence political expression, information seeking, and voting behavior in the real world. (Bond et al., 2012, p. 295). “Little is known about the relevance of the OSNs for politics in some countries, as well as what are the success factors”, which constitutes a research

opportunity pointed out by Stieglitz et al. (2012, p. 10).

Adopting the comparative method in which the basic concepts taken are always measured in comparison with other political systems, highlighting their similarities and differences (Espírito Santo, 2010, p. 48), four comparisons will be made: a) government parties vs. opposition parties; b) European countries vs. CPLP countries; c) full democracies vs. imperfect democracies; d) Facebook vs. Instagram.

The Internet penetration rate (ICT) motivates the choice of cases for the study (Table 1). All the countries analyzed have multi-party regimes and are organized, for comparison purposes, in two types of democracy (Table 1).

Digital ethnography or netnography and content analysis are the techniques adopted. In this research, netnography is used to collect data (for content analysis) and to analyze the behavior of the parties on the Internet, scrutinizing the totality and periodicity of publications, interactivity (likes and followers), the form of the messages and uses and tips of the communicators.

The corpus analyzed includes the period from September 15 to 30, 2016. It is the period of political profit and, therefore, the beginning of a new cycle. 2016 was the year chosen for being the most recent that is not contaminated by the general, legislative or presidential elections in the country. In the years 2017, 2018 or 2019, there is always an election close to this participation period. Therefore, there are a total of 249 Facebook posts from the parties: 93 posts from CPLP (Brazil and Cape Verde), 94 from Europe (Spain and England) and 62 from Portugal (which is included in both CPLP and Europe).

The coding matrix results from the articulation between a pre (inspired by the literature) and a post coding (taking into account the specificities of the corpus). The categories used are: political function carried out, type of content, theme, directional value, actors, purpose and form of publication. The "objective" category complies with the precepts of electronic democracy (Table 2): 1. Electronic information (information, preparation of the electoral campaign and present a supporting position), 2. Electronic participation (mobilizing political action), and 3. E-control (constitute a crisis situation and create counterpropaganda) (Table 2).

**Table 2**

*Objectives categorization*

Categories – Precepts of e-democracy	Subcategories
e-information: focus on the objective of informing and clarifying citizens, based on the idea that "information is power"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Inform: transmit objective content</li> <li>. Preparing for the election campaign: focus on elections and voting</li> <li>. Present a supporting position: give an opinion</li> </ul>
e-participation: Electronic participation: focus on the objective of motivating and mobilizing citizens to participate in decisions, participate in political initiatives or be actors in political life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Mobilize the political action of citizens: appeal to the vote, militancy and political participation. In general, call for participation and action.</li> </ul>
e-control: focus on the goal of alerting citizens, encouraging them to take more control by examining and monitoring the performance of their representatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Constitute a crisis situation: report a suspicious situation</li> <li>. Create counterpropaganda: reveal the inconsistencies of the political opponent, fight against his theses.</li> </ul>

The unit of record is the subject and the item (publication) and the form of enumeration are the frequency. A descriptive and inferential statistical analysis (chi-squared test) was performed on the data.



**Table 3**

*Publications of political parties by country and political function*

Country	Portugal		Brazil		Cabo Verde		Spain		UK	
<b>Total number of publications (TNP)</b>	62		79		14		42		52	
<b>Functions</b>	Gov.	Op.	Gov.	Op.	Gov.	Op.	Gov.	Op.	Gov.	Op.
<b>Party</b>	PS	PSD	PMDB	PT	MpD	PAIVC	PP	PSOE	PC	PT
<b>TNP</b>	36	26	4	75	5	9	15	27	7	45

### 3. RESULTS

#### 3.1. CHARACTERIZATION OF THE DIGITAL USES OF PARTIES

Considering the political role played, 182 publications of opposition parties and 67 publications of government parties were analyzed (Table 3).

Parties tend to present their goals with a positive directional value. The objective “present a supporting position” (electronic information) has 45 presences. The objective “create counterpropaganda” (e-control) registers the highest negative value (18 presences). In neutral terms, the “mobilizing political action” (electronic participation) shows 10 records. The publications without the possibility of verification are, above all, to “inform the public” (9 presences).

Party events serve to mobilize political action (electronic participation) with 23 presences and to prepare the electoral campaign (electronic information) with 22 presences. The content type “party positions” with 22 presences aims to “present a supporting position”. When the parties want to “create counterpropaganda” (18 presences) and “constitute crisis situations” with electronic control (1 presence), the type of content used is “counterpropaganda”. The objective of “informing the public” (electronic information) is achieved more with the content of “political speeches” (14 presen-

ces). The “problem identification” content has the highest objective of creating opportunity situations (7 presences).

Chi-squared tests reveal statistically significant relationships between: a) objective and content type, b) objective and actor(s) and c) objective and topic.

#### 3.2. DIGITAL USES OF GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION PARTIES: COMPARISON

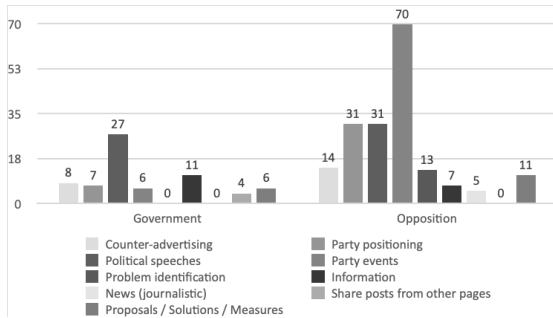
182 of the 249 publications analyzed come from parties that do not perform government functions: opposition parties are the most active in the OSN in contrast to government parties with 67 publications.

The contents most shared by government parties are “political speeches” (27) and “information” from parties (11). On the other hand, the contents preferred by the opposition are “party events” (70) and, in an ex aequo position (31 records each), “party positioning” and “political speeches” (Figure 1).

Government parties do not identify problems or share news from the media (OCS). Opposing parties do not use posts from other pages as content.

**Figure 1**

*Relationship between the political function of the party and the type of content*



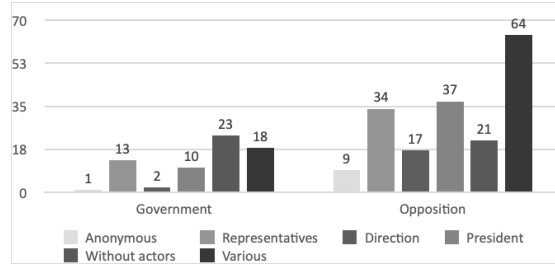
Government parties publish mainly “without actors” (23). Therefore, they use visual elements such as images or graphics. Opposition parties use posts with “various actors” (64), using images that show party leaders and deputies among anonymous people. There is also a strong presence of the party president / general secretary (37) (Figure 2).

There is a similarity of practice with respect to directional value between the government and opposition parties. Both prioritize publications with a positive directional value (49 and 100 respectively). With a second expressive score, the posts appear with a negative value (8 and 37). Third, neutral publications follow (7 and 15). We highlight the weight of the publications without the possibility of verifying the opposition parties (22).

The preferred theme of the government parties is “national politics” (40), followed by “economy” (11), avoiding in their thematic agenda: “environment”, “culture”, “defense”, “justice” and “health”. Opposition parties published more on “finances” (67) and “national politics” (63) (Figure 3).

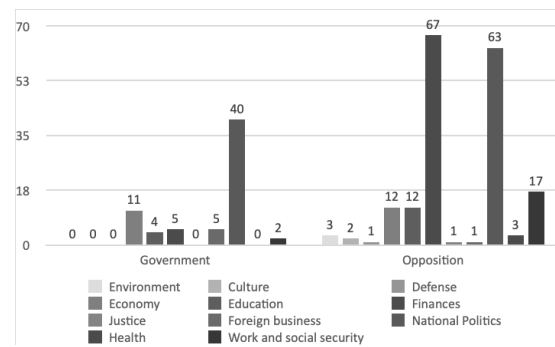
**Figure 2**

*Relationship between the political function of the party and the actors of the publications*



**Figure 3**

*Relationship between the political function of the party and the theme*



The main objective of the parties, both government and opposition, is to mobilize political action, electronic participation (49) and present a supporting position and electronic information (47). In the case of government parties, the objective of informing the public is also described (18). The least present objective is “constitute crisis situations” (electronic control), either in the opposition parties (1 presence) or in those of the government (no presence).

Government parties prefer to publish using text with images (42). With a different tactic, opposition parties use video more (100).

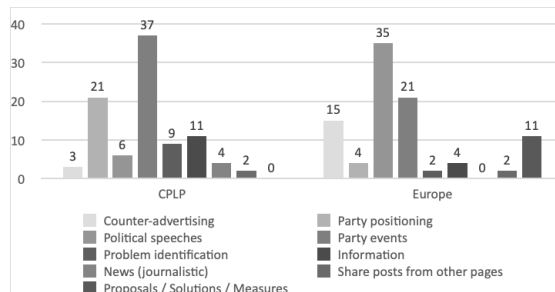
### 3.3. COMPARISON OF THE DIGITAL USES OF EUROPEAN PARTIES (FULL DEMOCRACIES) AND CPLP (IMPERFECT DEMOCRACIES)

Portugal was not analyzed since its inclusion would imply a double presence. Therefore, we deal with 187 publications: 94 publications from European parties (Spain and England) and 93 publications from CPLP (Brazil and Cape Verde).

In Europe, the preferred content type is “political speeches” (35), followed by “party events” (21 presences). In CPLP, the most published content type is “party events” (37), followed by “present a supporting position” (21). Publications are missing: a) in Europe, whose content is OCS news; and b) in CPLP, on proposals, solutions and measures for problems (Figure 4).

**Figure 4**

*Relationship between geographical location of the party and type of content*



The thematic agenda of both groups of countries or types of democracy obeys a similar expression: the most published topics both in Europe and in the CPLP are “finances” and “national politics” (Europe: 20 and 36, respectively; CPLP: 41 and 38, respectively). Two trends are detected: a) in Europe there is a greater thematic plurality in publications; b) 79 of the 93 publications in the CPLP talk about “finances” or “national politics” with all other topics underestimated, without ever gathering more than three publications.

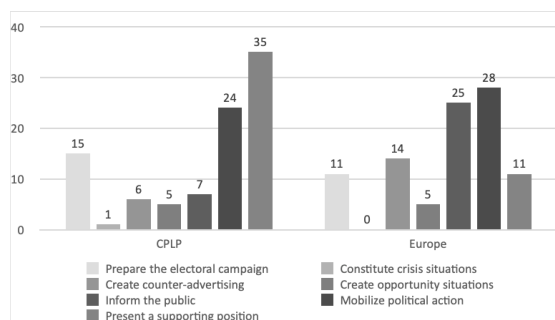
In Europe and the CPLP, the parties choose to use posts with a positive directional value, recording the absence of dual positions in the CPLP.

In the two geographies or cultural groups analyzed, the parties choose to use more publications with several actors simultaneously (24 in Europe and 34 in the CPLP), that is, elements of the party leadership with anonymous people. Second is the use of images of the party president (20 in Europe and 24 in the CPLP).

The main objective of party publications in Europe (Figure 5) is to “mobilize political action” (28), followed by “inform” (25). In the CPLP, “present a supporting position” (35) is the most expressive objective, seconded by “mobilizing political action” (24). Therefore, Europe uses more electronic participation and the participatory paradigm and the CPLP uses electronic information and the informational paradigm. The objective least present in the publications of the parties is “constitute crisis situations” with one presence in CPLP and without presence in Europe.

**Figure 5**

*Relationship between geographic location and objectives*



CPLP parties prefer to post using text with images. With a different practice, parties in Europe use video more.

### 3.4. COMPARISON OF DIGITAL USES OF GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION PARTIES IN EUROPE AND THE CPLP

The main trends are highlighted (Table 4) with “political speeches” as the type of content most used by government parties and “party events” by opposition parties in both blocks of countries. The directional value “in favor” is the most recorded in all cases. Regardless of the party’s functions, the main objective in Europe is to “mobilize political action”. In the CPLP, the parties prefer to “create opportunity situations” (government parties) and “present a supporting position” (opposition parties). Regardless of geography, government parties use more text and images and opposition parties use more videos (Table 4).

**Table 4**

*Indicator with the highest absolute value in each category under analysis on the digital uses of government and opposition parties in Europe and the CPLP*

Country	European countries (Portugal, Spain, UK)		CPLP countries (Portugal, Brazil and Cape Verde)	
Political function of parties / Categories	Government parties (58)	Opposition parties (98)	Government parties (45)	Opposition parties (110)
1. Type of content	Political speeches (27)	Party events (33)	Political speeches (17)	Party events (51)
2. Theme	National Politics (32)	National Politics (33)	National Politics (27)	Finances (52)
3. Directional value	In favor (40)	In favor (47)	In favor (37)	In favor (68)
4. Objective	Mobilize political action (16)	Mobilize political action (27)	Create opportunity situations (11)	Present a supporting position (39)
6. Actor(s) present in the photos	Without actors (19)	Various (33)	Without actors (15)	Various (45)
5. Form of presentation	Text with image (33)	Video (62)	Text with image (30)	Video (50)
	(n= 156)		(n= 155)	

### 3.5. COMPARISON OF DIGITAL USES OF FACEBOOK AND INSTAGRAM

The parties are present on Facebook in a more homogeneous way than on Instagram, but in presence (all present on Facebook) or in various publications (Table 5). The total number of posts on Facebook (NTP FB) is 249, while the

total number of posts on Instagram (NTP IG) is 111, in the same period. On Instagram, only four of the ten parties published in the selected period. Within CPLP and Instagram, the strong presence of Brazilian parties and the absence of Cape Verdeans can be noted (Table 5).

**Table 5**

*Total number of posts on Facebook and Instagram*

Country	Portugal		Brazil		Cabo Verde		Spain		UK	
Functions	Gov.	Op.	Gov.	Op.	Gov.	Op.	Gov.	Op.	Gov.	Op.
Party	OS	PSD	PMDB	PT	MpD	PAIVC	PP	PSOE	PC	PT
NTP FB	36	26	4	75	5	9	15	27	7	45
NTP IG	a)	9	31	46	b)	b)	25	c)	c)	d)

a) Created on October 26, 2016

b) Does not have Instagram

c) Not published in the period analyzed

d) Created on May 8, 2017

There is more interaction (likes vs. followers) on Facebook than on Instagram (Tables 6 and 7). The opposition parties are the ones that have

the most “likes” on Facebook, namely those of Brazil, England and Portugal (Table 6).

**Table 6**

*Facebook interaction of the parties under analysis on 05/25/2017\**

Party	OS	PSD	PMDB	PTB	MpD	PAIVC	PP	PSOE	PC	PT
Likes	54274	146123	69561	1230479	27029	19625	174609	147911	633586	992563

\* It is decided to carry out the mapping in 2017 on this date, as it guarantees the maintenance of the political function of the parties analyzed and taking into account the proximity of the general elections in the United Kingdom on June 8, 2017

**Table 7***Instagram interaction of the parties under analysis on 05/25/2017*

Party	PS	PSD	PMDB	PT	MpD	PAVC	PP	PSOE	PC	PT
Followers	1362	8084	9249	56200	-	-	19200	15100	6631	34200
Publications	139	1223	2209	719	-	-	389	589	41	413

Instagram follows the same trend (Table 7): it is the opposition parties that have the most followers and the most publications, mainly in Spain, England and Portugal. It is in Brazil where there are peaks: the PT is the opposition party with the most followers and the PMDB is the government party with the most publications (Table 7).

## 4. DISCUSSION

In a “permanent campaign” logic, opposition parties primarily use party events as content in order to mobilize political action and adhere to their ideals (electronic participation). They seek to be active and visible since they do not have the “window of visibility” that constitutes the performance of government functions. On the contrary, government parties prefer speeches, using them to explain and clarify their policies (electronic information), a practice consistent with the imperative of the government and corroborating the results of the studies by Farranha and dos Santos (2016) and Lalancette and Raynauld (2017). As Canel and Sanders (2012) explain, governing necessarily implies constant exchanges of information and communication about policies, ideas and decisions between governors and the governed. In summary, it can be said that the opposition uses more the

participatory paradigm and the government the informative one.

Opposition parties are more active and more interactive (on Facebook and Instagram) than government parties. They tend to further devalue interactive communication with followers because they may have to communicate with an entire country, which is a more Herculean challenge. This result differs from that of Braga et al. (2017), which shows a high positive correlation between the size of the parliamentary bench and the degree of engagement on Facebook. Interactivity characterizes the digital medium and offers, under the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism, conditions for the exchange of meanings and, under technological determinism, clues to confirm the aphorism that the medium is the message. In other words, since OSNs are interactive, they allow the politician to share and build symbolic worlds and meaningful relationships with supporters-voters and function as a structure that promotes the political participation of citizens, bringing politics closer to them (Kruike-meier et al., 2013) and creating political awareness and political participation offline (Ahmad et al., 2019) that also energizes democracy.

In quantitative terms and when it comes to digital uses, there are more differences between government and opposition parties than in the

comparison between European parties and CPLP, suggesting that digital performance is based more on the political role played than on geography, culture or type of democracy.

Similar trends include the use of positivity, the theme of national politics and the visual image. Positivity translates into contagion and enthusiasm, leading to incitement and in line with Trudeau's positive policy practice (Lalancette & Raynauld, 2017). The focus on national politics reveals concern for the internal affairs of the country. The use of the image is in tune with the "image civilization" and the "visual culture" that calls for visuality and reinforces the visual man.

Among the statistically significant relationships is the one between the communication objectives and the content of the message (type of content, topic and actor(s)). Therefore, a clear strategic commitment is observed in the correspondence between the objectives and the content of the message. In this line of action, Steyn (2003) suggests a route to build the communication strategy that requires stronger links between what should be communicated (objective) and how (content).

The use of Instagram is verified in a communication logic with the maximum number of voters, opting for the media orchestration (Rodrigues, 2014, p. 126) and for an integrated communication. Mass communication is consistent with the essence of democracy, which is the government of the people. The Internet offers the potential for electoral conquest for politicians, since it is becoming an attractive medium for the youngest members of the electorate (Eldin, 2016; Gibson & Ward, 2012, p. 62), this being one of the most present on Instagram, for example (Clement, 2019d).

## CONCLUSIONS

This research, which attempts to respond to Putnam (1997), offers a contribution on the trends of digital uses of parties in Europe and the CPLP in a democratic framework. Recognizing that communication is a condition for a democracy and that the way in which communication is carried out influences the democratic game, this study seeks to close the research gaps with respect to: a) the study of the digital communication of parties in non-electoral periods, which is an innovative object according to Gibson et al. (2003); b) government communication (Canel & Sanders, 2012); c) visual aspects of political communication that, in the opinion of Schill (2012, p. 119), are rarely addressed, and d) Instagram, a platform little studied (Eldin, 2016, p. 256). The theoretical anchoring, the interdisciplinarity of the theoretical component and the perspectives of comparison also take advantage of the contribution of the study.

In summary, the article shows, in a logic of "permanent campaign", that the opposition parties use the participatory paradigm more and the government ones use the informative one. Between the parties in government functions and the opposition parties, the most significant differences reside in the type of content, actors and programmed topics and, between Europe and the CPLP, the differences lie more in the implicit objectives of the uses. The use of positivity, the theme of national politics and the visual image are common practices.

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