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The Discreet Charm of (Not) Casting a Vote

A study of an effect of election campaigns on turnout for the Legislative Elections in France in 2012, the General Elections in the United Kingdom in 2015 and the European Parliament Elections 2014 in both countries

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Abstract

This thesis investigates why the variance in turnout for national and European Parliament elections is lower in France than in the United Kingdom. Based on the Most Similar System Design, it hypothesises that the variance is explained by the difference in the election campaigns conduct, following France's and the United Kingdom's switch of electoral systems for the European Parliament Elections. Hence, it examines the election campaigns and particularly the behaviour of the media as an issue mediator and voter mobilising actor for Legislative Elections 2012 in France, General Elections 2015 in the United Kingdom and European Parliament Elections 2014. The thesis finds a firm difference in the way election campaigns were carried out in two countries. Concurrently, it suggests that this difference might have an impact on turnout in the two countries. Yet, further research is needed to fully understand how election campaigns influence turnout in France and the United Kingdom.

Key words: Elections, United Kingdom, France, European Parliament, Electoral Systems, Election Campaigns, Media, Turnout

Words: 19800

Preface

I would like to thank you my supervisor Malena Rosén Sundström as well as Lund PHD student Audrey Vandeleene for invaluable expertise. A special thank you to all inquiring what I am studying. Now, I can rest assured that if the world ends tomorrow, I will still briefly explain the difference between the majoritarian and proportional electoral systems.

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1 Introduction

Why do we not vote?

This simple, yet perplexing question has become an enduring puzzle of contemporary political science. Already in the 1960's American political sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset (1960: 181) drew attention to the fact that comparing to 1896, when 80% of American eligible to vote, the figure in the 1960's has oscillated around 60 per cent. From then on, the tendency of a 'disappearing voter' has become a recurrent theme not only in the USA, but around the world. Hence, according to the World Bank's 2017 World Development Report¹ over the last 25 years, the average global voter turnout rate dropped by more than 10%. In representative democracies, where the right to vote is fundamental (Hogh and Larsen, 2016, p.1495) and elections serve as a necessary minimal condition (Norris, 2004, p.4), the fact that people choose to disengage is worrisome as turnout is seen as an indicator of the health of a democracy (Wagner, Johann and Kritzinger, 2012, p.372)

Concurrently, the elections to the only directly-elected representative institution in the European Union the European Parliament (EP) have not escaped the faith of electorate's indifference. Hence, since 1979 the level of turnout for EP elections decreased from 61,99% to 42,61% in 2014, while the variance in turnout between national and EP elections among member states has remained due to the second-order character of the vote.

Neither the UK nor France are an exception: According to the Voter Turnout Database of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance², in 1979 76% of the British citizens eligible to vote came to the polling station, while in 2015 the number constituted – 66,1%. Likewise, in France the level of turnout has dropped from 71,63% in 1978 to 55,4% in 2012. Yet, while the dwindle holds true for both countries, nevertheless the *variance in turnout remains higher in the United Kingdom than in France*. This presents the puzzle and leads to the following formulation of the **research question** for the thesis:

Why is the variance in turnout between the National and the European Parliament Elections lower in France than in the UK?

1.1 Why France and the UK?

As it is stated above, the variation in turnout between national and EP elections occurs practically in all 28 member states³ of the European Union. The reason behind it has

¹ For more information please follow this link <http://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/wdr2017>

² Please note that all the turnout data mentioned in the thesis is taken from this resource. Please follow the link for more information <http://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/voter-turnout>

³ Some states like Belgium, Cyprus, Luxembourg and Greece use compulsory voting and thus it is impossible to make the same claim in their case.

long been explained by the fact that EP elections are perceived to be second-order. The term was first coined by Reif and Schmitt (1980) and describes second-order elections as less important because, although still open to influence by national party politics, they determine the outcome for lesser offices, such as regional, municipal and local officials in parliamentary systems, and legislative representatives in presidential systems (Norris and Reif, 1997, p. 111)

Indeed, over the past 30 years, the second-order election model has remained the dominant framework for analysing EP elections, and numerous empirical studies have provided evidence in support of the model (Hobolt and Wittrock, 2011, p.29).

Whether it is the political actors, voters or the media, their behaviour in the second-order elections will always differ comparing to the first-order ones. Hence, there will be less interest in the elections, while the propensity of electorate to come to the polling station will also dwindle. Figure 1.1 confirms the latter and shows the mean variance in turnout between three instances of national parliament elections and three instances of EP elections for the period of 2004-2015.

Figure 1.1: The Mean Variance in Turnout for Three National and European Parliament Elections for the period of 2004-2015 (measured in times)

Country	NE ES	EP ES	NE/EP	
Slovakia	PR	PR	3,7	highest ↑ variation ↓ lowest variation
Czech Rep	PR	PR	2,6	
Slovenia	PR	PR	2,2	
Poland	PR	PR	2,2	
Holland	PR	PR	2	
Sweden	PR	PR	1,9	
Hungary	PR	PR	1,9	
Austria	PR	PR	1,8	
The UK	MJ	PR	1,8	
Estonia	PR	PR	1,8	
Finland	PR	PR	1,7	
Portugal	PR	PR	1,6	
Spain	PR	PR	1,6	
Lithuania	PR	PR	1,6	
Denmark	PR	PR	1,6	
Germany	M	PR	1,6	
Latvia	PR	PR	1,5	
France	MJ	PR	1,4	
Ireland	STV	STV	1,2	
Italy	PR	PR	1,2	
Malta	STV	STV	1,2	

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⁴ These calculations were performed by the author and are not taken any from any sources. NE indicates national elections turnout , EP — EP elections turnout, NE ES – electoral systems employed for national elections, EP ES – electoral systems employed for EP elections, NE/EP – the variance in turnout for national elections and EP elections, MJ – majoritarian electoral systems, PR -- proportional electoral systems, M – mixed-member systems. Below is the formula used to produce the mean variance:

$$\frac{x1 (NE country) + x2 (NE country) + x3 (NE country)}{y1 (EP 2014) + y2 (EP 2009) + y3 (EP 2004)} = \frac{\sum}{3}$$

e.g. $\frac{74,6\% \text{ the Netherlands } 2012 + 75,4\% \text{ the Netherlands } 2010 + 80,4\% \text{ the Netherlands } 2006}{37,3\% \text{ EP } 2014 + 36,8\% \text{ EP } 2009 + 39,3\% \text{ EP } 2004} = \frac{6}{3} = 2$

This table contains extensive food for thought. For instance, it is baffling why Slovakia has the highest variance in turnout among the member states, which makes it a case worth of investigation.

By the same token, one could inquire why there is a variance – at times radical – in turnout between the members which joined the EU following the 2004 enlargement. Consequently, it could be asked what accounts for a lower variance in Latvia (1,5), Lithuania (1,6) and Estonia (1,8) comparing to a higher one in Hungary (1,9), Slovenia (2,2), Czech Republic (2,6), Slovakia (3,7)?

One could also choose to investigate why Malta (1,2), Ireland (1,2) and Italy (1,2) have the lowest variation in turnout between national and EP elections among the member states.

Yet, while these puzzles deserve to be analysed, this thesis draws attention first and foremost to the fact that turnout in France and the UK also varies substantially. While the UK (1,8) belongs to a group of countries which have the middle turnout variation, France (1,4) is among the states with the lowest one.

Furthermore, they are among the three states which alternate⁵ their electoral systems for the EP elections, as according to the Article 1 of Council Decision 2002/772/EC, Euratom⁶ the elections must be based on proportional representation and use either the list system or the single transferable vote system.

Both countries employ majoritarian type of systems for the national Parliament elections, while switching them to proportional ones for EP elections. This is a highly important fact: by now, numerous studies have affirmed the link between electoral systems and voter turnout (Robbins, 2010, p.662).

Following the criteria outline for case selection, the thesis will now proceed with an explanation of what is believed to be an appropriate hypothesis for this study.

1.2 Hypothesis Derivation and Aim

Having chosen the cases – the UK and France – as well as formulated the research question, a natural issue arises, what to choose as its hypothesis and thus identify the *independent variable* of the research.

At least two explanatory factors – and as the reader will further acknowledge that they

States with compulsory voting – Belgium, Luxembourg, Greece, Cyprus – and less than three EP elections – Romania, Croatia and Bulgaria – are not taken into consideration in this table.

⁵ While the UK does alternate its First-Past-the-Post system for the EP elections, it should however be noted that Northern Ireland does not, as it employs the Single-Transferable-Vote for General Elections and thus preserves the system for EP elections. At the same time, Germany, unlike, France and the UK employs a different type of electoral systems -- Mixed-Member -- for national election and hence is not included in the research.

⁶ For further information regarding this specific article follow this link <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32002D0772>

are by no means exhaustive, when it comes to studying reasons behind turnout levels – immediately emerge when explaining why the UK has a higher variance in turnout for national and EP elections than France. That is level of Euroscepticism and France’s membership in the Eurozone. These two factors require further discussion.

It is, indeed, difficult not to acknowledge that a country which voted to leave the European Union (EU) in June 2016 might be slightly more Eurosceptic than France. Yet, while Euroscepticism is a widely-recognised and commonly-used concept, up to this day no systematic set of indicators for it are developed. Hence, what makes a country Eurosceptic: is it the percentage of people who feel that they are European citizens, the results of the EP elections, the degree of proneness to reminiscing “the good old days” or other?

While the exact criteria are yet to be developed, let us consider some indicators which could point to the degree of a country’s Euroscepticism, i.e. the feeling of European citizenship and the evaluation of the EU membership. According to the PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION data, Germany (79%), Finland (79%), Austria (77%), Poland (77%) and Sweden (77%) have the highest percentage of citizens who feel that they are European citizens, while for the UK the number constitutes 52%. At the same time, the 2014 post-election survey emphasises that 63% of the Dutch, 59% of Poles, 49% of Swedes and 41% of Austrians regard the EU membership as a positive thing, while only 38% of the British people agree with them.

Thus, if Euroscepticism is considered to be the primary explanatory factor behind the turnout for EP elections in member states, how does one explain why Poland, Holland, Sweden and Austria, which according to the Figure 1.1 have even a higher variance in turnout – 2,2, 2, 1,9 and 1,9 times respectively – than the “Eurosceptic” UK?

Similar occurrence takes place when placing the emphasis on France’s membership in the Eurozone. If French voters are more inclined to vote during EP elections than the British ones due to this factor, what is the reason that Slovakia (3,7), Holland (2), Austria (1,8), and Germany (1,6) — which are also members of the Eurozone — show even higher variation in turnout between national and EP elections than France?

For these reasons, tempting as it may be, there is no definite ground to suggest that the level of Euroscepticism, nor membership in the Eurozone, serve as a defining factor for the voter abstention during EP elections.

Consequently, while attributing Euroscepticism and Eurozone membership with the power to define voter’s propensity to come to the polling station on the election day is based on more of a speculative ground, the fact that the two countries alternate their majoritarian types of electoral systems to proportional ones for EP elections remains indisputable.

While the switch entails not only the difference in the method of determining the election winner, as proportional systems lead to a dissimilar formula of translating votes into seats, it will also result in difference in the way election campaigns are

carried out.

Therefore, this thesis suggests to look at four most recent national elections in France and the UK – Legislative Elections 2012 and General Elections 2015 respectively – and proposes to test the following central **hypothesis**:

The variance in turnout between Legislative Elections in France in 2012 and the General Elections in the UK in 2015 and EP elections in 2014 in both countries occurs due to a difference in the conduction of election campaigns.

Given that modern political communication processes are highly mediated, and the mass media play a crucial role as a main source of political information for most citizens (Stromback and Norris, 2006, p.131), this thesis believes that it is of utmost importance to include media in it. Besides that, it also presumes that the variance in election campaigns in the two countries occurs because of the difference in the media behaviour.

Thus, the **sub-hypothesis** of the thesis stands as follows:

The variance occurs due to a difference in the behaviour of the media during election campaigns for Legislative Elections in France in 2012, General Elections in the UK in 2015 and EP Elections 2014 in both countries.

Following the hypothesis and sub-hypothesis derivation, the **aim** of this thesis comes down to the analysis of whether the way the election campaigns were conducted for the Legislative Elections in France in 2012, the General Elections in the UK in 2015 and European Parliament Elections in 2014 in both countries lead to a variation in turnout for national and EP elections in these countries.

1.3 Variables

To summarise, the *independent variable* of this research are *election campaigns*. In particular, election campaigns for the Legislative Elections in France in 2012, General Elections in the United Kingdom in 2015 and EP Elections 2014 in both countries.

The *dependent variable* of the research is the *turnout*. More precisely, the turnout for Legislative Elections 2012 in France, the turnout for General Elections in the UK in 2015, the turnout for the EP elections in 2014 in France and in the UK.

1.4 A Two-Country Comparative Study

According to Blumler and Gurevitch, there are several arguments in favor of comparative research (qtd. in Stromback and Dimitrova, 2006, p.132). Such research enables expansion of the empirical database and can also serve as an antidote to “unwitting parochialism,” helping us become aware of other systems as well as the characteristics of our own (Stromback and Dimitrova, 2006, p.132).

Hence, comparative research is “valuable, even indispensable, for establishing the generality of findings and the validity of interpretations” derived from single contexts (Esser and Hanitzsch, 2012, p.8). Gurevitch and Blumler further state that mature comparative studies are designed to realize a “double value”: shedding light on the particular phenomenon under study *and* on the different systems or cultures in which they are being examined (qtd in Esser and Hanitzsch, 2012, p.10).

In comparative political research we distinguish between the ‘Most Similar Systems Design’ (MSSD) and the ‘Most Different Systems Design’ (MDSD) (Anckar, 2008, p.389). Depending on the cases being compared, either the first or the second design is chosen. For instance, Stromback and Dimitrova (2006) base their comparison of election news coverage in Sweden and the United States on the MDSD, pointing to the fact that the two states have different political, electoral and media systems.

This study, however, is based not on MDSD, but on the MSSD. Hence, most similar systems design is the usual method that researchers in comparative politics undertake (Peters, 1998, p.40). In this thesis, the main elements of similarity between France and the UK are first and foremost the fact that both states employ majoritarian systems for national elections to the Parliament and switch them to proportional ones for EP elections. Then, it should be taken into account that both have been long-standing members of the EU, until the recent decision of the UK to leave the union as well as the fact that turnout level for national elections has been in decline. Finally, it should also be remembered that these are democratic countries and thus the elections serve not as Potemkin villages⁷, but as events which have an actual impact on the appointment of the governments.

At the same time, Peters (2013:38) fairly points out that it is difficult to attend any academic meeting on comparative politics without hearing at least once the phrase, 'But those cases really are not comparable'. Indeed, this thesis recognises that no two cases are perfectly comparable, and neither are the UK and France. Consequently, it should be acknowledged, first and foremost, that the UK is a constitutional monarchy and France is a presidential republic. This fact plays a significant role, as it also defines the degree of importance of the elections in these countries. Thus, the general elections in the UK lead to the selection of the main political figure, the Prime-Minister, and subsequent formation of the government, for the next five years⁸. While the legislative elections in France are follow ups to the determining of the next President of the Republic.

Naturally, France’s membership in the Eurozone is another point of difference that should be borne in mind.

And yet even though these differences exist, and should be considered, especially when

⁷ A phrase used to signify the attempts to cover up the unfavourable state of things with an attractive façade

⁸ This term is officially stated in the Fixed-Term Parliaments Act 2011

interpreting results of the findings, they nevertheless do not serve as sufficient ground to hinder the comparison of these two cases.

1.6 Limitations of the Research

Every study contains limitations that should be acknowledged. Hence, we should begin by emphasising that this is a two-country comparative qualitative study. Because of the limited ability to generalize from two-country studies, they are increasingly being replaced with medium-N and large-N studies (Esser and Hanitzsch, 2012, p.8). Indeed, over the years the tendency in political science has moved towards a multi-case comparison, as it allows to produce more reliable results.

However, two-country comparisons have the potential of contributing to scholarship in important original ways (Esser and Hanitzsch, 2012, p.8). In fact, as Mancini and Hallin note, some of the best comparative work produced to date is based on a comparison of two countries (qtd. in Esser and Hanitzsch, p.8). Moreover, in focusing on just a few cases, qualitative researchers clearly do not view all possible cases as equal but that a chosen case is ‘substantively important’ that is worth studying and examining in detail (Marsh and Stroker, 2010, p.256). Researchers also tend to focus on a single or very few cases or examples when they use qualitative analysis to be able to gain an in-depth understanding of their research subject (Marsh and Stroker, 2010, p. 255).

In line with these views, this thesis points out first that the UK and France are substantively important for the reasons provided in the beginning, i.e. the switch of electoral systems. And second it is willing to scrutinise context more carefully to understand why the states which share many similarities, nevertheless produce a different result. In a large-N study this would not have been possible, as it requires sacrificing contextual scene for the sake of producing results which would be applicable to more cases.

Furthermore, while King, Keohane and Verba emphasise that the content of “science” is primarily the methods and rules, not the subject matter, since we can use these methods to study virtually anything (1994: 9), this paper does not adhere to this view. On the contrary, it believes the opposite: the content is the puzzle, while the method is the secondary means to solve it. If the scientist pays careful attention to the development of his or her topic and identifies a true puzzle, the other debates – whether this should be a qualitative or a quantitative study, the amount of cases to be taken into consideration, techniques employed or else – will settle by themselves⁹.

⁹ At the same time, this thesis understands the view of King, Keohane and Verba, as they are the adherents of large-N studies and thus for them the priority is to identify repeating patterns. Hence the emphasis is placed on the method, while the puzzle becomes secondary. Simply put, for them the logical aspect of the question are leaves green is not of primary concern as long as many leaves as possible have been included in the analysis. While for this thesis the primary importance is initially asking whether there is any reason to believe that the leaves are not green and whether anyone needs to find out.

Given that this paper is based on the puzzle on varying turnout in two-countries which alternate their majoritarian electoral systems for the EP elections, it is only natural that solely France and the UK are being examined.

At the same time, other limitations should be taken into consideration. Only four elections – General Elections in 2015 in the UK, Legislative Elections in France in 2012 and EP elections in 2014 in these countries – are analysed.

Moreover, the time-period taken into consideration is limited to two days prior to the elections. Lastly, the media in this study is represented only by newspapers, while the voters are exposed not only to newspapers, but also to television and radio as well as social media.

Yet, while these certainly constitute limitations of the thesis, they remain acknowledged and will be considered in the analysis section.

Outline

The outline of the thesis is as follows. Chapter 2 discusses the main theories and concepts. Chapter 3 elaborates the method which will be employed for studying election campaigns and the subsequent ways of connecting it to turnout. It will also describe what material will be considered, how the data was collected and what type of technique will be used to analyse it. Chapter 4 will demonstrate the results of the research for each of the elections, while Chapter 5 will be devoted to its analysis and discussion. The thesis will end with a conclusion and present reasons and recommendations for future research.

2 Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

In this Chapter, the key concepts and theories upon which this research is based will be presented. First, it will be explained why electoral systems are the “cogs of democracy” and what are its consequences, including for the turnout. Besides, it will be shown what changes France and the UK undergo when they alternate their national electoral systems to the proportional ones during EP elections. Then, the concept of election campaigns will be elaborated as well as how other researchers studied the subject. Lastly, the reader will find out why he or she should not vote, but still does – and what are the potential explanations behind it.

2.1 Electoral Systems Magnified

In the days of scientific contemplation one might wonder: Why study elections? One good reason for studying elections is that they are fun events (Denver, Carman and Johns, 2012, p.3). Other – than simply for reasons of personal entertainment –, it is because elections are a key element in a representative democracy. Their purpose is to allow voters to express their political preferences by making choices — between parties

and/or between candidates — choices with implications (sometimes clear consequences) for the conduct of government and to establish guidelines for future government actions (Eijk and Franklin, 2009, p.1). But if for representative democracies elections are a necessary minimal condition (Norris, 2004, p.4), metaphorically, electoral systems are the cogs that keep the wheels of democracy properly functioning (Farrell, 2011, p. 2)

For people who do not specialize in this area, electoral systems are usually seen as a big “turn-off” (Farrell, 2011, p.1). This thesis finds it hard to disagree with. Whether it is a regular reader or a political science researcher, the interest towards electoral systems fades the moment they are mentioned. Not least since often one gets lost in terms used by researchers in this field, as they juggle the terms of electoral laws, electoral rules and electoral systems at times using them interchangeably.

So, what is the difference between them? According to Farrell (2011:3) electoral laws is a family of rules governing the process of election: from the calling of the election, through the stages of candidate nomination, party campaigning and voting, and right up to the stage of counting votes and determining the actual election result. While this definition is not to be contested, it should be mentioned that other researchers use the term electoral rules and electoral laws interchangeably. This thesis takes a stance that while this may not necessarily be a problem, it nevertheless contributes to conceptual blurriness, especially for those who do not specialise in this area. Thus, it would be preferable to use the term electoral law as a reference to a consolidated version of rules governing the election process or certain parts of it, while the electoral rules would be understood as units which constitute a specific electoral law.

There can be a number of rules governing how to run an election (Farrell, 2011, p.3). For instance, there are laws on who can vote (citizens, residents, people over seventeen years of age, the financially solvent and so on); there can even be laws, such as in Australia or Belgium, obliging citizens to turn out to vote (Farrell, 2011, p.3).

Yet while there are many rules and laws when it comes to elections, there is also a phenomenon which is referred to as *electoral systems*. So, what are they? In their essence, they determine the means, by which votes are translated into seats in the process of electing politicians into office (Farrell, 2011, p. 4). Those ‘means’ include the way your ballot will look – will you know all of the candidates standing at your district, perhaps you will even be able to list your preference? The way your district will be formed – will it constitute the whole country or will constituencies be drawn? What formula will be applied when counting the votes – will it be D’Hondt, Sainte-Laguë, or perhaps Droop quota? What threshold will be used – does a party need to obtain a certain percent to enter the parliament? Who you will be given to vote for – will it be a candidate or a party or both? And how many candidates are to be elected at the district – is it one, two, perhaps more?

No single classification of electoral systems exists. Van der Eijk and Franklin (2009:63) note that systems for electing legislatures can be majoritarian (where the contest gives rise to a single winner in each district or constituency) or proportional

(where *legislative seats* are allocated to parties in proportion to the votes they received).

Farrell (1998:2), on the other hand, outlines five types of electoral systems: non-proportional — including first-past-the-post and majoritarian systems which is divided into second ballot and alternative vote; and proportional divided into list, two-vote, single transferable vote.

Arguably, the most comprehensive classification is provided by Norris (1999:2) who distinguishes majoritarian systems (including plurality, second ballot, and alternative voting systems); semi-proportional systems (such as the single transferable vote, the cumulative vote, and the limited vote); proportional representation (including open and closed party lists using largest remainders and highest averages formula); and, mixed systems (as in Taiwan and Ukraine combining majoritarian and proportional elements).

The reason why the latter classification is the most comprehensive one rests on the fact that Van der Eijk's and Franklin's attempt of classifying electoral systems is largely unspecified and highly abstract. At the same time, Farrell, for instance, places the Single Transferable Vote system into the proportional class, even though it contains elements which clearly belong to the majoritarian systems. Hence, it is more appropriate to place it in the semi-proportional category.

2.1.2 Electoral Systems and their Consequences

Being the cogs of democracy wheels, it is little wonder that Farrell (2011:2) emphasises that electoral systems are important, since they define how the political system will function. Arguably, the notion of electoral systems' capacity to affect political systems began with the discovery of the Duverger's laws which states that the plurality rule leads to a two-party system. Indeed, the countries which continue to use this version of majoritarian systems, including the US and the UK witness the dominance of two parties – the Democrats and the Republicans and the Conservative and the Labour Parties respectively.

While counterexamples can be provided to this law, one fact remains clear – in the majoritarian system the incentive to vote for a small party and thus shake the few-party dominance is substantially weaker. For a British voter to be motivated to vote for a small party he or she needs to know that candidates from this party have support not only across the whole country, but also in each particular constituency. Otherwise, it may lead to an outcome similar to the General Elections 2015 when the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) received over 3,881,099 votes across the country, but only one seat in the Parliament.

At the same time, the proponents of the First-Past-the-Post will point out to the fact that the neglect of the small parties is done purposefully. Adversarial democracies and majoritarian electoral systems emphasize popular control by the party in government (Norris, 2004, p.50). The logic is that it is more advantageous to secure one party's dominance in the government, as this way it will be possible to hold it accountable. Thus, electoral systems are linked to accountability.

By contrast, consensus democracies and PR¹⁰ electoral systems focus on the inclusion of all voices, emphasizing the need for bargaining and compromise within parliament, government, and the policymaking process (Norris, 2004, p.50). And unlike in the majoritarian systems every vote counts. Previous studies have commonly found that the type of electoral formula shapes participation, with PR systems generating higher turnout than majoritarian systems (Norris, 2004, p.161). Most of these studies demonstrate that proportional representation (PR) systems engender higher turnout figures; however, not everyone agrees with this conclusion (Robbins, 2010, p.661)

Yet, while proportional systems may indeed foster turnout, the debate regarding how electoral systems affect it does not end here. For instance, there are opposing views in the literature about how the use of OL vs. CL¹¹ systems should affect voter turnout (Sanz, 2015, p.3).

For the purpose of this research it is sufficient to understand, that the debate in this realm comes down to whether the ability of the candidate — either in a majoritarian system or a proportional one with open lists — to reach a voter and the voter knowing who he or she votes for is able to increase the likelihood of the voter to vote. Hence, Hix and Hagemann find that citizens in EU states who use OL are almost five percent more likely to be contacted by candidates or parties than citizens in member states with CL systems (qtd. in Sanz 2015, p.3). They are also more than 20 percent more likely to be contacted by candidates or parties and about 15 percent more likely to feel well informed about the elections than citizens in states with CL systems (Sanz, 2015, p.3).

On the other hand, Robbins hypothesizes that turnout should be higher in CL systems (qtd. in Sanz, 2015, p.4). His argument is that in OL systems parties may not exert the same level of resources to solicit support or mobilize voters as in CL systems (Sanz, 2015, p.4). Individual candidates, for their part, will appeal to their supporters but will likely avoid mobilization strategies that involve the entire population (Sanz, 2015, p.4).

Party system, representation, accountability, turnout – solely from this half a chapter, it is visible how versatile the explanatory nature of electoral systems is. The amount of studies concerning electoral systems and its causal effect is so extensive, that one unwillingly may get the impression that it is a solution (and the root) to all problems and controversies of humankind. Hence, if First-Past-the-Post is not able to include all political sentiments in the society, it would be logical to change it to a proportional system. But what about the connection between the constituency voters and constituency candidate? And what about the government accountability?

Concurrently, if proportional closed-list system leads to a worse link between voters and candidates, why not opt for a majoritarian system or perhaps Single Transferable Vote? But how do you form the electoral districts? Will you carve districts according to natural boundaries? Or will you recourse to gerrymandering – the deliberate

¹⁰ PR stands for proportional

¹¹ OL and CL stand for open-lists and closed-lists

manipulation of district boundaries which will either increase or minimise the chances of a certain candidate to be elected – and thus produce social and perhaps even ethnic cleavages in the constituency or perhaps the whole country?

These, and many other, questions are yet to be answered by the electoral scientists.

2.2 What Changes for France and the UK?

Given that the switch of electoral systems in the UK and France constitutes one of the backbones of this research, it is necessary to explain the changes which countries confront. Both France and the UK use majoritarian systems during national elections. While France employs a Two-Round system, alternatively known as second ballot, the UK has the simplest version of the majoritarian system – FPTP system. During EP elections both of the countries switch to a closed-list proportional system.

What happens next would be best explained on two hypothetical examples. Hence, Candidate Conservative, Candidate Socialist, Candidate Liberal and Candidate Green would like to be elected. Having counted the votes, the Candidate Socialist got 40% of the support, Candidate Liberal – 15%, Candidate Green – 20%, Candidate Conservative – 25%. In the FPTP, as used in the UK for national elections, the winner of the constituency is Candidate Socialist. Thus, he or she secures one seat in the Parliament, which means that 60% of the votes in that constituency are disregarded.

Yet, in the Two-Round system, which is employed in France, with the same results, a second tour will be appointed in which Candidate Socialist and Candidate Conservative would be competing in the Second Round¹². The winner would be elected by relative majority.

During the EP elections, the voter faces two crucial changes. Firstly, the voter will no longer be able to vote for neither Candidate Conservative or Candidate Green. He or she can only vote for the Conservative and Green Party. Likewise, the usual techniques employed by the Candidates competing in the constituencies vanish, especially since the constituencies are re-shaped for the EP elections into larger ones.

Secondly, the formula for counting votes will be different which will lead to a cardinally different redistribution of votes, reflecting all voices in the society. Depending on the percent of votes and the district magnitude (how many candidates are to be elected in a particular constituency), the Socialist Party may get three deputies elected, Conservative – two and Greens – one. This change is important as it makes the voter more likely to vote for whichever party – even a small one which would not stand a chance in a majoritarian system. Hence, the 60% of votes described above are not disregarded, but translated into Parliament seats.

Besides that, in the case of France the second round will not be present.

¹² Unless any of the Candidates secure 50% of the votes in the first tour.

The above-described consequences of change of electoral systems will inevitably affect the way election campaigns are carried out.

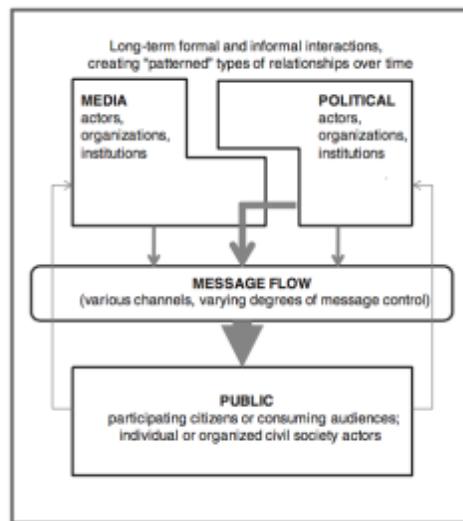
2.3 Election Campaigns

Election campaigns are critical periods in the lives of democracies (Swanson and Mancini, 1996, p.1). They are finite and time dependent venues for incumbents and hopefuls alike to express their platforms for the purpose of achieving electoral success (Bevan and Krewel, 2015, p.2). This thesis believes that this definition contains all the key elements of the concept of election campaigns. They are limited in time and space, they place an emphasis on two key actors of elections – those who are willing to be elected and those who elect – as well as on the communicative part. After all, in its essence election campaigns are a form of communication.

Taking this fact into the account, it is natural previous researchers have studied election campaigns by employing political communication theory. Pye (1993) defines political communication as “the flow of messages and information that gives structure and meaning to the political process” (qtd. in Esser and Hanitzsch, 2012, p. 25). It refers to “processes of communication throughout society which affect politics in any manner,” such as shaping public opinion, the political socializing of citizens, and the mobilizing of interests (Esser and Hanitzsch, 2012, p. 25). In its most general meaning, political communication involves interactive processes of information as well as formal and informal modes of message flow (Esser and Hanitzsch, 2012, p.26).

Yet, while election campaigns have been studied through the political communication theoretical framework, the exact structure of the framework has not been fully developed. Figure 2.2 shows a heuristic which Esser and Hanitzsch developed to conduct comparative research of political communication across countries.

Figure 2.2 Political Communication System



Source: Esser and Hanitzsch, 2012, p.30

2.3.1 Media

In this figure, as one might notice, not only are the political actors and the public included, but also the media. This is not a coincidence, as majority of the researchers prefer to study election campaigns as an interaction between three crucial players — political actors, media and the public. In the beginning it was stated that political communication processes are highly mediated. Therefore, Norris in her definition of political communication, refers particularly to the news media (qtd. in Esser and Hanitzsch 2012, p.26). She stresses that political communication should be seen as “an interactive process concerning the transmission of information among politicians, the news media, and the public (Esser and Hanitzsch, 2012, p.26).

This thesis agrees that media plays a crucial modern political communication. Thus, current political campaigns must use mass media channels to reach the average voter (Stromback and Dimitrova, 2006, p.131). Even though other methods of direct communication exist, they have by no means replaced the mass media (Stromback and Dimitrova, 2006, p.131).

While it is important to emphasise that there is an ongoing debate in the literature as to whether or not the media have an effect on viewers' attitudes and voting behavior (Alotaibi, 2013, p.1), nevertheless the media is a recognised actor by the researchers studying election campaigns.

Consequently, when it comes to the role of media in the election campaigns two distinctive theories should be mentioned — the agenda-setting as well as framing theories. Framing is based on the assumption that how an issue is characterized in news reports can have an influence on how it is understood by audiences (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007, p.13). Framing focuses not on which topics or issues are selected for coverage by the news media, but instead on the particular ways those issues are presented (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007, p.15).

At the same time agenda-setting refers to the idea that there is a strong correlation between the emphasis that mass media place on certain issues (e.g., based on relative placement or amount of coverage) and the importance attributed to these issues by mass audiences (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007, p.11).

To summarise, in reflecting what candidates are saying during a campaign, the mass media may well determine the important issues — that is, the media may set the “agenda” of the campaign (McCombs and Shaw, 1972, p.1).

2.3.3 How do Election Campaign Differ?

While above it is explained what the alternation of electoral systems entails for France and the UK, it should also be described what this switch leads to in election campaigns.

First, it should be acknowledged that a clear link exists between electoral systems and election campaigns. Depending on who is the key player in the campaign — a candidate or a party — the strategy and style of the election campaigns will change. Thus, majoritarian systems offer more incentives for aggressive modern and post-modern campaign strategies than coalitional government systems where it may be unwise to attack an opponent who might be invited later to join the administration (Esser and Hanitzsch, 2012, p.296).

Also, while majoritarian candidate-based electoral systems foster individualized and decentralized campaign styles that concentrate on heavily contested key districts or battleground states, proportional party-based electoral systems stimulate centralized, national campaign strategies with fewer modern or post-modern elements because there are no battleground districts that must be won by all means in order to secure victory (Esser and Hanitzsch, 2012, p.296).

Concurrently, it is necessary to understand what is the effect of the replacement on the French and the British electorate. Hence, a dramatic change occurs in the way the voters are approached. For the parties this means a change in political strategies, while for the electorate – that the candidates no longer directly campaign in their constituencies and hence the usual link between the candidate and the voter is broken.

In turn, the breakage of this link distorts the conventional setting and places a burden of informing the citizens on changes whether purely technical, like the absence of the second tour in France or general district reformation, but also the deeper ones. For instance, that in proportional systems your vote counts more than in the majoritarian or the mere fact that the voters should not expect the candidate approaching them.

2.4 Turnout

The level of electoral turnout is arguably the most widely monitored form of electoral participation (Robbins, 2010, p.661). This is by no means a coincident. A situation which results in high participation by members of a group normally has higher potential for democracy —that is, for the maintenance of an effective opposition— than one where few people show interest or participate in the political process (Lipset, 1960, p.180).

Yet, understanding why some individuals go to the polls and others do not remains an enduring puzzle (Hillygus, 2005, p.50).

The puzzle of why we vote (or not) begins with the fact that there is no reason for us to vote – a phenomenon referred to as «paradox of voting». The latter term is used to emphasise the impasse which the rational theory faces when trying to explain the motives of an individual to come to a polling station. Hence, the instrumental voter axiom predicts large-scale abstention because no individual is likely to have an influence on the election outcome (Geys, 2006, p.16). And yet, international election results, however, indicate that a considerable number of people do turn out to cast their vote, although they are not obliged to do so (Geys, 2006, p.16). This constitutes the

paradox of (not) voting (Geys, 2006, p.16). In turn, the paradox of voting has recently caused formal theorists to move away from a rational model of choice towards a behavioral model of choice (Fowler, 2006, p.335). In particular, Bendor, Diermeier, and Ting explore the possibility that reinforcement learning can explain voter turnout (Fowler, 2006, p.335).

Yet, these researches are just a few in the panoply of attempts to explain turnout. To date, much has been written on the causes behind voter turnout (Robbins, 2010, p.661). Consequently, research has long debated whether turnout is primarily determined by a variety of relatively immobile social, demographic, and political characteristics or whether turnout is also dependent on the short-term activities of the campaign, candidates, or parties (Hillygus, 2005, p.50).

Indeed, the socio-demographic factors have been closely examined to understand which groups in the society are more inclined to vote. For instance, it is an established fact that older citizens are more likely to vote than their younger counterparts (Blais, Gidengil and Nevitte, 2004, p.221).

The latter fact has been recently confirmed when analysing the turnout data for Brexit. Had turnout been higher among younger people its influence would have been even greater, but as is usually the case, there was a slight general trend for turnout to increase in line with average age (Burn-Murdoch, 2016).

Besides that, education remains an important correlate of voting. Hence, the increase in educational attainment has contributed to dampening the decline in turnout (Blais, Gidengil and Nevitte, 2004, p.221).

Meanwhile, other researchers underscore the relevance of institutional variables and, in particular, electoral systems (Robbins, 2010, p.661) – a fact which has been extensively discussed above.

At the same time, Alan Gerber and Donald Green examined the effectiveness of election campaign techniques for increasing turnout. First, the authors find that campaign contacts can effectively increase voter turnout in the short- and long-run: come the next election, a citizen induced to vote once is more likely to return to the polls (Pons, 2016, p.38). The second finding is that door-to-door canvassing offers the most cost-effective means to mobilize non-voters: personal and direct discussions that take place on doorsteps have a larger impact on turnout than phone calls and mailings. (Pons, 2016, p.38).

Some researchers like Persson, Sundell and Öhrvall (2014) even studied the effect of weather upon turnout.

While scrutinising what influences turnout in general remains to be diverse, several researches have also been produced specifically to understand the reason behind the continuous decline in turnout across the world which was described in the beginning of the thesis. For instance, influential scholars have argued that frequent elections lead

to voter fatigue and can therefore be directly responsible for low turnout in countries characterized by frequent contests (Garmann, 2017, p.19).

2.5 So, Why Election Campaigns?

In this panoply of factors which affect turnout one might wonder: But why election campaigns?

First, it is necessary to keep in mind that none of the theories regarding explanatory factors of turnout are of contradictory nature. In fact, they complement each other. Hence, a finding that the young vote less is important. But under what electoral system – majoritarian or proportional – are they more likely to vote? Likewise, would the young vote more (or less), if it is rainy outside? Finally, would they have come to the polling station, if an election campaign was conducted differently?

Second, as extensively described both electoral systems and election campaigns have been on numerous occasions connected to turnout.

Third, given that a firm link exists between electoral systems and election campaigns, and the change of the former will inevitably lead to a change in the latter, studying election campaigns as an explanatory factor is the optimal choice for this research.

3 Method and Material

In this Chapter the method behind the research will be elaborated. The model of communication upon which the method will be based will be presented as well as ways of connecting it to turnout. Then, a detailed description will be provided of what material will be chosen for the study as well as an appropriate technique to analyse it. Finally, it will be explained what guidelines were created in order to carry out this research.

3.1 Communication Models

Before proceeding, it is worth to remind that some methodological aspects of this study, i.e. why this thesis chose to conduct a two-case comparative study based on the Most Similar System Design and what are the limitations of this approach, have already been covered in the Introduction section of this thesis and thus will not be returned to.

Above it is stated that election campaigns are finite and time dependent venues for incumbents and hopefuls alike to express their platforms for the purpose of achieving electoral success (Bevan and Krewel, 2015, p.2) This paper agrees with the definition, as it points out to the key nature of election campaigns — a form of communication.

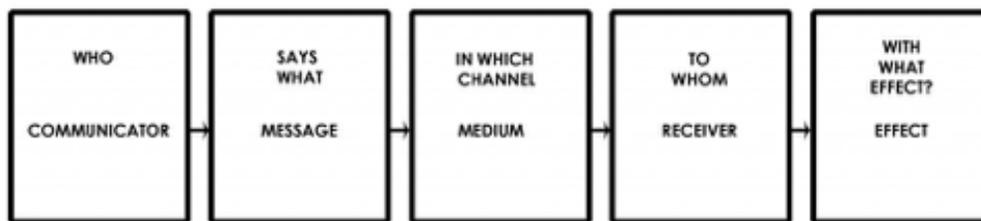
Having provided the heuristic model of Esser and Hanitzsch for studying political communication, which could serve as a potential starting point for the derivation of the

method, this thesis however chooses not to do so. There are several reasons for that. If we agree upon the definition as provided by Bevan and Krewel above, it becomes evident that the main actor in the election campaigns is in fact the ones seeking to be elected — «the incumbents and hopefuls alike». Thus, in the political communication model for election campaigns, it is imprecise to place the media and the political actors on the same level, as the latter will always be placed above in the hierarchy.

The other reason is that because that heuristic model does not contain a clear effect component, while for this research it is crucial. After all, this thesis seeks to explore the effect of election campaigns upon turnout.

Therefore, both for the reasons of additional precision and simplicity, the starting point of the method is extracted from the communication theory as formulated by Harold Lasswell (see Figure 3.1).

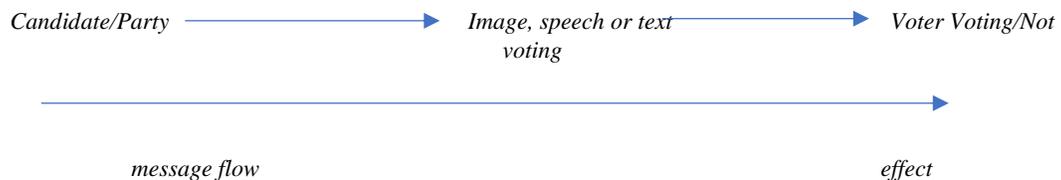
Figure 3.1 Harold Lasswell’s Communicaton Theory



Source: Communicationtheory.org

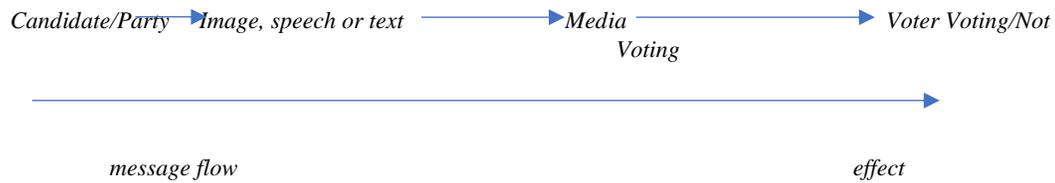
Building on the Lasswell’s communication theory above, two models of analysing election campaigns can be presented — a direct and an indirect model. Figure 3.3 shows the direct model of communication which involves three principal actors: those seeking to be elected – candidate or party (who, communicator) is sending a message which can either have a form of a text, speech or image (saying what, message) sent directly with no intermediary involved (in which channel, medium) to the citizens eligible to vote (to whom, receiver) and by either encouraging the voter to show up at the polling station or abstaining (with what effect? effect).

Figure 3.2 Direct Model of Communication



Likewise, if we employ the indirect of model communication, the construct, while remaining the same, will add one more actor, which Esser and Hanitzsch also include in their heuristic model — the media.

Figure 3.3 Indirect Model of Communication



Having differentiated the models of communication for election campaigns, it is necessary to understand which of the models is the most appropriate for this thesis to derive the method from.

3.2 Direct vs. Indirect Model

First, it should be acknowledged that both direct and indirect models are equally important when it comes to studying election campaigns. Hence, if one chooses to build the method on direct model, it would be no less valuable than the one based on the indirect model.

The direct model would involve the examination first and foremost the political actors' campaigns strategies. For instance, theoretically, this thesis could choose to investigate how the French and the British political actors alter their election campaigns strategies and techniques with the switch of electoral systems and subsequently try to explain the variance in turnout. Whilst this is a viable alternative to the method which will be proposed in this study, it faces a serious pitfall, as it fully neglects the role of the media in the communication process.

This thesis – together with the predominant number of researchers who study election campaigns – finds it impossible to disagree with the fact that the media should be included in the research concerning election campaigns. More so, given that for the majority it remains a media event (Election Analysis, 2015).

Therefore, media becomes an indispensable element of the research and the reason why indirect model of communication is preferred.

3.3 Connection to Turnout

Building on the indirect model of communication, the following three-step method is proposed.

The communicators (who?) in this research will be represented by the three parties which secured the most votes in each of the elections. From their party manifesto's the three main issues will be identified (says what?).

Given that this thesis chose indirect model of communication, the French and the

British media (in which channel?) will be scrutinised. More precisely, the content of the articles of three newspapers in each country for every election will be analysed to trace whether the issues upon which the parties campaigned were brought up.

Finally, post-electoral surveys for each of election campaigns will be examined in order to establish what issues were the most important ones for the electorate in each of the instances and look at the turnout level for that election (with what effect?).

The logic behind the method is based on elements of the issue-voting theory and the agenda-setting theory of the media. Concisely, the issue-voting theory comes down to the statement that voters choose whom to vote for based on the issues that the political actors put forward. Hence, it has been argued that voters have become much more likely to make their choices on the basis of political issues (Denver and Hands, 1990, p.19) How precisely this is to be understood, and what exactly ‘issues’ are, remain matters of some debate, but at least by the early 1980s ‘issue voting’ had become the new orthodoxy (Denver and Hands, 1990, p.19).

While this theory is used to explain how the voters make their choice – which is not a subject of this research and thus was not included in the main theoretical framework of the thesis – the focus *here is only on the informational aspect*. Hence, naturally, if one votes based on issues, they should first be informed about them. The informational function therefore is placed on the media and its role as an agenda-setter, i.e. which topics or issues it prioritises, falls under scrutiny.

However, this thesis believes that to further strengthen the method, and investigate the sub-hypothesis of the thesis – whether there is a difference in media behaviour –when analysing the content of the newspaper articles two other elements should be examined. First, whether the media encouraged the voter to come to the polling station by recognising the importance of elections and creating an incentive to come to the polling station.

Second, given that the electoral systems in the UK and France are alternated for the EP elections, and the above stated necessity to provide information on what that alternation entails, it will be traced whether the media took the burden of explaining the changes mentioned above. In addition, the content which explains how the EU, and in particular the EP functions will also not be neglected. Although knowledge about the European Parliament is on the rise, respondents still have a limited knowledge about the institution's activities (European Parliament, 2017). This stands at 30% (European Parliament, 2017).

Thus, it is set to examine whether the media transported the issues of the political parties and whether it encouraged the voters to come to the polling station and explained what the electoral system change entails as well as how EP functions.

3.4 Data Collection

We begin with the first actor in the communication theory — the parties (who?). Since

the first step described above includes identifying the issues of the parties in each election, an appropriate material needs to be chosen to do so. This study believes that party manifestos would be the most suitable option. Thus, it is widely considered that manifestos constitute the most objective source of information for parties' policy preferences, proposals, positions and, potentially, parties' ideology (Gemenis, 2012, p.1). Manifestos are, after all, documents produced by parties meant to present their positions to the electorate. (Gemenis, 2012, p.1).

During the research 14 party manifestos were retrieved for the analysis. The parties which were analysed in the UK were — *the Conservative Party (CP)*, *the Labour Party (LP)*, *the Liberal Democratic Party (LD)*, as they secured the most seats¹³ during the General Elections 2015. For the EP elections the manifesto of the *United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP)*, a party which received the most votes of the British electorate, was also taken into consideration.

In France the party manifestos of *the Socialist Party (Parti Socialiste, PS)*, *Union for a Popular Movement*¹⁴ (*Union Pour Un Mouvement Populaire, UMP*), *Europe Ecology – The Greens (Europe Écologie Les Verts, EELV)* as well as winner of the EP elections *the Front National (FN)* were planned to be included.

However, a problem occurred with a *PS* manifesto for EP elections which proved impossible to find. The same applies to the *FN* manifesto. Thus, for the EP elections the programme of Party of European Socialists to which the French Socialist Party belongs to at European level was analysed. While no substitute was found for *FN* manifesto, nevertheless a brief description of the party's main arguments will be provided.

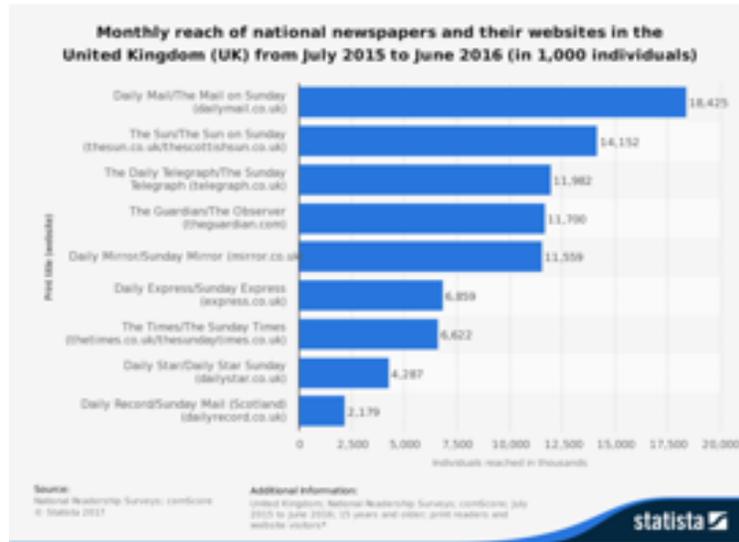
Three top newspapers were included in the research. For the UK they are the following: *Daily Mail*, *Daily Telegraph* and *Guardian*. The choice of the media resources was based on the existing statistical data. Figure 3.4 contains information for the monthly reach of national newspapers and their websites in the United Kingdom (UK) from July 2015 to June 2016.¹⁵ This figure shows that the top three newspapers in the UK for that period were *the Daily Mail*, *the Sun* and *the Daily Telegraph*. However, in this research *the Guardian* is analysed instead of *the Sun*. The reasons are twofold. Firstly, no appropriate way to access the Archives of the Sun for the period-in-question neither via Retriever Research nor the site itself was found. Secondly, by including *the Guardian* — clearly a Labour leaning newspaper and this is highly visible even in this research — we get a fuller picture of the British media scene. At the same time, in 2014 these newspapers were also among the most popular ones.

¹³ Even though in the General Elections 2015 the Scottish National Party secured more seats than the Liberal Democrats this party was not taken into consideration, as it is a regional party which has support only in Scotland.

¹⁴ Please note that in 2017 the party was renamed to the Republicans (Les Républicains)

¹⁵ Even though the period taken in the figure is slightly later than the date of General Elections in the UK, this is the only statistical data which mentioned the reach of the newspapers both in print and online versions.

Figure 3.4 Monthly Reach of National Newspapers and their Websites in the United Kingdom from July 2015 to June 2016



Source: Statista.com

For France the following newspapers were taken into account — *Le Monde*, *Le Figaro* and *Le Parisien*. Figure 3.5 shows the performance of the daily newspapers in France in 2012 according to the Alliance for the Statistics of Press and Media (Alliance pour les Chiffres de la Presse et des Médias), In the section «Les plus fortes diffusions 2012» (The most powerful circulation of 2012), we see three newspapers — *Ouest France*, *Le Figaro* and *Le Monde*. Yet, while *Le Figaro* and *Le Monde* are included in the research neither *Ouest France* nor *Sud Ouest* are, as these are regional newspapers. Even though *Le Parisien* also qualifies to be a regional newspaper it, unlike *Ouest France* and *Sud Ouest*, has *L'Observatoire* edition which is published at national level.

Figure 3.5 Performance of Daily Newspapers in France in 2012

PRESSE QUOTIDIENNE - synthèse

Observatoire 2013

PERFORMANCES			
Total de la diffusion QJD 2012			
	France	Etranger	France + Etranger
Diffusion payée	1 945 023 299	70 178 559	2 015 201 858
Répartition	96,52%	3,48%	
Diffusion non payée	51 238 010	10 989 771	62 227 781
Diffusion Totale	1 996 261 309	81 168 330	2 077 429 639
Diffusion moyenne par N°	6 494 300	261 074	6 755 374
Répartition de la diffusion France Payée 2012			
Ventes	884 172 141		
Abonnements	235 426 301		
Portage	804 639 262		
Diffusion Différée Payée	302		
Versions Numériques	20 585 293		
Les plus fortes diffusions 2012			
Diffusion France Payée par numéro			Podium 2012
Ouest France			749 258
Le Figaro			323 303
Le Monde			288 113
Sud Ouest			280 453
Le Parisien			274 892
L'Equipe Edition Générale			274 772
La Voix du Nord			251 641
Le Dauphiné Libéré			223 785
Le Télégramme			203 307
Le Progrès - La Tribune/Le Progrès			198 324

Source: Alliance pour les Chiffres de la Presse et des Médias

Due to time constraints only two days before the actual date of elections were analysed. Yet, while above it is stated that this constitutes a limitation of the research, it is also necessary to point out that the last few days before elections are considered to be crucial. For instance, according to the 2014 post-election survey 2014, 34% of citizens

chose to abstain from voting a few days before the elections (15%) or on the day of the elections (19%).

Thus, for the General Elections in the UK the following dates were analysed — 5th and 6th of May 2015; for EP elections in the UK — 21st and 20th of May 2014.

Concurrently, since France uses a Two-Round system, for Legislative Elections the dates of analysis were chosen in a different way. Taking into account that the first round was held on the 10th of June 2012 and the second on the 17th of June 2012, a day before each of the rounds was selected as a unit of analysis — 9th and 16th of June 2012. For EP elections in France the dates were — 24th and 23rd of May 2014.

Likewise, the fact that only newspapers were analysed in this research also constitutes a limitation and it would have been preferable to include other types of media as well such as television, radio and the social media. Yet, at the same time it should be remembered that for most voters the campaign remains a media event and one primarily viewed through the traditional media (Election Analysis, 2015). Despite the advent of social media and changing viewing habits, television news and the press remained a key outlet for mass appeals by parties and the main source of political information for voters (Election Analysis, 2015).

For the purpose of finding articles relevant for this research several ways were employed. For *the Guardian* an existing hashtag *General Elections 2015*, which unites all publications concerning the elections, was analysed. At the same time, for *the Daily Mail* and *the Telegraph* Archives of publications which are available on the Internet pages of the newspapers were accessed.

In order to find the necessary publications made by the newspaper on the specific dates, seven key words were used for search — «Elections», «Conservatives», «Labour», «Liberal Democrats», «Cameron» (David Cameron, former UK Prime Minister, former leader of the Conservative Party), «Miliband» (Edward Miliband, former leader of the Labour Party), «Clegg» (Nicholas Clegg, former leader of the Liberal Democratic party).

In the case of the EP elections five more key words were added — «EU», «Parliament», «European», «Farage» (Nigel Farage, former leader of the UKIP) and «UKIP» — to receive as many publications as possible concerning the EP elections.

Since on the 6th of May *the Guardian* only made 78 publications under the hashtag *General Elections 2015* the 5th of May was not analysed due to an overload of information and insufficient time to work with other articles as well as manifestos.

For France the key words searching for publications for legislative elections were “Élections”, «Ayrault» (Jean-Marc Ayrault, former leader of PS), «Duflot» (Cécile Duflot, former leader of EELV), « Copé » (Jean-François Copé, former leader of UMP), “PS”, “UMP”, “EELV”.

For EP elections five more key words were added — «EU», «Parliament», «Européennes», «Front National», «Le Pen» (Marine Le Pen, leader of the Front National). In all three cases the Archives or Search section (Recherche) with a specification of dates were used.

In the case of *Le Monde* the 8th of June 2012 is analysed instead of the 9th, as there were no publications made regarding the elections on that date.

Due to a different structure of *Le Parisien* archive the articles which belonged to the «Politique» category were considered for the relevant dates as well as those falling under the hashtag «Les Élections Européennes». Most of the articles were available for free. For the ones which were not the Retriever Research was used to access their content.

The final material included in this study are post electoral surveys which were taken from three sources – British Election Study Portal, Centre de Données Socio-Politiques de Sciences Po, 2014 post-election survey Directorate-General for Communication PUBLIC OPINION MONITORING UNIT EUROPEAN ELECTIONS 2014.

It has to be noted that for France due to absence of a post-electoral survey on most important issues for the 2012 Legislative Elections, the data was taken from post-presidential elections survey.

Likewise, the post-electoral surveys can be found either on the British Election Study Portal, Centre de Données Socio-Politiques de Sciences Po sites or as PDF files using Google search.

3.6 Type of Analysis and Guidelines

In line with the chosen method and the material, qualitative content analysis is believed to be an appropriate technique for carrying out this research.

To begin with, content analysis is a careful, detailed, systematic examination and interpretation of a particular body of material in an effort to identify patterns, themes, assumptions, and meanings (Berg and Lune, 2017, p.182). At the same time, content analysis is a widely used qualitative research technique (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005, p.1277)

Given that this a qualitative two-country comparative study, which includes such material as party manifestos, news articles and reports, content analysis proves to be an adequate tool for its conduct.

Content analysis can be of two types – qualitative and quantitative. There is no sharp dividing line between qualitative and quantitative content analysis, and the two methods share many similarities (Flick, 2013, p.173). For instance, for both types of analysis the text data might be the same. Textual data might be in verbal, print, or electronic form and might have been obtained from narrative responses, open-ended

survey questions, interviews, focus groups, observations, or print media such as articles, books, or manuals (Klenke and Martin, 2016, p.94)

However, the main aspect of difference lies in the fact that qualitative content analysis is more focused on the substance, while the quantitative one – on the numbers, for instance, how many times a certain text mentioned “women” comparing to “men”.

At the same time, qualitative content analysis is a method for systematically describing the meaning of qualitative data (Schreier, 2012, p.1). It is done by classifying material as instances of the categories of a coding frame (Schreier, 2012, p. 1). The analysis is designed to “code” the content as data in a form that can be used to address the research questions (Berg and Lune, 2017, p. 182).

Given that qualitative content analysis is predominantly interested in the meaning, this thesis believes that it is more advantageous technique for this research than the quantitative one. Hence, solely counting the number of occurrences of “economy” issue may show how often the topic occurred in the news articles for the period-in-question. Yet, did it occur in the context of elections? Was it attributed to a certain actor? What language was used when describing it? Quantitative content analysis cannot answer these questions, and for this study substance matters no less – and even more – than a purely numerical aspect.

Yet, this study does not fully neglect the importance of numbers and occurrences and does contain elements of quantitative kind. Thus, other than solely presenting the amount of articles released for each election – and comparing them – a ratio of publications containing issues, encouragement to vote and explanation of the electoral systems changes and EP functioning will be provided. After all, content analysis is not inherently either quantitative or qualitative, and may be both at the same time (Berg and Lune, 2017, p. 186).

Given that in order to complete this study, we need to *see whether the media transported the issues of the political parties and whether it encouraged the voters to come to the polling station and explained what the electoral system change entails as well as how EP functions* the following guidelines were created.

As it is stated above, this thesis is interested only in the three dominating issues for each party and for each elections. Consequently, the issues are first identified by analysing which of them came in the beginning of the document. Hence, Figure 3.6 shows an extract from the Conservative Party manifesto for the General Elections 2015 in which the first three issues are *A strong economy to help you and your family, Better roads, trains and modern communications, and Jobs for all.*

Figure 3.6: Extract from the content table of the Conservative Party manifesto for General Elections 2015

AN ECONOMIC PLAN TO HELP YOU AND YOUR FAMILY
A strong economy to help you and your family 7
Better roads, trains and modern communications 14
2. JOBS FOR ALL
Jobs for all 17

Source: Conservative Party Manifesto 2015

These three issues – succinctly formulated as Economy, Infrastructure and Jobs issues – are considered to be the most important ones and subsequently they are categorised according to the Table 3.1 design.

Table 3.1 Most Important Issues for the Parties

Issues	Conservative Party	Labour Party	Liberal Democrats
Issue 1			
Issue 2			
Issue 3			

Yet, the mere issue identification is insufficient which is the reason why for each of them the description will be provided, so that it is possible to trace the content of the issues in the articles.

Moving on to the newspapers. In order to work with the their content the categories as in Table 3.2 were created. This table contains six categories – Descriptive, Descriptive with Bias, Non-Descriptive, Other, Issue Containing and Encouragement.

Table 3.2 Categorisation of Newspaper Articles

	Figaro	Monde	Parisien
Descriptive			
Descriptive With Bias			
Non-Descriptive			
Other			
Issue Containing			
Encourage and Explain			

Descriptive category represents all publications which strictly include factual information. These publications do not contain any opinions on behalf of the editorial board or its author. An example of such publications is the following:

Ukip closing in on victory: Poll puts Farage seven points ahead on day of crucial EU vote (Daily Mail, 21st of May 2014)

Descriptive with Bias category refers to publications which while describing a certain event are nevertheless clearly not free of an opinion. Example:

Ed Miliband offers a bleak vision of Britain without him in final pitch to voters (Daily Telegraph, 5th of May 2015):

«In a bleak vision of modern Britain, Mr Miliband forecast that without him in Downing Street voters would see “food banks spreading across our country”, falling wages, an “epidemic” of zero-hours contracts and hedge fund managers enjoying “six figure bonuses”».

Holehouse, 2015

Both the headline and the text clearly does not favour Mr. Miliband and uses emotionally-provocative vocabulary to describe an event.

Non-Descriptive category contains all publications which are published in the newspaper in the opinion section.

The reason why these categories were created was due to the fact that during the research, it became evident that the context of the articles for France and the UK varied significantly. Given that this study is conducting a qualitative content analysis context in which issues were mentioned is also of great importance, as it provides us with the additional understanding with how it might have affected the voter.

Other category refers to publications which concern other aspects related to elections

and which are not of an interest for this research. Example:

Vote indie! Can a last-minute election song make your politics swing? (Guardian, 6th of May 2015)

Encourage and Explain category encompasses all articles which recognise the importance of the upcoming elections, encourage the voter to come or provide reasons why they should come both for national and EP elections as well as explain how the EP works and what changes the alternation of electoral systems entail.

Example: The Guardian view on election 2015: it may be the election of a lifetime (The Guardian, 6th of May 2015).

Issue Containing category refers to all articles which either mention the issues from the party manifestos attributing them to the original transporter or the ones which explain the issues from the manifesto.

Example: «Labour manifesto 2015: the key policies and what they mean for you” (The Daily Telegraph, 5th May 2015).

4 Results

This Chapter will present the reader with the results of the research following the guidelines from the previous chapter. In it, it will be established whether the media transported the main issues from the party manifestos and whether it encouraged the voters to come to the polling station, explained how EP works and what the alternation of electoral systems entails.

4.1 Summary

We begin with the most important issues for both the French and the British parties for the Legislative Elections 2012 and General Elections 2015. The results of the research have shown that for these elections 11 dominant issues were present. Hence, *Economy* was a top issue for all parties included in the research, except for *EELV*, *Unemployment* came second with three parties including *SP*, *UMP* and *CP* prioritising it, while *Education* was third. Table 4.1 provides a summary of the issues.

Table 4.1 Dominant Issues for all Parties in Legislative Elections 2012 in France and General Elections 2015 in UK

	SP	UMP	EELV	CP	LP	LD
Economy	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Healthcare					✓	
Foreign Policy		✓				
Education		✓			✓	
Purchasing Power	✓					
Energy			✓			
Unemployment	✓		✓	✓		
Financial System			✓			
Infrastructure				✓		
Communities					✓	
Tax, Pensions and Consumer Rights						✓
Finance						✓

On the other hand, Table 4.2 shows that both in France and in the UK the issues most frequently mentioned in the party manifestos for EP elections were – *Unemployment, Immigration and Leaving EU/Eurozone.*

Table 4.2 Dominant Issues for all Parties in European Parliament Elections 2014 in France and UK

	PES	UMP	EELV	FN	UKIP	CP	LP	LD
Economic growth	✓							
Leaving EU/Eurozone				✓	✓			
Unemployment	✓	✓					✓	✓
Healthcare			✓					
European Heritage			✓					
Energy			✓					
Immigration		✓		✓	✓	✓		
Europe		✓						
Referendum						✓		
Banking Sector	✓							
Economy						✓		
Living Standards							✓	
Communities							✓	
Crime and Justice								✓
Environment								✓

Building on the guidelines for the article categorisation, Table 4.3 shows that cumulatively the six newspapers included in the research published 264 articles for the analysed period.

Table 4.3 Total of Articles Analysed for General Elections in UK and Legislative Elections in France in 2012

	Daily Mail	Daily Telegraph	Guardian	Figaro	Monde	Parisien
Descriptive	35	33	45	5	12	16
Descriptive with Bias	17	8	12	0	3	0
Non-Descriptive	4	12	17	2	2	0
Other	6	7	15	0	1	0
Issue Containing	1	4	0	0	1	0
Encourage and Explain	2	2	1	0	0	1

At the same time, Table 4.4 indicates that for the EP elections the number of articles released amounted to 151.

Table 4.4 Total of Articles Analysed for European Parliament Elections 2014 in the UK and France

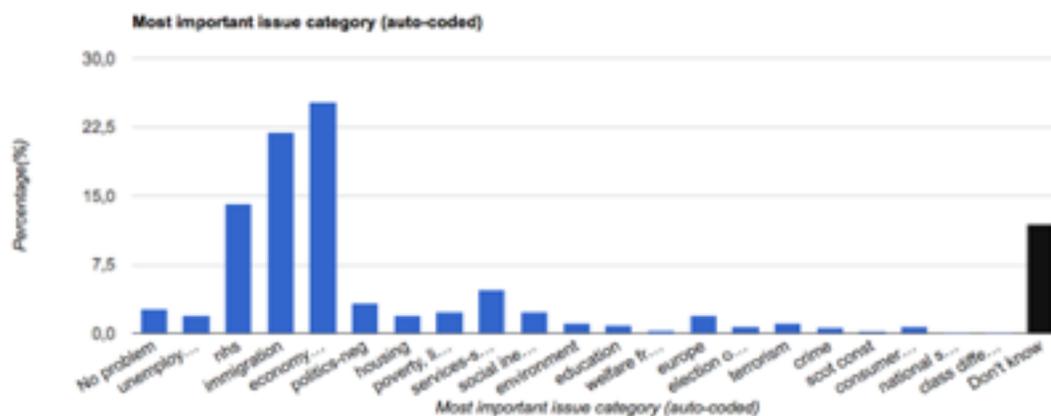
	Daily Mail	Daily Telegraph	Guardian	Figaro	Monde	Parisien
Descriptive	12	8	14	19	16	10
Descriptive with Bias	3	1	1	0	1	0
Non-Descriptive	1	6	11	16	10	0
Other	1	1	0	3	0	0
Issue Containing	0	0	2	1	1	0
Encourage and Explain	2	0	5	4	1	1

Total articles containing issues for all four elections: 16 out of 415 – 0,04%.

Total articles retrieved from the Encourage and Explain category: 19 out of 415 – 0,05%

Finally, Figure 4.1 shows that in the UK the top issues for the electorate for 2015 General Elections were: *Economy* (24%), *Immigration* (22,4%) and *National Healthcare System* (NHS, 14%).

Figure 4.1: Most Important Issues for British Voters in General Elections 2015



Source: British Election Study, Panel study data 2015 (N=25,222)

Concurrently, Figure 4.2 shows that in France the most common responses to the question “And which appears to be the most important question for you today?” (Et quelle est la question qui vous paraît la plus importante aujourd’hui pour vous-même?) included *Purchasing Power* (17,8%), *Unemployment* (14,5%) and *Healthcare* (13,4%) as the issues which presented the most importance to them.

Figure 4.2 Most Important Issues for the French Electorate in Presidential Elections 2012

Dataset: Enquête post-électorale de l'élection présidentielle 2012

Variable Q12: Question la plus importante pour le répondant : en premier

LITERAL QUESTION

Et quelle est la question qui vous paraît la plus importante aujourd'hui pour vous-même ?

- En premier



SUMMARY STATISTICS

Valid cases 2504

Missing cases 278

This variable is numeric

Source: Centre de Données Socio-Politiques

At the same time Figure 4.3 shows that the main issues for the voters were -- *Unemployment* (45%), *Economic Growth* (40%) and *Immigration* (23%).

Figure 4.3 Most Important Issues for Voters in European Parliament Elections

C. The issues which made people vote:

➤ Against the background of the current crisis, **unemployment** (45%, +8) was considered to be the main issue.

➤ **Economic growth** came second (40%, -1).

It is worth noting that while these two items were also the main issues in 2009, their order of importance was inverted.

➤ **Immigration** (23%, +7) has grown considerably since 2009.

➤ The **future of pensions** remained stable at 22%.

➤ **The role of the EU on the international scene** decreased slightly (20%, -2).

➤ The number of answers relating to the **single currency** increased by 5 points, to 17%.

➤ The answers which went down the most compared to 2009 were **terrorism** (7%, - 4) and the **fight against climate change** (12%, - 4).

Source: 2014 post-election survey EUROPEAN ELECTIONS 2014 ANALYTICAL OVERVIEW

The thesis will now proceed discussing in details the results of the research. For each of the elections a brief background of these elections took place will be provided beforehand.

4.2 Legislative Elections in France in 2012

The Legislative Elections in France were held a month later after the *PS* candidate Francois Hollande's victory in the second tour of the Presidential Elections against the then incumbent president Nicolas Sarkozy — representative of *UMP*. The five year rule of Nicolas Sarkozy led to France becoming more active on the foreign policy arena, in particular by partaking in the military intervention in Libya. At the same time the fact that his rule coincided with the beginning of the economic crisis in the Eurozone – as well as him being a highly controversial political figure on the French political scene – led to his opponent's victory.

Consequently, following the legislative elections *PS* secured 280 seats in the National Assembly. *UMP* finished second with 194 seats, whilst *EELV* received 17 seats.

4.2.1 Socialist Party

To begin with, the most important issue for *PS* was to secure *Economic Growth*. Particularly, the party referred to the necessity to support *the Purchasing Power* and secure dynamic consumption; to revive investment and redirect savings and taxation towards productive investment.

The second issue concerned *Unemployment*. In order to combat it, *PS* offered to create new full-time jobs in the non-market sector such as administration for a maximum of 5 years and 75% of which are financed by the State.

The third priority issue for *PS* is *Education*. The content of this issue comes down to the need of the college model reformation, a personalised attitude towards pupils and maintenance of a broad field of disciplines and skills in high school.

4.2.2 Union for Popular Movement

The three messages of *UMP* derived from their manifesto concerned *Economy*, *Education* and the *Republican Pact* and *Foreign Policy*.

The *Economy* issue revolved primarily around the notion of economic growth and covered such initiatives as the revival of small business, cutting the budget spending, re-inventing the social model by abandoning 35 working hours, combatting *Unemployment*, increasing *the Purchasing Power*, developing innovation.

The *Education and the Republican Pact* was the second point of concern for the *UMP*. This issue contained the promise to make a more effective education by adapting its objectives to the challenges of the twenty-first century, especially when it comes to the knowledge provided in primary schools. Simultaneously, the *Republican Pact* refers to the reinforcement of the classic values upon which the Republic is built – freedom, equality, fraternity as well as secularism – with the intention of unifying the French society.

The issue of France on the international arena – *Foreign Policy* – referred to the spread of the French values across the world and ensuring that France continues to promote peace, human rights, while gaining from globalisation as well as refoundation of Europe. The latter should be strengthened, so that it will be able to defend.

4.2.3 Europe Ecology – The Greens

The 2012 legislative campaign of *EELV* was based on three top issues — *the Financial System Change*, *Economy and Energy*.

Being a party that seeks radical change of the existing structure, its content of issues strikingly differs from the other parties — both British and French — which are included in this research. Put it differently, the principal matter for *EELV* is the modern political and economic scene, not just in France but in the whole Europe, as such. Yet, with this notion in mind the top issues for *EELV* were as followed.

First, it is necessary to introduce more solidarity in Europe by taking control over the *Financial System*, promote revived growth.

Then, a radical transformation of the existing economic, social and ecologic development model should take place. *EELV* proposes for everyone to work and to work better, for instance, in order to combat *Unemployment* both the young and the old need to cooperate. Simultaneously, competition should be eliminated and fairer taxes introduced.

Finally, in this grand re-invention the transition of *Energy* plays a crucial role. First and foremost, this means reducing electricity consumption and electric production by power plants from 75% to 50% by 2025 as well as investing into collective transport.

4.3 Figaro

Le Figaro is a centre-right and the second most read newspaper in France.

This research showed that the total amount of publications that *Le Figaro* made two days prior to the first and the second tour of the legislative elections is one of the lowest among all of the newspapers in this research. In total, only seven articles were published: two of them fall into the Non-Descriptive category, while the rest belong to the Descriptive kind.

None of the publications contained any issues from the political programmes of the parties, and the Encourage and Explain category remained empty.

4.3.2 Monde

While *Le Figaro* made only seven publications two days before the elections, *Le Monde* – a centre-left leaning newspaper – chose not to publish any information regarding the legislative elections on the 9th of June, which is why this thesis took into account the articles released on the 8th of June.

In total the amount of publications made on the 8th and 16th of June amounts to 18 articles. It has to be noted that unlike the other French newspapers three of the articles, among which is *FN activists confronted with migration of votes*, while being descriptive contained a slight bias and thus fall into the Descriptive with Bias category.

The Non-Descriptive category consisted of two publications — *On the right, the distinction between the populists and the liberals fades* – as well as *The strange*

political nomadism of Franck Ouvrier.

At the same time, it is necessary to mention that *Le Monde* was the only newspaper in this election which made a publication containing issues of the *EELV* party. In the article *The Breton ecologists announce their ambitions* the third main issue from the party programme – the *Energy* – was brought up. Hence, it is stated that *EELV* wants to abandon nuclear power, as well as the grander narrative of its programme — an alternative future.

No publications belonging to the Encourage and Explain category were made.

4.3.3 Parisien

Comparing to *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro*, *Le Parisien* published a relatively substantial amount of publications on the 9th and 16th of June — 17 pieces. While all of these articles fall into the Descriptive category and do not raise issues from the political parties' manifestos, nevertheless one publication recognised the importance of turnout during these elections and thus is included into the Encourage and Explain category.

4.4 Turnout and Issues

For the 2012 Legislative Elections in France 55,4% of the citizens eligible to vote came to the polling station. It has to be noted that comparing to two previous elections this level of turnout should be considered as one of the lowest. Hence, in 2007 and 2002 66% and 66,3% respectively of voters cast their votes.

According to the post-electoral survey carried out by the Centre de Données Socio-Politiques the three top issues for the French electorate were *Purchasing Power* with (17,8%), 14,5% believed that it was *Unemployment*, while 13,4% named *Healthcare*.

The analysis of the party manifestos showed that *UMP* addressed all of the three issues in their party manifesto, while *PS* emphasised two of them – *Unemployment and Purchasing Power* – and *EELV* only one – *Unemployment* issue.

Concurrently, the issues were mentioned in 0,02% of the material published two days before the elections. Likewise, in only one publication did the newspapers encourage the voter to come to the polling station. Hence, in total 0,04% of newspapers content attempted to transport the issues and recognise the importance of the Legislative Elections 2012.

4.5 European Parliament Elections 2014 in France

EP elections in France in 2014 were held two years after the election of François Hollande. During these two years the popularity of Hollande significantly plummeted. A series of his initiatives, including a 75% tax on incomes over 1 million Euros as well

as the scandal erupting following his decision to deport a Roma girl¹⁶ led to a decline in the *PS* popularity.

At the same time, the ongoing crisis in the Eurozone and the rising anti-immigration sentiments led to the anti-EU Front National securing victory in these elections with 24,8% of support. *UMP* received 20,81%, *PS* — 13,98% and *EELV* – 5,46%.

4.5.1 Front National

While it proved impossible to find the manifesto of Front National and thus see what were the priority issues for this party, it is still necessary to point out that it is an anti-EU party as well as concisely describe its points of concern. Hence, FN advocated the abandoning of the Eurozone and sought introduction of tougher immigration rules. In particular, the party proposed to reduce legal immigration to France from the current 200,000 a year to 10,000 (France 24, 2014). Also, the FN would seek to re-negotiate all EU treaties in order to claw back national sovereignty (France 24, 2014).

4.5.2 Union for a Popular Movement

The emphasis of the *UMP* manifesto was placed upon three issues – *Boarder Control (Immigration)*, *Limiting Europe* and *Economic Growth and Unemployment*.

According to *UMP*, the main issue for these EP elections *Boarder Control* revolved around the necessity to stop enlargement after the accession of Croatia. *UMP* also suggested the reformation of the Schengen area which would envisage the introduction of sanctions against states violating its rules and even hinted at the possibility of its abandoning.

The *Europe* issue refers to the necessity of a more pragmatic Europe, which would, *inter alia*, allow a two-speed development of its member-states and not interfere in the issues, like family.

The third issue for the *UMP* revolved around the topic of *Economic Growth and Employment*. The party promoted the use of the European Social Fund for vocational integration, the prioritisation of small businesses, putting an end to social and fiscal dumping as well as the move towards common space policy and common energy policy.

4.5.3 Socialist Party

In the light of the unavailability of the *PS* programme for this election, the Party of European Socialists, to which the French Socialist Party belongs at European level, manifesto was analysed instead. In it, the following three issues are brought up — *Employment*, *Economic Growth* and *Banking Sector*.

¹⁶ In 2013 a Roma representative Leonarda Dibrani and her family were expelled from France, having failed to receive an asylum.

For the *Employment*, the PES promised to substantially increase its budget and extend it to all citizens under 30 years of age; to put in place the ambitious European industrial policy and support the social economy and small and medium-sized enterprises. Besides that, it pledged to promote green technologies, to introduce the minimal European salaries as well as to end social dumping.

The issue of *Economic Growth* included the ambition of abandoning the austerity policy, reviewing the economic model in order to make it more socially responsible as well as launching a fight against tax fraud, tax evasion and ensuring a fair tax system.

Finally, the *Banking Sector* issue included the necessity to strengthen the regulation of the banking sector and limit the bonuses of bankers; separate the activity of investment and commercial banks; introduce tax on financial transactions; create the European credit rating agency and establish a strong banking union.

4.5.4 Europe Ecology – The Greens

In 2014 EP elections *EELV* obtained 5,46% of the votes. Its programme contained three clear issues. Unlike the other two parties, the *EELV's* programme was substantially longer, more detailed and clearly not perceived to be as less important than that which was used by the party during the Legislative Elections 2012.

The first most important issue for the party is *Energy*. Thus, one of its objectives was to reduce carbon emission in Europe by 2050 as well as energy consumption by 40% by 2030 with the goal of securing energy independence of Europe. In this issue, *EELV* also promoted ceasing shale gas fracking and abandoning nuclear energy.

The second main issue for *EELV* in these elections was *Preservation of European heritage*. Under this slogan, the party combined initiatives regarding preserving biodiversity, guarding food security as well as a zone without GMO, ensuring that 50% of CAP¹⁷ is durable agriculture and implementing a new sustainable fishing policy.

The third main issue for the party, close in its nature to the second one, is *Health*. It contains such initiatives as review of medication policy, limiting of exposure to different noxious chemicals, reduction of pollution.

4.5.5 Figaro

Among the analysed newspapers, *Le Figaro* set a record in the amount of publications made on the 23rd and 24th of May. In total, the number of articles reached 43. While the absolute majority of them fall into the Descriptive category, the Non-Descriptive category contained – 16.

In the Encourage and Explain category four articles were retrieved, including, *What*

¹⁷ Common Agricultural Policy

about the young people who are preparing, at best, to go vote?, The imposture of the 'useful vote', Europe without its Christian roots is doomed to decline, European Elections: Small lists will influence results.

The latter article, in particular, explains how the proportional system functions.

At the same time, it should be noted that one of the articles contained a brief mentioning of the issues from the *UMP* manifesto.

5.6.1 Monde

On the 23rd and 24th of May *Le Monde* made 29 publications concerning the EP elections. The Descriptive category included 16 publications, Descriptive with Bias 1, while the Non-Descriptive – 10.

Among all publications, solely three, like *Karima Delli: «In Parliament, we are fighting for ecology»*, which mentioned the issues of *EELV* party such as *Health*, could be considered as issue containing.

It should be remarked that while the articles did not transport the issues of the politicians, nevertheless they did extensively discuss the future of Europe and raised a number of issues, which were important for the voters during that election, such as *Immigration*. An example of such articles is *Europe, immigration: a vote without debate*.

Besides that, *Le Monde* made one publication – *European Elections: Small lists in search of becoming visible* – in which it had an extensive discussion of how the party lists function in the EP elections. Therefore, the Encourage and Explain contained one publication.

5.6.2 Parisien

Two days before the EP elections *Le Parisien* made 11 publications regarding the event. The absolute majority of the articles fall into the Descriptive category and only one into the Encourage and Explain — *European elections: EU in ten question*. The latter article is of explanatory kind and concerns not only the detailed description of the EU institutions, but also contains an *explanation for the voter concerning how the proportional electoral system works during EP elections*. More precisely, it emphasises that unlike during the legislative elections, the French voters should not expect the possibility to go to the polling station twice.

5.7 Turnout and Issues

The turnout for the EP elections in France constituted 42,43%. The main issues for the voters according to the Eurobarometer survey 2014 were *Unemployment, Economic Growth* and *Immigration*.

The analysis of party manifestos shows that two parties – *PES* and *UMP* – mentioned the *Unemployment* issue. When it comes to *Immigration*, it was the *UMP* who partially addressed it, by calling for tighter border control as well as the anti-EU *FN*. And *PES* emphasised the importance of *Economic Growth*.

While 0,008% of material contained reference to issues raised in the party manifestos, another fact should be taken into consideration. Thus, the newspapers published articles raising some of the issues important for the French electorate in the EP elections, including *Immigration*, but they did so without attributing them to a certain political party. In other words, the reader was presented with an article, usually from the Non-Descriptive category, which discussed the issue, but did not put it into the context of inter-party debate presenting the views on it and how it should be dealt with.

5.8 General Elections 2015

The General Elections 2015 called British voters to the polling stations following four years of rule by the Conservative and Liberal Democrats coalition. During this time, the former Prime Minister of the UK David Cameron made several contentious decisions, including the introduction of the austerity policy and the appointment of an independence referendum in Scotland. While the independence side lost, nevertheless the growing popularity of the Scottish National Party (SNP) combined with the prospect of it forming a coalition with LP following the elections has seriously shaken the UK's political landscape. Prior to the vote the opinion polls predicted a hung parliament, which in Westminster parlance means that no party secured a majority. Yet, in the end *CP* won 331 seats, *LP*— 232, *SNP* – 56 and *LD* – 8.

5.8.1 Conservative Party

The CP's manifesto for the general elections places a clear emphasis primarily on the *Economy*. In line with its previous policy of eliminating budget deficit, *CP* advocated the need to cut wasteful spending, run a surplus, build a Northern powerhouse, increase tax-free allowance and tackle tax evasion.

In its second top-priority issue, *Infrastructure*, CP concentrates on improving train, roads and broadband and promoting the growth of local businesses.

Finally, when it comes to *Jobs* the Conservatives talk about the need to help businesses to create two million new jobs, back small firms with a major business rate review, boost apprenticeships and maintain the most competitive business tax regime. This issue also includes the initiative to change system of strikes, cut red tape, invest in technology and science and champion farmers and food producers.

5.8.2 Labour Party

The analysis of the LP manifesto showed that the top three issues for these elections were the *Economy*, *Healthcare* and *Education* and *Communities*.

The main content of the *Economy* issue revolves around the necessity of improving productivity, backing small businesses, banning of exploitative zero hours contracts as well as reversing the 50p tax cut and freezing energy bills.

At the same time, when it comes to *Healthcare*, which according to the Labour manifesto has been in decline since the Conservatives came into power, the party suggests to recruit additional personnel and end time-limited 15 minute social care visits. For the educational part Labour proposed, *inter alia*, to ensure all young people study English and Maths to age 18 and introduce a new gold-standard Technical Baccalaureate for 16 to-18-year olds.

In its third top issue *Helping our Families and Communities to Thrive* (in the Table above it was shortened to just Communities) Labour was primarily concerned with the need to provide adequate housing and control *Immigration* by employing fair rules, i.e. immigrants will not be able to claim benefits until they have lived in the UK for at least two years, as well as extending free child care.

5.8.3 Liberal Democrats

The LD's manifesto begins with the issue of *Responsible Finance*. In it, the party addresses the economic policy of their coalition partners the Conservatives, by emphasising that in the next Parliament term they believe it is necessary to balance the structural current budget by 2017/18.

The second main issue for LD — *Economy* — included a wide range of promises from investing in sectors like advanced manufacturing that can provide high-skilled, sustainable jobs, reforming the banking sector, developing low-carbon energy encouraging green jobs and industry, securing global leadership in technology and improving infrastructure to providing sanctuary for refugees and free entrance to museums.

In its third priority issue — *Tax, Pensions and Consumer Right* — the LibDems placed an emphasis on the need to make taxes fairer and simpler and help those on low and middle incomes. Other initiatives included creating more jobs and helping with childcare costs.

5.8.4 Guardian

Two days prior to the election the newspaper published 78 articles — the largest amount of publications out of all newspapers included in this research. The Descriptive category contained 45 articles, the Descriptive with Bias – 12 and the Non-Descriptive – 17.

Concurrently, while the Encourage and Explain category had one publication, – *The Guardian view on election 2015: it may be the election of a lifetime* – no issues from any of the political party manifestos were mentioned.

5.8.5 Daily Mail

The number of articles published two days before elections reaches to 65 publications with most constituting Descriptive articles (35) and the Descriptive with Bias (17) categories. While there were four Non-Descriptive articles available, two, however, fell into the Encourage and Explain category — *For the sake of your children and grandchildren, your vote has never mattered more, Your biggest decision in a generation: Cameron issues rallying cry to voters as Tories take a three-point lead... but one in six are STILL undecided.* However, it has to be noted that all of the publications from all categories were of a deeply anti-Labour nature and heavily supporting the Conservatives.

With regards to the issues, it should be emphasised that in only one instance the Daily Mail mentioned *Healthcare* with regards to the Labour — *Party leaders coming to a street near you: Clegg goes from Land's End to John O'Groats as Cameron criss-crosses the country in final push for your vote.*

Finally, the Other category included six articles.

5.8.6 Daily Telegraph

Just as in case of the *Daily Mail* the *Daily Telegraph* is a heavily biased newspaper and supports the Conservatives. On the 6th and 5th of May it made 66 publications, with 33 of them being Descriptive, 8 – Descriptive with Bias, 12 – Non-Descriptive.

It should be noted that comparing to the other two newspapers the *Daily Telegraph* was more likely to talk about the issues which were brought up in the party manifestos, even though it was predominantly replicating the Conservatives' messages. Thus, publications like *Sir John Major: Labour has always wrecked the economy* and *The choice in this General Election is Labour chaos or Tory stability* brought up the issues of *Economy* and the notion of the *Northern powerhouse* present in the Tories party manifesto.

At the same time, one article mentioned *Healthcare* with regards to the Labour party — *Ed Miliband promises crowds he'll 'fight with every breath' at final rally* — and one — *Labour manifesto 2015: the key policies and what they mean for you* — directly concerned the explanation of the top issues mentioned in the Labour's manifesto, including *Economy* and *Healthcare*.

Two publications, including *Why Britain's Muslims should engage with this election*, recognise the importance of elections and thus fall into the Encourage and Explain category.

5.8.7 Turnout and Issues

For the General Elections 2015 the turnout constituted 66,1%. Based on the data British Election Study, the following issues were identified as the three most important for the

electorate — *Economy, Immigration and Healthcare*.

On the overall, two things should be stated. Hence, all of the parties addressed the *Economy* issue, while solely Labour mentioned all three of them. Simultaneously, only 0,03% of the total pool of articles contained material discussing the political parties' issues, and only in 0,02% of the newspieces were the voters encouraged to come to the polling station.

5.9 European Parliament Elections 2014

The EP Elections 2014 marked the first evaluation of the economic agenda of the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats coalition and their policy of cutting the budget deficit. The elections resulted in a victory of the anti-EU UKIP which secured 24% of the votes. LP received 20% of the support, CP — 19%, while LD — 1%.

5.9.1 United Kingdom Independence Party

The UKIP's manifesto contains solely one issue — *the Necessity for the UK to Leave the EU*. Once the latter is done, according to UKIP, the country will be able to address the problems in the *Healthcare* and *Immigration* realm.

5.9.2 Labour Party

During the EP elections, Labour chose to concentrate on the following three issues — *Jobs and Growth, Living Standards* and *Stronger Safer Communities*.

In the first case, LP offers to create the post of a new Commissioner for Growth to secure an accountable authority to restore growth, complete the Single Market in digital, energy and services. Other aspects of this issue include – tackling high youth *Unemployment*, promoting TTIP, recognising the importance of the European banking reforms and combatting tax avoidance.

Within the *Living Standards* issue, Labour offers to ban zero-hours contracts, tackle rising energy bills and climate change by reforming the European single market in energy as well as prioritise transport through infrastructure development and protection of consumer rights. Besides that, Labour emphasises the promise to equalise the wages and conditions between EU workers and local workers, freeze the energy prices and not make healthcare a subject to the full force of EU competition law.

Finally, the *Stronger and Safer Communities* issue content includes the mention of the European arrest warrant as well as the automatic possibility to deport a migrant who committed common assault or robbery within a few months of arriving.

5.9.3 Conservative Party

The main issues in the Conservatives manifesto for the EP elections 2014 were — *an In and Out Referendum, Economic Plan in Europe* and *Immigration*.

While the first issue concerned the appointment of the Referendum concerning the UK's membership in the EU, the long-term *Economic Plan* includes a promise to reduce deficit, create more *Jobs*, cap welfare and reduce immigration, as well as reform Common Agricultural Policy.

The third top issue for the conservatives concerned *Immigration*. The party suggested that it is necessary to adjust free movement and not give the right to immigrants to claim welfare payments for their relatives not residing in the UK.

5.9.4 Liberal Democrats

Unlike the other parties, LD framed its manifesto's issues in terms of EU politics. The top three points of concerns for the party were *Jobs*, *Crime and Justice* and the *Environment*.

The content of the *Jobs* issue revolved around backing of EU trade negotiations with emerging countries, including members of the MERCOSUR¹⁸, cutting red tape for the small businesses to be more effective, amending the Working Time Directive and introducing an easy-to-use EU information portal for small firms with access to EU and other export-related information. It also encouraged promoting innovation in science as well as speeding up infrastructure development.

The second most important issue — *Crime and Justice* — contained a wide arrange of initiatives, among which are combatting cross-border fraud, corruption and tax evasion. It suggested the full implementation of «Eurobail», set up of European Union database of unidentified bodies, extension of the European Union's criminal record information system and support of the new European Cyber Crime Centre functioning.

Lastly, when it comes to the *Environment* issue the LibDems campaigned for renewable energy, supported the research and production of sustainable biofuels, the revision of EU development policies to support the international goal of at least halving the rate of loss of all natural habitats by 2020 as well as halting net deforestation worldwide by 2020 and halving the rate of loss of all natural habitats by 2020.

5.9.5 Guardian

Two days before the elections *Guardian* published 33 articles regarding EP elections. While the majority of publications were of Descriptive kind, it should be noted that one belonged to the Descriptive with Bias category, and 11 to the Non-Descriptive.

Contrary to the expectations, *Guardian* paid substantial attention to the significance and importance of the EP elections. Hence, it had five publications, including *18 vaguely convincing reasons to vote in these elections*, *A big new green idea to revitalise the EU is not the only reason to vote in which the authors directly*, *European*

¹⁸ Southern Common Market

parliament elections: better together, in which the authors explained the reasons why the voters should come to the polling station.

Yet, a curious circumstance should be mentioned. Thus, while the newspaper published a substantial amount of articles which fall into the Encourage and Explain category, the Non-Descriptive one contained two publications – *Never mind the threat of Ukip, the electorate has been consumed with anger and alienated for years* and *Forget Ukip and these staggeringly irrelevant European elections* – which in fact discourage from partaking in these elections.

At the same time, the only two articles which mentioned the issues from the party manifesto's for this election was *Ukip's manifesto: immigration, Europe – and that's it* and the already mentioned *Forget Ukip and these staggeringly irrelevant European election* which talked about the *Referendum* issue.

Also, it is worth noting that, unlike the other two newspapers, it had at least two publications — *Bring the EU closer to the people - by giving power to its regions* and *We like the European Union. It's the politicians we can't stand*— which concerned the EU's future.

5.9.6 Daily Mail

On the 20th and 21st of May the Daily Mail made 19 publications on the EP elections – with 12 falling into the Descriptive and three into the Descriptive with Bias category – and thus being the most inactive out of the three British newspapers.

The Non-Descriptive category contained only one publication – *DAILY MAIL COMMENT: Tories can win if they stop demonising Ukip*, while the Encourage and Explain one had two – *European Parliament: a primer* and *127 candidates competing on one barmy ballot paper: Total of 39 political parties vying for seats at European parliament*.

Yet, while the *Daily Mail* chose not to transport any of the issues, it is worth remarking that the general tone of the most publications regarding EP was highly unfavourable towards the EU.

5.9.7 Daily Telegraph

Like the *Daily Mail*, the *Daily Telegraph* paid little attention to EP elections. Out of the 16 articles published on the 20th and 21st of May, eight were Descriptive, one Descriptive with Bias, one fell into the Other category and six into the Non-Descriptive.

Neither issues nor recognition of the upcoming elections was present in the articles.

The other publications, including those which were made in the Non-Descriptive category, concerned first and foremost the UKIP.

5.9.8 Turnout and issues

The turnout for the EP election in the UK was 35,6%. The main issues for the voters according to the Eurobarometer survey 2014 were *Unemployment, Economic Growth and Immigration*.

Whilst three parties – *CP, LP* and *LD* addressed the issue of *Unemployment*, solely *UKIP*, the Conservatives and Labour mentioned *Immigration* as the points of their primary concern. At the same time, *CP* and *LP* brought up the issues of *Economic Growth*.

6 Analysis

Having obtained and discussed the results, this Chapter will proceed with its analysis.

Before carrying on, the research question, the hypothesis of the thesis will be restated.

This thesis seeks to answer the **research question**:

Why is the variance in turnout between national and European Parliament elections lower in France than in the UK?

Hence, the **hypothesis** is: *The variance in turnout between Legislative Elections in France in 2012 and the General Elections in the UK in 2015 and EP elections in 2014 in both countries occurs due to a difference in the conduction of election campaigns.*

Given that media plays a crucial role in election campaigns, the **sub-hypothesis** of this thesis was formulated as follows: *The variance occurs due to a difference in the behaviour of the media during election campaigns for the Legislative Elections in France in 2012, the General Elections in the UK in 2015 and the EP Elections 2014 in both countries.*

In order to test the hypothesis and its sub-hypothesis, it was decided to establish whether the media, first, transported the issues of political parties to the voters. And, second, whether it acted as voter mobilising actor by encouraging the voters to come to the polling station as well as explaining the changes that electoral systems entail and how the EP works.

6.1 And is There a Difference?

The answer is clear-cut: **yes**.

This research has established an identifiable difference in how the election campaigns for the Legislative elections 2012 in France, General Elections 2015 in the UK and the EP Elections 2014 in both countries were carried out.

Likewise, the sub-hypothesis has also been partially confirmed. *The media's behaviour – both as an issue mediator and as an actor which encourages to vote and explains what electoral systems switch entails as well as how EP functions – differs in the two countries.*

Hence, we begin with a purely quantitative aspect of the research. The results show that in total the British media made twice as many publications as the French, – 126 against 277 – if we compare all four elections and five times more if solely the national elections are compared. Thus, the first aspect of variance occurs in the general activity of the British media.

The other variation concerns the treatment of the EP elections by the British and the French media. In this case, we are witnessing the opposite situation. The French newspapers cumulatively published twice as many publications as the UK media for these elections. At the same time, *Le Figaro*, *Le Monde* and *Le Parisien* in total released 2,1 times more publications for the EP elections than for the Legislative ones.

Summing up, the variation in quantitative regard, it is necessary to point out that, while the French newspapers are more active for EP elections, generally the British media is a significantly more lively actor in the election campaigns.

Content-wise, a variation also occurs. While on the overall, the results show that media did not bring up the issues from the party manifestos with only 0,04% of articles containing references to them, the British media is more likely to be an issue-transporter comparing to the French one. Cumulatively, *the Daily Telegraph*, *the Daily Mail* and *the Guardian* were three times more likely to mention and discuss the parties' issues than *Le Monde*, *Le Figaro* and *Le Parisien*. In total, the three British newspapers also published almost twice – 12 vs 7 – as many articles regarding the explanation of the electoral systems alternation, direct encouragement to come to the polling station and explanation of how EP works.

6.2 Did they vote more?

While the difference has been established, its connection to the turnout should be treated outmost carefully, especially given the fact that the research showed media in a light which is far from unambiguous.

Hence, it is quite tempting to jump to the conclusion that since the media in the UK was more active, marginally more inclined to act as an issue mediator and contained more articles recognising the importance of elections and thus encouraging to vote, it resulted in a higher turnout for the General Elections 2015 – 66,1% -- than for the French Legislative elections in 2012 – 55,4%. However, in the beginning of the thesis it is stated that one of the main differences between France and the UK is that the former is a presidential republic and the latter is a constitutional monarchy. Naturally, in a presidential republic the first-order elections are the presidential ones and the legislative ones are second-order, while the parliament elections in the UK are the first-

order ones.

If we compare the mean turnout for presidential and legislative elections in France in 2012 and the General Elections one in the UK it is in fact slightly higher – 67,7% vs. 66,1%. Moreover, in comparison to the previous legislative elections turnout, the percent of people who showed up at the polling station in 2012, is lower than during previous years. In 2007 and 2002 59,98% and 60,32% of voters respectively went to choose parties to represent them in the National Assembly.

Thus, it would be arbitrary to suggest that the higher media activity accounts for a higher turnout in Britain, unless more instances of elections are taken into consideration, including presidential elections in France to see whether the passiveness of the French media is a repeating pattern.

Likewise, it is no less tempting to conclude that, since the French media was more active for EP elections than the British one, made almost as many publications encouraging the voters to come to the polling station, explained what the alternation of electoral systems entailed, was more likely to and bring up the important for the electorate issues of *Immigration* and *Unemployment* – and frame them in terms of European Union's future – it led to a higher turnout. Yet, while this may have made the reader more prone to vote, it does not serve as unequivocal evidence to connect it to the turnout. Firstly, because the issues were «de-personified», which means that they were not attributed to a certain political actor. Thus, the fact that a voter just read about an important issue is too thin of a ground to claim that it made him or her more likely to come to the polling station. And secondly, because the Encourage and Explain category indeed contains less publications than the British one.

Therefore, no certain conclusion has been reached. On the other hand, on this point the thesis tends to agree with King, Keohane and Verba. Reaching perfectly certain conclusions from uncertain data is obviously impossible (King, Keohane and Verba, 1994, p.8).

6.3 Other findings

While this thesis focused solely on election campaigns and turnout, over the course of the research it made several findings which could not be left undiscussed.

Thus, it became evident that the media does not act as an issue-transporter in all four elections analysed in this thesis. With the exception of the *Daily Telegraph* during the General Elections 2015, which showed the most interest in transporting and explaining the issues to its readers, in all other instances the issues were hardly brought up.

Now, this suggests two points: either the voters do not derive information concerning the issues from the newspapers or they simply are insignificant for them. Simply put, where do the voters find out about the issues? Is it other media which was not included in this research – TV, social media, radio? Or perhaps such election campaign techniques employed by parties as door-to-door canvassing?

The reason behind this suggestion is unless it has been established how the voters derive information on issues, the premises of the issue-voting theory are undermined. How can one assume that the voters cast their vote based on issues, if they know nothing regarding them? This becomes especially important given the fact that the analysis of the party manifestos showed that in the majority of the cases the parties *address* the most important issues for the voters.

Special attention should also be paid to the fact that the French newspapers were twice¹⁹ more active during the EP Elections than the Legislative Elections, as it does not fit into the second-order elections theoretical model which would predict lower interest of media during the former.

While, again, one should keep in mind that the amount of publications would most probably have been different, were the presidential elections in France also analysed, the fact that the media paid more attention to EP elections than to national ones is challenging the second-order theoretical model.

When producing this research, another finding worth noting was established – the exceeding bias of the UK the media comparing to the French one. Hence, the number of articles falling into the Descriptive with Bias category is 14 times more than in France for all elections. While this would go beyond the scope of this thesis, this finding may be important for the explanation how the people vote and would suggest more research in the area of the influence of the media on voter's choice. This is especially important in the light of the famous quote «It was the Sun wot won it»²⁰.

7 Conclusion

This thesis sought to investigate why the variance in turnout between national and European Parliament elections is lower in France than in the UK. It was hypothesised that the variance occurs due to difference in the conduction of election campaigns, following the switch of electoral systems that both countries undergo for the EP elections. Particularly, it was believed that there is a difference in media behaviour during election campaigns which served as the sub-hypothesis of the thesis.

After analysing 14 party manifestos, 413 articles from six newspapers, both the sub-hypothesis and the hypothesis of the research have been partially confirmed. Hence, there is a difference in how election campaigns for Legislative Elections 2012, General Elections 2015 and EP Elections 2014 in both countries were carried out. More precisely, the behaviour of the media in the two countries differs.

Yet, while the difference exists and in some instances – like a higher activity of the

¹⁹ If the thesis did not consider the publications made by Le Monde on the 8th of June, the difference would have been even higher.

²⁰ The headline of the Sun newspaper which was published following the Conservative Party's victory in General Elections 1992.

French newspapers during EP elections – may account for a higher turnout in France for the EP elections than in the UK and subsequently explain why the variance in turnout between national and EP elections is higher in the UK than in France, this conclusion would be crude at best. Accordingly, a great deal of questions are still left unanswered.

Drawing upon these results, this thesis suggests three main ways of further research in this area.

First, since this thesis analysed only four election campaigns, – a fact acknowledged in the limitations part of this paper – it is necessary to take more cases into consideration and collect more evidence as well as study the full campaign period in each case and a greater variety of media. Only if we establish continuous difference in the campaigns conduct, can we produce a solid claim that it accounts for the lower variance in turnout between national and EP elections in France comparing to the UK.

Second, this thesis takes a stance that one of the most important findings in this study is the neglect of the Legislative Elections 2012 in France by the French newspapers. While it is necessary to keep in mind that they might have behaved differently during the presidential elections, the legislative elections also play a significant role. Even though the media does not only include newspapers, the amount of publications made two days prior to the event, is strikingly low, while the turnout still constitutes a high number 55,4%. Thus, it is advisable to analyse not only more instances of legislative elections in France, but also carry out more cross-election comparisons with the inclusion of the presidential elections to understand what role the French media has upon turnout.

Third, given that the variation in turnout does not occur only in France and the UK, this thesis encourages to examine other puzzling instances of turnout variation, especially between the former Communist states which joined the EU in 2004.

Concurrently, if election campaigns are chosen as an explanatory factor, this thesis does not see any reason why the method derived from Lasswell's communication theory for this study should not be employed in other cases, as it is not a country-dependent.

Finally, the study concludes with its own Encouragement category: study what you are truly interested in. And the puzzles and methods will come naturally.

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