

The Media's Impact on Political Party Organizations in Europe: Case Study Results

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Party Organizations

- **Parties as intermediaries** and main actors of interest aggregation, central to democratic process
- **Party organizations are open and loosely-coupled systems**
 - embedded in **various environments** like the political sphere, the state, the “lebenswelt” and the public sphere;
 - following **different orientations** like vote-seeking, policy-seeking, office-seeking (Strøm 1990), democracy-seeking (Harmel/Janda 1994) and self-interests;
 - encompass **several organizations** like party in public office, party central office, party on the ground (Katz/Mair 1993).

Mediatization on an Organizational Level

- Mediatization is a common **reaction** of political organizations to their **perception** of an increased importance of the media and of “best practice” models in communication;
- Mediatization implies **changes in organizational structure** (rules and resources for communication) and
- Mediatization implies **changes in organizational behaviour** (amount and form of communication).

Design & Methodology

- **Sample: Traditional, large party organizations**
BRD (SPD, CDU) UK (Labour, Conservatives)
AUT (SPÖ, ÖVP) CH (SPS, FDP, SVP, CVP)
- Focus on **party central offices** out of election campaigns
- **Analysis of documents and qualitative interviews**
with head of communication and party representatives
(e.g. general secretary) (2005-2007)

Perception of Environment

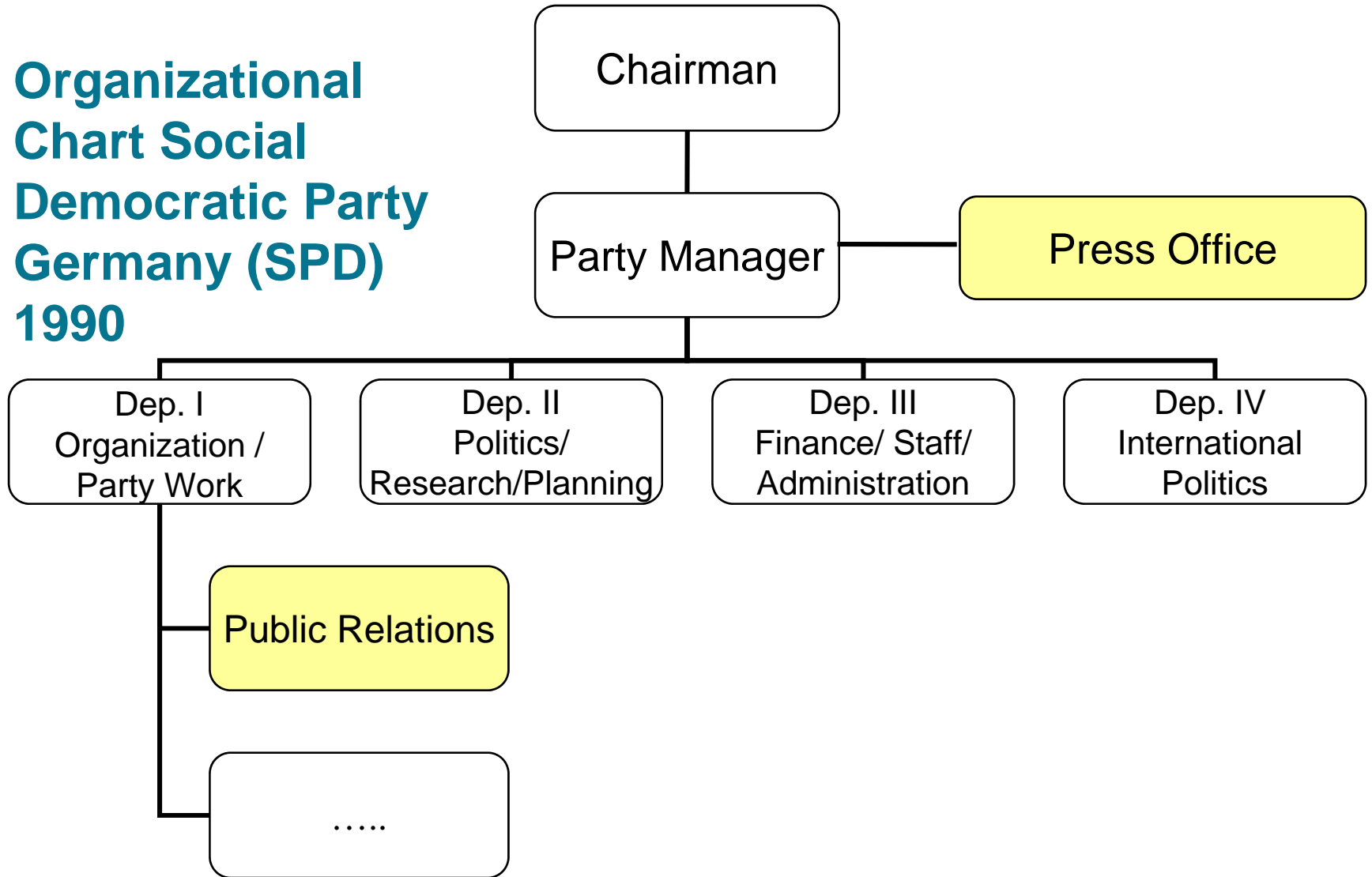
- **Party actors perceive increasing importance of media**
 - “Professionalization” as code for various changes
 - Increase of speed and permanent availability
 - Increasing importance of interpersonal and online-communication, mainly for internal communication
- **Monitoring of direct competitors and other forms of member-based political organizations**
- **Conservatism in media monitoring**

Structural Changes

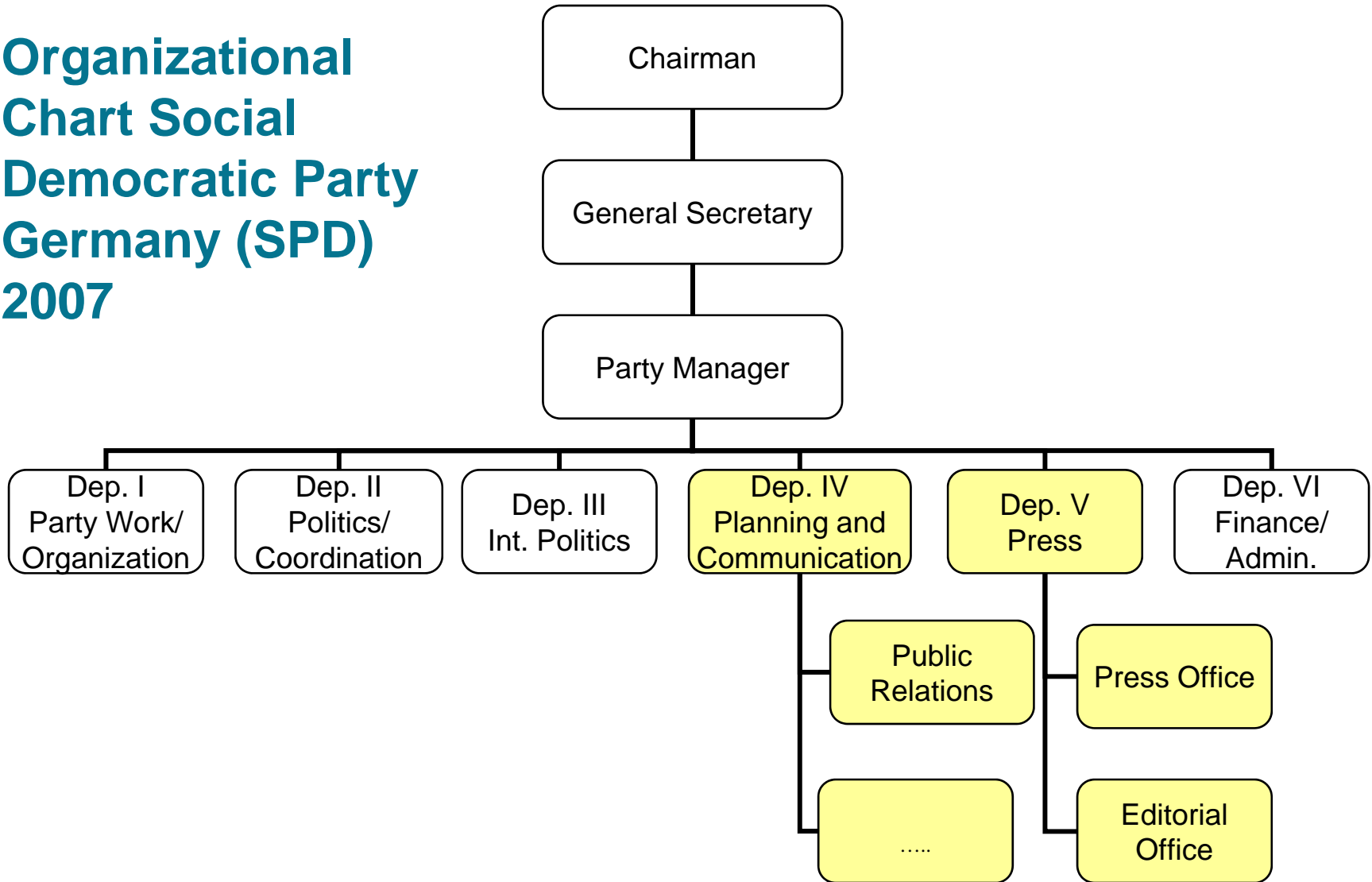
Organizational Chart Socialdemocratic Party Switzerland (SPS)

1992	2000	2005
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secretaries • Research Associates • Administration, Translation, Information Technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Politics • Communication • Campaigns / Cantons / Women • Finance / Administration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Politics • Campaigns & Communication • Board Support Unit • Finance / Staff / Administration
Staff: 0	3	9

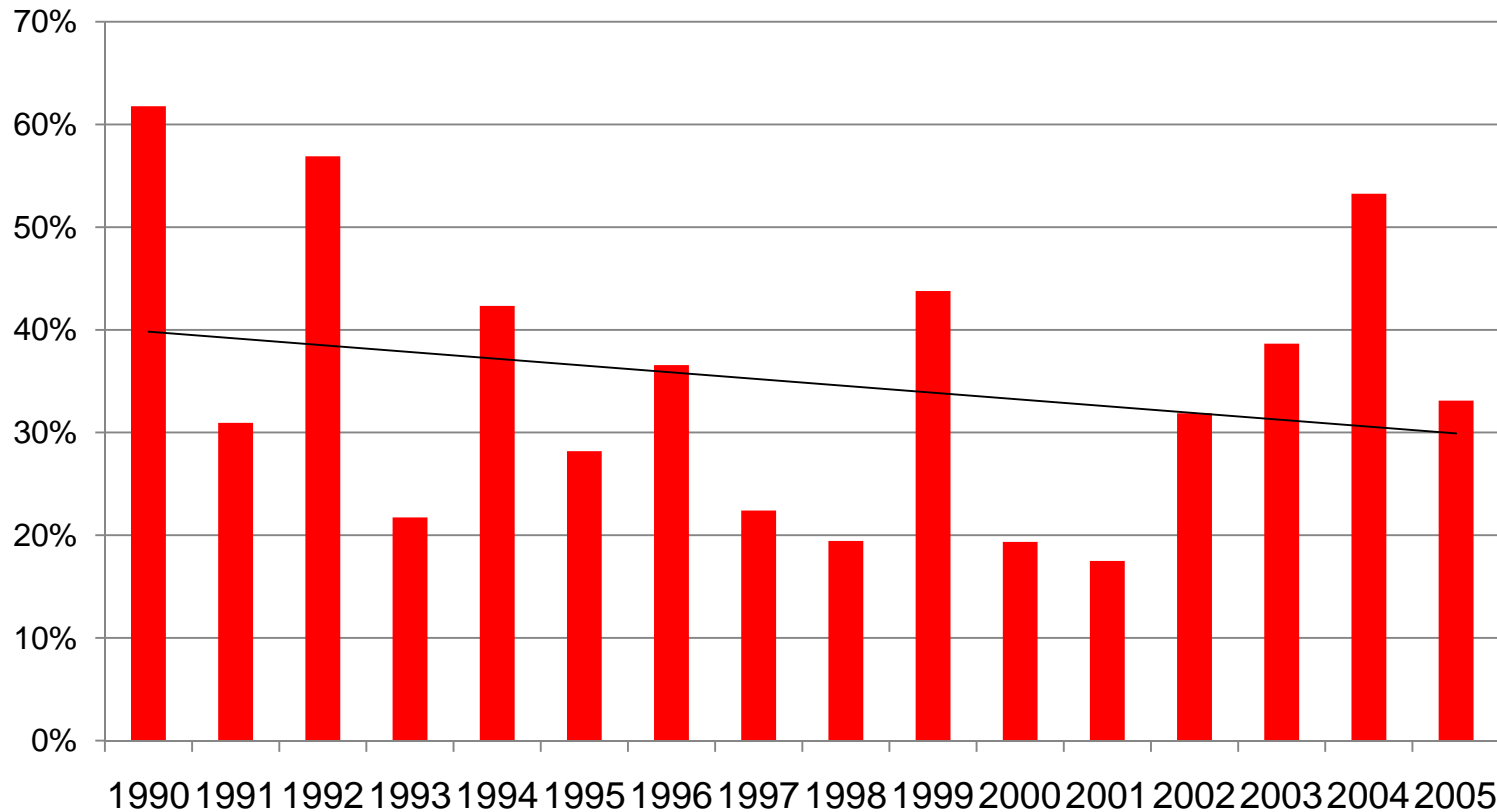
Organizational Chart Social Democratic Party Germany (SPD) 1990



Organizational Chart Social Democratic Party Germany (SPD) 2007



Proportion of Expenditure for Public Relations: Austrian People Party (ÖVP)



Behavioral Changes: Communication output

- **Use of traditional mass media**
 - e.g. press releases: general increase, but big differences between parties

- **Use of internet**
 - most important medium for internal communication
 - to avoid and to be faster than traditional mass media
 - mainly used for top-down communication
 - to give the impression of a “modern” and “innovative” party
 - does not replace traditional forms of communication

Conclusion

- **Mediatization is a common phenomenon but slowed down by the loosely-coupled form of party organization**
- **Shape and speed of mediatization depending on:**
 - internal differentiation (federalism)
 - history of the organization (path dependency)
 - resources of the party (forms of financing)