Allocating Campaign Effort in a Proportional System: Evidence from Spanish General Elections

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Abstract: Controlling for district magnitude, party candidates, and election effects, we test three hypotheses on campaign mobilization in a proportional multi-member district system. We find, first, that parties mobilize in districts in which they are more likely to win a new seat or are in danger of losing one that they already hold. As a determinant of campaign intensity, the current competitiveness of the district race is more relevant in smaller districts. Secondly, we find that parties also mobilize in their strongholds, although this effect is weaker than the effect of district competitiveness. We argue that these results suggest that choices made by party elites about the allocation of electoral effort are based on office-seeking as well as political finance motivations. Finally, and contrary to expectations, districts with a larger share of undecided voters do not seem to attract more campaign activity.

Key words: Electoral campaigns, mobilization, proportional systems, swing and core districts, Spain.

1. Introduction

Voter mobilization is a key feature in the electoral process. Since the individual incentives for voting are weak, in the run up to elections self-interested political parties provide information and other incentives to persuade voters to go to the polls (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993, Johnston et al. 2012). The literature linking party mobilization and voter turnout is abundant (Cox and Munger 1989, Caldeira et al. 1990, Holbrook and McClurg 2005, Nickerson et al. 2006). However, the determinants of the geographical distribution of mobilization activities are a less researched subject, especially in proportional representation systems.[1] While the literature has paid ample attention to the effects of campaigning on voters, we know less on why in multimember district systems parties concentrate their campaign efforts in some districts and not in others. Exploring campaign strategies of the two main Spanish parties will further improve our understanding of how they distribute mobilizational efforts in an institutional setting characterized by multi-member districts and closed lists.

The purpose of this article is to test the rationale of party elites in allocating campaign effort across districts. We contend that parties try to maximize campaign effectiveness by concentrating their activities in districts in which mobilization yields higher expected returns. We describe this as a combination of seat-maximizing and stronghold mobilization strategies. Our empirical tests show that, controlling for district magnitude, parties target districts where the competition for the last seat is more intense and where they traditionally obtain higher vote shares. Thus, while parties' main goal is to target swing constituencies, they also allocate some campaign resources to core districts.

The article is organized as follows. Section 2 discusses how parties allocate activity across parliamentary districts and poses several hypotheses about the behaviour of party elites. In section 3 we examine how to measure campaign effort, which is our dependent variable. Next, in section 4 we describe the Spanish case and the data and methods used in the article. In section 5, we test the model using data from the general elections held in Spain since 2000. Finally, we present the empirical results and conclude.

[1] See Criado (2008) and Lago et al. (2012) for an exception.

2. A model of district mobilization: factors and theoretical expectations

How do party elites allocate their mobilizational efforts across districts? Electoral campaigns are an essential part of the democratic process that assists parties to achieve their goals. In order to win elections, parties need votes. The individual incentives to vote are, however, weak. As the rational choice literature has emphasized, the likelihood that an individual vote turns out to be decisive is almost nil (Downs 1957, Riker and Ordeshook 1968). Therefore, parties have strong incentives to mobilize voters by reducing their information costs to vote, enhancing their feeling of duty and raising the stakes of the election. Electoral campaigns play, thus, a crucial role in overcoming the collective action problem of voters.

There is a vast literature studying the effects of campaigns and party mobilization on voters. Research has shown that electoral campaigns are successful in increasing voter turnout (Cox and Munger 1989, Holbrook and McClurg 2005, Nickerson et al. 2006, Nichter 2008) and persuading swing voters (Zaller 1992, Lupia and McCubbins 1998). Thus, campaigns seem to be a useful tool to win elections. However, campaign resources are limited and the electorate is large. Since parties cannot mobilize the whole electorate, when elections approach they have to decide how to allocate their campaign activities and which voters in which districts should be mobilized. Parties mainly face a choice: to mobilize their core coalitions (Cox and McCubbins 1986) or to concentrate on swing voters (Lindbeck and Weibull 1987). In this article, we test how parties solve this dilemma in a proportional system and which specific features of core and swing districts are important under these particular electoral rules.

Our starting point is that parties are mainly office-seekers. That is to say, parties are electoral machines trying to distribute their campaign effort in the most efficient way to access office. If this rationalization principle holds, parties will attempt to maximize the number of seats they win in each election. So, we expect that parties will concentrate their mobilization activities in swing districts in which it is easier (i.e., it requires fewer

votes) to win additional seats. We specifically consider two features of districts' potential to swing in proportional systems: closeness and share of undecided voters.

The first expectation corresponds with the standard hypothesis set up in the literature to explain electoral mobilization in marginal districts. If parties want to maximize their seat share, they will be especially attentive to the districts where the margin of votes to the last seat allocated (either won or lost) is narrower. These stronger incentives have to do with the efficiency of electoral mobilization. In those districts in which the allocation of the last seat depends on a few votes, party elites have a greater probability to affect the election outcome by increasing their vote share. Since small shifts in the party vote share of the district can alter the allocation of a seat, such districts are particularly attractive.

This behaviour has been widely documented in the literature as the main driver of parties' campaign effort. However, the evidence draws mainly either from single-member district systems, such as the United States (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993), the United Kingdom (Denver et al. 2003, Johnston et al. 2012), Canada (Eagles 1993, Carty and Eagles 1999, Cross and Young 2011), and Australia (Forrest 1997, Forrest et al. 1999), or from multi-member district countries where elections are held under very candidate-centered rules, such as Ireland (Marsh 2000, Johnson forthcoming). In this article, we test whether parties also behave this way in a closed list proportional system.

In addition, the hypothesis on competitiveness is useful to understand partisan mobilization in single-member districts where parties can only win one seat per district, but it is inadequate to encapsulate all electoral incentives in multi-member district systems with closed lists. In this kind of setting, there are other characteristics that can provide parties with incentives to increase their seat share.

Apart from mobilizing in competitive districts, parties will also target those districts with more potential to improve their results and win new seats. Thus, we expect that districts with a larger share of electors that have not decided yet which party to vote will look more promising for party elites. After all, undecided voters provide a favorable ground for the well-documented activation effect of campaigns (Popkin 1991, Finkel

1993, McClurg and Holbrook 2009). Thus, our expectation is that parties will allocate more mobilization activities to districts with a higher proportion of undecided voters, as it seems easier for parties to convince them, instead of converting those who have already made up their mind.

These expectations portray parties' rational strategies to concentrate effort in swing districts in order to win as many seats as possible. However, we build on Cox and McCubbins (1986) to argue that this may not be the only goal of party elites. Parties may also have incentives to mobilize in their core districts for a number of reasons. First, a party could be interested in winning a majority in the legislature, but focusing the electoral campaign solely on this goal may turn out to be risky. Voters' reactions are uncertain and targeting just districts where seats are at stake can come at the cost of losing support among core backers. Apart from winning seats, parties also need to count on their traditional constituencies to avoid losing electoral ground. Moreover, keeping their strongholds mobilized yields parties long-term benefits. As Díaz-Cayeros et al. (2008:11) state, all parties need to constantly respond to the concerns of their main constituencies. Otherwise, they "*will be condemned to unstable electoral coalitions that need to be constructed every time elections are held, confronting high risks of opportunism.*" A stable core of supporters is particularly useful for the rainy days, when the party will be in the opposition and unable to use government resources.

Secondly, parties have also financial motivations to mobilize their core strongholds. In many parliamentary systems -such as Spain, where we test our hypotheses-, the political finance regime rewards parties for the votes that they win in parliamentary elections and not only for their seats. This gives parties incentives to combine vote-maximizing and seat-maximizing behaviors. Besides, strongholds might also be particularly efficient in the use of mobilizational resources. Strong local branches of parties can rely on more volunteer work. Since most electioneering at the district level consists of labor-intensive activities (like party rallies), a strong local party organization lowers the effective cost of mobilizing in the district.

Thirdly, parties may mobilize in strongholds as a response to internal pressures. Previous research has emphasized the importance of local organizations and their bargaining power within the party (Denemark 2003, Hopkin 2009). Local elites are

interested in bringing the national party leaders to the district as this offers them an opportunity to raise issues of local concern. Also, the literature on national coattails shows that local and regional elites benefit from the electoral success of national copartisans (Gelineau et al. 2006, Rodden and Wibbels 2011). General election results at the district level are a predictor of results in local and regional elections (Leon 2012). Thus, local elites will be interested in bringing national leaders to their district to campaign there as this might have an impact in future regional and local elections.

On the basis of the previous discussion, we anticipate that in allocating campaign effort party elites will follow a double logic. On the one hand, mobilizational activities will be mainly directed at wining office. Thus, parties might attempt to maximize seats by targeting swing districts where the expected electoral margin to the last seat assigned is narrower (H_1), or districts in which there is a larger proportion of undecided voters (H_2). On the other hand, party elites will also be interested in allocating campaign activities to parties' electoral strongholds in order to mobilize their core voters (H_3).

Before testing the validity of these hypotheses, we turn to a couple of interactive effects that could be formulated as complementary hypotheses. The main variable that is expected to play a modifying role is district magnitude. The impact of electoral competitiveness and the share of undecided voters are predicted to vary according to the number of seats allocated to each district. In lower magnitude districts, Spanish parties will be inclined to mobilize more intensely. The rationale for this is malapportionment. The shares of legislative seats allocated to small districts in the Spanish electoral system are much higher than their shares of population (Montero and Riera 2009). Within this context, self-interested actors will tend to focus their campaigns on those districts in which the marginal returns to mobilization are higher, that is, in those districts where the ratio of voters to seats is lower. And small districts in Spain seem to generate such incentives. To sum up, we hypothesize that the positive effect on the number of mobilization activities organized by parties in a given district due to the closeness of the district race or the share of undecided voters, gets weaker as district magnitude increases (H_4).

3. Measuring district effort in Spanish elections

3.1 The Spanish case

To test the previous hypotheses we use data from Spanish general elections. There are two reasons that make the Spanish setting particularly suitable for the purpose of this article. First, most of the evidence in the literature draws from systems with single-member districts. However, we want to test a more general model of mobilization that also applies to other electoral systems. Spain employs a proportional representation system based on the D'Hondt formula. There are 350 seats in the Spanish lower house (Congreso de los Diputados), which are elected from 50 multi-member districts (provincias) and two single-member districts.[2] This implies that Spanish elections encompass a wide-ranging variety of scenarios, allowing for results that are not dependent on institutional features such as the level of proportionality or the magnitude of the district.

Secondly, given that Spain's electoral system operates with closed party lists and multi-member districts, no representative has a geographic electorate for which s(he) is solely responsible and, consequently, there are no incentives to undertake individual mobilization activities to seek a personal vote. Instead, the best policy to be nominated as an official party candidate is to please the national party elite. Consequently, campaigns are mainly run at the national level and it is the business of the national party elites to decide where and with which intensity to mobilize.

By focusing on Spain, we study the mobilization activities of the two main Spanish parties: the center-right Popular Party (PP) and the center-left Socialist Party (PSOE). These are the only parties that compete effectively for the national office and that are able to gain seats in all 50 constituencies. Therefore, these are the only parties whose mobilization decisions cover all the districts. Our data consist of 400 district observations with the campaign activities of both parties for the 2000, 2004, 2008, and 2011 elections. These four elections include two victories of each party, and two

[2] The two single-member districts are the autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla, on the North African coast. We drop these two districts from the analysis because parties pay little attention to them in their campaigns, because they are frequently very secure constituencies.

competitive and two non-competitive elections, providing a convenient diversity of scenarios to test our hypotheses.

3.2. Dependent variables

District mobilization is our dependent variable. The literature on elections has proposed different ways to measure mobilization efforts at the district level. These can be divided into two types: self-reported measures and district indicators. Research relying on self-reported measures uses the information provided by pre-electoral polls on the number of respondents contacted by party agents before an election. This is a widely used measure in the literature focused on the US case (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993: chapter 6, Cox et al. 1998, Gershtenson 2003, Huckfeldt et al. 2009, Johnston et al. 2012). However, for the sake of our analysis this is not an interesting measure. The main method of party contacts in Spain is through the postal mailing of ballots and leaflets. For parties with a parliamentary group, like the PP and the PSOE, such mailing is costless because the central government reimburses these expenses. In fact, both parties contact every eligible voter in the constituency making this measure useless to distinguish between mobilized and non-mobilized districts. In other words, all voters would turn out to be mobilized according to this measure.[3]

Another possibility could be to use the financial resources transferred by party elites to the district as a measure of district mobilization intensity (Johnston and Pattie 1995, Pattie et al. 1995, Denver et al. 2003, Benoit and Marsh 2003, Criado 2008). We cannot employ this variable, however, because parties in Spain do not disclose the distribution of their electoral spending by districts. Finally, measuring electoral canvassing is not an option either because Spanish political parties have never made an extensive use of it (Ramiro and Morales 2004).

We adopt a different approach. Instead of relying on voters' self-reported proxies of mobilization or on indirect measures of party effort, such as party expenses by district, we assess district mobilization by building two different measures.

[3] Empirical evidence from post-election surveys seems to support his point since the proportion of voters that declared having been contacted by parties does not significantly differ across districts.

Our first measure, *party rallies*, tracks the number of rallies held by party candidates or other senior national party leaders of the PSOE and the PP in each district during the four weeks preceding the general election.[4] We consider as a senior national party leader any member of the national board of each party, any member of the cabinet if the party is the incumbent, and any former minister. A similar measure has been used before (Shaw 1999, Franz and Ridout 2007). Criado (2008) also builds her mobilization variable by counting the visits to the district of the party candidate for prime minister, even though she restricts her analysis to the official electoral campaign, which in Spain lasts for two weeks. We use the broader time span of one month, as parties begin their mobilizational activities well before the official campaign starts.

A convenient feature of *party rallies* is that it is a direct measure of district campaigning. In addition, we believe that this variable captures the incentives of a party to mobilize a district as a whole. It could be argued that rallies are organized by party elites just to boost the morale of party activists, but the effects of rallies extend further. Huckfeldt and Sprague (1992) claim that those who participate in the rallies propagate the messages through the social network provided by family, job and friendship relations. Downs (1957: 229) also considers rational behaviour the use of personal contacts to reduce the costs of political information. Therefore, we have reasons to presume that the rallies held by a party in a district influence people other than the participants in the rally, such as those electors who are undecided or prone to abstain.

The range of the *party rallies* measure goes from 0 to 4 for the PP and from 0 to 3 for the PSOE. In Table 1 we classify the districts by the intensity of mobilization using this variable. A district classified as non-mobilized is not one in which there is no electoral effort at all. There is partisan mobilization in every district before a general election, but our measure does not count the mobilizational efforts undertaken by the local party branch. A value of zero for *party rallies* indicates that central party elites did not select a particular district to hold campaign rallies involving the presence of the national leaders of the party. The data presented in Table 1 also show that the structure of mobilization was quite similar for the PP and the PSOE in the four elections studied.

[4] The variable is compiled using the information from the archives of the two leading Spanish newspapers: *El País* and *El Mundo*. Most events and rallies are reported in both newspapers, so results are not dependant on the campaign coverage of any of the two papers.

(Table 1 about here)

Party rallies, however, does not capture all the electoral effort undertaken by national elites at the district level. While this measure of campaign intensity captures the main mobilization activities (rallies with the election candidate or senior national leaders), it does not include all the campaign actions organized by the national party in the district. To take into account such shortcomings, we build a new variable adding to party rallies other mobilizational efforts. The new measure, that we call *party events*, captures all the campaign actions organized by the party in a district that are reported in the national newspapers.[5] Beside *party rallies*, the *party events* variable includes the visits to the district by current or former ministers and other national leaders in order to promote the list of party candidates to the lower chamber. It also includes the visits by the candidate to prime minister or the national party leaders to inform the business, unions and cultural organizations about the party platform for the district. The correlation of *party events* with *party rallies* is 0.68, showing that both variables assess differently an analogous underlying behaviour.

Table 2 shows the degree of mobilization using *party events*. The main improvement of *party events* over *party rallies* is that it captures more electoral effort while remaining a direct measure of party activity at the district level. The range of values of *party events* extends from 0 to 11 for the PP and from 0 to 12 for the PSOE. According to this measure, there is substantial variation in parties' mobilizational effort across districts. In at least a third of the districts, both parties deploy no mobilization at all. The majority of the districts are moderately mobilized, hosting one or two events with national leaders. Lastly, there are only a few districts where parties display an intense mobilization effort, organising three or more events.

(Table 2 about here)

To sum it up, since the geographical distribution of electoral spending is not available in Spain and we cannot use survey information on party contacts for the reasons stated above, we are left with two measures of parties' mobilizational efforts at the district

[5] Similarly to *party rallies*, *party events* is compiled using the archives of *El País* and *El Mundo*.

level: *party rallies* and *party events*. Both measures are based on the presence of top party leaders in the local campaign and, as such presence is expensive (opportunity cost of the leaders' time plus travel, security, rental and advertising expenses), they are in our view reliable indicators of the intensity of the campaign effort made by parties in the individual districts. Similar indicators have been used in the past to capture campaign strength in the United Kingdom (Fisher and Denver 2008). Moreover, three features of the Spanish system of campaign finance reinforce the value of our measures versus other variables with more tradition in the literature, like party expenses.

First, campaign regulation in Spain bans parties from buying television time for advertising and restricts the amount that they can spend on publicity in radio, newspapers and billboards. However, party expenses on the mobilizational activities captured by our measures are not subject to specific limits, although they are included in the overall limit to campaign spending (García Viñuela and Artés 2008). Therefore, the electoral activities measured by *party rallies* and *party events* provide us with a unique insight into the priorities of party elites. Secondly, legal spending limits incentivize parties to conceal campaign expenses in order to avoid sanctions if they exceed the established limits. So, the use of parties' reported spending by district, if data were available, might misrepresent the real level of parties' mobilizational efforts. Finally, district campaigning has become increasingly centralized over the last decade (Denver et al. 2003; Gibson and Römmele 2009; Fisher, Cutts and Fieldhouse 2011). This also applies to Spanish general elections. According to Criado (2004: 20), as much as an 83 per cent of the campaign budgets of the two major Spanish parties is managed by the parties' head offices, while the remaining 17 per cent is transferred to the parties' organizations in the districts. Therefore, we believe that *party rallies* and *party events* are the best available measures of our dependent variable.

4. Data, independent variables and methods

The main independent variables are operationalized as follows. As a measure of district competitiveness, we use *district closeness*. This variable is inspired in Criado (2008)

and it is defined as the difference in the vote shares between the party that is predicted to win the last seat in the district and the runner up. We expect a negative coefficient of this variable because the smaller its value (that is, the narrower the distance to the marginal seat), the stronger the incentive of parties to mobilize in such a district.

To build *district closeness* we can use either lagged information from the previous election or contemporary information from pre-election polls. Although the literature tends to rely on lagged information from the previous electoral outcome, we think that using current information (that is, the anticipated closeness of the district race) is an improvement on those measures. Parties will rarely undertake mobilizational activities based on past information if there are more recent data available to them about district conditions. Additionally, we measure the current *district closeness* as a percent of the eligible voters in the district since, according to Cox (1988), party elites think in terms of percentages.

The *undecided* electorate variable is defined as the percent of respondents in each district who report that they have not yet decided which party they will vote in the forthcoming election at the time the pre-election poll was conducted:

$$undecided = \frac{\#\,undecided}{\#\,respondents} \times 100$$

The incentives of parties to target their electoral strongholds are operationalized through the *party strength* variable. This variable uses the party share of the district vote in the previous general election to evaluate the importance of a district in the party's electoral results as well as a proxy of the weight of the local party in the national organization.[6]

To isolate district effects, we have included in the analysis other factors that affect the level of campaign activity and could bias the estimates if they were omitted. First, we control for the number of seats allocated to each district. District magnitude varies widely in Spain and party decisions to mobilize in a district may be dependent on the

[6] Results are robust to alternative specifications of party strength that comprise more previous elections (such as the historical average electoral share in the last two or three general elections), or the percentage of city councillors of each party per district. These results are not reported but are available on request.

number of deputies that the district elects. [7] Secondly, we also include election fixed effects to take into account the different political contexts in which the four elections were contested. Third, the strategies adopted by parties to influence voters' decisions may vary if a party is ruling or in opposition during the campaign period. A party candidate running for the prime minister office for the first time has to carry on a more intense campaign than a candidate that has run for the same office before. Moreover, a first time party candidate needs to put more effort to increase name-recognition among voters as well as to consolidate her/his leadership inside her/his party in those circumstances in which the choice of the new candidate was controversial.

Previous research in other institutional contexts has found that campaign activities by a first-time candidate are more productive (Green and Krasno 1988, Jacobson 1990, Denver and Hands 1997). Therefore, we expect a higher level of campaigning when a party nominates a new candidate. Besides, although campaigns in multiparty systems tend to be party-centered, first-time candidates for prime minister have to make a good showing for her/his own survival. To remain in politics, a new candidate for prime minister must run a good campaign to prove that (s)he is a viable contender even if (s)he is unable to win the current election. So we expect that a party fielding a first time candidate for the prime minister office will undertake more mobilization activities than a party in which the candidate has already run at least once. To address this issue we include a new variable in the models (*new candidate*). [8]

The descriptive statistics for all the variables employed in the analyses are displayed in Table 3.

(Table 3 around here)

To construct our variables, we have relied on two data sources. Electoral returns are taken from the official results published by the Ministry for Internal Affairs (*Ministerio*

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[7] Excluding the single-member districts of Ceuta and Melilla, district magnitude variation ranges from 2 to 36. The district median magnitude is 5, the mean is 7 and the standard deviation 6.

[8] *Candidate* is a dummy scoring 1 if it is the first time that a party candidate runs for the prime minister office and 0 otherwise. The candidate for the prime minister office, the national leader of the party, is the number one in the party list of the district of Madrid. For the PP, the dummy is 1 in 2004 (first time for Mr. Rajoy), and 0 in 2000, 2008 y 2011. For the PSOE, the dummy is 1 in 2000 (first time for Mr. Almunia), 2004 (first time for Mr. Zapatero) and 2011 (first time for Mr. Rubalcaba), and 0 in 2008.

del Interior). Several of our variables aggregate individual electoral data at the district level. This information is taken from the Center for Sociological Studies (CIS) surveys. The CIS samples of the 50 constituencies in the pre-election polls are designed to be representative of the eligible voters at the district level since they are used to assign district seats to parties a month or so before the campaign begins.[9]

As for the methodology, our dependent variables, *party rallies* and *party events*, are tally variables that count the number of times a mobilization activity occurs in an election. These variables are supposed to follow either a Poisson or a binomial process. To apply the Poisson model the variance of the dependent variable should be equal to the mean (Green 2003: 709). For our data, the variance of the *party events* for the PP and the PSOE is twice the mean. So, given the overdispersion of the data and the skewed distribution, we use a negative binomial procedure to estimate the parameters. However, as a robustness check, we also replicate the results using Poisson and OLS estimations to show that the results do not depend on the type of econometric model.[10] Since the observations in our dataset are drawn repeatedly from the same districts, we cannot assume that they are independent of each other. All models are, therefore, estimated with clustered standard errors at the district level to allow for the possible autocorrelation of the error terms.

Finally, a last methodological point is the potential risk of endogeneity of some of our main independent variables. Since some of them are built using contemporary data, it could be argued that it is the mobilization of parties that leads to electoral competitiveness and not the other way around. However, given the periods of time in which our dependent variables were compiled and the polls were conducted, this is not necessarily a problem. In three out of four elections, all our party events and rallies took place after the pre-electoral polls were taken. As a matter of fact, the collection of data for the 2004, 2008 and 2011 pre-election surveys finished on the 15th of February, the 4th of February, and the 23rd of October while we started our period of observation on the 15th of February, the 11th of February and the 24th of October, respectively. The only problem seems to arise regarding the 2000 election, when the data collected for the pre-

[9] This is the reason why the sample size of the pre-electoral surveys is four times larger than the size of the post-electoral samples.
[10] OLS results are robust and available on request.

election poll ended on the 28th of February, that is, only 13 days before the election. However, the results are robust to the exclusion of this year as well.[11]

5. Results

In this section we discuss the district effects estimated by the models. The analysis proceeds as follows. First, in Table 4 we run a general mobilization model with all the observations for both parties. Then, to check the findings of the general model, we run again the negative binomial regressions on both dependent variables for each party separately. This allows us to test whether both parties behave similarly or they have different mobilization strategies. The PP models are displayed in Table 5 and the PSOE models in Table 6.

(Tables 4-6 about here)

The empirical results support three of the four hypotheses that we set out to explain the allocation of campaign activity. Controlling for district magnitude and election and candidate characteristics, the overall models suggest that the current competitiveness of the district has a positive impact on the distribution of effort across the individual constituencies. This result is consistent with our hypothesis about the behaviour of party elites. The effect of parties' electoral strongholds on mobilization is also validated. Contrary to expectations, the proportion of undecided voters at the district level does not appear to play a significant role in the allocation of campaign effort.

As hypothesized, parties' choices respond to both a seat and a stronghold mobilizing behaviour. The results, in the first place, support the idea that parties' main strategy is to allocate their mobilizational efforts across districts in order to maximize the number of seats in the legislature. This logic develops in two ways. An implication of the rational choice theory is that parties should mobilize more intensely where a marginal seat is easier to achieve or easier to lose (i.e., in districts in which the value of the *closeness*

[11] These results are not reported, but are available on request.

variable is smaller). The estimates of the current *district closeness* in the pooled models are consistently negative as predicted, significant, and robust to the measurement of campaign intensity (i. e., *party events* or *party rallies*). In Tables 5 and 6, it can be seen that when we run the mobilization model for each party, the effect found in the pooled models also holds for each party.[12]

We have argued that apart from winning new seats, parties have incentives to mobilize in their strongholds because campaigning in districts in which the party organization is stronger is less costly. Furthermore, bringing national leaders to a district provides local elites with an opportunity to address local issues. Our results support this hypothesis. *Party strength* at the district level is a significant predictor of the allocation of campaign effort by the central party headquarters in the general model. We also find that the local party effect is smaller in size than the effect of *district closeness*, both in the overall and the individual party models.

An explanation of this result could be that part of the expected influence of *party strength* rests in the system of public funding. Within this logic, we have argued that political finance regulation in Spain offers parties an economic incentive to increase the vote shares even when some of the votes gained are not translated into legislative seats. This is so because the votes achieved in the lower house elections are included in the formula that determines the subsidies that parliamentary parties receive from the central government to pay for general election expenses as well as for their organizational expenses between elections. But the number of seats attained is also included in the funding formula. Actually, two thirds of the central government subsidy for operating expenses depends on the seats gained while the remaining one third depends on the votes achieved. Therefore, although vote-maximizing behaviour makes sense for Spanish parties because it allows them to increase their yearly revenue flow, even for financial reasons it is better for parties to gain votes in districts in which they can be translated into seats. Thus, the financial incentives of parties for maximizing votes might be somewhat captured by the seat maximization variable.

[12] The estimate for the PSOE falls very close to conventional levels of significance ($p<0.13$).

With regard to the third hypothesis, and contrary to expectations, we find no significant influence of the share of *undecided* electors on campaign intensity. The parameter estimates are generally positive, although indistinguishable from zero in all the specifications. This is a striking result because the activation of latent preferences is a pervasive finding of the literature on the effects of campaigns. Moreover, it also seems plausible that districts with a larger number of undefined voters offer more potential for party mobilization activities.

To show graphically the empirical effects, we plot in Figure 1 and Figure 2 the impact of *district closeness* and *party strength* on *party rallies* (model 4.2), keeping the rest of the variables at their mean values.[13]

(Figures 1-2 about here)

Figure 1 displays the impact of *district closeness* on the predicted number of *party rallies*. A transition from a perfectly competitive district (where the electoral margin in the allocation of the last seat is zero) to a non-competitive one (where the electoral margin is as large as 25 per cent of the district's electorate) reduces the number of party rallies from 0.6 to 0.1. This is nearly equivalent to three fourths of a standard deviation of the dependent variable, which is quite a substantial impact. Figure 2 presents the effect of *party strength* on mobilizational choices. In this case, the effect is smaller. A switch from a district where the party obtained a 10 per cent share of the vote in the previous election to a district where it got a vote share of 40 per cent increases the expected number of rallies in about one seventh of a standard deviation (from 0.3 events to 0.4). This result reflects that the seat maximization logic is more powerful in explaining the campaign strategies of parties than the stronghold mobilization logic.

In Table 7, we analyze if parties' seat-maximizing incentives to mobilize voters are moderated by district magnitude (hypothesis H_4). Table 7 includes the general models of Table 4, but now interacting the number of seats elected by each district both with the closeness measure and the share of undecided voters. Models 7.1 and 7.2 show that the impact of the closeness of the district race on the distribution of electoral effort is more

[13] Both Figure 1 and Figure 2 are plotted with 95 per cent confidence intervals. Simulating the effect on *party events* yields very similar results (not shown, but available on request).

important in smaller districts. That is, the incentives to allocate campaign effort in a small district are stronger if the district is small. The reason is that, due to electoral malapportionment, fewer votes are required to achieve a new seat. In addition, we also find a positive and significant effect for the party events model interacting the undecided variable with district magnitude (model 7.3). However, the effect is of small magnitude and it is not robust, as the interaction is not significant for the rallies model (column 7.4).

(Table 7 about here)

Finally, to account for the robustness of our results to the econometric estimation method, Table 8 replicates the models in Tables 4-6 using a Poisson procedure instead of a negative binomial one. It can be observed that the magnitude and significance of the coefficients remains at comparable levels. Only the *party strength* estimate falls below conventional levels of significance for the *PSOE events* model (Table 8.6).

(Table 8 about here)

6. Conclusion

Our findings suggest that the campaign choices of party elites follow a dual logic. First, their main objective seems to be to maximize seats, concentrating their electoral efforts in swing districts where the marginal seat is more attainable. This is a result consistent with a parliamentary system in which seats are crucial to win the prime minister office. Secondly, parties also have incentives to mobilize where they are stronger, since they need the support of their core constituencies to achieve their other goals.

This article contributes to the literature on electoral mobilization. First, by departing from the usual institutional setting of single-member districts and focusing on a multi-member district proportional system, we are able to offer a different picture of campaign choices. Second, we employ measures built with contemporary information

from pre-election surveys taken before the mobilization activities of parties begin. This is an improvement over the standard practice in the literature, which relies on lagged variables. Third, we incorporate the incentive structure derived from the party-funding regime into the strategies of party elites.

Future research can extend the results of this article in a number of ways. It would be interesting to test our hypotheses in other proportional systems to account for the robustness of the findings reported here. It would also be useful to complement our analysis with other specifications of the dependent variable, such as party expenses in the districts. Finally, a surprising finding of this article is the non-significance of the undecided electorate at the district level in explaining campaign choices. The literature tends to assume that electoral campaigns are, at least partially, directed to persuade undecided voters. Thus, further research is needed to understand this mismatch between this theoretical expectation and the empirical result.

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Table 1. Intensity of district mobilization at general elections (2000-2011): party rallies by the PP and the PSOE

		2000	2004	2008	2011
PP	Non mobilized districts (*party rallies* = 0)	32	26	31	33
	Moderately mobilized districts (*party rallies* = 1)	16	21	18	13
	Highly mobilized districts (*party rallies* ≥ 2)	2	3	1	4
PSOE	Non mobilized districts (*party rallies* = 0)	31	32	30	29
	Moderately mobilized districts (*party rallies* = 1)	11	16	17	21
	Highly mobilized districts (*party rallies* ≥ 2)	8	2	3	0

Note: Entries are number of districts.

Table 2. Intensity of district mobilization at general elections (2000-2011): party events by the PP and the PSOE

		2000	2004	2008	2011
PP	Non mobilized districts (*party events* = 0)	16	16	18	23
	Moderately mobilized districts (*party events* = 1 or 2)	29	26	29	25
	Highly mobilized districts (*party events* ≥ 3)	5	8	3	2
PSOE	Non mobilized districts (*party events* = 0)	19	19	26	22
	Moderately mobilized districts (*party events* = 1 or 2)	27	27	21	25
	Highly mobilized districts (*party events* ≥ 3)	4	4	3	3

Note: Entries are number of districts.

Table 3. Summary Statistics

Variable	Observations	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Party Events	400	1.04	1.46	0	12
PP Events	200	1.06	1.42	0	11
PSOE Events	200	0.46	0.65	0	4
Party Rallies	400	0.46	0.66	0	4
PP Rallies	200	1.01	1.51	0	12
PSOE Rallies	200	0.47	0.66	0	3
District Closeness	400	5.18	4.85	0	30.5
Seats	400	6.96	5.98	2	36
Party Strength	400	0.41	0.10	0.11	0.65
Undecided Electors	400	0.19	0.06	0.53	0.37
New Candidate	400	0.50	0.50	0	1

Table 4. General Mobilization Model: Negative Binomial Estimations

VARIABLES	(4.1) Events	(4.2) Rallies
District Closeness	-0.0340*	-0.0718***
	(0.0186)	(0.0220)
Seats	0.0742***	0.0613***
	(0.0054)	(0.0061)
Party Strength	0.0151***	0.01543**
	(0.0044)	(0.0071)
Undecided	0.0097	0.0071
	(0.0116)	(0.0152)
New Candidate	0.0951	0.1380
	(0.3280)	(0.1630)
Observations	400	400
Clusters	50	50
Wald χ^2	483.62***	201.75***

Note: Election dummies, party dummies and constants not shown.
Robust standard errors clustered by district in parentheses.
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table 5. PP Mobilization Model: Negative Binomial Estimations

VARIABLES	(5.1) PP events	(5.2) PP rallies
District Closeness	-0.0341*	-0.0599**
	(0.0204)	(0.0245)
Seats	0.0688***	0.0669***
	(0.0051)	(0.0088)
Party Strength	0.0139**	0.0122*
	(0.0060)	(0.0070)
Undecided	0.0025	0.0204
	(0.0139)	(0.0207)
New Candidate	0.0674	0.00078
	(0.1750)	(0.2850)
Observations	200	200
Clusters	50	50
Wald χ^2	544.69***	123.85***

Note: Election dummies and constants not shown.
Robust standard errors clustered by district in parentheses.
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table 6. PSOE Mobilization Model: Negative Binomial Estimations

VARIABLES	(6.1) PSOE events	(6.2) PSOE rallies
District Closeness	-0.0342	-0.0835***
	(0.0224)	(0.0281)
Seats	0.0798***	0.0557***
	(0.0075)	(0.0082)
Party Strength	0.01521	0.02473*
	(0.0099)	(0.0149)
Undecided	0.0178	-0.0065
	(0.0128)	(0.0192)
New Candidate	0.4010*	0.2590
	(0.0280)	(0.2492)
Observations	200	200
Clusters	50	50
Wald χ^2	169.03***	94.78***

Note: Election dummies and constants not shown.
Robust standard errors clustered by district in parentheses.
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table 7. Models with interactions

	(7.1)	(7.2)	(7.3)	(7.4)
VARIABLES	Events	Rallies	Events	Rallies
District closeness	-0.0653***	-0.1270***	-0.0301*	-0.0712***
	(0.0251)	(0.0291)	(0.0183)	(0.0219)
Seats	0.0662***	0.0476***	0.0368*	0.0552***
	(0.0062)	(0.0056)	(0.0203)	(0.0160)
Party Strength	0.01639***	0.01711**	0.01426***	0.0154**
	(0.0043)	(0.0069)	(0.0041)	(0.0071)
Undecided	0.0106	0.0086	-0.0065	0.0044
	(0.0114)	(0.0152)	(0.0139)	(0.0180)
New Candidate	0.0809	0.1190	0.0906	0.1380
	(0.0968)	(0.1640)	(0.0911)	(0.1630)
District closeness*Seats	0.00647*	0.0108***		
	(0.0037)	(0.0036)		
Undecided*Seats			0.0025**	0.0004
			(0.0012)	(0.0012)
Observations	400	400	400	400
Clusters	50	50	50	50
Wald χ^2	709.34***	283.05***	576.15***	303.79***

Note: Election dummies and constants not shown.
Robust standard errors clustered by district in parentheses.
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table 8. Poisson Estimations

ARIABLES	(8.1) Events	(8.2) Rallies	(8.3) PP events	(8.4) PP rallies	(8.5) PSOE events	(8.6) PSOE rallies
strict closeness	-0.0340*	-0.0718***	-0.0341*	-0.0599**	-0.0342	-0.0835***
	(0.0186)	(0.0220)	(0.0204)	(0.0245)	(0.0224)	(0.0281)
ats	0.0742***	0.0613***	0.0688***	0.0669***	0.0798***	0.0557***
	(0.00545)	(0.00614)	(0.00507)	(0.00872)	(0.00753)	(0.00824)
rty Strength	0.0151***	0.01543**	0.01392**	0.01217*	0.01521	0.02473*
	(0.0044)	(0.0071)	(0.0060)	(0.0070)	(0.0995)	(0.0150)
ıdecided	0.0097	0.0071	0.0025	0.0204	0.0178	-0.0065
	(0.0116)	(0.0152)	(0.0139)	(0.0207)	(0.0128)	(0.0192)
ew Candidate	0.0951	0.1380	0.0674	0.00075	0.4010*	0.2590
	(0.0933)	(0.1630)	(0.1750)	(0.2850)	(0.2080)	(0.2490)
bservations	400	400	200	200	200	200
usters	50	50	50	50	50	50
ald χ^2	483.59***	201.75***	544.7***	123.85***	169.05***	94.78***

Note: Election dummies and constants not shown.
Robust standard errors clustered by district in parentheses.
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Figure 1

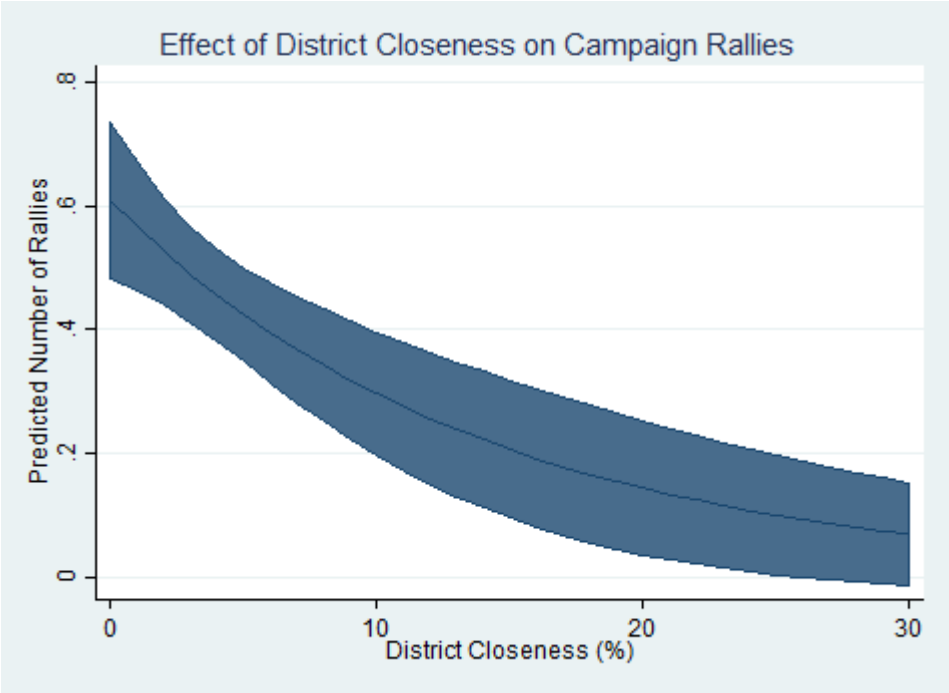
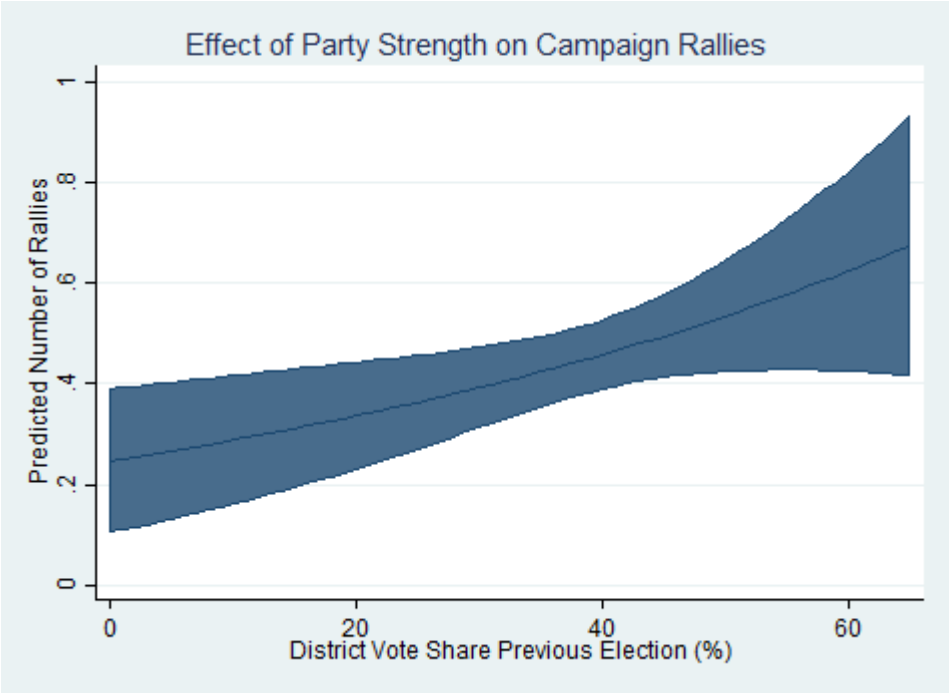
Figure 2