4. CYBER PARTIES

Miloš Brunclík

THEORY OF POLITICAL PARTIES

Cadre parties	Mass parties	Catch-all parties	Electoral-professional parties	Cartel parties	Business-firm parties	Member-less parties	Cyber parties
•Late 19th century	•Mass print media, party press, mass membership, class parties •Early 20th century	•Second half of the 20th century	•Late 20th century	•Late 20th century	•Late 20th century	•New millenia	•New millenia
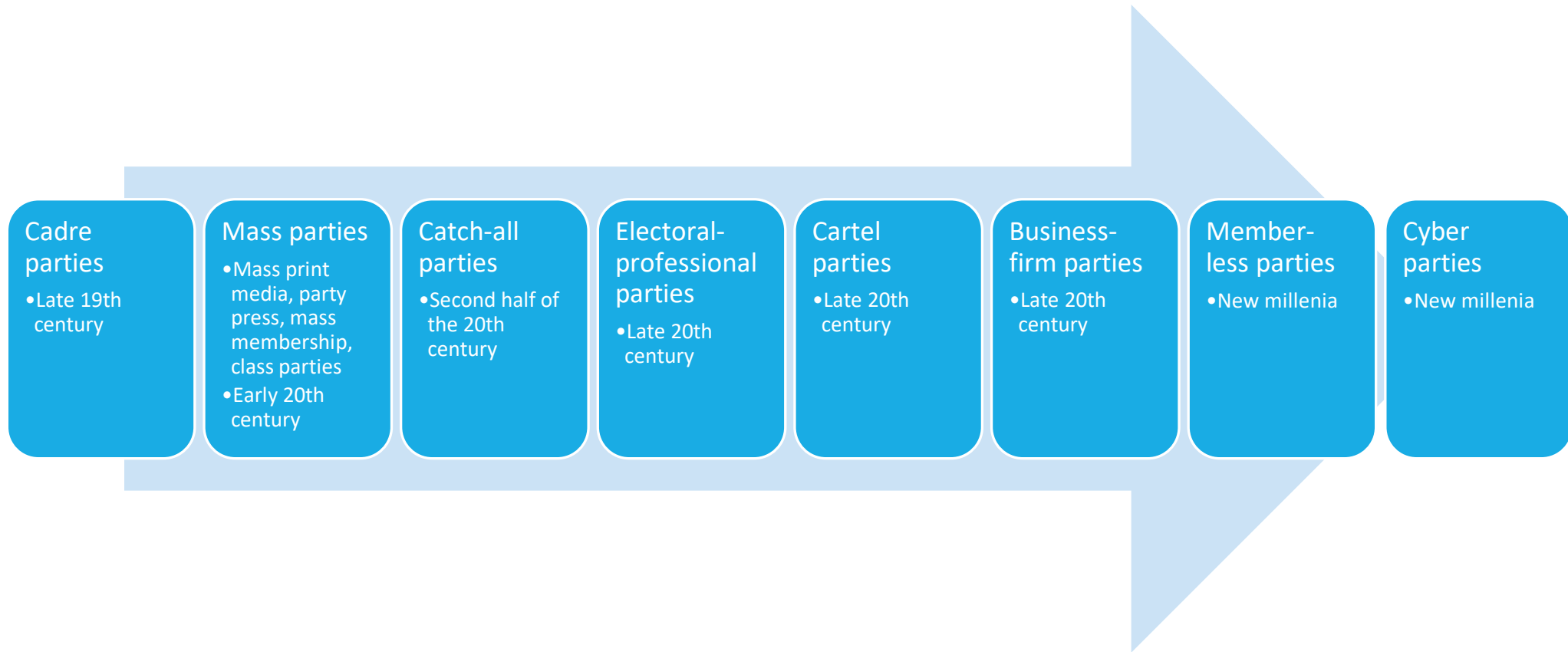
CYBER PARTY: HELEN MARGETTS (2001)

Cyber party = a conceptual model

Real parties may only approximate the concept

Modern political parties – some traits of the concept

„virtual" parties

ROOTS

|	
Increasing	**Increasing use of ICT** • Citizens, organizations, government, NGOs… • New apps • Mass usage of the Internet = key platform for political communication
Changing	**Changing patterns of relationship between parties and voters** • Single-issue political activities • Declining party membership • Dealignment

DEALIGNMENT

1. **Decreasing partisan identification**
2. **Greater alienation of voters from parties**

→ **links connecting parties and voters are weakening**

→ **more „free" voters available on electoral market**

→ **electorates are less stable and more volatile (changeable)**

3. **Decreasing partisan membership**
4. **Decreasing trust in political parties**
   - **Anti-party sentiment**
   - **Lowering turnout**
- **decreasing shares of old parties**
- **→Favourable conditions for the emergence of new parties**

SINGLE ISSUE POLITICAL ACTIVITY

- **Anti-capitalism**
- **Fox-hunting**
- **Animal rights**
- **Environmental issues**
- **Human rights issues**
- **Pirate issues**
- **…**
- **→ technologies allow target at the respective groups**

Public still oppose fox hunting
Do you support or oppose the ban on fox hunting with hounds? %

■ Support ■ Oppose ■ Don't know

	2004*	2015
Support	61	51
Oppose	30	33
Don't know	9	16
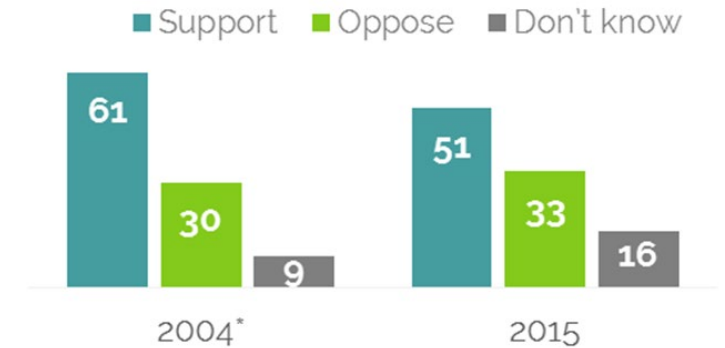
*2004 question: "MPs have voted to ban fox hunting with hounds. Do you suport or oppose this ban?"

YouGov | yougov.com   Jan. 7–8, 2015

FURTHER EXAMPLES OF SINGLE-ISSUE ACTIVITIES

PARTY RESPONSES

Origins:

- Changing patterns of political participation
- Web-based technologies

Claim to support

- Direct linkages to voters

Membership

- No or little membership
- Loose definition of supporters

Channels of communication

- Web-based

DIE DIGITALEN" IN GERMANY

- "virtual parties": "
  - ran in the 1999 local government election in Berlin
  - operated only on the on-line basis

MEMBERSHIP

Membership recruitment – low priority

Supporters and voters more important

Channels for supporter and voters to influence party manifesto

- **On-line discussion forums**
- **2000 Conservative Party in UK – organized first e-petition**
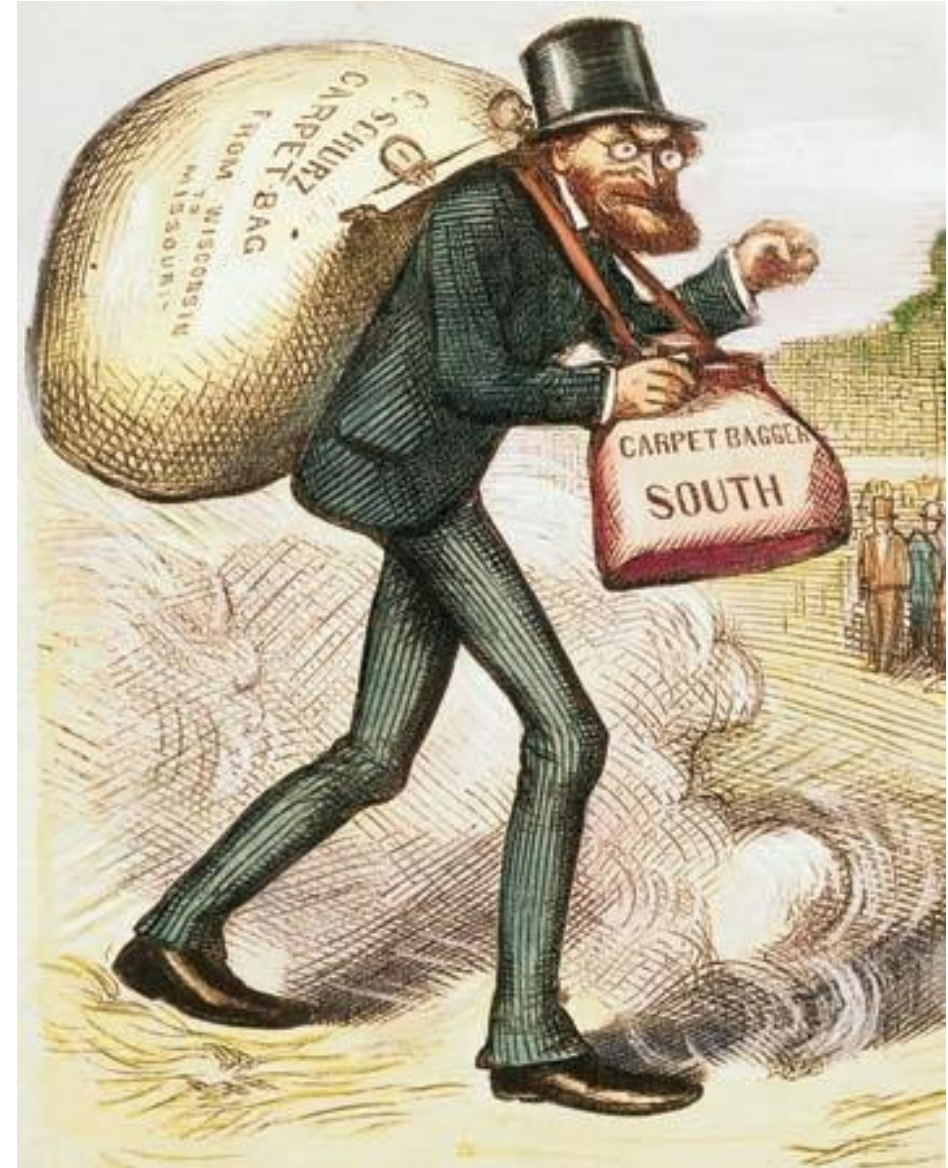
CYBERPARTIES AND THEIR WEAKNESSES

- **Strategic penetration („carpet baggers")**

  - **On-line participation (no formal members)**

  - **Danger of party enemies to influence party candidate selection**

  - **Especially local level**
    - **Low number of participants**
    - **Low turnout**
    - **→→ Small group of well-organized strategic voters are more likely to influence the result**

CYBERPARTIES AND THEIR WEAKNESSES

„preaching to the converted" (Pippa Norris)

- On-line messages can not reach out other people

Lack of organizational capacity and weaknesses

- Lack of people: grassroots activity is vital for local campaigns
  - Campaign can not be done solely on-line
- Lack of membership fees paying members
- X Internet – cost saving device
- X absence of membership does not preclude donations