Efficacy and the Reproduction of Political Activism: Evidence From the Broad Front in Uruguay

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Abstract

The professionalization of politics and the disappearance of party organizations based on activists seems an inescapable trend. This paper shows, by studying the Broad Front of Uruguay as a deviant case, the relevance of organizational rules for explaining the reproduction of party activism. Using data from both an online survey of people differing in their levels of engagement with the Broad Front and in-depth interviews with party activists, we show that those with relatively low levels of engagement—"adherents"— and activists differ in their willingness to cooperate with the party and in the time they devote to party activities. Also, we find that reducing the perceived efficacy of political engagement strongly decreases activists' self-reported willingness to engage with the party, while this reduction has no effect upon adherents. These findings suggest that the design of organizational rules that grant a political role to grassroots organizers can promote party activism.

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1. Introduction

What explains the reproduction of activism in party organizations? What type of organizational arrangements account for activists´ greater engagement with parties? Political parties are essential political organizations in modern democracies. To operate as channels for democratic representation, parties require loyal membership and activists to ensure a permanent organization that is not the mere electoral vehicle of ambitious politicians. All parties have adherents, i.e., people who identify with the party and typically contribute money to it and participate in party activities, mainly rallies. Yet, only a few parties have developed a structure of activists, that is, people who are regularly involved in the organization—especially beyond electoral cycles. Without members who can exert some degree of influence and control over party elites´ decisions, policy switches and significant ideological changes are more likely. Without grassroots members, the role of the party as a vehicle for ambitious politicians is likely to conflict with its role as a vehicle for democratic representation.

The old, mass-based party relied on grassroots structures to mobilize voters. The party politics literature has claimed for some time that parties, qua political organizations, are weakening. Whether or not one agrees with this general claim, it is clear that the old mass-based type of party, described by Duverger (1954), has disappeared. Exogenous factors account for its disappearance. For example, the communications and technology revolution eroded the previously necessary role of grassroots activism. New technologies have significantly decreased the costs of disseminating a political message and to incorporate voters´ needs in party platforms. Political parties in high- or middle-income societies no longer need activists to win elections (Hersh, 2015; Issenberg, 2012). Given that large, complex political organizations are costly and harder to manage and control, party leaders have no interest in maintaining activists and a big organizational structure.

Uruguay's Frente Amplio (Broad Front, FA), however, still produces party activists. At its origin in 1971, the FA relied heavily on the activism of an army of volunteers. Nonetheless, in the present, the FA does not depend exclusively on volunteer organizers to win elections. More critically, there are fewer people willing to volunteer as party activists or to invest time in the organization. As noted above, this weakening of organizational attachment is a general trait among other mass-based parties. The FA, however, still reproduces its activism; the party continues to reproduce the highly mobilized character of its grassroots structure, the movement of *Comités de Base*—Base Committees. This is the main reason why Levitsky and Roberts (2011) categorize the FA as the only leftist institutionalized mass organic party in Latin America. The difference between the FA's trajectory and the trajectories experienced by the *Partido Socialista* in Chile (Socialist Party, PSCh) and the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* in Brazil (Workers Party, PT), two comparable Latin American party organizations (Hunter, 2010; Roberts, 1998, 2014; Weyland, Madrid, & Hunter, 2010), is that, in contrast to the latter organizations, the FA in Uruguay has both resisted the dual transition to democracy and to a market economy and continues to have activists.

In the context of the generalized decline of party activism, the FA is a deviant case because the party still retains large numbers of engaged activists who are neither` a cadre of bureaucrats nor a part of a structure to deliver clientelistic goods (c.f. Levitsky, 2003). Moreover, it is the most intensely and permanently mobilized institutionalized party organization in Latin America.[2] Thus, it provides an opportunity to analyze the reproduction of activists´ engagement beyond the impact of exogenous processes.

The crucial difference between activism in the FA and the activism observed in other parties is the presence of a massive cadre of activists throughout the territory who play an

[2] Also, the FA has not (up to this point) become a Cartel Party; there is no complete "interpenetration of party and state." Katz and Mair (1995, p. 16).

active role in the party´s decision-making. These activists differ from adherents, both in their willingness to engage in volunteer activism and in the elasticity of their engagement behavior based on individuals' perception of efficacy within the organization. While grassroots activism plays a less important role now in the FA as compared to during the party's foundational stage, grassroots activism still exists, is widespread in the territory, and retains power in the party's decision-making structure.

In this paper, we explain how FA managed to reproduce activism , while other mass-based parties lost activism and became professional electoral parties. This paper describes the role the activists play in the FA and explains how organizational rules affect individuals´ decision to continue participating in the party. Our analysis speaks to theoretical arguments that seek to explain the reproduction of activism in civic organizations (c.f. Han, 2014, 2016). While there is a large literature that explains activist engagement in civic organizations (Baggetta, Han, & Andrews, 2013; Bimber, Flanagin, & Stohl, 2012; Han, 2014, 2016; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995), there are only a few studies that explain the reproduction of activism in party organizations, which are critical political organizations in modern democracies. While others have addressed the individual material or expressive incentives that influence one´s decision to engage in politics, we emphasize a much less-well studied dimension: the causal effects of organizational rules.

In the case of the FA, grassroots activists have an institutionalized role in the decision-making structure. They have institutionalized channels that facilitate participation; more crucially, these channels enable them to exert a significant *voice* (Hirschman, 1970), which imbues activists´ participation with a strong sense of *efficacy*. In other words, activists in the FA have sufficient voice in the organization that their choices and preferences powerfully shape the party's institutional design. Activists are aware of the extent of their power, and this, in turn, enhances their willingness to participate. Organizational rules

preclude party elites from reducing the role of grassroots activists without the latters' acquiescence. In line with Han (2014), these activists are organizers (i.e., activists who reproduce the organization by transforming new adherents into activists). The reproduction of the mass organic nature of the FA with an extensive network of permanent activists is facilitated by a specific institutional design that provides specific incentives for the reproduction of such structure.

To explore the differences between activists and adherents, we administered an online survey (post-stratified using observational population data from party internal election registries). Also, to analyze the effect of these organizational rules and of perceived efficacy, we included survey experiments. We gathered qualitative evidence using in-depth interviews and other secondary sources. The paper first develops the theoretical argument for the reproduction of activism in political parties. Second, the paper describes the difference between adherents and activists in the FA. Third, we present evidence from survey experiments to show the key role organizational rules play in reproducing commitment to the party organization.

2. Theory

What explains the willingness of a political activist to continue engaging with a given political organization? Several different lines of research are relevant to this question. For example, the party politics literature has contributed significantly to our understanding of the evolution of types of political parties (Duverger, 1954; Katz & Mair, 1995; Kirchheimer, 1966; Panebianco, 1988). One of the dimensions along which parties are classified is the level of membership attachment. The *cadre* party comprises a small elite of members of parliament, while the *mass* party includes large numbers of citizens within the party ranks.

Also, there are compelling analyses concerning the structural (Mainwaring & Zoco, 2007; Webb & White, 2007), institutional (Samuels & Shugart, 2010), and organizational (Scarrow, 2015; Scarrow & Gezgor, 2010; Scarrow, Webb, & Poguntke, 2017) determinants of the decay of party activism over the past several decades. Some studies have explained party organizational decay as a result of dramatic innovations in communication technology (Dalton, McAllister, & Wattenberg, 2005; Strøm, 2000). This technological revolution has reduced the costs of communicating with the electorate (Hersh, 2015; Issenberg, 2012). Thus, it is now possible to reach a large, dispersed electorate in a personalized (customized) way without incurring the expense of face-to-face contact based on activists. However, the literature notes that intense canvassing remains an effective tool for increasing voter turnout (Green & Gerber, 2008).

Several classical texts have explored how the internal dynamics of a party organization influences the organization's fate (Duverger, 1954; Panebianco, 1988). Duverger (1954) was the first to distinguish between types of engagement with a political party, e.g., voters, supporters, members, and activists. Building on Pizzorno (1970), Panebianco (1988) analyzed how selective and collective incentives affect individual's level of engagement with parties. *Collective* incentives refers to how leaders reproduce a party´s identity and satisfy party members´ need to identify with ideas and values. *Selective* incentives, by contrast, concern leaders´ ability to distribute positions within the party or in government, or other types of patronage. While collective incentives are crucial for voters, supporters, and members, activists´ willingness to continue their activism depends on a combination of both collective and selective incentives. Activists will participate as long as the party leadership provides these two types of incentives. However, this exchange between leaders and activists, where activists provide their voluntary work in exchange for these incentives, implies, in Panebianco´s terms, that such participation is functional to leaders´

interests. In other words, activists delegate to leaders the authority to define the party´s strategies. As a result, leaders are not restricted by activists´ preferences but by the party´s general identity, i.e., leaders need to satisfy collective incentives.

According to Panebianco, the terms of the relationship and exchange between activists[3] and leaders is influenced by exogenous conditions (Panebianco, 1988). In this exchange, leaders will have more power vis-à-vis activists when the latter have no alternative (i.e. no ability to participate in other parties or organizations that represent their ideas and values). For Panebianco, party rules and their operation only set the party positions that leaders can use as selective incentives. In Panebianco´s terms, these rules are completely manipulable by leaders and are only restricted by the marginally decreasing utility leaders derive from the creation of new positions and offices within the party. This point of view is also assumed by those who observe party rules and claim that formal rules are a façade that obscures the actual informal rules that are easily manipulated by leaders (Freidenberg & Levitsky, 2007; Levitsky, 2003).

Our point is that rules do, in fact, matter and can determine these exchanges between leaders and activists, and hence activists´ relative power vis-à-vis leaders. In the case of the FA, formal rules matter. They ensure activists´ voice in the definition of the party´s positions and this efficacy operates as a selective incentive to participate. This operates as a selective incentive because FA rules empower individuals to influence party decision-making. This is not an incentive controlled by party leaders. Moreover, it is an incentive set by the rules that prevent leaders from exercising power over activists in the party´s decision-making process. Even if activists lose their relevance for the party´s day-to-day operation and electoral

[3] Believers—only interested in collective incentives—and careerists—interested in selective incentives.

success and are no longer relevant for leaders, these rules limit the power that leaders hold over them. Activists do not depend on leaders for selective incentives to participate.

A more recent line of research has revived the analysis of the organizational sources[4] of political parties' success and failure (Anria, 2018a; Art, 2011; Burgess & Levitsky, 2003; Cyr, 2017; Levitsky, 2003; Levitsky, Loxton, Van Dyck, & Domínguez, 2016; Ribeiro, 2014; Rosenblatt, 2018; Scarrow, 2015; Tavits, 2013; van Biezen, 2003; Wills Otero, 2015). In general, the literature has been more interested in the organizational features that facilitate adaptation to exogenous challenges. However, neither electoral success nor organizational survival is analytically tied to the reproduction of activism. Thus, this literature is essentially silent on the role organizational rules play in the reproduction of activism and in the survival of the party. As in the case of Panebianco (1988), these works tend to see organizational rules as informal (Freidenberg & Levitsky, 2007), feeble and easily manipulable by leaders.

Other studies that have examined the individual-level determinants of party activism have focused on individuals´ resources (e.g. education) or individuals' incentives—material or purposive—to join a party (Van Haute & Gauja, 2015). Yet, the role of organizational structure per se in reproducing grassroots activism remains understudied. Determining the precise role of the organizational setting is critical because sustaining an organization is the greatest challenge for a political party. This paper seeks to help fill this lacuna.

The literature on civic engagement that explains the reproduction of activism in civil society organizations helps us build a theory about activism in party organizations (e.g. Verba et al., 1995). In this vein, Han (2014, 2016) develops multiple empirical strategies to analyze the determinants´ of individuals' decision to spend time in or donate money to a civic

[4] Other recent studies have also focused on the success or failure of party building and survival; however, they have placed greater emphasis on exogenous variables, though also combined with organizational strategies (Luna, 2014; Madrid, 2012; Roberts, 2014).

organization. More specifically, Han (2014, p. 5) analyzes the organizational settings of sustained activism in civic associations that make public claims, have voluntary membership, and have democratically elected leaders. High engagement in these civic associations arises, she claims, when leaders seek to reach as many people as possible, and also invest in forging intense attachment with new adherents, transforming them into activists. More recently, Han (2016, p. 296) seeks to identify how a "relational organizational context" breeds more activism in civic organizations. A relational setting is one that ensures "responsiveness" and "openness."

Political parties, however, are fundamentally distinct from civic associations. While civic associations are inherently oriented toward influencing or contending for power, political parties are, crucially though not exclusively, oriented towards winning office (Aldrich, 1995; Schlesinger, 1994; Strom, 1990). Thus, the role of political ambition and its satisfaction distinguishes parties from civil society organizations and warrants a separate analysis to explain the reproduction of volunteer member engagement, especially because political ambition may collide with a more altruistic basis for cooperation. The furtherance of a political career (and thus winning office) does not necessarily imply the construction of an organization with activists—as illustrated by the existence of "professional electoral" parties. As suggested above, political parties have less and less need of activists to win elections. Moreover, activists are also a source of potential challengers who may seek to depose existing party elites.

In democracies, political parties fulfill other functions besides furthering individual political careers, such as, most prominently, the representation function. This function can be fulfilled even if the party only serves the career interests of one or a few ambitious leaders. Yet, to ensure the fulfillment of this function (which might otherwise be contingent on the will of a leader), parties must build a structure that operates and decides independently (based

on institutionalized rules), limiting the will of one leader. If the resulting structure institutionalizes multiple channels for voice, leaders are less likely to exert absolute control over the destiny of the organization and over the party´s platform.

We argue that when a party has completed all of Panebianco´s (1988) main build-up stages, the reproduction of widespread sustained party activism can be explained by an organization having an institutional design that promotes activists´ voice (qua veto power). More specifically, if a party organization builds institutionalized channels to give activists a significant voice (Hirschman, 1970), activists develop a strong sense of efficacy. When their participation is relevant for the definition of party strategies and positions, activists perceive that they exert real influence in party decision-making. In this vein, rules generate both selective incentives (associated with individual's perceived efficacy) and collective incentives (associated with individuals' role in maintaining the party's identity and programmatic stance).

Activists work as organizers in the FA, keeping alive the organization of the party. As Han (2014) stresses, organizers transform adherents into activists. They engage in transforming people who were attracted to the party by its leaders. For example, once a person shows interest in engaging with the party, FA activists keep these prospective activists informed of meetings, and invite them to work for the organization as volunteers. Therefore, the FA, like all parties, has leaders that mobilize voters, but it also has organizers. As studied by, This type of organization is the kind that reproduces activism Han (2014).

Another strand of the literature focuses on analyzing efficacy at the regime-level to explain engagement. Rhodes-Purdy (2017) surveys the effects of efficacy in the reproduction of participation in populist regimes. As the literature has shown, clientelistic parties maintain activists at the base level to build a clientelistic network in places where an organization with territorial penetration is needed to distribute goods and mobilize voters, especially in settings

where TV propaganda is not necessarily the most efficient tool for mobilizing voters—e.g., Peronism in Argentina (Kitschelt & Wilkinson, 2007; Levitsky, 2003; Luna, 2014; Nichter, 2008; Stokes, Dunning, Nazareno, & Brusco, 2013). However, we here analyze activism in the FA, a party that, in contrast to populist regimes or to parties that build a clientelistic linkage between leaders and a party cadre, reproduces voluntary engagement in a basically programmatic context.

The FA developed institutionalized channels for members´ engagement that have existed for over three decades. We argue that the FA´s institutionalized channels that ensure activists opportunities for participation (with veto power) promote a high level of perceived efficacy. More specifically, the FA was born with the attributes of mass-based parties, as defined by Duverger (1954) but it developed a peculiar decision-making structure, wherein grassroots activists were afforded voice and a vote at all levels of the party´s organizational decision-making structure. When activists gained a significant proportion of the seats in the party's decision-making bodies, they also gained control over potential changes to these peculiar rules.

3. A Brief Description of the Democratic Nature of the FA

The FA emerged in 1971, in a context of socioeconomic crisis and political polarization (Astori, 2001; Nahum, Frega, Marona, & Trochón, 1993). Throughout the more than 45 years since its birth, it has remained a party with activists. Even though the party underwent a process of ideological transformation (Garcé & Yaffé, 2005; Yaffé, 2005), it retains its leftist ideological identity and remains the only mass-organic institutionalized leftist party in Latin America (Levitsky & Roberts, 2011). The two other comparable cases in the region—the PSCh in Chile and the PT in Brazil—have turned into professional electoral parties (Levitsky & Roberts, 2011). Both have significantly reduced the importance of the

party grassroots—i.e., volunteers—in the organization. In the case of the PT, the party structure is still relevant, though significantly less so than in the past (Hunter, 2007, 2010; Ribeiro, 2014; Roberts, 1998; Samuels, 2004). Comparing the FA with other electoral alliances in the region indicates that the FA has built a political and organizational structure that is rare among center-left electoral alliances in the region (like Popular Unity and Concertación in Chile, the Alliance in Argentina, and the different electoral coalitions that helped Lula and the Workers Party, in Brazil, to win the presidency).

The FA obtained 18.3% of the votes in its first national election in 1971, and reached 50.4% in the national election of 2004, the first time it won the national election and the presidency. In 1989 it won its first election, and Tabaré Vázquez became the first FA politician to be the Mayor of Montevideo (the capital city of Uruguay). In 2004 it won the national election by a landslide, and Tabaré Vázquez became the first leftist President, marking a historical moment in one of the oldest party systems in the world. It also retained the presidency and the absolute majority in both chambers of Congress in the elections of 2009 and 2014 with 49.3% and 49.4% of the popular vote in each.

From its inception, the FA initiated a process that led to the development of a party structure that privileged consensus and balance among factions, which resulted in the establishment of institutionalized channels for decision making in every aspect of the party's life (e.g., programmatic discussion, presidential candidate nomination, among others). From the very beginning, there was strong bottom-up participation and there were clear organizational rules by which grassroots activists could influence the highest levels of the party decision-making structure. This well-structured organization with institutionalized opportunities for bottom-up voice inhibits radical changes and favors long-term political consistency of the party brand. This structure, which gradually ensured multiple veto points and checks and balances between party structures, was consolidated and reproduced through

feedback mechanisms (Authors 2017). The FA acquired this characteristic during its foundational stage (1971-1986) and it continues to be a party that has activists and a strong internal democracy.[5]

The FA was born as both a coalition and as a movement, and these two structures coexist until today. The coalition was formed by traditional leftist parties, the Socialist Party, the Communist Party, the Christian Democratic Party, and progressive factions that exited from the foundational National and Colorado parties. These are now established and institutionalized factions of the FA that have their own organization and, under the FA label, present lists of candidates for national, departmental (regional), and local elections. The peculiar Uruguayan electoral system based on the Double Simultaneous Vote (DSV) enables each faction in the coalition to nominate candidates for the House and the Senate; factions compete among themselves and at the same time they generate votes for the party as a whole (Buquet, Chasquetti, & Moraes, 1998; González, 1991; Luján & Moraes, 2017; Piñeiro, 2004, 2007; Piñeiro & Yaffé, 2004). The movement was formed by grassroots citizens, who formed the FA´s grassroots organization, the Comités de Base (Base Committees).[6] A Base Committee is the local gathering of party adherents. They have existed since the very

[5] This does not mean that the competitive, electorally oriented decisions and actions of the FA were "stopped" by the action of radicalized uncompromising activists. On the contrary, the most interesting trait of the FA´s organizational structure is the relatively well-harmonized relationship between both goals.

[6] Since the very beginning, there have been activists who were engaged both in the factions and in the Base Committees, i.e. there was no trade-off between the participation in each structure, though (as shown in Table 1) there are activists who only participate in one of the channels.

beginning of the party.[7] The Base Committee structure does not participate in the nomination of candidates (except for the presidential ticket) or in the recruitment of government officials (reserved to the faction structure). It is essentially composed of organizers (Han 2014) who work as volunteers. Both factions and Base Committee structures are equally represented in the highest decision-making bodies of the FA. In this dual structure an activist can participate in Base Committees, in a faction, or in both at the same time.

Base Committees are essentially humble locales with some chairs and few other amenities distributed all over the country (see Table 1), where Frenteamplista grassroots activists gather to discuss politics, local, national or international, and that receive new activists. They meet also with civil society organizations from the neighborhood and channel demands to the decision-making structure of the FA and they meet to organize the deployment of the electoral campaign in the field. Thus, it is volunteer grassroots activists who sustain the operation of a Base Committee.

Table 1 shows the number of Base Committees that held a meeting on the Día del Comité de Base (Day of the Base Committee), which takes place every August 25 (since 1986). To be recognized as one of the Base Committee that holds a meeting that day, the required quorum is 15 registered members (i.e. a very low barrier to entry). The table shows that the number of Base Committees is stable and that they are well distributed throughout the country; they mimic, relatively well, Uruguay´s population distribution. Forty percent of Uruguay´s population lives in Montevideo, the capital city.

[7] There are two types of Base Committee: territorial units (the most common) or centers of functional activity (e.g. work place, student unions, etc.).

Table 1. Base Committees that hold a meeting during the Día del Comité de Base

Year	Montevideo		Canelones*		Rest of countryside		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
2000	185		n/d		n/d		n/d
2003	199		n/d		n/d		n/d
2005	192		n/d		n/d		n/d
2006	158		n/d		n/d		n/d
2008	137		n/d		n/d		n/d
2010	157	41.3	58	15.3	165	43.4	380
2011	142	41.0	54	15.6	150	43.4	346
2012	152	40.9	67	18.0	153	41.1	372
2015	152	43.2	75	21.3	125	35.5	352

Source: "*Informe Asambleas Comité de Base 2012*", Presented at the Mesa Política (Executive Board) of the FA (11/23/2012). Also, Acta 39, Mesa Política, November 20, 2015.
* Canelones is the second largest department in Uruguay (departments are the administrative division of the country). A significant part of Canelones constitutes, with Montevideo and a portion of San José (another department), the metropolitan area.

Since its origin, the FA has had a common complex structure. The Organizational Rules document of 1971 stated that the FA has a pyramidal structure with three levels: the base level, the intermediate level and the directing organs. Since 1986, the Base Committees have had a third of the total number of delegates in the national governing bodies of the FA; the National Plenary and the National Executive Board. In 1993, their presence increased to one half of the delegates. Other decision-making bodies of the party also have representatives of grassroots activists. Among such bodies, the congress of the party, which defines the programmatic platform and nominates the presidential candidate, is composed completely of Base Committee delegates.

The FA's vertical structure connects base-level activism with the decision-making bodies. This vertical structure also connects the grassroots structure with the factions (i.e. it connects the movement structure with the coalition structure), because both have representatives to the different bodies. Finally, grassroots activists also have developed informal institutions that complement the formal institutions and through which they coordinate their actions in the party's decision-making process. This institutional design is

particularly important because the factions´ representatives have a structure that ensures their coordination at the faction level. Without these opportunities to coordinate, grassroots delegates would remain atomized and they would lose relevance.

Base Committee delegates to these national bodies are subjected to strong vertical and horizontal accountability. Grassroots representatives are assumed to be delegates and not trustees. This is evident from the operation of the organizational structure and the regular meetings of the party's grassroots structure. This is relevant because grassroots delegates might also identify or participate in a faction and they could participate in the decision-making bodies in accordance with the position of their faction and not of their Base Committee. Even though many grassroots activists are also members or have some kind of participation in one of the FA factions, the Base Committee and faction structures are independent.

The permanent operation of Base Committees and the FA´s vertical structure assures that the results of the discussions in each Base Committee are conveyed to the top of the FA´s decision-making structure. At the same time, decisions and directives are conveyed from the top to the grassroots. This does not occur via professionals in charge of communications nor through the exclusive use of communication technologies; rather, delegates from the grassroots are a crucial part of all bodies within the FA structure and they coexist with delegates from the FA factions and party leaders. FA activists' perception of efficacy rests upon rules and their operation. Participating in a Base Committee means, for them, to be part of the party's decision-making process.

In the online survey described below, we asked respondents to rate on a ten-point scale the influence Base Committees have in the FA´s decision-making at different-levels: municipal, departmental (regional), and national. A rating of "1" signified "no influence at all" while a rating of ten signified "a lot of influence." As shown in Table 2, FA members

(Base Committee activists or not) gave Base Committees an average rating of 4.9 for the level of influence they exercise at the national level an average rating of 5.3 for the level of influence at the departmental level and an average rating 5.3 also for the level of influence at the municipal level. These results indicate that grassroots activists are perceived to have a significant level of influence, which is clearly not in line with general trends described elsewhere (Scarrow, 2015). However, in line with our description of the case of the FA, those who participate as Base Committee activists perceive themselves to have greater influence at all three levels of government surveyed: 5.6, 6.1, and, 6.0 respectively.

Table 2. Perceived influence of different FA members

	Base Committee	Faction	Adherents	All
Influence at the national level*	5.56 (5.36 – 5.77)	4.81 (4.54 – 5.08)	4.48 (4.30 – 4.67)	4.91 (4.78 – 5.03)
Influence at the departmental level*	6.07 (5.87 – 6.27)	4.94 (4.68 – 5.20)	4.81 (4.63 – 4.99)	5.26 (5.13 – 5.38)
Influence at the municipal level*	6.02 (5.81 – 6.23)	5.01 (4.74 – 5.29)	4.99 (4.81 – 5.18)	5.34 (5.21 – 5.46)

Source: Online survey.

* Survey participants were asked, "How much influence do you think Base Committees have in the FA´s decision-making at the national/departmental/municipal level?" Responses were given on a ten-point scale, where 1 is "no influence at all" and 10 is "a lot of influence." Here we report the average and, in parentheses, the confidence interval.

4. Hypothesis, Methods, and Data

We hypothesize that the institutionalization of voice channels provided base-level activists with a sense of efficacy and this perceived efficacy, in turn, promotes the reproduction of activism, i.e., the recruitment of members whose willingness to contribute time to the organization is greater than the willingness of those who are only adherents. Since

we cannot manipulate the organizational structure that gives a certain role to its activists, we presented survey respondents with a hypothetical party decision that reduces activists´ voice. We conducted this intervention among members of an organization that has multiple institutionalized channels for activists´ engagement and ensures them a significant role in the party´s decision-making structure. We tested whether the reduction of the political role assigned to grassroots activists negatively impacts the activists´ self-reported level of engagement.

The paper combines different methodological tools. First, we rely on an online survey. We conducted this online survey to gather original data on the characteristics of FA activists and adherents. It is the largest survey of FA party activists conducted to date. We recruited survey participants via Facebook. Given that party activists are very difficult to reach, Jäger (2017) claims that this is a good strategy for collecting data from party activists. Jäger also suggests that, to improve the representativeness, one can use post-stratification subsample robustness tests to analyze mean group differences. We designed a campaign with an advertisement that was targeted to people at least16 years old who declared in their Facebook profile that they lived in Uruguay and who indicated that have an interest in the FA. The survey was distributed between June 6 and July 6, 2017. The advertisement had 306,198 prints and reached 89,732 Facebook users. The survey had 4,017 clicks. We post-stratified our sample with data on sex and age of the people who voted in the most recent (August 2016) internal election.[8] Thus, we have reliable data about the population of party adherents—to vote in the internal election, adherents must register as party members.

[8] As a post-stratification technique, we used the rake function in the package "Survey" in R. As Lumley states, "Raking allows multiple grouping variables to be used without constructing a complete cross-classification. The process involves post-stratifying on each set

The survey included questions about different dimensions of the relationship between the respondent and the party. For example, it asked about the respondent´s participation in the different organizational structures (factions and Base Committees), the frequency of the respondent's participation, his or her contact with party and government authorities, whether the respondent pays the party dues, among other issues.

The implementation of the survey through a Facebook advertisement was targeted to a widespread population of people who stated an interest in the FA. The survey was designed to identify different types of people with different degrees of engagement with the FA: Base Committee activists, activists who exclusively participate in one of the factions of the FA and party adherents who do not participate regularly in either the political factions of the FA nor in the Base Committees. As Table 3 shows, more than one third of the party adherents (35.6 percent of survey respondents) participate in Base Committees (24.0 percent in Base Committees and in a faction, and 9.6 exclusively in Base Committees). Twenty percent of the respondents are activists who only participate in a faction, while 46.2 percent do not participate in either the Base Committees or in a faction, but identify themselves as FA adherents. This distinction enabled us to conduct a heterogeneous treatment effect analysis (http://egap.org/registration/1989). As stated in the pre-analysis plan, we expected that reducing the political role assigned to the grassroots members would negatively impact activists´—but not adherents'—self-reported level of engagement.

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of variables in turn, and repeating this process until the weights stop changing." (Lumley, 2011, p. 139). All the estimations are calculated using the Survey package.

Table 3. Types of Engagement

		Participate in Base Committees: Yes	Participate in Base Committees: No
Participate in a party faction	Yes	24.02 (0.97)	22.11 (0.94)
	No	9.59 (0.69)	44.28 (1.13)

Source: Online survey.
*In parentheses we include the standard error.

We complement our survey with a (pre-registered) qualitative analysis. To gather this qualitative evidence, we conducted in-depth interviews and analyzed secondary sources. Also, we used available (but incomplete) party records to show the territorial extension of the FA base-level party structure and to observe other traits characteristic of parties that have activists.

Capturing activists´ opinions is not an easy task. However, the online survey helped us reach a good-sized group of grassroots activists, the hardest group to reach. Our survey estimations are quite precise because the territorial distribution of survey respondents who report participating in Base Committees almost mimics the territorial distribution of activists that attend the most important yearly meeting of the Base Committees: the *Día del Comité de Base* (Day of the Base Committee). Table 4 shows the number of activists attending the Day of the Base Committee, distributed by region, compared to survey estimations of people who participate in the Base Committees. Also, this is in line with more recent data (2015) on the distribution of Base Committees throughout the country (see Table 1).

Table 4. Activists attending the Día del Comité de Base

Regions	2012 Base Committee day attendants (%)	2013 Base Committee day attendants (%)	% of FA adherents who participate in a Base Committee	Confidence interval
Montevideo	4,019 (40.5)	3,114 (43.0)	40.51	36.80 – 44.22
Canelones	1,918 (19.3)	997 (13.8)	16.91	14.02 - 19.79
Rest of the countryside	3,990 (40.2)	3,130 (43.2)	42.58	38.88 – 46.28

Source: Online survey and FA administrative data

The estimate of Base Committee participants approximates the known parameter in the population of FA adherents. In the last FA internal elections of 2016, 82,887 adherents participated. According to our survey estimate, after post-stratification, 35.6% of those adherents have some participation in the Base Committees. According to our survey, that percentage equals 29,508 people, 24.9% of whom (7,347) claim to always attend Base Committees meetings. These figures are close to the 7,241 attendance figure that the organization reports for the 2013 Day of the Base Committee.

5. Analysis

Our theory has three observable implications. First, activists should be different from adherents in terms of their willingness to participate and their actual levels of participation. Second, institutional rules affect voice, and more voice positively affect engagement. Thus, changes that negatively affect voice should reduce activists´ willingness to cooperate with the organization. Third, activists work as organizers á la Han (2014).

Activists are different from adherents

The evidence from the survey shows a party with a structure that supports the existence of adherents and activists. Even though these two groups generally do not differ in terms of age, sex, and ideological position, they systematically differ in their level of participation and in their willingness to actively participate in the organization and in civil society associations.

Compared with adherents, activists are more willing to participate in different forms of collaboration with the party organization. In all the surveyed activities, FA activists —base committee attendants as well as those who only participate in a faction)—are more prone to participate than FA adherents. Also, compared to adherents, a greater proportion of activists think they will participate in the FA in the future (Table 5). Those who participate in Base Committees also show greater willingness to engage in voluntary work than do activists who only participate in an FA faction.

Table 5. Average willingness to participate in different activities by type of adherent

Willingness to...	**Base Committee**	**Faction**	**Adherents**	**All**
Do voluntary work*	7.10 (6.90 – 7.29)	5.86 (5.58 – 6.14)	4.24 (4.05 – 4.42)	5.52 (5.38 – 5.65)
Make phone calls**	5.73 (5.48 – 5.98)	4.47 (4.17 – 4.78)	3.22 (3.05 – 3.40)	4.31 (4.17 – 4.46)
Integrate the local level direction**	4.77 (4.51 – 5.02)	3.87 (3.58 – 4.15)	2.88 (2.71 – 3.04)	3.71 (3.58 – 3.84)
Attend a political education course**	6.57 (6.31 – 6.83)	5.65 (5.32 - 5.99)	4.40 (4.18 – 4.61)	5.37 (5.23 - 5.52)
Collaborate with a representative**	5.67 (5.41 – 5.93)	5.12 (4.79 – 5.45)	3.87 (3.67 – 4.07)	4.73 (4.58 – 4.87)
Distribute Propaganda**	6.21 (5.96 – 6.47)	4.55 (4.24 – 4.86)	3.04 (2.86 – 3.21)	4.40 (4.26 – 4.55)
Contribute with fundraising**	4.58 (4.33 – 4.83)	3.25 (2.97 – 3.52)	2.48 (2.33 – 2.64)	3.34 (3.21 – 3.47)
Participate in the future***	84.77% (81.95 – 87.59)	71.66% (67.29 – 76.03)	39.62% (36.60 – 42.65)	61.21% (59.13 – 63.29)

Source: Online survey.

* On a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is not at all willing and 10 is very willing How willing are you to do voluntary work as a FA activist? Here we report the average and, in parentheses, the confidence interval.

** On a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 is not at all willing and 10 is very willing. How willing are you to dedicate at least four hours a week to do the following activities for the party? Here we report the average and, in parentheses, the confidence interval.

*** In the coming years, do you think you will participate in the FA? This was a Yes/No question. Here we report the proportion and confidence interval (in parentheses) of respondents who answered "yes."

In terms of reported behavior, activists dedicate significantly more hours to participating in FA meetings than do adherents. Also, a greater proportion of activists, compared to adherents, contribute money to the FA. Finally, a greater a proportion of activists are involved in civil society organizations (Table 6). As in the case of reported willingness, Base Committee activists devote more hours to the organization than activists

who only participate in an FA faction. Also, Base Committee activists are significantly more engaged in neighborhood organizations.

Table 6. Reported behavior by type of adherents

	Base Committee	**Faction**	**Adherents**	**All**
Monthly hours dedicated to FA activities*	23.17 (21.53 – 24.81)	12.71 (11.03 – 14.39)	4.16 (3.51 – 4.81)	12.23 (11.44 – 13.03)
Regular monetary contributions**	70.09% (66.56 – 73.62)	47.16% (42.30 - 52.02)	22.48% (19.67 – 25.29)	43.22% (40.99 – 45.45)
Unions***	33.16% (29.82 – 36.50)	28.16% (24.20 – 32.12)	21.30% (18.95 – 23.65)	26.65% (24.93 – 28.37)
Neighborhoood Commissions***	41.89% (38.17 – 45.60)	25.43% (21.35 – 29.52)	19.08% (16.66 – 21.50)	27.96% (26.04 – 29.88)
Cooperatives***	16.41% (13.62 – 19.21)	15.26% (12.16 – 18.36)	8.72% (7.03 – 10.40)	12.62% (11.24 – 13.99)
NGO***	12.86% (10.41 – 15.30)	10.85% (7.99 - 13.72)	8.69% (6.92 – 10.46)	10.52% (9.22 - 11.81)

Source: Online survey.
* How many hours a month, on average, do you dedicate to FA activities? Here we report the average and, in parentheses, the confidence interval.
** Do you regularly contribute with money to the party? This was a Yes/No question. Here we report the proportion and confidence interval (in parentheses) of respondents who answered "yes."
*** In the present, do you participate in…? This was a Yes/No question. Here we report the proportion and confidence interval (in parentheses) of respondents who answered "yes."

Base Committee activists are different from faction activists and both are different from those who are simply adherents; they exhibit a different willingness to engage in party activities and they devote different amounts of time to the organization. Base Committee activists are more willing to engage and they devote significantly more time to cooperating with the organization. Activists associated with FA factions are more willing than adherents to engage with the organization and they devote more time than adherents but they engage

less and devote less time than do Base Committee activists. However, they are more similar to Base Committee activists because they maintain permanent contact with the party organization. Two multivariate regression models (not reported here) that take ideological self-placement and education level as control variables, and the willingness to do voluntary work and the number of hours in a month devoted to FA activities as the dependent variables, generate similar results.

Voice reduction affects activists

Over the years, the FA grassroots structure became less and less important for the party. The organization has other campaign resources, and fewer people are willing to dedicate time to the party. Thus, the grassroots structure is less necessary as a mobilization tool. This resembles the observed trajectory of other mass-based parties worldwide. However, the FA's grassroots structure is still active and relevant. What explains this persistence? Activists have entrenched veto power over the organization´s rules and over the FA´s decision-making. This occurs through the grassroots activists' direct representation in the party's decision-making structure. This role imbues grassroots activism with a sense of efficacy.

In our in-depth interviews, we asked FA grassroots activists whether there have been attempts to change the FA´s organizational structure. We learned that there have been such attempts and in the excerpt below, one FA activist (Gonzalo) explains why the attempts have failed:

> "The Frenteamplista mystique was not made by party leaders´ that form the FA…those leaders that back then in 71…they saw the way and pointed it, but the

> mystique began to be built and was built by regular people. And that strange story that you are nobody, but support an idea that is the FA, is not called Socialist Party [one of the previously existing parties that formed the FA]…it is called the FA, and you can reach to participate in the decision-making, is part of the Frenteamplista mystique, that does not occur in any other party…" (personal interview with Gonzalo).

Beyond the actual attempts, it is interesting that he argues that what motivated the reproduction of a "FA mystique", i.e., the unity, is, among other related issues, the chance to participate in the party´s decision-making. Moving now beyond discussion of the differences between activists and adherents with respect to levels of engagement with the organization, we present below the results of our test of the hypothesis of the role organizational settings play in explaining the reproduction of engagement.

Because we cannot manipulate actual levels of efficacy that the organization grants to its activists, and given that we are studying a party that has institutionalized mechanisms that ensure activists' voice, our survey experiment sought to vary perceived efficacy. Our intervention is relevant (c.f Dunning, 2012) both because the survey was conducted among FA adherents and because the nature of the organizational structure and the role granted to grassroots activists has been a matter of debate in the party.

Box 1. Treatment Prompt and Placebo-Control

Treatment Prompt: Imagine that the FA conducts an organizational restructuring to adapt to a new social and political context. These reforms involve professionalizing the party and reducing the role rank-and-file members play in determining the political strategies and political stances of the FA. On a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is "not at all willing" and 10 is "very willing," how willing would you be to perform any of the following party activities in the next election?

Placebo-Control: Imagine that the FA conducts an organizational restructuring to adapt to a new social and political context. On a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is "not at all willing" and 10 is "very willing," how willing would you be to perform any of the following party activities in the next election?

- Participate in campaign rallies
- Distribute campaign literature
- Volunteer as a party delegate at a voting station
- Door-to door-canvassing
- Organize meetings with neighbors and candidates
- Donate money

The treatment prompt (see Box 1) describes a situation where the FA decides to enact an organizational reform responding to the demands of the social and political context. This reform aims to professionalize the structure of the organization and reduces the role of the grassroots in the decision-making. We intended this prompt to affect—i.e., to reduce— the perceived efficacy of party members. The outcome variable measures the willingness to engage in voluntary activities in the next national election. We took the average of the reported willingness to engage in all these activities (see Box 1 for the list of activities). As registered in our pre-analysis plan [reference not included to preserve anonymity], taking advantage of the nature of the survey, we analyzed heterogeneous treatment effects by type of engagement with the party (Base Committee activists, faction activists, and adherents who do not participate in either of them). We hypothesize that institutional rules that grant voice to activists produce selective incentives. Activists perceive their participation as effective at influencing the party´s decision-making processes. As a consequence, a reduction in their

perception of efficacy should affect activists´ willingness do voluntary work for the organization. However, it should not affect the willingness of adherents. As Panebianco (1988) suggests, one's willingness to participate in a party as an activist is related to the existence of these types of incentives.

Table 7. *t*-test Results Comparing Means on Treatment and Control[9]

Group	**Treatment (t1)**	**Control (t0)**	***t***	**Df**	**p-value***
All	4.03 (0.075)	4.42 (0.075)	-3.659	2485	0.0010
Base Committee	5.28 (0.137)	5.77 (0.121)	-2.699	808	0.0284
Faction	4.14 (0.158)	4.70 (0.156)	-2.538	517	0.0457
Adherents	3.09 (0.087)	3.30 (0.094)	-1.617	1156	0.4248

Source: Online survey.
Standard error in parentheses
* These are Bonferroni corrected p-values for multiple comparisons

Table 7 presents the results of the survey experiment expressed as differences of means (t-tests). First, the treatment had a significant effect for all FA members ("All"), i.e. the reduction of the efficacy granted by the organization reduced respondents' willingness to engage in voluntary work. Nevertheless, the analysis of heterogeneous treatment effects shows that this effect is statistically significant only for Base Committee and faction activists and not for adherents. This shows, in accord with our hypothesis, that those who develop a commitment to the organization in terms of activism are more sensitive to changes in their efficacy. This perception of efficacy seems to work as a selective incentive. Therefore, in the

[9] The t-test reported in this table is calculated from the post-stratified sample (see above). Nonetheless, the t-test using the sample without post-stratification, not reported here, shows similar results.

FA, the entrenched institutional rules that prevent the elites from changing the role of the grassroots members and the latters' perceived efficacy ensures the reproduction of activism.

Activists as Organizers

After 45 years and three terms in government, the FA preserves spaces for neighborhood level activism, the Base Committees. We have shown above the number of Base Committees. The online survey confirms the territorial extension of the FA´s Base Committees; 68.9% (std error 0.01) claim to have a Base Committee within walking distance (approximately less than 1 km away) and fewer than 10% do not know the location of a Base Committee. Thus, Base Committees are visible among FA members, both among those who actually participate in a Base Committee and among those who do not. Base Committees are local-level entry venues, which individuals who have an interest in joining the organization can approach. Without such spaces, adherents who are willing to perform volunteer work would not be able to do it and would simply remain as adherents.

The history of Gabriel, a young activist, illustrates how Base Committees, as the grassroots structure of the FA, are the local level entry venue for new activists. Gabriel was a FA voter. He attended the campaign rallies in 2004 with his family and he was a "network activist," but he wanted to deepen his activism in a "FA locale." Even though Gabriel wanted to participate in the FA, he did not know how to do it, so he visited the FA web page and checked the Base Committees of the area:

> …nothing clear came up so I sent an email, they answered. Then I met the person who answered and that person sent me to a locale that was two blocks from my house. I had not toured the neighborhood yet, it was my first week in this neighborhood, so I sent the email right away […] it was [December] 2010 […] and I arrived at a meeting

> that was actually one of a Coordinating Group, which was different from a Base Committee, then I understood the logic, but I entered and said "Hi," they greeted me, I said "can I come in?" and they replied "of course you can." I walked in, I participated, they briefly told me "look, this is a Coordinating Group, here a Base Committee operates, but it is on a different day and here what we do is to coordinate between Committees, stay in the meeting […] A guy there who also participated in the Base Committee that operated in the same locale told me "we gather every Thursday," "Ok I'll come on Thursday," and I went on Thursday, and in the Committee we were five or six people, it was a very low point […] I kept engaged all through February, I was very excited, I wanted that everybody to participate, but there was nobody, they were all on holidays, I was told. In March, we were seven or eight and there was a gang […] it was interesting and we started to generate a plan of operation starting in 2011, that was cool, that also restructured the Committee. (personal interview with Gabriel)

Base Committees do more than simply enable grassroots level activism. Base Committee organizers transform adherents into activists who engage in voluntary work. The following excerpts from in-depth interviews with grassroots activists illustrate the role organizers play. While there exist contextual processes that could affect the number of people who would like to join the party, there is also an open organizational mechanism that facilitates activism:

> I am convinced that most of the activists are recruited at the Base Committees. […] If you ask who gather more votes, the bases or the factions, perhaps the factions. Perhaps a speech of Pepe [Mujica], or Astori, or Vázquez, whoever is the referent, perhaps at one point capture more votes than the bases. Now, in terms of activists, in people who

work [for the organization] I think the Committee [plays a role]. (personal interview with Andrés)

The interview excerpt from Andrés illustrates the idea that the factions and FA leaders mobilize voters. However, Base Committees recruit activists, who, in turn, become organizers who recruit new activists. The continuous process of transforming voters, whom leaders mobilize, into activists, is described by Manuel, another FA grassroots activist from Montevideo, as "reconstructive history."

I believe that today there is much less activism everywhere […] Base committees are smaller than those of when I was a child […] But there is a reconstructive history. And the truth is that, the *compañeros* who join, those to whom we extend the relationship, […] are *compañeros* for the rest of their life. And then we start training with discussions and that is a capital that I am convinced the FA has, no other party in the country has it. (personal interview with Manuel)

This idea of Base Committees as an entry venue and a place where adherents are transformed into activists was repeatedly mentioned in the different in-depth interviews conducted for this research (transcripts are available upon request). This idea was mentioned particularly often in answers the interviewees gave to questions about their own first engagement in the FA qua activists. In-depth interviews with FA faction leaders and activists confirm the idea that mobilizers and organizers coexist in the FA. This combination is highlighted by Han (2014) as a cause of the reproduction of activism in civil society organizations. The former mobilize voters who want to join the organization, while the latter organize and transform the new recruits into activists.

7. Discussion and Conclusions

Our theory analyzes the causal effect of internal rules in the reproduction of activists´ engagement in party organizations. We examined the case of the FA. The FA was born in 1971 with intense local level activism, and reproduced itself as a party with activists. This does not imply that the present number of FA activists is the same as in the in the 1970s or early 1980s. In fact, since the early 1990s, the number of activists has declined. Moreover, given the electoral success of the FA, the party´s relevance in national politics and general trends in technology and communications, activists are less needed. Yet, they still exist in significant numbers and the organizational structure that facilitates their reproduction is still in place.

The reproduction of party activism occurs at the grassroots level. Activism is located in each faction´s organizational structure but, above all, in the Base Committees. This activism is powered by individually perceived efficacy. Finally, these activists who work as volunteers in Base Committees act as organizers, i.e. they transform adherents into activists.

The FA is a deviant case that enabled us to focus on endogenous factors to explain the reproduction of activism. Yet, since the FA is the only mass organic leftist institutionalized party in Latin America, why is it relevant to analyze its organizational characteristics? The FA has escaped the global tendency towards professionalization and personalization of politics and structural factors that have pushed mass-based parties into becoming electoral-professional organizations. The organizational structure of the FA, and its specific rules, activates the reproduction mechanism. These rules not only ensure the existence of a grassroots structure but also empower the structure with efficacy, which is perceived by FA activists as a selective incentive.

There have been other mass-based parties in Latin America. What happened to activism in these other party organizations? Roberts (1998), Levitsky (2003), Samuels (2004), Hunter (2010), Levitsky and Roberts (2011) and Roberts (2014) have analyzed the process of demobilization of former mass-based parties in Latin America. The PT in Brazil, for example, is an iconic case of a mass-based party that turned into an institutionalized professional-electoral party (Levitsky & Roberts, 2011; Ribeiro, 2014). In contrast with the FA, the PT is a negative case, i.e. a case of the failure to reproduce an organizational setting that promotes and ensures the engagement of grassroots activists.

As in the case of the FA, the PT was not a classic leftist Leninist party. In an effort to avoid the model of democratic centralism, both parties placed more emphasis on their respective grassroots activist bases. As with the FA, the PT comprised different factions. Hunter (2010) summarizes the groups that originally coalesced around this leftist party in Brazil: Christian base communities, intellectuals, and, most of all, labor organizers (22). The PT has always been very open and broad in its incorporation of new interest groups. Samuels (2006) and Ribeiro (2014) emphasize that the PT was the only party with a dense organization in Brazil that worked permanently and mobilized its activists. More importantly, it was "the only party with relatively widespread member involvement in its governance" (Samuels, 2006, p. 22).

Even though both the PT and the FA have had grassroots activists and a strong ideological commitment to participatory democracy since their very inception, there is a crucial difference in the relationship between these grassroots activists and the party leaders. At the first national conference of the PT in São Paulo during August 8-9, 1981, the party discussed whether the base nuclei would have decision-making power or an advisory role. The party decided to grant only an advisory role to the base nuclei. As is the case with other parties that have members, the PT´s grassroots activists had a role in the political life of their

party organizations; i.e. they participated in debates, chose party authorities, engaged in faction competition, and eventually became members of the party elite. However, in contrast to the FA, the PT´s grassroots members did not have a direct role in the party´s decision-making.

The PT base nuclei could select representatives to the municipal conferences, which, in turn, would elect delegates to the regional and national conferences. These bodies elected the directors of the party (diretorios) and the executive board (comisões diretivas) at each level. However, in contrast to the case of the Base Committees in the FA, the base nuclei in the PT did not have a set number of representatives to the different conferences nor did they have a set number of seats among the directors or the executive board. Moreover, in the PT, there was no organizational provision that could make the base nuclei delegates continuously accountable to their fellow grassroots activists, as in the case of the FA. Thus, there was no distinction between those who participated in the directing bodies as grassroots delegates and those who did not have base nuclei as their reference group; the PT grassroots representatives all served as trustees and not, as in the case of FA grassroots representatives, as delegates.

The base nuclei in the PT were relevant during the party's initial stages because they helped gather the required number of affiliates to formalize the PT as a political party. However, they quickly lost relevance. They began to operate for the sole purpose of electing delegates to the conferences at the different levels. By the end of the 1980s, the base nuclei´s loss of significance was evident (Ribeiro, 2008). In 1990, a resolution of the 7th national encounter of the PT in São Paulo stated that: "The majority of the nuclei ceased to exist, or when they exist (…) they have an episodic action, before the Conferences or Conventions."[10]

[10] Construção partidária. Resoluções do 7° Encontro Nacional, São Paulo, 1990, 443. Cited in Ribeiro 2008, 250. Translation from Portuguese by the authors.

Beginning in 1995, when the PT was dominated by the faction "Majoritarian Camp," a series of organizational and rules changes took place, granting party leaders more autonomy from the grassroots members. These reforms became more acute when the PT became the country's governing party (Ribeiro, 2014). In the early 1990s, base nuclei had little influence in the top echelons of the party. A decade later, this process was consolidated and by the 2000s base nuclei completely lost relevance. In the PT, as in other mass-based parties, the activist structure became ossified and the party turned into a professional electoral organization. The PT became a party with adherents but lacking a structure of organized activists with a role in the party's decision-making.

Some authors point to the MAS in Bolivia as a case of intense activists´ mobilization. Anria (2013, 2016), for example, labels the MAS a "movement-based" party. This party is younger than the FA, Bolivia´s party system is less institutionalized than Uruguay´s and, since the early 2000s, Bolivia´s society has been more mobilized and polarized (Anria, 2013, 2016; Madrid, 2012). However, as opposed to the FA, the MAS does not have a permanent and complex structure. Also, the connection between grassroots movements and leadership is not bureaucratized. For Anria (2018b), the party´s democracy and the ability of grassroots activists to participate in party decision-making relies on the absence of a bureaucratic structure. Activism in the MAS is not a consequence of organizational rules. Rather, in the MAS, activism is channeled through grassroots organizations, autonomous from the MAS, that operate with participatory assemblies. The MAS thus shows another, equifinal route to grassroots mobilization.

In contrast to the PT, the FA still has organized activists who participate in the decision-making structure. In contrast to the MAS, FA activists´ participation is organized in a vertical partisan structure with clear, complex, and enforced rules. Even though there are undeniable historical factors that account for the FA´s decision to establish this peculiar

organizational structure (Authors 2017), the case of the FA also challenges the idea that activism in established and organized parties is dead. If organizational settings and rules can foster activism, there is a chance for policy interventions to reverse the declining role of party activists in contemporary democracies. This case shows that a democratic party is not an organization that merely asks adherents about their preferences. It is, rather, an organization that provides open and accessible channels through which individuals can become activists and an organization that grants activists voice.

By focusing on the role of organizational rules, this paper has shed light on the potential effect of policy reforms aimed at improving the link between parties and society. If parties are to be effective channels of democratic representation, they should promote open-access for prospective activists who want to contribute to the organization. Above all, however, they should make the costly decision to ensure that the new activists who engage with the organization feel empowered by a sense of efficacy as a selective incentive.

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