



**MEDIA@LSE**

Department of Media and Communications

---

## **MEDIA@LSE Electronic MSc Dissertation Series**

Compiled by Professor Robin Mansell and Dr. Bart Cammaerts

---

### **An exploration of the 2006 electoral campaign for the re-election of Walter Veltroni for Mayor of Rome:**

**Aims of political marketing strategies, personalization of politics beyond the image of the candidate and the survival of ideological appeals.**

**Maddalena Vianello,**  
MSc in Media and Communications

---

Other dissertations of the series are available online here:  
<http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/media@lse/mediaWorkingPapers/>

**Dissertation submitted to the Department of Media and Communications, London School of Economics and Political Science, September 2007, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the MSc in Media and Communications. Supervised by Ms. Maria Kvriakidou.**

Published by Media@lse, London School of Economics and Political Science ("LSE"), Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE. The LSE is a School of the University of London. It is a Charity and is incorporated in England as a company limited by guarantee under the Companies Act (Reg number 70527).

Copyright in editorial matter, LSE © 2007

Copyright, Maddalena Vianello © 2007.  
The authors have asserted their moral rights.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means without the prior permission in writing of the publisher nor be issued to the public or circulated in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published. In the interests of providing a free flow of debate, views expressed in this dissertation are not necessarily those of the compilers or the LSE.

# **An exploration of the 2006 electoral campaign for the re-election of Walter Veltroni for Mayor of Rome:**

**Aims of political marketing strategies, personalization of politics beyond the image of the candidate and the survival of ideological appeals.**

**Maddalena Vianello**

---

## **ABSTRACT**

This paper explores the 2006 electoral campaign for the re-election of Walter Veltroni for Mayor of Rome. The analysis is based on key theoretical works concerning numerous facets of “Modernization” of politics, such as the increasing impact of leaders’ images, the transition of political parties towards “catch all” forms, the contribution of marketing expertise and the rise of opinion-based electoral tendencies. Focusing on trends of “Modernization”, political marketing strategies, forms of personalization of politics and ideological appeals represent the main areas addressed in this work. Through a critical discourse analysis of electoral materials and a set of interviews, this research argues that trends of “Modernization” of politics adapt to local contexts, rather than impose standardized formats. In particular, the paper claims that the employment of specific political marketing strategies, as well as forms of personalization beyond the presence of the candidate and the survival of ideological appeals encoded within the campaign respond to local political specificities. The need for differentiation from the obsessive recourse to leader’s image typical of Berlusconi’s political communication style and the moderate aversion towards forms of personalization among the left-wing electorate are identified as key elements influencing the adaptation of trends of “Modernization” within Italian politics.

---

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The crisis of ideology-based parties in the post-Cold War scenario, which has engendered deep changes in both voters' loyalties and party strategies, is perceived as a turning-point in political communication studies (Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 29; Novelli, 2006: 8-23). The change in the behaviour and demands of the electorate, plus the renewal in parties' approaches, have favoured the emergence of new trends of "Modernization". Marketing and advertising expertise, the increasing relevance of leaders' images, the growing centrality of the media, the increased importance of electoral campaigning represent only some of the main elements that converged into the recent turnabout in political communication (Mancini and Swanson, 1996: 1-17). In this respect, trends of "Modernization" have been understood, alternatively, as responsible for a progressive homogenization of politics or, rather, as being subject to local adaptations (Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 25-28; Scammell, 1997: 3).

Within this broad context, the present work offers an analysis of the 2006 electoral campaign for the re-election of Walter Veltroni for Mayor of Rome. By investigating trends of "Modernization" within the campaign, this paper will show how new strategies are applied through selective processes of adaptation according to the local political context rather than through standardized practices (Mancini and Swanson, 1996: 268-269). Thus the partial acceptance of forms of personalization of politics among the electorate, the need for distinction from political opponents and the moderate survival of ideological loyalties are identified as peculiarities that have contributed to shape trends of "Modernization" according to local specificities (Mazzoleni, 1996: 204; Mellone and Di Gregorio, 2004: 24-31; Scammell, 1997: 4-7).

The significance of the case study hinges on both the particular features of the campaign and the recent weight acquired by the candidate in the national political scenario. The absence of the candidate characterizes the campaign as relatively unusual in respect to the general massive recourse to strongly personalised electoral formats. Furthermore, the success of Veltroni within the national political context led to his candidature in the Democratic Party's primary elections shortly to be held. The increasing centrality of the candidate within Italian politics marks this campaign not only as an interesting micro-perspective case study but also as throwing light upon the Left's communication strategies at a national level.



By conducting critical discourse analysis on electoral materials and a set of interviews, this work will be developed through examination of three main aspects: the contribution of political marketing strategies, forms of personalization of politics, and ideological appeals. The impact of political marketing techniques within the campaign will be shown to be relevant in promoting emotional involvement, forms of reconnection and dynamics of identification between the electorate and the candidate. Moreover, forms of personalization of politics will emerge operating within the campaign even in the absence of the candidate. Symbolic elements and confidence-building strategies will be shown to converge in revealing the presence of the candidate and in promoting his reputation. Finally, the analysis will deal with ideological discourses. By disclosing the circulation of ideological appeals, it will be seen how the campaign addresses simultaneously the urban community as a whole and the left-wing electorate through different levels of communication.

Through the exploration of these three main areas, the paper will argue for the significance of trends of “Modernization” of politics within Italian political communication. However, it will also argue for the selective adjustment of such trends to the local context. The specific adaptation of political marketing strategies, personalization of politics and ideological appeals will be ascribed to the need for distinction from political opponents and adaptation to the electorate’s preferences.

By slightly enlarging the availability of case study-based research, this study aims to offer a modest contribution to the development of Italian political campaigning studies. In a wider perspective according to Gurevitch and Blumler (1990: 319) “Political communication research needs to advance on both fronts, with single-case studies feeding into comparative analysis, and a comparative approach contributing to specification of systems features that could then be explored in greater detail in single-case studies”. In this respect, this micro-perspective analysis aims to contribute to comparative studies within the field of political communication.

## **2. Theoretical framework**

The crisis of the great ideologies and the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s marks a global watershed. The mass party model, based, on the one hand, on pedagogical-ideological vocations and, on the other hand, on long-term loyalty and active militancy, succumbed under the weight of new pressures. The epoch of the two opposed blocks, paradigm of the global political scene for almost fifty years, was swept away by an intense period of transformation (Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 29; Novelli, 2006: 8-23).

The current debate has progressively tried to identify and explore the main trends that characterized this complex transformation and led to a new centrality of political communication (Mancini and Swanson, 1996: 1-17). Although the use of the terms "Americanization" and "Modernization" has been strongly criticized for providing misleading perspectives, it has been widely accepted in order to refer to such processes of transformation (Mancini and Swanson, 1996: 4-6; Scammell, 1997: 1-4). The new centrality of professional expertise, the emergence of personalization of politics, the contribution of political marketing and the adaptation to media requirements are only some of the main trends that have led politics towards processes of "Modernization". In this work the term "Modernization" will be preferred to "Americanization" "in an effort to stress that changes in political communication in Europe are not created purely by exogenous forces, but are rooted in a process of social change endogenous to European society" (Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 28).

A number of risks connected to the spread of these trends have been highlighted by the main literature. The USA is generally recognized as "the Mecca of political campaigning" (Scammell, 1997: 1) where trends of "Modernization" developed and gradually spread to the rest of the globe. A general homogenization of politics has been identified as a serious drawback for such trends (Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 25-28). However, the impact of the "indigenous factors" in the importation of political practices has been seen as guaranteeing the survival of national political specificities (Scammell, 1997: 3).

In this respect, the seminal study by Mancini and Swanson (1996) emerges as a fundamental point of reference for understanding how trends of "Modernization" pass through selective processes of adaptation according to local contexts. The authors point out how "Modernization" must be understood as an "archetype", rather than a "model". While the

archetype concept consists in the selective application and adaptation of general principles to the local context leading to significant variations, the model concept is based on the standardized application of general principles (Mancini and Swanson, 1996: 268-269). Moreover, "the archetype concept also suggests that modern practices are dynamic, developing and elaborating new forms to more fully realize the archetype's underlying principles as local circumstances change over time" (Mancini and Swanson, 1996: 269).

"Modernization" must also be understood in relation to the revolutionary transformation of the relationship between politics and voters. While consensus was previously based on ideological identification and long-term loyalty, the death of mass parties induced what Hallin and Mancini (2004) define as "political secularization". These authors show how the collapse of ideology-based parties led to the emergence of the individual as a central unit of the electorate and to the parallel decline of the party affiliate. The "triumph of the individual" engendered a deep process of fragmentation of the electorate where political orientation is increasingly determined by opinion-based choices and forms of personal identification (Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 28-32). Similarly, by drawing on Luhmann's concept of social complexity, Mancini and Swanson (1996) illustrate how the emergence of individualism within the political arena is connected to a fracture in citizens' identity. By relying on subsystems and "micro-aggregations" where individual specificities are satisfied and radicalized, voters appear to be increasingly dependent on personal opinions, desires and expectations (Mancini and Swanson, 1996: 7-14).

The centrality gained by individual preferences has prompted the current debate to focus on electoral volatility as a natural result of the fluctuation of voters' opinions according to different circumstances. Thus, while the margin of variation within electoral turnouts was previously minimal, it has become increasingly significant. Electoral preferences by no longer relying on solid ideological bases have become more unpredictable (Bowler and Farrell, 1992: 9; Kaid and Holtz-Bacha, 1995: 8-18).

The "triumph of the individual" forced political parties to face new problems in terms of redefinition of their own identities. Kirchheimer (1966) in a seminal article on the transformation of Western European party systems explores the conversion of political parties towards what he calls "catch-all" forms where strict ideological characterizations are progressively abandoned in favour of a more pluralistic and opinion-based spectrum of appeals. The "catch-all" party concept has been widely recognised within the current debate

as a determining contribution to the understanding of the transition of politics towards "Modernization" (Hallin and Mancini, 2004:28-29; Mancini and Swanson, 1996: 9-11; Scammell, 1999: 726). Nevertheless, Scammell (1997) argues that the idea of the inexorable decline of ideological appeals must be reconsidered. Indeed, in her opinion the wide recourse to pluralistic and opinion-based strategies does not preclude the maintenance of some basic ideological characterizations that still distinguish parties (Scammell, 1997:4-7). In addition, Bowler and Farrell (1992: 9) point out that:

*Right-wing parties and 'catch-all' parties may find the abandonment of ideological baggage and the switch to a greater reliance on leader image much easier to achieve than left-wing parties which tend to have more complex – and potentially more restrictive – organizational forms.*

Mancini and Mazzoleni (1995), on the other hand, by focusing on the transition of political parties towards "catch-all" forms show how "political issues" as topics related to ideological positioning, political alliances and coalition strategies, have been progressively abandoned in favour of "policy issues" connected with more specific and contingent matters. This transition in parties' strategies responds to the need to address voters' interests on specific matters and consequently secure their favour (Mancini and Mazzoleni, 1995: 12-8).

The growing centrality of the media, in general, and the progressive expansion of commercial television channels, in particular, have been shown as providing new challenges to politics (Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 32-40; Mancini and Mazzoleni, 1995: 19; Mancini and Swanson, 1996: 11-7; Novelli, 2006: 10-24). Media have been shown to be the virtual space where voters encounter politicians and the new source of political legitimization where voters make sense of politics. By representing the main stage where politicians gain visibility and consent, media oblige politics to submit to their imperatives (Bowler and Farrell, 1992: 7-10). In this respect, Mazzoleni (1987) illustrates how media constraints drove politics from a "political logic" to a "media logic" where agenda setting and timing are imposed by the media rather than by political priorities.

The impact of media has been interpreted as "toxic" and responsible for fuelling disengagement from and cynicism towards politics (Putnam, 2000: 216-246). Although a number of authors such as Norris (2000; 2002) and Bennett (1998) have suggested how political engagement passes through alternative types of participation, public distrust towards traditional forms of political participation such as voting has been shown to be

significant (Blumler and Gurevitch, 1995: 204-16; Cappella and Jamieson, 1997: 227-46; Putnam, 2000: 216-46).

Political marketing is generally seen as responding to the recent alteration in the relationship between parties and voters. According to Baker (1991) marketing consists basically in the repositioning of the consumer at the beginning rather than at the end of the production process. Marketing aims to interpret and to satisfy consumers by adapting the offer to their desires. Similarly, political marketing repositions the voter at the beginning of the political system by tailoring political messages according to individuals' expectations and desires (Scammell, 1999: 723-735).

As has been shown, the loss of ideological identification and the "triumph of the individual" have provoked a deep transformation in the dynamics through which consent is gained (Scammell, 1999: 726). Electoral consensus has been understood as based on processes of personal identification between voters and candidates leading to strong forms of personalization of politics (Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 28-32; Scammell, 1999: 726-735). Thus the reputation of the candidate has been detected as the central element around which confidence-building strategies are constructed by focusing on information policy, record of achievements, competences, commitments and promises (Scammell, 1999: 728). Nonetheless, in European countries an excessive recourse to candidate's image has been shown to cause a collapse of esteem among voters (Kaid and Holtz-Bacha, 1995: 8-18).

Political marketing and an extensive use of advertising have led to a new centrality of emotions within political communication. The wide recourse to emotional appeals has been accused of impoverishing the political debate by favouring the prevalence of images over contents and of entertainment over information. In this respect, Scammell and Lang (2006) argue for the compatibility of emotional appeals with rational thinking. Through the concept of "emotional intelligence" these authors argue against the categorical separation of rationality and emotions as artificial and forced. By pointing out that political engagement passes through emotional involvement, they show how emotional appeals can represent a form of reconnection of voters with politics (Scammell and Lang, 2006: 765).

Within this context, electoral campaigning has been understood as increasingly significant. The end of long-term ideology-based loyalties has helped to turn electoral campaigns into battlefields where parties have to compete for voters' preferences (Kaid and Holtz-Bacha,

1995:8-18). The “triumph of the individual” and the consequent fragmentation of the electorate have enabled the increasing employment of marketing techniques in order to identify voters’ demands. In this respect, political campaigning relies more and more on target segments studies in order to frame political messages according to the electorate’s tendencies. In addition, electoral campaigns tend to be based on different types of messages in order to appeal to different target segments (Farrell and Schmitt-Beck, 2002: 5-13; Norris, et al., 1999: 67).

According to Maarek (1995) electoral campaigns usually tend either to appeal to undecided voters while neglecting the segments sympathetic to the candidate, or vice versa to address the segments sympathetic to the candidate while neglecting undecided voters. However, the author seems to recognise the possibility that both strategies can be applied at the same time (Maarek, 1995: 35-38).

### **3. The Italian context**

The collapse of the mass parties coincided with a colossal political crisis due to corruption that dismissed the pre-existing establishment and led to the end of the First Republic (Campus, 2002:172-175; Novelli, 2006:7-23). As Mazzoleni (1996: 193) observes:

*The crumbling of the establishment, and the end of the party system that had governed Italy since the end of World War II, created a serious vacuum in the political arena that was promptly filled by a brand new party, Forza Italia, that had been created in only few weeks by Berlusconi.*

Moreover, in the early 1990s an intense period of electoral reforms took place in order to respond to the popular request for transparency. Through a number of intermediate reforms, the country adopted a majority electoral system, while citizens directly elected city mayors. These reforms have been generally interpreted as favouring forms of personalization of politics within the Italian political arena (Mancini and Mazzoleni, 1995: 11-18; Mancini and Swanson, 1996: 17-18, Novelli, 2006: 16-22).

The current debate has interpreted the arrival of Berlusconi and his success as either responsible for introducing modernizing trends into Italian politics or, alternatively, as the natural result of the ongoing advent of “Modernization”. Nevertheless, his appearance has been generally recognised as a turning-point in Italian political communication leading to a

massive and previously unknown recourse to forms of personalization (Campus, 2002: 175-181; Mancini and Mazzoleni, 1995: 11).

Furthermore, the early 1990s were characterized by the expansion of commercial television channels. On the one hand, commercial television brought about deep changes in the coverage of political issues by introducing new formats and election broadcasts; on the other hand, it emphasized trends of personalization of politics and "spectacularization" promoting the success of candidates' images over political contents (Mancini and Mazzoleni, 1995: 11-20; Novelli, 2006: 66-96).

The collapse of mass parties, the corruption scandals, the electoral reforms, the advent of Berlusconi and the development of commercial television as well as the growing adaptation of the left wing to a new political register and the impact of political marketing and electoral campaigning techniques are all elements that led to a profound "Modernization" of Italian politics (Novelli, 2006: 23). According to the interpretation of "Modernization" as an archetype (Mancini and Swanson, 1996: 268-69), Italian political communication seems to present its own peculiarities. For, while trends such as personalization, "spectacularization", "media logic" and the prevalence of "policy issues" over "political issues" developed strongly, forms of ideological loyalty survived (Mellone and Di Gregorio, 2004: 29-31). Parties' and voters' identities continue to feature some degree of ideological heritage. In this respect, while Campus (2002) argues for a deep "Americanization" within Italian politics, Mellone and Di Gregorio (2004) highlight how, despite the undeniable advent of "Modernization", ideological appeals persist and differentiate parties by representing effective calls to voters. Although forms of personalization of politics within the Italian context are generally seen to loom large, they seem to be only partly effective, and forms of resistance to excessive personalization of politics do indeed feature in the Italian electorate (Mazzoleni, 1996: 204).

As Mellone and Di Gregorio (2004) demonstrate in their investigation of Italian electoral volatility, forms of moderate loyalty have survived in electoral turnouts in the last decade. Their study shows how while "list volatility", understood as electorate fluctuation among parties of the same coalition, is a common phenomenon, "area volatility" as the movement of voters between coalitions is very rare (Mellone and Di Gregorio, 2004: 24-31). This analysis provides further evidence for the continuing significance of forms of loyalty and ideological appeals in Italian politics.

How, then, do trends of "Modernization" of politics and moderate forms of loyalty merge together in political communication strategies? The cohabitation of ideological patterns and trends of "Modernization" within Italian political communication suggests that both represent sources of appeal to the electorate (Kaid and Holtz-Bacha, 1995:8-18, Mellone and Di Gregorio, 2004: 24-30; Scammell, 1997: 3-4).

However, Berlusconi's party, Forza Italia, seems to present specific features. Its recent origins, its weak ideological heritage, its strongly marketing-based political style and obsessive employment of personalization identify Forza Italia as mainly extraneous to ideological appeals (Campus, 2002: 177-183; Mazzoleni, 1996: 199-202; Norris, 1997:2-3; Novelli, 2006: 60-68). This suggests a final consideration. The coexistence of forms of "Modernization" of politics and ideological appeals seems to represent an element of diversification between the Left's political communication as opposed to Berlusconi's compulsive trends of personalization.



#### **4. Research question and objectives**

In focusing on Walter Veltroni's 2006 electoral campaign, this study aims to investigate the functioning of political marketing strategies, forms of personalization of politics and ideological appeals in relation to the implementation of trends of "Modernization" of politics within Italy. Through an exploration of marketing and political rhetoric strategies, the paper aims to analyse how emotional appeals, dynamics of reconnection and identification are promoted in the electoral campaign. This raises the question as to how political parties, through trends of "Modernization" in general, and through marketing expertise in particular, attempt to promote voters' involvement.

The important role played by the context in shaping trends of "Modernization" suggests that personalization of politics has developed within the Italian political scenario according to local specificities. In particular, Veltroni's electoral campaign provides an interesting case study for analyzing how forms of personalization of politics can go beyond the presence of the candidate and emerge through confidence-building strategies devoted to the promotion of the leader's reputation as alternative to Berlusconi's style of communication.

Finally, the growing impact of trends of "Modernization" on political communication requires investigation into the survival of ideological appeals. From exploration of the themes promoted in the campaign two registers of communication emerge, appealing to different target segments.

#### **5. Research design**

The present study will be carried out by two different methodological approaches: a critical discourse analysis of electoral materials and a set of interviews with some key protagonists who contributed to creating the campaign. These methods enable comparison of the main narrative features embedded in the electoral materials with the interviewees' strategies and goals.

Discourse analysis will be conducted through a constructivist approach in order to unveil the encoded meanings, mechanisms and discourses embedded in texts. Underpinning this approach are the seminal works of the linguist and semiotician de Saussure (1983) and the philosopher Foucault (1978). Both of them, by exploring respectively the functioning of

language and of the circulation of power within discourse reveal how meaning is arbitrarily fixed and socially constructed (Hall, 1997: 35; Mills, 1997: 17). de Saussure (1983), in particular, recognizes two different levels of circulation of meaning based respectively on what he called the "signifier" (word) and the "signified" (idea). In applying de Saussure's theory to the exploration of images, Barthes (1985) argues for the existence of a superficial level of reading that deals with the object shown ("denotation") and a deeper level of interpretation where images rely on more complex symbolic systems of interplay ("connotation").

The contribution of semiotics to critical discourse analysis practices makes it possible to extract what is more latently there among the connotative levels of meanings, identify the operative principles of various signs and the different orders of signification, explore the implications of the codes and conventions which are drawn on in any text, and develop forms of ideological analysis of the role of the text in contemporary public culture (Deacon, Pickering, Golding and Murdock, 1999: 143). An exploration of processes of production and reception of texts has been provided by Hall (1980) in his influential article *Encoding/Decoding*. Producers ("encoders") by composing texts through specific elements encourage definite readings, called "preferred". Although readers ("decoders") are understood as able to provide a variety of interpretations according to their social and cultural backgrounds, the capacity of encoders to induce certain readings is also recognised. Interpretation is understood as a process of negotiation between encoders and decoders.

In this paper ideology features as a central concept. According to Fairclough (1995: 108) "the unsaid, the already said, the presupposed is of particular importance in ideological analysis, in that ideologies are generally embedded within the implicit meaning of a text rather than being explicit". Thus the exploration of degrees of presence in relation to the foreground and the background appears appropriate in order to detect how ideology works within texts (Fairclough, 1995: 106).

Critical discourse analysis has been mainly criticized for being subjective and not driven by a clear step-by-step methodology (Deacon et al. 1999: 132-40; Gill, 1996: 143; Potter and Wetherell, 1987: 175). That is why it is sometimes suggested it be associated with quantitative methods in order to limit its vagueness and scientific shortcomings (Deacon et al. 1999: 132). Nonetheless, no other method would have been suitable to explore the underlying discourses circulating within the electoral campaign texts. A reasonable effort at

objectivity, the definition of categories of analysis and rigour in the exploration would seem to guarantee sufficient reliability.

The aim of the interviews is to explore the declared goals and the strategies underlying the campaign and to compare them with the results obtained from critical discourse analysis. In this respect, qualitative in-depth semi-structured interviews seem to be the method most indicated to grasp confidential information (Deacon et al., 1999: 62-80). Other methods such as questionnaires or structured interviews would have not been appropriate, while they do not concede enough freedom to interviewees to express themselves extensively. Recourse to semi-structured interviews is also suggested by further considerations on the social status of the interviewees (Ostrander, 1995: 133-50; Warren, 2002: 84).

The respondents' status as members of the Italian political and professional environment necessitated that some specific matters concerning elite interviews be addressed. Self-consciousness usually drives elite members to express themselves through extensive digressions revealing a common tendency to "just talk" and to control the interviewing process by rejecting the role of the researcher (Ostrander, 1995: 146).

Although the respondents' flow of thoughts tends to run counter to the logical plan of the interviewer, it usually provides interesting perspectives and unexpected elements of analysis (Deacon et al., 1999: 69-70). In this respect, semi-structured interviews enable the researcher to go with the flow of the conversation. Moreover, this interviewing format allows the researcher to break the flow by taking the interviewees back to the research's aims and asking for further explanations when interesting (Hertz and Imber, 1995: 311; Johnson, 2002: 111; Ostrander, 1995: 146-49; Pridham, 1987: 81). Elite interviews resemble "narrative collaborations" where the researcher plays a fundamental role in discretely directing the dialogue (Warren, 2002: 88). Moreover, the construction of a personal relationship over time through telephone conversations and e-mail exchanges appears essential for making the interviewees familiar with the research project and obtaining confidential information (Gaskell, 2000: 45; Johnson, 2002: 103-4; Pridham, 1987: 81).

Data analysis represents an essential step in the interpretation of interviews. In this paper, by considering the particular relevance of ideological discourses, the main themes emerging in the interviews will be explored through rhetorical analysis. According to Leach (2000: 208) rhetorical analysis aims to grasp and investigate discourses as "acts of persuasion". Through

a constructivist approach rhetorical analysis intends to detect the intentions of the speaker and to discover the systems of rules around which discourses are organized. Means of persuasion usually deal with processes of identification through commonsense arguments that rely on audiences' emotions (Leach, 2000: 210). The "essential ingredients for exploring context as at the beginning of the rhetorical analysis" are Ethos, Pathos and Logos that respectively stand for credibility of the speaker, emotional appeals, and kind of arguments activated within texts (Leach, 2000: 214-15).

The combination of methods enables one to grasp and compare, on the one hand, the campaign as final communication product embedded in underlying meanings and, on the other hand, the declared intentions of the producers encoded in the campaign. Critical discourse analysis and interviewing not only complete one another in providing different perspectives on the campaign, they also represent the respective counter proof. While critical discourse analysis leads to detecting omissions and undeclared elements concerning the producers' intentions, the interpretation of the interviews will suggest how ideological discourses function and will throw light upon the campaign itself. The decision to combine critical discourse analysis and interviewing is also based on the consideration that relying alternatively on one of the two methods would have been misleading, either by focusing on the exploration of the campaign itself, or by anchoring the analysis to the producers' perspectives.

## 6. Methodology

Concerning the election materials, this paper will focus on posters and advertising spots according to patterns of readability. Being mainly visually based means of communication and short time-consuming texts, posters and spots involve instinctive and immediate readings, rather than engaging processes of deeper interpretation as required by written materials.

The election posters were articulated in three consecutive phases. The first two were created by the communication agency Saatchi & Saatchi, while the last one was produced within the electoral committee by the graphic designer Stefano Bruno. Posters within each phase are extremely similar. Thus, the analysis of one exemplar out of each phase will be considered satisfactory for the aims of this work. The selection has been made randomly by choosing the first poster received by e-mail within each phase. The material analysed will be inserted in the final appendix.

Analysis of posters will be performed according to the following categories:

- Shot, as the distance created with the viewer (Deacon et al., 1999: 190).
- Diagonals, as the routes through which the viewer is conducted within the text (Deacon et al., 1999: 194).
- Colours and light, as providing further measurements of the distance created with the viewer in relation to "the social history of visual experience" (Deacon et al., 1999: 194-95).
- Anchorage to words, as leading the viewer to specific readings (Deacon et al., 1999: 196-97; Hall, 1997: 225-79).
- Degrees of presence (Fairclough, 1995: 106).

Regarding the videos, the selection was made according to the same criteria applied to posters. The two clips created for the electoral campaign were shown in cinemas. The first one analysed within this research and inserted in the final appendix concerns the achievements realised by the administration during the first mandate, while the second regards future objectives. By considering the complexity and the artistic nature of audiovisual materials, categories of analysis aim to deconstruct the product and to grasp the basic constitutive elements (Rose, 2000: 246). The categories applied to the clip within this work will be:

- Camera shots (Rose, 2000: 251)
- Colour and light (Rose:2000: 251)
- Speaker and music (Rose, 2000: 251)
- Tone and anchorage to words (Scammell and Lang, 2006: 766-768)
- Degrees of presence (Fairclough, 1995: 106)

While the first four categories mainly aim to detect the distance created with the viewer and emotional appeals, the latter investigates ideological patterns.

Owing to limitations of time and space, other types of material such as documentaries and booklets were excluded from this analysis in consideration of their richness and length. The work would undoubtedly have benefited from examination of a wider range of materials.

Concerning interviews, the selection of interviewees aims to give a representative overview on the political and professional contributions converging in the campaign. Walter Veltroni, the Mayor of Rome; Angelo Baiocchi, volunteer responsible for communication within the electoral committee; Diego Mendoza, Art Director of Saatchi & Saatchi; Enzo Apollonio, Account Director of Saatchi & Saatchi, and Roberto Malfatto, the spot director, testified to their points of view by throwing light upon their respective purposes.

Obtaining contacts and gaining credibility are recognised as fundamental elements in conducting elite interviews (Briggs, 1986: 39-60; Gamson, 1995: 81-93; Hertz and Imber, 1995: 300; Pridham, 1987: 76). In this respect, Baiocchi represented both the intermediary vis-à-vis all the other interviewees and the first guarantor of my reliability. The relationship with Baiocchi was previously established thanks to my interpersonal network. The final selection of interviews derived from his suggestions and my proposals.

Establishing contacts and building relationships with the interviewees was a time-consuming activity. As Pridham (1987: 78) highlights, Italian elites do not privilege e-mail exchanges and avoid giving appointments more than few days in advance so that they can easily postpone them at the last moment. Apart from this, the availability and interest for this work were surprising. First contacts represented occasions for making interviewees familiar with the research project as well as for receiving feedbacks and further information.

From the very beginning, the possibility of giving an interview was suggested. None of the interviewees objected. Moreover, they all consented to their names and professional roles being reported in this work. In addition, they all opted to give interviews in their respective workplaces during office hours. Before each interview a rough summary of the research project was offered (Deacon et al., 1999: 74). The interviewees freely accepted to be tape-recorded when asked. They were also informed that the recording could be interrupted whenever they wanted (Gaskell, 2000: 51; Warren, 2002: 91-2). Each interview lasted around one hour.

Transcription of the interviews was an unexpectedly time-consuming activity. Each interview was replayed twice after the first transcription in order to detect errors and stress pauses. Cleaning up of the transcripts was minimal. The flow of thoughts, repetitions and slightly disconnected sentences typical of spoken language were all reported (Poland, 2002: 632-42). Little needs to be said about Veltroni's interview. My contact with the Mayor goes back to 2004 when, as European MP, he offered me an internship in his office. At the very beginning of this work he was supposed to give a face-to-face interview. However, his recent candidature in the competition for the leadership of the Italian Democratic Party in the approaching left-wing primary elections represented an insuperable obstacle. Consequently, the interview was submitted in written form.

Finally, in consideration of the different nature of oral and written interviews the final appendix includes the transcripts of Mendoza's and Veltroni's interviews.

## **7. Presenting results**

### **7.1 Posters**

#### *7.1.1 Shots*

- First phase – The picture shows a bartender holding a tray and wearing the Mayor's emblem around his chest. The full-length portrait and the subject's gaze turned away from the audience infuse a sense of distance in the viewer who tends to focus on the general situation rather than on the subject.
- Second phase – The photograph illustrates a half-length portrait of a young person who offers the viewer a Polaroid picture representing the ferry service introduced by the municipal administration on the river Tiber. The close-up of the portrait and the subject's gaze directed to the viewer transmits a sense of proximity.
- Third phase – An ordinal picture shows the smiling Mayor surrounded by citizens. No element suggests power relation characterizations. Subjects seem to be contextualised in a peer-to-peer relation.

#### *7.1.2 Diagonals*

- First phase - The Mayor's emblem emerges as a central element in the picture. This is partly due to its positioning in relation to diagonals. In particular, the left-right diagonal, by running parallel to the emblem, directs the gaze along the length of the band. This visual mechanism emphasizes the importance of the emblem.
- Second phase – The point of encounter of the diagonals coincides with the bottom left angle of the Polaroid photograph. The upper halves of both diagonals pass respectively through the Polaroid picture and the face of the subject by directing the attention of the viewer firstly to the image represented in the Polaroid picture and then to the subject. The general position of the elements in the image where the person stands on the left side and the Polaroid photograph is displaced on the right leads the gaze instinctively towards the texts inserted on the right side of the poster.
- Third phase – The convergence of the diagonals on the candidate's face directs the viewer's attention to the final appearance of Veltroni.



### *7.1.3 Colours and light*

- First phase - By rejecting a glamour style typical of advertising, the image, by means of a slightly sepia tone, appears as natural and warm, creating a sense of closeness.
- Second phase – An intense colour tone and a warm light characterize the image portrayed in the Polaroid photograph by contributing to its prevalence over the subject.
- Third phase – A warm light and intense colours contribute to characterize the image as familiar.

### *7.1.4 Anchorage to words*

- First phase - At the bottom of the poster is written: "you assisted 100,000 additional people, you renovated 170 km of streets and you created 700 extra enterprises in the suburbs". In a bold and capital format the slogan follows: "Rome. Three million mayors". On the right appears the logo: a small circle with a red tick accompanied by the motto "Walter Veltroni, everyone's mayor".
- Second phase - Collocation and length suggest an increasing importance assumed by the written text: "we rendered the river Tiber navigable, we created 79 additional km of cycle-lanes, we raised the green in the city to 68%, we illuminated 400 km streets in the suburbs". The slogan in a bold and capital format concludes: "Proud to be Romans". At the very bottom, after a considerable space left blank, the logo appears.
- Third phase – At the top of the poster the logo's motto is reported in giant format: "Walter Veltroni. Everyone's mayor", while at the bottom appears "Rome, the metropolis community".

### *8.1.5 Degrees of presence*

- First phase – The absence of the candidate breaks with the conventions of electoral communication. However, the prominence acquired by the tricolour sash, usually worn by Italian mayors on official occasions as symbol of power and popular investiture, seems to testify the presence of the candidate through a visual metonymy. Furthermore, the merge between an ordinary citizen and the Mayors' ornament produces an unusual contrast by combining elements of urban everyday life and symbols of the national political dimension.

- Second phase – The candidate is still absent but the growing importance acquired by data through images and written texts seems to respond to confidence-building strategies. While the figure of the person slightly blurred remains in the background, the attention of the viewer is conducted to the person's open hand holding the Polaroid photograph. This mechanism diminishes the importance of the tricolour sash worn by the subject.
- Third phase – The poster celebrates the final appearance of the candidate. In the foreground Veltroni greets citizens, while in the background a blurred crowd surrounds him. The candidate is the only clearly distinguishable person. His appearance is accompanied by the disappearance of the tricolour sash and written texts reporting data. This suggests how the candidate had gradually emerged through symbolic elements and reported achievements till his final appearance.

## **8.2 Video**

### *8.2.1 Camera shots*

The video consists of a rapid sequence of camera shots portraying views of Rome, moments of urban everyday life and citizens enjoying a better life style. Improvements in urban economy, employment rates, transport, assistance, public education, cultural spaces, green areas and suburban neighbourhoods are the main themes addressed.

### *7.2.2 Colours and light*

Images are characterized by vivid and brilliant colours. Camera shots portray bright sunny light. A general sense of modernity is communicated through the use of colours and light.

### *7.2.3 Speaker and music*

The speaker lists the objectives achieved while images follow one another on the screen. The voice belongs to Gigi Proietti, an extremely well-known Roman actor who through his long career has come to represent the soul of the city. The soundtrack is taken from a successful recently shown movie by Ferzan Ozpetek set in Rome, *La finestra di fronte*.

#### *7.2.4 Tone and anchorage to words*

The general tone of the video is positive and optimistic. While achievements are listed using an impersonal form, at the very end the first person plural is used to address the viewers. “[...] there are 6.000 additional places in the nurseries for our children and almost the 70% of Rome is green. We suffered together during the longest days of the year and we had fun together during the longest nights of the year [...]”. Although the last part may be incomprehensible without the help of the images it respectively refers to the deaths of Pope John Paul II and the Roman actor Alberto Sordi and to the recently instituted “Notte Bianca”, an annual night carnival.

The only written sentences shown in the clip appear at the very beginning and at the very end. These are respectively “many things have changed in Rome in the last five years” and “proud to be Romans”.

#### *7.2.5 Degrees of presence*

In the video the candidate is completely absent. However, also in this case he is replaced by a symbolic representation. One of last images shows the Capitoline she-wolf, symbol of Rome.

### 7.3 Interviews

The table below presents the main themes which emerged in the interviews:

	<u>Veltroni</u>	<u>Baiocchi</u>	<u>Apollonio</u>	<u>Mendoza</u>	<u>Malfatto</u>
<u>The absence of the candidate</u>	Citizens as real protagonists vs. passive recipients.	No need for the candidate (he was so popular!).	No need for the candidate (he was so popular!). It is all about you!	No need for the candidate (he was so popular!).	No need for the candidate (he was so popular!).
<u>The centrality of citizens</u>	Community, belonging, participation, re-appropriation, solidarity.	Belonging, self-perception, grandeur, pride, bridging historical gap.	Belonging, community, participation.	Familiarity.	Community, belonging, new dignity, pride, bridging historical gap.
<u>Reconnection</u>	Achievements, eliminating previous distrust.	Emotions rather than data. Transposition.	Identification with achievements.	Warming up in order to make data digested.	Emotions and data. Identification .
<u>A "different" style</u>	Speaking vs. shouting, sobriety.	Vs. Berlusconi. Communication "ex contrario", sobriety.	Vs. Berlusconi. Sobriety, not shouted, truthfulness.	Sobriety, truthfulness, not shouting. Vs. Berlusconi.	Vs. "spectacularization".
<u>Ideology</u>	Towards all citizens, no preferences.	Towards all citizens. The survival of ideology.	Towards both Romans and left-wing electorate.	Towards Romans. No ideological appeals.	Towards all citizens.

### 7.3.1 The absence of the candidate

The absence of the candidate was explained by the interviewees through popularity. As Baiocchi underlines, the very positive reputation of the Mayor among citizens gained during his first mandate and confirmed by the pre-electoral polls allowed explicit forms of personalization to be avoided in the campaign.

*"[...] a brief of displacement and not of personalization...our brief, in a few words, could be summarized as saying: the focus [is] on 'non-personalization' in the campaign".*

The lack of personalization in the campaign is generally highlighted by the interviewees. Furthermore, Malfatto points out:

*[...] we're all 'mayors', we're all participants in the evolution of the city, we enjoy it, we're all Veltroni and Veltroni is a little bit of all of us. I mean, there's an exchange of [...] identity between the citizens and their Mayor.*

### 7.3.2 The centrality of citizens

By mainly ignoring the candidate, the campaign focuses on citizens described by the interviewees as "the real protagonists". The respondents tend to explain the centrality of citizens in the campaign as opposed to personalization of politics.

Furthermore, they spontaneously made use of emotions in their descriptions of the effect that the framework of the campaign was supposed to provoke among viewers. In this respect, the sense of belonging is the emotion mentioned by all the interviewees. However, while the Mayor and Apollonio seem to rely more on the idea of community and participation, Baiocchi and Malfatto emphasize the concept of pride. The latter two both attest of how Rome has acquired a new dignity in becoming a modern city by overcoming an historical gap of provincialism and underdevelopment. In this respect, Baiocchi highlights:

*[...] the feeling that the city, in addition to confronting real problems like the suburbs, employment [...] would present itself [the city of Rome] as a candidate in an important role [...]. [...] we're the ones that made the city a place that has once again become important, a city that one can be proud of [...]. [...] the idea that we wanted to transmit was precisely that...the end result has been important in [our] self-perception...[our] self-perception: let's congratulate ourselves [...]. It was perhaps*

*more, in a few words...The attempt through communal images, through people who were neither pompous nor haughty, but people who do things like travel by bicycle or who work at a stall at the local market, that can transmit a sense of grandeur. The self-perception of a grandeur that has been recovered [...].*

Mendoza and Apollonio explain the centrality of citizens in the campaign as provoking a sort of unexpected effect in the viewer. Apollonio emphasizes:

*Instead, the interesting thing is...that the person stopping to reflect will say 'What are these people trying to tell me!? And I as a citizen have done these things?!' This type of short-circuit was necessary...And that's where the unexpected lies...The surprise. So, does it mean that I've managed to stop you? [...] if I've managed to stop you, I've won [...].*

In addition, they both underline as the aim of a good campaign consists in making people stop, stilling few seconds of their attention and provoking emotional reactions. Mendoza, in particular, identifies emotional appeals as a source of connection between the candidate and the electorate.

### *7.3.3 Reconnection*

The concept of reconnection emerges as central. Interestingly, opinions strongly diverge on the respective roles played by data and emotional appeals within the campaign.

A clear contraposition, for example, is identifiable between the Mayor and Baiocchi. While Baiocchi argues for the centrality of emotional appeals rather than rational data in creating a relationship between the candidate and the electorate, Veltroni emphasizes the prevalence of concrete data over emotional appeals. He underlines: "The ideas, the values are important but they don't get you very far without results and risk becoming empty words [...]". On the contrary, Baiocchi stresses how positive achievements do not automatically induce satisfaction and engagement among voters and how they are rather perceived as tedious. He explains how the inclusion of data in the campaign was mainly due to the Mayor's insistence against the suggestions of his staff.

This leads the campaign, as Malfatto underlines, to become very "concrete and very emotional at the same time" where both dimensions merge together. Concerning the videos

he suggests how the aim was to “to trigger a ‘click’ with the music and the voice and then to give, in that very quick sequence of events, a sort of positive bombardment [...]”.

In this respect Mendoza provides an interesting perspective by explaining how the fusion of data and emotional appeals was realised in order to overcome the “cold nature” of data and make the electorate “digest” them:

*[...] the difficult part is to communicate these [numerical] figures, not just communicate them, but make them more accessible [...] now, on the subject of figures, something in itself quite cold, ultimately numbers...what we had to build was something which would instead be a bit more engaging, that would give some life to these figures, some heart...All of this was built not only to disseminate information but to make it accessible, to make it a bit more appetizing. Because otherwise who’s going to read them, who would possibly read this information? They would remain empty numbers.*

#### 7.3.4 Being different

According to the interviewees a central aim of the campaign was to differentiate from opponents. Apart from the Mayor who indirectly refers to his challengers, the rest of interviewees explicitly illustrate the features of the campaign as purposely in contrast with Berlusconi’s style. The adjective ‘sober’ is extensively utilized to describe this distance. Furthermore, the absence of the candidate vs. the omnipresence of Berlusconi’s image, the “truthfulness” of the campaign in terms of images and reporting of effective results vs. the “fake artificiality” of the images and slogans used in Berlusconi’s rhetoric and the “spoken” tone of the campaign vs. the “strident” tone used by Berlusconi were as the most recurrent comparisons. In this respect, the Mayor argues:

*[...] I wanted to speak to citizens in a calm tone. As an administration we didn’t want to feed a spiral of aggressiveness. We put together projects to present to Romans. The shouting of one who yells with anger is heard but not listened to. We, on the other hand, wanted to be listened to calmly. The campaign aimed at this. At dialogue.*

In addition, Baiocchi speaks about communication “*ex contrario*” in describing the attempt to create a rhetoric in contrast to Berlusconi’s style in general and to Veltroni’s challengers in particular.

Furthermore, Mendoza and Malfatto argue for the need to adapt advertising strategies to political communication through “rigour” and “sense of balance”. In contrast with Berlusconi’s style they favour “truthfulness” over excessive forms of “spectacularization”.

### *7.3.5 Ideology*

When asked about the circulation of ideological appeals addressing the left-wing electorate some of the interviewees answered negatively. All the respondents focus on the fact that the campaign addressed the Romans as citizens without any kind of distinction concerning political orientation. The Mayor stresses: “As the mayor of a large city I have always tried to speak to the citizens, to work for them. Not for only a few of them, but for everyone, without distinction”. Moreover, concerning ideological appeals Malfatto answered curtly: “Not at all. Not at all taken into consideration. It wasn’t taken at all into consideration”.

However, Baiocchi and Apollonio seem to give different interpretations. Although they highlight how the campaign aimed to address all citizens without any kind of distinction, they also admit the existence of ideological appeals towards the left-wing electorate. While Baiocchi focuses on themes connected to the environment, municipal nurseries and solidarity, as particularly appealing to the left-wing voters, Apollonio highlights: “[...] it’s a campaign of the Left because it featured the public aspect, the community, participation...but in a real way...not a top-down message, but from the bottom up”.



## **8. Discussion**

### **8.1 The centrality of citizens: emotional involvement, identification and reconnection.**

Although the interviewees tend to highlight how citizens are at the core of the campaign as real protagonists of the local political life, the analysis of electoral materials reveals how the centrality of citizens seems to respond to marketing and rhetorical strategies by promoting emotional involvement, identification and reconnection, rather than empowerment.

The centrality of citizens within the electoral posters and videos is based on the key marketing imperatives concerning the collocation of the individual at the beginning of the process and the need for differentiation from competitors (Baker, 1991; Scammell, 1999). By switching the focus on ordinary people, the campaign tends to identify citizens as participants rather than recipients and to differ from personalized forms of electoral communication typical of the right wing (Mancini and Mazzoleni, 1995: 11-20, Novelli, 2006: 66-96).

Mechanisms of emotional involvement and identification are promoted through a number of elements. Indeed, as has been shown, shots and colours alongside the centrality of citizens tend to facilitate dynamics of identification. In addition, elements such as the tricolour sash and the use of verbal forms in the first phase encourage involvement among viewers. A similar mechanism is created in the second phase through the anchorage to words and the image of the citizen-protagonist offering the Polaroid picture to the citizen-viewer as tangible evidence of the common achievements. The last phase conducts the viewer into a more traditional dimension of the electoral campaign. However, the centrality of citizens as peers with the authority is maintained through the complete disappearance of the tricolour sash and the elimination of any kind of power relation between the candidate and the crowd. The video features similar mechanisms. Music, voice, tone and camera shots converge in constructing a growing sense of emotional involvement and identification with achievements.

Furthermore, as Mendoza and Apollonio highlight, the replacement of the candidate with citizens, by departing from viewers' expectations of the rhetoric customary in electoral communication, creates a sense of surprise among voters and promotes dynamics of reconnection (Leach, 2000). Indeed, through images and anchorage to words the campaign seems to speak to viewers directly by addressing them as active participants.

Moreover, emotional appeals aim to reconcile viewers with city (Scammell and Lang, 2006). A sense of belonging, a new dignity acquired by Romans and a feeling of active participation are the main elements through which the electorate is brought to identify through achievements with the urban community. However, this seems to represent an intermediate passage that conducts viewers through further processes of identification. The new kind of city created during the first mandate as a global success by the municipal administration seems to stand for the Mayor himself. Hence, by creating processes of reconciliation with the city through emotional appeal, the electoral materials orient viewers towards dynamics of identification with the candidate.

Thus, although the interviews tend to provide interpretations of the centrality of citizens in the campaign in terms of empowerment, the analysis of the electoral materials reveals concerns regarding marketing and political rhetoric; for the centrality of citizens within the campaign seems to promote mechanisms for emotional involvement, reconnection, and identification rather than empowerment. Although the respondents admit the existence of a correlation between the centrality of citizens and emotional appeals, this correlation seems to emerge as a main feature rather than a secondary consequence as the campaigners seem to suggest.

## **8.2 The illusory absence of the candidate**

At first glance the campaign seems to match with the declared intentions of the interviewees where the substitution of the candidate with citizens is seen as responding to forms of depersonalization.

However, decisive elements partially contradict interviewees' interpretations by revealing practices of personalization. Actually, the centrality of the candidate is only apparently obscured by the presence of citizens. Two elements mainly stand for the candidate in the campaign: the tricolour sash and the data.

By symbolising the Mayor, the tricolour sash suggests further considerations on patterns of identification; for the sash, as a suture between the Romans and Veltroni, encourages processes of identification between the viewers and the Mayor himself by playing, according to Malfatto, on an exchange of identities. How, then, is the absence of the candidate in the first two phases of the campaign merely apparent?

Further evidence is provided by the merging centrality of “policy issues” within the first two phases of the campaign. The data stand for the achievements obtained during the Mayor’s first mandate. As such, they embody the success of the candidate by symbolising his reliability and capability. By promoting the reputation of the candidate, the progressive illustration of achievements through images and texts reveals the functioning of confidence-building strategies (Scammell, 1999: 728). In this context the presence of the candidate, despite his visual absence, emerges strongly.

The centrality of the tricolour sash in the first phase and the emerging centrality of data in the second phase encourage forms of personalization through which the candidate is not only present but characterised as reliable and successful. The final visualization of the candidate seems to reveal to the viewer the central element of the narrative implied up till that moment.

In the video the narrative strategies are not dissimilar. For, while the speaker keeps listing the achievements that have improved living conditions in Rome over the last five years, images of citizens and well-recognisable scenes of the city follow one upon another. The video, by promoting through the use of impersonal verbs the achievements obtained during the first mandate, seems to depict the candidate as a *deus ex machina* who stands beyond them. Through highly emotional sequences data are dispensed to the viewer by promoting the efficiency and reliability of the candidate.

The emergence of the candidate through data and symbols recalling the municipal authority leads to consideration of mechanisms of personalization as operating in the campaign where forms of depersonalization seem merely illusory. The visual absence of the candidate can be understood as dealing with different issues concerning national specificities. As the majority of respondents seem to confirm, the need for distinction from Berlusconi’s style led to creating a campaign with a different approach to the personalization of politics. The need for clear distinction from the opponents’ electoral style emerges as a primary matter in the interviews and is neatly summed up by Baiocchi in the expression “communication ‘*ex contrario*’” (Baker, 1991). In addition, the absence of the candidate can be also understood in relation to the partial resistance towards excessive forms of personalization of politics by the Italian electorate in general and by left-wing supporters in particular (Mazzoleni, 1996: 204).

### **8.3 Getting less ideological?**

When the interviewees were asked about ideological appeals as addressing specific parts of the electorate they seemed to take the issue very seriously. All of them highlight how the campaign aimed to address the urban community as a whole. However, Baiocchi and Apollonio admitted that in some respects the campaign tended to appeal to the left-wing electorate.

Discourse analysis reveals the presence of a double level of communication where different targets seem to be addressed. At a more superficial level the campaign seems to consist of cross target appeals where “policy issues” are put in evidence as appealing to the urban community. Nevertheless, an analysis of the issues promoted through the campaign reveals how some of them correspond to patterns close to left-wing rhetoric such as environment, assistance, solidarity, state schools. Baiocchi’s interview explicitly invalidates this hypothesis. Furthermore, Apollonio interestingly suggests how the whole campaign, by dealing with the centrality of citizens, clearly appeals to the left-wing electorate.

By promoting issues of general interest for the community, the campaign addresses a cross-target electorate and appeals to both sympathetic and non-sympathetic segments of the electorate (Farrell and Schmitt-Beck, 2002: 5-13; Norris et al., 1999: 67). However, at a deeper level of analysis the majority of patterns promoted in the campaign seems to woo the left-wing electorate subtly by creating a dual level of communication where both the community and the left-wing electorate are simultaneously addressed (Maarek, 1995: 35-38).

A number of limitations concerning the amount and variety of electoral materials considered and the restricted number of interviews affect the present analysis. Furthermore, the research would have been benefited from a wider contextualization within the national political scenario. In particular, a deeper exploration of Berlusconi’s communication style would have thrown further light on the subject.

## 9. Conclusion

By employing critical discourse analysis on a selection of electoral materials, and a set of interviews with some key protagonists, this paper has offered an analysis of the 2006 electoral campaign for the re-election of Walter Veltroni as Mayor of Rome.

By taking into account the recent changes occurring in the area of political communication and the main aspects arising within the current debate, the research has argued for the conceptualization of the "Modernization" of politics as an archetype rather than a model. By highlighting how trends of "Modernization" have been adopted through processes of selective adaptation within the national context, it has been shown how politics plays a central role in shaping such trends according to local needs and demands.

The analysis has developed through the exploration of three main areas: political marketing strategies, personalization of politics and ideological appeals.

- Concerning marketing strategies, it has been shown how the centrality of citizens in the campaign mainly regards processes of emotional involvement, reconnection and identification rather than forms of empowerment as the interviewees tend to suggest.
- Furthermore, the absence of the candidate interpreted by the interviewees as regarding the dynamics of depersonalization has been shown to be illusory, since forms of personalization do emerge through confidence-building strategies based on the promotion of the candidate's reputation. This has been interpreted as mainly regarding differentiation from political opponents rather than forms of depersonalization.
- Finally, in contrast to the general interpretation given by the interviewees, it has been highlighted how the campaign hinges on ideological appeals through a dual level of communication by addressing simultaneously the urban community and the left-wing electorate.

The work aims to provide a contribution to future research oriented two different directions. On the one hand, by dealing with a recent case study, the paper attempts to broaden research on electoral campaigning at a national level. On the other hand, by analysing the forms of local adaptation of trends of "Modernization", it aims to offer an additional contribution to comparative political communication studies in a macro-perspective (Gurevitch and Blumler, 1990: 305-25).

## References:

- Baker, M. J. (1991). One more time – what is marketing? In M. J. Baker (Ed.), *The marketing book* (pp. 3-9). Oxford: Published on behalf of the Chartered Institute of Marketing by Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Barthes, R. (1985). *Mythologies*. London: Paladin, Granada Publishing.
- Bennett, L. (1998). The uncivic culture: communication, identity and the rise of lifestyle politics. *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 31 (4), 740-761.
- Blumler, J.G. and Gurevitch, M. (1995). *The crisis of public communication*. London; New York: Routledge.
- Briggs, C.L. (1986). *Learning how to ask: a sociolinguistic appraisal of the role of the interview in social science research*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Campus, D. (2002). Leaders, dreams and journeys: Italy's new political communication. *Journal of Modern Studies*, 7 (2), 171-191.
- Cappella, J.N. and Jamieson, K.H. (1997). *Spiral of Cynicism: the Press and the Public Good*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bowler, S. and Farrell D. M. (1992). *Electoral strategies and political marketing*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- de Saussure, F. (1983). *Course in general linguistics*. London: Duckworth.
- Deacon, D.; Pickering, M.; Golding, P. and Murdock, G. (1999). *Researching communications: a practical guide to methods in media and cultural analysis*. London: Arnold; New York: Oxford University Press.
- Farrell, D. M. and Schmitt-Beck, R. (2002). *Do political campaigns matter? Campaign effects in elections and referendums*. London: Routledge.
- Fairclough, N. (1995). *Media discourse*. London; New York: E. Arnold.
- Foucault, M. (1978). *Discourse and social change*. Oxford: Polity Press.
- Gamson, J. (1995). Stopping the spin and becoming a prop. In R. Hertz and J. B. Imber (Ed.), *Studying elites using qualitative methods* (pp. 81-93). London: Sage.
- Gaskell, G. (2000). Individual and group interviewing. In M. Bauer and G. Gaskell (Ed.), *Qualitative researching with text, image and sound: a practical handbook for social research* (pp. 38-56). London: Sage.
- Gill, R. (1996). Discourse analysis: Practical implementation. In J.T.E. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of qualitative research methods for psychology and the social sciences* (pp. 141-158). Leicester: BPS Books.

- Gurevitch, M. and Blumler J. G. (1990). Comparative research: the extending frontier. In D.L. Swanson and D. Nimmo (Ed.), *New directions in political communication. A resource book* (pp. 305-325). London: Sage.
- Hall, S. (1980). Encoding/Decoding. In S. Hall (Ed.), *Culture, media, language: working papers in cultural studies* (pp. 128-138). London: Hutchinson in association with the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham.
- Hall, S. (1997). *Representation: cultural representations and signifying practices*. London: Sage.
- Hallin, D. and Mancini, P. (2004). Americanization, Globalization and secularization. In F. Esser and B. Pfetsch (Ed.), *Comparing political communication: theories, cases, and challenges* (pp. 25-44). Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Hertz, R. and Imber, J. B. (1995). *Studying elites using qualitative methods*. London: Sage.
- Johnson, J. (2002). In-depth interviewing. In J.F. Gubrium and J.A. Holstein (Ed.), *Handbook of interviewing research: context and method* (pp. 103-119). Thousand Oaks, California, London: Sage.
- Kaid, L.L. and Holtz-Bacha, C. (1995). *Political advertising in Western democracies: parties & candidates on television*. Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications.
- Kirchheimer, O. (1966). The transformation of Western party systems'. *West European politics*, 17 (4), 124-148.
- Leach, J. (2000). Rhetorical Analysis. In M. Bauer and G. Gaskell (Ed.), *Qualitative researching with text, image and sound: a practical handbook for social research* (pp. 207-226). London: Sage.
- Mills, S. (1997). *Discourse*. London; New York: Routledge.
- Maarek, P. J (1995). *Political marketing and communication*. London: J. Libbey.
- Mancini, P. and Mazzoleni, G. (1995). *I media scendono in campo: le elezioni politiche 1994 in televisione*. Roma: Nuova ERI.
- Mazzoleni, G. (1987). Media logic and party logic in campaigning coverage: the Italian general election of 1983. *European Journal of Communication*, 2, 81-103.
- Mazzoleni, G. (1996). Patterns and effects of recent changes in electoral campaigning in Italy. In D. Swanson and P. Mancini (Ed.), *Politics, media, and modern democracy: an international study of innovations in electoral campaigning and their consequences* (pp. 193-206). Westport, Conn: Praeger.
- Mellone, A. and Di Gregorio, L. (2004). The childhood of an Approach: political marketing in Italy. *Journal of Political Marketing*, 3 (3), 17-39.
- Norris, P. (1997). *Electoral change in Britain since 1945*. Oxford: Blackwell.

- Norris, P., Curtice, J., Sanders, D., Scammell, M., Semetko, H.A. (1999). *On message: communicating the campaign*. London: Sage.
- Norris, P. (2000). *A virtuous circle: political communications in post-industrial societies*. Cambridge, UK; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press.
- Norris, P. (2002). *Democratic Phoenix: reinventing political activism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Novelli, E. (2006). *La Turbopolitica: sessant'anni di comunicazione politica e di scena pubblica in Italia: 1945-2005*. Milano: BUR Saggi.
- Ostrander, S.A. (1995). "Surely you're not in this just to be helpful". In R. Hertz and J.B. Imber (Ed.), *Studying elites using qualitative methods* (pp. 133-150). London: Sage.
- Poland, B. D. (2002). Transcription quality. In J.F. Gubrium and J.A. Holstein (Ed.), *Handbook of interviewing research: context and method* (pp. 629-649). Thousand Oaks, California, London: Sage.
- Potter, J. and Wetherell, M. (1987). *Discourse and social psychology: beyond attitudes and behaviour*. London: Sage.
- Pridham, G. (1987). Interviewing party-political elites in Italy. In G. Moyser and M. Wagstaffe (Ed.), *Research methods for elite studies* (pp. 72-88). London: Allen & Unwin.
- Putnam, R. (2000). *Bowling Alone: the collapse and revival of American community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Rose, D. (2000). Analysis of moving images. In M. Bauer and G. Gaskell (Ed.), *Qualitative researching with text, image and sound: a practical handbook for social research* (pp. 246-263). London: Sage.
- Scammell, M. (1997). The wisdom of the war room: U.S. Campaigning and Americanization, Research Paper. Joan Shorenstein Center Press Politics, Harvard University.
- Scammell, M. (1999). Political Marketing: Lessons for Political Science. *Political Studies* 47(4), 718-739.
- Scammell, M. and Langer, A. (2006). Political advertising: why is it so boring? *Media, Culture & Society*, 28 (5), 763-784.
- Swanson, D. and Mancini, P. (1996). *Politics, media, and modern democracy: an international study of innovations in electoral campaigning and their consequences*. Westport, Conn: Praeger.
- Warren, C. (2002). Qualitative interviewing. In J.F. Gubrium and J. A. Holstein (Ed.). *Handbook of interviewing research: context and method* (pp.83-101). Thousand Oaks, California, London: Sage.



## Photographic appendix

First phase

Comitato Veltroni Roma. Responsabile Committente: Paolo Teodoli

SAATCHI & SAATCHI



HAI ASSISTITO 100.000 PERSONE IN PIÙ, [www.veltroniroma.it](http://www.veltroniroma.it)  
HAI RINNOVATO 170 KM DI STRADE E  
CREATO 700 NUOVE IMPRESE IN PERIFERIA.

**ROMA. TRE MILIONI  
DI PRIMI CITTADINI.**

 **WALTER  
VELTRONI**  
IL SINDACO DI TUTTI.

"You assisted 100,000 additional people, you renovated 170 km of streets and you created 700 extra enterprises in the suburbs".

"Rome. Three million mayors".

"Walter Veltroni, everyone's mayor".

## Second phase

Comitato Veltroni Roma. Responsabile Committente: Paolo Teodoli

SAATCHI & SAATCHI



ABBIAMO RESO NAVIGABILE  
IL TEVERE, CREATO 79 KM  
DI PISTE CICLABILI IN PIÙ,  
PORTATO AL 68% IL VERDE  
DELLA CITTÀ, ILLUMINATO 400  
KM DI STRADE IN PERIFERIA.

**ORGOGLIOSI DI  
ESSERE ROMANI.**

 **WALTER  
VELTRONI**  
IL SINDACO DI TUTTI.

[www.veltroniroma.it](http://www.veltroniroma.it)

"We rendered the river Tiber navigable, we created 79 additional km of cycle-lanes, we raised the green in the city to 68%, we illuminated 400 km streets in the suburbs".

"Proud to be Romans".

"Walter Veltroni, everyone's mayor".



Third phase

**WALTER**  
**VELTRONI**  
**IL SINDACO DI TUTTI.**



**Roma,**  
**LA METROPOLI**  
**COMUNITÀ.**

[www.veltroniroma.it](http://www.veltroniroma.it)

"Walter Veltroni. Everyone's mayor".

"Rome, the metropolis community".

Interviews appendix

Interview with Walter Veltroni, Mayor of Rome

July 2007

**In reconstructing and analyzing the electoral campaign for your re-election for Mayor in the Spring of 2006, it became clear that you yourself contributed significantly to the conceptualization and the definition of the main themes of the campaign. What were the central concepts that you wanted to communicate to Romans? What were the key ideas that you wanted them to associate with you as a candidate?**

Like all great team sports, even the electoral campaign for my re-election wouldn't have taken place without the contributions of many people. With this I'm referring to the committee that was put together for the campaign which brought together many skills and enthusiasm in a strong synergism. I think of the group of young people that dedicated their time with passion to the realization of the internet website and contributed to audio-visuals which would speak to the new generations (as well as older ones). I think of the many Romans who wanted to participate and contribute. The conceptualization of the electoral campaign was a concert of ideas, contributions and passions.

I don't think that it had to do with associating my image to particular ideas or concepts. My first five years as the Mayor of Rome were a serious undertaking, results and facts. The city has changed. The ideas, the values are important but they don't get you very far without results and run the risk of becoming empty words. This administration has tried to change the face of the city in order to make it closer to its citizens, making daily life a bit simpler. We all got back into the game in 2006 in order to be evaluated on the results that we had achieved, to be able to obtain a new trust, to bring to terms projects and to begin new ones. Like an exam which one either succeeds in or fails. We worked hard. Maybe not too bad. This is what we wanted a verdict on from Romans.

**Why did you choose to conduct your electoral campaign this close to the elections?**

I don't think that the electoral campaign was started late.

All of us in the Municipal Administration were committed to a very delicate final phase. At the end of the five years the ongoing projects had to be finished. We were aware of the importance of the elections. But it was our duty to finish up this first adventure without leaving any loose strings. There was no reason for interrupting the work before the time was up. That same work that we had committed ourselves seriously to needed to be concluded with the same level of dedication.

Committing oneself to respect the tasks that one had embarked upon, to the very end. Every day it's possible to make a small step forward. This had and continues to have value. It is the results that speak to people. And, to be honest, in the face of concrete facts a long and intense campaign wouldn't have had much use. We too often forget that public administrators are at the service of the citizens and that they depend on their judgement. If they work well they are rewarded, if not they're kicked out. We presented ourselves to the Roman people with results that were achieved over the course of several years. A long and intense campaign wouldn't have been any use to us.

**The absence of the image of the candidate in the first two phases of the campaign is striking. Why didn't your electoral campaign initially make use of your image?**

My image wasn't at the centre of the campaign for a number of reasons.

The results that were obtained in these years were not uniquely my own doing, but the product of a capable and cohesive team. My face and image wouldn't have done justice to all those people, women and men, who worked and believed in the renewal of the city. Such a renewal is never just a question of rhetoric. Rome had to be given back to the Roman people.

The citizens and their needs were at the centre of the municipal politics of these years. We tried to start a small revolution: return the public administration to its proper role, that of being of service to the citizens. For decades the Roman people regarded the municipal institutions with a sense of detachment, almost with fear. We tried and, I believe, that we were partly successful, in breaking this feeling. We worked to ensure that citizens would be able to engage with the Municipality as a friendly institution which provided help and assistance and not like an additional problem with which to struggle (or, even worse, something that one needed to defend oneself from).

If, as I think, the electoral campaign had in some way to even summarize the philosophy of the first five years of the administration, then my image wouldn't have been a real representation. The simplification and the improvement of daily life and the attempt to give back to the city the dignity that it deserves on an international level have been some of the results of these years. And it was results that we wanted to offer to Romans, for their approval or an eventual dismissal. It wasn't my image that was being judged but rather the collective team of this administration.

**The absence of your image contrasts sharply with the constant presence of the image of Roman citizens. How would you describe the role of Romans in the campaign?**

The citizens of Rome are the real protagonists, those for whom and with whom we have been working in these years. I believe it's important to remember that this administration, following upon the politics inaugurated by Rutelli, has tried to listen to the needs of Romans but also to create a sense of participation and community in the city. We have tried to bring to an end what was one of the most ambitious objectives of the previous administration: getting rid of the feeling of abandonment that many citizens felt in respect to the administration and the diffidence that grew in the city between men and women who had become estranged from one another. We tried to rebuild a sense of belonging, of communion, of solidarity. The volunteers [helping in the social services sector] in this sense had an important role in reconnecting with citizens and in helping them rediscover a sense of pleasure in seeing oneself as part of a unique 'space'. Of course, it was necessary to create structures, opportunities and procedures to ensure that everything would fall into place. We tried to do exactly that— offer citizens ways to find themselves again. It was them that provided the commitment, participation and enthusiasm necessary for this big project to take off. We offered the means. The Roman people did the rest.

The campaign attempted to propose these ideas. The citizens as protagonists, the citizens at the centre. Not as an empty slogan. But as the philosophy of an administration dedicated to creating opportunities for a new way of imagining and living in the city. It is because of this that the citizens of Rome appear as protagonists in the electoral campaign. Not as simple recipients but people who actively benefit from the opportunities offered to them. It was

their own desire to participate that constituted the real success of these initiatives. The Roman people were called upon to build a new sense of community, to contribute, to exploit in a good sense the improvements that were made, to live in this new Rome. Protagonists in the facts, protagonists in the images.

**Taking into consideration the electoral campaigns of the last few years, would you define your 2006 campaign as innovative in any way? If yes, how?**

We wanted to do something different. During the election, the city was completely plastered with faces, promises, slogans. The level of crudeness in the tone of the debate, the perpetual contempt for the opponent, the increasing search for a provocative statement are not ways to make ourselves heard better. On the contrary, I think they're demoralizing. I'm afraid that this way of doing things is responsible for the recent distancing of citizens from politics. A political scene that every day is seen as strange, distant from the needs of people, from everyday life. Too often one forgets that it is politics, good politics, which is at the service of citizens. And not vice versa.

I have resolutely wanted that this electoral campaign would not contribute to creating an atmosphere of clashing in the city. On the contrary, I wanted to speak to the citizens in a calm tone. As an administration we didn't want to become entrenched in a spiral of aggressiveness. We put together projects to present to Romans. The shouting of one who yells with anger is heard but not listened to. We, on the other hand, wanted to be listened to calmly. The campaign aimed at this. At dialogue.

In this sense, I think that it was different from other electoral campaigns in Italy in the last few years. We assisted to the triumph of the candidate, of the man who embodied a political party, an idea. The man becomes a reductive symbol, a synthesis of a political proposal. The Municipal Administration was a team. The objective is the improvement of life for citizens. This campaign didn't want to be a marketing exercise, but an attempt to continue the dialogue that we started years back. The campaign wanted to be listened to, calmly, and based on its results.

**How would you sum up in a few words the political message contained in your 2006 electoral campaign?**

The campaign tried to present to Romans the results of the last five years of our administration with simplicity and modesty. It re-proposed concisely the values of a new civil coexistence that we tried to promote through several initiatives. Thanks to a new sense of community and solidarity, Rome has changed its face. It has rediscovered a new sense of belonging, a new generosity.

The campaign didn't want to be seductive. It wanted to recall the objectives of the last five years of this administration. Working to make Rome a modern, European city. Liberating the city from an aura of provincialism. Facts speak for themselves.

The desire was to give back to Romans a better city. A new city. There's still much more to go, but much has been done. If I had to choose a single idea that was at the base not only of this campaign but of the work that has been carried forward by this administration, I think I would opt for the restitution of the city to its citizens. Rome as a united community created for Romans through concrete deeds by Romans thanks to their participation and their effort.



**In the last twenty years we've seen a collapse of the old ideologies, from the end of the Cold War and the profound changes in the means of political participation. The difference between the Left and the Right, in the past very clear, seems today to be much more subtle. Political communication has changed deeply as a consequence, becoming less 'ideological', less 'political' and more focused on the image of the candidate and the attempt to emotionally involve the voter. In what way has your electoral campaign taken into account these changes?**

It's undeniable that following the collapse of the old ideologies, there have been notable differences in politics. Nonetheless, this shouldn't lead us to look back nostalgically or with blinders. The end of the Cold War has provoked a great disorientation. But it has also liberated new energies, provoked a new *modus operandi*. It has allowed for alternative movements and points of view to emerge out of the rigid compartments of ideological loyalties. I'm thinking of feminism.

I don't think that the Left and the Right are two separate entities whose boundaries are becoming blurred. I think, though, that it's necessary to rethink such an opposition. One hopes for an abandonment of rigid positions that are maintained in the name of opposing ideological loyalties. At the same time, it's important to have the courage to take back the ideas that for decades have been monopolized by a single front, as inalienable property. Only in this way is it possible to comprehend in new terms the relationship between the Left and the Right.

As the mayor of a large city I have always tried to speak to the citizens, to work for them. Not for only a few of them, but for everyone, without distinction. The administration has tried to promote projects and to make choices that wouldn't please only a part of the community. It tried to think about the city in all its complexity. Not only about parts of it.

I don't think that we're heading towards a politics of empty values. I think it's necessary to rethink those values with a certain dose of freedom, without the weight of rigid political loyalties.

Emotions? Politics is made up of emotions. Emotions that in the last decades seem to have become cold, a little numb. The passion for politics, for the public is in itself a great emotion. And if with the 2006 campaign we were able to transmit even a little bit of the emotions that have characterized the relationship between citizens and institutions in the last few years, then I have to admit that I couldn't have hoped for anything better.

Interview with Diego Mendoza, Art Director Saatchi & Saatchi  
Rome, July 2007

**What role did the Mayor play in the conceptualization and creation of the 2006 campaign?**

Well, there was no direct contact with the Mayor [during the time in which the campaign was created]. And obviously there were people working for the Mayor who provided us with information in order to later proceed with the formation of the 'brief'. And then with the development of the various...in the details of all the various information, above all that to put [the information] into the 'body copy', so everything that had been done, etc., etc... then, obviously the feedback so it went through other people and then came to us. So, in the beginning there was no direct contact. There was, however, [direct contact] in the second phase. There was direct contact in the sense that we brought our proposals, which were at a fairly advanced stage and spoke to the Mayor Walter Veltroni [about them].

**Did you have the impression that the Mayor, or the Mayor's staff, had come to Saatchi & Saatchi with extremely clear ideas? Did you have the impression of having to work under fairly strict guidelines? Or, instead, was the working dynamics between you [and the Mayor and his staff] fairly relaxed?**

No, no. I don't think that it was an unusual campaign in this respect. Also because in any case we're used to having to deal with clients that...sometimes don't know exactly what they want. So, it's especially us initiating with proposals and then taking it a bit at a time. We look for the right path that also works well for the client. So, it's not... it's not always easy. And neither was it in this case, but I think that it was fairly standard in terms of the type of information that is normally provided on an organizational level. And...actually there was the first phase of the launch which was good. We made some proposals...which were fairly interesting. Then, according to us, in terms of the other campaigns that were taking place...the final result wasn't bad. Even though in any case the...do some new in the campaign...is very difficult, you need a lot of courage...and...usually courage isn't...you don't see it very often...but let's say that it ended up well. Absolutely.

**Why do you think the Veltroni campaign was begun so late?**

Well... it depends on what you mean by 'begun so late'... 'begun so late', you're asking about how it turned out? Or 'begun so late' in terms of the brief...that it wasn't begun *that* late...

**How it turned out.**

How it turned out...I think that maybe it coincided with... also because you have to take into account that in any case...before...no, after the launch of the first phase there were another two, so it wasn't such a late, or last-moment, launching...eh...then in any case these things are decided beforehand, i.e. in the period in which...the period is decided beforehand, not by us in the creative team. This is information that in theory should be already given to us. Eh...this still doesn't alter the fact that there was a good long-term perspective. In the sense of then organizing the political campaign in three phases...I think it's looking ahead quite a bit. I haven't seen this attitude very often... the development in three phases.

**And according to you what were the reasons for which such a choice was made? I mean, why conduct a campaign in three phases?**

Mhm...I think...it definitely attracts a little more attention and in some cases can also accompany the...let's say...the person to which you're addressing through three different types of information. This time, the first was more of an introduction, no? The first phase, more than...a kind of...in any case...a sort of applause for all Roman citizens for what has been done up until...up until that moment...for the level of participation that was given...eh...so that...yes...let's say...a...we have attained...it was a bit as if the first phase had said: we have attained some good results thanks to all of you, good job, thanks for your participation, thank you for... I mean, having really taken part because in the end the image of three million 'first citizens' with...the... I mean, with our...let's call them...three or four characters was really the point of showing that there had been huge participation, that the results that were attained are the product of not only the Mayor's skill, but of a sort of communion of intentions and of specific goals, yes. So, accompanying the viewer step by step and then in the end what is said to be...a sort...had then become a sort of list of things that that had been done, no? Beginning, instead, with only a listing of things that were done is cold, it...doesn't attract much attention. Instead, accompanying them through three distinct phases then in the final phase maybe the general interpretation [of the viewer] is a bit less detached, a bit less...people maybe are less indifferent to this and this message. Even though the first two phases were the ones that really attracted [the most attention].

**But doesn't all this resemble a bit those marketing strategies in which you launch a product, in a slightly mysterious way, giving a hint...a bit like a teaser...**

Yes, yes, yes. It wasn't a proper teaser campaign. Let's say that it was a bit of a mess...eh...in truth, teaser is when someone wants to communicate something, but you don't know who it is [who is communicating]. I mean, you know what they want to tell you, but you don't know who it is that wants the thing publicized. And the second phase is precisely the one in which you wake up. In truth, the Veltroni campaign had been promoted by Veltroni or by the committee that supported him, that supports the Municipal Council...it's a compromise, you see...let's say that in the first phase more weight was given to...to communicating to the fact that everyone did a good job, that everyone had, how can I say it, worked in achieving our goals. The fact is that normally in this sort of political communication one will say: I did, I did this, I did that, etc., etc...while in truth in this case everyone involved did a great job.

**In looking over the campaigns from the past ten-twenty years, from the arrival of Berlusconi, do you have the impression that Veltroni's campaign was at all different or new?**

To be honest, I wouldn't be able to say that it was new. Also because...I haven't studied very many political campaigns because...it's not my specialty. I wouldn't be able to say if it was new or less...eh...

**But this element of not showing the face of the candidate...**

Well, I don't know if this has or hasn't been done in the past...but for sure working for Veltroni who is someone that's so well known that there's no need...I mean, this is an advantage that you have. In the moment in which the person is so well known that there isn't the need to show his face, then you can work on a different level. Because often when a politician presents himself in the elections no one knows who he is and you're therefore

forced to make him visible. Also because if you have a name and there's no face corresponding to this name, the person isn't really...it's not as if one can have trust...in a name just in itself...while Veltroni is a person that has such a large following that he himself...didn't want his face on the adverts...so...

**The absence of the Mayor in the first two phases can't but strike the observer. How do you explain an electoral campaign in which the candidate isn't present? How did you expect the electorate to interpret this choice?**

In this case the fact that people stopped to reflect is already something...often [political] posters are so...how should I say...obvious and banal that you only have to give it a brief glance to understand what's being said to you.. Instead it's much more...eh...how shall I say...it's better that someone, that whoever is seeing the publicity campaign doesn't immediately understand everything but stops for half a second or a second to understand what's being said. And this usually isn't taken into account much...it's not...

**Why is it important?**

Because it makes you stop, makes you reflect. This is what a good campaign should do, it should make you stop for a second and make you reflect because often the publicity message is so obvious, so banal that it doesn't draw you in because you've obviously already understood everything. While instead making you think rationally, for that split second, a second and a half...it's that...it means that the campaign works well, precisely for the fact that it's drawn your attention for a second or a second and a half. Obviously, we always hope that it has drawn it in an intelligent way, not in an idiotic way...so normally it can... the important thing in my opinion is to stimulate something, an emotion whether it be a smile or a particular thought or to realise that what they say it is maybe something that you hadn't thought about before. Campaigns should be run in this way.

**And in Veltroni's campaign, the absence of the Mayor, in your opinion, might have worked as a surprise factor that triggered people's curiosity and encouraged them to stop...**

Definitely, it definitely made them stop and especially...then...definitely someone stopped and...tried to figure out because maybe then the symbols weren't well known ...

**That was done by In Area, right?**

Yes. But especially in comparison to the posters that came out for the other candidates you can see a difference, the profound difference between a campaign that had a certain, in my opinion, delicacy in the way it was done, in the way it was conducted ...for...

**An aesthetic delicacy?**

Aesthetic and also...visually and conceptually. Because saying in any case three million 'first citizens' is like we were saying before, complimenting everyone that participated up until that moment. Instead if you were to look at the other posters at that same moment there was a different type of message. That obviously Veltroni wouldn't have been able to follow anyone because he could allow himself to distance himself from the others and conduct a campaign without his face. The others could have taken two tactics: either attack him as is usually and voluntarily done or do the same old campaign with the big image [of the candidate]...and maybe a choice...let's say...of, of the politicians that, in any case, is hardly ever made because often the political themes are so generic that there's no way...no one ever takes a

firm stance but instead a rather generic one. So Veltroni obviously found himself set apart for...there was already a certain preference, a certain popularity and this then enabled him to build a campaign of this type. None of the other candidates would have been able to permit himself a campaign of this type.

**Don't you find a bit of contradiction in all this? On one hand the absence of a candidate is cast as leaving space for citizens as the real protagonists, on the other, instead, it's a tool for taking the observer by surprise, a mere strategy.**

This obviously isn't...won't...how can I say...doesn't have to clash, the two don't have to clash...it's clear that starting with a particular politician you can build a campaign around him, you can't build a campaign around Mr. X and then adapt it to just anyone. I mean, we...we could have focused more on other aspects, right? That was precisely the...beginning to thank— this then was also one of the ideas of the Mayor, that of thanking in a certain way Roman citizens and then concentrating on the things that had been done that were begun in the second phase, then the third famous phase...

**It seems more and more evident that at the heart of political communication is the impact of marketing strategy and advertising and in part this campaign for Veltroni reflects this tendency...**

But it's a normal tendency...in the end the scope is always that, it doesn't change. It's clear that the techniques are then refined or adapted, also because people change even though I think that, in any case, it's not as if there's been such a huge change with respect to the techniques that were used in the past...I think that from this point of view it's much more advanced abroad...maybe even due to people's habits and seeing campaigns that were a little more...advanced. In reality, one tries to do something original that people will like, something entertaining. In reality, irony is a very powerful tool. Irony and being able to provoke a smile or a laugh. A smile can immediately bring the person transmitting the message closer to the person who's receiving it and it's truly a moment of closeness because you're able to provoke such an emotion that...no?

**The complete absence of the Mayor contrasts with the omnipresence of the citizens...as a contrast almost, compensating for his absence. If you had to describe the role of the citizens within the first two phases of the campaign and...what kind of political message did the presence of the citizens contrasted with the absence of the Mayor transmit to the public?**

Well, this definitely allowed a communication at a particular level. At the level of the people themselves avoiding therefore...the thing that was difficult, and obviously is always difficult, is to avoid that the message comes across as an advertisement because in the moment in which you make it into an advertisement, you put a certain distance between yourself and whomever you're communicating with and...so we therefore started with the idea of doing something simple and spontaneous...and from this...we depicted some scenes...by and large regular people, normal people that one feels to be real in the end...and they were all real...we didn't invent people...the people that participated were all spontaneously doing what we depicted them as doing and this allows you to...we think that it was, in any case, understood, even in the second phase, even though the second phase was already a step ahead in the sense that showing the polaroid already indicates...while in the first phase we had the image of someone doing something and then finishing with the 'three million mayors' slogan and only [the three-coloured] sash. Eh, I think that the first phase definitely was very...was inherently very genuine.

**But what did you expect people looking at these images to think or feel? I mean, looking at an ordinary citizen with the three-coloured sash, seeing citizens that, as Romans, all of us are familiar with, for example the barista at S. Calisto...so probably each of those characters was saying something to the Romans who were looking at those images. What did you expect this to provoke?**

A connection, a connection which was fairly immediate...a bit as if...let's say the campaign was saying 'I speak your language, I'm like you, I'm one of the people, one of the masses'. We detached ourselves from the ready-made images that everyone has used in campaigns and which are clearly fake...I think that people are intelligent enough to understand this. Maybe even a little annoyed. Instead we communicated with these people that are...are allowed themselves to be photographed and these people recognizable, real people...

**So in some way you wanted to make it so that people felt both identified but also to create the idea of a sense of community?**

Yes. It's as if you bring the communication to your own level, to your own range...you're saying: we speak the same language...and...so it creates less distance...

**But is it a mechanism for creating trust?**

It definitely expresses more trust in contrast to the ready-made images that feel fake. We wanted to communicate with real images and real people doing that work, that do that profession...and with also...how can I say...we didn't want to do something that was too clean-cut, no?

**And what is the importance of this?**

It's...often when you see the advertising image it's so tidy that it loses power, it loses consistency, but especially it loses truthfulness. What we did was precisely letting the truth and...which is actually a portrayal of real life. Real life isn't clean, it's not milk and honey, not everything goes well, rather there are obstacles, there are problems. And this is what should be represented. These are also opinions because often there are those who try to do super-clean campaigns, no?

**So is there a deliberate contrast with the campaigns that we've seen for Berlusconi between '94 and now?**

We didn't honestly think about this contrast...

**I mean in terms of the campaign's philosophy...**

Without a doubt...double-breasted jacket, fake bookshelves in the background and photos...which are considerably touched up...our intention was definitely to communicate in a different way...and...I think, in any case, the target that was given to us was at any rate...

**In terms of the colours, while blue is seen in many countries in Europe as the colour of the Right, the Left after the fall of communism still seems to be searching for a colour. How do you explain the chromatic choices that were made for the Mayor's electoral campaign?**

We wanted to use a style that was quite warm and in fact the photos are all a bit yellowish, they seem almost old, right? This allows us to warm it up a bit because in the end we're speaking about the subsequent stages...speaking of numbers and speaking of politics is already enough...people will become easily put off...and so we wanted to use a colour that wouldn't be too out-of-sync from the photos. In fact, in political communications...some really absurd colours...that clash amongst themselves, that are too strong...too presumptuous, too insistent, too heavy, no? And this also probably has to do with...with...in inverted commas, something 'soft' that we had wanted to convey. It's all a bit mixed up, it doesn't have colours that are too bright, it doesn't attract too much attention in comparison to other [candidates'] posters with flashy colours. And this, in the end, I think, worked in our favour because it made ours stand out from the other posters in a much more elegant way.

**But was it a purely aesthetic choice or rather was it an attempt to give political meaning to the use of colours?**

No. There wasn't any attempt to give any political meaning to the use of colours.

**Did it not give you any trouble the fact that the Right was associated with blue and the Left wasn't clear about what colour it was.**

But look...I think that in the end colours...communicate along with everything else, they don't communicate on their own. So, it depends on how you use them and what they stand for. Fortunately, we didn't find ourselves in a place in which we had to decide on a colour for the Left. So we decided to do something that would, more than anything, work well alongside our images...without cannibalizing the rest. And there's also the question of weight. Often in political posters, the right amount of weight isn't given to the various parts of the poster. In fact, the logo almost comes off as if it were the title, it's so big that it takes over the poster, right?

**Instead you tried to...**

...to proportion all the elements in the poster in order to give a correct interpretation, because in the end you have to give the right weight to the various elements. So in this case the visual was the photograph and was dominant with respect to the other elements—the headline (i.e., the title) and then the logo at the end. This should be the interpretation.

**Political communication seems to be becoming more and more based upon advertising and marketing strategies and this seems like a way of getting the electorate, the observer, and the public emotionally involved. How did you weigh all of this in the creation of this campaign and what type of emotional reaction did you hope to provoke in the viewer?**

Mhhh...in terms of relying on advertising strategies...it's normal...so...it's a bit of an obvious question...why shouldn't we rely on such strategies?

**Exactly, there's really no reason not to use such strategies. But on what kind of an emotional path did you want to lead the voters?**

Mmmmh...let's say that beginning from this idea of making a campaign that would warm up [the voters] and so would create a sort of closeness with people...it gave, or it should have given, the possibility of communicating at the same level...I think the intention was to provoke...a certain attention to what was being created. So, create attention, rather, create an entrance that wasn't too invasive, too heavy, too...if it had been seen as too invasive then it probably wouldn't have taken on board or read, while instead in this way it was read, it was even perceived as something pleasant.

**But there was the intention through these three phases of bringing, of accompanying in some way, the citizen from a starting point to a finishing point through these three steps?**

Yes, of course...

**If you had to try to describe this process of accompanying...**

The first campaign is a sort of approach, the second a...let's say: I introduce myself in the first [phase] more or less, I introduce myself better in the second [phase], so I'm a bit clearer in the second, I show in more depth what has been done through the polaroids. And then in third phase was pure information of what had been done ...

**And maybe [this phase] was a bit more typical...**

Yes, exactly. A bit more typical...but obviously, the difficulty is in rendering...or it was conveying clearly all the things that had been done...creating a connection, a means of communication and then we gave [them] our information...we told them what had been done...the campaign can be seen as an emotional 'teaser'. Because, in the end, we're starting with a first campaign that ...distinguished itself from other ones through the fact that it wasn't very invasive. It didn't have too many colours...that blue which clashes with everything around it...it was all very...well done...done at the right times...not like an advert in the middle of a film, ruining the best part of the movie. We wanted to avoid all of this so that it would be perceived as something that communicated its message little by little in the second phase.

**If you were in the shoes of one of the citizens [of Rome], what would you say was the idea behind all of this? What was the idea that animated you?**

The intention was to communicate these [numerical] figures...the difficult part is to communicate these figures, not just communicate them, but make them more accessible...now, on the subject of figures, something in itself quite cold, numbers in the end...what we had to build was something which would nevertheless be a bit more engaging, that would give some life to these figures, some heart...All of this was built not only to disseminate information but to make it accessible, to make it a bit more appetizing. Because otherwise who's going to read them, who would possibly read this information? They would remain empty numbers. While it's obvious that you have to create a base concept that you carry along through more or less the entire campaign...and this base concept was to give the Roman citizen...the...using, using...giving the citizen what in truth he or she had done, what he or she had built up until that moment. The fact, in any case, was to make the citizens feel like participants in what had been done.



**So what you wanted the viewer to be left with was this: feeling once again at the centre of the political process?**

Of course, of course. This was fundamental from the beginning...so...in the first two phases the citizen was...in the first phase [he/she was] absolutely central, and dominant in respect to all the [numerical] figures reflecting what had been done. In the second phase there was already a bit...it tried to balance it a bit more with the figures, with what the figures showed. But, yes, recovering...the attention of the citizen...and making [him/her]...feel like a participant.

**In the last twenty years we've seen a collapse of the old ideologies, from the end of the Cold War and the profound changes in the means of political participation. The difference between the Left and the Right, in the past very clear, seems today to be much more subtle. Political communication has changed deeply as a consequence, becoming less 'ideological', less 'political' and more focused on the image of the candidate and the attempt to emotionally involve the voter. In what way has the electoral campaign taken into account these changes?**

Not much, not much. But we naturally took into account...[political] loyalties...even though in this case the character (Veltroni) is so popular in my opinion that he surpassed the ideological subdivision between Right and Left. In our campaign we didn't take it into account much, in the sense that we didn't want to address the campaign in respect to only one particular...let's say...political section...So...it's probably normal that it happens this way...so, yes, probably campaigns are becoming more centred around the candidate...campaigns end up being *ad hoc* about the candidate, or if a campaign isn't based on ideology then it will end up becoming centred around the candidate *ad hoc*.

**So what you were trying to present was the man, the politician, Veltroni, without referring in any way to a target...**

No, but in the end our target was the citizens of Rome...

**So your target wasn't the voters of the Left...**

No, no, no. Everyone, everyone. With these things, in my opinion, you shouldn't look at the colour but...you should look at what is being said and what is being proposed...Evolution is normal, it's part of moving forward, part of making progress. It's important to keep this in mind.

**So the idea of introducing a candidate that was almost above [political] parties. It was clear that Veltroni was part of an alliance and that he had a coalition behind, but the idea was to not pigeonhole him?**

We took it into consideration, but only partially in the sense that obviously our task wasn't to create a political campaign, I mean a political alliance, but to focus on the candidate. So particularly for municipal elections, you don't create a campaign for a entire coalition because it's counter-productive. But you create a campaign...that's tailor made [for a particular candidate].

**Is there anything that you would like to add?**

B: Not really...I've spoken plenty...I've lost myself in a sea of words...

**...something that I haven't asked you but which has been important in your work...**

What I'd like to say is that this was the first political campaign on which I've worked. And maybe this was why the campaign was based on ideas that were quite innovative.

## Electronic MSc Dissertation Series

Media@lse Electronic MSc Dissertations will:

- Present high quality MSc Dissertations which received a mark of Distinction (70% and above).
- Selected dissertations will be published electronically as pdf files, subject to review and approval by the Editors.

Authors retain copyright, and publication here does not preclude the subsequent development of the paper for publication elsewhere.

---