Popa SA, Dumitrescu D.

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National but European?

Visual manifestations of Europe in national parties' Euromanifestos since 1979

Sebastian Adrian Popa, University of Mannheim and CEU

Delia Dumitrescu, University of Gothenburg ¹

Abstract:

The architects of the European project made a significant effort to create a set of symbols for the community (such as the EU flag, the map of Europe, the anthem, etc.), and recent evidence suggests that the main European values are nowadays spontaneously associated with them. We know little however if and when national political actors choose to display these symbolic visual manifestations of Europe. In this study we examine the presence of such symbols in parties' Euromanifestos since the first European elections. The presence of EU community symbols is correlated with several factors, suggesting that the display is consistent both with a policy-driven and with a vote-seeking logic. We explore at length the implications of these results for future visual analysis of parties' European messages and for the larger issue of European identity.

¹ Both authors contributed equally for this paper, corresponding author Sebastian Adrian Popa
Sebastian.Popa@mzes.uni-mannheim.de

Constructing symbols of the European community was and still is one of the central foci of the European project. Such symbols were created in order to communicate European values and hence project the idea of Europe (Bruter, 2003). This process was institutionalized during the mid-80's when, alongside attempts to strengthen the European identity in the context of the increasing debates about a European citizenship, the European flag was adopted by all EU leaders (Wiener, 1998). Twenty years later, evidence shows that the European community, as a community of people, and some of its core values, such as peace, harmony and friendship, are spontaneously associated to EU symbols such as the flag (Bruter, 2004; Manners, 2011). Nevertheless, the display of EU symbols in the public space has been from the beginning strictly an European-level elite-driven project, buttressed by these elites' belief that a set of symbols is needed for the success of the EU, and that citizens need to embrace them. In exchange, we know little to nothing about the extent the EU visuals have been freely adopted by other political actors not directly connected with the European institutions in their communications. In this paper we aim to fill this gap by looking at if and when national political parties choose to display them, absent any obligation to do so.

The display of the EU flag and of other symbols of the EU community is important to examine in light of extant visual research. Visual communication carries important information (Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, 1996; Messaris, 1994), and the graphic design of a document can send powerful signals about the communicator's intention, the importance of what is pictured, as well as its relationship with the viewers (Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, 1996; White, 2011). Moreover, there is evidence that political visuals are purposely constructed to send implicit messages reflecting a party or a candidate's optimal strategy (Dumitrescu, 2010).

This study analyses the display of European symbols in national parties' European elections manifestos (i.e., Euromanifestos) over 25 years, from 1979 to 2014. We focus on the Euromanifestos for two reasons. The first is cross-time and cross-country availability, the largest among all other party documents. Second, despite having one of the lowest circulations among voters, Euromanifestos express the party's general direction with regard to Europe at one point in time, and are taken as strict guidelines by the party membership in their subsequent policy-making (e.g. Naurin, 2013). Thus, to the extent that parties decide to feature the European symbols on these uncontroversial documents consulted primarily by party members, the simplest assumption is that this presence conveys a message about the party's position with respect to the larger EU-wide community.

From a descriptive point of view, our data show that about a quarter of the parties throughout this 35-years period display the European symbols in one form or another. In the absence of previous research on the topic, our analysis of this display is exploratory and aims to help future theory construction. As such, we investigate the relation between parties' choice to display these symbols and party-external factors (such as the public pro-European mood and the European construction events over the 20 year period) and internal party features (such as their pro-anti EU position and their ideological family). By and large, we find that these factors correlate with the decision to include EU-specific visuals on the Euromanifestos throughout the years. We conclude with a longer discussion of the importance of our results. In particular, we argue that the analysis of visual symbols in parties' communications, either alone or in combination with other aspects (e.g. issue positions), can offer a new perspective for the study of electoral strategies at the European level. Our analysis suggests that there is a largely unexplored richness hidden in the visual aspect of parties' European messages. To be more specific our

findings suggest that European symbols are an expression of parties' ideology, but also a reflection of issue salience in the public. Moreover, given the intrinsic link between the European visuals and European identity, should parties publicly embrace the artificially created EU community symbols, or at least, enough to display them absent any requirement to do so, one can imagine a scenario in which the display of European symbols by parties may impact the European attachment in the public as well. We believe that further investigations in these directions are of timely importance.

The Meanings of European Symbols

Symbols are important for defining a community as they are emblems of group life that contribute to a society becoming self-conscious (Durkheim, 1951; Manners, 2011). Klatch argues, furthermore, that symbols "act as forces of integration, creating solidarity by binding individuals together into a unified whole" ((Klatch, 1988: 139). Research at the country level finds that exposure to national symbols – such as the flag – activates nationalist, ideological or identity feelings (Butz et al., 2007; Kemmelmeier and Winter, 2008; Schatz and Lavine, 2007). Schatz and Levine (2007) show that the symbolic component of national identity and attachments to national symbols are strongly related, suggesting that "[the attachment to symbols] serves psychological needs related to the acquisition and expression of positive social identity" (p.346). People who report positive feelings about the flag report also stronger feelings of national identity and beliefs in the superiority of the nation. They are also more likely to attribute positive characteristics to the nation as a whole, and to exhibit biased perceptions of the nation's attributes.

Such an account is closely related to the context in which European symbols were created (i.e. to strengthen a European identity and develop European citizenship), and is therefore not surprising that previous studies have adopted it when studying the role of the European community symbols in the process of European integration. Probably the most predominant here is the work of (Bruter, 2003, 2004, 2009) who argues that physical elements such as the flag or the EU map, among others convey identity messages. Moreover, given that European symbols were created to portray the EU as a visible social space, Laffan (2011) considers European symbols as the connection between individuals and the social and political order. All in all, European symbols (e.g. the flag, the EU map, the anthem, the passport, the currency, etc.) are “the most obvious, and most discussed, symbolic manifestations of the EU’s physical presence” (Manners 2011: 253) and thus essential for a European community. Our analysis of the parties’ displays of such symbols in their Euromanifestos takes therefore as a starting point their ability to communicate an identity association to Europe on behalf of the displayer and to the observers. As visual elements carry important politically-relevant information about the communicator (e.g. Dumitrescu, 2010; Grabe and Bucy, 2009; Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, 1996), ignoring the display of such symbols by parties might misrepresent the actual preference of parties and how these preferences are perceived by the general population.

The Euromanifestos as Party Statements

Parties’ European Elections manifestos represent authoritative statements of where the party stands on Europe, and of what it intends to do. A large body of previous manifesto-based research shows that many of these policy promises are fulfilled (Artes and Bustos, 2008; Klingemann et al., 2006; Naurin, 2013; Royed, 2009; Thomson, 2001). Furthermore, as

previously noted, these manifestos have primarily a members-based readership. As a group program, they are also less susceptible to the influence of single actors (when compared for example with candidate statements)(Ceron, 2012). They are thus more likely than other campaign production to act primarily as a platform of collective internal expression that takes into account the preferences of all factions within a party (Ceron, 2012). Because no rule requires parties to display the European symbols on these documents, the simplest assumption is that their display contributes also to this expression.

In this paper we build on a unique and original dataset combining the coding of the visual elements found on the first page of parties' Euromanifestos with country- and party-level contextual data. Our dataset contains 662 cases consisting of 237 parties who competed across the 27 EU countries in the European Parliament Elections starting with 1979 until 2009. Our focus on coding the visuals present on the first page of the manifestos (rather than the entire document) is motivated by methodological concerns. The length of manifestos may vary with the party and time, but they all have at least one page. Thus, by restricting our analysis to the display of European symbols on the first page of the manifesto, we are certain that our data points are comparable across time and space. The manifestos of the relevant political parties were collected by the Euromanifestos Project (EMP) 1979 – 2004 (Schmitt & Wüst, 2012), the European Parliament Election Study 2009, Manifesto Study (Braun et al., 2010) and the 2014 Euromanifestos Project.¹

Internal Party Factors Correlated with the EU Flag Display

Our purpose is to better understand what motivates parties to display the EU symbols on these self-focused documents. Our expectations are exploratory, but nonetheless, hinge on the

assumption rooted in visual communication evidence (e.g. Dumitrescu, 2010; Grabe and Bucy, 2009) that this display is part of a larger party agenda. Thus, we explore the extent to which this display varies with several party characteristics previously shown to be correlated with parties' positions with respect to European issues.

The first factor is the parties' position regarding the extent of European integration (the policy scope of the Union). This position, generally referred to as the EU dimension of political contestation, ranges from outright opposition to full support of EU integration (Hix, 1999). Given the importance that EU symbols played in the construction of the European project (Bruter, 2003; Manners, 2011) we assume that pro-EU parties will be more likely to display European symbols in their documents.

A second characteristic is a party's ideological family. The leaders of mainstream parties – by which, following Adams et al. (2006), we mean Labor, Socialist, Social Democratic, Liberal, Conservative, and Christian Democratic – have been routinely more involved in the construction of the European project than other parties (Helbling et al., 2010; Hix, 1999; Hooghe et al., 2002). Thus, these parties should be more likely to display the symbols associated with this process. But in making this distinction we need to take into account that with respect to their stances towards the EU, non-mainstream parties do not represent a homogeneous group. In particular, although non-mainstream parties are generally viewed as Euroskeptics, regional parties are “Europhile” (Jolly, 2007). In fact the regional party family was acknowledged to be the “most pro-European of all European party families” (De Winter and Cachafeiro, 2002), thus we expect regional parties to be similar to mainstream parties in respect to their propensity to display EU symbols.

Party-External Factors Correlated with the EU Flag Display

We also explore the possibility that the display of the EU flag on the party materials varies with other contextual factors. One such factor is the popularity of the European Union among voters at the time. Given that EU symbols were created to encourage the formation of an EU community and are currently associated with a sense of European identity (Bruter, 2003, 2004, 2009), parties should be more likely to display European symbols in political climates that are more favorable to the idea of Europe as a community.

Finally, there is the possibility that major events in the arduous evolution of the European space since 1979 may have also played a role in the activation of identities. On the one hand, events such as the establishment of the EU flag and anthem (beginning of the '80s), the permeability of borders as a result of the Schengen treaty (1985), the introduction of EU citizenship (early '90s), and the increased contact among European citizens as a result of economic integration, all lead to an elevated sense of community among citizens (Bosch and Newton, 1995; Scheuer and Schmitt, 2009; Wiener, 1998). This period is also referred to as the years of *permissive consensus*, a period in which “public opinion was quiescent” towards the elites’ effort to push for European integration (Hooghe and Marks, 2009). But by the mid-1990s however, the *permissive consensus* towards the European project began dissipating. The 1990s debate around the Euro and then its introduction and the creation of the European Monetary Union seem to have eroded European identification among EU citizens (Eichenberg and Dalton, 2007; Scheuer and Schmitt, 2009). The increase in contestation and the politicization of the EU after the 1999 elections (van der Eijk and Franklin, 2004), primarily driven by the rise of Euroskepticism² (De Vries and Edwards, 2009; de Vries and Hobolt, 2012) meant that the EU project at the start of the 2000s was far from unanimously accepted. Thus, if the display of EU

symbols by parties is sensitive to these historical dynamics, then we would expect it to reach its highs in the first decade of European elections and to waiver around the turn of the century.

Data, measurement and methods

The operationalization of the display of the EU symbols variable and validity checks

Our main variable is dichotomous, with “1” indicating the presence on the first page of any of the following EU community symbols: display of the EU flag or parts of it, the map of the EU or flags of *all* member states.³ Two coders independently looked at all the manifestos to check the presence of any of the above mentioned symbols. The non-parametric correlation between the two coders was 0.83 ($p < 0.001$), as disagreement between them was recorded in only 46 out of the 838 cases. Also the inter-rater reliability between the two coder measured using Krippendorff's alpha is 0.83, showing that the coding was reliable. To insure we do not lose any cases, a third coder analyzed the cases where disagreement was recorded and gave a final verdict. The non-parametric correlation of the final score with the original coding was 0.95 ($p < 0.001$) with the first coder and 0.87 ($p < 0.001$) with the second coder. Finally, in four cases EU symbols were shown in a negative frame (identified by both coders as such), thus these were recoded as zero.

In order to validate the assumption that the first page of the manifestos is indicative of the parties' general stance, we look at what else they display on it. More specifically, we evaluate the correlation between their choice of color scheme and their ideological stance. We expect that parties use colors that are representative for their political party family. To reduce ambiguity we only look at two families, as classified in the Euromanifestos Project (EMP) 1979 – 2004 (Schmitt and Wüst, 2012) and in the European Parliament Election Study 2009, Manifesto Study

(Braun et al., 2010): (post-) communist or social democrats, which are associated with red as a representative color, and green parties which, of course, are expected to use green as a representative color.⁴ We find that 92 out of 115 (post-) communist and social democrats use red on the front page of their manifestos and 35 out of the 39 green parties use green on their first pages. The correlation between using red and party family (coded as 1 for (post-) communist or social democrats and 0 otherwise) is 0.59 (N=380, sig at $p<0.05$) and the correlation between using green and party family (coded as 1 for green parties and 0 otherwise) is 0.59 (N=380, sig at $p<0.05$). This result supports our intuition that the visual elements parties use on the first pages of the manifestos communicate their core values.

The operationalization of internal and external party factors

The parties' pro-anti EU stances are computed based on their Euromanifestos (Braun et al., 2010; Schmitt and Wüst, 2012). We use a ratio score measure based on quasi-sentences (proEU-antiEU/totalEU), which “seems to be the most valid measure of party positions” (Ray 2007: 20) and that was further shown to be highly correlated with pro-anti EU position computed based on expert placement, mass perception, electoral self- placements and NOMINATE scores (Ray, 2007). The use of an indicator of the parties' pro/anti EU positions computed from their Euromanifestos has the added advantage of being based on these same documents used to study the display of EU symbols, thereby ensuring cross-time equivalence.⁵

The *party family* is coded based on the classification included in the Euromanifestos Project (EMP) 1979 – 2004 (Schmitt and Wüst, 2012) and in the European Parliament Election Study 2009, Manifesto Study (Braun et al., 2010).⁶ Following Adams et al. (2006), we further distinguish between mainstream parties (belonging to one of the following families: Labour,

Socialist, Social Democratic, Liberal, Conservative, and Christian Democrats) and non-mainstream ones (belonging to one of the following families: Regional, Communists, Greens, Extreme Right, and Special Interest parties).

To capture the *aggregate public sentiment of a European identity*, the variable we use in the analysis is the percent of respondents who feel European/ ‘European citizens’ in each EP election year as indicated by Eurobarometer data.

As we do not expect a linear relation with *time*, in order to capture its effect we use a series of dummy variables for each of the EP election years.

In addition, a number of control variables are used in the multivariate models at both the country and party level. First, we control for whether the first page of the Euromanifesto is a cover, as visuals may be more present in this case. As covers have usually less text than the inside of documents, we operationalize the control for cover page as a dummy. This takes the value of 1 if the text (not including the slogan or the name of the party) takes more than 20% of the page.⁷ Other controls are: the size of the party, if the party is new, if the party is part of the government, a dummy variable for post-communist countries and a dummy variable for multiple elections (i.e. if first-order elections took place in a given country-year at the same time with the EP elections).⁸ Based on the above description, we have a multilevel data structure, with parties nested in elections, which are nested in countries. We estimate models in which parties are nested in the 27 EU countries. Given that only a maximum of eight elections took place in each country, the effect of time is only incorporated as a fixed effect.⁹ Group mean centering is used for these variables while grand mean centering is used for country level variables (Enders and Tofighi, 2007) The analysis is conducted in R, with the lme4 package version 1.1-6.

Empirical analysis

To give the reader a clearer idea about the aspect of the first pages of the manifestos over the years, it is worth mentioning that 74% include at least some visual element, 68% include the name of the party, 50% include the logo of the party, 41% of them have a direct reference to the European Election, 8.2% have national symbols and 5.4% also identify the European party family. European community symbols are present in 186 out of the 838 cases, i.e. in 22.2 % of the analyzed manifestos. In a context where the European Elections are viewed as the main mechanism to legitimize the European project, the fact that only 22% of parties use European symbols

Before proceeding to the multivariate analysis we look at some overall patterns of usage of European symbols.

[Figures 1 and 2 around here]

Figure 1 plots the propensity to display the EU symbols by parties grouped into different party families. In line with our preliminary expectations, we notice that parties belonging to the mainstream families (e.g. Christian-democrats, conservatives and social-democrats) have the highest propensity to display European symbols as they were more involved in the construction of Europe. At the same time most non-mainstream parties generally regarded as Euro-skeptics (i.e. greens, communists, special interest parties and nationalists), have a lower propensity to display such symbols. The exception in the non-mainstream group is, as expected, the regional parties. These are more similar to mainstream parties with regard to the usage of European symbols. These distinctions are further emphasized in Figure 2 that shows that while only 10%

of the non-mainstream parties display European symbols, both mainstream and regional parties have a much higher propensity to display such symbols and are in fact very similar from this point of view.

[Figures 3 around here] ¹⁰

Figure 3 describes visually the evolution of the display of the EU community symbols in time. As expected we can notice two distinct patterns. The first is a constant, almost linear increase in this display from 1979 to 1994, which is consistent with the creation of a European community and then strengthening of the European identity (Bosch and Newton, 1995; Scheuer and Schmitt, 2009; Wiener, 1998). The second visual pattern is the drop in usage of EU symbols in the 5th EP election (1999), consistent with the time when the EU dimension became increasingly politicized due to increased contestation from the anti-EU side. Finally the 2004 expansion of the Union brought a slight increase (most likely fueled by pro-EU attitudes in the Eastern countries) in the proportion of parties using EU symbols. ¹¹

In Table 1 we present the results for the multivariate models explaining the usage of European symbols. ¹³

[Table 1 around here]

The first variable of interest is the position of parties on the pro-anti EU axis of competition. As expected, Model 1 reveals a positive and statistically significant relation between the placement of parties with respect to EU integration and the display of European

symbols. The strength of the relationship is more clearly revealed when looking at Figure 4, where we see a substantial difference between the propensity of pro-EU and anti-EU parties to display European symbols. A party that is at the pro-EU end of the scale has 40% probability to display European symbols, while parties at the anti-EU end of the scale only have a 15% probability to display such symbols.

[Figure 4 around here]

The second party characteristic that we expected to influence the propensity to display European symbols is a party's family. The findings revealed by the simple bivariate analysis presented in Figure 1 and Figure 2 are confirmed in Models 2 and 3. Model 2 shows that two party families characterized as mainstream (Conservatives and Christian-democrats), and the regional parties have a higher propensity to display European symbol than the baseline category, i.e. nationalist parties. Further looking at the predicted probabilities of EU symbol display by party family highlights this difference (see Figure 5). Christian-democratic, Conservative and regional parties have a higher propensity to display EU symbols than any other party, but the difference is not significant when compared to the social democratic and liberal parties (who also have a comparatively high likelihood to display the EU symbols). When we group mainstream parties together, Model 3 and Figure 5 show clear support for our intuition with regard to the distinction between mainstream parties (actively involved in the European project, Benoit and Laver, 2012; Helbling et al., 2010; Hix, 1999), regional parties (Jolly, 2007; de Winter and Cachafeiro, 2002) and the rest. Parties belonging to mainstream and regional families are virtually indistinguishable in their propensity to display European symbols, but both have a

statistically significant higher propensity to display such symbols than the other parties (i.e. green, communist, special interest and nationalist parties).

The two internal factors (i.e. the support for the European integration and their mainstream status) that correlate with parties' display of European symbols are, at least to a certain extent, in accordance with their policy-driven. To be more specific by displaying such symbols parties express their commitment with the European project; a commitment reflected by both their position on the pro-anti EU axis of competition and their mainstream status.

[Figures 5 and 6 around here]

Moving to the party-external factors, the first one we consider is the strength of European identity in the population. Confirming our initial expectation, Models 1 through 3 show that the proportion of national citizens feeling European has a statistically significant and positive effect on a parties' propensity to display EU symbols. This is further illustrated by Figure 7, which shows that parties are on average three times more likely to display European symbols in contexts where the proportion of the population identifying as Europeans is high compared with contexts where this proportion is at its lowest. This relation makes the display consistent with a vote-maximizing strategy: the average party is more inclined to display the symbols linked to development of the European identity in contexts where this identity is popular.

[Figure 7 around here]

The effect of time presented in Table 1 is consistent with that presented in Figure 2. For the period between 1984 and 1994 we can notice a general increase in the usage of European symbols.¹⁰ This is consistent with the creation and the strengthening of a European political community (Scheuer and Schmitt 2009) that is directly linked to the creation and usage of European symbols.

A second period started in 1994 to 1999 when we notice a drop in the usage of EU community symbols, which afterwards remains relatively constant until 2004. This supports our initial expectation regarding the impact of the increased politicization and contestation of the EU dimension towards the end of the 90s, fuelled by the introduction of the Euro and the creation of the European Monetary Union (Eichenberg and Dalton, 2007; Scheuer and Schmitt, 2009). The end of the *permissive consensus* years in the mid 90's (Hooghe and Marks, 2009) followed by the increased contestation from the anti-EU side taking shape at the turn of the century (de Vries and Edwards, 2009; de Vries and Hobolt, 2012) tainted the image of the EU project, which was no longer unanimously accepted. This led to a decrease in the usage of EU symbols (parties are approximately four times less likely to use such symbols in 1999 compared to 1994 and 1989). And although we can notice a reverse of this trend in 2009 (see Model 1), most likely due to the expansion of the EU which “brought in surprisingly European-minded citizens” (Scheuer and Schmitt, 2009: 556), the proportion of parties displaying European symbols still does not reach the level of 1989 or 1994.^{14 15}

Last but not least it needs to be noted that as in the visual analysis and the multivariate analysis did not reveal any substantial changes brought by the 2014 EP elections in comparisons to both the 2004 and 2009 elections (the coefficients for 2014 EP elections are very similar to those for the 2004 and 2009 EP elections). A possible explanation is the conflict between two

opposing phenomena. On the one hand, as the contestation of the EU became even stronger in the 2014 EP elections, evident by the success of Euroskeptic parties, one might expect a further decrease in the display of EU symbols during these elections. On the other hand the increase contestation also forced a reaction by the pro EU camp. Unlike in previous years when pro-EU parties de-emphasized and blurred the issue (Rovny, 2012), in the 2014 elections the pro-EU parties took a clear position as illustrated by the open and clear support for the European project expressed by the list leading candidate of the two main EP party groups (i.e. the Socialists & Democrats and the European People's Party) during the 2014 EP elections campaign(Hobolt, 2014).

Discussion and conclusions

European symbols are generally considered to have played an important role in the creation of a European community and European identity. Given that this was an elite driven project, it is surprising how little we know about how an important category of elites, political parties, chose to use such visual symbols in their political documents. Previous evidence indicates that parties purposely use visuals to send implicit messages reflecting an optimal strategy (Dumitrescu, 2010), which suggests that, at the very least, their display of the EU community symbols is not due to chance.

In this paper we go beyond this simple statement, and show that the use of these symbols follows a number of empirical regularities. On the one hand we can clearly see that the pro-anti EU stance of the parties and their relation to the European project influences the propensity to display of European symbols. To be more specific, parties that are on the pro-EU side of the spectrum, have a much higher propensity to display the European symbols. On the other had the

usage of such symbols is also clearly influenced by party-external factors. We show that parties are hesitant to display EU community symbols whenever the public's European attachment is low. Moreover, the propensity to display the symbols also varies with the historical evolution of the European integration. The display of EU community symbols drops after 1995, which coincides with the onset of a strategy of issue entrepreneurship by non-mainstream parties which contested and polarized the EU dimension (de Vries and Hobolt. 2012). Thus, we find that the display of symbols is consistent both with a policy driven logic (since it follows the parties' ideological stances, in this case the commitment with the European project) as well as with a more general national-focused vote seeking logic (as discussed by Adams et al., 2004, 2006; Ezrow et al., 2011), despite the fact that the public rarely lays eyes on the Euromanifestos.

We believe that, beyond identifying these patterns over a two-decade period, the importance of this study lies also in its implications and possible follow-ups. The analysis of visual symbols, either alone or in combination with other aspects (e.g. analysis of electoral manifestos), can offer a new perspective for the study of electoral strategies. The visual aspect of electoral communication is often overlooked with respect to the verbal aspect (as testified by the numerous studies on the *content* of manifestos, in contrast to this initial study on their *aspect*). Yet, given the close correspondence between visuals and party-internal and external factors, it can be said that, at the very least, by neglecting the visual content of parties' electoral communication we may be missing a lot of information present in their discourse. Visual studies show that the layout and visual elements of any message carry important information about both the communicator and the addressee (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006; Messaris, 1994). An increased interest in political visual communication over the past decades has in fact shown that much of the information in politics is communicated through images, rather than verbally (Grabe

and Bucy, 2009). Also, individuals make snap judgments about political candidates on visuals alone (e.g. Hall et al., 2009). And judgments made based on limited available information may be particularly prone to the influence of visuals (Dumitrescu, Gidengil and Stolle, 2015). As the level of information about parties' positions on European issues is even lower than in other domains, it is possible that on European matters, visuals may play a key communication role. Thus, a systematic study of the use of visuals by parties in their European discourse is of timely importance.

The second implication of this study pertains to the larger issue of European identity. Previous studies have connected *exposure* to such symbols to an increased feeling of attachment towards the European community among voters (Bruter, 2009). We know of no other study that has looked at what makes people or other organizations beside the European institutions *display* the visual symbols associated with the EU *by choice*. But if (as the evidence suggests) the symbols truly serve the purpose they were created for (i.e., to foster such a spirit of community), then a more systematic study of their display among non-EU institutional actors is sorely needed to understand how deep the sense of European attachment among national actors and the public has grown over the years. The display of group signs has been previously studied in the context of national campaigns: Boen and Vanbeselaere (2002) showed that voters display posters of winning parties for a longer time than those of the losers in their windows. Huckfeldt and Sprague (1992) showed that people make inferences about the likely presidential candidate winner based on the share of yard signs their neighbors display. More recently Makse and Sokhey (2014) show that the display of yard signs in the context of US campaigns is not simply dictated by party efforts, but serves an expressive, communication purpose connected to the social networks of individuals. Our results mirror the insights provided by social identity studies

which show that individuals who identify with a group adopt group-sanctioned behaviors and images (e.g. Hogg, 2003, 2006). Thus, the display of EU community symbols in the internal documents of parties such as Euromanifestos may well indicate a sense of attachment to Europe which is in line with the policy driven goals of the party elites responsible with drafting them. We formulate this as conjecture, given that our existing data does not permit us to test it. But, given evidence from group identity and political participation studies, more investigation in this direction is of evident importance. If national parties develop a sense of attachment to Europe, then this could also impact the public's sense of attachment, given that parties are in a position to influence the public on various national policy aspects (Zaller, 1992) as well as on European matters (Gabel and Scheve, 2007; Hooghe and Marks, 2005).

Our analysis inevitably suffers in that we only look at one type of document. We can be sure that these documents have not been vetoed by key players, and are read by the membership; the downside is that we cannot know how debated they are, nor do we know if parties choose to display EU symbols in other campaign materials. Although the data is difficult to obtain, this analysis should be replicated with additional party-produced documents (such as posters, or leaflets) in the future.

At the same time, given that the consistent patterns we identify are based on practically the entire population of Euromanifestos, and given that the Euromanifestos are the guiding documents for other party campaign materials, there is a strong reason to expect them to emerge in other aspects of party campaigns as well. So, while more research is needed with regards to the display and dissemination of visual manifestations of European symbols by national parties, we believe this study is a strong first step in that direction.

Notes:

1. For a complete list of coded manifestos see:

info1.gesis.org/dbksearch/file.asp?file=ZA4457_cod.pdf and

info1.gesis.org/dbksearch/file.asp?file=ZA5057_r.pdf

Appendix 5 for the list of the 2014 coded Euromanifestos
2. More exactly non-governing parties polarized the EU dimension by bringing forward a Eurosceptic stance. Thus they managed to manipulate the salience of the EU dimension making it a relevant axis of competition (de Vries and Hobolt, 2012).
3. The display of the flags of all member states is more common prior to the adoption of the EU flag (i.e. 1979 and 1984) and when the European community had a more limited number of members. For an example of the coding schema see Supplementary File, Appendix 1.

Furthermore one needs to note that in four cases: United Kingdom Independence Party 2004, Die Republikaner (The Republicans, Germany) 1994, Laïkós Orthódoxos Synagermós (Popular Orthodox Rally, Greece) 2009 and British National Party 2014, although European symbols were present on the first pages of the manifestos, they were portrayed in a negative/sarcastic manner, hence these cases were coded as 0.
4. This analysis applies to manifestos for which colored first pages were available (249 cases)
5. Additionally using this measure offers further advantages, as expert placement, mass perception and electoral self-placements are not available over such a long time span, while NOMINATE placements might be biased (see Ray 2007). Still it needs to be noted that as

the 2014 Euromanifestos are not yet coded this measure is not available for the parties competing in the 2014 EP elections.

6. For 2014 we used the party family as indicated by the previous studies which was validated using the ParlGov database (Döring and Manow, 2015) and the Manifesto project. In the case of new parties we used the categorization provided by the ParlGov database. As only eight cases belonging to the Agrarian family were present in our database this parties were recoded as Special Interest parties.
7. We use a visual analysis software to determine the percentage taken by text with pixel-level accuracy.
8. For a detailed description of these variables see Supplementary File, Appendix 2.
9. Similar modeling strategies were employed by other works studying the behavior of parties across EU elections (e.g. Hooghe et al., 2002; Spoon, 2012) . Furthermore, following the recommendation of Shor et al. (2007) we also ran cross-nested models (i.e. parties nested in countries and in elections), which revealed very similar results but a worse model fit.
10. The figure is compiled using the R `ggplot2` package and use a smoothing function, since the N is smaller than 1000 the lines are LOESS curves and shaded areas are 90% confidence intervals.
11. It is important to mention that this pattern is not dependent on developments in printing technology, layout style and political communication in general in the last 30 years, which could lead parties to use more general visual components in their electoral materials. As Figure A (see Supplementary Materials) shows, analyzing only the manifestos that include any type of visual elements (including pictures of leaders, country flags, etc.) yields very

similar patterns. Unfortunately imposing such restrictions means losing more than one half our sample (we are left with 434 cases), thus limiting the usage of multivariate models.

12. Due to the fact that data on EU identity is not available for 1979, this year is excluded from the analysis. Because of this and due to items missing the total sample drops to 585.

Excluding EU identity from the models revealed a very similar pattern of results for the other variables while including the cases from 1979, see Appendix 3, Table 2.

13. Given the fact that the position of the parties on the pro-anti EU position is strongly correlated with the mainstream status of parties (0.5 sig at $p < 0.05$) the variables measuring the two concepts were introduced in separate models.

14. When compared to the baseline of 1999, the usage of European symbols was statistically significant higher only in 1989 and 1994, which also has a stronger effect compared to previous years (the peak being in 1994).

15. Including the lagged dependent in the models yields very similar results (see Appendix 4, Table 3 in the Supplementary Materials). Furthermore, as parties switch back and forth in using EU symbols, there is not a clear continuous pattern in the usage of symbols from one election to another.

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Figure 1: Proportion of EU symbols by party family

Figure 2: Proportion of EU symbols by party types

Figure 3: Relation between time and the usage of European symbols

Figure 4: Predicted probability to display European symbols, pro-anti EU

Figure 5: Predicted probability to display European symbols, party family

Figure 6: Predicted probability to display European symbols, party type

Figure 7: Predicted probability to display European symbols, EU identity (population)

Table 1: Dependent variable: The display of European symbols on parties' Euromanifestos

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<i>Fixed effects</i>			
Intercept	-2.165*** (0.388)	-3.074*** (0.685)	-2.524*** (0.419)
EU position (party)	0.593** (0.246)		
Greens		0.563 (0.685)	
Communists		0.577 (0.648)	
Special interest		1.492** (0.681)	
Regional		0.708 (0.723)	
Conservative		1.298** (0.623)	
Christian-democrats		2.347*** (0.652)	
Social democrats		0.966 (0.619)	
Liberals		0.671 (0.638)	
Mainstream			0.675** (0.325)
Regional			0.748* (0.445)
Not cover page	-1.902*** (0.368)	-1.913*** (0.328)	-1.931*** (0.329)
New Party	0.151 (0.557)	0.059 (0.475)	0.0004 (0.470)
Incumbency	0.182 (0.266)	0.303 (0.235)	0.300 (0.235)
Party Size	0.039*** (0.011)	0.030*** (0.011)	0.033*** (0.010)
1984 elections	-0.115 (0.570)	-0.177 (0.586)	-0.083 (0.578)
1989 elections	1.288*** (0.463)	1.307*** (0.479)	1.269*** (0.472)
1994 elections	1.200*** (0.434)	1.218*** (0.441)	1.221*** (0.438)
2004 elections	0.727* (0.420)	0.591 (0.429)	0.652 (0.426)
2009 elections	0.797* (0.435)	0.630 (0.442)	0.561 (0.436)
2014 elections		0.592 (0.431)	0.571 (0.423)
EU identity (population)	2.543** (1.258)	2.117* (1.181)	1.817* (1.109)
Post- Communism	-0.936* (0.515)	-0.235 (0.388)	-0.329 (0.390)
Multiple Elections	-0.339 (0.515)	-0.423 (0.506)	-0.549 (0.510)
<i>Random effects(variance)</i>			
Country	0.075	0.263	0.113
EU position	0.092		
Mainstream			0.560
Regional			0.304
Log Likelihood	-245.929	-316.893	-324.385
Akaike Inf. Crit.	-245.929	-316.893	-324.385
N (parties)	591	762	762
N (countries)	27	28	28

*denotes p<0.1, **, denotes p<0.05; *** denotes p<0.01; standard errors in parenthesis