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How to evaluate parties membership ?

The interest of the results of intra-parties votes
to look at the number of members participating

⚠ in the parties

Case study of the PCF (French Communist Party)

Work in progress

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In France, data on parties membership is very volatile.

For each party various numbers of members exists.

Obviously, the leaders of parties overstate (exaggerate) the number of their members.

But it's very difficult to correct the informations published by the parties.

... the results of intra-parties votes are a useful resource to correct these informations...

In France, the number of these elections increases for 20 years...

and the level of voter turnout seems of good public information to estimate parties membership.



Examples :

PS (*Socialist Party*)

232 000 members in 2008

173 000 in 2012

but only

134 000 voters in 2008

then **88 000** voters in 2012

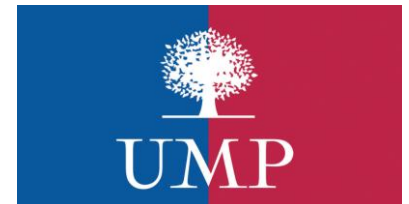


UMP (*Conservatives*)

300 000 official members in 2012

but only **177 000 (?)** voters in 2012

then 143 000 (?) members en 2014



In passing, we note that French parties have less members than other parties in other countries.

Examples :

- **Partito Democratico (Italy)**

more than 500 000 official members (2013)



- **CDU (Germany)**

484 000 official members (2012), then 467 000 (2014)



It would be interesting to understand those important differences with a country like France.

With the politist Laura Morales, we can note that **2 aspects** are decisive :

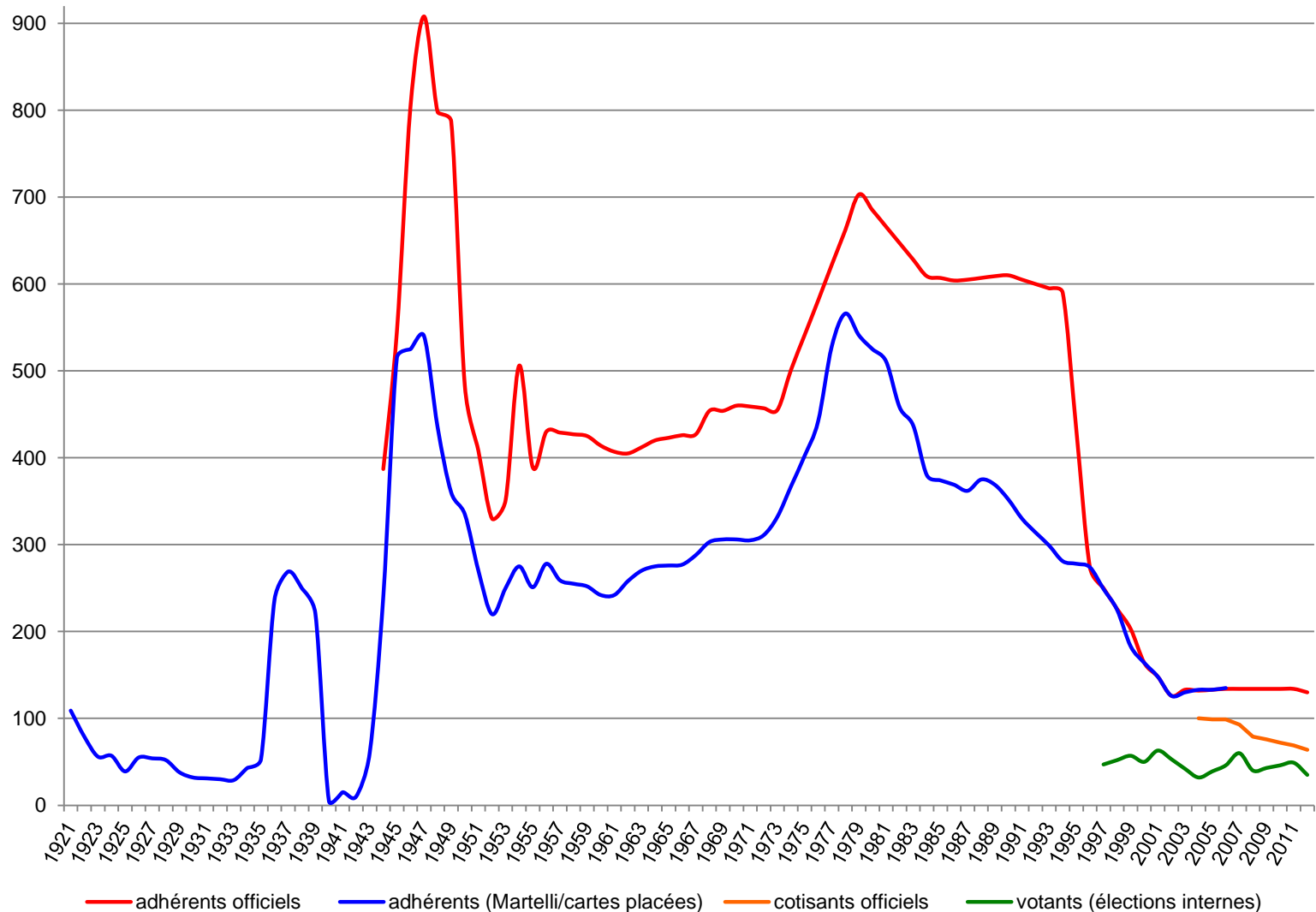
- The **density** of the organization in the society
- The **opportunities** for members for collective action

But, back to our question, that I put forward at the beginning : are numbers of members in French parties correct ? Look at the case of the PCF

The case of the PCF

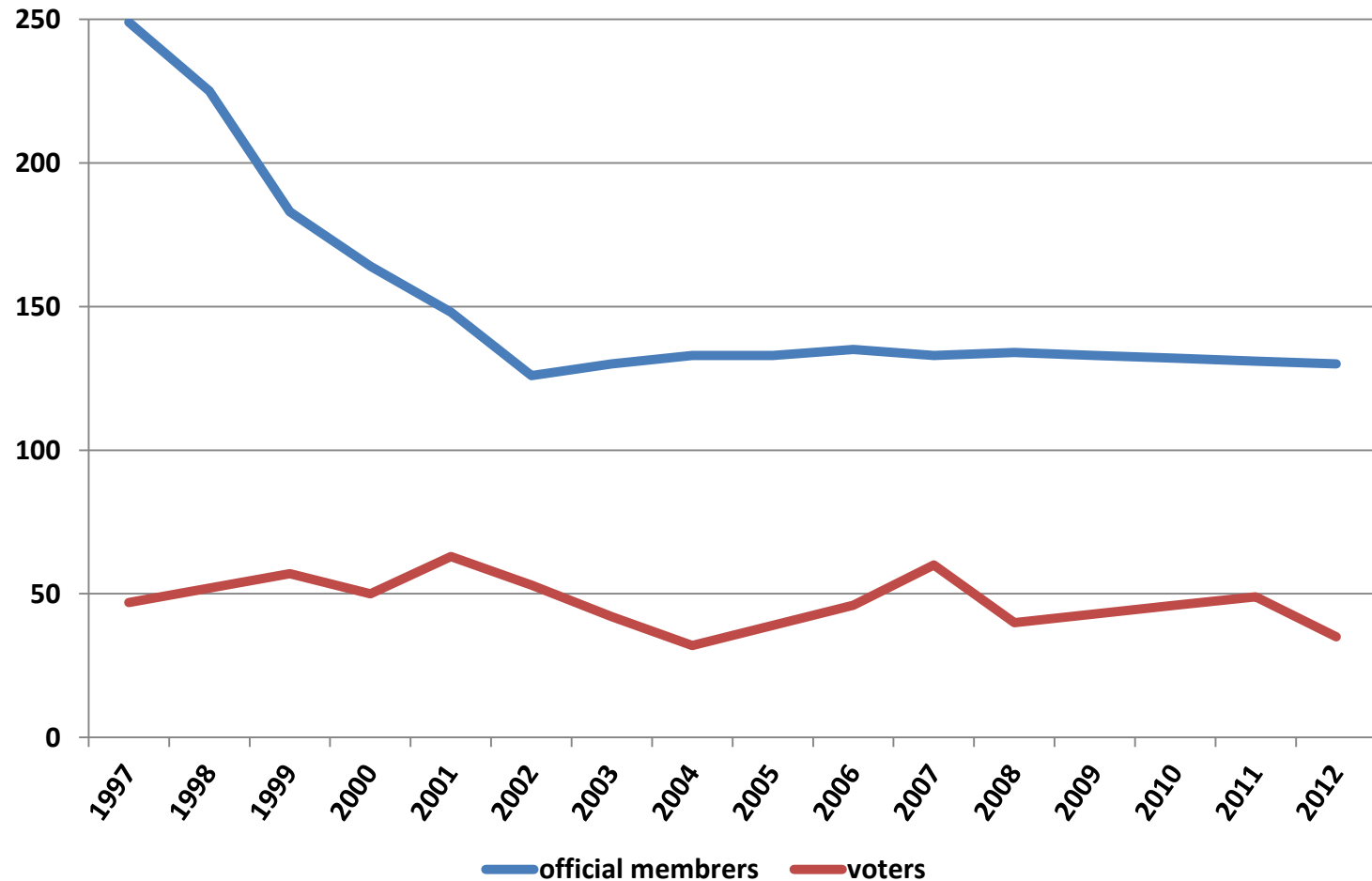
Membership... and voters at internal elections (from origins to our times)

4 kinds of « members » : officials (2 data series), contributing members, voters



Comparison between the official members and the voters at the PCF (1997-2012) :

the voters are more than two times less than the number of official members



So, we could estimate that the PCF have about 55 000 or 60 000 members, more than half of its number of official members, (the leadership says more than 130 000 members for 10 years !)

But could we reduce the communist membership at the communist voters ?



*Internal vote in 2013
(for the local elections in Paris)*

Of course, we can estimate that the number of voters is necessarily lower than the number of members... because of the non-voters (or abstainers)

But, we must look at 3 points (or factors) :

1st point : Don't the members of a party, like the PCF, vote more than simple citizens ?

But, we can see at the internal elections that the communists should vote less than the ordinary citizens. That is strange.

2nd point : The voting modalities at the PCF are very easy.

For example, you can vote by telephone or the internet...

But the communist members would vote less... This is another strange fact.

3rd point : Some irregularities of voting (which are difficult to evaluate but often mentioned) would increase the number of voters...

But this number is in fact rather small...

For all these reasons, we can think that the number of non-voters is problematic and probably a wrong number.

So the real PCF membership would be actually more than two times less than the number of official members.

But, the internal votes are also interesting because their results allow to analyze the relations between the « **party in central office** » (politician elites) and the « **party on the ground** » (simple members)... from the point of view (especially) of the politists Katz and Mair.

From this point of view, we can examine the different internal elections at the PCF.

*The leadership
of PCF,
Place Colonel Fabien,
In Paris*

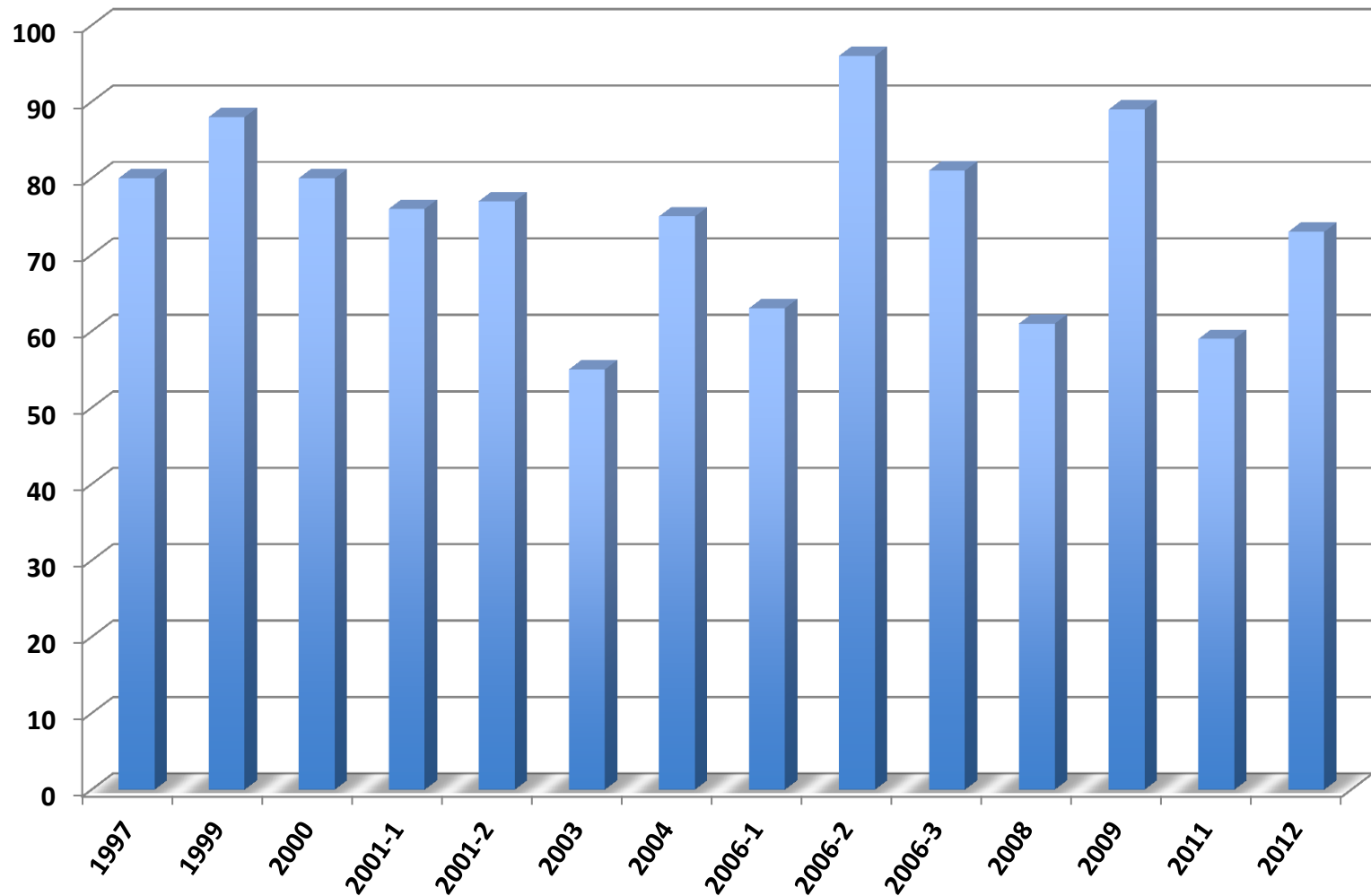


Internal votes at the PCF 1997 – 2012

About
20 national
votes for 15
years
(and many
other local
votes)

	Participants at internal votes	Objects of internal votes	positions adopted at the votes (in % of the cast votes)
1997	47,000	participation in the Jospin government	80% approve of the participation
1999	57,040	Line of the 31 st congress	88% approval of the agenda of the leadership
2000	50,540	Line of the 31 st congress	80% approval of the leadership's project
2001	15,616	modification of the statutes	76% consent
2001	63,941	candidacy at the 2002 presidential elections	77% for R. Hue
2003	42,782	Line of the 32 nd congress	55% in favor of the text of the leadership
2004	24,013	European strategy	No publication of results
2004	32,838	Joining of the European Left Party (EL) by the PCF	75% favour joining
2006	46,210	Line of the 33 rd congress	63% in favor of the text of the leadership
2006	61,980	proposition of the candidacy at the 2007 presidential election	96% for M.-G. Buffet
2006	52,302	"Anti-liberal" candidacy at the 2007 presidential elections	81% for M.-G. Buffet
2008	40,090	Line of the 34th congress	61% in favor of the text of the leadership
2009	43,000	Local strategy	89% in favor of the alliance with the PG
2011	48,631	candidacy at the 2012 presidential elections	59% For J.-L. Mélenchon / PG 37% For A. Chassaigne / PCF 4% For E. Dang Tran / FCP
2012	34,662	Line of the 36th congress	73% in favor of the text of the leadership

Are communist voters supporting the leadership of the PCF ? (in percentage of votes)



**Usually, the leadership easily gets the majority of votes...
but there are sometimes difficulties.**

Most difficulties for the leadership :

2003 : Line of the congress

2006 : Line of the congress

2008 : Line of the congress

2011 : selection of the candidate at the presidential election

(J.-L. Mélenchon supported by the leadership of the PCF)

In question, we find the **identity** of the Party

Divisions in the party

2 main problems with the deep communist identity :

- **The evolution of the ideology** of the PCF : from leninism to a strong social democracy (with R. Hue, then M.-G. Buffet and P. Laurent, leader of the party since 2010)
- **The support of the ex-trotskyist** (and socialist) J.-L. Melenchon by the leadership of the PCF at the presidential election of 2012

These facts introduce division between the leadership of PCF and a lot of members, especially in northern France, which was an important industrial (and communist) region...

Finally, intra-party democracy shows – in the case of PCF – a deeply divided organization... and a weak organization.

...while the PCF was historically a very unified and strong organization.

Thank you for your attention
arigatō gozaimasu
どうもありがとう

