

Radio Radicale: between propaganda, universal access and support to parties

Simone Carlo

OssCom - Università
Cattolica del Sacro Cuore

Simone.carlo@unicatt.it



Defining Radio Radicale

RadioRadicale:

- Official radio of Radical Party, a small party with libertarian inspirations

1.

Theoretical introduction

Defining Radio Radicale

Reflection on community media has always been pointing out the difficulties in approaching these media products (Carpentier et al. 2003). CM definition depends upon the following features: (1) their ability to serve a community, (2) the more or less explicit and radical objective of being a good alternative to mass media (3) the ability to be part of civil society, (4) Finally, the identity of media players of being able to place themselves not necessarily "in the strict alternative" to mainstream media, but to interact with commercial and public media.

The four approaches, mentioned above, emphasize the complex relations between CM, PSB and commercial entities

On account of this, the paper will analyze the Italian radio station RadioRadicale;

Defining alternative media

The debate over community media has always been pointing out the difficulties in approaching these media products (Carpentier et al. 2003).

	Media-centered	Society-centered
Autonomous identity of CM (Essentialist)	<u>Approach I:</u> Serving the community	<u>Approach III:</u> Part of civil society
Identity of CM in relation to other identities (Relationalist)	<u>Approach II:</u> An alternative to mainstream	<u>Approach IV:</u> Rhizome

Methodology

- Analysis of scheduling, programming and website contents.
- Expert interviews (radio staff):
 - Massimo Bordin, editor
 - Paolo Martini, journalist
 - Roberto lezzi, political correspondent in the House of Deputy
 - Rino Spampanato, web editor

1.

The radio of the Radicals



The radio of radicals

Radical Party:

- 1955: it was born in the left-liberal political area
- end of '60s: it became a libertarian movement.
- 70s: it became involved in civil rights activism (divorce, abortion, disarm, feminism), supporting referendum
- '76: it won first seats in Parliament



The radio of radicals

Radical Party:

- The RP has never got massive support in elections
- In the 1990s RP agenda emphasized economic issues:
 - 1994-1999: confluence inside Forza Italia (Silvio Berlusconi's party)
 - 1999-2005: no alliance with any big party
- In the last years RP has increasingly criticized Berlusconi
 - 2005-2009: confluence inside Partito Democratico
 - European election 2009: independent, 2.42%

- Generally RP embodies trans-partitival ideas, of looking for alliance *among* politicians for single campaigns

The radio of radicals

RadioRadicale:

- born as Radio Libera (*Pirat Radio*) from radical militants in the '75 in Rome
- became rapidly the official radio of Radical Party that, with the contribution of the radio, start to grown in term of visibility and in term of militants
- In the 1976 a Radical Party militants entered in the Parliament

The radio of radicals

RadioRadicale:

- According to the concept of community “of supplementing the geographical with the non-geographical”, Radio Radicale became the instrument to coordinate and inform the (few) militants across Italy.
- Radical Party has still few local sections, and the radio is playing the role of giving fundamental information aimed at creating a political (and imagined) community

2.

The radio for everybody



The radio for everybody

RadioRadicale:

- “An alternative vision to hegemonic policies, priorities and perspectives” (Downing et al., 2001)

- In opposition to public information state monopoly
 - Providing information on how institutions and parliament work, bypassing media coverage (pirat live broadcast during parliament sessions):
 - “Radio Parlamento”: “Know to deliberate” (Einaudi, 1958)

The radio for everybody

RadioRadicale

→ “Public service”, alternative to the Italian PBS (RAI)

- Radicals refuse the term counter-information: they want to demonstrate how could be possible realize a real public service alternative to the italian PBS
- Broadcasting and recording activities carried on by political parties, associations, national and international institutions
- Today, Radio Radicale’s archive is the most important Italian analog and digital archive concerning national political life (300.000 tapes, mp3, real audio/video) funded by the Ministry of Culture

→ “Radically” democratic:

- Offering to all political movements and parties space of information and communication:
 - 1977, debate with Giorgio Almirante, President of a neo-fascist party: expulsion of Radio Radicale from Radio Democratic Federation

The radio for everybody

RadioRadicale

→ A third type of radio (Girard, 1992)

→ A third voice between state and private commercial media, “giving visibility to whom doesn’t have visibility”

- Immigrants
- Prisoners
- Religious minorities
- Associations
- On-shot activism

3.

The radio between politics and state



The radio between politics and state

RadioRadicale:

→ Relation to politics and state

→ RR refuses to carry advertising

→ Funded by the Radical Party:

→ For PR: Needing to keep Parliament seats in order to preserve public support

→ For: RR; Needing be coherent with Radicals' political official line: e.g., the editor Massimo Bordin resigned being in contrast with Radical Party leader

→ Funded by the Italian government (with a law approved by Parliament every 2 years), fulfilling “a general interest service” :

→ By an agreement with the Italian Parliament, the radio is responsible of broadcasting Chamber and Senate sessions

→ Its thanks to this agreement that Radio Radicale manages to survive economically, providing a public service which is not fulfilled by the PBS

→ It's impartial and has good relations with politics

→ It offer s “free service” to political parties (audio-video service for conferences, congresses)

5.

Conclusion: three pillars



Conclusion

It's essential for the weak and small Radical Party to engaged its militants and to be present in the political debates

Radio Radicale is a paradigmatic case to explain how the identity of some of CM tends to be reconfigured, by the strong commercialization of public broadcasting and the difficults of community media to be totally independent

→ The community doesn't control totally the radio

→ *the politics*

→ It's main focus is not only the community but even the *survival* of the community and the public services for all

→ *the "agreement"*

→ It's not completely not-for-profit

→ *the dependency from the parties*

Three pillars

RadioRadicale as storyteller of the Radicals identities:

→ RadioRadicale “is” the Radical Party:

→ “RadioRadicale is an instrument of propaganda and “training” for militants, by-passing the PBS and commercial information, which is inaccessible to the Radicals

Three pillars

RadioRadicale as news agency:

→ Produces information for other information subjects:

- “RadioRadicale is the most present radio on news agency. For this reason, politicians are happy to talk with us” (Iezzi, Parlamentar Journalist)
- It’s a “free” service: RadioRadicale wants its work to be politically recognized: “Our work gives good visibility and prestige to the Radical Party, especial between the politicians responsible of our economical survival” (Iezzi, Parlamentar Journalist)

Three pillars

RadioRadicale as PR agency for Radical Party:

→ Influence the political agenda:

→ A radio that talks to the politicians: “Probably, the most popular radio among Italian politicians” (Roberto lezzi, journalist)

→ News, interview, political analysis, press clippings, conference, congress, trials

→ Represent *the radicals*:

→ Journalist-testimonials: the “public service” and transparency of RadioRadicale as demonstration of the usefulness of the Radical Party

→ Preserve a minority in a bi-partite system

→ Support transpartite campaign

→ 2002, RadioRadicale journalists inside the parliament organize a campaign to collect signs among parties to support radicals referendum in period where there are no radicals deputy

Conclusion

Militants

opposition

Politicians

pushing to give
fundings to RR

Civil Society



votes

alliance

propaganda & information

public service & service to parties

fundings

acknowledgement of utility

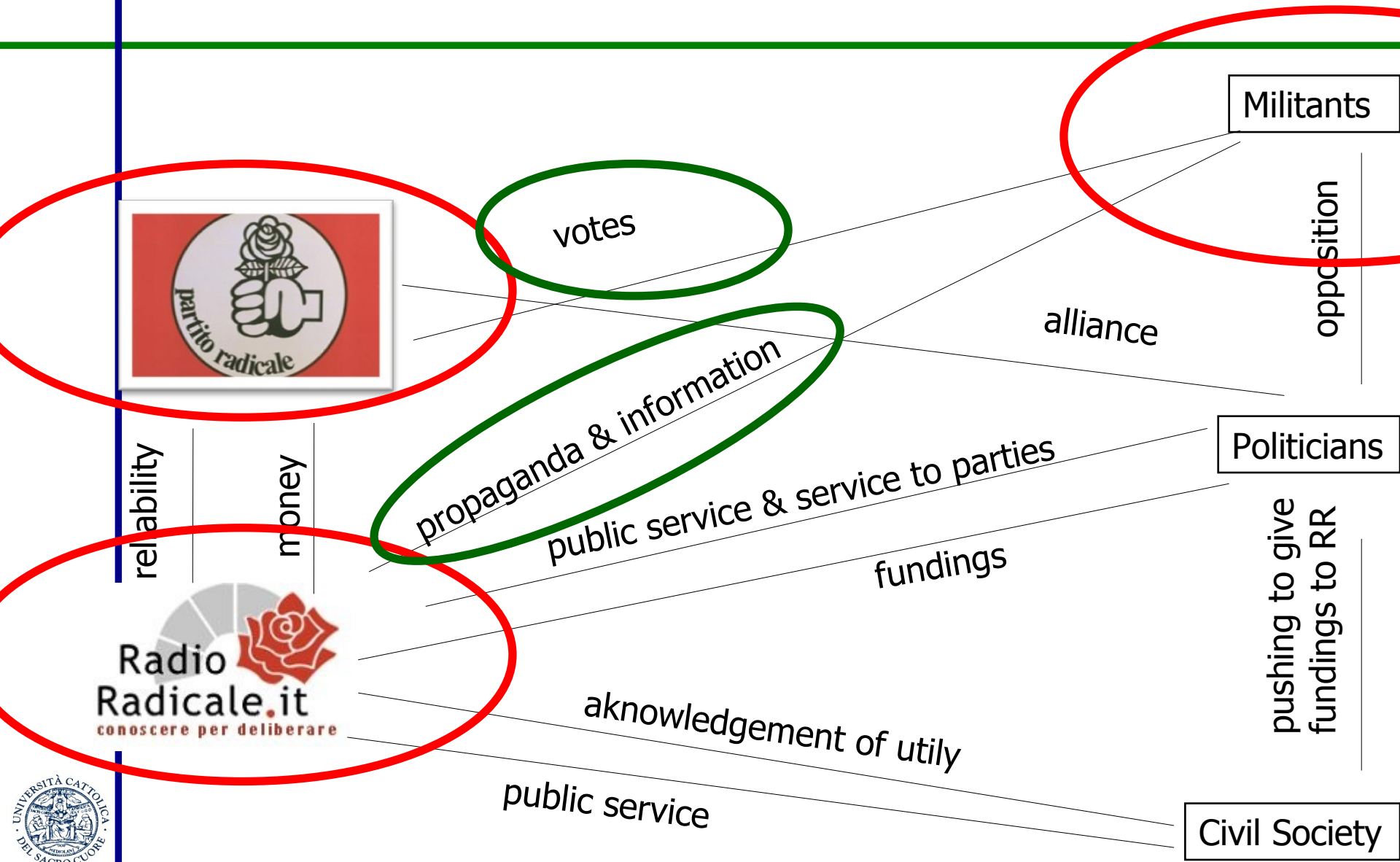
public service

reliability

money



Conclusion: the propaganda



Militants

opposition

alliance

Politicians

pushing to give fundings to RR

Civil Society

votes

propaganda & information

public service & service to parties

fundings

acknowledgement of utility

public service

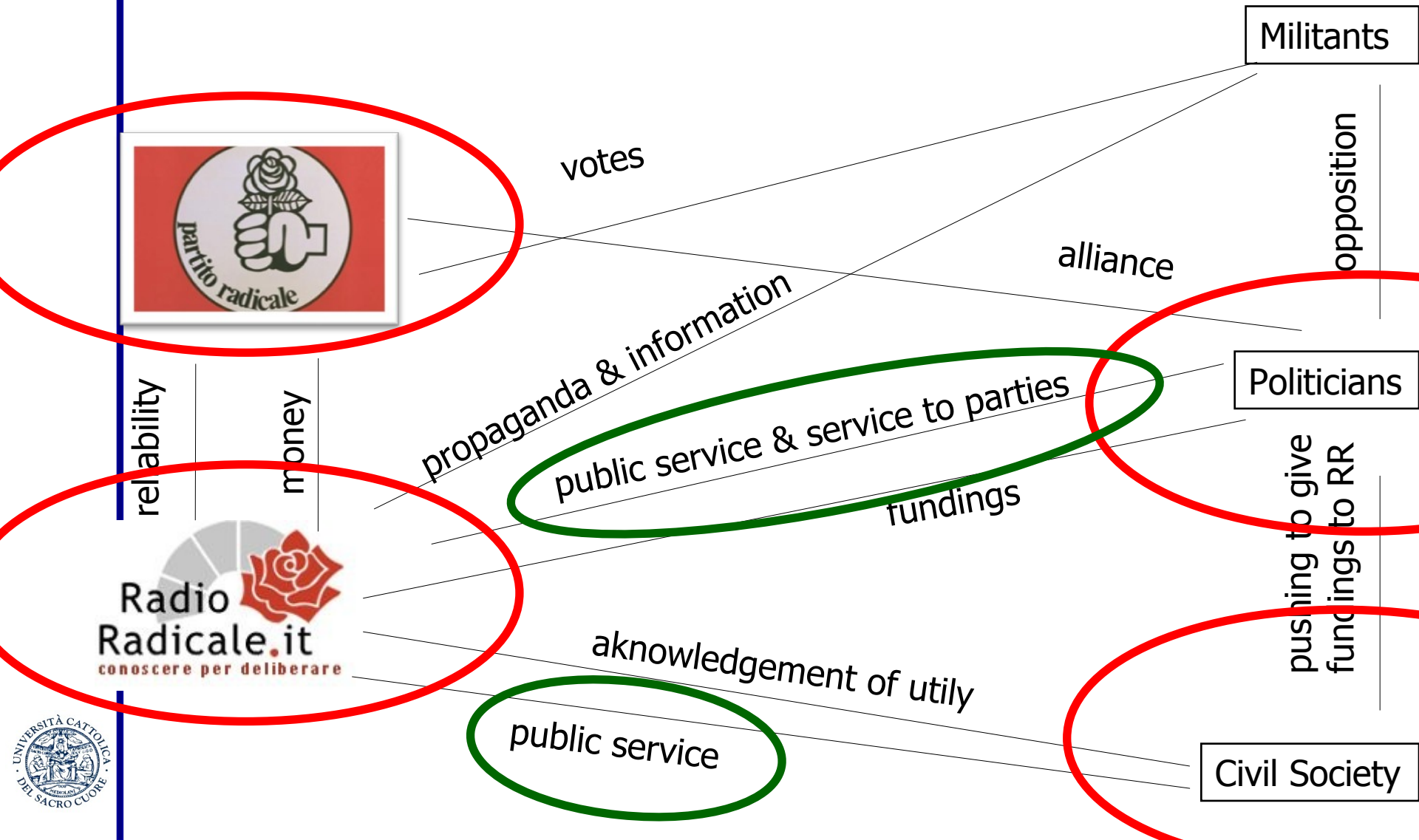


reliability

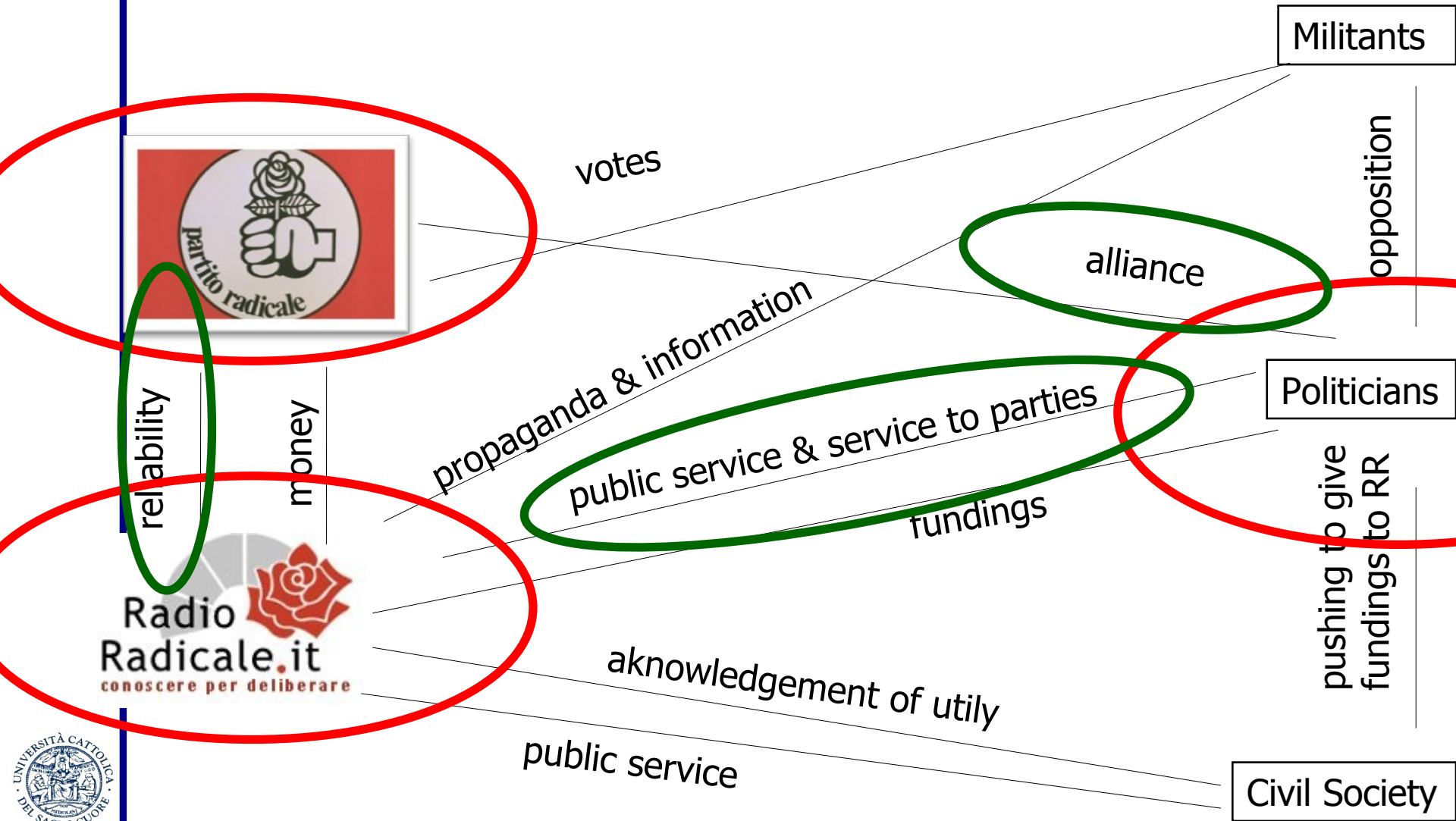
money



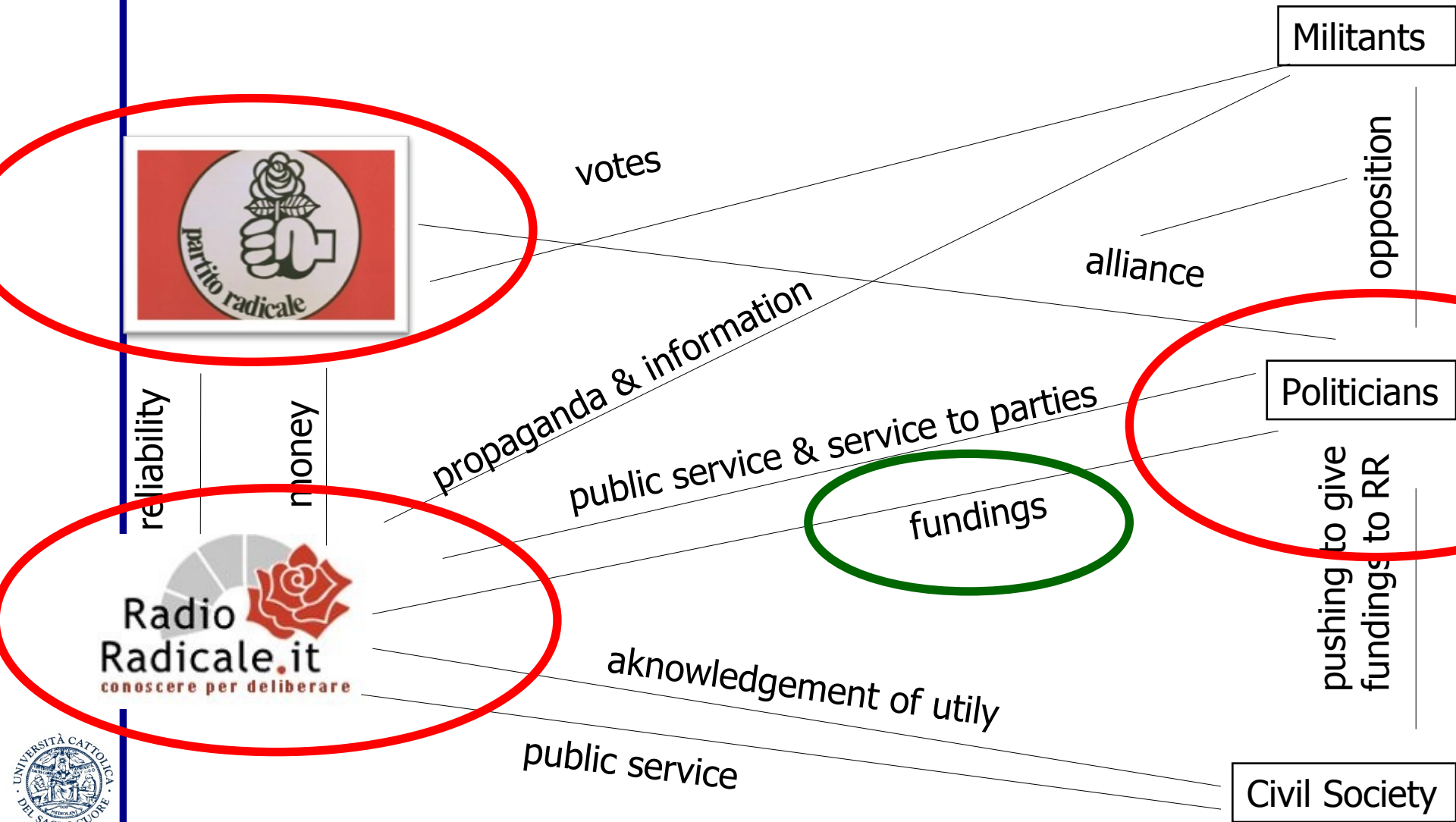
Conclusion: the news agency



Conclusion: PR of the radicals



Conclusion: opposition or money?



Conclusion

- *Radio Radicale risks to be for Radical Party an instrument of dependency from the “partitocracy” instead a instrument of counter-information*
- *What is the level of independency of a party of opposition if it survivals with the money of other parties, especially the Government ones?*