

## Summary

**Maik Bohne: Vibrant Spaces – Structure and Dynamics of Party Networks in US Campaigns, Political Parties in Theory und Empiricism, 3rd edition, Budrich: Opladen, 2011.**

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## **Summary**

The United States of America are an election-centered democracy. There are few countries in which more candidates run for office, in which more money and time is invested in campaigning, in which the professionalization and intensity of election campaigns are higher. The popular assumption is: Candidates dominate the electoral landscape, not political parties. Maik Bohne shows in his book that this established picture of candidate-centered campaigning has to be adapted. He makes clear that political parties in the US are anything but outsiders to campaigns. In times of intensified polarization the two major parties in the United States are as vital, forceful and effective players as seldom before in their history.

The key to this analysis is a new view on the structure and life of political parties that was originally introduced by Giovanni Sartori in the form of the party space model. This model conceives parties as permeable, open spaces in which formal and informal actors such as party committees, incumbents, political consultants, and party-allied interest groups work openly, creatively and loosely together for party victory – away from formal structure and binding memberships. This party model could be an interesting stimulus for party reformers in Western Europe who think of new ways to vitalize their increasingly ossified organizational structures. Political parties in the US show: Instead of building up powerful formal structures, it sometimes is informal organization that makes political parties more vital and forceful.