

PART III

The supply side: Members and their party

The role of party members in Belgian and Italian parties: A cross-national analysis

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Introduction

In their seminal article on the cartel party, Katz and Mair¹ claim that political parties are migrating increasingly to the state and are losing their connection with society. The cartel party hypothesis implies several characteristics concerning the different dimensions of party politics (resources, party and electoral competition, ideology and goals, internal organisational structures, party work and campaigning). Nevertheless, the qualitative shifts in the relationship between members and elites are the sole features of the cartel party that transcend the intensification of the previous catch-all model². Therefore, it would be interesting to focus the assessment of the model on the intra-organisational dimension, in particular the development of stratarchical organisational structures and the unclear distinction between members and non-members.

Even though the cartel party theory has triggered flamboyant literature on the empirical assessment of the model, there are few quantitative and cross-national attempts aimed at verifying the explanatory potential of the model³. Even less numerous are the studies that try to apply the model at the organisational/individual

¹ R. KATZ and P. MAIR, 'Changing models of party organization and party democracy. The emergence of the cartel party', *Party Politics*, 1/1, 1995, p. 17-21.

² N. BOLLEYER, 'Inside the Cartel Party: Party Organisation in Government and Opposition', *Political Studies*, 57/3, 2009, p. 559-579.

³ Y. AUCANTE and A. DÉZÉ (eds), *Les systèmes de partis dans les démocraties occidentales. Le modèle du parti-cartel en question*. Paris, presses de Sciences Po, 2008 ; R. PELIZZO, 'The Cartel Party and the Italian Case', *Politics and Policy*, 36/3, 2008, p. 474-498.

party level and not only at the party system level⁴. Therefore, in this paper we will assess the cartel party model empirically by using quantitative methods and focus on the individual party level and not the systemic one.

The purpose of this paper is twofold. Firstly, it will be argued that the relationships between members and elites are the only features of the cartel party model that transcend the intensification of the catch-all model. Therefore, we will make a quantitative assessment of the extent to which political parties are cartelised in terms of intra-organisational party features. Two countries were selected – Belgium and Italy – as they are widely considered as mildly cartelised party systems in which interesting variation between parties can be expected. The unit of analysis of this study is the individual party, and 19 parties were therefore selected within the two considered party systems. We attempt to identify the main factors explaining the differences among parties. The role of the party family (the party's ideological location) and the country effect will be explored as well. Our main hypothesis is that the degree of cartelisation varies according not only to the country but also to the party family in particular. We found a strong relationship between the ideological orientation of parties and their degree of cartelisation, in line with our expectations. Moving from the left to the right extreme of the right/left continuum, the degree of cartelisation seems to decrease.

The second goal of this paper will be to investigate whether the membership role is connected to other aspects of cartelisation, such as the dependency of the party on state resources, in order to assess whether cartelisation has a changing membership role dimension and to assess the internal coherence of the model. Contrary to our expectations, we found no significant correlation, which indicates that a changing membership role and cartelisation are not connected processes. We will conclude by discussing the possible theoretical implications for the cartel party model.

Theoretical framework

According to Katz and Mair⁵, a new trend has emerged since the late 1970s: the erosion of traditional social boundaries has caused the weakening of formerly highly distinctive collective identities and therefore the ideological and political distinctiveness of parties has become rather unclear. Having become mainly office-seeking, current parties tend to reinforce inter-party cooperation and to set up barriers to the entry of new challengers in the party system, while they depend increasingly on state resources for financing their activities. These phenomena are thought to impact on contemporary parties in organisational terms. The core properties of the cartel party model are, in fact, not only the professionalization of politics and the capital intensive nature of party work and party campaigning, but also the new basis of party competition, i.e. managerial skills and efficiency, and the strataarchical

⁴ K. DETTERBECK, 'Cartel Parties in Western Europe?', *Party Politics*, 11/2, 2005, p. 173-191; N. BOLLEYER, 'New Parties: Reflexion or Rejection of the Cartel party Model?', paper presented at the *ECPR General Conference*, Pisa, 6-8 September 2007.

⁵ R. KATZ and P. MAIR, *op. cit.*, 1995, p. 18; R. KATZ and P. MAIR, 'Cadre, catch-all or cartel? A rejoinder', *Party Politics*, 2/4, 1996, p. 525-534; M. BLYTH and R. KATZ, 'From Catch-all Politics to Cartelisation: The Political Economy of the Cartel Party', *West European Politics*, 28/1, 2005, p. 33-60.

relations between members and party elite. The latter property, i.e. that members and elites are mutually autonomous, is linked to the unclear distinction between members and supporters. The overall balance between members' rights and obligations tends to emphasise members' privileges, but in the end neither rights nor obligations are important.

Although some scholars suggest that this model may be considered more as a set of hypotheses and suggestions on party change processes rather than a cohesive and structured model of party nature, it is widely accepted as a well-defined analytical framework and is generally integrated in the main literature on party models⁶. Since the influential publication of Katz and Mair, several scholars have empirically tested and implemented the model as well as developed a large set of cartelisation indicators, although mainly at the systemic level⁷. These studies are mirrored by the development of important theoretical and empirical critiques of the model⁸. Still, the cartel party thesis is widely considered as the best proxy for grasping the empirical reality and the current dominant features of west European parties⁹.

As outlined above, a large set of empirical indicators on the degree of cartelisation of parties and party systems has been described in the literature. All of these indicators might be categorised into four main dimensions for measuring the degree of cartelisation of contemporary parties that can be applied at the meso-level, i.e. for analysing individual parties:

- *The political role.* Many scholars have studied the evolution of the linkage function of parties and of their political role, which concerns their position between society and the state¹⁰. In fact, the interpenetration of parties and the state constitutes the main theoretical feature of the cartel party model. The core variables of this

⁶ R. GUNTHER *et al.* (eds), *Political Parties: Old Concepts and New Challenges*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002; A. KROUWEL, 'Party Models', in R. KATZ and W.J. CROTTY (eds), *Handbook of Party Politics*, London, Sage Publications, 2006, p. 249-269.

⁷ R. PELIZZO, 'A Subjective Approach to the Study of Oligopolistic Party Systems', *Quaderni di Scienza Politica*, 1/3, 2007, p. 393-419; N. CONTI *et al.*, 'Le parti-cartel en Italie', in Y. AUCANTE and A. DÉZÉ (eds), *op. cit.*, p. 195-219; P. DELWIT, 'Partis et système de partis en Belgique. Une double cartellisation à l'œuvre?', in Y. AUCANTE and A. DÉZÉ, *op. cit.*, p. 219-244.

⁸ R. KOOLE, 'Cadre, Catch-all or Cartel? A Comment on the Notion of the Cartel Party', *Party Politics*, 2/4, 1996, p. 507-524; K. VON BEYME, 'Party leadership and change in party system: Towards a post-modern party state?', *Government and Opposition*, 31/2, 1996, p. 135-159; H. KITSCHLITZ, 'Citizens, Politicians, and Party Cartellization: Political Representation and the State Failure in Post Industrial Democracies', *European Journal of Political Research*, 37/2, 2000, p. 149-179; J. PIERRE *et al.*, 'State Subsidies to Political Parties: Confronting Rhetoric with Reality', *West European Politics*, 23/3, 2000, p. 21-22.

⁹ P. IGNAZI, 'Il puzzle dei partiti: più forti e più aperti ma meno attraenti e meno legittimi', *Rivista Italiana di Scienza Politica*, 3, 2004, p. 325-346; P. IGNAZI, 'Gli iscritti ad Alleanza Nazionale: attivi ma frustrati', *Polis*, 20/1, 2006, p. 31-58.

¹⁰ I. VAN BIEZEN and P. KOPECKY, 'The State and the Parties: Public Funding, Public Regulation and Rent-Seeking in Contemporary Democracies', *Party Politics*, 13/2, 2007, p. 235-254.

dimension are the state regulation of political parties, the rent-seeking practices of parties through patronage and the dependency of parties on public funding.

- *The internal organisational structures.* Several scholars have studied the evolution of the roles and functions of the three main composing elements of parties, i.e. the party in public office, the party in central office and the party on the ground, in order to assess the hypothesis regarding the ‘ascendancy of the party in public office’ developed by the cartel party model. The main aspects that can be analysed concerning this dimension are the relationships between the elite and the members and the role of membership. The latter constitutes a rather understudied variable.
- *The inter-party competition patterns.* Research has often focused on typologies of electoral campaigns and on the role of the different composing elements of parties during campaigns, as well as on the access to governmental coalitions. The style of inter-party competition and the barriers set up against newcomers are often analysed with regard to this dimension.
- *Party goals and ideology.* Several scholars have studied the office-seeking nature of the cartel party model and its decreasing ideological distinctiveness. Some authors have also developed other specific aspects of the cartel party model at the individual level, focusing mainly on parties’ policy positions and policy outcomes¹¹ and on parties’ access to political resources, both in terms of media access and parliamentary recruitment¹². Nevertheless, we consider that the latter variables concerning party access to political resources might be incorporated within the inter-party competition dimension and that the variables concerning policy outcomes can be integrated within the dimension concerning party goals and ideology. Thus, the cartel party model might be apprehended on the basis of four main analytical dimensions, illustrated by Table 1.

Table 1. The core dimensions of party cartelisation

<i>Level/Indicators or dimensions</i>	<i>Systemic-relational level</i>	<i>Organisational-individual level</i>
Main cartelisation indicators	1. Political role indicators	2. Internal organisation indicators
Main cartelisation indicators	3. Inter-party competition indicators	4. Party goals and ideology indicators

Despite the many empirical assessments of the degree of cartelisation, we are still confronted with important gaps in the literature. In line with Bolleyer’s argument we notice a lack of analyses at the individual party level, while assessments of cartelisation at the systemic level are predominant. We argue that the stratarchical nature of intra-party organisation is the most important feature of the cartel party model (at individual party level) because it distinguishes this model from the previous ones and especially from the catch-all party model, developed by Kirchheimer, and

¹¹ M. BLYTH and R. KATZ, *op. cit.*; R. PELIZZO, ‘The Changing Political Economy of Party Membership’, *Quaderni di Scienza Politica*, 5/2, 2005, p. 211-238.

¹² F. RANIOLO, ‘Miti e realtà del cartel party. Le trasformazioni dei partiti alla fine del ventesimo secolo’, *Rivista Italiana di Scienza Politica*, 20/3, 2000, p. 553-581.

the professional-electoral party model, developed by Panebianco¹³. The ascendancy of the party in public office and the ‘professionalization’ of politics have already been postulated by the catch-all party model and the professional-electoral party model, as well as the capital intensive nature of electoral campaigns and the limited role (‘cheerleading’ role in Kirchheimer’s terms) of decreasing (in terms of figures) party membership. On the contrary, the hypothesis developed by the cartel party model on the increasing division of labour between party elites, who hold strong decision-making powers, and party members, who might maintain a legitimisation function but whose position is increasingly limited, seems to capture the reality of current intra-party organisational features.

Moreover, an explanatory analysis of the differences between parties will be made as well. In this respect, there will be a focus on ideology in order to determine whether this variable is able to explain party differences. We will also consider the country factor as a control variable, given the fact that, even though the characteristics in terms of degree of cartelisation of the three party systems (Flemish, Walloon, and Italian) are considered as constants, we have to take into account the general differences at the level of political systems and institutional settings. In fact, Pelizzo¹⁴ has assessed the impact of country factors on party membership decline, exploring the effects of public finance laws, the degree of competitiveness of the political system, and the electoral system. We can therefore hypothesise that a similar effect also plays on other aspects of membership beyond its general size, such as its power position within party organisational structures. Institutional settings such as the electoral system, political culture, social capital and the characteristics of the political system in general might infringe on the organisational dimension of parties as well.

Moreover, even though the cartel party model postulates the convergence of all contemporary parties along strataarchical organisational features disregarding their ideological location, it would be interesting to assess whether the ideological positioning of parties might explain the variation in the degree of cartelisation of the selected parties. In the literature, the differences among parties in terms of intra-organisational cartelisation have been explained mainly in terms of age of the party and of government/opposition divide¹⁵. The effect of ideology is therefore rather understudied, but can be considered as relevant given the postulates of the cartel party thesis concerning party programmatic convergence¹⁶. Our aim is to verify whether some party families show a more evident tendency towards cartelisation than others. We can thus consider the degree of intra-organisational cartelisation measured by the role of party membership as the dependent variable of our study, and, on the other hand, the country factor and the ideological positioning of parties as the independent

¹³ O. KIRCHHEIMER, ‘The transformation of the western European party system’, in J. LAPALOMBARA and M. WEINER (eds), *Political parties and political development*, Princeton NJ, Princeton University Press, 1966, p. 177-200; A. PANEBIANCO, *Political Parties: Organization and Power*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988.

¹⁴ R. PELIZZO, *op. cit.*

¹⁵ N. BOLLEYER, *op. cit.*, 2007; N. BOLLEYER, *op. cit.*, 2009.

¹⁶ N. CONTI *et al.*, ‘The Cartelization of the Italian Party System: One Step Forward and One Step Backwards’, *CIRCAP Occasional Papers*, 17, 2006.

variables. Moreover, the cartel party thesis is built on the hypotheses of the migration of parties towards the state and the reliance of the former on state subventions. Thus, it would be interesting to assess whether the intra-organisational cartelisation is connected to other aspects of cartelisation, such as the dependency of the party on state resources. We will therefore develop our analysis on the basis of the following main research questions:

1. To what extent are contemporary parties cartelised in terms of intra-organisational features?
2. What are the main variables that determine the differences in the degree of cartelisation of the selected parties?
3. What is the link between cartelisation and the changing membership role?

Our first hypothesis is that the degree of cartelisation varies according not only to the country (which is somewhat of a prerequisite) but also to the party family in particular. Our second hypothesis is that the changing membership role and cartelisation are linked processes. In a theoretical perspective, our aim is to confirm the cartelisation thesis and the membership role dimension incorporated in it.

In the next section, we will justify the case selection and develop instruments for assessing the intra-organisational degree of cartelisation. All relevant variables will be described and embedded in the theory. The following section is dedicated to the empirical analysis of Belgian and Italian parties with respect to their degree of cartelisation. The most important results are presented and commented. The last section explores whether the party membership role and other dimensions of cartelisation are connected or not, in particular the dependency upon state resources and the membership ratio. The implications of this analysis for the theory on party cartelisation will be discussed in the conclusion.

Selection of cases and variables

Several analyses developed at the systemic level (presence of cartel of parties) have classified the European party systems according to their degree of cartelisation. On the basis of these classifications, we are focusing our analysis on two party systems: Italy and Belgium. A first reason to select these countries lies in the fact that they are generally considered as mildly cartelised systems¹⁷, meaning that the parties of the two selected political systems should have equal environmental chances to undertake a cartelisation process (or not). The analysis will thus be carried out under *ceteris paribus* conditions concerning the party system context. The degree of cartelisation of the party system may be considered as a constant and therefore we may focus on the degree of cartelisation of individual parties. Nevertheless, other aspects of the functioning of the political (and not only party) systems of the selected countries as well as their institutional settings may vary, and may thus impact on the degree of cartelisation at individual party level. A second reason to study the cases of Belgium and Italy is the lack of research on these particular cases. Many highly cartelised party systems have been studied widely in recent years (especially France,

¹⁷ L. BARDI *et al.*, *I Partiti Italiani. Iscritti, dirigenti, eletti*, Milano, Bocconi University Editor, 2008, p. 288-292; P. DELWIT, *op. cit.*, 2008, p. 242.

Germany, Denmark, and the Scandinavian countries), but mildly cartelised systems such as Belgium and Italy have received far less attention.

Our analysis contains only parties with national or federal parliamentary representation in 2008. For Belgium, we have included eleven parties: the green parties *Ecolo* and *Groen!*, the social democratic parties PS and SP.a, the Christian democratic parties CD&V and cdH, the liberal party Open VLD, the ethno-regionalist party N-VA and the populist right parties LDD, FN, and VB. The only main Belgian party which is not included is MR due to the extreme fragmentation of the data concerning this party. For Italy, we have analysed eight parties: the Social democrats PD and IdV, the Christian democrats UDC, the ethno-regionalist parties UV and SVP, the populist right parties FI and LN, and the conservative party AN.

Table 2. The variables measuring intra-organisational cartelisation

<i>Features of membership (boundaries and role)</i>		<i>Relations between members and elites</i>
Unclear character of membership		Stratarchy and members as individuals
<i>Indicator</i>		<i>Indicator</i>
Recruitment procedure	Rights and obligations	Candidate selection procedure
<i>Sub-indicator</i>	<i>Sub-indicator</i>	<i>Sub-indicator</i>
Conditions for entry*	Attending the party congress*	Party selectorate definition
Formal procedure	Voting right at the party congress*	Proposition power of local units*
Member signature required	Right to call the party congress	Selection of candidates from a list determined by national bodies
Probation phase*	Election of the party president*	Veto power of party headquarters
Level formally deciding upon membership applications	Election of the party executive	Veto power of local units over headquarters propositions
Rejections and expulsions must be justified	Right to be held as candidate in elections	
Online applications	Obligation to follow the party programme	
Frequency of party recruitment campaigns	Formal procedure for expelling members	
Organ launching recruitment campaigns	Non members held as candidates for elections	
Membership fees		

* Most important variables weighted in the analysis – values were doubled.

The relationship between the individual and the party as a political organisation constitutes the focus of our research. On the one hand, we will analyse the rules used by parties to control their organisational boundaries, by looking at the character of membership, and on the other hand we will observe the rules used by parties to control the relations between members and elites and ensure internal party unity. As mentioned, the cartel party model predicts an unclear character of party membership

and a stratarchical relationship between members and elites¹⁸. This is why we have gathered data on the degree of complexity of the recruitment procedure for potential party members, the importance of rights over obligations for party members and the relationship between national executive and local branches concerning candidate selection. In highly cartelised parties, neither rights nor obligations are important, but there might also be a slight predominance of rights over obligations. A classic variable to measure this dimension involves investigating how the party leader is elected (by all the voters, by members or by a party agency). The dimensions of inclusiveness and of territorial and vertical decentralisation of leadership procedures are analysed here¹⁹. The third indicator we have developed measures the degree of local autonomy in candidate selection procedures. In addition, to assess whether the membership role is connected with other processes of cartelisation, we have yielded data on the membership/voters ratio and the share of state resources over party finances. An overview of our variables is presented in Table 2.

In order to assess the internal validity of our instrument, we have performed a principal component analysis of the correlations between the 23 indicators measuring intra-organisational cartelisation. Three components were extracted with eigenvalues of more than one and the factors were rotated with both varimax and direct oblimin, giving similar results. The first factor seems to reflect the complexity of the recruitment procedure as all ten indicators loaded most highly on it, except for the indicator concerning the online membership application. The second factor appears to represent the balance between the rights and obligations of members. The only indicator that is not highly correlated with the second factor is the one assessing the expulsion procedure. The indicators that had high loadings on the second factor also loaded highly on the first factor, suggesting a narrow conceptual distance between the evaluation of the duties and privileges attached to members and the degree of complexity of the recruitment procedure. The two directly oblimin factors are in fact correlated (.24). The third factor represents the relations between members and elites concerning the candidate selection procedure, as all five indicators are highly correlated with it.

For collecting data on these variables, we relied mainly on party statutes, party constitutions, and party documents. However, as some statutes are incomplete and some specific questions could not always be answered through the party statutes, we also relied on a small survey that we sent to the secretary generals of all the parties in our analysis. We calculated a 'membership openness index' concerning the recruitment procedure, a 'rights over obligation' index, and a 'stratarchy' index²⁰. We then added

¹⁸ R.K. CARTY, 'Parties as Franchise Systems. The Stratarchical Organizational Imperative', *Party Politics*, 10/1, 2004, p. 5-24.

¹⁹ R. HAZAN and G. RAHAT, 'Candidate Selection', in R. KATZ and W. CROTTY (eds), *Handbook of Party Politics*, London, Sage, 2006, p. 109-121.

²⁰ The indicators used here are measured with values that in each case range from 0 and 1, sometimes classified into four categories (0, 0.3, 0.7, 1), sometimes into three (0, 0.5, 1) when an understanding of the territorial and functional decentralisation of certain processes was necessary (the three or four categories corresponding to different levels such as local-regional-central party organs), and most of the time into two categories (0, 1: presence or absence of

the values of the three indexes in order to obtain a ‘cartelisation’ index. However, as the openness of membership index is measured through more items than, for instance, the stratarchy index, we weighted the different indexes by dividing the scores by the maximum score that a party could possibly attain on the corresponding index²¹. The average of these weighted indexes (which can be presented in percentages) constitutes a weighted cartelisation index (Table 3).

The parties in our analysis are all classified according to the party family which they belong to. We classified the parties using six categories ranging from left to right: 1) new left and greens (*Groen!*, *Ecolo*); 2) Social democrats (SP.a, PS, PD, IdV); 3) Christian democrats (CDH, CD&V, UDC); 4) ethno-regionalist parties²² (N-VA, UV, SVP); 5) Liberals (Open VLD); 6) conservatives and populist right (VB, LDD, FI, LN, AN).

The intra-organisational cartelisation of Belgian and Italian parties

Exploring the data

Table 3 presents all parties ranging from high to low on the weighted cartelisation index. Belgian parties, in particular the Flemish ones, appear to be the most cartelised. The main exception seems to be the VB and the LDD, both populist right parties, which in general seem to reject the cartel party model. The French-speaking parties are mostly situated in the middle of the table and hence can be classified as mildly cartelised parties. Finally, at the bottom of the table, we find the great bulk of Italian parties. An intuitive analysis of Table 3, moreover, suggests the presence of an ideological pattern in the distribution of the cartelisation index scores. Considering each country case separately, Social democrats and leftist parties seem to be slightly more cartelised than Christian democrats and Liberals. Populist parties are less cartelised within the three selected party systems, and Italian conservative and populist parties (FI and AN) have obtained the absolute lowest scores.

With regard to the complexity of the recruitment procedure index, there is a big difference between Italian and Belgian parties. For instance, it is a common rule for Belgian parties to provide online applications for membership, whereas this is not always the case in Italy. The populist radical right party *Vlaams Belang* is the party most open to new members in our analysis. The statutes of this party mention that the only condition in order to become a member is to pay the annual fee and to endorse the

a certain condition). The value 0 always corresponds to the minimum degree of cartelisation, while the value 1 represents the maximum degree of cartelisation. We also weighted the most important variables (indicated with an asterisk in Table 2) by doubling the values on this variable.

²¹ As the obligation to follow the party programme was integrated in the party statutes of every party, there was no variation in this variable and it was excluded. The variable measuring whether the rejection of a membership application must be justified was not correlated at all with the final index and was excluded as well.

²² Ethno-regionalist parties, which are positioned on the centre-periphery cleavage and are thus located at very different positions on the left-right continuum according to the specific case, are positioned somewhere in the centre of the political spectrum (position 4). This is considered as an ‘average’ position and not an empirically centrist position on the left-right scale.

statutes of the party. Individual members can even be recruited anonymously through a postal recruitment procedure, mainly in order to avoid the social stigmatisation that is generally reserved to members of far right parties in contemporary societies. The VB's statutes show significant differences in terms of the rules for joining compared to the Italian right parties, which require very complex conditions to be met in order to become a member. The central organs of *Alleanza Nazionale*, for instance, carry out a close investigation of each membership application through three different levels of evaluation and require not only that potential members do not belong to other parties or to associations not approved by the party, but also that they prove to behave following the principles of 'honour, dignity and personal decorum' and do not show any 'anti-national behaviour'.

Table 3. Membership role indicators and party cartelisation index

<i>Party</i>	<i>Membership openness index</i>	<i>Rights over obligations index</i>	<i>Stratarchy index</i>	<i>Cartelisation index</i>	<i>Weighted cartelisation index (%)</i>
SP.a	11.0	5	5.7	21.7	74.6
Groen!	7.0	7	4.3	18.3	65.4
Open VLD	6.0	9	3.3	18.3	65.0
cdH	6.7	7	3.3	17.0	59.2
CD&V	8.0	6	3.3	17.3	58.3
Ecolo	7.0	8	2.3	17.3	58.0
FN	8.0	5	3.3	16.3	54.6
N-VA	6.7	4	3.3	14.0	48.0
PD	5.5	5	3.0	13.5	47.4
PS	6.7	5	2.3	14.0	46.2
VB	12.0	3	1.3	16.3	45.0
LDD	10.7	3	1.0	17.0	40.4
UV	4.8	5	2.0	11.8	40.3
ldV	6.5	4	1.0	11.5	34.8
SVP	5.8	3	1.3	10.1	31.2
LN	6.5	3	1.0	10.5	31.1
UDC	3.2	3	2.0	8.2	29.3
FI	4.5	2	2.0	8.5	28.5
AN	0.8	2	3.3	6.1	27.5

More or less the same country differences can be seen with regard to the balance between rights and obligations of party members. Overall, the members of Italian parties enjoy fewer rights than party members in Belgium, and in the latter case the differences between members and non-members are generally more unclear. In particular, the members of the Open VLD and the green parties in Belgium (both Flemish- and French-speaking) are endowed with wider channels of representation and greater possibilities to make themselves heard. The Open VLD congresses not only integrate all the party members but also the observers and supporters of the party; the party president is elected by all the members, and the latter also have the

possibility to elect the executive organ of the party²³. The opposite features in terms of balance between rights and obligations can be seen in the case of populist right parties. Given the fact that *Forza Italia* is generally considered as a ‘personal party’²⁴, it is not surprising that the party president cannot be elected by its members. Moreover, only delegates can participate in party congresses and be endowed with voting rights. The recruitment procedure is quite simple, also because the consequences of joining the party remain minor, as members’ rights are quite limited and the differences between members and supporters remain unclear to a certain extent.

With regard to the autonomy of local party branches and lower territorial strata, we see a clear difference between Belgium and Italy as well. In Belgium, both in the case of Flemish- and French-speaking parties, the great majority of parties allow the provincial branches to propose candidate lists for the chamber of representatives. The central organs can then approve the final lists or intervene in the case of disputes. In Italy on the contrary, the party in central office generally compiles the lists that can be approved afterwards by party members within the local branches. Moreover, the socialist Flemish party SP.a shows the most stratarchically organisational structure. The candidate lists for the Chamber are compiled by the provincial (i.e. intermediate level) organs and are finally approved by the party members in the SP.a congress. *Italia dei Valori* and *Lega Nord*, on the other hand, show a strongly hierarchical organisation, in which the local branches can only propose a limited portion of the candidate places available in each constituency list. *Forza Italia* also shows a hierarchical internal organisation, with the decision-making power being held tightly in the hands of the central organs. The degree of vertical stratarchy of different party levels is also exceptionally low in the case of AN. The candidate selection procedure is dominated by the central organs and the lower strata have very limited autonomy in this field.

Understanding differences: the country effect and the role of ideology

As mentioned in previous paragraphs, the data indicate that some of the differences of intra-organisational cartelisation might be linked to the country the party belongs to as well as the party family. The differences in the degree of organisational cartelisation that can be ascribed to country institutional and political settings can be linked to the following main dimensions: electoral system²⁵, political culture, path-dependency

²³ J. JAGERS, ‘Eigen Democratie Eerst! Een Comparatief Onderzoek naar het Intern Democratische Gehalte van de Vlaamse Politieke Partijen’, *Res Publica*, 44/1, 2002, p. 73-96.

²⁴ J. HOPKIN and C. PAOLUCCI, ‘The Business Firm Model of Party Organisation: Cases from Spain and Italy’, *European Journal of Political Research*, 35/3, 1999, p. 307-339.

²⁵ In Belgium, the party system is completely regionalised and the electoral system for the federal lower chamber is based on separate provincial constituencies. Thus, only lists of Flemish parties can be presented in Flanders and likewise, only French-speaking parties can compete in the provincial constituencies of Wallonia (a mixed system is present in the bilingual Brussels region). In Italy, however, there are 26 regional constituencies (for lower chamber elections) with a completely nationalised party system. Moreover, the electoral systems for the election of the lower chamber are purely proportional in Flanders and Wallonia, while being mixed with strong majoritarian corrections in Italy.

trends, and overall party membership size. We might interpret the difference in the degree of organisational cartelisation as a consequence of the differences in the political cultures of the three political systems analysed. However, the distance in terms of political culture is too vaguely identified to explain the major difference in the degree of intra-organisation cartelisation. Size might be a stronger explanatory variable, as the much larger overall membership of the Italian parties might restrain them to adopt more cartelised organisational structures. The party cartelisation literature is however rather controversial on this point²⁶.

On the other hand, in Italy, the party and political systems have undergone some serious changes in the last 15 years. As Italian parties were, in most cases, adhering intensively to the mass party organisational model before the collapse of the 'First Republic' political system in 1994, a significant path dependency effect seems to have intervened and to have led several parties towards less cartelised organisational features in recent years. The new parties that emerged after 1994 are mainly populist or conservative right parties which generally reject the cartel party model. In Belgium, most parties evolved quite rapidly from a mass party organisational model towards more cartelised structures. Particularly with regard to the membership recruitment procedures, Flemish populist right parties seem more open to new members, quite unlike their Italian counterparts. This fact might be due to the tendency of the former to search for new members in order to gain social and political legitimisation.

Ideology might play an important role as well. It is often argued in the literature that, according to their ideological orientations, parties tend to adopt different organisational strategies. Parties situated at the two extremes of the right-left spectrum (new left and green parties and conservative and extreme right parties), often built on the anti-organisational rhetoric, are generally characterised either by complex structures for securing high membership participation (left) or by strongly hierarchical organisations (right)²⁷. Nevertheless, Bolleyer hypothesises that new parties on the left embrace societal individualisation processes fully and incorporate them organisationally, supporting the validity of the cartel party model²⁸. Thus, we expect to find very weak degrees of cartelisation within the extreme right party family while finding highly cartelised structures within leftist parties. On the other hand, we expect to find high degrees of cartelisation within liberal parties, which are often built following the electoral-professional party model and therefore shift more easily towards cartelisation²⁹. Social democratic and Christian democratic parties, often built originally on mass party structures, are expected to adopt more mild forms of cartelisation.

Table 4 explores the country effect and ideology effect on the degree of cartelisation by means of a linear regression model. The advantage of testing both hypotheses

²⁶ K. DETTERBECK, *op. cit.*, 2005; K. DETTERBECK, 'Le cartel des partis et les partis cartellisés en Allemagne', in Y. AUCANTE and A. DÉZÉ, *op. cit.*, 2008, p. 129-152.

²⁷ M. DUVERGER, *Political parties. Their organization and activity in the modern state*, London, Methuen, 1954; H. KITSCHOLT, *op. cit.*

²⁸ N. BOLLEYER, *op. cit.*, 2007, p. 22.

²⁹ L. DE WINTER (ed.), *Liberal Parties in Western Europe*, Barcelona, ICPS, 2000.

simultaneously is that we compensate for the fact that Italy counts more populist right and conservative parties than Belgium.

Table 4. Estimating the country effect and the impact of ideology on cartelisation

	Standardised Coefficients (Beta)	t	Sig.
(Constant)		9.118	.000
Party family	-.391	-2.974	.009
Country (ref. cat. Italy)			
Wallonia	.490	3.427	.004
Flanders	.742	5.362	.000

Dependent variable: cartelisation ($R^2 = 0.762$).

In this regression, both the country effect³⁰ and party family effect are estimated upon the intra-organisational cartelisation. Given the low number of cases integrated in the analysis, we cannot push the explanatory power of this regression model further than supplying a clear assessment of the conclusions built intuitively upon the descriptive statistics. The country effect is confirmed as both Flemish, and French-speaking parties are significantly more cartelised than Italian parties, and this discrepancy is even greater for Flemish parties. Given the high R-square (.762), this confirms the intuitive interpretation of Table 3, whereby Italian parties seemed to score less on the integrated cartelisation index than Belgian ones. An inverse relation between party family identification and intra-organisational cartelisation appears to be confirmed as well. Moving from the left (1) to the right (6) of the ideological spectrum, the degree of intra-organisational cartelisation of parties decreases. As expected, new left and green parties are highly cartelised, whereas conservative and populist right parties are generally weakly cartelised.

When it comes to the country effect, we must note that the Italian parties are often composed of highly polarised factions. The threat of internal conflicts or even splits might lead party elites to be more reluctant to enlarge membership boundaries or to give members more extensive rights. This partly explains the higher thresholds for accessing party membership. With regard to the effect of ideology, the only two green parties in our analysis are *Groen!* and *Ecolo*, and they are highly cartelised as was expected. Considering the social democratic parties, SP.a, PS, PD and IdV (although the classification of this latest party is quite complex), there is no clear pattern visible, with only the SP.a emerging as a highly cartelised party. The same can be said of the Christian democratic parties, CD&V, cdH and UDC, which vary considerably regarding cartelisation. Nevertheless, the Social democrats seem at first glance to be more cartelised than the Christian democrats: the average score of intra-organisational cartelisation achieved by Belgian and Italian social democratic parties is slightly higher (16.4) than that obtained by Christian democrats (14.2).

The scores of the ethno-regionalist parties N-VA, UV and SVP – which all have a low to a very low level of cartelisation – are more interesting. Government participation might be an intervening variable here. As these parties are in opposition

³⁰ Each ‘country’ has been transformed into a dummy variable, and Italy has been taken as the reference category.

most of the time, they might be less inclined to embrace a cartelised organisation than other parties. Finally, we analysed the populist right parties VB, LDD, FN, FI, LN, AN, most of which achieved low scores on the intra-organisational cartelisation index as expected. Charismatic and powerful leaders guide a collective of followers hierarchically in most of these parties. In conclusion, we might attribute the ideological effect mainly to the extreme positions of the green parties, the populist right parties and, surprisingly enough, the ethno-regionalist parties. For the other parties, it is more difficult to draw clear conclusions. The results of our analysis are summarised in Table 5.

Table 5. Relationship between intra-organisational cartelisation and party family

	<i>New left and green</i>	<i>Social democrats</i>	<i>Christian democrats</i>	<i>Ethno-regionalist</i>	<i>Liberals</i>	<i>Conservative-populist right</i>	<i>Total</i>
Very low cartelisation	0	25%	33%	33%	0	50%	32%
Low to intermediate	0	50%	0	67%	0	33%	22%
Intermediate to high	50%	0	66%	0	0	17%	21%
Very high cartelisation	50%	25%	0	0	100%	0	16%
Total (N)	2	4	3	3	1	6	19
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

The membership role and other dimensions of cartelisation: linked processes?

In this section, we examine whether the membership role dimension is connected with other important dimensions of cartelisation, in particular public funding over total receipts and the membership ratio. The percentage of public funding over total receipts gives an indication of the extent to which parties have ‘migrated’ to the state and are no longer dependent upon other resources such as membership contributions³¹. The second indicator introduced here is the membership ratio or the number of party members divided by the party voters. This indicates whether parties are still backed by a large membership enrolment, or whether, on the contrary, members are less important.

Table 6 presents the bivariate correlations between the different dimensions of cartelisation. This table shows that significant correlations cannot be found between the variables. This might be due in part to the limited number of cases, which makes it more

³¹ The financial data for Italian parties are collected on the basis of the annual party budgets published in the *Gazzetta ufficiale* and of L. BARDI *et al.* (eds), *I partiti italiani. Iscritti, dirigenti, eletti*, *op. cit.* The data concerning Belgian parties are collected on the basis of P. DELWIT, *op. cit.*, 2008; J. NOPPE, ‘Morphologie des partis francophones en 2002 et 2003’, *Res Publica*, 46/2-3, 2004, p. 413-452 and J. NOPPE, ‘Morfologie van de Vlaamse politieke partijen in 2003 en 2004’, *Res Publica*, 47/2-3, 2005, p. 349-426. The data concerning membership figures are derived from the same sources.

difficult to find significant relations in statistical terms. Nevertheless, it is striking that the intra-organisational cartelisation is not significantly correlated with the percentage of public funding. It seems that these two aspects of cartelisation are less related than often assumed. These results seem to challenge the idea that a changing membership role and cartelisation are linked processes. The intra-organisational cartelisation is, however, negatively correlated with the membership ratio, which might support the cartelisation thesis. Parties with relatively high numbers of members are supposed to be less cartelised.

Table 6. Bivariate correlations between different dimensions of cartelisation

		<i>Intra-organisational cartelisation</i>	<i>Public funding over total receipts</i>	<i>Membership ratio</i>
Intra-organisational cartelisation	Correlation		0.050	-0.333
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.853	0.177
	N	19	16	18
Public funding over total receipts	Correlation	0.050		-0.057
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.853		0.839
	N	16	17	15
Membership ratio	Correlation	-0.333	-0.057	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.177	0.839	
	N	18	15	18

The case of the VB is interesting, as it is the least cartelised party of all Belgian parties, but at the same time receives most of its funds from the state compared to other Belgian parties. According to Delwit³², up to 94.5% of its revenue is derived from the state. The complete opposite pattern can be discerned with the Italian PD, whose resources are still derived to a considerable extent from membership contributions, but at the same time it is the most cartelised Italian party in organisational terms. This particular pattern, which seems to contradict the cartelisation thesis as a coherent process, has also been noticed by Conti, Cotta, and Tronconi³³. These scholars demonstrated that Italian parties, taken together at the level of the party system, can be considered as highly cartelised with regard to public funding rules, ideological distinctiveness and party competition, especially in terms of media access. At the same time, they are far less cartelised in organisational terms. This study confirms that cartelisation is a wide, multilateral process which needs further study in order to understand its internal coherence.

³² P. DELWIT, *op. cit.*, 2008, p. 232.

³³ N. CONTI *et al.*, *op. cit.*, 2006.

Conclusion

Since the seminal article of Katz and Mair published fifteen years ago, in which the authors describe the emergence of the cartel party model, much empirical research has been aimed at assessing the degree of cartelisation of European party systems. In this study, however, we focused on intra-organisational cartelisation at the individual party level. We explored whether an unclear character of membership and a strataarchical relationship between members and elites exist in current parties in Belgium and Italy. We based our analysis on these two dimensions because they constitute the only variables that truly transcend the intensification of the previous catch-all model. The first aim of this paper was to develop an analytical instrument which enabled us to assess the degree of intra-organisational cartelisation in a quantitative way by means of an examination of party statutes and primary documents as well as a small survey among the parliamentary parties in Italy and Belgium.

This quantitative analysis revealed significant variation in the degrees of party cartelisation between the two countries, as well as between different parties within the same country. In general, we saw that Italian parties were far less cartelised than Belgian parties, and French-speaking parties less than Flemish parties. These findings confirm the fact that we must take into account the country factor when analysing the degree of intra-organisational cartelisation, even though the levels of cartelisation of the three party systems are generally considered as being equal. Although we provided some tentative explanations for this difference related to political culture, electoral systems, membership size and internal factionalism, no clear-cut account of the dynamics of the country variable can be drawn. In order to investigate which variables really have a significant effect on the degree of intra-party cartelisation, more data should be gathered and different cases must be integrated in the analysis.

An interesting relationship between ideology and the degree of intra-party cartelisation also came to the surface, using an explorative regression model. In this respect, we found that the green parties tend to adhere most to this organisational form, in line with previous research findings. The decrease in members' obligations and the blurring of the supporter-member divide in new parties of the left closely correspond to the expectations formulated by the cartel party hypothesis. Populist right parties generally rejected the model, although the relationship is not so clear cut. The Belgian populist right parties for instance seem to be more open to new members than expected. This could be due to the fact that these parties are desperate to legitimise themselves by assembling a considerable number of members, an issue that populist right parties in Italy have to deal with less. The ethno-regionalist party family also seemed to reject the cartel party model in most of the cases. These findings are particularly relevant as they contradict the current belief that describes the organisational cartelisation process as functioning irrespective of ideological positions. We might argue that moving from the left to the right extreme of the right/left continuum the degree of cartelisation seems to decrease.

Finally, we explored whether the intra-organisational cartelisation is correlated with other dimensions of cartelisation such as dependency of state resources and the relative number of party-members. Contrary to expectations, we found no significant correlations whatsoever between these two variables. This might be due in part to the

fact that we have only analysed a limited number of cases, but we cannot ignore the fact that the parties in our analysis sometimes clearly rejected intra-organisational cartelisation, while at the same time they are highly dependent on state resources. For example, *Alleanza Nazionale* and *Forza Italia* achieved the lowest scores according to the intra-organisational cartelisation index, but are intensively funded through state resources. On the other hand, the *Partito Democratico* scored highly on the cartelisation index, but the percentage of public funding with respect to its total receipt is among the lowest in the database. Therefore, we might conclude that the role of membership constitutes a separate dimension of intra-organisational party cartelisation and must be examined carefully.

In conclusion, we might challenge the idea that a changing membership role and cartelisation are linked processes, which is quite a unique finding as previous research on the cartelisation thesis has not tended to focus on the membership role dimension. The lack of connection between these two different dimensions of cartelisation might even be perceived as a falsification of the cartel party model altogether. While this conclusion seems too strong and too preliminary, this study suggests that the cartel party model is a set of hypotheses and suggestions on party change processes rather than a cohesive and structured model of party development.

