Party decline and response

The effects of membership decline on party organisations in Western Europe, 1960-2010

Ann-Kristin Kölln

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PARTY DECLINE AND RESPONSE
THE EFFECTS OF MEMBERSHIP DECLINE ON PARTY ORGANISATIONS IN
WESTERN EUROPE, 1960-2010

Dissertation

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by

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born on 9 March, 1986
in Buchholz in der Nordheide

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1 – Introduction

Political parties are closely tied to the functioning and organisation of politics in Western democracies. Their historical roots date back to the emergence of organised politics. First versions of parties existed as factions or political groups in ancient Athens or Rome. But their modern counterpart, defined minimally as ‘an organization that presents groups of candidates for elections’ (Diamond and Gunther, 2001: xxxi),¹ developed only through the establishment of parliamentarianism in 19th century Europe. Over time, political parties have become so closely linked to the political process that they are almost seen as a synonym for politics today. And it was a combination of civil society’s continuous appreciation of them as well as the parties’ ability to adapt to changing circumstances that made this possible (see Yanai, 1999). Parties’ continued linkage to society and the state is an extraordinary achievement given the fundamental changes Europe experienced economically, socially, and politically in the 20th century. Changes in each of these areas had profound effects on political parties and their working between society and the state.

However, in recent decades research has been suggesting a disenchantment of citizens with parties and politics at large (see Dalton and Weldon, 2005). Empirical evidence in favour of this view refers, for example, to declining numbers of citizens who say they identify with a particular party, declining figures of voter turnout and trust in political parties, declining party member registration, and increasing voter volatility. Based on those and similar observations, party politics research even refers to a ‘crisis of party’ (Daalder, 1992: 269) and contemplates ‘party decline’ (Dalton et al., 2011: 4; Drummond, 2006: 628; Wattenberg, 1996) in Western societies. The resulting *party decline thesis* may be summarised and defined as parties’ decreasing influence on citizen attitudes and behaviour, in general (see Reiter, 1989: 326).

The party decline thesis is a rather pessimistic view on the current state and future of parties. In addition, it is citizen-centred and emphasises the parties’ connection with civil society (Dalton et al., 2011); it only relates to how citizens evaluate parties. As a consequence, it does not include an evaluation of party-state relationships or of the party organisation itself. Moreover, it seems to be oblivious to the fact that parties are ‘strategic actors’ (Dalton et al., 2011: 231; Mair, 1994: 1). Parties may follow different ideologies but they all arguably pursue the goal of winning votes in the following election. Their actions will eventually be steered towards accomplishing this goal. Parties are therefore not only an object exposed to their changing environment but actors themselves. Acknowledging and emphasising this, the

¹ For an extensive discussion of extant definitions, see Katz (2008).

following study takes on the parties' perspective in the debate surrounding party decline in assessing how parties respond to this alleged crisis.

1.1. Specifying the research question

Questions surrounding party responses to challenges are not new in the political science literature. The parties' prime activity of competing over votes makes them a repeated study object for their behaviour in the political market. There are two analytical challenges inherent to any study of party responses that require specifying the research question further. Firstly, responses imply in many instances intentionality or at least the perception of a trigger (Mair et al., 2004b: 9). Speaking of responses necessitates a prior impulse or trigger. The translation of the impulse into the response occurs through perception. However, whether or not a perception has occurred on the side of parties and the extent to which it has occurred is difficult to observe from the outside. Another challenge inherent to the study of party response lies in the possible response set. A non-response can also be one way of responding (Mair et al., 2004b: 10). Parties may be aware of a specific problem and may have debated about how to tackle it but have eventually decided not to do anything at all. In such cases, a study of party response will only observe non-response as the outcome without knowing what the motivations for such a decision are. Both challenges relate to the fact that researchers simply do not often know how parties reason. Whenever a detailed study of processes is not possible, researchers are required to shift focus. Instead of studying the entire process, it is possible to consider the impulse and the effect or response in isolation, leaving the process in-between untouched.

In a similar vein, this study is going to focus on party response as an effect of party decline as the impulse, keeping the process constant. More pointedly, this study defines party response as any visible change in the party from one time-point, T_0 , to the next, T_1 , that shows to be associated to a trigger that occurred at T_0 . This means that the following chapters are going to study party response as an effect brought about by the impulse of party decline, holding the process in-between constant. However, such an analytical decision and conceptualisation necessitates making two assumptions about the process itself. Firstly, perceptions preceding responses are equal across parties and secondly, the observed effects are intentionally brought about. The latter assumption, especially, is more justifiable for some response areas than for others.

Political parties have several areas at their disposal in which they could respond to challenges brought upon them. Following largely Peter Mair et al. (2004b: 11ff), party response can be broadly distinguished into four different areas depending on the addressee: voters, other parties, the party system, or the party organisation. Party responses targeted at voters may involve appealing to a group of citizens that

previously did not vote regularly for the party. This can be achieved in different ways but in many instances parties change their policy programme to attract a new group of voters and/or members. Research on policy-shifts, campaigning strategies, and target groups is ample in the political science literature (see for instance Budge, 1994; Rohrschneider, 2002). Equally, party response aimed at other parties can be frequently observed when parties, for instance, change their preferences in coalition partners. For example, whenever the German liberal party, FDP, was in government in the years between 1949 and 1966 it formed a coalition with the Christian parties, CDU and CSU.² However, following a period in opposition (1966-1969) the FDP formed a coalition with the social democratic party, SPD, for the next thirteen years. Apparently, the FDP had changed its coalition preferences. A change in coalition preferences does not require other parties' formal consent; yet, consent is usually implied nonetheless. A party is less likely to utter a coalition preference unless it is relatively certain that the preferred partner thinks alike. In comparison, party response targeted at the party system does indeed require open consent of other parties in most cases. These responses may be characterised as entailing a change in the functioning of the entire party system, affecting all parties. Such responses may involve a change in the electoral threshold or a change in the party financing system. They often require a qualified majority in parliament and thus other parties' consent. What all of these party response areas have in common is that they involve another actor – be it voters or other parties. In contrast, the response area of the party organisation is self-sufficient. A party's organisation is under direct control of the party, and organisational responses do not require anyone's consent to be implemented. As soon as a party decides to respond to an impulse in its organisational realm it actually can do so. For any of the other types of responses to be successfully implemented, a party is dependent on another actor. Direct and unrestricted control makes the party organisation as a response area so attractive to the party. According to Mair et al. (2004b: 11), the party organisation marks in many cases the very first means of response. The underlying rationale is 'that there is nothing inherently wrong with the party; rather, it is simply failing to adequately communicate its message'. In that sense, the party organisation as a response area signifies the mildest response but also the very first a party usually gives. It may involve, for instance, a change in the financing structure of the party or the employment of more professional staff (see for example Bille and Pedersen, 2004; Scarrow et al., 2000; Webb, 2004).

Comparing the different response areas shows that while they can all mean a significant change in the way a party is positioning itself as a response to an impulse, the area of the party organisation yields the advantage of independent implementation. A party can bring about a response in the realm of the party organisation irrespective of other actors. For the same reason the earlier assumption

² Long forms for party abbreviations as well as their English translation can be found in Table 1.1.

of intentionality is more justifiable for this response area than for any other. With these characteristics the response area of the party organisation serves well for the study of party responses.

Despite its importance to the democratic process, the party organisation as a research object has only received comparatively little scholarly attention in the past. As permanent institutions, irrespective of electoral success or failure, party organisations are an important feature of the democratic process. Parties may win or lose elections but the party organisation usually continues to exist and will strive for success in the following election. In that sense, it also ensures the enduring connection between citizens, politics, and the state. Next to the state, party organisations are arguably the institutions most influential for organising democracy and structuring politics beyond elections. However, throughout the last 100 years, the party organisation as an empirical study object remained largely a 'black box' (Luther and Müller-Rommel, 2002: 6; see also Panebianco, 1988: xi), providing limited data (see for a discussion Janda, 1983). Consequently, the empirical study of party organisations as responding actors is still underdeveloped while research into other response areas is more advanced. Samuel Eldersveld (1964: 22) already observed that '[t]he disparity between our firm philosophical belief in party organizations and our imperfect and uncertain knowledge about party organizations can only be resolved by persistent, systematic, behavioural research into party structure'. With more data having been made available in the past 30 years, academic knowledge of party organisations has been growing (see for instance Dalton and Wattenberg, 2000a; Katz and Mair, 1992b; Krouwel, 2012; Webb et al., 2002). Yet more recently, Elin Allern and Karina Pedersen (2007: 85) renew the call for 'more research on party organisations'.

For these reasons this study will focus on the party organisation as the response area. More specifically, the main research question this study aims to answer is *What are parties' organisational responses to party decline?* Such a question equals studying the effects of party decline on the party organisation. Before anything else, it prompts the question of whether or not parties are necessary for or beneficial to a system of representative democracy. Answering this question requires further defining party decline and establishing whether or not it does actually occur. Next to a conceptualisation of the party organisation, the main research question also necessitates a theoretical framework that clarifies why, how and under which circumstances party organisations respond to party decline. These separate tasks will be dealt with in the following chapters.

1.2. Party organisations as the research object

The theorisation of political parties as organisations dates back to the very first studies conducted on parties at the beginning of the 20th century by Moisey

Ostrogorsky (1902), Robert Michels (1911), and Max Weber (1922). All three were interested in party organisational structures and power relations. In the post-World War 2 development of political science as a discipline, many influential studies on party organisations emerged. Eldersveld (1964), for instance, disentangled the political party into its substructures thereby enabling the study of intra-party tensions and paving the way for a new conception of political parties. Maurice Duverger (1964), in turn, has received scholarly attention for the theorisation of the cadre party type and the *contagion from the left thesis*³. Otto Kirchheimer (1965) then further developed the study of party types and proposed the catch-all party as a new type. And finally, Jean Blondel (1978) and Angelo Panebianco (1988) critically reviewed, theorised, and provided case study tests of the development of party organisations over time. These classic writings have largely influenced today's conception and understanding of party organisations in the political science literature.

The empirical study of party organisations has become more widespread ever since Kenneth Janda's (1980) cross-sectional data collection on party organisations in 53 countries between 1952 and 1960 and the resulting disseminations. Before that, limited systematic data collection on party organisations existed. James Gibson et al.'s study (1983) offers, for instance, great in-depth insight into party organisations in the US. The authors present a framework for assessing party organisational strength and test this with data from national and regional party organisations. For Europe, it was especially Richard Katz and Mair's (1992b) data collection effort that revived the study of party organisations and made empirical comparative analyses feasible. Their data and resulting analyses provided unprecedented insight into the development of party organisations across twelve countries between 1960 and 1990, recorded in many cases on an annual base. Thereafter, many researchers made use of the data handbook and the shortly afterwards published comparative study *How parties organize: change and adaptation in party organizations in Western democracies* (Katz and Mair, 1994) in analysing party organisations.⁴

In part as a consequence of this, the so-called party change literature formed, seeking to describe and explain party development (Harmel, 2002). Katz and Mair (1995) theorised, for instance, in their seminal article the emergence of a new type of party, the cartel party. Briefly, the authors contend that party organisations develop over time starting with the elite party, then moving to the mass party, over to the catch-all party before evolving into the cartel party. Transitions from one type to the next are explained by the parties' capacity to adapt to a changing environment. Social, economic, and political changes provide challenges to party organisations, to

³ It refers to the phenomenon in which parties of the political right mimic parties of the political left in order to survive.

⁴ To exemplify the scholarly influence of these publications, according to google.scholar, the books have been cited 119 and 489 times, respectively.

which they respond and adapt. The cartel party type is characterised, for example, by stronger state- and weaker citizen-relationships. It focusses on the governing role of parties at the expense of the representational one. In addition, parties of the cartel type collaborate in securing their position in the party system. The cartel party thesis encompasses many different facets of party-life and is not restricted to the party organisation in particular.

Conceptually, it has been Katz and Mair's (1992a, 1993; Katz, 2002; Key, 1964; Mair, 1994) work again that has been most influential for the study of political parties as of late. It proposes to break up the unitary actor assumption of parties in order to distinguish different dimensions of party work (*party on the ground*; *party in central office*; *party in public office*). Using this distinction, several edited volumes have emerged that assess parties and their faces comparatively (see Dalton and Wattenberg, 2000a; Katz and Mair, 1992b, 1994; Luther and Mueller-Rommel, 2002; Mair et al., 2004c; Webb et al., 2002). All of these studies provide thorough and insightful analyses of political parties, party organisations, and their respective developments. Regrettably, they rarely treat party organisations as responding units, and whenever they do, the analysis is country-focussed and limited to two or three parties within the country, as in Mair et al. (2004c).

Next to these comparative, cross-country studies, party organisations within a single country have also been the subject of scientific inquiry (see for instance Bille, 1997; Erlingsson et al., forthcoming; Müller and Steininger, 1994; Pedersen, 2010). Lars Bille's (1997) monograph *Partier I Forandring: en analyse af danske partiorganisationers udveckling 1960-1995* is noteworthy, due to its comprehensiveness. Using Katz and Mair's conceptual distinction of the three faces of a party, Bille studies their interrelationships in Danish party organisations between 1960 and 1995. His main hypothesis is that the party on the ground has become less meaningful, while the party in public office and in central office have gained in importance over time. More so, the party in central office has become more professional, specialised, and centralised, while simultaneously connecting more strongly with the party in public office (Bille, 1997: 43). And while Bille provides individual over-time analyses on each of these faces, he does not offer an integrated test of a causal relationship between them. Despite the aforementioned studies, comprehensive, comparative research on party organisational responses to party decline is still scarce, especially since the publication of Katz and Mair's data handbook. Many of the abovementioned studies use (parts of) the data handbook. However, it only covers the period 1960-1990 and ever since, data collection efforts have either focussed on a single organisational parameter or on a single country.

Building up on these existing studies on party organisations the following study seeks to contribute to the current understanding of party organisations, their development over time, and their capacity as responding organisations. With this,

the study is placed in the party politics literature with an open mind towards the organisational literature. It acknowledges the conceptual distinction amongst the different facets of a party, and it understands the party organisation as a permanent, goal-oriented, strategic, and largely independent institution pursuing a win for the entire party in the next election. These characteristics of a party organisation as exemplified and emphasised in existing studies enable it to be responsive and adaptive to changing circumstances. Since the parties' establishment as institutions operating between civil society and the state in the late 19th century in Western Europe, both of these focal points (civil society and the state) have been exposed to dramatic environmental changes which also impacted political parties.

1.3. Western European parties in the course of time

Ample research conducted in political science and sociology has reported on the fundamental changes Western European democracies have undergone in the past decades. To be precise, the referred changes are not restricted to Western Europe but have also been found in areas with similar characteristics, i.e. with high GDP per capita, high literacy rate, and a tradition of democratic rule. In general, they can be summarised as pertaining to economic, social, and political changes on the macro-level, which have impacted citizens on the individual-level and political parties on the meso-level.

Economically, Western Europe during the 20th century but especially in the post-World War 2 period has undergone vast changes. National economies have developed from being largely dependent on manufacturing companies such as iron, steel, or coal towards relying more heavily on the service and new technology industries. This development has been accompanied by steady growth in Western European countries' GDP per capita and a deceleration in population growth (see Crafts and Toniolo, 1996). The latter has not been outweighed by increasing numbers of immigrants coming to Western Europe. Over this period, Western European societies have been generally aging characterised by fewer babies being born and a larger share of elderly people. In addition, the share of female labour has been continuously increasing (see Lesthaeghe, 1981). These economic and demographic developments have had reciprocal relationships also with societal changes. Educational levels amongst citizens have been generally rising with increasingly more citizens being highly educated (Dalton et al., 1984b; Franklin et al., 1992). Societies have become more volatile and social mobility has increased. In addition, women's emancipation has revised the traditional relationships amongst men and women in the labour market as well as interpersonally. Technological advances in communication through television and the internet are connecting citizens quickly around the world. This has fostered globalisation trends, which in turn has

contributed to increasing migration amongst countries and a more competitive environment, economically and socially.

These parallel and interrelated developments have affected politics and its institutions as well. According to the *dealignment thesis*, citizens' attitudes towards political parties have changed due to these social, economic, and political processes (Beck, 1984; Dalton, 1984; Dalton et al., 1984b; Inglehart, 1990). Citizens no longer easily align with any of the political parties on offer. On the individual-level, modernization theories suggest that these changes in citizens' environment have amounted to a shift in the political values they hold (Dalton, 2006; Hosch-Dayican, 2010; Inglehart, 1977, 2007; Klingemann, 1995; van Deth and Scarbrough, 1995). Instead of materialist wishes that citizens used to hold predominantly, the new Western European citizen increasingly holds post-materialist values. These include, amongst others, environmental concerns, anti-nuclear opinions, and support for feminism. Parallel and possibly interrelated, a marginalisation of religion and the weakening of social ties on the basis of left-right orientation can also be observed (Luther and Müller-Rommel, 2002). As citizens are better informed about political issues and more educated in general, they have increasingly been demanding participation in the democratic process as opposed to simple representation through a single democratic vote every four years (Dalton, 2006). All of these individual-level and macro-level changes have had a profound impact on political parties and their role as intermediaries between society and the state. They have posed at least the following six challenges to parties and their work.

(1) Eroding social ties have challenged the stable voter base of parties. Over time, citizens have become less tied to their social basis and social backgrounds. Social mobility fostered by increasing educational services has made citizens less attached to a particular party. As a consequence, the parties' stable voting base has eroded, as exemplified in voter volatility and party identification patterns (Dalton et al., 2002: 28, 31). Voting decisions have also been increasingly delayed until closer to election day. This has changed the game of politics entirely for political parties, as they are now increasingly facing a situation in which they need to fight over voters and fight longer, instead of relying largely on a stable voter base. Election campaigns, therefore, have become more professional and capital-intensive. These changes have also affected parties organisationally. Many societal ties parties traditionally upheld with, for example, trade unions have eroded and some of the parties' stable membership base has disappeared as a consequence (Poguntke, 2006). It has left parties, generally, with fewer voluntary workers for campaigning and otherwise, fewer voters to count on, and less membership dues to draw on (Webb, 2002a).

(2) New political values held by citizens have also led to new political parties. Political parties founded pre-World War 2 stand for issues alongside the classic social

cleavages (subject vs. dominant culture;⁵ church vs. the state; primary vs. secondary economy; and workers vs. employers), as maintained by Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan (1967: 14). However, with the emergence of new post-material values and citizens adhering to them, existing parties have initially been unable to capture this new but increasing group of citizens with the existing programmes. A short-term consequence has been increasing voter volatility but more permanently the foundation of new political parties (Dalton et al., 1984a; Mack, 2010; van der Eijk et al., 1992). It is especially the green parties, most of which were established in the 1970s and 1980s, that represent post-materialist values. Over time, green parties have also been slowly increasing their voter base and are now a constant challenger to the established and traditional parties in many countries.

(3) Citizens' hesitation to permanently commit to parties has challenged parties' traditional role as voluntary associations. Traditionally, political parties not only organise politics but also the public as exemplified in the issue-structuring function ascribed to them (Gunther and Diamond, 2001). At a time when mass communication, such as the internet, was not even on the horizon, political parties provided the necessary structures and access to politics for politically interested citizens. Party membership became a tool for citizens to be more permanently informed about and potentially involved in politics. However, with the spread of mass communication tools and a rise in education, parties have no longer had privileged access to political information and political involvement (Luther and Müller-Rommel, 2002). Ever since, citizens are able to get informed about and engage in politics themselves, they no longer need the short-cut originally provided by political parties. The attraction of party membership has lessened. In addition, political changes may have influenced the attraction of being a party member. Only where parties offer clear and coherent choices will citizens commit themselves more permanently. In most Western European countries elections have become more contested over time with a higher number of effective parties (Dalton et al., 2002: 32). More parties mean more alternatives but also potentially fewer clear alternatives. Even though the degree to which politics is polarised is only fluctuating by elections and not decreasing overall (Klingemann, 2005: 48), it certainly does not provide the kind of stable structures and clear choices that party membership enrolment may require.

(4) Mass communication makes traditional forms of party communication seem outdated. As a consequence of the development and spread of the internet as a source of information and communication, the speed of information and communication has increased rapidly on societal-level. This is at odds with traditional party communication tools. Traditionally, many parties have relied on

⁵ Sometimes this cleavage is also referred to as centre versus periphery (see for instance Lipset, 2001: 5) and relates to conflicts between cultural groups.

either the passing of news from person to person or on the party press in the form of newsletters for internal purposes (Webb, 2002a). In their external communication, parties traditionally have held press conferences or have issued press releases. As a tool for mobilising and maintaining political support, any of these methods presently appear ill-suited for they are, above all, too slow (Luther and Müller-Rommel, 2002); in light of the speedy and efficient communication tools available, both party communication occasions – internal and external – demand updates and adjustments to keep up with the outside world.

(5) New participatory demands by citizens are at odds with hierarchical party structures of representation. As mentioned previously, societal changes on the macro-level have impacted also citizens' values and demands. Amongst others, in the course of the last decades citizens have become more heavily involved in politics on the individual-level beyond established institutions. This is evident in an increase in single-issue groups in which citizens engage (Dalton, 2006; Webb, 2002a). Citizens in Western Europe increasingly demand participation in decision-making processes. This, however, is at odds with the parties' traditionally hierarchical internal structures that maintain a small ruling elite at the top (Scarrow et al., 2000). Party organisations are often structured according to the administrative setup of the country they are operating in. Traditionally, membership is organised on the local, i.e. the lowest level so that individual party members in many cases have limited decision-making power when it comes to national issues, selecting candidates or leaders (Scarrow et al., 2000). However, a hierarchical administrative setup does not preclude democratic participation. This presents a challenge to the power-structure within parties and requires parties to contemplate what they can sacrifice: members' happiness or exclusive elite decision-making.

(6) Eroding links to auxiliary organisations and less permanent citizen support challenge the financial structure of parties. With decreasing links to auxiliary organisations, such as trade unions, political parties are also presumably less supported by them financially. In addition, less permanent citizen support as expressed in fewer party members implies less income generated through party membership dues (Luther and Müller-Rommel, 2002). Simultaneously and as outlined above, party campaigning has become more capital-intensive and thus requires more financial resources. The parallel developments of insecure income sources but expanding expenditures pose serious challenges to political parties' financial structure.

As can be seen from this brief overview, economic, social, and political changes at the micro- and macro-level have been challenging Western European political parties and their role substantially during the last decades. It appears that many changes in their environment have translated into serious problems for them. However, the very fact that we are finding it still difficult to imagine politics

without parties shows that parties have adapted to these changes and have retained their power throughout this period (see Dalton and Weldon, 2005). Apparently, parties have responded to each of these challenges in a way that at least alleviated their respective impact. The aforementioned studies on party response include analyses on some of the above challenges as well as the parties' reaction to them. This study will deal with a subset of these challenges and their accompanying responses, including a less explored one: party organisational responses to party decline.

1.4. Design and data

Studying the effects of or responses to an impulse means studying change. That is, establishing whether or not a party has responded to party decline as well as the extent to which it has responded, necessitates having points of comparison in the form of an earlier time point. Recall that party response was defined above as any visible change in the party from one time-point, T_0 , to the next, T_1 , which shows to have an association to a trigger that occurred at T_0 . In addition, party decline, as preliminarily defined in the introductory section, is not a one-off event or incident; it is presumably a more gradual process stretching over longer periods of time. Combined, these issues require selecting a longer time frame and several data points to study party responses to party decline. For this study a 50-year period between 1960 and 2010 has been selected because it covers a large portion of the time period under which Western Europe experienced the aforementioned fundamental micro- and macro-level changes. Accordingly, it also marks the period under which party organisational responses to party decline should be observable. Annual time-points for all parties secure that the organisational responses are measured in a detailed way.

A design that seeks to assist the study of how parties have responded to party decline in Western Europe takes political parties as units of analysis and party-years as units of observation. Parties are selected following a rule of having been in parliament during three consecutive electoral cycles. This criterion has two advantages: firstly, it allows one to measure change over time in a rather detailed manner that unveils intentional change and secondly, it enables approaching a party-within-country sample that includes all political parties of a system between 1960 and 2010 that once played a relevant and enduring role in politics. A party can still have played a relevant role in politics without having been represented in three consecutive electoral cycles. However, it might have only experienced a short-term electoral success such as the Dutch Lijst Pim Fortuyn in 2002 and 2003. Even though those parties potentially show very interesting organisational structures, they cannot adequately display intentional change over time. From this also follows an inbuilt bias in the dataset: it only includes success stories of parties that emerged

and made it into parliament and not those that failed or those that experienced a short lifespan. Having said this, the dataset does include parties that vanished. Overall, then, the case selection not only comprises bigger or ‘key parties’ (Mair et al., 2004b: 14), like previous studies on party response, but also small parties and those that have already vanished. These are included to the extent that they played an enduring and relevant role over three consecutive electoral cycles. This rule was applied to six countries in Western Europe: Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

The choice for selecting precisely these six countries was steered by patterns of party organisational continuity and by data availability for individual party organisations (for a similar argument see Katz and Mair, 1992a). In all six countries, parties have been maintaining stable party organisations for a long period of time. A joint characteristic of parties in those countries is also that they have been equally exposed to the economic, political, and social changes mentioned above. This feature allows assessing the effects of a trigger unique to all of them, like party decline. In addition, practical reasons have also played a role in selecting precisely these countries. Traditionally, Scandinavian countries and Germany have a stronger culture of government transparency and party regulation, respectively (see van Biezen, 2009). Both features foster data availability. Equally, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom have regulations, albeit only introduced later, that require the publication of party data. In addition, it should be noted that the data collection from first-hand sources requires reading official documents and accounts issued by political parties in their respective national language. Accordingly, the necessary language skills for collecting data in additional countries put a natural constraint on such endeavours. Due to these deliberate choices, the sample is not random and subsequent analyses cannot be easily generalised to other West European countries. The results first and foremost apply to this current sample. At the same time, the similarities in parties’ characteristics allow the expectation of similar results for comparable parties, i.e. parties also operating in advanced industrial democracies in Western Europe.

This study uses a unique time-series cross-sectional dataset that follows 47 parties in six Western European countries between 1960 and 2010, the *Party Organisation Dataset 1960-2010*. Table 1.1 presents an overview of the parties included with their founding year, party family belonging and time coverage, grouped by country belonging. In most cases, data have been collected from first-hand sources. They stem from annual reports, statements of accounts, or party contacts.⁶ A description

⁶ Numerous archivists, party employees, and academics helped in the gathering of the necessary information, and without them it would not have been possible to build the database in its existing scope. I am grateful for all their effort and time spent on directing me towards the relevant data or providing them. For data in Denmark: Kristian Buhl Thomsen, Karina Kosiara-Pedersen, Peter Egemose Grib; for Germany: Herr Kühne, Frau Podschun, Herr Theurer, Herr Pradier, Frau Kröger, Frau

of the dataset, including the sources of information, can be found in the codebook in the appendix to this chapter. Where it was not possible to obtain data first-hand, I relied on secondary sources, most notably Katz and Mair's (1992b) edited volume *Party Organizations: A Data Handbook*. The resulting dataset amounts to a total of 1,970 party-year observations. Throughout the following chapters, empirical analyses are based on the *Party Organisation Dataset 1960-2010*. The precise data, variables, and descriptives are introduced in subsequent chapters.

Sander, Herr Camp, Herr Bitterhof; for the Netherlands: Dorien van Rheenen, Sylvia Bakker, Marnix Morsink, Frank Johan Hoogendam, Evert van Schoonhoven, Marco Kampmeijer, Harmen Binnema, Leo Koelewijn; for Norway: Elin Allern, Jan Bruusgaard, Anders Ravik Jupskås, Knut Heidar, Tor Henriksen, Rune Karlsen, Ann-Christine Alderin Låtun, Lars Svåsand, Øivind Rustad; for Sweden: Jon Pierre, Anders Widfeldt, Gissur Erlingsson, Tina Hodell, Elin Naurin, Siv Stjernborg, Robert Rydefjård, Anders Yngman, Acko Ankarberg Johansson, Magnus Haglund, Anna Stenvinkel, Åsa Larsson, Bo Leinerdal, Håkan Granlund, Thomas Lind, Johan Westrin; for the United Kingdom: Paul Webb, Darren Treadwell, Jeremy McIlwaine, Beth Armstrong, Wolfgang Rudig, Graham Lippiatt, Colin Copus.

Table 1.1. Overview of parties included in the database.

Country	Party name (national)	Abbreviation (national)	Party name (international)	Founded	Family	Time coverage
DK	Socialdemokraterne	A	Social Democrats	1871	soc	1960-2010
	Det Konservative Folkeparti	C	Conservative People's Party	1915	con	1960-2010
	Socialistisk Folkeparti	F	Socialist People's Party	1959	com	1960-2010
	Venstre, Danmarks liberale parti	V	Left, Denmark's Liberal Party	1910	lib	1960-2010
	Fremskridtspartiet	Z	Progress Party	1972	lib	1972-2004
	Det Radikale Venstre	B	Danish Social Liberal Left Party	1905	lib	1960-2010
	Centrum-Demokraterne	CD	Centre Democrats	1973	soc	1973-2007
	Kristendemokraterne	K	Christian Democrats	1970	chr	1970-2010
	Dansk Folkeparti	O	Danish People's Party	1995	right	1995-2010
	Enhedslisten	Ø	Red-Green Alliance	1989	com	1989-2010
DE	Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands	CDU	Christian Democratic Union of Germany	1945	chr	1960-2010
	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands	SPD	Social Democratic Party of Germany	1875	soc	1960-2010
	Freie Demokratische Partei	FDP	Free Democratic Party	1948	lib	1960-2010
	Bündnis 90/Die Grünen	GRÜNE	Alliance '90/The Greens	1977	eco	1977-2010
	Christlich-Soziale Union in Bayern	CSU	Christian Social Union of Bavaria	1945	chr	1960-2010
	Die Linke	LINKE	The Left	1989	com	1989-2010
NL	Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie	VVD	People's Party for Freedom and Democracy	1948	lib	1960-2010
	Partij van de Arbeid	PvdA	Labour Party	1946	soc	1960-2010
	Christen-Democratisch Appèl	CDA	Christian Democratic Appeal	1980	chr	1980-2010
	Socialistische Partij	SP	Socialist Party	1971	com	1971-2010
	Politieke Partij Democraten 66	D66	Democrats 66	1966	soc	1966-2010
	GroenLinks	GL	GreenLeft	1989	eco	1989-2010
	ChristenUnie	CU	ChristianUnion	2001	chr	2001-2010
	Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij	SGP	Reformed Political Party	1918	con	1960-2010
	Politieke Partij Radikalen	PPR	Political Party of Radicals	1968	soc	1968-1989

	Pacifistisch Socialistische Partij	PSP	Pacifist Socialist Party	1957	com	1960-1989
	Communistische Partij van Nederland	CPN	Communist Party of the Netherlands	1909	com	1960-1989
	Katholieke Volkspartij	KVP	Catholic People's Party	1945	chr	1960-1980
	Anti-Revolutionaire Partij	ARP	Anti-Revolutionary Party	1879	chr	1960-1979
	Christelijk-Historische Unie	CHU	Christian Historical Union	1908	chr	1960-1979
NO	Arbeiderpartiet	A	Labour Party	1887	soc	1960-2010
	Fremskrittspartiet	Frp	Progress Party	1973	con	1973-2010
	Høyre	H	Conservative Party	1884	con	1960-2010
	Sosialistisk Venstreparti	SV	Socialist Left Party	1973	com	1973-2010
	Senterpartiet	Sp	Centre Party	1920	agr	1960-2010
	Kristelig Folkeparti	KrF	Christian Democratic Party	1933	chr	1960-2010
	Venstre	V	Liberal Party	1884	lib	1960-2010
SE	Sveriges Socialdemokratiska arbetarparti	S	Swedish Social Democratic Party	1889	soc	1960-2010
	Vänsterpartiet	V	Left Party	1917	com	1960-2010
	Centerpartiet	C	Centre Party	1913	agr	1960-2010
	Folkpartiet Liberalerna	FP	Liberal People's Party	1934	lib	1960-2010
	Moderata samlingspartiet	M	Moderate Party	1904	con	1960-2010
	Kristdemokraterna	KD	Christian Democrats	1964	chr	1964-2010
	Miljöpartiet de Gröna	MP	Green Party	1981	eco	1981-2010
UK	Conservative and Unionist Party	Con		1834	con	1960-2010
	Labour Party	Lab		1900	soc	1960-2010
	Liberal Democrats	LibDem		1943	lib	1960-2010

1.5. Argument and outline of the book

Answering the question of what party organisational responses are to party decline requires several analytical steps. Subsequent chapters each mark one of these steps; they each address a research question of their own. Jointly, the chapters will provide an answer to the main research question with one exception. Chapter 2 takes on a normative view and defends the political parties' value to representative democracy. It is not strictly necessary for answering the main research question yet provides the motivating ground for subsequent chapters and ultimately the entire study.

Chapter 2 departs from the observation that, while political parties play a major role in the democratic process around the world, the party decline thesis suggests that parties are increasingly less important to citizens. In addition, classic and contemporary theories of representative democracy only scantily incorporate accounts of party benefit. Should we thus accept parties' decline and move on? Or is there reason to believe that parties contribute to the well-functioning of representative democracy? The chapter attempts to reconcile democratic representation with party politics literature by discussing the benefits that parties provide towards the well-functioning of representative democracy. The argument takes two different paths that both evaluate party democracy's value in comparison to its next best alternative – pluralist democracy with individual representatives. While the chapter argues that parties are not flawless or even necessary, the assessment of pluralist democracy and party democracy against both yardsticks shows that party democracy performs slightly better. It concludes that the qualities parties provide make them preferable over their competitors in a system of representative democracy.

Chapter 3 then deals with the party decline thesis in more detail and aims to provide an analysis of the concept itself, as well as empirical evidence for and against it. In discussing the most commonly cited definition of party decline the chapter highlights several weaknesses and instead proposes an alternative conceptualisation. Accordingly, party decline is defined as the citizens' increasing critical attitudes and behaviour towards individual parties. Based on that the chapter argues for an ideal-type operationalization that incorporates measures of party identification, party membership, and partisan volatility. An analysis of 64 empirical studies that employ these indicators or a subset thereof shows that the empirical evidence for wholesale party decline is rather thin. The indicators of party identification and volatility provide evidence in support of party decline, albeit not across the board. In contrast, party membership is the only measure offering unequivocal support for such a vast and broad claim as party decline. Country-level figures of party membership have been dropping almost continuously across the Western world since the 1960s. It is the only indicator that largely supports the claim

of party decline within the boundaries of its definition. In light of this finding and the importance attached to membership by citizens and parties alike, the chapter concludes by narrowing down the concept of party decline to that of party membership decline for subsequent chapters.

Chapter 4 takes a closer look at party membership developments and possible patterns amongst parties. It departs from the observation that existing research on party membership development commonly reports figures aggregated to the country-level and/or using only few time-points. While these choices may be appropriate for certain research questions, they nevertheless hide major differences between parties and conceal short-term fluctuations between measurement occasions. They are also inappropriate for testing party-level theories and for studying individual party trajectories. However, this is also necessary to better describe and ultimately explain the phenomenon of membership decline. The chapter analyses a total of 1,654 party-year observations across 47 parties in six Western European countries between 1960 and 2010. Using multilevel modelling and time-series analyses, the chapter corroborates the average downward trend found in existing studies. Yet the results also show what aggregated data with few time-points cannot: membership decline is far from a universal phenomenon. It applies more to parties founded before 1945 and less so to green parties. Membership decline appears to be part of a party's life-cycle, in such a way that the more consolidated parties are, the fewer members they have.

Chapter 5 develops a theoretical and conceptual framework that facilitates the study of party responses to changes in membership size. It first argues for the importance of studying party organisations and their development for democracy, before conceptualising the party organisation. Further, it lays out conceptual prerequisites and assumptions that facilitate the study of party organisational responses to membership decline specifically. Several explanatory approaches to organisational change are outlined that seek to understand why and how organisations change. General theories of party change propose three main determinants: firstly, party age; secondly, party system-belonging; and thirdly, electoral result and leadership effects. Organisational and party politics literatures also include expectations about organisational change or response behaviour towards a drop in a specific resource, such as members. Following an operationalization of the concept of party organisation, several hypotheses are derived. They pertain to over-time patterns of party organisational change, general determinants of organisational change, membership as a specific trigger of change, as well as the mediating effects of party institutionalisation.

Chapter 6 explores and assesses party organisational change and its potential general determinants. It tests the first set of hypotheses related to over-time patterns as well as general determinants of change. Using multilevel modelling and

time-series techniques, the chapter argues firstly, that party organisational development has been generally one of increasing the organisational size and becoming more capital-intensive until the late 1980s. After that, party organisations increased only in a minority of parameters but decreased in more. In addition, organisational complexity has been generally declining over the period of study. Secondly, it shows that out of the three general explanatory approaches to party organisational change, party age, as a proxy for party institutionalisation, marks the best general predictor for these patterns. There appear to be systematic differences between emerging and consolidated parties as to their structure and size of the organisations.

Chapter 7 pursues two goals: firstly, to investigate what the effects of membership decline on the party organisation are; and secondly, to assess more generally how membership size and party age relate to organisational resources and structures. In total, three hypotheses are tested. The first two pertain to the effects of membership size on organisational parameters. The third hypothesis tests for party age as a mediating variable to the relationship between membership size and the organisational setup. The findings show that parties on average respond to party membership decline, according to several organisational parameters. In those instances, they display more proactive than conservative response behaviour. The party organisation increases in size and brings itself closer to the state. In addition, it appears that party age or party institutionalisation play a crucial role for organisational complexity in how parties respond to any kind of change in their membership size. In the emerging phase, parties appear to be more sensitive to and dependent on membership size, while during a more consolidated phase membership size becomes less important for the party organisation in this parameter. Overall, the findings paint a picture of partial organisational response to changes in membership size.

Chapter 8 summarises the findings before placing them into the academic literature and political practice. It reflects on this study's results by highlighting the implications they have for parties, party democracy and the everyday working of politics. In doing so, it stresses the contributions this study makes to the literature on party organisations. It also makes suggestions for future avenues of research. In sum, the chapter argues that this research project yields the following five implications: (1) Party members are a valuable resource to party organisations. (2) Party organisational development is also driven by membership size. (3) Party organisations and their work are increasingly centred on elections. (4) Levels of party institutionalisation are linked to the financial costs of democracy. (5) Party accountability is torn between citizens who provide votes and the state which supplies funding. The overall findings and their implications show that party organisations find themselves in a constant struggle to straddle citizen-based

participatory ideals of democracy and elite-based representative principles of democracy.

1.6. Scientific contribution

This study seeks to contribute to the party politics literature in several ways.

Theory. By deriving a theoretical framework that was originally proposed in the early years of the 20th century, the study revives a more than 100-year-old debate in political science on the effects of party membership on the party organisation. What is more, the theoretical framework employed in this study reaches out to the neighbouring literatures of management and organisational theory to learn from their respective theoretical expectations, conceptual analyses, and empirical evidence. In so doing, it synthesises the interrelated sub-disciplines of party organisational and business organisational research.

Data. Ever since Katz and Mair's (1992b) impressive data collection efforts, party organisational data has not been updated on a larger comparative base. In addition, the data are still not fully digitised. As a consequence, empirical studies can often only cover either the time-period 1960-1989 for comparative accounts, or individual parameters or individual countries for the time thereafter. No comprehensive cross-country data exist for the time period after 1989. From 2011 onwards, the *Political Party Database* (<http://www.politicalpartydb.com/>, accessed: 17/09/2013) administered by Susan Scarrow and Paul Webb, collects and provides annual data on a large number of dimensions and cases (Scarrow and Webb, 2013). The dataset specifically built for this current study, the *Party Organisation Dataset 1960-2010*, links both databases (the Party Organizations Data Handbook and the Political Party Database) on the time dimension and bridges the more than 20-year data gap. In building the database, special attention was being paid in employing the same definitions for the new data as used in the Katz and Mair handbook. In addition, large portions of the Katz and Mair data have been updated or augmented wherever possible. While both the earlier and the future database cover parties in more countries, the *Party Organisation Dataset 1960-2010* is easily expandable to parties in more countries. The dataset thus alleviates the restricted availability of data on European party organisations and their development over time. In addition, the political finance data included here are amongst the few to be comparable across time and space (see Scarrow, 2007b). Further, membership data recorded annually per party is so far non-existent on a cross-country basis. The *Members and Activists of Political Parties* project (MAPP; <http://www.projectmapp.eu/>, accessed: 27/09/2013) aims at providing in the future a cross-country database of party membership figures. Data contained in the *Party Organisation Dataset 1960-2010* can contribute to this endeavour.

Methods. The combination of the research question asked and the dataset used makes it possible to employ statistical techniques from fields other than party politics research. The structure of the data with individual years being nested in parties allows applying a combination of multilevel modelling and time-series analysis tools throughout. In addition, to my knowledge, tests of asymmetric causal relationships have not yet been conducted in party organisational research.

Results. The findings contribute to the party organisational and party politics literature. They show that the party decline thesis is not corroborated across indicators, time-periods, or areas. It is especially party membership as an indicator that supports such a broad claim as the party decline thesis. However, while membership decline can be observed on average across the 47 parties examined, it certainly does not apply to all parties. Although much research has predicted but has rarely tested, over time, party organisations grow on average, albeit not in every dimension of the organisation. However, the results also show that they are able to shrink. This underlines parties' adaptive nature as opposed to confirming the suspicion of ever-growing party organisations. Moreover, support is found for the life-cycle approach and party institutionalisation as an explanation for party organisational development, which invites future research into the precise mechanisms as well as into a wider applicability of the approach. The results, pertaining to party responses to membership decline, show that parties, on average, react organisationally in several instances. In those cases, they display more often proactive than conservative response behaviour by expanding the organisation: they employ more staff and fewer local offices, spend more money but pay out lower salaries, and they are more reliant on state subsidies as opposed to dues as sources of income. The findings are also in line with earlier research on the tightening link between parties and the state. Lastly, the study contributes to the interconnection between party politics literature and the theories of political representation by providing a normative argument for the value of political parties for representative democracy.

Appendix Codebook Party Organisation Dataset 1960-2010

Summary statistics of the dataset are provided with each variable, where n is the number of party-year observations, N the number of parties covered, $\bar{N}$ the mean number of party-observations per year ($= n/52$), and $\bar{T}$ the mean number of years per party ($= n/N$).

cntry **country**

values: 1 = Denmark (DK); 2 = Germany (DE); 3 = The Netherlands (NL); 4 = Norway (NO); 5 = Sweden (SE); 6 = United Kingdom (UK)
($n = 1,970$; $N = 47$)

yr **year**

values: 1959-2010
($n = 1,970$; $N = 47$)

wave **data collection wave**

values: 1-50
($n = 1,970$; $N = 47$)

period **period**

reports five-year periods starting with 0 in 1959

size_elect **size of electorate**

($n = 1,922$; $N = 47$)

Source Denmark: www.danmarkshistorien.dk (accessed: 13/02/2013);
Germany: www.bundeswahlleiter.de (accessed: 16/07/2012); The
Netherlands: www.politiekcompendium.nl (accessed: 13/02/2013);
Norway: www.ssb.no
(accessed: 13/02/2013); Sweden: www.scb.se (accessed: 13/02/2013); UK:
Rallings and Thrasher (2009). Data for non-election years have been
interpolated.

elecyr election year for parliament

values: 0 = No; 1 = Yes

(n = 1,922; N = 47)

Source <http://www.parties-and-elections.eu/> (accessed: 13/02/2013)

turnout electoral turnout

(n = 1,922; N = 47)

Source <http://www.parties-and-elections.eu/> (accessed: 13/02/2013)

loggovunit number of local government units

(n = 1,922; N = 47)

Source Denmark: www.dst.dk/aarbog (accessed: 28/01/2013); Germany: www.destatis.de (accessed: 29/03/2013; The Netherlands: Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek; Norway: www.ssb.no/aarbok/ (accessed: 25/01/2013); Sweden: Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting and Statistiska centralbyrån; UK: Copus (2011)

GDP_cu_lcu GDP in current local currency units

(n = 1,922; N = 47; $\bar{N}$ = 37; $\bar{T}$ = 41)

Source World Bank Databank,
<http://databank.worldbank.org/data/home.aspx> (accessed: 05/03/2013)

GDP_co_lcu GDP in constant local currency units

(n = 1,922; N = 47; $\bar{N}$ = 37; $\bar{T}$ = 41)

Source World Bank Databank,
<http://databank.worldbank.org/data/home.aspx> (accessed: 05/03/2013)

GDP_capita_GK GDP per capita in 1990 US\$ (converted at Geary Khamis PPPs)

(n = 1,922; N = 47; $\bar{N}$ = 37; $\bar{T}$ = 41)

Source The Conference Board Total Economy Database™, January 2013,
<http://www.conference-board.org/data/economydatabase/>

GDP_capita_EKS GDP per capita in 2012 US\$ (converted to 2012 price levels,
updated 2005 EKS PPPs)

(n = 1,794; N = 47; $\bar{N}$ = 35; $\bar{T}$ = 38)

Source The Conference Board Total Economy Database™, January 2013,
<http://www.conference-board.org/data/economydatabase/>

prty**party name***values:*

- 1 = Socialdemokraterne, A (Social Democrats);
- 2 = Det Konservative Folkeparti, C (Conservative People's Party);
- 3 = Socialistisk Folkeparti, F (Socialist People's Party);
- 4 = Venstre, V (Left, Denmark's Liberal Party);
- 5 = Fremskridtspartiet, Z (Progress Party);
- 6 = Det Radikale Venstre, B (Danish Social Liberal Left Party);
- 7 = Centrum-Demokraterne, CD (Centre Democrats);
- 8 = Kristendemokraterne, K (Christian Democrats);
- 9 = Dansk Folkeparti, O (Danish People's Party);
- 10 = Enhedslisten, Ø (Red-Green Alliance);
- 11 = Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands, CDU (Christian Democratic Union of Germany);
- 12 = Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, SPD (Social Democratic Party of Germany);
- 13 = Freie Demokratische Partei, FDP (Free Democratic Party);
- 14 = Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, GRÜNE (Alliance '90/The Greens);
- 15 = Christlich-Soziale Union in Bayern, CSU (Christian Social Union of Bavaria);
- 16 = Die Linke, LINKE (The Left);
- 17 = Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie, VVD (People's Party for Freedom and Democracy);
- 18 = Partij van de Arbeid, PvdA (Labour Party);
- 19 = Christen-Democratisch Appèl, CDA (Christian Democratic Appeal);
- 20 = Socialistische Partij, SP (Socialist Party);
- 21 = Politieke Partij Democraten 66, D66 (Democrats 66);
- 22 = GroenLinks, GL (GreenLeft);
- 23 = ChristenUnie, CU (ChristianUnion);
- 24 = Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij, SGP (Reformed Political Party);
- 25 = Politieke Partij Radikalen, PPR (Political Party of Radicals);
- 26 = Pacifistisch Socialistische Partij, PSP (Pacifist Socialist Party);
- 27 = Communistische Partij van Nederland, CPN (Communist Party of the Netherlands);
- 28 = Katholieke Volkspartij, KVP (Catholic People's Party);
- 29 = Anti-Revolutionaire Partij, ARP (Anti Revolutionary Party);
- 30 = Christelijk-Historische Unie, CHU (Christian Historical Union);
- 31 = Arbeiderpartiet, A (Labour Party);
- 32 = Fremskrittspartiet, Frp (Progress Party);
- 33 = Høyre, H (Conservative Party);
- 34 = Sosialistisk Venstreparti, SV (Socialist Left Party);

35 = Senterpartiet, Sp (Centre Party);
 36 = Kristelig Folkeparti, KrF (Christian Democratic Party);
 37 = Venstre, V (Liberal Party);
 38 = Sveriges Socialdemokratiska arbetarparti, S (Swedish Social Democratic Party);
 39 = Vänsterpartiet, V (Left Party);
 40 = Centerpartiet, C (Centre Party);
 41 = Folkpartiet Liberalerna, FP (Liberal People's Party);
 42 = Moderata samlingspartiet, M (Moderate Party);
 43 = Kristdemokraterna, KD (Christian Democrats);
 44 = Miljöpartiet de Gröna, MP (Green Party);
 45 = Conservative and Unionist Party, Con;
 46 = Labour Party, Lab;
 47 = Liberal Democrats, LibDem

prtyfam party family

values: 1 = Christian; 2 = social; 3 = liberal; 4 = ecological ; 5 = communist; 6 = conservative; 7 = right; 8 = agrarian

($n = 1,970$; $N = 47$; $\bar{N} = 38$; $\bar{T} = 42$)

Source <http://www.parlgov.org/> (accessed: 13/02/2013)

foundyr year of party foundation

($n = 1,970$; $N = 47$; $\bar{N} = 38$; $\bar{T} = 42$)

Source <http://www.parties-and-elections.eu/> (accessed: 13/02/2013)

Whenever a party is a merger of other parties, the year the new party was founded was taken as the year of foundation. Parties are defined as new, if they are organisationally new (Bolleyer and Bytze, 2013). Exceptions to this are the Liberal Democrats (UK) in which case the year of foundation of the Liberal Party, 1859, was used because the Liberal Party formed first an alliance with the SDP before formally merging to the Liberal Democrats. Similarly, The Left (Germany) considers itself as a direct successor of the PDS (founded 1989), which was formally dissolved in 2007 to form The Left.

prtyage age of party

($n = 1,970$; $N = 47$; $\bar{N} = 38$; $\bar{T} = 42$)

Calculated from year of foundation, starting with 0 in year of foundation.

oldnew old or new party*values:* 0 = Old; 1 = New $(n = 1,970; N = 47; \bar{N} = 38; \bar{T} = 42)$

‘Old’ refers to parties being founded before 1945, whereas ‘New’ pertains to parties being founded after 1945. Information is based on the variable year of foundation.

gov_opp parliamentary status*values:* 0 = No; 1 = Yes $(n = 1,922; N = 47; \bar{N} = 37; \bar{T} = 41)$ *Source* <http://www.parties-and-elections.eu/> (accessed: 13/02/2013)**prtleadch change in party leadership***values:* 0 = No; 1 = Yes $(n = 1,922; N = 47; \bar{N} = 37; \bar{T} = 41)$ *Source* <http://www.wikipedia.org/> (accessed: 11/02/2013)

Following differing party and country cultures, the position of party leader differs. Denmark: partileder; Germany: Parteivorsitzender; The Netherlands: partijleider or partijvoorzitter; Norway: leder; Sweden: partiordförande, partiledare or språkrör; United Kingdom: party leader.

leadereffect party leadership effect*values:* 0 = No; 1 = Yes $(n = 1,922; N = 47; \bar{N} = 37; \bar{T} = 41)$

Party leadership effect is coded with “1” during the year of leadership change as well as the following two years.

**elecresult electoral result in general election, percentage of votes
(electoral cycle constant)** $(n = 1,896; N = 47; \bar{N} = 37; \bar{T} = 40)$ *Source* <http://www.parties-and-elections.eu/> (accessed: 11/02/2013)**parlseats number of parliamentary seats (electoral cycle constant)** $(n = 1,896; N = 47; \bar{N} = 37; \bar{T} = 40)$ *Source* <http://www.parties-and-elections.eu/> (accessed: 11/02/2013)

mmb **number of individual party members**

$(n = 1,653; N = 47; \bar{N} = 32; \bar{T} = 35)$

Source Denmark: van Biezen et al. (2012), Bille (1997), Kosiara-Pedersen (2013), Folketinget (www.ft.dk, accessed: 17/09/2012) ; Germany: annual reports, annual financial reports (<http://www.bundestag.de/bundestag/parteienfinanzierung/rechenschaftsberichte/index.html>, accessed 05/10/2012); The Netherlands: Documentation Centre Dutch Political Parties (www.rug.nl/dnpp/, accessed: 01/10/2012); Norway: Elin Haugsgjerd Allern (University of Oslo); Sweden: party contacts, Widfeldt (1997), Petersson (2005); United Kingdom: LSE library collection JN 1129, People's History Museum Archive, Wolfgang Rudig (University of Strathclyde).

me **membership ratio, members per electorate**

$(n = 1,653; N = 47; \bar{N} = 32; \bar{T} = 35)$

Calculated as follows: $mmb/size_elect$

staff **number of paid staff at central office**

$(n = 1,155; N = 46; \bar{N} = 22; \bar{T} = 25)$

Source Denmark: Bille (1992) (1997) , Kosiara-Pedersen (2013); Germany: Poguntke and Boll (1992), party contacts, minutes of annual conferences, annual reports, Archiv Grünes Gedächtnis; The Netherlands: Koole and Velde (1992), annual reports, party contacts; Norway: Svåsand (1992), annual reports; Sweden: Pierre and Widfeldt (1992), annual reports, party contacts; United Kingdom: Webb (1992) (1994), annual reports, statements of accounts (Oxford University, Bodleian Library, Conservative Party Archive: ref. Accn/2004/38, LSE library collection ref. JN 1129, People's History Museum Archive NEC reports).

basic2 **number of second smallest basic units**

$(n = 80; N = 5; \bar{N} = 2; \bar{T} = 16)$

Source Germany: Poguntke and Boll (1992), Franz and Gnad (2005), CDU-Vorstand (1986), SPD year books, minutes of annual conferences, annual reports; Norway: annual reports.

basic number of basic units

$(n = 859; N = 40; \bar{N} = 17; \bar{T} = 21)$

Source Denmark: Bille (1992, 1997), Kosiara-Pedersen (2013); Germany: Poguntke and Boll (1992), Franz and Gnad (2005), CDU-Vorstand (1986), SPD year books, minutes of annual conferences, annual reports; The Netherlands: Koole and Velde (1992), annual reports, party contacts; Norway: Svåsand (1992), annual reports; Sweden: Pierre and Widfeldt (1992), annual reports, party contacts; United Kingdom: annual reports, statements of accounts (Oxford University, Bodleian Library, Conservative Party Archive: ref. Accn/2004/38, LSE library collection ref. JN 1129, People's History Museum Archive NEC reports).

incomeco income of party in central office in national currency and then prices

$(n = 1,143; N = 40; \bar{N} = 22; \bar{T} = 28)$

Source Germany: statements of accounts; The Netherlands: Koole and Velde (1992), annual reports; Norway: Svåsand (1992; 4-year averages), Elin Allern, statements of accounts; Sweden: Pierre and Widfeldt (1992; 4-year averages), annual reports, statements of accounts; United Kingdom: Webb (1992).

incometot total party income in national currency and then prices

$(n = 757; N = 36; \bar{N} = 15; \bar{T} = 21)$

Source Denmark: Bille (1997), statements of accounts; Germany: statements of accounts; The Netherlands: Koole and Velde (1992), statements of accounts, PvdA archive; Norway: Svåsand (1992; 4-year averages), statements of accounts, annual reports; Sweden: Pierre and Widfeldt (1992; 4-year averages), annual reports, statements of accounts; United Kingdom: annual reports, statements of accounts (Oxford University, Bodleian Library, Conservative Party Archive: ref. Accn/2004/38, LSE library collection ref. JN 1129, People's History Museum Archive NEC reports).

expenseco **expense of party in central office in national currency and then prices**

(n = 1,019; N = 40; $\bar{N}$ = 20; $\bar{T}$ = 26)

Source Germany: statements of accounts; The Netherlands: Koole and Velde (1992), annual reports; Norway: Svåsand (1992; 4-year averages), Elin Allern, statements of accounts; Sweden: Pierre and Widfeldt (1992; 4-year averages), annual reports, statements of accounts; United Kingdom: Webb (1992).

expensetot **total party expense in national currency and then prices**

(n = 505; N = 23; $\bar{N}$ = 10; $\bar{T}$ = 22)

Source Denmark: Bille (1997), statements of accounts; Germany: statements of accounts; The Netherlands: Koole and Velde (1992), statements of accounts, PvdA archive; Norway: Svåsand (1992; 4-year averages), statements of accounts, annual reports; Sweden: Pierre and Widfeldt (1992; 4-year averages), annual reports, statements of accounts; United Kingdom: annual report, statements of accounts (Oxford University, Bodleian Library, Conservative Party Archive: ref. Accn/2004/38, LSE library collection ref. JN 1129, People's History Museum Archive NEC reports).

staffcostco **expenditure for staff or personnel at party in central office in national currency and then prices**

(n = 992; N = 36; $\bar{N}$ = 19; $\bar{T}$ = 28)

Source Germany: statements of accounts; The Netherlands: Koole and Velde (1992), annual reports; Norway: Svåsand (1992; 4-year averages); Sweden: Pierre and Widfeldt (1992; 4-year averages), annual reports, statements of accounts; United Kingdom: Webb (1992; 4-year averages).

staffcost **expenditure for staff or personnel at party level in national currency and then prices**

$(n = 426; N = 22; \bar{N} = 8; \bar{T} = 19)$

Source Denmark: Bille (1997), statements of accounts; Germany: statements of accounts; The Netherlands: Koole and Velde (1992), annual reports; Norway: Svåsand (1992; 4-year averages); Sweden: Pierre and Widfeldt (1992; 4-year averages), annual reports, statements of accounts; United Kingdom: Webb (1992; 4-year averages), annual reports, statements of accounts (Oxford University, Bodleian Library, Conservative Party Archive: ref. Accn/2004/38, LSE library collection ref. JN 1129, People's History Museum Archive NEC reports).

incomedue **party income from membership dues in national currency and then prices**

$(n = 1,391; N = 46; \bar{N} = 27; \bar{T} = 30)$

Source Denmark: Bille (1992, 1997), statements of accounts; Germany: statements of accounts; The Netherlands: Koole and Velde (1992), statements of accounts, PvdA archive; Norway: Svåsand (1992; 4-year averages), statements of accounts, annual reports; Sweden: Pierre and Widfeldt (1992; 4-year averages), statements of accounts, annual reports; United Kingdom: Webb (1992; 4-year averages), annual reports, statements of accounts (Oxford University, Bodleian Library, Conservative Party Archive: ref. Accn/2004/38, LSE library collection ref. JN 1129, People's History Museum Archive NEC reports).

subco **income from state subsidies to party in central office in national currency and then prices**

$(n = 1,255; N = 38; \bar{N} = 24; \bar{T} = 33)$

Source Denmark: Bille (1992, 1997), statements of accounts; Germany: statements of accounts; The Netherlands: Koole and Velde (1992), statements of accounts, PvdA archive; Norway: Svåsand (1992; 4-year averages), statements of accounts, annual reports; Sweden: Pierre and Widfeldt (1992; 4-year averages), statements of accounts, annual reports; United Kingdom: Webb (1992; 4-year averages), annual reports, statements of accounts (Oxford University, Bodleian Library, Conservative Party Archive: ref. Accn/2004/38, LSE library collection ref. JN 1129, People's History Museum Archive NEC reports).

sub **income from state subsidies to entire party**

(n = 743; N = 42; $\bar{N}$ = 14; $\bar{T}$ = 18)

Source Denmark: Bille (1992, 1997), statements of accounts; Germany: statements of accounts; The Netherlands: Koole and Velde (1992), statements of accounts, PvdA archive; Norway: Svåsand (1992; 4-year averages), statements of accounts, annual reports; Sweden: Pierre and Widfeldt (1992; 4-year averages), statements of accounts, annual reports; United Kingdom: Webb (1992; 4-year averages), annual reports, statements of accounts (Oxford University, Bodleian Library, Conservative Party Archive: ref. Accn/2004/38, LSE library collection ref. JN 1129, People's History Museum Archive NEC reports).

candselect **degrees of inclusiveness of party selectorate in legislative candidate selection**

values: 1 = oligarchical; 2 = representative; 3 = basis democracy

(n = 858; N = 24; $\bar{N}$ = 17; $\bar{T}$ = 36)

Source Kittilson and Scarrow (2003)

leadselect **degrees of inclusiveness of national leadership selectorate**

values: 1 = oligarchical; 2 = representative; 3 = basis democracy

(n = 1,093; N = 24; $\bar{N}$ = 21; $\bar{T}$ = 46)

Source Kittilson and Scarrow (2003)

2 – The value of political parties to representative democracy⁷

Political parties play a major role in the democratic process around the world. However, party politics research has been observing their declining importance in citizen minds across Western democracies, most noticeably in declining party membership rates and general disenchantment (for instance Dalton and Weldon, 2005; van Biezen et al., 2012). Before assessing party responses to these empirical observations, the research findings first prompt the question whether or not parties are even necessary or beneficial to a system of representative democracy. This would be a discussion normative democratic theory has to provide. But, in fact, Elmer Schattschneider (1942: 10-12) observes that parties are the ‘orphans of political philosophy’, which has only changed recently (see Bawn et al., 2012; Muirhead, 2006, 2010; Rosenblum, 2008; van Biezen and Saward, 2008; White and Ypi, 2010, 2011). Nevertheless, classic and contemporary theories of representative democracy specifically still minimally incorporate accounts of party benefit to representative democracy. This chapter attempts to reconcile party politics with democratic representation literature.

My argument evaluates party democracy’s value in comparison to its next best theoretical alternative – pluralist democracy with individual representatives – along two different paths. While both conclude that party democracy is preferable, they each utilise a different yardstick for judgement. The first argues that representative democracy comprises the principles of authorisation and accountability, forming representative democracy’s core features. Only if a political agent fulfils both aspects will the representative process serve its purpose and be satisfactory. Compared to parties, individual representatives in pluralist democracy, however, only fulfil these aspects concurrently under certain conditions. Political parties are by no means flawless; they do not succeed in all possible circumstances either. But they are able to succeed in more instances than individual representatives. In a second line of reasoning and echoing previous research, I extend my argument to concrete party activities as the yardstick of judgement because the functions parties perform are considered beneficial for representative democracy. Any better alternative to parties would need to fulfil these functions with at least the same result. I argue that individual representatives, as compared to parties, are not equally capable to fulfil these functions. Overall, I argue in this chapter that parties are not necessary for representative democracy, in the sense that plants need water to grow. However, it is implausible that representative democracy could be successful without parties. With this argument I attempt to reconcile normative theories of representative

⁷ Previous versions of this chapter were commented on by the editors of *Perspectives on Politics* and by reviewers for *Constellations*. I would also like to thank Peter Esaiasson and Göran Duus-Otterström for providing valuable comments on this chapter.

democracy and political parties. This also signifies the motivating ground for subsequent chapters.

Section one argues, firstly, that the prominent notion of party democracy in literature on party politics and democratic representation takes the existence of parties and their indispensability as the point of departure; and, secondly, that contemporary normative theory of representative democracy continues in the tradition of its classic counterparts, largely neglecting parties. Section two argues for a core meaning of representative democracy: authorisation and accountability through means of elections. The political parties' place and value to representative democracy can and should be measured against this core. The third section pictures a system of representative democracy without parties in a short thought-experiment. It sketches the representative process with party democracy's strongest competitor, democracy with individual representatives (pluralist democracy), and evaluates its implications. The fourth section shows that groups of representatives, in comparison, perform slightly better when measured against the core meaning of representative democracy. The second line of argument starts in section five, in which the core functions that parties fulfil are elaborated on, before showing that individual representatives cannot fulfil them satisfactorily. The final section summarises the arguments and reflects briefly on their implications.

2.1. Political parties and theories of representative democracy

In the past, political parties have rarely been objects of discussion, let alone of appreciation, amongst normative political theorists. This has only changed recently, at a time when parties and their performance as institutions of representation and governing are more questioned than in the past. Today, scholars argue that the 'golden age' (Janda and Colman, 1998: 611) of parties is over. Parties are said to be 'losing their capacity as agents of representation' (van Biezen, 2003: 182) and are characterised by a 'more exclusively procedural function' (Bartolini and Mair, 2001: 336). These latest implicit and explicit points of criticism about party performance are based on observed citizen disenchantment with political parties. Simultaneously, parties have found some appreciation by normative theorists only recently. Yet, those favourable arguments for parties do not sit in a framework of existing theories of democratic representation.

In the 18th century, Edmund Burke was the first to acknowledge not only parties' existence but essentially their value. According to Nancy Rosenblum (2008: 119f), Burke's appreciation is one based on regulated rivalry. In short, parties organise conflict, and thereby prevent public uproar, control each other, and legitimise government when in opposition (Rosenblum, 2008: 120f). Accordingly, they are beneficial to enable non-violent competition of ideas. After Burke, the slow emergence of parliamentarianism also brought political parties more and more to

the fore and the advent of mass suffrage transformed parties into mass organisations. Along with this came an increasing importance of parties. It urged scientists to consider political parties more closely (Thomassen, 1994), demonstrated through works by, for example, Michels (1911) or Weber (1922). What followed were mostly Joseph Schumpeter and Schattschneider (1943) reconciling of political theory and party politics. Most famously, Schattschneider (1942: 1) stated that ‘modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of political parties’. He was also a strong proponent of *party government*, a normative ideal about political parties and democracy that began to flourish after the American Political Science Association’s report on the responsible party model (RPM) had been published in 1950 (Mair, 2008).⁸ Party democracy (or party government) and the RPM both mark the same partisan variant of representative democracy that sets conditions for making electoral choices effective and holding parties accountable. As such, the models acknowledge the parties’ key position in the system of representative democracy, yet each of the models also takes the parties’ very existence for granted.⁹ Neither the idea of party government nor the RPM provides an argument for why modern representative democracies should have political parties in the first place.

In a recent monograph, Rosenblum (2008) revives the discussion of party benefit by providing three arguments derived from political thought. The first is the aforementioned argument of regulated rivalry defended by Burke. The second stems predominantly from Hegel and concerns the parties’ abilities and advantages in the organisation of government. Parties compete for taking over governing functions and when successful they are taking on an important responsibility. They become responsible for the state (Rosenblum, 2008: 126ff). That way, parties not only govern for their own sake but for the benefit of citizens and the state, too. Thirdly, Rosenblum (2008: 138ff) draws on David Hume and John Stuart Mill and argues that the parties’ benefit lies in their complementarity. Parties are partial and each party’s ‘sectional representation’ (Bobbio, 1987: 51) will entice a counterpart; multiple parties represent a larger part of the electorate. Their discourse and conflict produces political outcomes that are more in line with the public’s interests (Rosenblum, 2008: 144). Accordingly, parties are beneficial due to their contribution to the democratic process as well as to the outcome. With these arguments, Rosenblum shows that political thought in the past was not as unappreciative of political parties, as argued by some (see for instance van Biezen and Saward, 2008). But her arguments for party benefit are not part of theories of democratic representation. In fact, her point of departure is that ‘orthodox standards of representativeness or responsiveness or

⁸ The self-declared purpose of the report, issued by the American Political Science Association’s Committee on Political Parties, is to instigate public awareness of deficiencies within the American two-party system. It aims at more responsible parties at the polls.

⁹ In the early years of US history, James Madison (1788 [1987]) already took factions, i.e. political parties, for granted. However, he famously argued for democratic rule saving the state from the dangers brought about by parties.

accountability are not the only ones' (2008: 13). This means that her argument does not sit in a framework of representative democracy.

Other scholars have also recently discussed party benefit. Jonathan White and Lea Ypi (2010), for example, develop a justification of party benefit that is based on evaluating parties against other political agents. Their argument departs from different sources of commitment a political agent can provide. Each source of commitment contributes to civic engagement, and they jointly foster collective self-rule. Different political agents perform differently in fulfilling them. Briefly explained, the normative source of commitment refers to a political goal or aim, the motivational to an individual's sense of being collectively affected by the goal, and the executive to the individual's conviction about the feasibility of change. If a political agent provides all of these sources of commitment it fosters civic engagement and collective self-rule, maximally. White and Ypi's analytical strategy is to not only argue why political parties perform well but that they actually outperform their alternatives. The alternatives discussed – labelled social movements, corporate agents, and deliberative agents (White and Ypi, 2010: 817ff) – each lack one of the sources of commitment. They argue, however, that parties serve all three. White and Ypi offer an argument for party benefit in departing from sources of commitment but not from theories of representative democracy.

Theories of representation concern, amongst others, who is involved in the representative relationship. This is where an argument for parties and their benefit would find its place. However, despite recent revisions, theories of representation remain largely silent on the place of political parties. The classic conception of the representative relationship is summarised in the *standard account* (Castiglione and Warren, 2006; Urbinati and Warren, 2008). It conceives of representatives as agents and the represented as their principals, wherein individuals are represented on the basis of their interests and opinions. Even though the standard account has been challenged from multiple ends as of late (see Urbinati, 2011), parties and their role as appropriate agents of representation have not yet been discussed. In that, contemporary normative theorists of representation merely follow the tradition of their classic counterparts like Mill (1869) or Hanna Pitkin (1967) in remaining largely silent on whether or not representatives should be acting by themselves or in groups.¹⁰ Yet, representative democracy continues to be conceptualised empirically through political parties (Saward, 2008; Wessels, 2011). Theoretical and empirical models of representative democracy consider parties as the main actor establishing and maintaining the representative link.

While parties have become a reality to almost any representative democracy (for exceptions see Anckar and Anckar, 2000) and empirical theorists acknowledge the

¹⁰ Although Mill and Pitkin both speak of representatives and parties, they do not explicate the differences further, let alone state a preference for one or the other.

parties' importance, normative representative theory has largely ignored them in the past (see Bawn et al., 2012; Rosenblum, 2008; Urbinati and Warren, 2008; van Biezen and Saward, 2008; White and Ypi, 2010). Defined as 'voluntary organizations that channel citizens' demands into the public political realm in order to influence the political agenda, place candidates in elections and often (but not always) aim to obtain control of government' (Bonotti, 2011: 19), it is believed that parties emerge naturally out of a need to reduce transaction costs and to solve collective action problems (Müller, 2000). Although parties may occur in any case and it is thus not necessary to argue for their contribution, it does not mean parties are beyond normative scrutiny.

2.2. Core features of representative democracy

Pitkin (1967: 209) famously stated that political representation 'means acting in the interest of the represented, in a manner responsive to them'. She identified three core features of representation: authorisation, promotion of interests, and accountability (Pitkin, 1967; Urbinati and Warren, 2008). Authorisation refers to the selection of a representative to act on someone's behalf. Pitkin (1967: 40) stresses the importance of authorisation for representation when she argues: 'True representation exists only where certain select members have authority to act for the group, but other members do not.' The act of authorisation puts the representative and the represented in a relationship to one another. The representative acts in a way to promote the interests of the represented.¹¹ A large amount of research has been devoted to what precisely the promotion of interests is meant to include, summarised in the independence-mandate controversy (see Dovi, 2008). Accountability, finally, pertains to the idea that the representative is held to account by the represented and will eventually need to answer to the represented 'for what he does' (Pitkin, 1967: 55). These core features of Pitkin's account embody the formalistic view of political representation.

Because of its procedural nature, Pitkin's view presents a widely applicable framework of representation. It establishes the relationship between the represented and the representative but remains silent on the substance of representation (Castiglione and Warren, 2006; Urbinati, 2005). Questions surrounding what or who exactly should be represented are not covered by Pitkin's formalistic account. Likewise, it does not pose any requirements on how to achieve authorisation and accountability. The open nature of Pitkin's formalistic view has made it relevant to different forms of political representation. To illustrate, Michael Saward (2011) identifies a nested order of concepts in which representative democracy is a subtype of democratic representation, which in turn is a part of the

¹¹ Lately, the uni-directionality of the representative relationship has been called into question (see for instance Disch 2011, 2012).

broader notion of political representation. Representative democracy shares Pitkin's formalistic features of political representation but is more specific on its modes.

Democratic theorists hold that elections are the tools to make political representation democratic (Manin, 1997; Powell, 2000; Przeworski et al., 1999). Free and fair elections under universal suffrage are the means to authorise representatives and to hold them accountable (Gastil, 2000; Manin et al., 1999; Urbinati, 2005). Under these conditions elections enable the entire electorate to be represented in government action without physically being present. While most recent research on representation is concerned with theorising and studying the representative relationship between elections (see Esaiasson and Narud, 2013), authorisation and accountability through elections remain the pillars of representative democracy. Therefore, representative democracy's key features can be summarised as authorisation and accountability through means of regular elections.¹²

This is the core of representative democracy and any normative argument in favour of political parties, needs to start here.¹³ Parties can possibly fulfil further requirements set by the RPM or by party democracy, if and only if, they comply with this core meaning of representative democracy. However, as central as parties are in the democratic process they are said to be contemporarily in decline or even redundant (see Daalder, 2002). Kaare Strøm (2000: 183) maintains that 'political parties are as attractive as the alternatives permit'. A normative justification for the parties' role thus needs to show that their centrality is justifiable against party democracy's best alternative. This requires arguing that parties are better at fulfilling the core meaning of representative democracy than their strongest competitor.

2.3. Representative democracy without political parties

Provided that representative democracy as the overarching form of governing modern democracies prevails, not all possible alternatives to party democracy are equally likely to occur. Katz (1987) suggests, generally, three likely alternatives to party democracy. Firstly, referendum democracy in which citizens vote directly on policy proposals; secondly, a corporatist system characterised by direct negotiations between affected groups, policy-makers, and government; and thirdly, pluralist democracy in which mostly individuals and not groups of representatives stand for

¹² Although Saward (2006: 298) argues for a shift away from conceiving of representation as a 'factual product of elections' it is the broader concept of political representation and not representative democracy he is concerned with in his argument about *The Representative Claim*.

¹³ These core features focus on the idea of representation from below and emphasise the citizens' role in the representative process. They thus neglect representatives' agenda-setting as well as interest articulation abilities and functions.

election and are thus in a direct relationship with the represented (see also Strøm, 2000).¹⁴ Strøm (2000) argues that not all of these alternatives need to be seen in direct competition to party democracy because they pose alternatives at different levels in the hierarchy of democratic forms of government, as Figure 2.1 illustrates. The further away the alternatives are from the current model of party democracy the less likely they become, simply because each further step requires more structural and procedural changes and shifts with a larger magnitude (Strøm, 2000: 184). This does not mean that they will never occur; radical structural reforms in the political system around the world have been common in the 20th century. Nonetheless, the strongest competitor to party democracy is arguably a governing model that is closely related. Referendum democracy, for example, can be discarded, as it poses an alternative to representative democracy altogether. It does not mark a plausible alternative to organise the democratic state with today's national population sizes. As noted earlier, around the world, representative democracy is the prevailing form of democracy. Corporatist democracy, in turn, is not based on elections as means of selection, which renders it a less likely alternative that modern democracy is moving towards.¹⁵ Democracy without elections seems inconceivable today (Powell, 2000). Strøm (2000: 203) concludes that pluralist democracy poses 'the most likely alternative to party government'. He describes pluralist democracy as a non-partisan system based on representation and elections, in which parties still occur but are of less importance and in which individual representatives are more independent of their political groups. With these features the concept of pluralist democracy is similar to Bernard Manin's (1997) audience democracy.

¹⁴ Some may want to add deliberative democracy as a more recent contestant of party democracy. However, deliberative democracy is not institutionally distinct. Rather, it is a feature that enhances democratic legitimacy in any institutional model, other things being equal. This implies that it is desirable to have deliberation before making a decision, and reason-giving is important to achieve accountability, but deliberative democracy is not on Katz's or Strøm's level of concreteness. In addition, White and Ypi (2010: 819ff) show that deliberative agents lack motivational skills, in comparison to political parties.

¹⁵ Note that Strøm also acknowledges the previous prevalence and importance of corporatist democracy in real-world democracies. He argues that corporatist ideas, at their peak of popularity, were also considered a potential replacement to party democracy but corporatism with elections 'has waned in most OECD countries since the 1970s' (Strøm, 2000: 189). Therefore, it is not a strong competitor to party democracy today.

Figure 2.1. Party democracy and its alternatives (Strøm, 2000: 184)

If pluralist democracy is the strongest competitor of and the most likely alternative to party democracy, it needs to be shown whether or not and the extent to which pluralist democracy can fulfil representative democracy's core meaning better than party democracy. In the absence of a real-world example of pluralist democracy to compare with, the imaginative *Individualcountry* will act as point of comparison. The following short thought-experiment sketches the electoral process in *Individualcountry* and will set the stage for such an assessment. It is designed to discover what the implications and limitations of pluralist democracy are in today's politics. For that, I will take the idea of pluralist democracy to its extreme: instead of supplementing parties with more autonomous candidates, as described by Strøm, the thought experiment substitutes parties with individual candidates altogether. Or to be more precise, the thought experiment deals with the question: *ceteris paribus*, what happens if the citizenry is presented with individual representatives as opposed to political parties in a parliamentary setting, selected by means of general elections?¹⁶

2.3.1. Thought experiment: representative democracy with individual representatives

The polity *Individualcountry* is of average size, i.e. it has an average sized electorate of 15.5 million people.¹⁷ It has a parliamentary system¹⁸ that features universal suffrage for general, parliamentary elections held every four years, in which 170

¹⁶ The thought experiment does not handle any transitory situations with a mix of parties and individual representatives. It does not consider how a situation of pluralist democracy could arise either.

¹⁷ According to Eurostat of the European Commission (<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu>; accessed: 11/10/2013), the European Union with its 28 member states has approximately 500 million inhabitants. This means an average of about 18.5 million per country. In 2008, 84 per cent of EU citizens were aged 15 and above. This corresponds roughly to the voting age required for local elections in most countries. Accordingly, approximately 15.5 million are at of voting age in each country.

¹⁸ Out of the 28 European Union member states, only four have a presidential or semi-presidential system (Cyprus, France, Portugal, Romania). All other member states follow a parliamentary system.

parliamentary seats¹⁹ are allocated. *Individualcountry* is divided into 10 constituencies²⁰ in which individual candidates compete over votes for the 17 seats available per constituency²¹. On average, 124 candidates²² stand for election in each of the 10 constituencies, each comprising an electorate of 1.55 million²³. The translation of votes into seats follows rules of proportional representation with no threshold in multimember districts. Candidates need to finance their campaign themselves, but will earn a reasonable salary once they win a parliamentary seat. Being a representative is a full-time job. The system offers enough incentives for representatives to aspire for re-election. Citizens in *Individualcountry* care about issues and have independent, exogenous preferences which they express in a single vote on election day. It is further assumed that issue-preferences form the basis of and predate ideology-preferences amongst citizens.²⁴

Individualcountry's citizens authorise members of parliament (MPs) by voting for one of the 124 candidates in a constituency. Although reading through the list of names takes time, *Individualcountry* offers websites on which candidates present themselves prior to election. They provide voters with a selection aid that reduces the number of possible candidates according to the user's preferences. This enables voters to find their ideal candidate. It does not, however, simplify grasping what is actually on offer, if voters do not know what or who they want. What technology cannot answer is how candidates run a successful election campaign as individuals. If a candidate wants to secure a seat in parliament, she needs to get into the top 17 ranked candidates in a constituency on election day. Assuming full voter turnout and a strict stand on the theory of representative-represented policy congruence, a candidate needs to convince more than 91,176 voters²⁵ of his or her abilities. Even though there is a natural overlap between the policy preferences of candidates and

¹⁹ This number is based on ratios adapted from the Netherlands. The Netherlands has a population of 16.5 million people and a parliament with 150 seats (Andeweg and Irwin, 2009). Based on this ratio *Individualcountry* with its slightly bigger citizenry has 170 seats in parliament. It should be noted, however, that the Netherlands has a disproportionately small parliament given its size of the electorate.

²⁰ Denmark's parliament has a roughly corresponding number of seats to *Individualcountry* of 175. Of those 135 are allocated amongst the ten constituencies; the remainder of 40 is allocated amongst the three electoral provinces (Eklit et al., 2011). For simplicity reasons I assume here that all 170 seats in *Individualcountry* are allocated by the ten constituencies.

²¹ Contrary to Denmark and for simplicity reasons, the number of seats per constituency is the same across the country, namely 17.

²² In the 2009 German parliamentary elections, a total of 2,195 candidates competed for a single direct seat available in each of the 299 constituencies (www.bundestagwahl-2009.de; accessed 25/07/2013). This means that on average 7.3 candidates stood for election per seat. Adopting this ratio for *Individualcountry* means that in each constituency roughly 124 candidates stand for election.

²³ For simplicity reasons I assume that constituency borders are drawn in a manner so as to encompass an equal amount of citizens.

²⁴ This assumption is largely consistent with empirical research on the development of political ideologies (see for instance Knight, 2006 or Merelman, 1969). In contrast, in Manin's audience democracy representatives are elected based on their image.

²⁵ This figure is based on the division of average size of electorate per constituency, 1.55 million, and the number of seats per constituency, 17.

voters (Thomassen and Schmitt, 1997), it is possibly too narrow to rely purely on it as a way for any candidate to get into the top 17 ranked candidates per constituency. Relying purely on the natural overlap may become an even riskier strategy, if competitors actively promote policy alternatives. Hence, in order to be on the winning side the candidate gauges first what voters' policy preferences are before offering a programme. In *Individualcountry*, a serious candidate tries to appeal to a winning majority of voter preferences. That means 91,176 policy preference sets.²⁶ Before possibly adapting to them a candidate needs to know what they actually are. Watching the media, conducting surveys, and talking to citizens are all necessary tools, yet even with all information technology readily available a candidate can quite possibly not know what 91,176 citizens demand (see Urbinati, 2006). The exercise of gauging voters' wishes and opinions is difficult, let alone feasible in a timely and financially reasonable manner.²⁷ Alternatively, voters could decide to collaborate and form groups that support a specific candidate. But the problem of information and coordination would also be difficult to solve for citizens in a sensible time frame. Media plays a crucial role in this process as they are bundling and communicating offers and demands. Yet, doing that on each of the 124 candidates per constituency seems unattainable.

For the sake of this thought experiment, I assume that a candidate does know, after all, what citizens want (or just guesses) and is authorised by means of elections to act on the citizens' behalf to promote their interests.²⁸ Here a further problem arises: MPs elected on the basis of their internet presentation and policy orientation need to form a government.²⁹ MPs need to find common ground in terms of policy sets once they are elected into parliament. On the bases of these denominators they select representatives from their midst. It could be considered highly time-consuming and thus inefficient to find common ground with 169 other MPs, but consider that the internet website presenting all candidates who stood for election can shorten the

²⁶ All possible preference sets probably do not amount to 91,176. However, even if the variety of preference sets is considerably smaller the candidate still has to find out what those 91,176 citizens want.

²⁷ Note that this outcome would not be altered under assumptions of a first-past-the-post system. For then, *Individualcountry* has 170 constituencies with each comprising 91,176 eligible voters. The problem to gauge what all those voters want remains. What does change is that each constituency's voters have an easier time making a choice between candidates. This is because in this scenario only seven candidates would run for election per constituency. This is a manageable amount of policy proposals to distinguish.

²⁸ I assume that candidates are only elected on the basis of a high congruence in preference sets even though in Manin's (1997) audience democracy representatives are elected on the basis of their image.

²⁹ Some might object that forming a government is not necessary. In *Individualcountry*, governments may not exist. However, there are two ways to respond to this objection. Firstly, according to the ceteris paribus assumption, the thought experiment follows current practice and keeps everything equal except for parties as representatives. Governments are formed across the world, hence also in *Individualcountry*. Secondly, it is also reasonable to assume that *Individualcountry* would have a government, despite its differences to real-world countries. After all, politics in ancient Athens was organised by a government.

process through the information provided on policy goals. The government is composed of MPs who stand for the majority of policy goals and who are elected by their peers.

2.3.2. Individuals as representatives: an assessment against representation's core features

The point of this short thought-experiment is that, in principle, it is possible to replace party democracy with pluralist democracy in contemporary democracies. In such a case, individual representatives would be like free-lancers or political entrepreneurs, offering their individual services to consumers. The benefits this would yield are easily imaginable. No parties would also mean absence of party discipline, which in turn implies that representatives only need to give accounts for their actions to voters, not to parties. This might increase credibility of and trust in representatives. Equally, party patronage and its negative effects would not exist. However, assessing pluralist democracy against representative democracy's core features of authorisation and accountability shows that pluralist democracy poses a slightly less preferred alternative to party democracy.

First, consider the case of authorisation. *Individualcountry* demonstrates that the act of authorisation could be accomplished by using modern technology, albeit obstacles would need to be surmounted. A more severe problem arises for the principle of authorisation in the second step when government is formed. MPs have to find common ground to govern the country and elect governing MPs from their midst. For that, it is necessary to find common denominators in MPs' preference sets authorised by each MP's voters. Two extreme scenarios are possible: first, most MPs are authorised with a general preference set; or second, most MPs are authorised with a specific preference set. The first scenario of a general preference set means that citizens authorise representatives with a goal they want to have implemented. This could, for instance, be a preference for expanding the welfare state. Such a general preference is defined by the goal but the means to accomplish this are unspecified. Contrary to that, the specific preference set includes more details about how to complete that goal. For example, within the realm of expanding the welfare state, a specific preference set could mean increasing three specific parameters of the welfare state such as unemployment benefits, medical coverage, and pensions. Here, the means are defined next to the goal. The implication of this distinction is that in the first scenario common ground amongst MPs is more easily found because MPs only need to (dis)agree on a single issue, i.e. to expand, yes or no. A government is quickly put into office based on the simplicity of citizen goals and on the leeway MPs have regarding how this is achieved. It is their interpretation and bargaining that determines the shape of the final outcome. It might even be that MPs' underlying ideological preferences help in accomplishing this. In the second

scenario, every MP has a different, specific policy set that he or she is authorised with. The three parameters above (unemployment benefits, medical coverage, pensions) with only two characteristics each (higher or lower), still produce 2^3 different possible preference combinations. If the goal of expanding the welfare state is attainable by increasing only any two parameters instead of all three, the number of possible preference sets the representative can be authorised with is still four. Note that in any country, the number is even higher with more parameters and more characteristics per parameter. The process of finding common ground with more options is more problematic and thus takes longer.

The difference between the two scenarios lies not only in the time it takes to elect a government but also in the extent to which representative democracy's core features are fulfilled. Overall, under the conditions of *Individualcountry*, a general preference set is preferable. If an MP is authorised with a general preference set, he or she achieves an agreement not only quickly but also in accordance with the principle of authorisation, acting on behalf of the represented in regards to what was authorised. On the other hand, in the case of a specific preference set, the bargaining process not only takes longer but also potentially requires, at some point, giving in and neglecting some specific issues to the benefit of others. Consequently, large grey areas of whether or not the representative is acting in accordance with what has been authorised may arise (see Pennock, 1968), which tap right into the middle of the aforementioned independence-mandate controversy (Pitkin, 1967).

More precisely, independence theory holds that representatives are elected for their good judgement and not for their specific views. Accordingly, they are encouraged to act on their convictions and have the promotion of citizens' interests as their duty. Mandate theory argues that representatives are elected on the basis of their campaigning proposals. Every action counter the campaigning pledge makes the representative break the authorised ties with the represented.³⁰ In essence, the quality of fulfilling the core features of representative democracy can vary according to how specific the preference set the representative is authorised with, and whether or not the representative is acting according to mandate or independence theory. A 2x2 matrix is depicted in Figure 2.2 to illustrate the four possible combinations. Citizens are faced with the decision to either authorise their representative with a specific or a general preference set (columns).³¹ Representatives, in turn, can be understood as having the duty to enact what they have been authorised with, as well as giving account of what they have done, according to Pitkin. To fulfil both, they have a choice between either the mandate or the independence model, as the two extremes (rows). The four possible outcomes

³⁰ The trustee and delegate model are varieties of the two types (Mainsbridge, 2011; Rehfeld, 2011; Weinstein, 1970).

³¹ See also Powell (2000: 8f) for an elaboration which circumstances make voters more likely to opt for one and not the other.

these combinations generate pertain to different levels in the quality of fulfilling representative democracy's core meaning.

Figure 2.2. Citizens' and representatives' potential interaction.

		Citizens	
		Specific	General
Representatives	Mandate	I	II
	Independence	III	IV

As argued above, the specific preference set is only problematic for representatives, if they follow the mandate model (cell I). This is because the process of bargaining and forming a government from the group of representatives can easily make representatives betray their voters in regards to the policy preferences they have been authorised with. Conversely, if representatives act according to the independence model no problem arises, as long as they account for if and why they deviated from the specific authorised preference set (cell III). As a way of exemplifying, under conditions of cell III a representative might be authorised with expanding the earlier mentioned welfare state parameters of unemployment benefits, medical coverage, and pensions. If acting in accordance with the independence model, representatives may opt for only fulfilling two out of those three preferences, simply because they have information about the state of medical services that constituents do not have. If, and only if, the representatives provide an account of and explanations for their deviations, can these representatives still be considered as fulfilling representative democracy's core meaning.

As for the case of the general preference set, again only the mandate model poses problems. Representatives authorised with a general preference set but following a mandate model (cell II) need to be aware of out how far they can take the bargaining process for forming a government before going beyond their promises to voters. For example, authorised with a general preference set of expanding the welfare state, representatives need to accomplish that goal in the bargaining process, if they are acting according to the mandate model. In this instance, a single specific parameter running counter to that goal can already be considered as a betrayal to the voters. In contrast, faced with the independence model and a general preference set, the representative has the most independent position of all (cell IV). Here again, representative democracy's core meaning can be fulfilled.

These four outcomes for the case of pluralist democracy suggest that representative democracy's core meaning is accomplished more easily, whenever the representative chooses the independence and not the mandate model. Under conditions of a mandate model, the match between what the representative is authorised with and what he or she does is problematic and not easily resolved, especially under conditions of cell I. Citizens, on the other side, can foster the fulfilment of the core meaning by authorising the representative with a general preference set. However, since most of the 124 candidates in a constituency of *Individualcountry* also aim at being authorised with a general preference set, differentiation amongst their proposals would naturally occur to increase the chances of being elected.³² Hence, being authorised with a preference set that is general enough to not run into troubles of accountability (cells I and III) is difficult to achieve for a representative. It is especially the combination of a specific preference set and the mandate model that creates problems for representative democracy's core meaning in a model of pluralist democracy.

To summarise, individual representatives are theoretically possible and under certain conditions they can also simultaneously fulfil representative democracy's core meaning of authorisation and accountability. Pluralist democracy is possible and might even produce desirable outcomes. But as the next section argues, if individual representatives group together based on interests before election day, instead of after, different and, above all, preferable outcomes occur.

2.4. Groups of representatives (or party democracy) in representative democracy

There are several benefits in grouping representatives and what they aim at representing prior to election day: for one, the bargaining process is largely transferred to the period before election day, which expedites the act of forming government. In party democracy, finding a consensus amongst several parties is also a time-consuming exercise, and taken to the extreme it can take years as in the case of Belgium 2007-2011. However, in general, governments are formed within a couple of weeks after election day.³³ Related to that is a second benefit: voters already know about most actions that the group aims at pursuing once in government. Pre-election grouping also implies group-campaigning to some extent. For the post-election period this means more predictable government action. In support of this point, Powell (2000: 52f) points at a higher level of clarity of responsibility in 'multiparty preelection majority governments' as opposed to 'majority governments negotiated after the election'. Also, individual proposals of representatives are, if

³² Note that this is similar to what Manin (1997: 224) describes for the case of audience democracy: 'Each candidate proposes the issue or term which he thinks will divide the electorate in the most effective and beneficial manner.' See also Powell (2000).

³³ Note that this benefit only holds in systems where coalition formation is necessary. In presidential systems or majoritarian systems this is less likely to be a benefit.

anything, only to a limited extent contradicting one another since all individual representatives of a group started the bargaining process prior to election day to form a joint set. Hence, if elected, the group is authorised by its voters in regards to this set of proposals. Additionally, grouping reduces the alternatives to choose from and thus the range of choices decreases. Speaking in economic terms, pre-election grouping reduces voters' information costs (Jones and Hudson, 1998). The potentially long-lasting process of finding the ideal candidate, that proved to be an obstacle in *Individualcountry*, is simplified with groups of representatives and a reduced set of options. On what basis the group is formed or what common denominator its members have is an entirely different question. This could be ideology, region, or religion. Yet this does not alter the fact that grouping prior to election day yields benefits. Groups of representatives offer more efficient means to arrive at collective decisions. Considering the benefits, it appears that authorisation does not pose a problem to groups of representatives. Rather, in comparison to individuals, a group of representatives provides characteristics that make the process of authorisation easier, quicker, and more transparent for voters.

However, representative democracy's core meaning requires that both principles, authorisation and accountability, are concurrently accomplished. Consider again Figure 2.2 depicting the two different choices that voters and groups of representatives face. For individual representatives, the case of a specific preference set combined with a mandate model showed to be particularly difficult. Therefore, the changes brought about under conditions of party democracy will centre on these conditions.

A group facing the combination represented in cell I can accomplish the core of representative democracy more easily, because the group does not run into the same amount of troubles regarding trading and bargaining after election day. It bargains before even standing for election and thus already presents voters with a coherent proposal prior to election. Some might object that this is only partially true, because it only holds for one-party governments. Indeed, most coalitions require bargaining and trading of proposals after election day.³⁴ But even in the case of coalition governments the outcome of cell I is preferable to the outcome of the same cell under conditions of pluralist democracy. The reason for this is the number of proposals on which compromise is to be made is considerably smaller than under conditions of 170 individual representatives. Essentially, only a handful of groups bargain as opposed to 170 individual MPs in the case of *Individualcountry*. It not only yields benefits of transparency and simplicity but also in terms of representation. In the case of groups, citizens who voted for one of the winning groups can be relatively certain that some of the group's proposals will definitely be enacted. In

³⁴ As an exception, in Sweden, for example, several parties already propose a joint programme before Election Day, making the coalition partners and proposals clear from the outset. This is also why Sweden's political system is being referred to as bloc-politics.

contrast, in *Individualcountry* the number of proposals to compromise on is considerably larger. This makes it uncertain how many of the individual representatives' proposals will be enacted. Assuming that voters want to maximise their number of preferences being represented by government, they should support groups of representatives, instead of individual representatives.

To summarise, under conditions of party democracy, representative democracy's core features can be accomplished more easily in cell I, namely for cases of one-party government and to a lesser degree for cases of multi-party government. In comparison, in pluralist democracy it is hardly possible to achieve a comparable outcome in cell I because representatives would easily betray their voters when bargaining their interests in post-election parliament. Therefore, in a system of groups of representatives acting on a specific preference set and according to the mandate model, it is still difficult to put authorisation and accountability into equilibrium but slightly easier than under the same conditions with individual representatives. Just like in pluralist democracy, the remaining cells do not pose serious problems in accomplishing simultaneous fulfilment of representative democracy's core features.

While groups of representatives perform better in accomplishing the core, they are by no means perfect. Patronage and group discipline have already been mentioned above as caveats of party democracy. Additionally, assigning accountability to several representatives of a group can be difficult for voters. For, depending on the electoral law or format of the ballot sheet, elections hold predominantly individuals, groups, or a mix of both accountable. But even if the group is stressed by an electoral law through a party vote, voters can hold representatives accountable for their choice to join one group and not the other, apart from all actions with regard to what representatives are supposed to represent.

Overall, groups of representatives having decided on a joint policy proposal prior to election day perform slightly better at putting authorisation and accountability into equilibrium and thus fulfilling the core meaning of representative democracy, compared to party democracy's strongest competitor, pluralist democracy.³⁵ This means that pre-election bargaining makes the key difference. Having a system of individual representatives who bargain and form groups prior to elections resembles party democracy in many important aspects. Some might object that party democracy restricts the scope of policies unnecessarily in comparison to pluralist democracy. This appears as a weakness of party democracy, or so it seems. In both settings, government formation might require the same amount of bargaining, so

³⁵ This outcome would not be the same, of course, had the yardstick of simultaneous fulfilment of authorisation and accountability been different. One of the arguments against the current standard would be that in previous times the two principles were kept in separate institutions: governments were not elected and representatives were not governing. However, as the discussion above showed in section 2, representative democracy's core does still incorporate both.

that the outcome in terms of policy-diversity would be the same. Whether a reduction in policy alternatives happens before or after the election is extraneous for the number of alternatives. In either case a limitation is inevitable. But in a post-election setting the outcome is less predictable for the voter than in a party-based, pre-election bargaining system. This means that under conditions of party democracy the scope of policy alternatives is comparable to that in pluralist democracy but precise policy outcomes are more predictable and more transparent.³⁶ The implications of this are that predictability and transparency of outcomes is maximised in a two-party system and decreases as the possibility of post-election bargaining increases due to coalition formation.

2.5. The fulfilment of valuable functions in pluralist democracy

Instead of testing both parties and individual representatives against a common standard this section puts individual representatives up for evaluation against the parties' standard alone. The rationale is that individual representatives need to at least fulfil the same functions and activities that parties fulfil in order to be a viable competitor. This is an important point because if the functions parties fulfil are not adequately served, representative democracy is put at risk, since they are considered necessary for its effectiveness and legitimacy (Mair, 2003). And even though parties are said to have changed in their performance of functions, as Mair (2003: 18; emphasis in original) argues, the functions themselves still play a major role on the '*democracy* side of representative democracy'.

Richard Gunther and Larry Diamond (2001: 7) argue for 'a common denominator' that forms the core of the functions that parties fulfil in relation to civil society and the state. They comprise the following seven: candidate nomination, electoral mobilization, issue structuring, societal representation, interest aggregation, forming and sustaining government, and social integration. For a detailed discussion of these functions the reader may consult the original source; here it suffices to quickly elaborate on those that are not self-explanatory, such as electoral mobilisation, issue structuring, and interest aggregation.

Electoral mobilisation can either refer to the party's efforts of encouraging the electorate to participate in politics in general or a mobilisation of citizens for elections only. While the first would imply a political participation in general through, for instance, party membership and campaigning, the latter refers only to the act of voting (Gunther and Diamond, 2001). Here, electoral mobilisation is understood as comprising both. Secondly, *issue structuring* refers to the parties' ability to 'shape the agenda and substance of current affairs' (Webb, 2002b: 13).

³⁶ A similar yet more narrow view is also defended by Katz (1987: 4) and Allern and Pedersen (2007: 72). They argue that parties 'make the accountability of control collective'.

Parties in their daily work – be it through public debate, speeches, or written documents – structure choices and alternatives along different issue dimensions (Gunther and Diamond, 2001). With that parties not only organise public debates but also articulate new issues and thus act as agenda-setters. The sum of these issues represents long-standing principles of how a state should be governed (Morse, 1896 [2002]). It is especially in the function of issue structuring where mass media plays a crucial role. Increasingly, the media poses a competitor to parties and challenges them in their performance (Webb, 2002a). Just like parties, the media structures the debate, articulates new issues as well as aggregates existing demands. Related to issue structuring, the final function of parties is *interest aggregation*. It can be interpreted as comprising two stages: firstly, the process of gauging what citizens want, and secondly, the process of transforming those interests into policy proposals (King, 1969). Both stages are necessary for parties to complete the task or function of interest aggregation.

An assessment of individual representatives against their potential performance in the functions parties fulfil shows that some of them are redundant while others pose serious challenges to pluralist democracy. First consider, for instance, that candidate nomination as a function strongly associated with party activity becomes redundant in a system with individual representatives because candidates put themselves up on the ballot sheet. As for the function of forming and sustaining government, the preceding sections already argued that individual representatives face challenges in fulfilling this role. However, if it was only about forming and sustaining a government as such, without any further conditions, the thought experiment did indeed reveal the feasibility.

When it comes to the more societal-based functions of electoral mobilisation, societal representation, and social integration, they do not seem to pose a problem for individual representatives, either. Individual representatives are as capable as political parties to mobilise the electorate, just because of the sheer number of candidates. Similarly, individual candidates are as likely to represent society as political parties. Potentially, they would even perform better in this function than political parties because with many candidates running for election (*Individualcountry*: 1,240) the diversity of society might be better represented at the ballot booth, compared to party democracy.³⁷ Social integration refers to parties' potential to include citizens into politics and to enable them to 'participate effectively in the political process' (Gunther and Diamond, 2001: 8). How exactly political parties foster social integration of citizens beyond what they do in the function of electoral mobilisation is difficult to say. Therefore, it is assumed here that

³⁷ Note that this does not necessarily imply that people vote according to social characteristics. If 124 candidates stand for election per constituency, the number and diversity of issues they represent is quite possibly larger than with only 2 to 10 parties running for election.

these activities at least do not present more difficulties in their fulfilment to individual representatives than political parties.

Equally, individuals are well capable of fulfilling the functions of interest aggregation. Defined above as the gathering, bundling, and transformation of interests from the bottom to the top, parties are already increasingly contested in this function by interest groups and non-governmental organisations (Webb, 2002a). In addition, Webb (2002a: 447) argues that individual representatives are more prone to challenge parties in this function when operating in presidential- and candidate-based political systems. However, in presidential- and candidate-based political systems the benefits that parties offer in terms of predictability of outcomes and transparency would only be rising because there would be no post-election bargaining at all. Individual candidates might face difficulties gauging what people want, as illustrated in the case of *Individualcountry*, but they are certainly able to do that to the same extent as political parties. The same can be said for the transformation of interests into policy proposals. There is little to suggest that MPs cannot propose policy proposals by themselves and without any party support.

Lastly, consider the function of issue structuring. Political parties are said to structure alternatives alongside issue-dimensions (Bonotti, 2011). Parties communicate their views and thereby also shape voters' opinions. Beyond the sum of these alternatives lie long-lasting visions of how a country should be governed. While individual representatives can also structure alternatives alongside dimensions and shape preferences by communicating their own views, presenting long-lasting alternatives is more problematic. The earlier advantage of not being bounded by party discipline reverses into a severe disadvantage. Individual candidates have a hard time presenting a vision for how the country should be ruled and pursuing this vision accordingly. Not only because they are individuals but more so because they cannot know beforehand whether or not they are ever going to have another chance to be an MP. Therefore, it is rational for them to only pursue small, easily recognisable projects so as to ensure visibility to those who voted for them. However, a vision of a country entails more than just the sum of smaller individual projects. Nadia Urbinati (2011: 45) stresses this point by arguing that parties and partisanship need to be seen in a relationship to 'an imagined general will'. Otherwise, she warns, particular interests would only compete, dividing the public. The pursuit of this imagined general will, however, poses serious problems to the individual representative. With individual representatives, democracies would be less likely to be guided by long-term views or visions of what the country should look like in the future. According to Urbinati (2011: 44; emphases in original), 'the currency of representation is *ideological* in that it is an *interpretative* or *artificially created similarity* between the representative and her electors'. This emphasises the importance of ideology and a long-term vision for representative democracy. It is in this where political parties in representative democracies contribute most in

comparison to individual representatives. Parties not only aggregate citizen demands but they offer and thus also articulate something beyond individual demands. Ideology as a (more or less) coherent plan or vision of how to govern the country saves politics and policies from becoming a dispersed and possibly even contradicting set of actions. As important as the media is in the activity of issue structuring, it does not provide an ideology or long-term vision that could supplement individual representatives and their work. The pursuit of a political ideology and a long-term plan about the country's future is what distinguishes party democracy from pluralist democracy. And accordingly, it is in the function of issue structuring where pluralist democracy cannot live up to the standards set by parties, although they might surpass them in other instances.

2.6. Summary and conclusion

This chapter set out to explore parties' value in a system of representative democracy. It showed that while party democracy is by no means flawless, it is nonetheless the better alternative to its strongest competitor of pluralist democracy with individual representatives. It outperforms pluralist democracy in terms of predictability of policy outcomes. Against the core meaning of representative democracy, pluralist democracy cannot easily fulfil authorisation and accountability simultaneously under certain conditions. In some instances party democracy performs slightly better. Especially, under circumstances of a mandate model and a specific preference set, with which the representative is authorised, political parties perform slightly better than individual representatives. When assessed against the party standard, individual representatives can probably perform on par with political parties, except for in the function of issue structuring. I argued that individual representatives are perfectly capable of taking over parties' work in structuring issues alongside policy dimensions. But what they lack is the provision of a long-term vision or an ideology of how a country should be run, which is important for policy-coherence in the long run.

With these findings I offer an attempt to reconcile representative democracy and party politics literature. It contributes to the recently emerged normative endeavours of exploring the value of political parties to modern democracies. The implication the discussion yields is that political parties are not necessary for representative democracy to work in the sense that plants need water to grow. Political parties are possibly similar to rich soil; the plant may live without it but it cannot thrive. In that sense it is implausible that representative democracy could be successful without parties. Even during times when a general disenchantment with parties can be observed amongst citizens and scholars call for party decline, it appears that parties are worth having as institutions for the well-functioning of representative democracy. The qualities parties provide make them preferable over

their strongest competitor. With this finding in mind, the next chapter assesses the concept of party decline and its empirical evidence.

3 – Party decline: concept and evidence³⁸

In spite of recurring popular criticism of political parties as self-interested bureaucratic powerhouses, survey evidence also suggests that parties are still considered necessary for the well-functioning of democracy (Linz, 2002). More so, reality has proven that except for a few pacific island states (see Anckar and Anckar, 2000) political parties across the world structure the electoral process in liberal democracies (Dalton et al., 2011). As the previous chapter showed, while representative democracy without political parties is theoretically possible, parties and party democracy as a model are preferable in a representative system, compared to the next best competitor. Against these empirical and theoretical findings, it is comprehensible that since the first emergence of studies suggesting a decline of parties in the 1970s the literature evaluating the evidence has been growing quickly (Dalton et al., 2011: 9). Therein, some phrase it rather pessimistically when summarising the observations as the ‘crisis of party’ (Daalder, 1992: 269) or the ‘decline of parties’ (Clarke and Stewart, 1998: 357; see also Dalton et al., 2011: 4; Schmitt and Holmberg, 1995: 95). Over time, these concerns have been narrowed down to pertaining only to party-citizen linkages as a consequence of which parties are said to increasingly fail to fulfil their function of representation (Mair, 1995). Yet, limiting the scope of the problem does not make it less imminent. Despite the vast amount of literature on party decline,³⁹ it is still not entirely clear whether and when we observe or have been observing party decline in the past. This is not only a problem originating from the large body of literature itself but also from the lack of conceptual coherence and definitional clarity therein (Reiter, 1989).

In order to contribute to the literature on party decline and party democracy this chapter aims at fulfilling two purposes: firstly, it provides conceptual and definitional work on the concept of party decline; and secondly, it reviews the empirical literature on party decline. As the following sections demonstrate, the literature on party decline shows some variation as to the definition and operationalization of the concept. A conceptualisation and operationalization of the concept argues for a joint measurement through indicators of party identification, party membership, and partisan volatility. An analysis of the empirical literature on each of these indicators shows that party membership is the only measure providing unequivocal support for party decline. Country-level figures of party membership have been dropping almost continuously across the Western world since the 1960s. It is the only indicator that largely supports the claim of party decline within the boundaries of its definition. In light of this finding and the importance attached to

³⁸ This chapter improved vastly through comments and advice provided by reviewers for Party Politics and Government and Opposition.

³⁹ A google.scholar search of the term resulted in 1,800 entries.

membership by citizens and parties alike, the chapter suggests conceiving of party membership as a powerful indicator of party decline.

The argument proceeds in the following steps. The first section defines the concept of party decline, demarcating it from others. Section two lays out and discusses a possible ideal-type operationalization that comprises measures of partisan volatility, party identification, and party membership. Section three reviews the existing literature that provides empirical evidence on those indicators. It shows that they produce largely mixed findings except for the case of party membership. The fourth section provides a summary and conclusion.

3.1. The concept of party decline and what it is (not)

Since its emergence in the 1970s,⁴⁰ the concept of party decline has most often been used as way of summarising trends in how citizens see, evaluate, and relate to political parties as institutions of representation (Dalton, 2000). The most commonly cited definition of party decline is provided by Howard Reiter (1989: 326) who infers from the literature that

“‘party decline’ is the phenomenon in which political parties in general are less determinative of the attitudes and behavior of political actors on both the mass and elite levels, less highly regarded, and less likely to inspire the electoral act than they once were’.

Not all of the allegedly constituting parts mentioned in the definition are equally justifiable or equally clear in their meaning. First of all, it should be noted that Reiter specifies in his writing that the term ‘in general’ (1989: 326) is supposed to imply the party-system as the unit of analysis. However, this approach may not be in line with what the concept of party decline is supposed to accomplish. It is true that party decline may be defined and detectable on the system level, i.e. in all parties of a system. And it is also easy to concur with Reiter (1989: 326) on the fact that short-term fluctuations in individual party support should not be covered by the concept (for a similar point, see Müller and Narud, 2013: 3). Nevertheless, in order to gain a good picture of party decline and parties, which is supposedly what the concept is designed for, it is necessary to take individual parties as the primary unit of analysis and not party systems. Otherwise the concept of party decline would overlap heavily with the concept of party system change or decline (for a distinction see Mair, 1998). As way of clarifying this point, consider the following example. It might be that no evidence of party decline is found overall for, say, five different party systems, measured on the system level. However, the analytical strategy employed would potentially miss some very interesting information, namely, for example, that in all systems social democratic parties suffer from decline, whereas all other

⁴⁰ Pomper (1977) was the first to use the term in a journal article.

parties do not. This finding would suggest that party decline only affects some party families while others are spared. With system-level measures and system-level units of analysis it would be impossible to see this pattern. Therefore, it is preferable to employ individual parties as the units of analysis for the concept of party decline, which takes into account single parties as opposed to the whole system.

More generally, the above definition includes two dimensions, one referring to actors and one to actions or attitudes in relation to parties. The actor-dimension mentions two groups – the masses and the elites. On closer inspection, the latter might not be warranted as a separate group. Reiter states in his definition that party decline is observable not only in mass citizen behaviour and attitudes but also and specifically on the elite level. However, in his elaboration on the definition he fails to explain why or how party decline can be perceived amongst the elite. This does not change once he moves to the operationalization, since he also here proposes only measures that have citizens or voters as their unit of observation but not the elite. In light of other scholars' definitions and interpretations of the concept of party decline as well as democratic theory, this operational focus on citizens is hardly surprising. For many scholars party decline is a phenomenon inherent to mass behaviour without referring to the elites specifically. They argue for 'party decline at the electoral level' (Thies, 2000: 250; see also Wattenberg, 1981; Fiorina, 2002) due to the diminishing values citizens attach to them and hold that parties are in a 'linkage crisis' (Widfeldt, 1995: 135; also Dalton et al., 2011; Mair, 1995) with citizens.⁴¹ Placing an additional emphasis on political elites as being critical of parties poses the question of who is then left within the party to run it. And from a democratic theory perspective, ordinary citizens' attitudes are of most interest for the legitimacy of a political system. Arguably, if parties are losing touch with citizens it is secondary whether or not they are with the elites, too. Based on scholars' definitions and interpretations, Reiter's own operationalization, as well as theoretical considerations, the concept of party decline does not encompass the elite level, at least not as a separate group. Party decline applies first and foremost to mass citizen behaviour and attitudes. Hence, it has individual citizens or voters as its units of observation.

The second dimension of Reiter's definition relates to actions or attitudes in relation to parties. Reiter defines party decline in terms of the decreasing influence parties have on citizen attitudes and behaviours in general, as well as the decreasing attitudes towards parties specifically. These are two different facets since the former defines party decline in terms of the consequences it yields for citizen behaviour and attitudes, whereas the latter refers to attitudes and behaviour towards parties themselves. A conceptualisation that incorporates or is even based on the behavioural or attitudinal consequences it might yield can be problematic. It

⁴¹ These observations accumulate to what Daalder (2002: 39) calls the 'redundancy of party' argument.

presupposes defining the specific relationship as well as the concept it relates to. More concretely, defining party decline as the parties' decreasing power to inspire the electoral act prerequisites a definition of 'the electoral act' as well as what 'to inspire' means in this context. Reiter (1989: 326) explains that both refer together to the level of electoral turnout. The underlying rationale is that if citizens do not vote at all, they show discontent with the choices offered by existing parties (see Jackman, 1987), and thus purport party decline. Such a definition that requires explanation or further definitions is less than ideal.

Besides the problem of defining party decline in terms of its behavioural consequences, electoral turnout does not specifically serve well as a measure. As important as the measure of electoral turnout is for evaluating system support, it is ill-suited as an indicator for individual party decline because it lacks construct validity. This is because it says little about the individual's attitudes towards a specific party. If an individual does not vote, it remains unknown for whom this person would have voted, had she turned out. Measured at the individual or aggregate level, turnout might offer a good indication as to the extent of political cynicism or efficacy amongst citizens. It probably also reflects some sense of an individual's perception of system responsiveness. But low levels of electoral turnout are not indicative of individual party decline.

Nonetheless, covering both attitudinal and behavioural components is important to gauge fully the extent to which citizens are disenchanted with political parties, as suggested by empirical studies (see for instance Dalton and Weldon, 2005). Considering only behavioural aspects would neglect that not everyone is equally expressive in her opinions. Restricting a definition to only attitudes, on the other hand, would dismiss an important clue about how strongly some citizens feel about parties – positive or negative. In sum, conceptualising party decline in terms of the potential consequences it might yield is problematic in general. Even more so, when it is operationalized on the system level as Reiter suggests, as opposed to the individual-party level. And while behavioural measures are more powerful and telling tools to assess attitudes, they do not reveal the entire story. Therefore, this dimension of the concept of party decline should ideally cover both, attitudes and behaviour, in order to be content valid.

A conceptualisation of party decline that is more restrictive in its units of analysis, determinative indicators, and units of observation is preferable over Reiter's. As argued above, such an approach takes into account that party decline can and should be distinguished from party system decline or change. In addition, taking citizens as the units of observation takes extant information and definitions more closely into consideration. And finally, a definition that is not based on the consequences it might yield for other concepts is clearer and less prone to changes over time. On the basis of these considerations, an alternative definition of party

decline is citizens' increasing critical attitudes and behaviour towards individual parties.

From this definition it becomes also evident that party decline is restricted to party-citizen relationships and only takes into account the *party in the electorate* (Dalton and Wattenberg, 2000a). This conceptually distinct part of the party refers to the parties' relationships with citizens as well as a party's behaviour towards citizens. It needs to be distinguished from the *party as political organization* and *party in government*, which pertain to the administrative or business-like face of parties and the public or governmental sphere, respectively (Dalton and Wattenberg, 2000a; see also Katz and Mair, 1992a, 1993; Katz, 2002).⁴² Accordingly, party decline only refers to how citizens see, evaluate, and engage with individual political parties. It does not cover the parties' ability to govern the state, nor their organisational realm.

Such a distinction invites a brief note on the related concept of dealignment. It was already briefly mentioned in the introductory chapter as a theory about why citizens engage less in politics and its institutions. Occasionally, the concepts of party decline and dealignment are used interchangeably (see Reiter, 1989), even though one refers to a set of observations while the other additionally relates them to causal processes. According to Russell Dalton (2000), the dealignment thesis is more comprehensive than the concept of party decline. He argues that dealignment also incorporates a theory of causes. Put briefly, it states that citizens' attitudes towards parties have changed due to social, economic and political processes (see for example Dalton, 1984; Dalton et al., 1984; Inglehart, 1990). In contrast, party decline is a summary of individual observations, yet does not propose what the causes thereof could be. It is not a theory but a latent construct.

3.2. Measuring party decline

As a latent construct, defined as citizens' increasing critical attitude and behaviour towards individual parties, party decline requires careful operationalization. Measuring attitudes and behaviour of citizens towards parties can encompass a variety of individual-level indicators. The three indicators best suited are party identification, party membership, and partisan volatility, analysed over time. They cover both attitudinal and behavioural dimensions, and they are jointly sufficient to capture a potential decline of an individual party in the minds of citizens.

Firstly, the long-standing measure of party identification, which originates from the American National Election Studies (ANES) in the 1950s, has been used extensively over time for various purposes. The corresponding survey questions of whether or

⁴² Note that there is a conceptual difference between Katz and Mair's subconcepts of the party organisation mentioned in the introductory chapter and Dalton and Wattenberg's. Katz and Mair's are nested within Dalton and Wattenberg's party as political organization.

not and the degree to which individuals identify with, or are adherent to, a political party have found their most prominent application in the forecasting of voting behaviour. ‘Party identification is a long-term, affective, psychological identification with one’s preferred political party’ (Berglund et al., 2005: 106). As such, the measure reflects positive attitudes towards an individual party at the mass level. In comparison, party decline refers to the declining affective attachment of an individual to a party. So that if the number of party identifiers with any particular party has been declining over time, first evidence for party decline can be inferred. Hence, party identification serves as a valid measure of party decline.

Secondly, party membership signifies behavioural evidence for a positive attitude towards and support for a political party. Arguably, party membership might even be the strongest mode of support an individual can express in relation to a party. Yet, party membership is a more contested indicator of party decline because some political cultures are more prone to showing high numbers of party membership across parties, which makes cross-country comparisons difficult. Another counter-argument is that the sheer number of members might not reveal too much about the party’s capacity to exist as a party at all; we know empirically of parties which manage to exist despite few members (for instance, in Canada, party membership is traditionally low, [Carty, 2002]). On the other hand, there are also good reasons to include party membership. Firstly, it offers an additional behavioural measure that probably also correlates with party identification. Secondly, it is easy to refute the earlier proposed constraint of direct comparisons of party membership. It is true, if a polity has traditionally higher levels of membership than others direct comparisons might not be possible. This does not, however, preclude trend comparisons. Two polities might show party membership decline with the same slope but with different intercepts; the rate of decline is the same but the starting spots are different. Thirdly, and as mentioned above, an individual’s party membership is a formal statement of explicit support and liking for a specific party. Conversely, if an individual quits her membership it is a sign of criticism or at least discontent with the party. Recall that party decline has been interpreted above as a ‘linkage crisis’ between parties and citizens. Party membership arguably reflects (part of) this linkage. In support of this point, Mair and Ingrid van Biezen (2001: 8) argue that party membership ‘offers the most telling indicator of the extent to which parties might be regarded as retaining a hold within the wider society’. Therefore, party membership serves as an indicator for party decline. However, it only does so if two conditions are met: firstly, it needs to be measured at the level of parties instead of party systems in line with the above conceptualisation; and secondly, it has to be sensitive to the size of the electorate. The latter point is particularly important to enable cross-country and over-time comparisons (Mair and van Biezen, 2001). A membership size of, for example, 500,000 for a German party might mean something very different for a Norwegian party, simply because of the size of the

total electorate. The same holds for over-time comparisons. Expressing party membership per party as a proportion of the electorate is therefore to be preferred and then serves well as an indicator for party decline.

Thirdly, partisan volatility presents a second behavioural measure of the concept of party decline. However, in contrast to party membership, it refers to electoral participation. Concurring with Reiter (1989), the measure serves the purpose well, provided that it can distinguish between party decline and realignment as conceptually distinct ideas. Since volatility can be defined as measuring ‘change of any kind’ (Reiter, 1989: 327) it is easy to confuse a process of realignment with party decline. Therefore, Reiter argues for a measure of partisan volatility that keeps these processes distinct, like that of ‘increasing, unstructured volatility’ (Reiter, 1989: 328). It takes into account the standard deviation of vote percentages per party over time and the correlation between those percentages and the election year. If the standard deviation increases, and the correlation decreases over time, support is found for party decline. Concurring with Reiter’s take on redefining volatility in principle, what he deems as a drawback of this measure is in fact an important merit: the unit of analysis. He states that the measure falls short of measuring volatility at a system level, unlike for instance the well-known Pedersen index (see Pedersen, 1979). It only measures ‘parties one at a time’ (Reiter, 1989: 328). But as argued above, this is exactly what a measure of party decline is supposed to do: taking individual parties as the unit of analysis as opposed to the entire party system. With that, the measure is located on the party level and not on the system level, and accordingly, takes into account individuals’ shifting vote choices between parties. Such an indicator of partisan volatility is an important and valid measure of party decline.

Taken together, party identification, party membership, and partisan volatility provide jointly an operationalization of the latent construct of party decline. Under the conditions outlined, these indicators are able to capture individuals’ potentially declining attitudes towards and participation in political parties over time. The indicators follow closely the conceptualisation presented above while aiming at a parsimonious measurement model. Considering that the definition above includes both the attitudinal as well as the behavioural level, the indicators need to be seen as necessary, each individually and jointly sufficient to measure party decline. That means if empirical evidence suggests jointly declining party identification, declining party membership, and increasing partisan volatility support is found for the decline of an individual party. However, as the following section shows, the existing literature measuring party decline is quite diverse, employing a variety of indicators, whose results are quite mixed.

3.3. Support for party decline in the existing literature

In order to gain a better picture of the existing literature on party decline and its evidence, a larger number of studies are reviewed. The studies have been selected to reflect the diversity of approaches and findings in the English language literature on party decline. The selection criterion was that the studies either explicitly measure party decline or any of the three indicators argued for above. However, no attention was paid as to the exact measurement, only whether or not studies used any of the three indicators generally. It is a purposive sample that defines the field of studies on party decline and its indicators, aiming at maximum heterogeneity in its findings. Such an approach enables assessing the empirical evidence in support of party decline as well as its diversity, according to the above three ideal-type indicators. Note that not all studies are empirical. In addition, few of the studies included in this literature review purely analyse the phenomenon of party decline. Some authors seek to explain it (for instance Berglund et al., 2005; Huber et al., 2005), others take it as an explanatory factor (for example Scarrow and Gezgor, 2010; Tan, 1997, 2000). And yet at other times, one of the indicators has been thoroughly investigated cross-sectionally or over time (see Fiorina, 2002; van Biezen et al., 2012). Therefore, the studies do not only reflect the empirical literature on party decline alone but on several measurements as a way of assessing it. In total, 64 studies published either in journals or in edited volumes provide the basis of this review, albeit several contributions to a single edited volume cannot be regarded as entirely independent studies. Studies that are part of the literature review are marked with an asterisk in the bibliography.

Table 3.1. Most commonly used indicators for measuring party decline in 64 studies.

Note: Frequencies are not adding up to 64 but rather exceed it by far. Most studies use multiple indicators (on average around 2) to measure party decline.

Indicators	Frequency
Party identification	48
Party membership	30
Electoral volatility	26
Electoral turnout	19
Trust in political parties/politicians	6
Electoral fractionalisation	5
Effective number of parties	4
Time-point of voting decision	4
Like/dislike questions	2
Parties care what people think	2
Anti-party vote	2

The studies reviewed present a diverse picture in terms of operationalization. Table 3.1 shows the most commonly used indicators. Obviously, most studies included in the sample use any of the three indicators argued for above (party identification,⁴³ party membership, partisan volatility), given that this was one of the selection criteria. However, since the sample also includes studies that explicitly measure or assess party decline and closely related concepts, other indicators can also be found. These include, for instance, voter turnout, measures of trust, political cynicism, effective number of parties, or time-point of voting decision. As already mentioned, voter turnout does not serve particularly well as an indicator for party decline, within the boundaries of the above conceptualisation, as it is a system-level measure. The same can be said about the survey items of trust in parties, political cynicism, anti-party vote, or parties care what people think (as used in Dalton and Weldon, 2005; Greene, 2002; Poguntke, 1996; Webb, 2002c). These are referring to the party system as a whole and are not tapping the individual's feeling towards a specific party. They might suit well for measuring the concept of *Politikverdrossenheit* but they are ill-suited measures of party decline for an individual party. At other times, indicators such as electoral fractionalisation or effective number of parties are used, which are probably a consequence of partisan volatility and already well-captured in that measure as it is.

Arguing for an ideal-type operationalization and reviewing the literature as to its congruence is a methodological exercise. More substantively, it is interesting to evaluate whether or not analyses of these indicators present overall (dis)confirming evidence for party decline in the literature. Put differently, according to the preferred indicators, does the empirical literature support the idea of party decline? In order to simplify such an analysis and for presentational purposes, Figure 3.1 presents a Venn diagram through which the studies' operationalizations can be shown in a more accessible way. It depicts studies employing each of the three indicators of party identification, party membership, and volatility per circle. Studies located in the overlapping spaces use at least two measures. This form of presentation yields also the advantage of enabling a systematic discussion of the studies and their results contingent on the operationalization used.

Firstly, the figure shows that studies belonging to the group of those using all three indicators are relatively large. This is an immediate consequence of the selection process for the sample. Most of them are contributions to the book *Political Parties in Advanced Industrial Democracies* (2002) edited by Paul Webb, David Farrell, and Ian Holliday. Throughout, the positively connoted concept of 'popular legitimacy of

⁴³ The indicators of party loyalty and party attachment were also considered as part of the category 'party identification' whenever they were measured with the classic party identification or party closeness survey item.

parties' is used instead of party decline. It refers to the 'vibrancy and health of linkages between parties and society at large' (Webb, 2002b: 7). The definition shows that the concept of popular legitimacy is different from that of party decline, not only in connotation. While popular legitimacy of parties includes all parties, individually as well as jointly, party decline as conceptualised here is slightly narrower, taking one party at a time, yet studying it over time. As a consequence of these similarities, most of the country-studies included in the edited volume use indicators which also closely describe the idea of party decline. At the same time not all indicators used for measuring popular legitimacy of parties are suitable for measuring party decline, as pointed out above. Webb (2002a) summarises in his conclusions the findings from the individual country-studies. The individual indicators show a remarkably consistent pattern: 13 countries report a downward trend for party identification; relative party membership has declined in 15 countries and increased in only one; and total net volatility has increased in 12 countries, is stable or fluctuates in three countries, and is declining in only one country. Only for the Spanish and US case mixed or positive results can be found. Overall, Webb (2002a: 442) concludes that 'while parties in crisis are certainly the exception rather than the rule, it is undeniable that their popular standing has been weakened in most Western democracies'. He also relates these findings to time and finds 'that the problems parties in advanced industrial democracies now face in terms of popular legitimacy are probably chronic but rarely acute' (2002a: 442).

The remainder of studies that analyse all three indicators – party identification, party membership, and volatility – come to very similar conclusions. Wolfgang Müller et al. (2004) find in the Austrian case increased voter volatility to a level of 20 per cent in the 1990s compared to 7 per cent in the 1970s. The level of strong party identifiers has decreased by 46 percentage points, and there were 9 percentage points fewer Austrians enrolled in any of the political parties in 2002 compared to the 1970s. Andrew Knapp (2004) equally reports a deteriorating party-citizen link in France. He shows that party membership has halved and party identification fell by 12 percentage points between 1978 and 2002, while elections repetitively showed high levels of electoral volatility. Mair (2005) confirms the overall results once more in his investigation of Western European countries between 1950 and 2003. He concludes that all three trends indicate declining party-citizen bonds. For party identification and voter volatility he shows that most of the changes occurred after 1990, while party membership significantly dropped in the late 1990s. Piero Ignazi (1996) also states a decline in these three indicators while doubting the reliability of existing party membership data.

Figure 3.1. Distribution of studies dependent on the use of the three ideal-type indicators (N = 62).

Note: The studies encircled by the solid line use the indicator party identification (N = 48), the dashed circle includes all studies using party membership (N = 31), and the dotted circle shows all studies using electoral volatility (N = 27). The solid/dotted intersection has a population of 22 studies, solid/dashed of 19, and dashed/dotted of 18, and 15 studies are using all three indicators.

As far as other areas in the Venn diagram are concerned, their studies' results are equally clear, provided that they analyse purely party membership. It is noteworthy that all of the sampled studies evaluating only party membership find declining figures. The only exception seems to be in new democracies where membership levels are either stable or even rising (Scarrow, 2007a; van Biezen et al., 2012).⁴⁴

⁴⁴ This finding is also in line with theory. Recall that party decline is a summary of individual observations and that the dealignment thesis combines those with a causal theory. It sees the causes in fundamental social, economic, and political changes, which mostly apply to so-called established advanced industrial democracies (cf. Webb, 2002b: 5). Those are characterised by a continuous democratic rule since 1945 and economic patterns that make a country belong to one of the OECD

Studies purely considering voter volatility and its adjacent measures conclude that party support is instable rather than stable. Andrew Drummond (2006: 628) finds unstable figures in 19 Western European countries for the period 1970-1995. His conclusion is that ‘party system instability is on the rise throughout much of the West since 1970, with statistically significant increases seen in Scandinavia and across all regions combined’. For the case of Belgium, Kris Deschouwer (2004) confirms this finding when he shows that the period of high volatility already started in the 1960s.

For the remainder of the areas in the Venn diagram, the results are not as clear-cut; rather the studies’ findings are more often mixed than not. For example, out of the three studies using party membership and voter volatility combined, two conclude in favour of party decline (Poguntke, 2004; Schmitter, 2008), while Holliday (2002) finds stable or even positive indicators for Spain. The sample using party identification in conjunction with voter volatility also reports very different findings. While some point at party decline, Harold Clarke and Marianne Stewart (1998) conclude that the trends of declining party identification halted in the 1990s in the UK and US. Bille and Pedersen (2004) also report no significant changes in party identification whereas unstable volatility has been rising in the 1990s in Denmark. For Italy, Luciano Bardi (2004) shows that party identification has recently stabilised while volatility dramatically shifted for the worse after 1992.

Equally diverse are the results found in the sampled studies using a combination of party identification and party membership. Thomas Poguntke (1996) reports declining party membership but finds little indication for a uniform pattern for party identification. He only found in three out of eight countries party identification to be in decline. Conversely, Reiter (1989) shows that membership has a more mixed pattern; some countries have experienced declining membership while others have not. But he finds that identification is in decline throughout. In support of the membership figures, Per Selle and Lars Svåsand (1991) do not find any indication of decline for aggregate membership figures in Norway. And even on the individual level they only find stable figures while party identification shows to have a u-shaped pattern over time. Webb (1995), however, still finds tentative support for party decline in both indicators for the UK.

Many of the sampled studies using only party identification find mixed support in favour of party decline. Dalton (for example 1984, 2007) has persistently provided indication for declining partisanship in Western countries. In contrast, while some studies do not find evidence for a crisis of party in both Europe and North America, a

members. Comparable terms are ‘advanced industrial’, ‘post-industrial’ (see Dalton, 1996) or ‘post-modern’ (Inglehart, 1997). New democracies do not fulfil these conditions, especially not the political ones, which is why it is to be expected that they are less affected, if at all, by party decline. In addition, for the indicator of party membership specifically, decline is unlikely to occur in new democracies. These polities often have new parties, which start with zero members.

larger group shows very mixed results. Morris Fiorina (2002: 103) states ‘the thesis of party decline was accurate until approximately the mid-1970s’. Donald Green and Bradley Palmquist (1994) only find support for party decline on the macro-level but not on the micro-level in the US. Frode Berglund et al. (2005) qualify their finding by concluding a downward trend yet not a monotonous one for party identification in European countries. Lastly, Sören Holmberg (2007) shows that the patterns differ with the country analysed. While Sweden still shows signs of decline, US party identification figures are recovering.

In sum, when presenting the sampled studies and their results, contingent on the operationalization used, very few patterns emerge. All three indicators differ in terms of the results they produce. Given the very different findings on party identification only, it appears that levels of party identification are not easy to interpret. A general reason for this might be that surveys are ‘seldom designed with the express purpose of gauging anti-party sentiment in mind’ (Webb, 2005: 643). Other reasons may include: fluctuations in the figures, different reference points used, or researchers’ different expectations.⁴⁵ For voter volatility the interpretations are somewhat clearer, yet not conclusive. Electoral volatility seems to have been increasing in many countries, although the pattern is also characterised by many fluctuations. It is especially the figures referring to party membership that researchers almost uniformly agree are pointing downwards. Except in the cases of new democracies, analysts find declining membership rates across Western countries, and these downward trends are almost independent of the time-span (van Biezen et al., 2012). However, treating each of the studies reviewed here as a unit of observation also carries a major drawback. It assigns the same weight onto very different studies, such as a case study analysing only a short time-frame and a comparative study investigating several decades. Since a comparative study with a longer time-frame warrants stronger conclusions, all things being equal, consideration has to be granted to the complexity of a study. Such an approach, in turn, might also alleviate the mix in findings the overall sample produces.

⁴⁵ Some analysts tend to evaluate contemporary party performance against parties under the mass party model of the 1950s. According to Dalton et al. (2011) and Scarrow (2000), this may be an unrealistic standard to begin with.

Figure 3.2. Time line of longitudinal studies (N = 57).

For each of three indicators the most comprehensive study, i.e. covering the longest time-frame and the most countries, is selected. Figure 3.2 depicts the time coverage of all 57 longitudinal studies, ordered alphabetically. Whenever an author had several contributions in the sample, the studies were grouped more tightly to each other to facilitate easy reading. As can be seen from the figure, large variation exists in the length of the time-frame the studies cover. The shortest period covered is Scarrow's (2007a) comparison of membership data across 38 countries around the world whereas the longest period, 65 years, is Michael Marsh and Mair's (2004) study of, amongst others, voter volatility in Ireland from 1937 onwards. However, the best time- and country-coverage for the case of voter volatility within the sample is provided by Drummond (2006). The analyses cover, in total, 19 Western democracies and a time-period spanning 1945 to 1995. He concludes that electoral volatility was stable between 1945 and 1970 but is instable for the period thereafter. Nonetheless, statistically significant increases can only be found in Scandinavia and when globally assessed (Drummond, 2006: 628). This means, for the case of voter volatility, that it has been increasing over time, as a general phenomenon. Citizens are less tied to a specific political party and alter their vote choice. On the other hand, despite Drummond's coverage across time and space, such a conclusion needs to be taken with care. It only holds for the time-period following 1970.

In comparison, Dalton (2000) shows in his comprehensive analysis of party identification a stronger pattern of decline. Analysing 19 Western countries over the period 1952-1998, he finds for all countries, except for five, a significant decline in the percentage of citizens being a strong identifier. When considering the percentage of simple party identifiers his findings show a significant decline in all countries but six. These comprehensive and conclusive results suggest that, indeed, the percentage of (strong) party identifiers has been dropping in the past decades, by and large, throughout Western democracies. Fewer citizens are setting their mind on a specific political party and feel continuously close to this party. Yet again, the results also show that such a negative trend cannot be uphold for all countries, as indicated in either non-significant or even positive trend lines.

Finally, for the case of party membership the set of studies analysed above already showed a quite unambiguous picture of decline. This is only confirmed once closer consideration is given to the most wide-spanning study. Van Biezen et al. (2012) present party membership figures in 23 countries covering the time-period between 1980 and 2009. The results suggest that the decline in relative membership (total membership divided by the size of the total electorate) 'is evident in each of the long-established democracies' (van Biezen et al., 2012: 33). And while newer democracies have experienced less or even no decline, membership decline should also not apply to new democracies to the same extent (see footnote 44). With the negligible exception of new democracies, comparative and comprehensive figures on party membership point downwards. Fewer and fewer citizens enrol in a political party.

Overall, these findings mean that if party decline is operationalized through measures of party identification, party membership, and partisan volatility, existing empirical evidence supports the notion of party decline most through the indicator of party membership. Party identification and volatility also provide evidence in support of party decline, albeit not across the board. The conclusion to draw from the existing literature is that such a vast and general claim as party decline can most unambiguously be substantiated by aggregated party membership figures.

3.4. Summary and conclusion

This chapter set out to take a closer look at the concept of party decline and its empirical evidence. Departing from the observation that the literature on party decline is vast and confusing, it aimed at answering two related questions: firstly, how should the concept of party decline be ideally conceptualised and operationalized? And secondly, does the existing empirical literature employing such an operationalization find support for party decline? In doing so, the first section argued for a conceptualisation of party decline as citizens' increasing critical attitudes and behaviour towards individual parties. Given that party decline is commonly referred to as a linkage crisis between parties and citizens and is said to occur in a single part of the party, namely the party in the electorate, it was maintained that citizens mark the preferable unit of observation for party decline. And in order to be conceptually distinct from the concept of party system change, individual parties and not party systems mark the units of analysis. On the basis of this, section two then proposed an ideal-type operationalization that aimed at simplicity yet comprehensiveness. It argued for measuring party decline through the three individually necessary yet jointly sufficient measures of party identification, party membership, and partisan volatility. A comparative analysis with a sample of 64 empirical studies on party decline and related concepts showed that the minority of studies utilise these indicators jointly.

The literature on party decline is fairly diverse when it comes to operationalization. Despite this drawback, it was investigated how the general empirical literature evaluates the status of parties according to the three ideal-type indicators. On the basis of reviewing these studies on party decline of the last 40 years some trends can be derived, especially when more weight is given to comprehensive and comparative studies. Party identification has been declining, which means that fewer citizens are setting their mind on a specific political party and feel continuously close to this party. Voter volatility has increased at the same time, suggesting that citizens are less tied to a specific political party and instead alter their vote choice. In addition, fewer and fewer citizens enrol in a political party, making party membership figures drop across democracies.

While these trends can be observed across numerous party systems and spanning larger time-periods, they do not unequivocally accumulate to the acceptance of party decline as a generalizable empirical proposition. Instead, they also include some exceptions as to time frame or party systems, except for in one case. Party membership figures are the only ones suggesting a more universal phenomenon of decline amongst established advanced industrial democracies, according to previous studies (see for example Mair and van Biezen, 2001; Scarrow and Gezgor, 2010; van Biezen et al., 2012; Whiteley, 2011). In fact, research on party membership has led scholars to conclude most recently that '[t]here is scarcely any other indicator relating to mass politics in Europe that reveals such a strong and consistent trend as that which we now see with respect to the decline of party membership' (van Biezen et al., 2012: 38).

Given the conceptual work of this chapter and the empirical evidence provided, a conclusion that argues for party decline seems unwarranted. Party membership is the only indicator that points consistently at party decline. However, since party membership, as argued by Mair and van Biezen (2001: 8), 'offers the most telling indicator of the extent to which parties might be regarded as retaining a hold within the wider society', it can possibly be conceived as a very powerful behavioural proxy for party decline. Therefore, the following chapters will focus only on party membership decline and the extent to which parties have responded to it specifically. Aside the general empirical literature on party decline reviewed so far, the next chapter takes a thorough look at party membership figures explicitly. It applies the here argued for operationalization of membership as a measure relative to the electoral size, using individual parties as units of analysis.

4 – Party membership across Western Europe: a time-series cross-sectional analysis of individual parties⁴⁶

Political parties and their members mark the enduring link between civil society and the modern democratic state. As the previous chapter showed, the decline of party membership provides the most unequivocal evidence for the party decline thesis in existing studies. Recall that van Biezen et al. (2012: 38) conclude ‘[t]here is scarcely any other indicator relating to mass politics in Europe that reveals such a strong and consistent trend as that which we now see with respect to the decline of party membership’. However, two drawbacks inherent to existing analyses of party membership figures over time are the unit of analysis and the number of time-points.

Most existing studies analyse party membership figures aggregated over all parties, only a few time-points, or a mix of both to evaluate the development of membership over time (see Delwit, 2011; Krouwel, 2012; Mair and van Biezen, 2001; Scarrow, 2000; Scarrow and Gezgor, 2010; van Biezen et al., 2012; Van Haute, 2011; Whiteley, 2011). Data aggregated on the country-level have the disadvantage of potentially hiding major differences between parties of the same system. Equally, analysing only a few time-points can conceal changes and fluctuations in-between. So far, little is known about official party membership figures and their development over time through annual time-series for a larger number of individual parties. Such data can provide a more thorough description and analysis of Western European parties’ allegedly increasing failure to hold on to members.

This chapter contributes to the literature on party membership decline by analysing a rich dataset and by testing party-level hypotheses pertaining to membership development with 47 individual parties as units of analysis. A total of 1,654 party-year observations are analysed for that purpose. They will show, firstly, whether or not the well-documented decline found on the aggregate-level is uniformly supported on the individual party-level, as well. And secondly, they will provide a better account of the problem of membership decline – a necessary first step for any possible explanation. Annual data over fifty years on a larger number of individual parties allows testing party-level hypotheses of development over time, using statistical techniques commonly used in time-series or time-series cross-sectional

⁴⁶ A previous version of this chapter received the status of Revise & Resubmit at the journal *Party Politics*. Reviewers for *European Journal of Political Research* provided additional comments. Earlier versions were presented at the seminar ‘Väljare, Opinion och Demokrati’ held at the Department of Political Science, University of Gothenburg, 24 May 2012, at the *Politologenetmaal* in Amsterdam, 30 May – 01 June 2012, and at the seminar ‘Innovation of Governance’ held at the Department of Public Administration, University of Twente, 2 October 2012. I would like to thank all participants for their valuable advice.

analyses (TSCS). Some patterns become evident which are only hinted at in previous studies: membership decline is by far not a universal phenomenon of parties in Western Europe. It applies relatively more to parties founded before 1945 and less so to green parties. More generally, membership decline appears to be part of a party's life-cycle, in such a way that the more consolidated parties are, the fewer members they have.

The first section starts by reviewing briefly some of the latest studies on party membership development, their data and results. These are almost identical to the ones analysed in the previous chapter. The section maintains that taking selected time-points and aggregated data on the country-level, mark two common caveats that potentially hide important patterns pertaining to individual party and/or time characteristics. In the second section hypotheses are derived from existing theories of party development whose tests will provide a better understanding and description of membership decline in the parties at hand. Section three introduces the data and presents the methods used before section four presents the results. Lastly, the concluding remarks summarise the findings and highlight the implications they have.

4.1. Existing research on party membership development

Previous research on party membership can be mostly characterised by the use of aggregated data and/or few time-points. As a way of exemplifying, consider the following selection of studies from most recent times, most of which have already been cited in the previous chapter.⁴⁷ For example, Scarrow (2000) covers five time-points between the 1950s and the 1990s in her analyses of country-level membership. Mair and van Biezen (2001) also analyse country-level membership figures but this time for three time-points between 1977 and 2000. Equally, Scarrow and Burcu Gezgor (2010) report country-level data; their analyses encompass three occasions between 1987 and 2000. Covering only a single time-point, Paul Whiteley (2011) also uses country-aggregates. Van Biezen et al. (2012) report absolute and relative membership figures on country-levels for four time-points, spanning in total a period covering 1980 to 2008.⁴⁸ Pascal Delwit (2011), in turn, employs two data strategies. On the country-level he analyses a total of seven time-points between 1946 and 2006, whereas on the party-level, fourteen time-points are covered between 1980 and 2010. And finally, André Krouwel (2012) analyses party membership data over the period 1945-2010 aggregated to the party family-level for thirteen time-points. Each of these more recent studies on party membership figures

⁴⁷ For each study, the longest time-frame and the largest number of time-points analysed has been taken.

⁴⁸ In the appendix to the study, membership figures of individual parties are reported for a single year.

and their respective, comparative development provides valuable insights. Despite their differences in coverage over time and space, they have at least three commonalities. Firstly, most studies analyse membership figures on an aggregated level, mostly on the country-level. Secondly, most report the data using only a few time-points even when spanning long periods of time in total. In fact, only in the case of Delwit's (2011) analysis of green parties is the number of measurements such that there is, on average, a time-point every two years. For the other studies average intervals range between four and eight years. And thirdly, all these studies share the general finding that party membership has been declining during the last decades. Exceptions to this rule of thumb can be found for new democracies and green parties (Delwit, 2011; van Biezen et al., 2012).

The results obtained might be a consequence of the data covered. It might be that mapping the broader trend according to aggregate data and few time-points is more likely to provide these results. Quite possibly, however, the issue is more complex than that and the variation in data coverage is too large to actually find support for such a hypothesis. In support of this, Scarrow (2000: 86) notes that the results also depend on factors, such as, what measure of party membership is used, what cases are included, and what year is taken as a baseline. Nonetheless, both data-coverage-related decisions commonly taken – the aggregation of figures to a higher level as well as a small number of time-points – come with severe constraints, which limit the scope of hypotheses to be empirically testable.

The aggregation of figures to a higher level equals a summary of all the parts on the lower level. Summaries, be it as averages or as sums, as in the case of party membership, are heavily influenced by extreme cases and they also hide information about the distribution of the data across lower-level groups. For example, aggregated party membership for Sweden in 1990 yields a value of 1,119,071 which is equivalent to 17.5 per cent of the electorate at that time.⁴⁹ However, what neither of the figures reveal is that the social democratic party, S, alone contributed to this figure with around 72 per cent, due to the party's close ties with the trade union. This is admittedly a very extreme case but it illustrates the influential impact of outliers. Moreover, the entire distribution across individual parties remains hidden with aggregate figures, and even if the number of parties per aggregate figure were known, computed averages per party would be just a better guess of the real distribution. These caveats of aggregates or summaries are well-known and they hinder any conclusions to be drawn for lower-level units, also known as ecological fallacy (Bryman, 2012: 323; King, 1997: 12ff). As soon as individual parties are considered as units of analyses, aggregated party membership figures fall short of providing warranted conclusions.

⁴⁹ The number of party members is taken from Widfeldt (1997) and figures on the size of the electorate have been provided by Statistics Sweden for the election years 1988 and 1991. Values for other years were interpolated.

An equally problematic issue in studying membership data pertains to the number of time-points analysed. As mentioned above, these numbers are often rather small, especially when considering the long time-span the aforementioned studies are covering in total. Unlike the aggregation of individual figures, such an analytical strategy does not summarise the data but rather takes only a snapshot of them. Party membership figures are exposed to constant changes, and most parties nowadays record them on an annual base. Analyses of only a small subset are insensitive to these constant changes and can only at best report broader trends; outliers or short-term fluctuations are not captured. To illustrate the potential problem, van Biezen et al. (2012: 45), for example, report for the Netherlands an aggregate membership ratio (total number of members as a fraction of the entire electorate; M/E ratio) of 2.51 and of 2.48 in 2000 and 2009, respectively. They suggest an average decline across parties during this period, albeit a marginal one. However, these time-points hide the fact that in 2004 the M/E ratio rose to 2.56, thus exceeding its 2000-level.⁵⁰ Considering all three values together over this period of nine years provides not only a much more fine-grained picture of party membership development in the Netherlands but also shows that its respective trend has not been continuously downwards. Apparently, the year 2004 was special in some respects. Counter the country-trend, the social democratic PvdA and the communist SP gained in membership in that year.⁵¹ Again, depending on research interests, considering only selected time-points may not be problematic. Mapping a global trend may not require detailed data. In such cases, the choice in time-points and baseline poses a serious problem (see Scarrow, 2000). But as soon as the research question pertains to party membership change over time, a case can be made that the intervals between measurements should ideally be as short as possible.

Individual-level data on party membership solve the aggregation problem but not the issues connected to frequency of time-points (see for example Cross and Young, 2008; Hoffmann, 2012; Marien and Quintelier, 2011; Seyd and Whiteley, 2004; Whiteley, 2011). Individual-level survey data can reveal the different motives individuals have to join or to leave a party. Both are important prerequisites for understanding individual-level patterns and causes of membership decline. Such data also allow taking individual parties as units of analysis and testing party-level theories. However, surveys amongst party members are not frequently conducted. General surveys often lack big enough party member participation and, above all, the necessary questions to understand the motives underlying participation in parties. Individual-level survey data are ideal for testing individual-level theories of

⁵⁰ The calculation is based on figures obtained from the Documentatiecentrum Nederlandse Politieke Partijen (<http://dnpp.ub.rug.nl/dnpp/>; accessed 19/04/2012) and information provided by the Compendium voor Politiek en Samenleving (<http://www.politiekcompendium.nl/>; accessed 13/02/2013).

⁵¹ See footnote 50. Long forms for party abbreviations as well as their English translation can be found in Table 1.1.

participation in parties, but existing data do not allow testing for party-level theories about development over time. As argued above, this would require analysing multiple time-points, which survey data cannot easily provide.⁵² Research interests pertaining to development over time are duly analysed with party-level data. The testing of party-level theories of membership development provides another necessary stepping stone in exploring and explaining membership decline.

To summarise, existing studies on party membership and the development thereof, use mostly aggregated data and/or only a few time-points. These choices as to data coverage are justifiable especially in light of the respective research interest. If it is about evaluating broader trends across time and space, as well as investigating party membership decline as a general phenomenon, or party participation as an individual-level choice, these data strategies may be appropriate. However, as soon as researchers intend to test party-level theories related to development over time and through a comparative perspective, they are ill-advised in using aggregated data and few time-points. Instead, party-level figures recorded annually are preferable.

4.2. Party-level theories of membership development

As the scholarly interest in party politics experienced a revival during the 1980s, theories on party development evolved fast. Even though these theories do not focus exclusively on the development of party membership, they cover it implicitly. In the following, two important explanatory approaches to membership development are introduced and tested. Although each of them considers a different trigger as the main driving force behind party development, they are not competing theories. Rather, they are complementary because each stresses a different party-characteristic and its connection to the development of membership size. The *life-cycle approach* explains membership size by a party's different life-phases or levels of institutionalisation, whereas the *modernization approach* suggests a pattern of development according to the ideological family a party belongs to.

The life-cycle approach originates in the organisational literature and aims at predicting businesses' development over time (see Hannan and Freeman, 1984; Whetten, 1987). Businesses experience different life-phases from their emergence, to establishment, over to their decline. Also, the political science literature considers a party's or a social movement's development as following different stages (see Bolleyer and Bytze, 2013; Harmel and Svåsand, 1993; Lipset and Rokkan, 1967; Müller-Rommel, 2002; Pedersen, 1982; Stein, 1973; van Biezen, 2005). Most famously, Mogens Pedersen (1982: 6f) argues for four stages of party development: declaration,

⁵² However, it is interesting to note that van Biezen et al. (2012) find a high correlation between reported party membership in the European Social Survey and official membership figures issued by the parties themselves.

authorisation, representation, and relevance. A party's electoral and parliamentary strength determines the transition point from one stage to the next. It is only at the stage of representation that a party actually occupies seats in parliament; the previous two stages pertain to extra-parliamentary phases of development. In comparison, Robert Harmel and Svåsand (1993: 71f) propose a three-step development (identification, organisation, stabilisation), whose first phase already refers to a party's parliamentary representation. While these stages are complementary to those proposed by Pedersen, the authors acknowledge that it is extremely difficult to identify clear transition criteria (Harmel and Svåsand, 1993: 71).

The main idea behind the life-cycle approach is that a (party) organisation as it develops and ages, gains experience, and simultaneously loses some of its freshness as a newcomer. In that sense, a party's age can be considered a proxy for the stage of development or level of party institutionalisation (see Mainwaring, 1998; van Biezen, 2005).⁵³ This is not to suggest a deterministic relationship beyond parties' control. Every stage of party institutionalisation offers simply new opportunities, challenges, and incentives for the party organisation to act and react. For instance, due to its existing visibility in the electoral market, an established party arguably can survive with fewer party members to spread its message and to retain parliamentary presence. In contrast, a newly founded party is more dependent on members, and it is also more likely to increase in membership size during its initial phase. Accordingly, at an early stage of a party's development membership size should be increasing. However, as the party ages and consolidates it is less reliant on party members and therefore will exert less effort to gain members.

H1 The relationship between a party's level of institutionalisation and its membership size is positive but flattening.

Next to that, the modernization approach suggests that parties of certain party families are experiencing a disproportional decline in political support (see for instance Inglehart, 1977, 2007). Modernization theories maintain that due to socio-economic changes in the citizens' environment at least since the 1950s, a shift in values from materialist to post-materialist has taken place (Dalton, 2006). One of the consequences already mentioned in the introductory chapter is that citizens connect less to parties that do not capture new politics values. New parties representing post-materialist values, such as ecological parties, are on the rise (see for example Müller-Rommel, 2002). The same goes for other niche values, such as right-wing beliefs, representing to some extent anti-party sentiments (see for example Mudde, 1996; Poguntke, 1996). This implies that under the modernization approach parties

⁵³ To be sure, a party's age might only be a proxy for the level of party institutionalisation in the sense that it is empirically more likely to find an older party that is also consolidated than it is to find an older party that has never entered the stage of parliamentary representation.

belonging to the right-wing party family can also be expected to gain in party members. Note that the modernization approach and the life-cycle approach overlap here because the party-characteristics of being new and belonging to the ecological/right-wing ideological family are coinciding and both approaches predict growing membership size. While these parties should not be affected by membership decline, others should be heavily impacted, according to modernization theories. Social democratic parties, for instance, should be more strongly exposed to membership decline. Research into social democratic values and their respective rise and fall suggests that economic changes, particularly in the labour market, have lessened the social democratic parties' appeal to the electorate (see Pontussen, 1995; Rueda, 2005). In addition, traditional welfare state demands purported by social democratic parties in Western Europe have been generally fulfilled in the course of the last decades (see Hirst, 1997; Merkel et al., 2008), rendering those parties in a state of identity crisis. These fundamental changes across social democratic parties should also negatively affect their membership size. Likewise, with increasing secularization and increasing atheism amongst European citizens (see for instance Halman and Draulans, 2006), Christian parties should have been disproportionately affected by membership decline. Therefore, accordingly to modernization theories, party family belonging is a predictor of membership size.

H2 Since the 1950s, ecological and right-wing parties have been increasing in membership size whereas Christian and social democratic parties have been decreasing.

To summarise, existing aggregate literature of party membership development has been arguing time and again for declining figures. From theories pertaining to party development a slightly more nuanced pattern is to be expected. Depending on a party's level of institutionalisation and party family its membership size should be more or less heavily affected by decline.

4.3. Data and methods

The data are part of the *Party Organisation Dataset 1960-2010*, which records official party membership figures on an annual basis and which was introduced in chapter 1. Figures all originate from the parties and were systematically gathered through

various sources,⁵⁴ despite the well-known reliability problems connected to them (for a longer discussion see Delwit, 2011; Mair and van Biezen, 2001).⁵⁵

There are different ways of measuring party membership. It can be expressed as a party-total (M), as fraction of the number of voters (M/V), or the size of the total electorate (M/E). Each of these measures has its merits and their respective usage depends solely on the research interest, as Scarrow (2000) emphasises. Absolute figures are interesting for assessing, for instance, the organisational capacity of parties at the grass-roots level. Membership in relation to a party's voter base, in turn, provides information on how successful the party is in binding their supporters beyond election day. In the end, membership figures are to a certain extent also a function of electoral success. By far the most commonly used measure is the number of party members expressed in relation to the size of the total electorate, M/E ratio. This measure is appropriate, for instance, if parties as means of political participation are evaluated. This measure cannot entirely reveal whether or not parties have become less successful overall. It comprises an inbuilt bias, if a party's voter base is not taken into consideration, but it still provides information on the parties' capability to mobilise and bind the electorate. In addition and unlike other measures, membership figures are then easily comparable across time and space. Accordingly, in the following M/E ratios are used as a measure of party membership per party; in total 1,654 party observations are available. Figure 4.1 illustrates aggregate party membership ratios in all six countries over the entire period of study. It shows that the six party systems differ markedly in their proportions of party members. The three Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Sweden, Norway) have almost consistently higher aggregate M/E ratios, compared to the other three countries. Sweden has had very high party membership rates, partly due to the social democratic party's, S, strong ties to trade unions until the 1990s. The figure also confirms, once more, earlier research conducted on aggregate party membership figures, as it shows a decline for all of them especially since the beginning of the 1990s.

⁵⁴ The precise sources are reported in the codebook in the appendix to chapter 1. Note that whenever annual data on the size of the electorate was not available, election years were taken and annual data were obtained through interpolation.

⁵⁵ Parties have incentives to exaggerate their membership figures in order to appear as having a stronger hold in society (see Mair and van Biezen, 2001). Additionally, the parties' methods of registering members have also been less systematic in the past than they are now. Both aspects pose threats to the reliability of official party membership records. There are several reasons to use these data nevertheless. Firstly, they come from the official annual financial reports, signed off by the treasurer and an external auditor. Every inaccuracy detected therein would not only lead to serious political consequences for a party but would also entail legal actions. Secondly, even if parties are overstating their number of members they are presumably doing this all to a similar extent. This means the trend can still be considered without running into big reliability problems. The only other source of data – reported membership in surveys – also carries threats to reliability, while the data simultaneously are not fit to test party-level theories of over-time change.

Figure 4.1. Aggregate M/E ratios per country.

However, once the trajectories are disaggregated and examined on the party-level, a slightly more nuanced development in membership size can be observed especially for some parties. An overview of all the parties included can be found in Table 1.1 of chapter 1. It also reports the parties' year of foundation as well as their respective family. There are several parties which run counter the common downward trend. Figure 4.2 depicts, for example, all those parties in the Netherlands that have been maintaining at least a rather stable membership size (measured again in M/E ratios) between 1960 and 2010. In most cases, however, these parties have undergone membership growth during this period. Note that these are all parties newly founded between 1960 and 2010. They include the GL with an increase of 0.2 percentage points between 1990 (0.14) and 2010 (0.16). The D66 and SP have had an impressive rise, increasing their M/E ratios by 0.12 (1966: 0.02; 2010: 0.14) and 0.24 (1992: 0.13, 2010: 0.37) percentage points, respectively. Next to those, the figure also shows the development of membership size for the SGP, which has remained remarkably stable over time. Compared to the aggregate-level decline of party membership in the Netherlands, as displayed in Figure 4.1, these trends in some parties' membership sizes are noteworthy.

Figure 4.2. Party-level M/E ratios for selected parties in the Netherlands.

Equally, the downward trend in Danish membership figures on the aggregate-level veils some success stories. Figure 4.3 depicts the trajectories of those parties. The F has had a rather turbulent history in terms of its membership size with a considerable amount of fluctuations around a value of 0.18 M/E ratios. Yet, in most recent years its membership size has taken a leap, almost doubling in size (2010: 0.41). In addition, the newer Danish parties, O (1995: 0.01, 2010: 0.25) and Ø (1992: 0.02, 2010: 0.11), have been increasing their membership base substantially since they started out in the 1990s.

Figure 4.3. Party-level M/E ratios for selected parties in Denmark.

Other countries also include success stories related to party-level membership size that is usually hidden by the common country-trend, as reported in Figure 4.1. Figure 4.4 shows those parties that have been experiencing upward shifts in any of the other countries. They include again ecological parties with the German Grüne, which doubled its M/E ratio since 1980 from 0.04 to 0.08, or the Swedish MP that started with a share of 0.03 in 1981 and reached its highest level in 2010 of 0.2. With its impressive rise the Norwegian Frp (1973: 0.03, 2010: 0.61) also belongs to the group of parties countering the common trend of membership decline, as can be seen from the figure. Since all of these parties still only hold a smaller fraction of the nation's electorate as members, as exemplified in their rather low M/E ratios, their success stories are veiled by the larger parties' losses and thus not observable on the aggregate level. Overall, this smaller but not negligible group of parties (approximately 23 per cent of the sample) opposes the aggregate-level trend of decline and thus also validates the approach of party-level data analysis. However and as mentioned above, a TSCS dataset allows not only mapping parties' individual trajectories but also analysing them simultaneously.

Figure 4.4. Party-level M/E ratios for selected parties in other countries.

In order to determine a party's age for the following analyses, the variable party age (*AGE*) subtracts each year from a party's year of foundation and thereby creates a time-varying variable that has been standardised additionally through z-scores.⁵⁶ As far as party family belonging is concerned, the dataset comprises ten Christian parties, nine liberal and nine social democratic parties, eight communist parties, six conservative parties, three ecological parties, two agrarian parties, and a single right-wing party.

The hypotheses to be tested require an analysis that takes into account individual party trajectories, their commonalities as well as their differences. In the following, a combination of statistical techniques commonly applied to time-series and TSCS data will be used. Firstly, for evaluating individual parties' trajectories separately, percentage changes are computed that summarise the change in M/E ratios from

⁵⁶ As noted in the codebook, establishing a party's age was in most cases straightforward. But whenever a party is a merger of other parties, the year the new party was founded was taken as the year of foundation, unless the new party was a direct successor of a previous party. Parties are defined as new, if they are organisationally new (Bolleyer and Bytcek, 2013: 778). In the case of the Liberal Democrats (UK) the year of foundation of the Liberal Party, 1859, was used because the Liberal Party formed first an alliance with the SDP before formally renaming itself to the Liberal Democrats. Similarly, The Left (Germany) considers itself as a direct successor of the PDS (founded 1989), which was formally dissolved in 2007 to form The Left.

one year to the next in percentages. For each party, i , the percentage change, pc , in its M/E ratio, ME , over two consecutive time-points is calculated with formula (1):

$$pc_{i,t=2} = (ME_{i,t=2} - ME_{i,t=1}) / ME_{i,t=1} * 100 \quad (1)$$

This means that a time-series of 51 party-years (1960-2010) produces 50 percentage changes in total. Each percentage change marks a party's growth – positive or negative – relative to the previous time-point. The average of all percentage changes per party, over a time-series, marks the average annual growth, i.e. the growth rate. By way of averaging annual percentage changes per party age, or according to party family, **H1** and **H2** are tested, respectively.

In the second step, the hypotheses are tested using multilevel modelling.⁵⁷ Multilevel modelling serves the current purpose particularly well as it allows a nested structure, where each party's observations between 1960 and 2010 fall on the level-1 part of the model. Parties as a set of observations fall on the level-2 part, which, in turn are nested in party systems on the third level. The rationale of such an approach is that within-party differences can be distinguished from between-party differences over time. Instead of separately modelling within- and between-party effects, multilevel models can accomplish this simultaneously. It yields the overall benefit of being able to model party-specific growth curves (see Hox, 2010).

For the multilevel analyses the variable of M/E ratios is taken as the dependent variable, while the reported results successively display the impact of time, a squared polynomial of time, a standardised measure of party age, and party family belonging. The variable of time is included as a predictor to the growth model in order to model development over time. It is clocked in five-year periods to avoid multicollinearity,⁵⁸ and since the pattern of membership over time does not show to be linear, a second-order polynomial is included as well. Except for party family, variables are included in the level-1 part of the model. The categorical variable party family is added to the level-2 model as a cross-level interaction with time. This way it is possible to assess whether or not party family belonging has varying effects on M/E ratios over time. All models are estimated using maximum likelihood in order to also compare fixed effects across models (Singer and Willett, 2003).⁵⁹

⁵⁷ The models are estimated using the *lme4* (version October 25, 2013) package (Bates et al., 2013) in *R* (version 3.0.2, 2013-09-25).

⁵⁸ I am grateful that Henk van der Kolk pointing out this problem.

⁵⁹ Full maximum likelihood (ML) estimation assumes that errors are normally distributed with zero mean and unknown variance (Singer and Willett, 2003; Hox, 2010). This is particularly important for the estimation of random parameters. However, violations of this assumption do not affect the estimation of fixed parameters (Maas and Hox, 2004). For this current purpose, only the fixed

Multilevel models assume that random effects are mutually independent across measurement points and parties, as well as identically distributed. However, since the data are longitudinal this assumption cannot be upheld (Hox, 2010; Singer and Willett, 2003). A party's value at time-point T_1 is most likely dependent on its previous value at T_0 .⁶⁰ It implies that residuals are more likely to be independent and normally distributed across parties, yet not within. Within parties, it should be the case that residuals are heteroscedastic and autocorrelated. However, standard multilevel modelling does not take this feature into account. Estimating a different error covariance matrix, for example, can handle this problem (Hox, 2010; Singer and Willett, 2003). Modelling a residual error structure over time entails considering every single measurement occasion (here: 51 years) in the model. In other words, a saturated model would need to estimate a covariance matrix that includes 1,326 terms.⁶¹ While this model would appropriately estimate the error structure, considering the special character of the longitudinal data at hand, it would be a very complex model according to the random effects. Alternatively, including time and polynomials of time as variables into the random effects part of the model allows random slopes to vary over time. This, in turn, addresses parts of the restricted assumption made by the standard model and estimates the error covariance structure more appropriately (Hox, 2010). Estimating this simpler model is here preferable, especially if specifying the correct error covariance matrix is only important for the random effects, yet not for the fixed effects; the fixed effects, which are of ultimate interest here, are unaffected by the character of the error covariance structure (Hox, 2010: 103; Singer and Willett, 2003: 257).

To evaluate each of the models, different parameters are at hand: overall model fit (goodness-of-fit statistics), variance components, and fixed effects. Because the goal of this analysis is to explore membership trajectories of individual parties, it is the fixed effects that the following discussion will focus on. More precisely, it is to be expected that a growth model including only time-related predictors confirms the commonly found trend in membership decline. Further, it should be the case that party age has, on average, a negative effect on membership ratios. At the same time, including party age into the model should alter the coefficient on time. That would be additional indication for party age having a varying effect on membership development. The dataset also comprises a number of new parties⁶² ($N = 17$) that, according to the life-cycle approach, should display growth patterns during their early years. However, as mentioned in the introductory chapter, there is an inbuilt

parameters are of interest so that the assumption made by maximum likelihood was not tested as to its validity.

⁶⁰ I am grateful that Paul Kellstedt pointed out this problem.

⁶¹ This follows from the following formula: $k(k+1)/2$, where k are the number of measurement occasions (see Hox, 2010: 101).

⁶² Splinter parties as a subset of new parties are not truly new and are thus more likely to already possess a membership base. However, the dataset does not include any.

bias in the dataset in the sense that it only tracks parties that made it into parliament and that sustained themselves for at least three consecutive electoral cycles. In that sense, all new parties covered by the data have passed the threshold of representation and relevance or stabilisation. This particular feature, however, allows testing for whether or not parties grow in membership size during these life-cycle phases. It is expected that party age has a positive effect on all new parties covered by the dataset during their first 15 years in parliament.⁶³ In the second analytical step, parties' percentage changes are assessed. Here, with increasing age parties should display a more negative growth. More recently founded parties, on the other hand, should again show membership growth.

For testing **H2**, the mediator variable of party family is recoded into several dummy variables. Successively, ecological, social democratic, and Christian family dummies are incorporated into the model as well as their cross-level interaction with time. Since the dataset only includes a single right-wing party (the Danish People's Party; O), the analysis is restricted to parties of the above three party families. The model including ecological party family as a mediator should show a positive relationship between time and M/E ratio, while the models containing the social democratic and Christian dummy should both report an even stronger negative relationship compared to the growth model. Here again, percentage changes and growth rates supplement and substantiate the analyses. Ecological parties should show positive growth rates while social democratic and Christian parties should yield negative ones. A correlation matrix of all the variables used can be found in the appendix to this chapter.

4.4. Results

Several multilevel models have been fitted to the data. For any of the subsequent models an analysis of influential groups is conducted. The Swedish S is a highly influential group due to its strong membership base. It can be considered a regression outlier, defined as displaying unusual values of the dependent variable, conditional on values of the independent variable (Andersen, 2008). In such a case,

⁶³ To allow tracking the entire membership development, new parties are defined as those that were founded during the period of study, 1960-2010. As an exception to this, the Danish Socialist People's Party (F), founded 1959, is also included because its entire lifespan thus far is covered by the dataset. A total of 16 parties are included in this subset. For those parties, only the first 15 years of their trajectory is analysed. The threshold of 15 years has been selected in accordance with the case-selection criterion of being a party that once played a relevant and enduring role in politics, where enduring was defined in terms of three consecutive electoral cycles. Depending on the length of the electoral cycle, these correspond at most to 15 years.

the regression line is substantially influenced. The S, as a group, meets these characteristics and thus is excluded from the multilevel analysis.⁶⁴

The results are displayed in Table 4.1, showing the unconditional growth model, Model 1, and the growth model with a second-order polynomial, Model 2, in the first two columns. According to the over-all fit statistics the model including the higher-order term is the better fit for the data. It suggests that membership figures do not follow a linear trend. The coefficients on the time parameters indicate that the included parties' trajectories are on average u-shaped, albeit not all coefficients are significant. The estimated turning point lies at period 12, which equals years 2015-2019.⁶⁵ and means that the estimated upward shifts in membership size lay in the future. Supporting earlier findings, it means that also on the basis of party-level data M/E ratios have been dropping on average since the 1960s in the 46 parties under study.⁶⁶

Turning to the hypothesis tests, **H1** proposed that party age as a proxy for party institutionalisation predicts membership size. The results are displayed in Model 3 of Table 4.1 and indicate that party age might indeed be a predictor of membership ratios as shown in the significant coefficient on party age. As expected, a party's age is negatively related to its M/E ratio, yet not statistically significant. The effect size is an estimated 0.05 M/E ratios per one standard deviation increase in party age. In other words, with every increase in a party age by one standard deviation the M/E ratio drops by 0.05. In addition, it was expected that controlling for age would alter the coefficient on time compared to the growth model to indicate varying effects of party age. This is also supported by the data. Model 4 reports the results for the subset of newly founded parties during the period of study and their membership development over the first 15 years in parliament.⁶⁷ It covers 16 parties and 180 party-year observations. As expected it shows a positive coefficient on party age, which suggests that a party's early life-cycle phase is a positive predictor of membership size. However, the results are again not statistically significant. Overall, party age shows to be a negative predictor of membership development, once the entire sample is considered. After controlling for party age, the coefficient on the linear time parameter also changes, compared to the growth model. Additionally, even though the results were not statistically significant, the expected positive

⁶⁴ The computation was facilitated by the package *influence.ME* (Nieuwenhuis et al., 2012) in *R*. For measuring the impact of parties on the outcome Cook's distance was evaluated. Put briefly, Cook's distance, D_i , indicates the effect of excluding a particular group or case from the analysis. All parties, except for the Swedish S display values around or slightly above 0 whereas the S yields a value of above 4.

⁶⁵ With the variable of time being clocked in five-year periods, a period of value 12 refers to the years 2015-2019.

⁶⁶ This effect would only be stronger, had the S been included.

⁶⁷ A simple growth model without a second-order polynomial presented the better fit for the data, according to the goodness-of-fit statistics.

effect for parties' early life-phase was found. This provides further indication that membership size is part of a party's life-cycle.

4 – Party Membership across Western Europe

Table 4.1. Multilevel models; M/E ratio as dependent variable (n = 1,607; N = 46).

Note. p-values: ~ p < .10; * p < .05; ** < .01; *** < .001. Standard errors are in parentheses.

			df = 1554		df = 1553		df = 1552		df = 162		df = 1553		df = 1553		df = 1553	
			<i>Growth models</i>				<i>Life-cycle</i>				<i>Party family effect</i>					
			Model 1	Model 2			Model 3	Model 4			Model 5	Model 6			Model 7	
Fixed effects																
	intercept	γ_{00}	1.53 *** (0.29)	1.79 *** (0.36)			1.71 *** (0.30)	0.42 * (0.22)			1.87 *** (0.35)	1.53 *** (0.36)			1.89 *** (0.42)	
	TIME	γ_{10}	-0.14 *** (0.03)	-0.24 (0.3)			-0.22 * (0.1)	-0.01 (0.02)			-0.24 (0.32)	-0.21 * (0.09)			-0.01 (0.05)	
	TIME^2	γ_{20}		0.01 (0.03)			0.01 (0.01)				0.01 (0.03)	0.01 (0.01)			0.01 (0.01)	
	AGE	γ_{30}					-0.05 (0.04)	0.11 (0.09)								
	ECO	γ_{40}									-1.68 ~ (0.98)					
	SOC	γ_{50}										1.06 ~ (0.64)				
	CHR	γ_{60}													-0.5 (0.52)	
	ECO*TIME	γ_{70}									0.13 (0.09)					
	SOC*TIME	γ_{80}										-0.08 (0.05)				
	CHR*TIME	γ_{90}													0.06 (0.04)	
Variance components																
Level 1	Within-unit	σ^2_e	0.12	0.05			0.06	0.00			0.05	0.05			0.05	
Level 2	var intercept	σ^2_0	3.73	5.65			3.67	0.36			5.10	5.04			6.55	
	var slope	σ^2_1	0.05	4.00			0.42	0.00			4.67	0.30			13.28	
	cov intercept	σ_{01}	-0.88	-0.85			-0.87	-0.92			-0.84	-0.84			-0.86	
Quadratic term	var slope	σ^2_2		0.03			0.00				0.04	0.00			0.11	
	cov intercept	σ_{02}		0.82			0.79				-0.81	0.68			0.84	
	cov linear slope	σ_{12}		-1.00			-0.99				-1.00	-0.97			-1.00	
Goodness of fit																
	logLik		-800	-253			-200	-488			-1871	-187			--282	
	AIC		1614	526			421	474			3767	398			588	
	BIC		1646	580			480	452			3832	462			653	

To further substantiate these findings, percentage changes per age group are analysed. Parties are divided into three groups according to their year of foundation: ‘old’ refers to parties being founded before the end of World War 2 ($N = 22$), ‘middle’ to parties being founded after World War 2 ($N = 18$), and ‘young’ to parties being founded after 1980 ($N = 7$). The decision as to who would make up the youngest group was guided by a trade-off between only including the youngest cohort while simultaneously including a reasonable number of parties. So, a thirty-year span prior to 2010 seemed reasonable to meet the trade-off. Restricting the group of young parties to a foundation year as late as 1990, would have excluded five of the seven parties. Therefore, the choice was made to set 1980 as the cut-off point for the group of younger parties. For the following analysis two individual observations are excluded: the Swedish S’ value in 1991 and Dutch D66’s in 1974. In those years the parties’ percentage changes were extraordinarily high with -210 and -1,926, respectively, due to heavy drops in the membership rate from one year to the next. The reasons for these decreases lay in exceptional contextual circumstances that warrant excluding these cases in order to single out a more general trend.⁶⁸ Figure 4.5 shows the development of percentage changes per age group.

Figure 4.5. Parties’ percentage changes per age group.

⁶⁸ In 1990, the S voided their cooperation with trade unions that had made the latter's members automatically enrolled in the S. As for the D66, election results in 1974 put the party into a state of crisis and as a consequence many members left.

What can be derived from the figure is that the age of a party might indeed provide further information on which parties are most likely affected by membership decline. The group of old parties almost consistently yields average negative percentage changes in membership ratios between 1960 and 2010. In comparison, parties having been founded after World War 2 but before 1980, labelled ‘middle’, had a very mixed history. In the late 1960s they had high losses due to the Danish SF’s loss of more than 2,500 out of 7,500 members, followed by several years of straight gains (mid-1970s). The 1980s and 1990s can be characterised again as decline-years for middle-aged parties. But since the late 1990s, those parties have mostly been gaining again in their aggregate share of party members. The group of young parties also experienced larger fluctuations throughout, yet recording almost exclusively positive values in the last 20 years.

The graphs support the hypothesis that party age predicts the development of membership size. Older parties yield almost consistently negative percentage changes, while the middle-aged parties and younger parties do remarkably better. In support of this point, old parties yield a growth rate of -3.46 (standard deviation = 2.03), middle-aged parties of -0.43 (standard deviation = 5.70) and young parties of 0.60 (standard deviation = 16.04). This means that parties founded before 1945, for example, have been annually losing on average 3.46 per cent in their M/E ratio over the period 1960-2010. Performing comparison of means tests between these averages shows that the difference between ‘old’ and ‘middle’ is statistically significant (p-value = 0.00). Other differences in group means were not significant. Note again, however, that due to the case selection criteria, young parties included in the dataset mark success stories of party entry and survival. Nevertheless, it appears that the hypothesis pertaining to life-cycle effects of parties finds some support in the data. Older parties have significantly more negative growth rates than middle-aged parties. Younger parties do not differ significantly from the other two groups. If party age is considered a proxy for party institutionalisation, these results suggest that the more consolidated and established parties are, the fewer members they have.⁶⁹

Finally, the analyses of mediating effects of party family belonging show that none of the interaction terms are significant (Models 5, 6 and 7 in Table 4.1). It means that none of the hypothesised party families have a mediating effect on the relationship between time and membership ratios. Also, the combinations of coefficients across

⁶⁹ Instead of considering party age a proxy for party institutionalisation, age could also be considered a proxy for the emergence of specific social cleavages. In such a case, the conclusion to draw from the results is that the older the cleavages are that parties are standing for, the more heavily they are affected by membership decline. And while, for instance, social democratic or Christian parties were mostly founded at the turn of the 19th century, newer parties supporting these cleavages also emerge, such as the Danish social democratic party, CD, or the Swedish Christian party, KD. In comparison, considering party age as a proxy for levels of party institutionalisation, as opposed to the emergence of social cleavage, appears to be the more plausible conception.

interaction models are not all in the expected direction. They indicate, for example, a negative effect for ecological parties that is flattening over time. This result runs counter to the expectation, as it means that, over time, being an ecological party has had a negative effect on the M/E ratio, as can be seen from the negative coefficient on ecological party belonging. Admittedly, this effect is flattening over time, as indicated by the positive coefficient on the interaction term. Again, none of these coefficients are significant. However, note that the cross-level interactions improve the over-all fit in the models on social democratic and Christian parties. Letting party family belonging exert varying effects over time fits the data better in those two cases. Overall, according to the multilevel analysis little support can be found for **H2**.⁷⁰ Ecological parties are not significantly less affected by membership decline. In addition, social democratic as well as Christian parties are not significantly more affected. There appear to be no significant differences in membership decline across party families.

Figure 4.6. Parties' percentage changes per party family belonging (Chr; Soc; Eco).

⁷⁰ As way of testing the robustness of results, the models were also estimated using restricted maximum likelihood. The results do not differ in substance from those returned by ML estimators, except for the model testing for age effects. Here, the coefficient on age is not only negative but also significant at the 10 per cent level.

Figure 4.7. Parties' percentage changes per party family belonging (Com; Con; Lib).

Turning to the time-series analysis of **H2**, Figure 4.6 and Figure 4.7 report the aggregated percentage change for two sets of party families: firstly, Christian, social democratic, ecological parties; and secondly, conservative, liberal, and communist parties. The two outlier values of S in 1991 and of D66 in 1974 are again excluded, due to their exceptional circumstances that produced them. Overall, the figures show that party membership development varies considerably over different party families. Specifically, for the three hypothesised party families the figure shows interesting patterns. Parties belonging to the ecological party family have experienced considerable fluctuation especially in the earlier years (Figure 4.6). The extreme peaks are a result of strong membership recruitment of the German Grüne and Swedish MP between 1981 and 1982, immediately followed by heavy losses in the MP between 1982 and 1983 when it lost 3,300 of their 5,800 members. Despite these fluctuations in the early years of ecological parties, it should be noted that this is the only party family which has experienced more often positive percentage changes since the mid-1990s. In comparison, over the entire period of analysis the social democratic party family has only had straight gains in the mid-1960s and 1970s. Thereafter, the average percentage changes are continuously negative, up to a value of -8 (1995). Only for the very last change between 2009 and 2010 can a positive value be found again. This change in trajectory is due to the British Labour Party's gains in membership of around 0.08 percentage points in M/E ratios from one year to the next. Likewise, the graph shows that Christian parties have been continuously experiencing negative percentage changes since the 1980s. It means that just like the social democratic parties in the sample, the ten Christian parties

have been unceasingly losing more members than they could newly recruit since the 1980s. However, since then, other party families have also experienced such a decline. The graphs indicate that a similar pattern also applies to parties belonging to liberal and conservative party families (Figure 4.7). This also validates the earlier finding of the multilevel models. Counter the expectation, membership decline does not differ significantly depending on party family belonging.

Inspecting the growth rates per party, as displayed in Table 4.2, confirms these results. The table displays average percentage changes per party family over the period of study, as well as their standard deviation. Again, negative growth rates indicate that the party family has had on average a negative growth (i.e. loss) in M/E ratios. A high standard deviation suggests a scattered distribution around the average that potentially includes outliers. Comparatively, the values show that ecological parties are the only ones having a positive growth rate of 1.3 per cent annually between 1981 and 2010, while all other party families yield negative values between 1960 and 2010. As far as the social democratic parties are concerned, their growth rates range roughly amongst those of the other party families, once the two outliers of S in 1991 and D66 in 1974 are discarded. Likewise, the Christian parties' growth rates are not beyond the ordinary in comparison to other party families. Overall, these results are not supportive of **H2** either. The multilevel models did not return any statistically significant results and the time-series analyses corroborate this finding as several party families are negatively affected in their M/E ratios. Yet, results of both analytical steps show that ecological parties are gaining, on average, in membership, which is in line with Delwit's (2011) findings. To verify and relate Delwit's findings to the first hypothesis pertaining to age, party characteristics need to be reviewed for potential correlations. Ecological parties, for example, tend to be younger than parties of other party families (Delwit, 2011).

Table 4.2. Party membership growth rates and standard deviations per party family.

	Chr	Soc	Soc w/o outliers	Lib	Com	Con	Eco
Growth rate	-2.15	-7.71	-1.68	-2.97	-1.26	-3.15	1.30
Standard deviation	4.29	38.12	4.57	3.81	6.61	8.91	18.22

4.5. Summary and conclusion

This chapter set out to evaluate party membership decline over a period of 50 years taking 47 individual parties as units of analyses across six Western European countries. It departed from the observation that most existing analyses on membership and the decline thereof use aggregate measures and/or only few time-

points. While these measurement decisions may be tenable with regards to the respective research question asked, they are ill-suited for providing a test of party-level theories of development. However, this is a necessary part of better understanding and eventually explaining the phenomenon of decline. In an attempt to provide a test of party-level theories pertaining to membership decline, the chapter analysed a total of 1,654 observations using techniques of time-series and TSCS analyses otherwise only known from other research fields. In doing so, the goal was two-fold: firstly, to evaluate whether the decline trend commonly found on the aggregate level is also substantiated using party-level data; and secondly, in order to move beyond the general trend, party-level hypotheses pertaining to party age and party family belonging were tested to elucidate on patterns of membership decline.

While previous aggregate-level findings of an overall decline were validated once more, a sizeable group of parties is withstanding this common trend. At least ten parties (Denmark: F, O, Ø; Germany: Grüne; Netherlands: GL, D66, SP, SGP; Norway: Frp; Sweden: KD, MP) could be identified as not having experienced membership decline during the period of study. In addition, the Dutch SGP was found to have retained rather stable figures throughout. In total, these exceptions to the general rule of thumb of membership decline are equal to around 23 per cent of the entire sample. It appears that there are more success-stories than aggregated data could possibly show, considering the large losses other parties have experienced. Nonetheless, the analysis also supports earlier findings. The more fine-grained data – disaggregated and on an annual basis – corroborate the average trend of membership decline in the 47 parties. Further, through calculating growth rates and estimating multilevel models it was found that a party's age, as a proxy for party institutionalisation, plays a role in explaining membership decline. More precisely, the models provide mild support for the idea that the more consolidated parties are the fewer members they hold. In support of this, statistically significant results were found through time-series analyses, indicating that parties founded before 1945 are, on average, more affected in their growth rate than parties founded between 1945 and 1980. And lastly, while some party families appear to be more heavily affected by membership decline than others, no significant differences were detected. Parties across party families are negatively impacted by membership decline. Yet, it is noteworthy, that the ecological party family was the only one yielding positive growth rates, on average.

The findings of this chapter mean that the development of party membership in Western Europe is a more complex story than existing studies and analyses suggest. Parties in Western Europe are differently affected by membership decline; a non-negligible group is not affected at all. The chapter also confirmed earlier empirical evidence pertaining to aggregate membership decline. The foregoing analysis also showed that party age, as a proxy for party institutionalisation, might play a bigger role in explaining the share of citizens a party holds as members. It appears that

membership decline is part of a party's life-cycle, in such a way that the more consolidated parties are, the fewer members they have. Similar to this finding, Scarrow (2000: 85) suggests that membership decline can also be seen as a sign of 'increasing efficiency of central party organizations'. However, despite this pattern, the overall trend is still one of decline. In light of these findings, the next chapter is going to lay out a theoretical and conceptual framework of party organisational response to cope with this grave challenge of declining membership figures.

Appendix

Table 4.3. Correlation matrix of variables.

Note. Entries display Pearson's coefficients.

	M/E	TIME	TIME^2	AGE	ECO	SOC	CHR
M/E	1						
TIME	-0.27	1					
TIME^2	-0.26	0.98	1				
AGE	0.29	0.21	0.21	1			
ECO	-0.11	0.15	0.14	-0.26	1		
SOC	0.32	-0.06	-0.06	0.25	-0.12	1	
CHR	-0.09	-0.06	-0.06	-0.25	-0.11	-0.26	1

5 – Party organisations and theories of organisational change⁷¹

The last chapter showed that Western European parties have on average been losing members between 1960 and 2010. In fact, the vast majority of the 47 parties analysed lost a substantial number of members during the last decades, in absolute terms as well as relative to the total electorate. Researchers maintain frequently that members present a valuable resource to political parties (Detterbeck, 2005; Jun, 2010; Katz, 1990; Klein et al., 2011; Mair and Marsh, 2004; Scarrow, 1996; Webb, 2002b; van Biezen et al., 2012). One of the membership loss arguments most often put forward is that of legitimacy; in that the argument echoes classic writings on party organisations. In the early days of mass parties, Michels (1911: 352) observed that parties take pride in having large numbers of members, voters, and mandates and consider it politically prestigious to maintain each of these on a large scale.⁷² Similarly, Blondel (1978: 145) maintains that ‘individual membership is viewed as the basis and main characteristic of modern political parties’. According to him (1978: 137), a larger organisation is beneficial to the parties’ performance because it provides a greater capacity to fulfil the basic requirements of a party organisation – representation and mobilisation.⁷³

If parties indeed value members so much, as suggested by classic and contemporary researchers, it prompts the question of how parties actually react to this grave challenge of a diminishing resource of members. For parties are ‘strategic actors’ (Mair, 1994: 1) and ‘independent actors in their own right’ (Mair, 1993: 1). However, little research exists on this issue. In fact, Mair et al. (2004b: 2) maintain for the case of voter loyalties to parties that ‘surprisingly little attention has been paid to the question of how political parties have responded to this decline’. In a similar vein, empirical and theoretical knowledge on how parties respond to membership decline is scarce. Some have argued that existing theoretical and conceptual research on party organisations has, to this point, been joined to a limited extent (see for instance Harmel, 2002; Mair et al., 2004c; Schlesinger, 1984; Wiesendahl, 2010).

However, general theories of how party organisations change, and what drives their change exist. Lately, they have gained in prominence because scholars see party organisational change as an indicator or even determinant of democratic change (see Allern and Pedersen, 2007). As permanent institutions, irrespective of electoral

⁷¹ A previous version of this chapter was presented at the Department of Political Science, University of Oslo, 13 November 2012. I would like to thank Elin Allern, Knut Heidar, Anders Ravik Jupskås, and Rune Karlsen for their comments and advice.

⁷² In his own words Michels (1911: 352) observed the following: ‘Jede Einbuße an Mitgliedern wie an Stimmen, ja selbst an Mandaten, schwächt ihr [das der Sozialdemokratie] politisches Prestige.’

⁷³ Blondel (1978: 138) also admits that even though size is an important factor in a party’s task performance it is not the only one. So, size and task performance cannot necessarily be described through a linear relationship.

success or failure, party organisations ensure an enduring connection between citizens, politics, and the state. Next to the state, they are responsible for the organisation of democracy and the structuring of politics beyond elections. This important role has made party organisational structures, resources, and their respective developments repetitive subjects of political science research since Ostrogorsky (1902) and Michels (1911). In principle, general theories of party change suggest three explanatory approaches. Firstly, the *life-cycle* approach predicts that a party's age or level of institutionalisation is one of the main driving forces for organisational change. Secondly, the so-called *system-level trends* approach maintains that party organisations within the same party system develop similarly and resemble each other more as time proceeds, making system-belonging the main explanation. And thirdly, the *discrete change* approach says that party organisational development is more erratic and largely driven by electoral results and leadership behaviour. The approaches need not necessarily be seen as competing theories about causes of change (Harmel, 2002). However, since they each yield different implications for how party organisations will develop and thus also democracy at large, it is still important to test them against each other.

So far, the combination of theoretical and conceptual incoherence, on the one hand, and limited available data resources, on the other hand, has limited the comparative study of general theories of change, as well as the effects of membership size more specifically. Ever since Katz and Mair's (1992b) efforts of collecting and providing comprehensive party organisational data and their resulting dissemination, large-scale, comparative, and quantitative analyses have been scarce. While causal analyses of individual aspects of the party organisation have been undertaken since the early 1990s, comprehensive comparative accounts on party organisational development and its causes are rare (for an exception see Krouwel, 2012).⁷⁴ This chapter lays out a theoretical and conceptual framework for the study of party organisational change and response. It draws a major distinction between general theories of change and membership size as a specific trigger of change; the latter is founded on some important assumptions.

The argument is structured as follows. Section one argues for the importance of studying party organisations and their development for democracy. Section two then provides a conceptualisation of the party organisation that concludes in the *party in central office*. In sections three and four, party organisational models and their implications are elaborated on. It is argued that the *party as a business* offers an ideal conception of the party in central office and its goals, motives, and behaviour. This implies a *resource-based view* and *strategic-actor view* as important conceptual prerequisites for the study of party responses to membership decline specifically. Section five outlines the precise operationalization of the concept party

⁷⁴ Krouwel, however, takes party families or countries as units of analysis and not individual parties.

in central office before section six parses out the different theoretical expectations pertaining to party organisational change and responses. This includes general theories of change, as well as a theory on party membership size as a specific trigger for change. A final section summarises the argument and findings.

5.1. Party organisational development and democracy

As permanent institutions for structuring and organising democracy, party organisations change and adapt constantly to new challenges (Mair, 1998; Mair et al., 2004b). However, unlike other permanent democratic institutions, party organisations are operating in a market-like environment, competing with others. As a consequence, they purposefully change in order to improve their effectiveness (Harmel, 2002: 119). Or put differently, adaptation is forced upon them in order to secure survival (Lawson and Merkl, 1988; Lipset and Rokkan, 1967). The underlying rationale is that changing and supposedly improving organisational features can possibly bring about a competitive advantage in relation to other parties. For example, staff of a party organisation could hypothesise that higher spending for the election campaign can improve the results obtained on election day itself. If spare money for campaigning expense is not readily available the party organisation needs to change or adapt its organisational features in the hope of making money available. This adaptive skill of parties is also the core theme of eight country chapters included in the edited volume *Political Parties & Electoral Change* (Mair et al., 2004c). The editors conclude that while parties have changed in different dimensions (organisational features, policy-positions, or electoral target group) the commonalities in change are in fact larger in number than the variation between and within countries (Mair et al., 2004a: 268). Other studies also found empirical evidence for the parties' capabilities of changing and adjusting to new circumstances. Farrell and Webb (2000), for example, show how party organisations in Europe have changed their campaigning strategies and the resources used in order to accommodate new technical and also social changes. Equally, Scarrow et al. (2000) demonstrate in a longitudinal analysis of intra-party democracy procedures that party organisations have adapted to the more participatory demands of citizens in recent years. What these studies have in common is an understanding that party change and adaptation is not a process that just happens to parties; an intended and purposeful decision is usually preceding it. As Mair (1998: 16) puts it: 'Adaptation here is the key to survival, for without it the party risks decline and decay.' More immediately, if party organisations do not adapt they might be outrun by competitors. But given party organisations' paramount and permanent role in the democratic process, party change not only has consequences for the individual party or its competition with others but also for the democratic system as a whole.

From the perspective of democratic theory, party organisations' tight bonds to the democratic process make the study of their development, particularly in terms of direction and magnitude important topics of scientific inquiry (Allern and Pedersen, 2007). Parties and party organisations emerged and have evolved in order to promote citizen interests, and accordingly, parties are supposed to serve primarily citizens (see Muirhead, 2006; Rosenblum, 2008; Urbinati, 2011). Party organisational features that run counter to this ideal can be considered problematic from a democratic theory perspective,⁷⁵ as this can imply that democratic self-rule stops during the phase of handling and representing citizen demands within the party organisation.⁷⁶ Most famously, Michels (1911) was concerned about intra-party democracy's failing in promoting direct member participation, which according to him made democracy as a whole unachievable (see also Teorell, 1999). In addition to features of intra-party democracy, the recent increase in state subsidies granted to parties in Western democracies has especially made researchers raise concerns about party organisational development. A growth in state subsidies is considered problematic as this can make party organisations more entangled with the state at the expense of civil society (Katz and Mair, 1995; Nassmacher, 2002, 2003b; van Biezen, 2008). As the financial support by the state grows in size and proportion, party organisations are becoming financially independent from private sources of income.⁷⁷ Intra-party democracy or public subsidies are just two examples of how party organisational features relate to the wider democratic process.

More generally, any party organisational change that drives parties away from civil society and towards the state makes parties promoters of the state and not of citizens (see for instance van Biezen, 2004). From a democratic-ideal perspective, one of the potential consequences is that citizens are only seemingly represented by independent parties, governing and controlling the state, but in reality, parties are already part of the state themselves. Therefore, structures and resources of party organisations, in general, and their respective developments are a research topic not only important for understanding party competition and the dynamics of politics, but also and possibly more importantly, for evaluating of democracy itself (see Pierre and Widfeldt, 1994: 332f).

⁷⁵ However, an elitist model of democracy would oppose to this. According to Schumpeter (1943: 295), citizens only serve the purpose of electing representatives; after Election Day, citizens have no business in the democratic process. Hence, it may be argued that in an elitist conception of democracy, the role of party organisations and their intra-party democracy is less important.

⁷⁶ In contrast, Schattschneider (1942: 60; emphasis in original) argues that '[d]emocracy is not to be found *in* the parties but *between* the parties'.

⁷⁷ In a similar vein, any change that concludes in tightening bonds with special interest groups is considered problematic (see Allern, 2010).

5.2. Conceptualising the party organisation

In a study of party organisations, Angelo Panebianco (1988: xi) highlights the organisation's importance as the unit of analysis and the research field's underdevelopment in relation to other areas of political science.

'As the systematic approach (in its broadest sense) became dominant amongst social scientists, party systems became more important than individual parties in the ranking of the scholars' interests. This understanding of political processes has thus gone a long way forward. However, something has been lost: namely the awareness that whatever else parties are and to whatever other solicitation they respond, they are above all organizations and that organizational analysis must therefore come before any other perspective.'

Panebianco puts his finger onto the right spot, it seems, because alongside his plea came a revival of research on party organisations with the theoretical and conceptual advances made by scholars such as Janda (1983), Joseph Schlesinger (1984), Panebianco (1988), Strøm (1990), Katz and Mair (1993), Andrew Appleton and Daniel Ward (1997), and Nicole Bolleyer (2012).

Most influentially for the conceptualisation of party organisations, Katz and Mair (1992a, 1993; Katz, 2002; Mair, 1994: 4) break up the unitary actor assumption of the party organisation and contend that party organisations possess an internal organisation and dynamic of its own. '[A] party is itself a political system' (Katz and Mair, 1992a: 6). The disaggregation of the party organisation into several dimensions enables a more detailed study and further allows the possibility of intra-organisational developments that a unitary actor assumption would potentially cover. Accordingly, and as mentioned in the introductory chapter, the authors propose distinguishing between three faces of the party organisation: the membership organisation (*party on the ground*), the governing organisation (*party in public office*), and the bureaucratic organisation (*party in central office*) (Katz and Mair, 1992a; Katz, 2002; Mair, 1994). Note that although these dimensions are conceptually separate, they intersect frequently in reality. Nonetheless, separating the dimensions analytically has the advantage of studying details of party organisations more systematically, for each face has its own rationale, incentives, and resources. Making this distinction also allows narrowing down the concept of party organisation to that of party in central office for the current purpose. But firstly a brief elaboration on all faces is in order.

The party on the ground pertains to the organisation and participation of party members. This face comprises party members and their influence on party policy and also local branches and venues where participation takes place. It is the part of the party organisation that is characterised by a voluntary and non-professional nature (except for employed party staff at the local level) (Katz and Mair, 1992a; Katz, 2002). Also, it is the part that provides the entire party organisation with external

input through members' participation, either in terms of motions and policy proposals or through candidate selection procedures. In that sense, the party on the ground marks the party organisation's eyes and ears. Its main resources are provided by party members in the form of voluntary labour, money through membership dues, information, and above all, legitimacy (Katz and Mair, 1992a; Katz, 2002). It is mostly the power obtained through legitimacy, however, that provides the party on the ground with a strong bargaining position vis-à-vis the other faces.

In contrast, electoral success secures the party in public office's strength and survival. Unlike party members, members of the party in public office – parliamentarians or city council members – are serving not only the party organisation but also the public as a whole (Katz and Mair, 1992a; Katz, 2002). It is in the party in public office where the idea of the party as a fraction contributing to the whole is most apparent. The party in public office has its organisational home in the parliamentary fraction; its resources are the legal authority and legitimacy granted to its members by electoral success, as well as by public patronage (Katz, 2002).

Lastly, the party in central office is 'the least studied' (Katz and Mair, 1992a: 5) face.⁷⁸ Unlike the party on the ground or the party in public office it has no legitimate leverage based on representation or on policy implementation, respectively. It is primarily aiding and assisting the other two faces. It provides coordination, central communication, and structures to link the faces but also the different hierarchical levels of the party organisation (Katz, 2002: 99). As such, it is the most independent, but also intermediary and mediating force between the party on the ground and the party in public office. It is precisely this role which makes the party in central office so crucial for the entire party organisation.

The interconnections the party in central office holds can be observed in the dependencies it possesses with the other two faces. Income obtained through membership dues, for example, should be attributed to the party on the ground's assets as this is where they are stemming from. But in reality it is a resource most often administered, collected, and distributed by the National Executive Committee (NEC) as part of the party in central office. The same goes for financial resources made available for elections to the party in public office. Campaigning expenditures are necessary for the party in public office's survival but are again administered by the party in central office. These shared or intertwined responsibilities exist also beyond financial resources. As mentioned above, the party on the ground's tasks encompass members' participation in policy proposals and in selecting candidates. Here, the party on the ground intersects with both, the party in public office and party in central office. This is because candidates may eventually become members

⁷⁸ Ever since Katz and Mair's observation, some studies have been conducted on the party in central office (see for instance, Farrell and Webb 2000 and Pedersen 2010), but it arguably still remains the least studied part.

of the party in public office, and the party in central office is at times deciding on the selection procedure for candidate nominations. Overall, Katz (2002: 100) contends that the party in central office takes on an intermediary role by supervising each of the other faces on behalf of the third.

The party in central office primarily comprises the bureaucratic part of the party organisation with the national headquarters as its central unit. Organisationally, it may be divided into the NEC and staff employed by the party. Unlike the party in public office, this face's members, namely bureaucratic and professional staff, often 'live from rather than for politics' (Katz and Mair, 1992a: 5). In that sense, the incentive structure is also different for them: it is one, more oriented towards job security. At the same time, their professional competence and performance in running the party in central office contributes in crucial ways to the electoral success of the entire party organisation and thus eventually aids themselves (Katz, 2002). From this brief description also follows the face's resources of occupying a central network position amongst the other two faces, central communication, professional and (in most cases) policy expertise, control over organisational changes as well as public relations and fund raising (Katz, 2002).

The account of party organisational faces and their relationships shows that each of them has its own rationale and dynamic, and they each relate differently to the other faces. In that sense, breaking up the unitary actor assumption of the party organisation opens up opportunities to study and comprehend the party organisation in its variations and details. At the same time, the description of the faces also shows that the party in central office is the most independent face of the three. The other two faces are dependent on favourable external factors, which are beyond their control. The party on the ground, for example, is dependent on party members and their participation for its survival whereas the party in public office's existence hinges upon a successful election. Due to its permanent and rather independent nature, the party in central office can be most strategic. And it is precisely this feature that makes it well-suited for the study of party organisational change. Therefore, the centre of attention here rests only with the party in central office. Henceforth, for simplicity reasons, the terms party organisation and party in central office are used interchangeably. The party in central office is conceptualised as the permanent, organisational unit usually associated with a parliamentary party, which is responsible for the management of the party during and between elections, comprising resources at the party's disposal to assist the party on the ground's joined effort of winning elections and to provide policy and managerial advice to the party in public office.

5.3. Party organisational models and the party as a business

Party organisational models (POM) need to be distinguished from *party models* (PM). The latter models centre on the classification of parties' relationships to civil society and the state, and they are famously described by Duverger (1964) in the mass party model, by Kirchheimer (1965) in the catch-all party model, or by Katz and Mair (1995) in the cartel party model. According to these models, parties respond to changes in their environment, namely citizens or the state as the two main actors, through influencing their relationship with these actors. POMs, in turn, are sets of assumptions related to the internal workings of party organisations. Triggers of change therein could still be the environment but the reference unit, namely the party organisation, is narrower compared to PMs. Despite the similarities in semantics, the two corresponding literatures on POMs on the one hand, and PMs on the other, differ in the scope of change each set of models covers.

Since the various PMs describe characteristics that evolved through a changing environment, as already mentioned in the introductory chapter, changes in PMs are shaped accordingly. Katz and Mair (1995), for example, describe each PM – the mass party, catch-all party, and cartel party – predominantly as having a different relationship to civil society and the state. Each of these models also covers party organisational characteristics such as party finance or relations between 'ordinary members and party elite' (Katz and Mair, 1995: 18). But the internal structures, processes, or workings of a party organisation are not the primary focus of PMs; rather, the primary focus is the changing relationship between citizens, parties and the state. In contrast, POMs consider only the internal workings of party organisations almost isolated from the party's environment. They are not referring to change over time either. POMs are narrower in their scope and hence more focussed. Therefore, it is important to understand that while the two sets of models are semantically similar, they differ in important ways.

For the purpose of this study only the party organisation as a responding unit is of interest and thus also only POMs. According to Elmar Wiesendahl (2010), modern party politics research distinguishes between the following models of party organisations: *party as a business*, *party as a fighting organisation*, *party as a franchise*, and *party as a stratarchy*, which will be elaborated on shortly.⁷⁹ Despite the models' differences in characteristics and implications, their aim is to bundle a set of basic assumptions about the party organisation's goal, general patterns of centralisation, and nature of decision-making. In doing so, each offers a framework to understand the usage, need, and transfer of resources and structures within the

⁷⁹ Wiesendahl (1998, 2010) himself proposes a new party organisational model called 'organised anarchy'. It combines the idea of defined structures and goal-oriented behaviour with the voluntary aspect of a party organisation, which implies a lot of self-interested behaviour and unaccountability. He argues that this produces tensions within the organisation that it cannot resolve and then the goals become more blurry. This model has not been considered here more extensively because it appears to be unestablished, theoretically and empirically.

party organisation. They do not preclude inter-party or inter-temporal differences but simply outline general characteristics.

For this study the party as a business model, as a conception for the party organisation, is adopted. The party as a business is characteristic of having an instrumental goal-oriented organisation; it follows vote-maximising behaviour based on largely centralised, hierarchical structures when it comes to national issues; it is comprised of a small leading group at the top and a larger, mostly unitary and homogenous membership base at the bottom (see Hopkin and Paolucci, 1999; Schumpeter, 1943; Weber, 1988). It uses modern mass communication techniques and employs professional staff (Hopkin and Paolucci, 1999). With these characteristics the party as a business offers an ideal conception of the party organisation for the study of organisational responses to party membership decline during the period 1960-2010 for several reasons. These reasons can be structured along the following lines: firstly, the inherent logic and goal pursued; secondly, the use of modern technology and professionalised staff; and thirdly, the functioning of intra-party democracy and decision-making processes.

Firstly, the logic and goal pursued, inherent to POMs, makes some models more preferable to others for the study of organisational responses. The party as a business, similar to the party as a fighting organisation and the party as a franchise, follows an instrumental logic of pursuing a goal with necessary means (Carty, 2004; Hopkin and Paolucci, 1999; Michels, 1911; Panebianco, 1988; Weber, 1922; Wiesendahl, 2010). According to this instrumental account, the party organisation is merely a tool in the hands of the organisation's leadership for the structuring of processes, designed for performance development (Deeg and Weibler, 2005: 28). From this follows, the goal pursued by a party organisation is the centre of attention, without which the organisation would not exist; in all three models this is the maximisation of votes, or at least the pursuit of maximising parliamentary representation. The models assume that parties want to gain and increase electoral support on election day and that they adopt necessary means to achieve this goal.⁸⁰ In comparison, the party as a stratararchy follows a systemic-functional logic of an organisation (Wiesendahl, 2010). The idea is that the party is part of society and as such is an 'open, informal, personalized system' (Eldersveld, 1964: 5), reflecting society's diversity. This is also echoed in the organisation's primary purpose of being 'a particular structural response [...] to the needs of the social and political system in a particular milieu' (Eldersveld, 1964: 2). While the idea of a party organisation as an open system and a reflection of society is appealing, it is the characteristic of goal-

⁸⁰ Some might object that party goal research has shown that parties pursue multiple, often incompatible goals, including votes, office goal, policy pursuits and intra-party democracy (Harmel and Janda 1994; Pedersen 2012; Strøm 1990). However, it may be argued that parties will always fall back onto vote-seeking behaviour at last because this is what secures ultimately their survival (cf. Beyme, 1985).

oriented decision-making implemented in the other models that is important for the study of party organisational responses. This is because strategic responses are designed towards a certain goal and therefore also require goal-oriented decision-making (Raschke and Tils, 2007; Schmid and Zolleis, 2005). The party as a strataarchy's logic of an organisation and the goal it pursues is not well-suited for the study of party organisational response. This leaves three models: party as a business, party as a fighting organisation and party as a franchise.

Secondly, the party as a business can be considered the modern version of the party as a fighting organisation. It is also the preferred model among the two because it considers and incorporates aspects of modern party politics. Both share the features of instrumental goal-oriented behaviour, targeted at maximising votes and occupying public offices. Also, the assumed internal processes and structures are alike with more hierarchical decision-making mechanisms and the party membership is a largely unitary, homogenous actor. Both models assume a hierarchical-centralistic structure of the organisation with a group of elites at the top (Blondel, 1978; Downs, 1957; Hopkin and Paolucci, 1999; Michels, 1911; Mommsen, 1981; Schumpeter, 1943; Schlesinger, 1984; Weber, 1922; Wiesendahl, 1998, 2010). But here is where the only, yet negligible, difference between the party as a business and the party as a fighting organisation exists: in the party as a business the group of elites is described as a team of entrepreneurs (Hopkin and Paolucci, 1999; Schumpeter, 1943; Weber, 1988), while the party as a fighting organisation is led by a group of oligarchs (Blondel, 1978; Hands, 1971; Michels, 1911). Both, arguably, include the idea of a 'central elitist principle' (Hands, 1971: 157) as the governing mode within the party. In fact, Michels, the first proponent of the party as a fighting organisation, and Weber, the first advocate of the party as a business⁸¹, concur on the dominance and rule of a small group of people (Mommsen, 1981; Wiesendahl, 1998).⁸² The differences between a group of entrepreneurs and a group of oligarchs are possibly negligible as they are mostly of semantic nature. What makes the business model ultimately the modern version of the fighting organisation, and preferable, is not just the label but more importantly the tools of mass communication and access to professionalised staff that the parties have (Hopkin and Paolucci, 1999). Neither was

⁸¹ Weber (1922: 169) describes the internal power-structures of parties as comprising a small core of actively involved people on the one hand, and members that only play a passive role on the other hand. He concludes that this power-distribution is what makes people oppose the idea of a political party. More precisely, it is the formal relatedness of parties with equally formal capitalistic businesses. ['Es ist der zweite Hauptangriffspunkt der Opposition gegen das Parteiwesen als solches und bildet die formale Verwandtschaft der Parteibetriebe mit dem gleichfalls auf formal freier Arbeitswertung ruhenden kapitalistischen Betrieb.']

⁸² Even though Weber always phrased his conception in terms of an individual actor as opposed to referring to a collective elitist group, from his writing it is apparent that these are only differences in labels. He writes: 'Stets beherrscht das "Prinzip der kleinen Zahl", d.h. die überlegende politische Manövrierfähigkeit *kleiner* führender Gruppen das politische Handeln.' [The 'principle of small numbers' is always paramount, i.e. the superior political manoeuvrability of *small* ruling groups, in political action.] (Weber, 1988: 348; emphasis in original; own translation)

considered by Michels in the party as a fighting organisation but they are both important and universal features of party organisations nowadays. The similarities between the party as a business and the party as a fighting organisation are numerous, whereas the differences are either negligible or illusory. Hence, using the modern version, the party as a business, embraces both models while still accounting for the contemporary take the model has on the party organisation.

Thirdly, the party as a business has also been defended recently against another close competitor, the party as a franchise, using arguments of intra-party democracy and decision-making processes. Kenneth Carty (2004: 10) develops the party as a franchise model based on criticism of the party as a business as neglecting modern structures of intra-party democracy. His argument is that the conception of a strictly hierarchical organisation is somewhat outdated, given democratic structures built into modern parties (see also Jun, 2010: 14). In quoting Mair (1994: 17), Carty (2004: 7) argues for a ‘widespread consensus that the relevant relationships are now more strataarchical than hierarchical, and that each face of the party is now increasingly autonomous of the others’. The party as a franchise model takes this into account, as it also incorporates strataarchical elements. It has also found some empirical support in recent research on German and British parties (Laffin and Shaw, 2007; Zittel and Gschwend, 2008). In contrast, one argument against the franchise model as an entirely new party model and in defence of the party as a business has been recently put forward by Bolleyer (2012). She argues that strataarchy and hierarchy do not need to be seen as opposite and thus incompatible poles. Amongst other things, she maintains that strataarchy can incorporate top-down elements and points out that Carty also makes explicit reference to hierarchical decision-making within the franchise system (Bolleyer, 2012: 318f). Carty (2004: 10) states that

‘a central organization, recognizable by its common brand, determines the product line and sets standards for its production [...] and provides management help and training as well as arranging for the supplies needed by local outlets’.

In the franchise model, local units are granted authority when it comes to local issues. Local units are designed ‘to stabilize party support on the ground’ (Bolleyer, 2012: 318). Even a strataarchical party such as the franchise model includes several centralised features: ‘central conflict resolution, central control over fiscal resources and the capacity of top-down communication’ (Bolleyer, 2012: 318). Besides, Carty (2004: 10) acknowledges also that it is the central office which ‘can penalize a local affiliate if it fails to meet the organization’s standards’. The models of party as a franchise and party as a business agree on centralised and largely hierarchical structures when it comes to national issues but disagree on the nature of decision-making processes and intra-party democracy concerning local issues. Whether or not this controversy justifies an entirely new conception of a party organisation is beside the point here; instead, it is important to keep in mind that the models agree

on the inner workings whenever the party as a whole is concerned. Party membership figures are likely to concern both the local and the central unit. However, since virtually all parties have adopted a central register, the central administration is likely to be more aware of important changes in membership size (see Scarrow and Gezgor, 2010). Therefore, the party as a business with its largely centralised and hierarchical structures is still up-to-date.

On the basis of these arguments this study employs the party as a business model as a conception of the party organisation. To reiterate, this entails making the following set of assumptions: the party organisation is instrumental goal orientated; it follows vote-maximising behaviour on the basis of largely centralised, hierarchical structures when it comes to national issues; it is comprised of a small group at the top and a larger, mostly unitary and homogenous membership base at the bottom. Modern mass communication techniques are used and professional staff is hired. With these features, the party as a business model has shown to be the preferred model for the purpose of analysing parties' responses to membership decline for the period 1960-2010.⁸³ They are not only more appropriate due to the study's interest but also the period the study considers. To emphasise, making these assumptions does not mean that parties cannot differ in, for instance, their level of centralisation or their level of professionalism. The assumptions mark only general characteristics that facilitate the study of organisational change and response to membership size specifically. They do not preclude inter-party or inter-temporal differences.

5.4. Implications of the party as a business model

Adopting the party as a business model yields implications for the way party organisational response comes about and for the way it is implemented within the party organisation. Studies employing the party as a business model usually do not spell out its implications. However, for understanding how parties could respond to membership decline these implications need to be made explicit. For one, the model implies that the party organisation, just like any other business, is guided by a *resourced-based view* in determining its response. The resource-based view is also what enables identifying the trigger of organisational response within the party as a business. For another, the characteristics of the party as a business imply the *strategic-actor view* in how party organisational responses are being implemented within the party.⁸⁴ In what follows both implications are elaborated on in more detail.

⁸³ Note that some of these are strong assumptions about the inner workings of political parties. Even though they have not been put up for rigorous testing, the assumptions are individually well-founded in the party politics and organisational literature.

⁸⁴ This necessarily excludes other approaches for understanding how change is brought about within party organisations. These are lacking either the high level of intentionality, inherent in the SAV and

The party as a business implies, firstly, the resourced-based view (RBV). Originating in organisational theory and in the management literature, the RBV's basic understanding is that the organisation is 'a collection of resources and capabilities' (Amit and Schoemaker, 1993: 34), where the set of resources is helpful in providing the organisation with a competitive advantage in the market (Amit and Schoemaker, 1993; Barney, 1991; Crook et al., 2008). While resources are traditionally only defined as inputs into a process, the RBV makes a distinction of 'strategic resources' (Crook et al., 2008: 1142). A strategic resource 'is valuable, such that it reduces costs or increases value to consumers, rare enough that competitors do not use the same resource to compete away the value, and difficult to imitate or substitute' (Crook et al., 2008: 1142). Based on this, the RBV can be summarised as being founded on two assumptions: firstly, organisations are heterogeneous as to their strategic resources; and secondly, strategic resources are not easily transferable (Barney, 1991). Research results obtained in the field of management and organisational theory support the assumptions, and most importantly, the relationship the RBV postulates between the amount of strategic resources and the organisation's performance. In a recent meta-analysis on the combined results of 125 individual studies, Russell Crook et al. (2008: 1153) find 'strong support for the assertion that organizations' performance is enhanced to the extent that they possess strategic resources'. Accordingly, the RBV emphasises the resources an organisation possesses, whereby the availability of strategic resources can be determinative of the organisation's success. If the number and availability of strategic resources affects performance, organisational response is likely to be triggered.

The similarities between business organisations and the party as a business suggest that the RBV is implied by the party as a business model, where party members mark one such strategic resource. The party as a business with its features of instrumental goal-oriented behaviour largely based on centralised, hierarchical structures with a small group of decision-makers resembles any business organisation, which suggests that the party as a business mimics business organisations also in the RBV. The party as a business is competing over voters in a market-like environment. Just like any other organisation working in a competitive market, the party as a business cares about its resource base; more resources usually mean a better position in the market in relation to competitors. According to contemporary scholarship, members can be thought of as one such strategic resource, beneficial for achieving the party's goal of winning election (Detterbeck,

thus the party as a business, such as the environmental-deterministic approach (e.g. Harmel and Janda, 1982). A second group of alternative approaches only assumes low levels of coordination such as the micro-political approach (e.g. Ross, 1992), the anarchistic approach, or the environmental-processing approach (Wiesendahl, 2010). Finally, the interactive approach (e.g. Harmel and Janda, 1994) and the neo-institutional approach (e.g. Meyer and Rowan, 1977) do not include goal-oriented behaviour, which is arguably crucial for understanding party organisations.

2005; Jun, 2010; Katz, 1990; Klein et al., 2011; Mair and Marsh, 2004; Scarrow, 1996; van Biezen et al., 2012; Webb, 2002b). The scholarly body of literature that considers members as a resource includes both aspects – their quantity and quality. Many members can be advantageous for a party. A smaller group of active members can be just as advantageous for a party. Both can possibly achieve the same goal of aiding the party in winning elections, yet with different means. In the following, only the quantity of members is considered a resource and not their quality since this lies at the heart of the research question examined here. Party membership decline first and foremost refers to numeric changes; whether or not this also entails a change in quality is a different issue that is not subject of this research (but see Scarrow and Gezgor, 2010).

Members as a numeric resource also fulfils the RBV's assumptions, as described above. According to the RBV, organisations are heterogeneous as to their resources. If parties differ in their number of members, they are heterogeneous as to this particular resource. Next to heterogeneity of resources, the RBV also assumes that resources are not easily transferable. This assumption is also in line with considering members a resource. Party membership is an expression of a rather stable loyalty towards a particular party. Members usually do not switch their party books easily, which is why members can also be thought of as a resource that is not easily transferable, in line with the RBV's assumption. An advantage in a strategic resource, e.g. more members, can entail a competitive advantage in the market. Equally, the diminishment of a resource as in the case of membership decline should influence the party's follow-up action and response. In this case, membership decline acts as a constraint and forces the party to either stock up this particular resource or to substitute/supplement it by emphasising other resources. Party members as a strategic resource are valuable, rare, and not easily transferable. Therefore, and with reference to the RBV as an implication of the party as a business, a change in the number of members as a strategic resource can mark a trigger for organisational response.

The RBV, implicit in the party as a business, allows answering the question of what actually triggers party response: a change in the amount of strategic resources. In fact, in organisational theory, the decline of organisations is defined as 'a condition in which a substantial, absolute decrease in an organization's resource base occurs over a specific period of time' (Cameron et al., 1987: 224). Transferring this definition to party organisations also allows specifying when or under what conditions party response can be expected (but is not limited to). A party response in the party organisation is triggered if a party experiences a substantial, decrease in one of its resources, in this case its membership base.

Secondly, the party as a business' characteristics imply also the *strategic-actor view* (SAV) in how strategy or response is implemented in the organisation. It takes as its

base-line that parties are not simply objects, exposed to external, environmental factors. Rather, parties are, as mentioned before, ‘strategic actors’ (Mair, 1994: 1) and ‘independent actors in their own right’ (Mair, 1993: 1). ‘[P]arties and party systems are not simply objects, but also subjects’ (Mair, 1998: 9). The SAV sees parties as complex actors, capable of following their strategy in the pursuit of their goal, taking into account competitors’ behaviour as well as changing environmental circumstances (Kitschelt, 1994). The kind of change process to be expected from the SAV is a ‘proactive, self-initiated’ (Wiesendahl, 2010: 51) one. Joachim Raschke and Ralf Tils (2007: 133) argue that strategically oriented action presupposes being conscious and also having the will to act strategically.⁸⁵ Applying the SAV to party organisational response implies intentionality and coordination of the actors involved.

It is especially the features pertaining to the power-distribution within the party as a business and the structures facilitating and supporting it that imply highly coordinated actions concerning national issues. The party as a business is structured in a largely centralised, hierarchical way with a small ruling elite group at the top. Any intentional plan of organisational change or response is likely to proceed in a coordinated manner throughout the party. Therefore, with its features of a rather strong leadership, high levels of coordination, intentionality, and competitive behaviour the party as a business model implies the SAV. The SAV is a perspective implicit in the party as a business model for assuming that responses are implemented in the party organisation in a rather hierarchical and coordinated manner.⁸⁶

Both implications of the party as a business – the RBV and the SAV – are important prerequisites for the study of party organisational responses to party membership decline. While the RBV aids in determining the trigger of party response, the SAV assists in understanding the process of implementation. Together with the assumptions made by the party as a business model they make the conceptual implications explicit. That means party organisational change and response can be expected (but is not limited to) whether membership size as a resource drops. Additionally, the resulting change is implemented intentionally and in a coordinated manner. The next section deals with how to measure (change or response in) the party in central office precisely.

⁸⁵ Raschke and Tils (2007: 133f) also acknowledge the difficulties in observing intentionality. They argue that even though it is in most cases difficult to infer from political action prior to strategic planning, ‘methodological objectivism’ can assist in linking actions to prior intentions. The method refers to an inference from observable, unambiguous actions and an accompanying self-portrayal of the underlying intentions.

⁸⁶ A counter-argument easily put forward against the SAV is that it overestimates unitary decision-making power within the organisation. And it is true that not all areas of the party organisation can possibly be controlled in a top-down manner, but a restriction on national issues as found in characteristics of the party as a business accounts for that.

5.5. Measuring (change in) the party in central office

The operationalization of the party in central office follows the RBV of an organisation. As outlined above, the RBV maintains that organisations can be understood as ‘a collection of resources and capabilities’ (Amit and Schoemaker, 1993: 34), where the set of resources is helpful in providing the organisation with a competitive advantage in the market (Amit and Schoemaker, 1993; Barney, 1991; Crook et al., 2008). An RBV for operationalizing the party organisation is also a common approach amongst party scholars, be it explicitly or implicitly (see for instance Coleman, 1996; Dalton and Wattenberg, 2000a; Gibson et al., 1983; Krouwel, 2012; Tan, 1997; Webb, 1995; Webb et al., 2002).

Building up on these previous studies and following the conceptualisation of party in central office above, any party organisation can be understood as comprising a different set of resources or structures that makes it unique and demarcates it from others. These resources can be grouped into the following four dimensions: complexity, finances, professionalism, and centralisation. Prior resource-based research on party organisations, and on their respective development or strength, suggests that each of these dimensions is necessary in describing the party in central office. However, additional dimensions have been suggested too. Janda (1983: 328), for instance, also includes the dimension of coherence, which he defines as ‘the degree of congruence in the attitudes and behaviour of party members’. It is probably true that the more coherent a party is in terms of its members’ values and opinions, the stronger it can convey its message to outsiders, as argued by Blondel (1978). Although unity might even be considered a valuable resource, it is more questionable whether it is a resource really belonging to the party in central office. This is because Janda’s (1983: 328) translation of organisational dimension into variables such as legislative coherence, ideological factionalism, or issue factionalism, suggests a closer relationship to the reference unit of the parliamentary party and thus to the party in public office. Webb et al. (2002), in turn, employ the additional dimension of public relations to define party organisational strength. And again, it is easy to see how the number or intensity of a party organisation’s public relations can be an important resource. However, following James Gibson et al. (1983), I consider both aspects of public relations and issue coherence as belonging to the concept of a party’s programmatic capacity, instead of party in central office’s resources. Overall, the resources proposed here should be considered a minimal approach and as one way of operationalizing that follows existing studies.

More specifically, *complexity* as a resource refers to the extent of the organisational setup, i.e. the number of organisational units and their distribution. Leaning on Janda (1980), it incorporates at least two components: the level of intensiveness and

the level of extensiveness. Intensiveness refers to the number of organisational or administrative layers a party employs throughout the country. Usually, these follow more or less the administrative setup of a country (Scarrow, 2000). However, variation between parties can still be found, as some parties prefer fewer hierarchical layers than others, or can only afford fewer. In contrast, extensiveness pertains to the organisational reach of the party organisation, or the horizontal element of complexity. Taken together, the more units a party holds per hierarchical layer, the more complex it is. The literature suggests that organisational units are an important feature of political parties, especially the smallest ones – basic units (Katz and Mair, 1992a). They are the primary organisational connection of the party to members, voters, and potential members and thus the point of first contact, but they also provide a permanent connection between the party in central office and party members (Jun, 2010; Wiesendahl, 1998). Local administrative offices of parties located in citizens' neighbourhoods provide in many cases the first opportunity for new political engagement. In addition, basic units play a key role in recruiting new members or candidates and in running election campaigns (Beyme, 1985; Scarrow, 2000; Selle and Svåsand, 1991; Svåsand, 1994). This is because at the local level politics becomes particularly more personal and tangible through the personal contact provided by volunteers and full-time staff. In that sense, party organisations may have an incentive to maintain a larger number of basic units. And indeed, in an analysis of parties in eight countries between 1959 and 1989, Scarrow (2000) finds that 91 per cent of the parties increased their number of basic units per local government unit. The more organisational or administrative units a party has, the more present it is for citizens. A high number of local offices, spread across the country create visibility that can easily turn into a competitive advantage over other parties during and between elections. During election time, many local offices can indicate in theory a stronger campaign, while between elections many offices can prove beneficial for attracting new members or candidates. On the downside, each additional unit also requires extra financial resources for the party organisation, whereby finances are a resource in themselves. Overall, complexity can be defined as the extent, horizontally as well as vertically, of the party organisational set-up which covers the number of administrative levels and number of administrative units per layer. Yet, it is the number of administrative units on the lowest level, the basic units, that presents the best indication of a party organisation's complexity.

The dimension of *finances* plays a key role in the party's resource base (Farrell and Webb, 2000). A steady and sufficiently large budget allows manoeuvrability for the party organisation to adjust to new challenges. Income as a resource can be easily transferred into other valuable assets, such as professional staff or campaigning material. At the same time, just running the party with some permanent staff already requires financial resources. 'Any degree of organization will pose a considerable need for funds for the operation of a party' (Nassmacher, 2003a: 4).

Knowing that parties need financial resources simply to operate and organise party competition, raises questions of how these should be distributed to allow fair competition, or where the money should be coming from in order to restrict resourceful groups' influence on party politics, thus potentially on policy output.

Party finances have been on researchers' agendas for a long time, as the financial structure reveals more about parties' strategies and through which means they seek to accomplish them. For example, party expenditure for campaigning has been increasing almost universally throughout the past decades with modern campaigning techniques being employed (Farrell and Webb, 2000). To illustrate, in the 2012 US presidential election campaign, parties spent a total of \$6 billion, \$700 million more than in 2008 (Hudson, 2012). Farrell and Webb (2000) find a similar pattern across Europe. Expenditures can only exist, however, where there is income. Levels and sources of party income are equally interesting for party politics research, as they reveal more about potential dynamics and goals, not immediately visible otherwise. In a unique study, Allern (2010) analysed, among other things, parties' incomes and their connection to interest groups in Norway in order to evaluate parties' role as representatives of special interests as opposed to citizens' interests. A larger amount of research has been devoted to the growing amount of state subsidies granted to parties. Throughout Western democracies, shares of state subsidies in relation to total party income have been increasing during the last decades (see Farrell and Webb, 2000; Nassmacher, 2003a; van Biezen, 2004). State subsidies are seen as a double-edged sword: on the one hand, they guarantee a certain level of party competition by enabling financially weak parties to run for election. On the other hand, a large contribution can render parties more state institutions than voluntary associations. In an attempt to make political parties still the primary advocates of citizens and not the state, German party law, for example, prescribes that parties' primary source of income should not be the state (van Biezen, 2009). This is accomplished through requiring parties to disclose their financial accounts annually. In many cases, dues paid by members are still considered one of the main sources of party income (Katz, 1990; Klein et al., 2011; Scarrow, 1996). However, party members also require maintenance through keeping records or spreading information to them. These activities require financial resources, so members also come at some financial cost to the party. Overall, party finances are probably one of the most valuable resources a party possesses (Alexander and Shiratori, 1994). The dimension of party finances is defined as the overall financial structure of the party organisation. This means firstly, its total income and expense and secondly, the relation between sources of income – membership dues and state subsidies.

The dimension of *professionalism* refers to the number and level of human resources a party can draw on. Human resources can be divided into three groups, according to Webb and Robin Kolodny (2006: 338): amateurs, professional staff paid by the party,

and professional consultants. Non-professionals are members and other volunteers that do not live from their work for the organisation. They might still receive small amounts of money for the labour they put into the party organisation but these amounts do not make a living. A lot of times, sports clubs or other grass-roots associations are led by their members, all working free of charge. Alternatively, the group of professional staff, who are paid by the party, live from their work for the party. It is the group of qualified and trained employees that the party organisation needs in order to fulfil typical tasks of the party in central office, such as the recruitment of members or candidates, policy development and policy marketing, or fundraising and public opinion research (Webb and Kolodny, 2006). Lastly, professional consultants are external to the party organisation and are usually hired for only short periods of time and/or for a specific task (Webb and Kolodny, 2006). All three groups are important resources for the party in central office as they are needed to fulfil tasks that the entire party organisation needs. In that sense all three groups of human resources are contributing to the party's resource base. However, Webb and Kolodny (2006) define professionalism as requiring at least expertise or special competence and training so that the group of amateurs does not belong to the relevant items of professionalism. And while consultants possess all of the necessary characteristics to belong to the group of human resources that relates to a party's level of professionalism, the vast majority of them are only hired for a short time-period. Due to their activity as advising the party in the short-term, they may not count into the set of normal employees. Accordingly, they are excluded here. This results in consultants not being included in the professional dimension of human resources on the central offices' payroll. It has been found that with increasing professionalization of politics in the last decades, staff employed at the headquarters are more likely to be 'full-time professionals, possessing a variety of technical skills' (Dalton and Wattenberg, 2000b: 267; see also Karlsen, 2010). This development is also described and incorporated in modern party models, such as Panebianco's (1988) electoral-professional party or Katz and Mair's (1995) cartel party. Increasing central party staff is one aspect of professionalization of the party. As Farrell and Webb (2000: 117) show in an analysis of central party staff in nine countries between 1960 and 1990, the average number of central party staff has been growing in all countries by between 8.6 per cent (Germany) and 216 per cent (Ireland).⁸⁷ But the sheer number of party staff is only one indicator of professionalism. Salaries paid to those members of staff are indicative of the party in central office's level of professionalism, as well (for a similar argument see Bolleyer and Gauja, 2013). If a party organisation employs more staff and pays out higher salaries per staff member, it can be inferred that this party is hiring more highly-trained and highly-skilled people. In sum, the dimension of professionalism is

⁸⁷ This enormous average increase between 1965 and 1989 can be found across the three parties, for which Farrell and Webb (2000: 127; also Murphy and Farrell, 2002: 233) have data. These are Labour, Fianna Fáil, and Fine Gael.

operationalized through two indicators: firstly, the number of staff employed by the party in central office, and secondly, average salaries paid to employees.

Finally, the dimension of *centralisation* comprises resources in the hands of the party in central office that pertain to the strength in bonds amongst the hierarchical levels within the entire party organisation. Since the party in central office is the permanent head of the party organisation, any strategy development and implementation is issued from there. The level of centralisation can be an important resource for the party in central office to quickly and efficiently implement new strategies. Conversely, if a party grants sub-units substantial influence and autonomy, the party as a whole runs the risk of losing unity (Bolleyer, 2009). Especially, ever since the upsurge of members' participatory demands in many parties, the relationship between the party in central office and the party's hierarchical sub-units has become a tense one. Lower levels are striving for power and the party in central office is usually trying to balance these demands with some decentralisation while still retaining unity and power at the central level (Scarrow et al., 2000). Notably, the works by Carty (2004) and Bolleyer (2012) provide new conceptual insights into the subject of hierarchy and centralisation of power within party organisations. Carty (2004: 13) maintains that as it is the parties' primary interest to win elections, basically anyone within the party organisation has a strong interest in having leverage on the final product – be it the election manifesto or personnel. Frequently, scholars consider the organisational level that selects candidates or leaders an indicator of the degree of centralisation within the party as a whole (Bille, 2001; Bolleyer, 2012; Carty, 2004; Hazan and Rahat, 2010; Rahat and Hazan, 2001). The more grass-root or basic the level, the less centralised the party. Scarrow et al. (2000), for instance, find a trend towards more inclusiveness in both candidate and leadership selectorates in parties operating in eighteen countries between 1960 and 2000. Since the number of organisational levels differs by party and it is also being influenced by a country's administrative setup, an attribution of decision-making according to territorial level is not preferable. Instead, the literature suggests the alternative of taking into account precisely the group of people being granted the right to make that decision, the selectorate. This alternative of measuring centralisation can range from a very inclusive selectorate such as the entire electorate to a very exclusive selectorate such as the party leader (Rahat and Hazan, 2001: 304). The more inclusive the selectorate, the less centralised the party. Miki Kittilson and Scarrow (2003: 70) employ a three-fold classification where each group incorporates a (set of) selectorates: oligarchical (national leadership), representative (regional delegates or local party selectorate), and basis democracy (members can vote or non-members can vote). Measuring the degree of inclusiveness of party selectorates for candidates and leaders is one way of illustrating the hierarchical power structure within party organisations. It is

indicative of the level of centralisation prevailing between the party in central office and its hierarchical sub-units.

In sum, all four dimensions – complexity, finances, professionalism, and centralisation – contribute to the concept of party organisation as conceptualised above. Their respective operationalizations follow previous studies and are summarised in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1. Summary of party in central office's operationalization

Dimension	Operationalization
Complexity	basic units
	hierarchical layers
Professionalism	staff
	salaries paid to staff
Finances	income
	expense
	income structure
Centralisation	candidate selection
	leadership selection

From the individual studies cited above, expectations can be phrased as to what kind of organisational development to expect in the sampled parties for the period 1960-2010. In their entirety, previous studies hint at an increasing professionalization in the loosest sense of the word, as well as generally increasing organisational structures in the past decades. According to the literature, this development started after World War 2 and with the end of the mass party in the 1950s. More specifically, from the above cited studies expectations can be summarised alongside the four dimensions in the following over-time hypothesis, **H3**:

H3 Since World War 2, party organisations are likely to gradually possess (1) a higher level of complexity, (2) a higher level of professionalism, and (3) a higher degree of centralisation. In addition, they are likely (4) to become more capital-intensive and increase their number of secure finances.

This over-time hypothesis states expectations about how party organisations have developed since the 1950s. Besides time as a predictor, party politics literature also provides propositions about more specific determinants of party change and development.

5.6. Determinants of party organisational change and response

5.6.1. General theories of party organisational change: theory and hypotheses

Party politics literature has developed several explanatory approaches to party change; some of them were already briefly introduced in the previous chapter. Harmel (2002: 119) points out that there are in fact ‘three literatures [...] seeking to explain why parties do change (and sometimes in a dramatic fashion) in spite of their natural propensities for preserving the organizational status quo’. However, as he argues, these approaches – life-cycle, system-level, and discrete – have been used and supported almost independently of each other, and have only been integrated to a limited extent. Two core assumptions underlying any party organisational change theory are that firstly, some of party organisational change is the outcome of intentional decision-making, which means that change is intended; and that secondly, party organisations are change-averse and thus need to have sufficient reason to change (see Harmel, 2002 and the literature cited therein). With these assumptions, it is also evident that general theories of change are compatible of any POM and its implications.⁸⁸ As this section argues, each strand of literature not only postulates a different cause of party organisational change but also has different implications for party competition and democracy at large.

In general, party change is defined as ‘any variation, alteration or modification in how parties are organized, what human and material resources they can draw upon, what they stand for and what they do’ (Harmel and Janda, 1994: 275). With that definition party change can be considered a synonym for party development. Party change theory is concerned with the organisational sphere of parties, as well as their electoral or ideological realm. Parties can and do change in different areas. Any outcome directly under the control of the party organisation is covered by party change theory (Harmel, 2002). However, and as pointed out in the introductory chapter, Mair et al. (2004b: 11) argue that it is the internal party organisation that marks the first target of change. In those cases the underlying assumption is ‘that there is nothing inherently wrong with the party; rather, it is simply failing to adequately communicate its message’. In that sense party organisational changes signify the mildest change but because of that also the first set of reactions a party usually gives.

Existing party change literature distinguishes between three approaches: the *life-cycle* approach (e.g. Michels, 1911), the *system-level trends* approach (e.g. Epstein, 1967; Katz and Mair, 1995; Panebianco, 1988), and the *discrete change* approach (e.g.

⁸⁸ At the same time, the assumption of intentionality links up directly with the strategic-actor view, implicit in the party as a business. However, this does not mean that intentionality can only be found in the party as a business model.

Harmel and Janda, 1994; Harmel et al., 1995). Generally varying in their perspectives and underlying assumptions, they mostly differ in what each of them constitutes as the source of party change (Harmel, 2002: 129).

The life-cycle approach emphasises individual party-characteristics as sources of change and was briefly introduced in chapter 4. It has been coined in the organisational literature and has been used there to explain why and when organisations change (see e.g. Hannan and Freeman, 1984; Whetten, 1987). Only recently, Clay Dibrell et al. (2011) again found support for the life-cycle approach, as their analyses show that the life-cycle stage of an organisation is a mediating variable in the relationship between strategic emphasis on market orientation and firm innovativeness. But the political science literature also considers life-cycle effects to be a viable explanation for change (see for instance Harmel and Svåsand, 1993; Müller-Rommel, 2002; Pedersen, 1982; Randall and Svåsand, 2002; Stein, 1973).

Contrary to that, van Biezen (2005: 153) contends that life-cycle explanations are ‘implausible’. Given that the life-cycle approach assumes endogenous factors to be the driving force of party development, she considers it unlikely that a party develops in a vacuum unaffected by the environment it is operating in. This argument is indeed a valid one, especially in light of the different environmental challenges parties are exposed to, as presented in the introductory chapter. More so, empirical research investigating party development generally supports van Biezen’s concerns and suggests that parties are indeed susceptible and responsive towards their environment (see for instance Mair et al., 2004c). However, despite van Biezen’s thorough and pointed theoretical and conceptual distinctions, she does not consider the parties’ different faces or operational spheres sufficiently. As outlined in the introductory chapter, parties have different response areas at their disposal; these include policy, ideology, target groups, coalition partners, as well as the party organisation. And when considering some of these realms it does seem indeed implausible that a party’s age would be in any way determinative of, for instance, its policy position or target group. However, if party age is considered an indicator of party institutionalisation, the life-cycle approach becomes plausible for certain areas of a party.⁸⁹ Pedersen (1982: 6f) argues for four stages (declaration, authorisation, representation, and relevance), beginning at the birth of a party and ending with parliamentary weight. In comparison, Harmel and Svåsand (1993: 71) distinguish three phases of party development and institutionalisation that start with parliamentary representation: identification, organisation, and stabilisation. The authors contend that the different phases are difficult to pin down empirically, yet there are some guidelines. While the second stage begins with parliamentary representation beyond a ‘handful’, phase three starts once a party has

⁸⁹ According to Scott Mainwaring (1998: 74; see also van Biezen, 2005), a party’s age can be considered one way of measuring longevity or institutionalisation.

coalition/governing potential (Harmel and Svåsand, 1993: 72). Accordingly, it is probably not party age that accounts for the transition from one stage to the next. Nonetheless, it is more likely to find older parties at a later stage of party institutionalisation and younger parties in the earlier identification phase; this might hold more for some areas of a party than for others. For instance, taking a Downsian (1957) approach to party behaviour in the electorate, it makes perfect sense that a party behaves differently in its formative years, compared to its established phase. At an early stage, parties simply want to get access to the electoral market, whereas at a later stage they are more concerned with appealing to the masses. Equally and more to the point of the current research interest, it also makes more sense to think about life-cycle stages of party development in the organisational realm. During a party's formative years the organisation is necessarily smaller, underdeveloped and has fewer financial resources. However, as the party ages and institutionalises the organisation's incentives and motives alter, which ultimately impacts organisational behaviour and structures (Harmel, 2002; Harmel and Svåsand, 1993; see also Wiesendahl, 2010). Now the party is no longer concerned with establishing an organisation but about maintaining it and making it more efficient. For this reason, party age as a proxy for party institutionalisation poses a reasonable explanation for party organisational development.

This is not to suggest a deterministic relationship beyond the parties' control. Rather, the core assumption of intended party change is still valid; party age only offers the reasons and opportunities to change. According to the life-cycle approach, party age or party institutionalisation is a predictor of party organisational development (see Pedersen, 2010). Therefore, and following the over-time hypothesis above as to the direction of change, the first hypothesis referring to general determinants of party organisational change, **H4**, can be phrased as follows:

- H4** With increasing age and party institutionalisation (and independent of time) party organisations are likely to gradually develop (1) a higher level of professionalism, (2) a higher level of complexity, (3) a higher degree of centralisation. In addition, they are likely (4) to become more capital-intensive and increase their number of secure finances with increasing age.

In addition, environmental factors can also be thought of as influencing a party's development. In this strand of literature, called system-level trend approach (Harmel, 2002: 120; Krouwel, 2006: 252), the development of political parties is predominantly explained by changes in the environment parties are operating in. These changes have already been mentioned in the introductory chapter. According to Duverger (1964), the emergence of the mass party, for example, can be explained

by the introduction of general suffrage as well as by a growing working class as part of the electorate. In a similar vein, Kirchheimer (1965) explained the transformation of mass parties into catch-all parties: after World War 2, alongside an economic development came a less distinct class consciousness amongst individuals and fewer needs for ideological statements. This put pressure on mass parties to transform themselves into catch-all parties. Katz and Mair's (1995) cartel party thesis continues in the tradition of the system-level approach to explain party development and party change. The transformation of catch-all parties into cartel parties, as the argument posits, is due to social, cultural, and political developments, acting on all parties simultaneously.⁹⁰ This brief sketch of the well-known party types shows that these authors argue in favour of a system-level trend that causes parties to transform from one party model to the next.

In general, this literature argues not only for the explanatory power of environmental stimuli, but it also explicitly incorporates the idea of parties' adaptive skills to environmental changes. It is argued that parties are changing organisations 'adjusting their appeals to the audiences whose votes they seek' (Wolinetz, 1988: 304). The idea is that old and new parties alike transform by way of responding to 'dramatic changes in relevant environments of parties' (Harmel, 2002: 122). Essentially, it is the environment all parties operate in which changes and which triggers new party models across a party system. As a case in point, Katz and Mair (1995: 6) refer to the development of parties as 'a dialectic process in which each new party type generates a reaction that stimulates further development, thus leading to yet another new party type'. Building up on this, the *convergence hypothesis* (see Heidar and Saglie, 2003; Mair, 1994, 2008; Pedersen, 2010; van Biezen, 2003) states that individual parties of the same system resemble each other more as time proceeds. Contributions to the edited volume *How Parties Organize: Change and Adaption in Party Organizations in Western Democracies* (Katz and Mair, 1994) evaluate the validity of the hypothesis on a country-basis. While evidence in support of organisational convergence is found in the United Kingdom (Webb, 1994), Sweden (Pierre and Widfeldt, 1994), Ireland (Farrell, 1994), Austria (Müller, 1994), Norway (Svåsand, 1994), and Denmark (Bille, 1994), studies on Germany (Poguntke, 1994) and the Netherlands (Koole, 1994) provide counter-evidence. In addition, more recent studies on Denmark (Pedersen, 2010) and Norway (Heidar and Saglie, 2003) do not find supportive information for the convergence hypothesis.

Proponents of the convergence hypothesis and system-level approach to party change all share the idea of environmental features explaining party development. If system-level properties are affecting party (organisational) development and following the convergence hypothesis, then parties of the same system resemble each other more as time proceeds. Note, however, that this approach does not

⁹⁰ These are, for instance, those outlined in the introductory chapter.

explicitly state a direction of change but phrases this only comparatively in relation to other parties of the same system. The second hypothesis of party organisational development, **H5**, can thus be stated as follows:

- H5** Since World War 2, party organisations of the same party system are likely to gradually resemble each other more in their party organisation, i.e. (1) complexity, (2) professionalism, (3) centralisation and (4) financial assets.

A third strand of party change literature considers aspects of both aforementioned explanations in the discrete change approach (Harmel, 2002: 125ff). The idea is that external factors provide stimuli to change but favourable internal factors (especially internal decision-making) are important, too. For example, consider a situation in which a political party has experienced steep losses in its share of parliamentary seats following election day. While these circumstances would call for change in most parties, it still takes an intra-party decision to actually recognise the need for change and implement it (see Panebianco, 1988). An external shock, such as an unexpected electoral defeat, can cause abrupt and discrete changes in the party organisation. Janda (1990: 5) even argues for electoral defeat being ‘the mother of party change’. Accordingly, in the discrete change approach the role of leadership and having a dominant faction are considered important factors that influence the development of party organisations (Harmel et al., 1995). Several studies having employed the discrete change approach provide overall supportive results in explaining party organisational change (see for example Albinsson, 1986; Harmel et al., 1995; Harmel, 2002; Wilson, 1980). According to this literature, electoral results and leadership change effects are independently associated with party organisational development. If the over-time hypothesis above, **H3**, can be supported, the discrete approach should be able to explain some of this development. The third hypothesis, **H6**, can thus be phrased as follows:

- H6** Prior high electoral results and leadership change effects are likely to lead to an increase in (1) complexity, (2) professionalism, and (3) centralisation. A further consequence is that they are likely (4) to become more capital-intensive and increase their number of secure finances.

To be sure, the amounts of subsidies that parties receive are in many countries also linked, by law, to prior electoral results or representation in parliament. This is the case for almost all Western European countries (Nassmacher, 2003b: 122). In some

countries, such as the Netherlands, the amount of state subsidy is also made contingent upon the number of party members divided by the total amount of party members across all parties (van Biezen, 2009). Accordingly, in theory, any development of state subsidies should be strongly correlated with prior electoral result.

So far, the different approaches of party change theory have been presented as competing approaches, all seeking to explain party change. However, Harmel (2002: 128) argues that despite the approaches' differences they do not need to be seen as conflicting lines of reasoning; rather, they are complementary. Quite possibly, there is not a single explanation for why and when parties change. It is probably realistic to assume that not a single cause is responsible for a party's organisational change but rather multiple causes. The approaches all explain '*purposeful decisions* to change' (Harmel, 2002: 129; emphasis in original text) and involve multi-level explanations. Harmel further contends that they imply different patterns of change. While the life-cycle approach explains fundamental and gradual change largely dependent on the individual party's age and level of institutionalisation, the system-level approach explains fundamental and gradual change that occurs across parties in a party system (Harmel, 2002). In contrast, the discrete approach seeks to understand changes that happen rather 'abrupt and usually discrete' (Harmel, 2002: 130). However, these hypotheses about patterns of change are rather vague, and in addition they postulate the same pattern under conditions of the life-cycle and the system-level approaches. This makes them not clearly distinguishable hypotheses about patterns of change. Moreover, it is also unclear what the cut-off line is between a gradual and an abrupt change. This makes a distinction amongst them, in terms of patterns of change, not convincing.

The approaches might not be strictly competing in regards to the causes of change. Yet, it is still important to find out which is more supported by the data or is the stronger predictor because each yields different implications for party democracy. For instance, if party change is largely supported by the life-cycle approach the implication for parties would be that their respective future is more foreseeable. Similarly, if the data supports the system-level approach most, more attention needs to be paid to parties' behaviours towards their competitors, also when it comes to organisational features. Therefore, the approaches are competing as to the implications they yield for parties and party democracy at large. So far, they have only been tested individually with respect to their impact on party change as a single event, as demonstrated in the studies mentioned above. To my knowledge, they have not been tested, for one, against each other and, for another, as competing approaches illustrating party organisational development over time.

The approaches can be understood as belonging to a general theory of party change and development. They take into account certain, rather general party or party-

system characteristics as determinants of change but they cannot provide direct answers to whether or not and how parties respond to membership decline. What these hypotheses and the approaches they are derived from do not provide, is a prediction of how party organisations specifically react to membership decline, i.e. a drop in one of its resources. Drawing on the earlier developed conceptual prerequisites, as summarised in the party as a business, organisational and party politics literature include expectations as to how parties respond to membership decline.

5.6.2. Changes in membership size as a trigger of organisational change: theory and hypotheses

Party politics literature has on first inspection little to offer on the topic of organisational responses to party membership decline. However, studies in organisational theory and management ask more frequently ‘whether – and how – organizations adapt to organizational decline’ (Mone et al., 1998: 115). Even though they mostly stem from the 1970s and 1980s, they are still of ‘considerable value’ (Bozeman, 2010: 561). This literature is divided over how organisations and businesses respond to organisational decline, defined above as ‘a decrease in an organization’s resource base’ (Mone et al., 1998: 117). Two approaches predicting whether and how organisations respond have produced supporting results (Mone et al., 1998): *organisational learning theory* suggests that crisis leads to adaptation and innovation, whereas advocates of *threat-rigidity theory* maintain that a decline in resources makes organisations less likely to adapt.

5.6.2.1 Organisational responses in organisation and management theory

Proponents of organisational learning theory argue that organisational decline has a stimulating effect promoting an organisation to change, more specifically, to adapt to the changed environment (Cyert and March, 1963; Kiesler and Sproull, 1982; Lant and Mezias, 1992). This claim rests on the idea that a discrepancy between the organisation’s desired outcome and the actual outcome triggers the necessity to change or respond. It is based on three assumptions. Firstly, organisations have a goal; secondly, success or failure is defined as the extent to which performance and the goal are converging; and thirdly, seeking responses to restore performance up to the desired level involves a costly search (Lant and Mezias, 1992). The implication is that once conventional means fail to restore the performance up to the desired level, an organisation needs to go beyond the usual and be innovative (Mone et al., 1998). The most famously held example of such a case is the adaptation of six big tobacco firms to a decline in demand. They responded by modifying their products and issuing new patents (McKinley, 1993; Miles and Cameron, 1982; Mone et al., 1998). Equally, other research (Koberg, 1987; Manns and March, 1978) has shown for

organisations in the public sector that a decline in resources or just one particular resource leads to a new strategy including the adaptation of processes and structures. Responses to a decline according to learning theory can then be understood as implying two possible strategies: either attempting to reach the desired level of resources through new means, or emphasising other resources in an attempt to substitute existing deficiencies in order to reach the target. For example, a tobacco firm might respond to decreasing demands for cigarettes by developing a new type of cigarette with strawberry-flavoured tobacco. This kind of response would then most likely fall into the first category of trying to restore the desired level of profit through other means. Conversely, the tobacco company could also emphasise other resources and, for example, expand its product line of nicotine chewing gums. Both lines of action might positively affect the company's assets, but both will also involve new investment costs and thus another valuable resource: money. In both response scenarios the resources an organisation has at its disposal are not only crucial for whether or not the organisation is facing a challenge but they are also interrelatedly involved in the process of response. Overall, when predicting organisational adaptation, learning theory emphasises the opportunities that a state of organisational decline brings about.

Contrary to that, threat-rigidity theory suggests that a decline in resources inhibits innovation (Barker and Mone, 1998; Bozeman and Slusher, 1979; D'Aunno and Sutton, 1992; McKinley, 1993; McKinley et al., 2013; Mone et al., 1998). The idea stems from literature focussing on the limited scope of opportunities that a decline entails, as well as the cognitive effects a state of crisis exerts on managers. For instance, Barry Staw et al. (1981) suggest that a decline in resources decreases the likelihood of organisational change. An organisation with fewer resources is constrained in its manoeuvrability. Additionally, decision-makers within the organisation are reluctant to introduce new methods or products and want rather to concentrate on making the existing methods more efficient. In this strand of literature, it is assumed that declining organisations 'restrict information processing, centralize control, and conserve resources' (McKinley, 1993: 3). It has been found that organisational decline inhibits a manager's propensity to take risks and act proactively in the market (D'Aveni and MacMillan, 1990). Backing these arguments up for the case of political parties, Scarrow (1991, cited in Tan, 1997) points out that organisational change requires a lot of resources, which a party in crisis is usually short of. This suggests that a crisis makes organisations less likely to be innovative and instead more restricted. In threat-rigidity theory, the deficiency in a resource is responded to by acting conservatively and restrictively.

This brief summary of two strands of organisational literature demonstrates that learning theory and threat-rigidity theory are each founded on resource-based assumptions predicting, however, inherently different responses to a decline in resources. While learning theory postulates organisational adaptation and

innovation in response to a state of crisis, threat-rigidity theory is more pessimistic in its prediction as it expects organisations to react conservatively and restrictedly to a decline. The overall outcome might be in either case organisational survival, or non-survival for that matter, but the means or individual responses leading to it are different.

When combined with theories of organisational growth, each of these response theories to decline imply a different causal direction between organisational resources and structures. Organisational theories of growth define growth as increases in the organisational size. Typically, this means in the organisational world a growth of at least one organisational resource; this is often the number of employees but can also be a different measure of organisational size. It is argued that a rise in the organisation's size leads to an enlargement of organisational administration (Blau, 1970; Blau and Schoenherr, 1971; Child, 1973). In a much cited article, Peter Blau (1970: 216) generalises from his analyses of 1,500 organisations, 416 government bureaus, and 53 government agencies that 'increasing size of organizations generates structural differentiation along various dimensions at decelerating rates' and that 'structural differentiation enlarges the administrative component in organizations'. For responses to organisational growth this means that increasing organisational size triggers responses of expanding organisational structures. Combining this prediction with the proposed theories of responses to organisational decline shows that one decline theory reverses the development whereas the other does not, if and only if organisational size is understood as a strategic resource in both instances. On one hand, threat-rigidity theory maintains reverse processes at work during decline – the organisation reacts conservatively and restrictively – compared to periods of growth. It predicts for periods of decline that the organisation responds with a decrease in its organisational structure. In contrast, Blau's theory of organisational growth combined with learning theory and its hypothesis about organisational decline poses a different causal direction between organisational size and organisational structures. The effects of growth are not reversed during periods of decline. The organisation reacts proactively and innovatively towards organisational decline; more pointedly, it suggests that the organisation expands.

In summary, in the organisational literature ample evidence supports predictions that organisations respond to growth by increasing their organisation. However, the literature is divided as to organisational responses to decline: either, organisations respond proactively by expanding or conservatively by downsizing.

5.6.2.2 Organisational responses in party politics research

This divide in organisational literature, as to the kind of expected response to decline is mirrored in party politics literature, albeit only implicitly. Although party politics

literature can be considered as still underdeveloped in terms of ideas of how parties respond organisationally to decline (Harmel, 2002; Mair et al., 2004b; Wiesendahl, 2010), expectations on party organisational development exist. However, these are largely based on theories under conditions of organisational growth. To my knowledge, party politics research has only considered thus far, theoretically and empirically, responses to party organisational growth but not responses to organisational decline (for an exception see Tan, 1997, 2000; Mair et al., 2004c). In short, these echo Blau's theory of organisational growth based on assumptions about the party organisation that are made explicit in earlier sections of this chapter and summarised under the party as a business model. Michels (1911) and Blondel (1978) contend that party organisational size is positively related to the size of organisational structures. If members are thought to be a resource related to organisational size, and parties respond according to threat-rigidity theory, the kinds of responses to be expected during times of decline take on the reversed form from organisational growth – downsizing. Contrary to that, if the relationship between party size and organisational structures is such that it follows learning theory, then parties respond to party decline by increasing their organisational structures. The failure to show reversed processes is precisely one of Panebianco's (1988) points of criticism on Michels' account. The following section first elaborates on Michels' and Blondel's views before laying out Panebianco's criticism and counter-proposal. This results in precise hypotheses about how party organisations respond to party membership decline.

Michels (1911) is the most famous and oldest proponent of the idea that party organisational size affects party organisational structures. His work has been very influential over the years, especially the so-called Iron Law of Oligarchy. Having been amongst the first scholars to conduct research on party organisations, his seminal work originally published in German in 1911 *Zur Soziologie des Parteiwesens in der modernen Demokratie: Untersuchungen über die oligarchischen Tendenzen des Gruppenlebens* has become the first point of reference for theories of party organisations. To illustrate, according to google.scholar, the English translation alone has been cited around 3,700 times already. Next to his famous conjecture of intra-party democracy's decline as a consequence of membership size increase, he postulates also other effects of rising membership size. In a less known and less elaborated part of the book, he theorises that increases in membership size also lead to increases in complexity, specialization, and professionalism. Later, his theory finds support by Blondel (1978). Overall, Michels and Blondel propose a theory of party organisational development that considers changes in membership size as one of the driving forces. Put differently, changes in membership size trigger organisational responses. To demonstrate this line of reasoning, the following paragraphs are going to lay out briefly the authors' arguments, focussing especially on Michels. In doing so, two aspects are highlighted: firstly, Michels' Iron Law of Oligarchy logic is flawed;

and secondly, it is a misconception and misinterpretation to consider it a law in the first place. Both aspects are useful for the theoretical framework of this study. The first may even be a prerequisite for understanding Michels' rationale, especially in light of the less known and extremely brief but important part about other effects of increasing size.

Michels departs from the assumption and observation that democracy needs an organisation because it is the only way a common will of the masses can emerge due to coordination, and because organisations display the true size of the working class appropriately (Michels, 1911: 21f).⁹¹ His reasoning does not immediately follow a need for organisation in democratic rule. This is partly because of he is inconsistent in his terms of reference use. He refers first to the need for organisation in democracy but the explanations brought forward are concerning sub-groups within a system and the labour force in particular. This makes Michels' rationale unsound. The argumentative chain can be followed logically, only if combined with the assumption that democracy needs a working class.⁹²

In what follows, Michels argues more directly for the effect and ability of membership to trigger organisational responses. Firstly, a growing organisation creates a need for delegates and a representative system of decision-making. In explaining this argument, he first describes self-administration as the ideal form of government adhering to the highest democratic ideals. In such a system '[t]he will of the majority would decide' (Michels, 1911: 23).⁹³ Similar arguments are purported by advocates of participatory democracy. Theorists such as Carole Pateman (1970) and Crawford Macpherson (1977) promote the self-rule of citizens against the centralization of decision-making processes. In a manner similar to Michels, Blondel highlights the importance of democratic structures within organisations. The argument is that the party needs to live what it preaches. A party that promotes democracy by working within a democracy should, itself, be structured in a democratic way, according to Blondel (1978: 140).⁹⁴

Despite his admiration for the self-administration of the people, Michels has to concede that there are technical and administrative difficulties in putting it into practice. Similar to other critics of direct democracy, such as Mill (1869), he argues for the impossibility of self-administration and thus for the necessity of delegates. This is based firstly on the sheer number of people.⁹⁵ As a way of explaining this point,

⁹¹ In the original German version it says: 'Das Prinzip der Organisation muß als die condition sine qua non der sozialen Kampfesführung der Massenbetrachtet werden.'

⁹² And while this assumption might not have been that unconventional in Germany during Michels' time, he still does not make it an explicit part of his argument.

⁹³ 'Der Wille der Mehrheit entscheide.'

⁹⁴ But see Schattschneider, footnote 76.

⁹⁵ Presumably, this only holds for cases in which groups have to reach consensus. Otherwise large groups are as capable as small groups in reaching conclusions.

Michels presents the case of the social democratic party in Berlin, which enjoyed a membership of 90,000 (Bernstein quoted in Michels, 1911: 26) in the early 1900s. With this size (and even if it was only a tenth of it, Michels contends) direct member influence is difficult to maintain. In addition, he also points at the logistic challenges that direct participation of large number of people would entail, similar to the description of elections held in *Individualcountry* in chapter 2. In a second line of argument, he shows that the unfeasibility of self-administration of the masses results from administrative-technical requirements large membership entails. He states that self-administration requires each party member to be informed about the issues at stake. In addition, the issues need to be deliberated within the community. But both requests seem to be impossible to Michels, given large party membership: 'If Jacques treats Pierre unjust, not all French can come running to see the case with their own eyes and to protect Pierre from Jacques' (Blanc quoted in Michels, 1911: 27).⁹⁶ According to him and based on the premise that self-administration requires (full) information for participants, the goal seems administratively impossible given larger number of people. In today's society with modern mass communication tools readily available, keeping everyone informed poses obviously far fewer problems. However, what is still not solved under conditions of the digital age is how to process the amount of information. As illustrated and argued in chapter 2, it is difficult to imagine how every member of society could possibly keep track of and have a distinct opinion on every political issue. The same arguably holds for intra-party decisions.

In their entirety, these arguments present to Michels enough justification to propose a system of delegates within a large organisation, which mirrors by and large decision-making processes through representation outside party organisations. It may be noted that Michels' arguments are not inherently different. In fact, both (number of people and amount of information) concern the constraint that the (growing) size of membership puts on the daily organisation of a party. But regardless of the overlap in reasons, both support his idea that a party cannot be ruled by self-administration. However, the introduction of delegates in itself is not what brings about oligarchy within the organisation. Rather, compared to his preceding reasoning, Michels maintains that it is inevitable that the role of leadership changes as membership size grows.

In doing that, he departs from the observation that in the original relationship between leadership and the masses the leader acts only as the servant of the people (Michels, 1911: 27). As for the members, relationships amongst them are structured by the principles of equality. All members enjoy the right to vote and the right to be voted for. Additionally, all offices are elected. These democratic principles, as the

⁹⁶ 'Wenn Jacques Pierre Unrecht zufügt, können nicht alle Franzosen hinzueilen, sich den Fall mit eigenen Augen besehen und Pierre vor Jacques in Schutz nehmen.'

basis of the party organisation, secure the largest possible impact of the masses and individuals' participation in the pursuit of their joint effort (Michels, 1911: 28). Here, members' influence on the party leader is 'omnipotent' (1911: 28). In this original relationship, delegates try to tie themselves to the wishes and wills of the masses in an attempt to move away from the principles of direct democracy as little as possible. However, what is still unclear from this short account is what changes this initial relationship.

What constitutes the change in the power-relations, Michels justifies more concretely in two explanations. He argues first that as the organisation grows in membership size, a necessity for a 'technical specialisation' (Michels, 1911: 31) emerges. At this point, Michels fails to explain what precisely is meant by this term. However, the content of his paragraphs on special schools in various countries to train party officials suggests that a professionalization of staff is what he means. This may cover both the amount of staff and their level of professionalism or education as laid out in the section on measurement in this chapter. Michels (1911: 31) argues that technical specialisation or professionalised staff creates a gap to ordinary members because this group decides on common matters themselves and only in accordance with the party leader. In quoting Rosa Luxemburg,⁹⁷ Michels (1911: 31) states that business-like leadership is a necessity to the growing organisation but that it transfers all decisive characteristics of the masses to the leader as leader-specific tasks. This leads ultimately to an increase in the leader's power.

In addition to this argument of an almost technical development in the role of the party leader, Michels reveals very briefly more about his conception of the organisation in general, but also the party organisation in particular. He states that party organisations possess inherent aristocratic features (Michels, 1911: 32). By referring to the organisation as machinery that creates 'a solid structure', through which members can bring about big changes, he only explains this argument briefly and insufficiently. What kind of changes Michels refers to is not clear. These might be either intra-organisational changes but more likely he means changes within society, similar to the argument of coordination benefits he puts forward, as reasons to have an organisation in the first place. And overall, it remains an open question why any organisation shows intrinsically aristocratic features and whether these already exist at the start of each organisation or only at a later stage. If they are present from the beginning then the justification for a changing leadership role cannot support the argument in a valid manner; for, it states that the role of

⁹⁷ Rosa Luxemburg (1871-1919) was a Polish Marxist theorist and founder of the Communist Party of Germany (together with Karl Liebknecht). Michels quotes a lengthy passage from her book 'Massenstreik, Partei und Gewerkschaften' (Hamburg, 1906) in which Luxemburg describes how the relationship between the leader and the members turns around once specialists are brought into the social-democratic party.

leadership is *changing*. If, however, these aristocratic features only develop over time then their presence may serve as justifying a change in the leader's role. Yet, what facilitates the emergence of such features remains a question that Michels does not answer. It might well be, however, that Michels at this point mixes already his premises with his conclusion. Originally, leadership only had the status of a servant to the members, designed to promote members' interests, according to Michels, but growing membership size turns leadership into an independent organ by emancipating itself from the masses (Michels, 1911: 32). Overall then, the last argument stating a changing relationship between the members and the leader can only be said to be validly supported through the explanation of increasing technical specialisation.

On the basis of the three argumentative steps (democracy needs organisations; growing organisations need delegates; the leadership role will change as the organisation grows) Michels presents his conclusion famously referred to as the Iron Law of Oligarchy. He writes: 'He who says organisation says tendency to oligarchy anyway' (Michels, 1911: 32).⁹⁸ He argues that the growth in party membership size reverses the initial relationship between the leader and the members, in such a way that the leader is no longer the servant of the members but rather the other way around. Here, membership size acts again as a resource whose increase produces certain organisational effects. Even more so, the two variables of size and power are also related linearly: the leader's power increases to the same extent as the organisation expands (Michels, 1911: 33). For Michels the crux is the introduction of delegates that causes the power-relationship to twist around: once members delegate their decision-making power, they lose it all together (Michels, 1911: 36). When compared to the premise this conclusion is based on, it is interesting to note that the different argumentative steps postulate very different outcomes for democracy. Recall, according to the first premise, democracy requires organisation; Michels' conclusion, however, is that organisation leads to oligarchy (i.e. non-democracy). Note that the two have different reference units. The first premise concerns the entire system whereas the conclusion is based on observations within the organisation as a unit. Unfortunately, Michels does not resolve this inconsistency. Instead, he only observes the paradox without much acknowledging the difference in units and notes that 'the development of democracy describes a parabola' (1911: 33).⁹⁹

The preceding discussion of Michels' argument shows that it is not sound and is flawed in several instances. At times, he fails to provide explanations or justifications for his claims. In other instances, he switches reference units so that

⁹⁸ 'Wer Organisation sagt, sagt ohnehin Tendenz zur Oligarchie.'

⁹⁹ 'Die Entwicklung der Demokratie beschreibt eine Parabel.' This is the case, as he briefly argues, because over time increasingly more democratic structures have emerged. Yet, within parties and as the organisation, grows this development reverses (Michels, 1911: 32f)

the argument cannot be followed logically. It appears on closer inspection that Michels' famous Iron Law of Oligarchy is founded on a rather weak argumentative basis. In contrast to that, ample research supports his claims (see for a brief summary Slattery, 2003). Nonetheless, his proposition remains in multiple instances patchy and insufficient as a full-fledged theory about intra-party democracy and party organisations generally.

Further, the Iron Law of Oligarchy has been frequently interpreted as a deterministic relationship between size and democracy within organisations (see for instance Harmel, 2002; Panebianco, 1988). But it should be noted that what precisely is meant by the iron law and whether or not it has been correctly interpreted is debateable. Gordon Hands (1971: 157f) shows in a thorough analysis of Michels' writings that they do not explicate a precise definition or conception of 'law' throughout. Presumably, Michels is referring to 'something of universal applicability' (Hands, 1971: 158) but not necessarily to a law. And it might be argued that this in itself does not yet entail the suggestion of a deterministic relationship. In addition, Robert Brym (1980:42) shows how Michels can be interpreted in a non-deterministic way. He conceptualises oligarchic control as 'manifested by the intellectuals only to the degree that they are more powerful than the non-intellectuals'. This way, Brym argues, Michels' initial understanding of oligarchic control as a constant is converted into a variable – 'the ebb and flow of oligarchic and democratic tendencies' (Brym, 1980: 42). The advantage this yields is apparent: Michels' law now also allows deviant cases (Brym, 1980: 42). This is also more in line with Michels' original work because he only claims a 'tendency to oligarchy' (1911: 32), not oligarchy in all instances. However, next to this often quoted law, Michels has also highlighted side-effects of this relationship, which have already been hinted at but which are of immediate interest for the question of party organisational responses to organisational growth.

In a less often discussed part of Michels' text, he theorises growing size also as a trigger for other parts of the party organisation. It is interesting to note that Michels goes into details in parsing out his argument about the changing nature of intra-party democracy as a consequence of increasing size, which is not even sound at all times, as shown above. Simultaneously, he states several other effects of growing membership size in a very brief format without elaborating on them. They can only be taken as conjectures but not as a theory, due to a lack of explanations and justifications. More precisely, he proposes that increasing size leads to higher organisational complexity, more specialization, and higher professionalism (Michels, 1911: 34). Due to his brevity, it remains unclear what precisely the difference is between specialization and professionalism. From his writing, it appears that specialization might refer to more staff employed, while professionalism concerns the idea of better educated staff. Regardless of this, Blondel (1978) later proposes similar conjectures about the potential effects of growing membership size.

Just like Michels, Blondel argues that with increasing membership size more sub-leaders are needed to make individual members visible (Blondel, 1978: 149). With increasing size the party adds units at the local level of the party and thereby expands its complexity and hierarchical structure. This is also a direct effect of growing membership size that Michels (1911: 34) hints at in his work. In describing the structure of contemporary parties, Blondel (1978: 149) points out that local or regional offices enjoy some independence but that the ‘real decision-making takes place [...] in smaller councils and executives’. In that way most contemporary parties, Blondel argues, are neither centralised nor decentralised but rather somewhat in-between with the national leadership being responsible for national matters, providing ‘unity of purpose and some guidance’ (1978: 163). Note how this description of the party organisation mirrors the aforementioned assumptions made explicit in the party as a business.

Further, according to Blondel, large size, unity, dynamism, and democratic/responsive structures are all ‘conditions for the success of almost any organization’ (Blondel, 1978: 139). However, these factors are all interrelated in a way that hinders their simultaneous fulfilment. For example, while a large size and a dynamic organisation might not be mutually exclusive characteristics, they are difficult to accomplish. Instead, the conditions need to be balanced and it is up to the leader’s choice to “optimize” between them’ (Blondel, 1978: 142). Blondel warns against an easy choice for one or the other requirement by highlighting their interrelatedness.

More precisely, he claims first that size exerts an effect on unity and dynamism. As way of supporting the hypothesis, he argues that more members also mean a higher likelihood of disagreement between them. Simply put, it is easier for a small group of members to agree on a programme but the more members there are the more difficult it becomes (Blondel, 1978: 142).¹⁰⁰ Additionally, unity and dynamism are jeopardised by an increase in membership because it brings about the likelihood of ‘lukewarm followers’ (Blondel, 1978: 142). With more members joining, the party runs the risk of taking on members that are less enthusiastic about the party’s goals and the means employed to achieve its goal. While this may sound initially appealing from a leadership perspective, it may also limit the party’s ideological coherence. So, one may conclude that there is an incentive for limiting the size of the party. At the same time, Blondel also asserts the importance of large party size. ‘There seems to be something wrong with a small party, as smallness seems synonymous with failure’ (Blondel, 1978: 137). But this is exactly what the balancing act entails: considering the trade-offs.

¹⁰⁰ To be sure, the relationship is probably not linear, even though this is how Blondel makes it sound. Quite possibly, there is a certain numeric threshold after which agreeing on a programme becomes more difficult.

Secondly, Blondel maintains that democracy is related to unity and dynamism. The more members are involved in the decision-making process the more opinions are being heard. It might even be, Blondel (1978: 142) argues, that eventually ‘sub-groups and fractions will be formed, and the unity of the party will be undermined’. Also, it is easy to imagine that the party’s dynamism as expressed in its ability to adapt to challenges is hampered by large membership influence mainly due to its diversity and pace in forming decisions.

Thirdly, Blondel suggests a relationship between size and democracy that seemingly runs contrary to what Michels has proposed. Blondel states that a ‘lack of democracy is often associated with small parties’ (1978: 140), but this alleged difference in Blondel’s and Michels’ account is easily resolved. For, Blondel (1978: 140) elaborates further which parties he means by referring to ‘parties which do not propose a democratic model for society as a whole’. It is easy to see that it is not small parties per se that show a lack of democracy in Blondel’s eyes. Rather, this hypothesis refers to parties of a specific ideology, which (most of the time) happen to be small. This, however, does not change the fact that Blondel, too, postulates a relationship between size and democracy.

In summary, it might be argued that Blondel and Michels agree on some very important points. They correspond as to the interrelatedness of party organisational features, similar to the RBV in the management literature. And more specifically, they concur that party membership size is a trigger for changes in organisational parameters. For both, size has an effect on party complexity and intra-party democracy. The differences between Blondel and Michels come from their choices of dependent factors. Michels postulates a relationship between size and complexity, size and specialisation, as well as size and professionalism. In contrast, Blondel theorises that size is related to complexity, unity, and dynamism. However, Blondel’s factors of unity and dynamism are not, strictly speaking, organisational features as they pertain to the parties’ programmatic capacity,¹⁰¹ and since the parties’ programme and issues have been excluded from the realm of organisational responses in the introductory chapter, they are irrelevant for the current research question. Most importantly for the study of party organisational response to party membership decline, Michels and Blondel agree on an independent effect of size on the other party organisational parameters. For the case of intra-party democracy they postulate a negative relationship, while for the organisational parameters of complexity, professionalism, and specialisation a positive relationship is suggested.

These predictions about the effects of growing party membership size on the party organisation serve as possible answers as to how the organisation might respond to declining membership size. Applying also the organisational literature to the decline of organisations, Michels’ and Blondel’s propositions about the effects of

¹⁰¹ A similar argument was made in section 5 of this chapter.

membership size increases can be reversed to mirror threat-rigidity theory. In such a case, decreases in membership size would instigate and be responded to by decreases in organisational parameters. This would be referred to as a symmetrical causal relationship because responses to organisational growth are reversed when the causal factor drops back to its initial value (Liebersohn, 1985). Therefore, according to threat-rigidity theory and reversing Michels' and Blondel's thinking, the party organisation responds to decreasing membership size by downsizing its organisation. Utilising the contemporary conceptualisation of party organisations discussed above, allows updating and specifying Michels' and Blondel's hypotheses into the following, **H7**:

- H7** Political parties are more likely (1) to downsize their organisational complexity, (2) to reduce their level of professionalism, (3) to decrease centralisation, and (4) to become less capital-intensive and to decrease their number of secure finances in response to decreases in their size of party membership.

While these hypotheses are in line with threat-rigidity theory as found in the management literature, an equivalent to proactive response behaviour as summarised in learning theory has not been proposed for party organisations specifically. However, given the similarities between party organisations and businesses as highlighted in the preceding sections, it is reasonable to expect a comparable response behaviour in party organisations. Existing empirical findings are suggestive of such a relationship. Overall, they show that party organisations have been increasing their resources while being simultaneously exposed to declining membership.

Most notably, three edited volumes deserve special mentioning with regards to this aspect. Firstly, Dalton and Mark Wattenberg's *Parties Without Partisans: Political Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies* (2000a) elucidates on the changing and adaptive nature of political parties. Amongst others, it argues that evaluations of the state of parties depend on the analytical perspective taken. One of the book's sections pertains specifically to party organisations, in which the individual chapters jointly observe falling party membership rates but an increase in the organisations' levels of professionalism, complexity, and finance (pp. 79-153). The authors also hint at a possible connection between these developments without providing a formal test. Secondly, in a wide-spanning study of various countries, examining an array of indicators, the edited volume *Political Parties in Advanced Industrial Democracies* (Webb et al., 2002) assesses the parties' performance, legitimacy, and organisational strength comparatively, encompassing the period 1960-2001. Out of the thirteen

country-chapters eight concern parties in European countries. For each of them, party organisational strength is observed and evaluated over time. Jointly, the chapters point at increases in the number of secure financial resources and rising levels of professionalism, as well as declining membership figures. The individual authors also attempt to draw connections between these developments wherever possible. Finally, in a deliberate attempt to study party responses to changes in the electoral market, the edited volume *Political Parties & Electoral Change* (Mair et al., 2004c) links selected party developments to, amongst other things, declining party membership in eight country-chapters between 1945 and 2001. Each chapter structures party responses alongside five response areas: organisational responses, responses towards voters, responses towards other parties, programmatic responses, and institutional responses (Mair et al., 2004b: 11-15). With regards to organisational responses, the editors find several commonalities amongst the parties studied: changes in the ‘new and uncertain environment’ have made them transform towards more centralisation, professionalism, and a more capital-intensive strategy (Mair et al., 2004a: 265-268).

These findings, based on individual country-studies, largely corroborate Tan’s (2000) cross-country results on membership size’s impact on party organisations. The longitudinal part of the study only covers nine parties in three Western countries between 1950 and 1990. Even though the sample is small, he finds, for example, that ‘party membership size is a statistically significant predictor of organizational complexity’ and parties have developed from voluntary to professional organisations (Tan, 2000: 67, 83). Most recently, Krouwel’s (2012) study of party transformation in Europe investigates party organisational developments for a larger number of parties between 1945 and 2010. Although he finds similar patterns of more professional and capital-intensive parties, he only connects falling membership rates to an increase in professionalism (Krouwel, 2012: 245).

These existing studies can be summarised as follows: over the last decades, party organisations have generally developed into more professional, capital-intensive organisations with fewer members. Prior research also points at increases in organisational complexity as time proceeds. In addition, some of the aforementioned studies indicate not only a link between time and party organisational parameters but also a connection to party membership size, to the extent that they hint at a negative relationship. Put differently, declining levels of party membership are suggested to be related to, or at least coincide with, increasing levels of secure party finance, complexity, and professionalism. However, the existing studies do not provide information regarding whether or not this association can be substantiated by empirical findings on a broader scale and to what extent.

These considerations imply that parties could be counter-attacking decline by expanding their organisation, similar to what learning theory suggests. As a result, the relationship between membership and the organisation would then be referred to as asymmetrical (Lieberson, 1985: 175) and the corresponding hypotheses would be the following, **H8**:

H8 Political parties are more likely (1) to increase their organisational complexity, (2) to raise their level of professionalism, (3) to increase centralisation, and (4) to become more capital-intensive and to increase their number of secure finances in response to decreases in their size of party membership.

In contrast to both sets of propositions, Panebianco (1988) doubts the validity of any of these causal directions and instead argues for size as a dependent factor, turning the causal relationship around. His argument is a two-fold critique of Michels' and Blondel's conclusions. For one, he is concerned about the deterministic character of Michels' hypotheses, given that Michels' study is solely based on the observational data of a single case (Panebianco, 1988: 183,203). From hitherto studies, Panebianco grants size to be an important factor for the party organisation but utters concern about there being 'no empirical research' (Panebianco, 1988:186) on size as the independent variable. For another, Panebianco (1988:183) argues against the party organisation as a passive object and instead makes a plea for acknowledging a party's influence on its own structure.

With reference to three organisational features – internal cohesion, participation/mobilization of members, and complexity – Panebianco counters Michels and Blondel. As far as internal cohesion (or unity in Blondel's words) is concerned, he is careful in highlighting a couple of counter-examples, which are illustrative of large parties with high internal cohesion, namely the Italian Communist Party and the British Conservative Party. He states that small size is not 'a necessary condition' for internal cohesion but acknowledges that 'a relationship between size and political homogeneity probably exists' (Panebianco, 1988: 187), without providing any substantive test of his claims. Equally, Panebianco argues that Michels was wrong in his assertion that small organisations trigger more active participation. In referencing Mancur Olson's (1971 [1965]) theory of collective action, Panebianco claims that it is not a small organisation's size that particularly encourages participation but its "'solidarity system" geared to attaining its manifest goals' (1988: 188). With the increasing institutionalisation of a party, Panebianco (1988: 188) argues, incentive structures change and voluntary participation declines. Accordingly, there is no direct relationship between party size and intra-party participation.

Lastly, in response to Michels' and Blondel's hypothesis about the relationship between size and complexity, Panebianco admits that '[s]ize initially parallels complexity' (1988:189). But here again he doubts size to be the real explanation. Instead, 'it is the effect of the need to channel and control the intense participation generated by the "solidarity system" accompanying an organization's début' (1988: 189). It might well be, Panebianco (1988: 189) acknowledges, that the variables of size and complexity have an association but this does not demonstrate causality. To him, in order to show causality between size and complexity, one of the requirements is to demonstrate that 'when size decreases, complexity and/or the level of bureaucratization diminish at the same time' (Panebianco, 1988: 189). But for the time being he is not convinced of an independent effect of size on the organisation.

Instead of size as the independent variable, Panebianco proposes size to be a dependent factor. To him, it seems plausible that leaders exert influence on the party organisation's size. He points out that leaders differ markedly in their 'control of organizational boundaries, i.e. their ability to change size by tampering with membership recruitment' (Panebianco, 1988: 190). According to this view, party leaders have immediate control on who enters the party and who stays out. '[T]he leaders can make [the organisation] grow or shrink' (Panebianco, 1988: 190f). This argument raises immediate questions of how a party would go about successfully influencing its size. It seems hardly possible to just decide for a larger organisation and increase membership size, but Panebianco illustrates two ways of influencing the size of membership directly. On the one hand, the party can constrain its size by introducing stricter criteria for member admission, for instance, to achieve higher internal cohesion. On the other hand, the party can 'take persons from the challenging groups and organizations inside organizational boundaries' (Haldrich 1973: 245 cited in Panebianco 1988: 191) in order to increase the party's reach, thereby expanding its size. While the example for decreasing party size seems plausible and feasible, the strategy proposed for increasing party membership size is more difficult to follow. Regrettably, Panebianco fails to explain further how a party would go about increasing its size, especially because this appears to be such a central point in his argument. The two cases provided to back up the existence of these strategies are cases in which parties *tried* to expand its membership size by implementing new recruitment strategies, and they happened to be successful with it. According to Panebianco, for the French and Italian Communist Parties in the 1970s it was a deliberate choice to expand the parties' boundaries and to incorporate adjacent social groups. Even if, in both instances, the increase in membership was the true intention of party leaders, both cases could just be examples of a good opportunity and not the systematic result of leaders' response. Panebianco (1988: 192) also acknowledges that '[s]ize can sometimes vary independently of the elites' decisions to change it'. But irrespective of this point, he explains, in what follows, his thesis and the mechanism with a little more detail. To him, especially the conformation of

the dominant coalition plays a crucial role in determining membership size. For instance, '[a] cohesive-stable, dominant coalition is more likely to increase party size [...] in order to safeguard its organizational stability' (Panebianco, 1988: 192). Conversely, a 'divided-stable coalition [...] is more likely to maintain party size stationary' (Panebianco, 1988: 192). Accordingly, the power structure within each party determines to a large extent the size of the party. Ultimately, size can then be regarded as a dependent factor. Under today's conditions with declining membership across parties, as demonstrated in chapter 4, and an ever increasing competition over voters, it seems implausible that any constellation of party elites would be concerned with deliberately limiting its membership size.

In summary, Panebianco is highly critical of Michels' and Blondel's proposition of an independent influence of party membership size on party organisational features. However, he appears to share the predictions for party organisational responses during periods of party membership growth, based implicitly on the party as a business model and its implications. As Panebianco (1988: 189) suggests for the case of complexity, in order to show that size has an independent effect, one 'would still have to demonstrate that (1) when size decreases, complexity and/or the level of bureaucratization diminishes at the same time; (2) that a big organization is always more complex than a small one'. However, for the time being he doubts there to be an independent effect of membership size on organisational features. Accordingly, Panebianco's reservations are equivalent to formulating an alternative null hypothesis.

Finally, it might be that a relationship does exist between membership size and the organisation, and that contemporary findings are afterall in line with Michels. This would only be the case, if parties at an early stage of their existence (the status Michels can only have referred to) are intrinsically different from parties at a later stage. Chapter 4 already found that party age or party institutionalisation play a role in explaining different levels of membership loss amongst parties. The results indicated that the more consolidated parties are, the fewer members they pull, thereby supporting the life-cycle approach. And already Panebianco (1988: 188) observed that a party's level of institutionalisation changes incentive structures for members and party elites alike. To reiterate, a party experiences different stages of organisational development from its first emergence to its consolidation and establishment as an enduring option for voters (see Harmel and Svåsand, 1993). Each stage presumably provides a distinct set of opportunities and incentives for the party organisation, its members, and their respective actions. For the current case, it implies that depending on the level of party institutionalisation, parties might be more or less sensitive to changes in their membership size. Put differently, depending on the level of institutionalisation, parties might respond differently to changes in membership size. This could mean that even if support is found for a relationship between declining membership and increasing organisational

parameters, this does not necessarily mean that Michels is proved wrong. More pointedly, theoretical considerations and empirical evidence so far suggest that the relationship between party membership and organisational parameters might be mediated by party age as a proxy for party institutionalisation. At a younger age, when a party is less institutionalised, membership and the organisation are positively related, whereas at an older age, with increasing party institutionalisation, the relationship reverses. It would mean that the two concepts of party membership and the party organisation are differently related, depending on the value that the mediator takes on. Accordingly, testing the conditional hypothesis, **H9**, clarifies and elaborates on the entire relationship between party membership (growth and decline), party organisational parameters, and party age as a proxy for party institutionalisation.

H9 Each of the relationships between party membership and (1) organisational complexity, (2) professionalism, (3) capital-intensiveness, and (4) centralisation, are conditional upon a party's age, independent of time. For the first three instances it holds that at a younger age the relationship is positive whereas it is negative for older parties; the reverse is true for the last case of centralisation.

5.7. Summary and conclusion

This chapter set out to develop a conceptual and theoretical framework for the study of party organisational response. It was built around five key points. Firstly, understanding party organisations and their change is crucial due to the close ties party organisations hold with the structure and organisation of democracy. Secondly, the party organisation is in this study conceptualised as the *party in central office*. It is defined as the permanent, organisational unit associated with a parliamentary party, which is responsible for managing the party during and between elections, maintaining resources at the party's disposal to assist the party on the ground's joined effort of winning elections, and providing policy and managerial advice to the party in public office. Thirdly, for the study of organisational responses to membership decline, the party as a business model is an ideal summary of necessary assumptions made about a party organisation's internal workings, goals, and incentives. Fourthly, based on the resource-based view of the party organisation it is operationalized according to four key dimensions: complexity, professionalism, centralisation, and finances. And fifthly, theories of organisational change provide different expectations as to what causes a change as well as what kind of change to anticipate. General theories of party change propose three main determinants: party age, system-belonging, or a combination of electoral

result and leadership effects. Organisational and party politics literatures also include expectations about organisational change or response behaviour towards a drop in a specific resource, such as members.

On the basis of these individual building blocks, a total of seven hypotheses are formulated whose individual tests will answer the main research question. They can be divided into four groups, depending on their respective goals. Table 5.2 summarise them according to their group-belonging. The first marks an over-time prediction about party organisational change or development. The following three pertain to different general explanations for party organisational change; subsequently, two hypotheses relate to membership decline as a specific determinant and the possible relationships it might have with party organisational change. Finally, a last hypothesis states an expectation about how the relationship between membership size and the party organisation is conditional upon party age as a proxy for party institutionalisation. In the following two chapters all seven hypotheses will be put to the test.

Table 5.2. Summary of hypotheses.

over-time	H3	Since World War 2, party organisations are likely to gradually possess (1) a higher level of complexity, (2) a higher level of professionalism, and (3) a higher degree of centralisation. In addition, they are likely (4) to become more capital-intensive and increase their number of secure finances.
general determinant	H4	With increasing age and party institutionalisation (and independent of time) party organisations are likely to gradually develop (1) a higher level of professionalism, (2) a higher level of complexity, (3) a higher degree of centralisation. In addition, they are likely (4) to become more capital-intensive and increase their number of secure finances with increasing age.
	H5	Since World War 2, party organisations of the same party system are likely to gradually resemble each other more in their party organisation, i.e. (1) complexity, (2) professionalism, (3) centralisation and (4) financial assets.
	H6	Prior high electoral results and leadership change effects are likely to lead to an increase in (1) complexity, (2) professionalism, and (3) centralisation. A further consequence is that they are likely (4) to become more capital-intensive and increase their number of secure finances.
membership as trigger	H7	Political parties are more likely (1) to downsize their organisational complexity, (2) to reduce their level of professionalism, (3) to decrease centralisation, and (4) to become less capital-intensive and to decrease their number of secure finances in response to decreases in their size of party membership.
	H8	Political parties are more likely (1) to increase their organisational complexity, (2) to raise their level of professionalism, (3) to increase centralisation, and (4) to become more capital-intensive and to increase their number of secure finances in response to decreases in their size of party membership.
age as condition	H9	Each of the relationships between party membership and (1) organisational complexity, (2) professionalism, (3) capital-intensiveness, and (4) centralisation are conditional upon a party's age, independent of time. For the first three instances it holds that at a younger age the relationship is positive whereas it is negative for older parties; the reverse is true for the last case of centralisation.

6 – The development of party organisations in Western Europe: adaptation and institutionalisation¹⁰²

In the previous chapter a conceptual and theoretical framework was developed that facilitates the study of party responses to changes in membership size. In addition, several explanatory approaches to organisational change were outlined that seek to understand why organisations change. The party organisation as a concept was defined and divided into several dimensions to enable a study of change. Finally, several hypotheses were derived. Building up on this, the following sections are going to test the first set of hypotheses.

This chapter explores and assesses party organisational change and its potential general determinants. More precisely, the chapter pursues two goals. Firstly, in the following sections party organisational change and development will be sketched and described for the 47 political parties included in the dataset between 1960 and 2010. In doing so, the over-time hypothesis, **H3**, will be tested (see Table 6.1). Secondly, it will be testing the three explanatory approaches for party organisational changes, as introduced in the previous chapter. The hypotheses, **H4**, **H5**, and **H6** all make independent predictions as to the main driving force behind party organisational change. In its entirety the chapter argues firstly, that until the late 1980s, party organisational development generally emphasised increasing its organisational structures and becoming more capital-intensive. After that, party organisations increased only in the minority of parameters but decreased in more. In addition, organisational complexity has been generally declining over the period of study. Secondly, it shows that party age as a proxy for party institutionalisation marks the best general predictor for these patterns.

¹⁰² Earlier versions of this chapter were presented at the Department of Political Science, University of Bamberg, 20 August 2013, and at the Department of Methods in the Social Sciences, University of Vienna, 3 October 2013. I would like to thank all participants for their valuable advice.

Table 6.1. Summary of over-time and determinants hypotheses.

over-time	H3	Since World War 2, party organisations are likely to gradually possess (1) a higher level of complexity, (2) a higher level of professionalism, and (3) a higher degree of centralisation. In addition, they are likely (4) to become more capital-intensive and increase their number of secure finances.
general determinant	H4	With increasing age and party institutionalisation (and independent of time) party organisations are likely to gradually develop (1) a higher level of professionalism, (2) a higher level of complexity, (3) a higher degree of centralisation. In addition, they are likely (4) to become more capital-intensive and increase their number of secure finances with increasing age.
	H5	Since the 1950s, party organisations of the same party system are likely to gradually resemble each other more in their party organisation, i.e. (1) complexity, (2) professionalism, (3) centralisation and (4) financial assets.
	H6	Prior high electoral results and leadership change effects are likely to lead to an increase in (1) complexity, (2) professionalism, and (3) centralisation. A further consequence is that they are likely (4) to become more capital-intensive and increase their number of secure finances.

The chapter is structured as follows. The next section introduces the precise data, measures, and methods to be used. Section two presents the results, where the first part deals with the over-time hypothesis and the second part with the different explanatory approaches. Finally, section three discusses the results and provides a summary of the findings.

6.1. Data and methods

For testing the four hypotheses alongside the four dimensions of the party organisation developed in the previous chapter (complexity, professionalism, centralisation, and finances), data from the *Party Organisation Dataset 1960-2010* are used. The variables to be examined in the upcoming analyses are listed in Table 6.2, with their corresponding dimensions and operationalization of the concept of party in central office. The table also lists their coverage, mean, and standard deviation.

More specifically, since the number of hierarchical layers (intensiveness) rarely varies over time, only the level of extensiveness, i.e. number of basic units, is included in the analysis. In order to make the number of basic units comparable across countries and time, the local government structure of each country is taken into account. For that, annual data on the number of local government units have been obtained from official sources and a ratio is calculated, expressing the average number of basic units per local government unit per year.¹⁰³

¹⁰³ Whenever data was only available for some years, missing values were interpolated or previous figures were taken as a continuation as in the case of the UK. For the precise sources, see codebook.

Table 6.2. Summary of party in central office's operationalization and data.

Note: 'co' denotes central office, whereas 'tot' refers to entire party. Financial data are expressed in Int'l. \$ of 1990.

Dimension	Operationalization	Variable	Observations	Mean	Standard deviation
Complexity	basic units	units/ local government unit	859	2.01	2.80
	hierarchical layers	layers			
Professionalism	staff	staff/ member	1,040	6.71	8.43
	salaries paid to staff	salary/ staff	641	40,552.86	37,598.09
Finances	income	income (co)	1,143	8,441,280	17,292,765
		income (tot)	757	30,861,475	57,172,311
	expense	expense (co)	1,019	7,497,883	16,451,905
		expense (tot)	505	33,308,820	60,262,925
	income structure	subsidy/due (co)	729	-1.72	7.12
		subsidy/ due (tot)	504	-0.73	4.84
Centralisation	candidate selection	candidate			
	leadership selection	leadership			

The financial data were obtained from annual reports.¹⁰⁴ As in some cases statements of accounts only reported the entire party's financial status and not only that of the party in central office, those figures are included in a separate variable.¹⁰⁵ Henceforth, the suffix 'co' indicates that a variable was measured at the headquarters' level, whereas 'tot' refers to the entire party. Figures on income, expense and staff salaries are made comparable across countries as well as across time. In line with previous studies on party finances (see Nassmacher, 2004), figures expressed in national currencies are adjusted by purchasing power and converted into international dollars (Int'l. \$). Following recommendations by the United Nations Statistics Division¹⁰⁶ an index is used that expresses a country's total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 1990 US dollars converted at Geary Khamis Power Purchasing Parities (GK-PPPs) for each year.¹⁰⁷ Even though the Geary Khamis index uses 1990 price levels, it does not necessarily pose a problem to comparisons over time or across parties as this only affects the actual level of figures, not their rise or fall. Each financial figure, x , is adjusted using the following equation (1):

$$\frac{\text{unadjusted } x}{\text{adjusted } x} = \frac{\text{unadjusted GDP}}{\text{adjusted GDP}} \quad (1)$$

¹⁰⁴ The sources for each variable can be found in the codebook in the appendix to chapter 1.

¹⁰⁵ In the process of finding the appropriate operationalization for the dimension of finances Sedef Turper and Steven Van Hauwaert provided much appreciated criticism, insights, and ideas.

¹⁰⁶ United Nations Statistics Division: http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/icp/ipc7_hm.htm, accessed 25/02/2013.

¹⁰⁷ Data stem from The Conference Board Total Economy Database™, January 2013, <http://www.conference-board.org/data/economydatabase/>. Zethyn Ruby McKinley offered valuable advice on how to obtain, select, and use the appropriate index, for which I am very grateful.

In order to assess the sources of income, raw values of the two variables – income through dues and income through state subsidies – are first converted into percentage shares of the total income (as appropriate, either of the central office or of the entire party). Such compositional data have the characteristic of being strongly interrelated. An increase in one variable's share must necessarily lead to a decrease in the other one's share, provided that the total amount remains the same. For expressing both shares in a single score, log-ratios are calculated using income through membership dues as the denominator and income through state subsidies as the numerator (see Aitchison, 1986). This way, the initially correlated variables no longer pose a problem to the analyses and the variables are combined in a single score.¹⁰⁸ The interpretation of scores is straightforward. If both shares in income are equal, the score is zero. Whenever membership dues mark the larger share, the score yields a negative value; and conversely, a positive score indicates a larger share of state subsidies in relation to income generated through membership dues. The difference in magnitude is reflected in the scores' levels.

The variable of number of staff contains information on the number of employees on the payroll of the party in central office, obtained either from annual reports or from party contacts. Wherever possible the precise full-time equivalents (FTEs) are used. Since the number of staff employed at party in central office probably depends also on the size of the organisation, a ratio is calculated that expresses the number of staff per 10,000 members. In addition, a variable is created that expresses the average, adjusted salary paid for a member of staff employed at the party in central office. Both staff-related variables jointly measure the level of professionalism within a party.

Lastly, the two variables belonging to the degree of centralisation within the party, selectorate of legislative candidates and selectorate of leadership, show too little variation over time to be included in a systematic analysis that takes a single year as the unit of observation. Parties do not frequently change their candidate or leadership selection procedure. Usually, they only change their official rules once in several decades. The most wide-ranging analyses of intra-party democracy in eighteen countries between 1960 and 2000 by Scarrow et al. (2000) provide evidence for a trend towards more inclusiveness in both candidate selectorates and leadership selectorates, albeit many parties still centralise these decisions. Yet, these changes in parties' intra-democracy do not vary by year, which is the reason why a

¹⁰⁸ Note that the original shares had to be slightly modified for creating a variable that takes the natural logarithm of the two shares. This is because the natural logarithm of 0, $\ln(0)$, is undefined, since there is no number to which e can be raised to receive the result of 0. Therefore, whenever a share of the total income was 0 per cent, the value was modified in such a way to return a defined result. Practically, this means that those values were changed from being 0 to 0.000001. The values are still close enough to not bias any of the further analyses.

party's degree of centralisation will not be part of subsequent analyses. The reader may be referred to the relevant literature that also draws a connection between party membership loss and increasing decentralisation (see Scarrow et al., 2000 and the literature cited therein).

In order to test the hypotheses pertaining to determinants of change – **H4**, **H5**, and **H6** – variables of party age, country-belonging, electoral success, and leadership change effects are also needed. Party age is calculated on an annual basis, where year of foundation is coded as 'o' (*AGE*), as in chapter 4. Election results in percentage of votes are summarised in the variable *ELECTORAL RESULT*. Both variables are standardised using z-scores. Electoral result is additionally lagged by one year to allow for reaction time. The variable leadership change effects (*LEADER EFFECT*) pertains to the effect that a new party leader has. In years of leadership change as well as in the following two it is coded '1', in all others 'o'. The underlying rationale is that a leadership change has not only instantaneous effects on the party in the year of change but probably also in the following two years. It may take some time to design and implement changes. Note that it is not always referring to a change in the exact same position across parties or countries. This is because similar tasks are not uniformly summarised under the same title. According to Janda (1980: 109), a minimal definition of party leader encompasses the person acting as 'national spokesman' of the party, whereas a maximal definition could mean a person being the 'locus of power' in the party. Following more closely the minimal definition, the following positions were taken, depending on country and party: for Danish parties 'partileders'; for German parties 'Parteivorsitzender'; for Dutch parties either 'partijleider' or 'partijvoorzitter'; for Norwegian parties 'leder'; for Swedish parties 'partiordförande', 'partiledare', or 'språkrör'; and for the United Kingdom 'party leader'. Table 6.3 summarises means and standard deviations of the raw independent variables used in the following analysis.

Table 6.3. Summary of independent variables.

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation
Party age	54.76	37.69
Electoral result	15.36	13.20
Leader effect	0.37	0.48

For the analyses two different strategies are employed, according to the two different statistical methods used. In order to test the over-time hypothesis, as well as the life-cycle and discrete approach for party organisational change, multilevel

modelling is used.¹⁰⁹ Multilevel modelling serves the purpose of testing these hypotheses particularly well as it allows a nested structure, where each party's observation between 1960 and 2010 marks level 1, which is nested within parties on level 2. The rationale of such an approach is that within-party differences can be distinguished from between-party difference over time. Taking this into account, multilevel models draw a distinction between the level-1 and level-2 models. As a consequence, party-specific growth curves can be modelled. This also enables specifying at which level predictors are assumed to have an effect. Any predictors added to the level-1 model will represent time-specific characteristics, while predictors in the level-2 part of the model consider party-specific characteristics. The hypotheses to be tested only require these two levels.¹¹⁰ Instead of separately modelling these processes, multilevel models accomplish this simultaneously.

In the following analysis, each of the indicators of party organisational development is taken as a separate dependent variable. The reported results successively model the impact of time (just like in chapter 4, denoted through the variable TIME that refers to 5-year periods starting with 1 in 1960), polynomials of time and standardised values of party age, a one-year lag of party's standardised electoral result, as well as a 3-year effect of leadership following a change. All models are estimated using maximum likelihood, which allows comparing fixed effects as well as the stochastic part across models (Singer and Willett, 2003: 118).¹¹¹

Further, as already mentioned in chapter 4, the longitudinal nature of the data does not fit with the assumptions the standard multilevel model makes about the error covariance structure. To reiterate: A party's value at time point T_1 is most likely also dependent on its value at T_0 . It implies that residuals are probably not independent and normally distributed within parties. Rather, it should be the case that residuals are heteroscedastic and autocorrelated. However, the standard model assumes that random effects are mutually independent across measurement points and parties, as well as identically distributed. Different possibilities were discussed in chapter 4 to address this problem. For the following analyses, the same approach is applied as in chapter 4. This means that instead of specifying a complex, saturated error covariance structure that takes into account autocorrelation within parties, a simpler model is preferred. By incorporating time and its polynomials into the random part of the model, a more complex error covariance structure is imposed

¹⁰⁹ The models are estimated using the *lme4* (version October 25, 2013) package (Bates et al., 2013) in *R* (version 3.0.2, 2013-09-25).

¹¹⁰ If any of them would also incorporate country-specific predictors, this could be modelled in the level-3 part of the model.

¹¹¹ Full maximum likelihood estimation assumes that errors are normally distributed with a mean of zero and unknown variance (Singer and Willet, 2003; Hox, 2010). Violations of this assumption have been shown to be negligible for estimating the fixed parameters (Maas and Hox, 2004), and since here only the fixed effects are of interest to the analysis, the assumptions made by maximum likelihood have not been tested.

onto the data compared to the standard model. In addition, specifying the correct error covariance matrix is only consequential for the random effects, yet not for the fixed effects, which are of ultimate interest here (see Hox, 2010: 103; Singer and Willett, 2003: 257).

In order to compare the different models for each dependent variable, the overall model fit (of goodness-of-fit statistics) is used. The model returning the best fit statistic with higher order polynomials of time marks the growth model. In the full model fixed effects are evaluated to establish which of the explanatory approaches finds most support by the data. Note that the discrete approach is operationalized here with two variables (LEADER EFFECT; ELECTORAL RESULT) based on the rationale that organisational change is caused by both triggers. Each is sufficient to bring about change. Therefore, if only one of them shows to have a significant and greater effect compared to party age, support is found for the discrete approach.

In order to test the convergence hypothesis, a different analytical approach is employed. The convergence hypothesis states that parties of the same party system resemble each other more in their organisational features over time. This requires a shift in the unit of analysis from the individual party to the country level. Units of observations, however, are still individual years. The hypothesis further implies that the variance between parties decreases over time. Therefore, variances are computed per organisational parameter, per country, for each year. These time-series of country-level variances are regressed on a linear trend variable. If the coefficient on the time parameter is negative and significant, support is found for the idea that country-level variances have been decreasing over time. In such a case, the results would be supportive of the convergence hypothesis.

6.2. Results

6.2.1. Analysis of party organisations over time

For each of the dependent variables, the best fitting growth model was first selected to test **H4** pertaining to party organisational development between 1960 and 2010. In most cases this implied including a second-order polynomial of time ($TIME^2$), whereas some distributions required also a third-order polynomial ($TIME^3$). Polynomials of time are included whenever the trend over time is non-linear. As can be seen from successively including higher order terms per dependent variable (see Table 6.4 and the appendix to this chapter), overall model fits improve. This means that a model including polynomials presents the better fit for the data, which suggests that over-time developments are not monotonous. For presentational purposes, only for the very first dependent variable of the unit ratio will all models

be presented in the text. Thereafter, only the most important coefficients are reported and discussed. All models can be found in the appendix to this chapter.

Table 6.4. Multilevel models of unit ratio ($n = 859$; $N = 40$).

~ $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; standard errors in parentheses.

			df = 818	df = 817	df = 795
			<i>Growth models</i>		<i>Causes of effects</i>
			Model 1.1	Model 1.2	Model 1.3
Fixed effects					
	intercept	γ_{00}	1.86 *** (0.53)	2.03 ** (0.85)	2.39 ** (0.84)
	<i>TIME</i>	γ_{10}	-0.06 (0.08)	-0.15 (0.27)	-0.18 (0.27)
	<i>TIME</i> ²	γ_{20}		0.01 (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)
	<i>AGE</i>	γ_{30}			0.68 ** (0.25)
	<i>ELECTORAL RESULT</i>	γ_{40}			0.39 *** (0.10)
	<i>LEADER EFFECT</i>	γ_{50}			-0.01 (0.06)
Variance components					
Level 1	Within-unit variance	σ^2_e	1.14	0.43	0.43
Level 2	1st grade	σ^2_0	9.66	24.14	22.05
	variance	σ^2_1	0.18	2.48	2.39
	cov 1st grade	σ_{01}	-0.78	-0.91	-0.92
Quadratic term	variance	σ^2_2		0.01	0.01
	cov 1st grade	σ_{02}		0.90	0.90
	cov linear	σ_{12}		-0.99	-0.99
Goodness of fit					
	logLik		-1402	-1038	-1002
	AIC		2816	2097	2031
	BIC		2845	2144	2092

The results of the multilevel analyses for the unit ratio are displayed in Table 6.4. They are structured as follows: the upper part reports the fixed effects, the middle part depicts the variance components for each of the levels, and the lower part shows the goodness-of-fit statistics. As can be seen, the goodness-of-fit statistic for

Model 1.2 is superior to the previous model with a simple linear term, which lends support to that model presenting the best fit for the data, albeit not all coefficients are significant. Substantially, the model shows that the number of units per local government unit has been declining, on average, over the period of analysis, as indicated by the negative coefficient on TIME^2 . The estimated turning point lies at period 7.5, which is equivalent to the years 1994/1995. The estimated growth curve suggests that the average number of basic units per local government unit has been decreasing after that again. Note, however, that this pattern of overall decreasing organisational complexity during the past decades is not in line with Scarrow (2000) but supports Bardi's (2004) findings in Italy. In addition, it does not support the hypothesis above. It appears that parties have been, on average, reducing their local presence through decreasing their number of local offices per local government unit.

Table 6.5. Summary of growth model equations.

Note: 'co' denotes central office; 'tot' refers to entire party.

Dependent variable	Growth model equation
units/ local government unit	$2.39 - 0.18x + 0.01x^2$
staff/ member	$3.71 - 0.09x + 0.09x^2$
salary/ staff	$17520.70 + 8462.10x - 633.30x^2$
income (central office; co)	$2576688 + 1633893x - 130215x^2$
income (total; tot)	$-6647948 + 8018107x - 575356x^2$
expense (central office; co)	$2483959 + 1732738x - 143275x^2$
expense (total; tot)	$447740 + 11058756x - 881263x^2$
subsidy/ due (central office; co)	$-12.25 + 1.25x + 0.12x^2 - 0.01x^3$
subsidy/ due (total; tot)	$-24.43 + 9.17x - 1.18x^2 + 0.05x^3$

Table 6.5 summarises the best fitting growth model equations for the other dependent variables. It reports for each dependent variable the estimated parameters on the time coefficients. Note that none of them only includes a linear term; as noted above, for all parameters at least a second-order polynomial of time provided the better fit. For the two indicators of professionalism the best fitting growth models show mixed results. In line with Farrell and Webb's (2000) results, the staff/member ratio has been generally increasing over the period of study, which can be interpreted as headquarters staff becoming more specialised. In contrast, the salary/staff ratio follows an inverse u-shaped pattern between 1960 and 2010. The coefficients indicate that the average salary per member of staff first increased until about the late 1980s when it began to drop. Taking this variable as an indicator of professionalism means that parties have become increasingly more professional until 1989/1990 before employees' average salaries dropped somewhat. Nonetheless, for the dimension of professionalism no clear pattern emerges. **H4**, stating that professionalism since the 1950s has been increasing, cannot be fully supported by the data.

The results of growth patterns for the dimension of finances are similarly mixed. Party incomes at central office and for the entire party describe again parabolas for the period under study with peaks in the late 1980s.¹¹² The same holds once party expenses are considered across both party levels. Each has been increasing substantially until the late 1980s only to then decrease in subsequent years. Two individual parties are particularly noteworthy in their development over time across these four parameters (income at central and entire level, expense at central and entire level). These are the two German parties, SPD and CDU. Their trajectories are continuously substantially higher than those of all other parties. For the variables of income and expense at the central level, for example, all other parties stay below figures of Int'l. \$ (1990) 20,000,000 almost throughout, whereas the two German parties' figures rarely drop below Int'l. \$ (1990) 40,000,000. This is twice as much income and expense; the same pattern can be found at the parties' entire level. Here, SPD's and CDU's income and expense are almost continuously double the size as those of the next most capital-intensive party, Int'l. \$ (1990) 100,000,000 versus Int'l. \$ (1990) 50,000,000. Raw data and conversion checks have been conducted several times to exclude errors within the dataset. On the basis of these figures, it appears that the German SPD and CDU are and have been, together, the most capital-intensive parties in the dataset between 1960 and 2010. Even when compared to other big European parties, such as the British Tories or the Swedish social democratic party S, SPD and CDU are remarkably capital-intensive and appear to be financial powerhouses. Potential explanations are at this point difficult to find since other German parties range amongst their European counterparts, so a 'German explanation' is not warranted. And since the pattern stretches across income and expense, explanations pertaining to special sources of income, such as donations or foundations can be ruled out, too. To reiterate the average pattern, parties have been increasingly more capital-intensive until the late 1980s before downsizing somewhat.

And finally, the analyses of the parties' income structure over different party levels indicates for the party in central office a general increase towards a higher reliance on state subsidies as time proceeds. While most parties relied more on dues relative to subsidies until about the early 1990s, for most parties the distribution amongst the two sources of income has changed. Currently, subsidies and dues are in most cases on par in their share of income; for several parties subsidies present even the larger source of income. On the other hand, for the entire party the growth equation describes a slightly different pattern: until very recently, parties have been generally maintaining a higher reliance on dues. However, the estimators of the growth curve above suggest a steep increase towards more reliance on state subsidies as of late. Yet, the general picture is one of increasingly less reliance on membership dues to the benefit of subsidies. This finding is also in line with many studies on state

¹¹² For both parameters, the estimated peaks lie in the period 1985-1989.

subsidies (see for instance Farrell and Webb, 2000; Mair et al., 2004a; but see Pierre et al., 2000). This difference in finding might be a consequence of a longer time-period than what was considered here, the selection of parties, or the measurement used.

Overall, the analyses of the different indicators pertaining to party finances show that the hypothesis of more capital-intensive party organisations and a higher reliance on state subsidies cannot be fully supported. It appears that the data support the hypothesis largely until about the late 1980s. For the time thereafter, party organisations seem to have become again somewhat less capital-intensive. The only exception to this marks the subsidy/due ratio at central level. Between 1960 and 2010, parties have, on average, increasingly relied more on state subsidies, relative to dues, for financing the central party.

The over-time hypothesis, **H3**, finds full support only through the indicators of staff/member ratio and subsidy/due ratio at central office, which is also in line with previous studies (for instance Farrell and Webb, 2000; Mair, 1994; Mair et al., 2004a; Webb, 2002a). Most other indicators for party organisational development show only partial support for **H3**, namely until about the late 1980s. After that, party organisations, on average, appear to generally downsize slightly and become less capital-intensive. Finally, according to the unit ratio measuring organisational complexity, **H3** cannot be supported. On average, parties have been decreasing in complexity over the period of study. This is not in line with Scarrow's (2000) finding of increasing complexity between 1959 and 1989. The difference in findings can perhaps be attributed to the longer time-period that was employed here or the differences in parties analysed.

6.2.2. Test of explanatory approaches for party organisational change

Turning to the analyses of which explanatory approach finds the most support by the data, consider again Table 6.4 reporting the multilevel model results for the unit ratio. Model 1.3 displays the results of comparing the life-cycle and discrete change approach within the growth model. The coefficients on party age and prior electoral result are both significant and positive. They mean that higher age and a higher electoral share in the previous year are associated with a larger local presence of the party. The effect of party age is substantially than the one exerted by electoral result (0.68 versus 0.39). These results support the life-cycle approach as phrased in **H4**.

For all other dependent variables the coefficients on party age, electoral result, and leadership effect are summarised in Table 6.6 for ease of reading. Full models can be found in the appendix to this chapter. As for the dimension of professionalism, the models estimating the effects of the two explanatory approaches show mixed results. Firstly, according to the staff/member ratio, both coefficients on party age

and electoral result are not significant. In addition, contrary the expectations formulated in the hypotheses above, both factors yield a negative impact on the number of staff per 10,000 members. Presumably, a certain number of staff is always needed. As for the other indicator of professionalism, the salary/ staff ratio, neither of the approaches appears to be a good explanation. None of the coefficients are significant, and the effect of age is also not in the expected direction. For the entire dimension the results suggest that neither the life-cycle nor the discrete change approach can explain parties' development in professionalism between 1960 and 2010 in the parties included.

Table 6.6. Summary of explanatory multilevel models, coefficients on substantive variables.

Note: 'co' denotes central office; 'tot' refers to entire party. Standard errors are in parentheses. ~ $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$. Financial data are expressed in Int'l. \$ of 1990.

Dependent variable	Party age	Electoral result	Leader effect
units/ local government unit	0.68** (0.25)	0.39*** (0.10)	-0.01 (0.06)
staff/ member	-0.85 (0.63)	-0.51 (0.46)	0.11 (0.34)
salary/ staff	-2,816.4 (3727.2)	1,873.4 (2362.1)	518.8 (1400)
income (co)	2,415,387* (995748)	911,998 (650311)	801,522 (498574)
income (tot)	3,614,169 (2314276)	2,974,242~ (1628789)	3,196,149** (1232428)
expense (co)	2,492,995** (877070)	924,236 (605103)	852,307~ (453958)
expense (tot)	4,583,564 (2808803)	6,815,908** (2451427)	3,566,993~ (1818269)
subsidy/ due (co)	1.15** (0.47)	0.20 (0.42)	0.36 (0.28)
subsidy/ due (tot)	1.58** (0.48)	-0.96* (0.42)	-0.03 (0.27)

Turning to the dimension of finances, the coefficients provide a rather mixed pattern that is supportive of the life-cycle approach in the realm of the headquarters. However, for the entire party the results the discrete change approach is more tenable. The models evaluating income and expense at central office show that party age is a significant predictor, also in the expected direction. It is true for both indicators that higher age is positively associated with higher income and higher expenses, respectively. For example, an increase of one standard deviation in age has an estimated effect of Int'l. \$ (1990) 2,415,387 in party income at central office. While it is also true that leadership change has a significant and positive effect on expense at central office, the effect of party age is in much stronger. However, as soon as the level of analysis is broadened to the entire party, both variables related to the discrete change approach (prior electoral result and leadership change) yield a positive and statistically significant impact on income and expense. For example, an increase of one standard deviation in electoral result in the previous year yields an estimated increase of Int'l. \$ (1990) 2,974,242 in party income for the entire party. Interestingly, the effect of leadership change is estimated for both variables (income and expense for the entire party) with a substantial increase of more than Int'l. \$ (1990) 3 million. It appears that changes in a party's leadership are linked to higher

income and expenses. This might be the case because such changes often occur before elections. Overall, these findings are highly supportive of the life-cycle approach to be the best predictor of party income and expense at the headquarters. As soon as income and expense for the entire party are considered, the discrete change approach is supported.

Finally, consider the last two indicators pertaining to the income structure of the parties at central office level and for the entire party. Recall that a positive subsidy/due ratio indicates a higher relative reliance on subsidies whereas a negative ratio shows the opposite. Accordingly, increasing values mean a move towards higher reliance on subsidies, whereas declining values show the reverse. The results indicate for both cases that party age is again a significant explanatory factor, also in the expected direction. At central office, the coefficient on party age means that an increase of one standard deviation in age instigates an estimated increase of 1.15 in the subsidy/due ratio. The estimated effect at the entire party level is very similar. Higher age, independent of time, is a significant predictor of a higher relative reliance on state subsidies. This supports again the life-cycle approach. Note also that for the entire party the coefficient on electoral result is significant yet negative and smaller than that on party age. It means that a high electoral result in the previous year produces a lower reliance on state subsidies in the following year. This is a somewhat counterintuitive finding since in many countries the amount of state subsidies is linked to electoral success. However, it might be that prior electoral success has positive effects on the size of party membership in subsequent years and thus on income through dues.

In sum, the results show that the life-cycle approach provides so far the strongest predictor of party organisational development.¹¹³ The analyses show that it yields the anticipated effects for the dimensions of finances. At the same time, the discrete change approach found support in the entire party's income and expenses. Further, according to the results, neither of the explanatory approaches can explain the

¹¹³ A test for cohort effects was also conducted. In the absence of theory suggesting any differences in party organisational development depending on a party's generation, it might still be that parties of a certain cohort develop intrinsically different, simply because times have changed. For that, a time parameter (TIME), party age (AGE), and parties' year of foundation divided into two groups ('old' referring to pre-end World War 2 foundation, = '0'; 'new' meaning post-World War 2 foundation, = '1') were regressed on the different organisational parameters. The expectation is that generational effects should be detectable, indicated by significant independent effects of the variable year of foundation. Further, I expected younger parties to be less complex and less capital-intensive but more professional, given the opportunities modern democracies offer to new parties. Only two cases, staff/salary and subsidy/due at the central level, produced significant results. They show that the later parties were founded, the lower the salary per staff ratio (estimated effect size Int'l. \$ [1990] -1,270). This runs counter to the expectation. However, in the second case the hypothesis was supported in the sense that the later parties were founded, the more reliant they are on state subsidies as opposed to membership dues. Overall the analysis of cohort effects shows that the parties' year of foundation does little in predicting the way parties develop or in distinguishing between parties' trajectories.

parties' development in the dimension of professionalism. To reiterate, the data support **H4** pertaining to party age and party institutionalisation as an explanatory factor of party organisational development in complexity and in the majority of parameters related to finances, yet not in professionalism. There, data support neither approach so far.¹¹⁴ This, however, could be different once the convergence hypothesis is tested, **H5**.

As mentioned above, testing the convergence hypothesis requires a different approach that utilises party system variances over time. If the variance across parties of the same system decreases over time and the coefficient is significant, support for the convergence hypotheses is found. A summary of results obtained by regressing country-level variances per parameter on a variable of time is displayed in Table 6.7. The table is organised with organisational parameters in rows and with party systems in columns. Entries are the coefficients on time and their corresponding standard errors as well as level of significance, as found through a linear regression. For ease of interpretability, cells that support the hypotheses of convergence are shaded grey.

What can be seen from the table is that the convergence hypothesis finds support in the minority of cases. Only a few party systems show signs of convergence according to the organisational parameters investigated. In relative terms, some countries and some parameters show stronger tendencies. For instance, German parties' variances are significant and decreasing in four out of the eight cases that data is available for. The parties are increasingly similar in terms of their staff/salary ratio, expenses at both levels, and subsidy/due ratio at the entire party level. Next to Germany, Dutch parties are also shown to have some signs of convergence, albeit only according to two parameters, namely income and expense at the entire party level. While Danish and Norwegian parties only converge on their organisational complexity, Swedish and British parties are not becoming more alike in any of the dimensions. This also means that convergence tendencies are generally only observable in the organisational parameters of the unit ratio and expense at the entire party level, albeit only in two countries. The overall picture is, in fact, one of divergence across countries and parameters, as demonstrated in positive and significant coefficients. For example, in Norway, Sweden, and the UK, almost all

¹¹⁴ As way of testing the robustness of the models, a comparison with models using restricted maximum likelihood estimators (REML) was undertaken. Coefficients differ somewhat but the overall result remains the same, except for in the case of staff/member. Here, the results obtained using REML show again support for the life-cycle approach. This only lends further support to the findings obtained with ML. The overall conclusion remains: the life-cycle approach is the strongest predictor of party organisational change.

organisational measures point at increasing dissimilarities as opposed to similarities.¹¹⁵

The results for testing **H5** can be summarised as generally non-supportive. Convergence tendencies could be found in two countries, at most, per indicator. Comparatively speaking, Germany and the Netherlands show the strongest signs of convergence. This finding is at odds with previous convergence studies (see Koole, 1994; Poguntke, 1994). Reasons for this can be easily found in the difference in time-frame, a change ever since the early 1990s, or in the different analytical approach. Aside from those two countries, the finding of non-convergence generally confirms the existing studies' findings (see Mair, 1994; Pedersen, 2010). The results generally contribute to the already existing, largely qualitative literature on convergence trends, as exemplified in the edited volume by Katz and Mair (1994).

¹¹⁵ This might be caused by extreme cases. The only discernible and clear extreme that was found is the Swedish Centerpartiet. The party owned for many years several local newspapers, which were all sold in 2005 for 1.8 million Swedish kronor (appr. 200,000 Euros). This had a noticeable impact on the financial structure of the party in 2005 and in subsequent years.

Table 6.7. Analyses of country-level variances over time.

Note: 'co' denotes central office; 'tot' refers to entire party. 'N' indicates the number of parties per country included in the analyses. Standard errors are in parentheses. ~p < .10; * p < .05; ** < .01; *** < .001. Grey-shaded cells are those that are supportive of the hypotheses, i.e. negative and significant coefficient.

	DK		DE		NL		NO		SE		UK	
	N		N		N		N		N		N	
units	-0.75 *** (0.14)	10	0.00 ** (0.00)	4	0.00 *** (0.00)	8	-0.05 ** (0.02)	7	0.45 *** (0.04)	7	0 (0)	2
staff/member	1.48 *** (0.26)	10	0.02 (0.03)	5	-1.91 (2.10)	12	1.19 * (0.54)	7	7.29 *** (1.09)	6	0.38 ~ (0.19)	3
staff/salary	3310338 ~ (1710048)	9	-1.3E+08 *** (22967051)	6	-803391 (5721704)	9	26907399 ** (8189166)	6	-700792 (513241)	5	11051778 ~ (5243386)	2
income (co)	-1.72E+10 (1.62E+10)	10	-5.76E+11 (6.37E+12)	6	6.46E+10 (4.09E+10)	11	3.65E+10 *** (4.53E+09)	6	2.13E+11 ** (6.60E+10)	5	-5.66E+11 (4.42E+11)	2
income (tot)	2.57E+09 (3.60E+10)	8	-2.49E+13 (3.86E+13)	6	-3.24E+11 * (1.49E+11)	5	3.29E+11 (2.76E+11)	1	9.10E+12 ~ (4.43E+12)	5	5.46E+12 *** (7.68E+11)	3
expense (co)	-1.95E+10 (1.23E+10)	10	-4.65E+13 ** (1.36E+13)	6	6.24E+10 (5.00E+10)	8	3.27E+10 *** (8.57E+09)	6	2.68E+11 ** (8.24E+10)	5	-3.61E+11 (3.41E+11)	2
expense (tot)		0	-3.11E+14 ** (1.04E+14)	6	-4.44E+11 * (1.91E+11)	5	3.37E+10 ** (8.71E+09)	2	8.66E+12 * (4.17E+12)	4	5.94E+12 *** (1.26E+12)	3
sub/due (co)	0.10 (0.09)	10		0	0.17 (0.17)	9	0.16 (0.14)	5	0.42 *** (0.12)	5		0
sub/due (tot)	1.79 *** (0.33)	8	-0.01 ~ (0.01)	6	-0.06 (0.52)	5	0.01 (0.04)	7	3.31 * (1.13)	7	-0.06 (0.35)	3

6.3. Discussion and concluding remarks

This chapter set out to give an account of party organisational development in Western Europe between 1960 and 2010 and its general determinants. It sought to answer two research questions: firstly, how have party organisations generally developed; and secondly, which general explanatory approach for their development finds the most support from the data.

The results of the analyses are summarised in Table 6.8, organised per indicator and showing the growth equation as well as indicating support (if any) for the different explanations of change. The growth hypothesis, **H3**, could not be supported entirely. It appears to apply to certain parameters of the party organisation and certain time-periods. It only finds full support through the indicators of staff/member ratio and subsidy/due ratio at central office. The other indicators show only partial support for **H3**, namely until about the late 1980s. After that, party organisations appear to generally downsize slightly and become less capital-intensive. Finally, in the dimension of organisational complexity, **H3** cannot be supported at all. On average, parties have been decreasing in complexity over the period of study.

Table 6.8. Summary of results.

Note: 'co' denotes central office, whereas 'tot' refers to entire party.

Dependent variable	Growth model equation	Hypothesis supported
units/ local government unit	$2.39 - 0.18x + 0.01x^2$	- lifecycle - convergence: NL, NO
staff/ member	$3.71 - 0.09x + 0.09x^2$	- none - convergence: none
salary/ staff	$17520.70 + 8462.10x - 633.30x^2$	- none - convergence: DE, SE
income (co)	$2576688 + 1633893x - 130215x^2$	- life-cycle - convergence: none
income (tot)	$-6647948 + 8018107x - 575356x^2$	- discrete - convergence: none
expense (co)	$2483959 + 1732738x - 143275x^2$	- life-cycle - convergence: DE, NL
expense (tot)	$447740 + 11058756x - 881263x^2$	- discrete - convergence: DE
subsidy/ due (co)	$-12.25 + 1.25x + 0.12x^2 - 0.01x^3$	- life-cycle - convergence: none
subsidy/ due (tot)	$-24.43 + 9.17x - 1.18x^2 + 0.05x^3$	- life-cycle - convergence: DE, UK

Next, different general approaches for explaining party organisational development were tested. Firstly, multilevel analyses were conducted with the different party organisational parameters as dependent variables. The results show that the life-cycle approach provides the stronger predictor of party organisational development, compared to the discrete change approach. The data support **H4**, pertaining to party age and party institutionalisation, as an explanatory factor of party organisational

development in complexity and in most organisational finances, yet not in professionalism. There, the data support neither approach. Secondly, time-series tools provided an analysis of the convergence hypothesis, **H4**. However, since very few tendencies for convergence were found and the convergence hypothesis maintains increasing similarities within but also across similar party systems as those under scrutiny here, **H5** cannot be supported.

Although it is difficult to compare results across different analytical approaches, it is especially the overwhelmingly strong support for the life-cycle approach (except for in the dimensions of professionalism and two financial parameters) that speaks in favour of this explanation for party organisational development and change. Party age as a proxy for party institutionalisation appeared to be a stronger predictor for the different outcome variables pertaining to the financial and administrative part of the party organisation, compared to the discrete and convergence approach. Overall, the findings presented in this chapter are in support of life-cycle explanations of party development. This finding can be interpreted as party organisational change being dependent on the level of party institutionalisation, independent of time.

In sum, these findings mean two things. Firstly, until the late 1980s, party development had been generally one of increasing the organisation and becoming more capital-intensive. After that party organisations increased only in the minority of parameters, namely the staff/member ratio and the subsidy/due ratio at central office. It means that throughout the past 50 years, party organisations have been, on average, employing more staff and have become more reliant on state subsidies at the central level. However, it also indicates that party organisations are downsizing as well. Interestingly, it appears that organisational complexity has been generally declining over the entire period of study. Hence, party organisations seem to be placing increasingly less emphasis on local branches. Secondly, out of the three commonly used explanations, the findings show that party organisational development is most strongly influenced by a party's age as a proxy for party institutionalisation and demonstrated by the life-cycle approach. This implies that individual party organisational development occurs in certain stages and might also be more foreseeable. In the upcoming chapter, party organisational change is investigated as to whether or not, and to which extent, it marks a response to changes in the number of party members as a specific trigger of change. It will also take into account the crucial role of party institutionalisation in this relationship as suggested by theory and already preliminarily validated in this chapter as well as chapter 4.

Appendix

Table 6.9. Multilevel models of staff/member ratio ($n = 1,014$; $N = 46$).~ $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; standard errors in parentheses.

			df = 967	df = 966	df = 934
			<i>Growth models</i>		<i>Causes of effects</i>
			Model 2.1	Model 2.2	Model 2.3
Fixed effects					
	intercept	γ_{00}	0.45 (1.04)	3.71 *** (0.94)	0.92 (2.14)
	<i>TIME</i>	γ_{10}	1.06 *** (0.22)	-0.09 (0.31)	0.62 (0.64)
	<i>TIME</i> ²	γ_{20}		-0.09 (0.03) **	0.05 (0.04)
	<i>AGE</i>	γ_{30}			-0.85 (0.63)
	<i>ELECTORAL RESULT</i>	γ_{40}			-0.51 (0.46)
	<i>LEADER EFFECT</i>	γ_{50}			0.11 (0.34)
Variance components					
Level 1	Within-unit variance	σ_e^2	22.80	22.63	21.83
Level 2	1st grade	σ_0^2	31.49	6.70	116.64
	variance	σ_1^2	1.74	0.27	10.04
	cov 1st grade	σ_{01}	-0.76	1.00	-0.94
Quadratic term	variance	σ_2^2		0.01	0.03
	cov 1st grade	σ_{02}		-0.40	0.78
	cov linear	σ_{12}		-0.40	-0.90
Goodness of fit					
	logLik		-3128	-3123	-3068
	AIC		6267	6265	6161
	BIC		6297	6315	6225

Table 6.10. Multilevel models of salary/staff ratio (n = 649; N = 37).

~ p < .10; * p < .05; ** < .01; *** < .001; standard errors in parentheses. Salaries are expressed in Int'l. \$ of 1990.

			df = 603	df = 602	df = 587
			<i>Growth models</i>		<i>Causes of effects</i>
			Model 3.1	Model 3.2	Model 3.3
Fixed effects					
	intercept	γ_{00}	46570.90 *** (13927.60)	17520.70 * (8203.40)	13719 (8712.9)
	TIME	γ_{10}	-454.60 (1477.70)	8462.10 * (3869.20)	9163 * (3762.9)
	TIME^2	γ_{20}		-633.30 ~ (331)	-652.60 * (323.60)
	AGE	γ_{30}			-2816.4 (3727.2)
	ELECTORAL RESULT	γ_{40}			1873.4 (2362.1)
	LEADER EFFECT	γ_{50}			518.8 (1400)
Variance components					
Level 1	Within-unit variance	σ^2_e	2.93E+08	2.40E+08	2.22E+08
Level 2	1st grade	σ^2_0	6.11E+09	1.14E+09	1.17E+09
	variance	σ^2_1	6.16E+07	4.13E+08	3.68E+08
	cov 1st grade	σ_{01}	-0.94	-0.65	-0.55
Quadratic term	variance	σ^2_2		2.40E+08	2.87E+06
	cov 1st grade	σ_{02}		0.48	0.34
	cov linear	σ_{12}		-0.98	-0.97
Goodness of fit					
	logLik		-7262	-7203	-7015
	AIC		14536	14426	14056
	BIC		14563	14470	14113

Table 6.11. Multilevel models of income (co) (n = 1,143; N = 40).

~ p < .10; * p < .05; ** < .01; *** < .001; standard errors in parentheses. Income is expressed in Int'l. \$ of 1990.

			df = 1103	df = 1102	df = 1065
			<i>Growth models</i>		<i>Causes of effects</i>
			Model 4.1	Model 4.2	Model 4.3
Fixed effects					
	intercept	γ_{00}	5988579 ** (2007500)	2576688 * (1056262)	2828970 * (1234717)
	TIME	γ_{10}	105953 (109475)	1633893 * (774685)	1779276 * (775928)
	TIME^2	γ_{20}		-130215 * (64098)	-160250 * (64621)
	AGE	γ_{30}			2415387 * (995748)
	ELECTORAL RESULT	γ_{40}			911998 (650311)
	LEADER EFFECT	γ_{50}			801522 (498574)
Variance components					
Level 1	Within-unit variance	σ^2_e	6.88E+13	5.68E+13	5.75E+13
Level 2	1st grade	σ^2_0	1.38E+14	6.63E+12	5.04E+12
	variance	σ^2_1	3.58E+10	1.80E+13	1.71E+13
	cov 1st grade	σ_{01}	0.71	0.98	1.00
Quadratic term	variance	σ^2_2		1.23E+11	1.18E+11
	cov 1st grade	σ_{02}		-0.98	-1.00
	cov linear	σ_{12}		-1.00	-1.00
Goodness of fit					
	logLik		-19912	-19806	-19327
	AIC		39836	39631	38679
	BIC		39866	39682	38745

Table 6.12. Multilevel models of income (tot) (n = 757; N = 36).

~ p < .10; * p < .05; ** < .01; *** < .001; standard errors in parentheses. Income is expressed in Int'l. \$ of 1990.

			df = 720	df = 719	df = 689
			<i>Growth models</i>		<i>Causes of effects</i>
			Model 5.1	Model 5.2	Model 5.3
Fixed effects					
	intercept	γ_{00}	13575162 ~ (7969721)	-6647948 (6386334)	-4278925 (4265818)
	TIME	γ_{10}	589083 (405046)	8018107 * (3886161)	7185621 (3685677)
	TIME^2	γ_{20}		-575356 ~ (310381)	-546000 ~ (299085)
	AGE	γ_{30}			3614169 (2314276)
	ELECTORAL RESULT	γ_{40}			2974242 ~ (1628789)
	LEADER EFFECT	γ_{50}			3196149 ** (1232428)
Variance components					
Level 1	Within-unit variance	σ^2_e	4.21E+14	2.13E+14	2.16E+14
Level 2	1st grade variance	σ^2_0	1.93E+15	5.54E+14	1.86E+14
	variance	σ^2_1	7.37E+11	4.39E+14	4.20E+14
	cov 1st grade	σ_{01}	-0.70	-0.64	-0.99
Quadratic term	variance	σ^2_2		2.84E+12	2.75E+12
	cov 1st grade	σ_{02}		0.60	0.98
	cov linear	σ_{12}		-1.00	-1.00
Goodness of fit					
	logLik		-13895	-13666	-13492
	AIC		27801	27352	27010
	BIC		27829	27397	27070

Table 6.13. Multilevel models of expense (co) (n = 1,019; N = 40).

~ p < .10; * p < .05; ** < .01; *** < .001; standard errors in parentheses. Expense is expressed in in Int'l. \$ of 1990.

			df = 978	df = 977	df = 947
			<i>Growth models</i>		<i>Causes of effects</i>
			Model 6.1	Model 6.2	Model 6.3
Fixed effects					
	intercept	γ_{00}	9866257 *	2483959 *	2371558 *
			(4091429)	(1034529)	(1145765)
	TIME	γ_{10}	-361175	1732738 *	1944402 *
			(349791)	(812984)	(815543)
	TIME^2	γ_{20}		-143275 *	-174648 *
				(70664)	(70855)
	AGE	γ_{30}			2492995 **
					(877070)
	ELECTORAL RESULT	γ_{40}			924236
					(605103)
	LEADER EFFECT	γ_{50}			852307 ~
					(453958)
Variance components					
Level 1	Within-unit variance	σ^2_e	5.21E+13	4.20E+13	4.24E+13
Level 2	1st grade	σ^2_0	6.04E+14	8.20E+12	5.25E+12
	variance	σ^2_1	3.63E+12	2.15E+13	2.10E+13
	cov 1st grade	σ_{01}	-0.88	0.95	1.00
Quadratic term	variance	σ^2_2		1.64E+11	1.61E+11
	cov 1st grade	σ_{02}		-0.97	-1.00
	cov linear	σ_{12}		-1.00	-1.00
Goodness of fit					
	logLik		-17656	-17521	-17110
	AIC		35324	35063	34245
	BIC		35353	35112	34310

Table 6.14. Multilevel models of expense (tot) (n = 505; N = 22).

~ p < .10; * p < .05; ** < .01; *** < .001; standard errors in parentheses. Expense is expressed in in Int'l. \$ of 1990.

			df = 482	df = 481	df = 459
			<i>Growth models</i>		<i>Causes of effects</i>
			Model 7.1	Model 7.2	Model 7.3
Fixed effects					
	intercept	γ_{00}	52476713 *	447740	-22909962 *
			(25911019)	(5088600)	(11436486)
	TIME	γ_{10}	-2796232	11058756 *	16727558 *
			(1908898)	(5112551)	(7137397)
	TIME^2	γ_{20}		-881263 *	-1255499 *
				(435079)	(556195)
	AGE	γ_{30}			4583564
					(2808803)
	ELECTORAL RESULT	γ_{40}			6815908 **
					(2451427)
	LEADER EFFECT	γ_{50}			3566993 ~
					(1818269)
Variance components					
Level 1	Within-unit variance	σ^2_e	3.82+14	3.27E+14	3.23E+14
Level 2	1st grade variance	σ^2_0	1.39E+16	1.4307E-09	1.64E+15
		σ^2_1	6.96E+13	5.11E+14	1.01E+15
	cov 1st grade	σ_{01}	-0.99	0.31	-0.99
Quadratic term	variance	σ^2_2		3.76E+12	6.24E+12
	cov 1st grade	σ_{02}		-0.28	0.98
	cov linear	σ_{12}		-1.00	-1.00
Goodness of fit					
	logLik		-9255	-9215	-9117
	AIC		18521	18451	18259
	BIC		18547	18493	18314

Table 6.15. Multilevel models of subsidy/due (co) (n = 729; N = 30).

~ p < .10; * p < .05; ** < .01; *** < .001; standard errors in parentheses.

			df = 698	df = 697	df = 696	df = 667
			<i>Growth models</i>			<i>Causes of effects</i>
			Model 8.1	Model 8.2	Model 8.3	Model 8.4
Fixed effects						
	intercept	γ_{00}	-8.30 ** (3.10)	-13.67 *** (2.33)	-12.25 *** (2.27)	-13.29 *** (1.79)
	TIME	γ_{10}	1.18 *** (0.33)	2.81 ** (0.76)	1.25 (2.18)	-3.09 * (1.32)
	TIME ²	γ_{20}		-0.12 * (0.06)	0.12 (0.54)	-0.19 (0.26)
	TIME ³	γ_{30}			-0.01 (0.03)	0.003 (0.01)
	AGE	γ_{40}				1.15 ** (0.47)
	ELECTORAL RESULT	γ_{50}				0.20 (0.42)
	LEADER EFFECT	γ_{60}				0.369 (0.28)
Variance components						
Level 1	Within-unit variance	σ_e^2	16.70	14.97	9.24	9.68
Level 2	initial status	σ_0^2	258.57	91.28	72.77	36.32
	rate of change	σ_1^2	2.82	11.75	116.02	29.67
	cov 1st grade	σ_{01}	-0.97	-0.71	-0.23	0.39
Quadratic term	variance	σ_2^2		0.07	7.77	1.15
	cov 1st grade	σ_{02}		0.50	0.00	-0.36
	cov linear	σ_{12}		-0.96	-0.97	-0.93
Cubic term	variance	σ_3^2			0.03	0.003
	cov 1st grade	σ_{03}			0.08	0.19
	cov linear term	σ_{13}			0.94	0.75
	cov quadratic term	σ_{23}			-0.99	-0.94
Goodness of fit						
	logLik		-2146	-2101	-1976	-1932
	AIC		4303	4222	3983	3899
	BIC		4331	4268	4053	3981

Table 6.16. Multilevel models of subsidy/due (tot) (n = 504; N = 36).

~ p < .10; * p < .05; ** < .01; *** < .001; standard errors in parentheses.

			df = 467	df = 466	df = 465	df = 435
			<i>Growth models</i>			<i>Causes of effects</i>
			Model 9.1	Model 9.2	Model 9.3	Model 9.4
Fixed effects						
	intercept	γ_{00}	-4.66 ** (1.52)	-13.79 *** (1.48)	-24.43 *** (2.58)	-17.79 *** (2.54)
	TIME	γ_{10}	0.57 * (0.25)	3.33 *** (0.49)	9.17 *** (1.16)	6.71 *** (1.50)
	TIME ²	γ_{20}		-0.21 *** (0.05)	-1.18 *** (0.23)	-0.90 ** (0.29)
	TIME ³	γ_{30}			0.05 *** (0.01)	0.04 * (0.02)
	AGE	γ_{40}				1.58 ** (0.48)
	ELECTORAL RESULT	γ_{50}				-0.96 * (0.42)
	LEADER EFFECT	γ_{60}				-0.03 (0.27)
Variance components						
Level 1	Within-unit variance	σ_e^2	7.99	7.28	6.11	5.97
Level 2	initial status	σ_0^2	50.39	8.31	48.46	20.28
	rate of change	σ_1^2	1.84	2.15	8.85	27.64
	cov 1st grade	σ_{01}	-0.95	-0.24	0.35	-0.19
Quadratic term	variance	σ_2^2		0.05	0.83	1.62
	cov 1st grade	σ_{02}		-0.14	-0.72	0.00
	cov linear	σ_{12}		-0.88	-0.89	-0.97
Cubic term	variance	σ_3^2			0.003	0.01
	cov 1st grade	σ_{03}			0.78	0.05
	cov linear term	σ_{13}			0.82	0.95
	cov quadratic term	σ_{23}			-0.99	-1.00
Goodness of fit						
	logLik		-1318	-1312	-1260	-1246
	AIC		2648	2644	2550	2528
	BIC		2674	2686	2614	2604

7 – Effects of party membership size on party organisations¹¹⁷

While the previous chapter explored patterns of organisational development and general causes thereof, this chapter investigates the extent to which party membership size is a specific trigger of organisational change. Therefore, this chapter links directly to the previous chapter's findings and builds upon them. Firstly, the previous chapter found that party organisational development has been generally one of increasing the organisational size and becoming more capital-intensive until the late 1980s. Thereafter, party organisations grew only at the minority of parameters and shrank in more instances. In addition, organisational complexity has been generally declining over the period of study. Secondly, the previous chapter showed that party age as a proxy for party institutionalisation marks the strongest general predictor for these patterns, as compared to system-belonging and a mix of external and internal changes.

Building upon these findings, and on those from other chapters, the following sections pursue two goals: firstly, to investigate precisely what the effects of membership decline, as one indicator for party decline, are on the party organisation; and secondly, to assess more generally how membership size and party age relate to organisational resources and structures. In total, three hypotheses are tested, as summarised in Table 7.1. The first two pertain to the effects of membership size – **H7** and **H8**. They will elucidate whether parties display, on average, conservative, proactive, or no response behaviour. Finally, **H9** tests for party age as a mediating factor to the relationship between membership size and the organisational setup. The expectation is that with different stages of party institutionalisation the incentive structure changes for parties, which has consequences for their response behaviour towards changes in membership size.

The findings show that parties on average respond to party membership decline, according to several organisational parameters. In these instances, their response is more often proactive than conservative. The party organisation increases in size and binds itself closer to the state. It also appears that party age and party institutionalisation play a crucial role for organisational complexity in how parties respond to any kind of change in their membership size. In the emerging phase, parties appear to be more sensitive to and dependent on membership size, according to organisational complexity, while during a more consolidated phase, changes in

¹¹⁷ Earlier versions of this chapter were presented at the seminar 'Väljare, Opinion och Demokrati' held at the Department of Political Science, University of Gothenburg, 24 May 2012, at the Politicologenetmaal in Amsterdam, 30 May – 01 June 2012, at the 3rd Annual Conference of the European Political Science Association, 20-22 June 2013, Barcelona, and at the CCNER pre-conference workshop to EPOP, Lancaster University, 13 September 2013. I would like to thank all participants for their valuable advice.

membership size have less of an effect on the party organisation. Overall, the findings paint a picture of partial organisational response to changes in membership size.

The chapter is structured as follows. Section one lays out the analytical strategy and methods. It also elaborates on the notion of causal directionality, which is important for the following analysis. In section two the results are presented, divided into the two major analytical goals of investigating the effects of membership decline, on the one hand, and testing for party age as a mediator, on the other hand. Finally, section three summarises the findings and provides a conclusion.

Table 7.1. Summary of effect and mediator hypotheses.

membership as trigger	H7	Political parties are more likely (1) to downsize their organisational complexity, (2) to reduce their level of professionalism, (3) to decrease centralisation, and (4) to become less capital-intensive and to decrease their number of secure finances in response to decreases in their size of party membership.
	H8	Political parties are more likely (1) to increase their organisational complexity, (2) to raise their level of professionalism, (3) to increase centralisation, and (4) to become more capital-intensive and to increase their number of secure finances in response to decreases in their size of party membership.
age as condition	H9	Each of the relationships between party membership and (1) organisational complexity, (2) professionalism, (3) capital-intensiveness, and (4) centralisation are conditional upon a party's age, independent of time. For the first three instances it holds that at a younger age the relationship is positive whereas it is negative for older parties; the reverse is true for the last case of centralisation.

7.1. Analytical strategy, directionality of causation, and methods

In order to formally test the above hypotheses, two consecutive analytical strategies are required to be applied to the same set of data. The two sets of hypotheses mark each a distinct analytical step, but they are both evaluating the effects of changes in membership size. And while **H7** and **H8** only investigate the effects of declining membership, **H9** concerns the effects of any kind of membership level. Since party responses also include non-response, as argued in the introductory chapter, effects exerted by lagged membership size are considered as support for visible party responses. Testing the first set requires regressing party organisational parameters on membership, with and without control variables. If the resulting coefficient on membership is significant and positive, support for **H7** is found; this would mean that decreasing membership size leads to downsizing in the organisation. A significant and negative coefficient, in turn, supports **H8**, while non-significance supports the null hypothesis. Putting **H9** to the test is somewhat more complex, as it postulates a conditional effect.

Conditional hypotheses, such as the one in **H9**, can also be understood as a test for the precise causal directionality between concepts. The above hypothesis states causal relationships between party membership and the party organisation, whose direction is mediated by party age. Put differently, the hypothesis claims that the relationship is directly sensitive to the value of party age. In other words, it matters for the (non-)existence and shape of the relationship whether membership size is increasing or decreasing. This characteristic of sensitivity towards directional shifts in causal claims, henceforth referred to as their *directionality*, is less frequently considered and applied in social science research, though equally important (Clark et al., 2006; King et al., 1994; Lieberman, 1985). In fact, as Stanley Lieberman (1985: 73) argues, considering directionality has implications for theory formulation, empirical testing and application of the results obtained. And for the current endeavour it is particularly important, as taking directionality into account allows testing of Michels' theory, as well as taking into account recent empirical findings on party organisational development.

Causal directionality can be defined as specifying the precise relationship between the cause, X, and the effect, Y. A major distinction exists between symmetric and asymmetric causal effects. The former is most often used, albeit only implicitly, and refers to instances in which the same effect that initially occurred by adding or increasing X is entirely reversed, once X is absent again. In contrast, asymmetric causal relationships are those in which the effect, Y, does not drop back to its initial value after X is removed (Clark et al., 2006; Lieberman, 1985). As a way of clarifying, consider the following examples. Suppose you are cooking a tomato sauce and think it needs more heat. You turn up the stove and, as an effect, the sauce heats up. Shortly thereafter you think, however, that the sauce should really only simmer again. You turn down the stove and, as an effect, the sauce cools off again somewhat. In this case, turning the stove up and down affects, positively and negatively, the temperature of the sauce. In addition, they are of the same magnitude. Turning up and down the stove entirely controls the temperature of the sauce. Both features jointly are what make this causal relationship symmetric in its directionality. Conversely, consider the following example of an asymmetric causal relationship. While writing this section, I broke my foot as a consequence of rolling over my ankle. In other words: rolling over my ankle caused my foot to break. However, contrary to my wish, standing on both feet steadily again did not un-break my foot. In this instance, reversing the cause (standing on both feet steadily) does not reverse the outcome (the break) to its origin; my foot was still broken. Instead, an external mechanism was needed to undo the outcome, namely, keeping the foot still in a cast for five weeks. This example illustrates that asymmetric causality refers to relationships that are not reversible, not fully reversible, or are only reversible through another reverse-mechanism. Adding or increasing X yields different consequences for Y than removing or decreasing X. Applying these brief

considerations on causal directionality to the present study again allows specifying the causal relationship between party membership and the party organisation, stated in **H9** above. Increases in party membership are thought to generate different consequences in organisational resources than decreases in membership due to a party's age. Hence, the relationship is hypothesised to be asymmetric.

With recent advances made by William Clark et al. (2006), causal directionality has been connected directly to conditional hypotheses testing. The authors build on existing strategies for the case of asymmetric relationships between categorical variables (see Braumoeller and Goertz, 2000). They propose using interaction terms for evaluating asymmetric hypotheses. Clark et al. (2006) argue and show by application that the coefficients on multiplicative interaction functions reveal the precise relationship between the independent and the dependent variable through the mediating variable. Consider the standard multiplicative interaction function (1) below, taken from Clark et al. (2006: 320), where X_1 and X_2 are alternative causes of Y .

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_1 X_2 + \varepsilon \quad (1)$$

Whether or not the relationship between X_1 and Y is symmetrical, and to what extent, can be read off the coefficients on the constitutive terms as well as on the interaction term. This is because the marginal effect of X_1 on Y is described by $\beta_1 + \beta_3 * X_2$ and the marginal effect of X_2 on Y is $\beta_2 + \beta_3 * X_1$. At the same time, the marginal effect of X_1 and X_2 on Y is β_3 . There are three possible scenarios, assuming that β_1 , β_2 , and β_3 refer to the coefficients on membership, party age, and their interaction, respectively. Firstly, in order to be supportive of a symmetrical effect between membership and the party organisation, β_3 needs to be non-significant. In addition, the coefficient on membership should be significant. Secondly, if the relationship is asymmetrical, β_3 and β_1 should be significant. And thirdly, if only β_2 is significant, then support is found once more for party age playing a role in determining party organisational parameters, independent of party membership. The coefficients' combinations in signs then reveal the precise direction of the relationship. In order to be supportive of **H9**, the data should show that β_1 and β_3 are significant. In addition, β_1 needs to be positive whereas β_3 should be negative. This would indicate an asymmetrical relationship between party membership and the party organisation, because membership size yields a positive marginal effect that decreases with increasing party age.¹¹⁸

For both analytical steps employed for testing **H7-H9**, data stem again from the *Party Organisation Dataset 1960-2010* expressly built for this endeavour and introduced in previous chapters. Likewise, the operationalization of organisational

¹¹⁸ Note that the underlying assumption is that there are no other important omitted variables.

parameters follows chapter 6.¹¹⁹ The independent variable of party membership is operationalized here analogous to chapter 4 as a percentage of the entire electorate (M/E ratio) per party and year. Values are standardised through z-scores and additionally lagged by one year in order to allow for response time. In subsequent analyses the variable is denoted *ME*.

Firstly, testing for parties' responses to membership decline, as stated in **H7** and **H8**, requires analyses per organisational parameter. For each of the dimensions and associated indicators as introduced in chapter 6, separate multilevel models are built that jointly test the two individual hypotheses about the effects of declining party membership.¹²⁰ Using multilevel modelling is particularly appropriate for this purpose, as parties' individual trajectories between 1960 and 2010 as well as differences between the 47 parties can be modelled simultaneously. Equally, just as in previous chapters, only the fixed effects are of interest for the analysis. This makes the validity of assumptions made by, on one hand, maximum likelihood estimators about the distribution of errors, and on the other hand, by the longitudinal data about the error covariance matrix, inconsequential. Since the within-party level, level-1 part of models, expresses individual party trajectories, the variable of party membership is added to this level in each analysis.

In addition, the models also include some important control variables to isolate the effects of membership. Following Christopher Achen (2002: 446), only a limited amount of control variables are included. Using more variables as controls might increase the probability of multicollinearity and this is to the disadvantage of reliable inferences. With more independent variables, the effects of party membership decline on organisational parameters might be distorted. Instead, only using a few controls will allow a less biased test of the effects. Accordingly, each of the models built in the next section will start with the growth models whose coefficients are summarised in Table 6.5 in chapter 6. Next, the lagged and standardised variable of the M/E ratio is introduced before three controls are added: party age, parliamentary status, and election year.

The variable of party age is the same standardised variable as used in chapters 4 and 6 and refers to the parties' individual age in years starting with their year of foundation (= 0), *AGE*. Building upon the previous chapter's findings, party age was showed to play an important role in predicting party organisational development in many instances. It might be that party organisations have been responding in their organisational resources to the signs of age and not so much to membership decline. In order to isolate the effects produced by lagged M/E ratios, it is necessary to control

¹¹⁹ This also implies that the parts of the hypotheses that relate to the development of centralisation within the party organisation cannot be tested due to little variation over time.

¹²⁰ The models are estimated using the *lme4* (version October 25, 2013) package (Bates et al., 2013) in *R* (version 3.0.2, 2013-09-25).

for a party's individual age at any point in time. Accordingly, the control of party age is added to the level-1 part of the model.

In a similar vein, the models are controlling for a party's position in parliament in the level-1 part of the model, i.e. whether the party is part of the government (= 1) or not (= 0) in any given year, *GOV_OPP*. It is important to control for these effects as governing parties have access to and also require different resources as compared to opposition parties. In the UK, for instance, direct state subsidies are only granted to parties in opposition (Krouwel, 2012) (van Biezen, 2009). The party in government probably requires more human resources for policy development not only for the party in public office but also for the party in central office. Therefore, it can be expected that a party's position in parliament has an influence on its level of organisational resources in any given year. Most likely, being in government is associated with an increase in organisational parameters.

Lastly, the models also include a control variable that pertains to whether a particular year has been an election year (= 1) or not (= 0), *ELECTION YEAR*. This control variable is also important to isolate the effects of party membership on the organisation. Arguably, in election years, parties employ more staff, have higher expenses and receive larger amounts of state subsidies. Therefore, election year, as a control variable, aids in isolating the effects exerted by lagged M/E ratios. Taken together, party age, parliamentary status, and election year act as control variables for the effect of M/E ratios on organisational parameters. In a final step of building the models, an interaction term between the M/E ratio and time (clocked again in 5-year periods starting with 1 in 1960; *TIME*) is added to the level-1 part of the model. In this way, each party's individual trajectory can also vary in slope depending on party membership (Singer and Willett, 2003). It implies that the effect of party membership on organisational parameters is allowed to vary over time. The additional information this generates will permit assessing whether or not, and to what extent party membership size exerts varying impacts on organisational parameters during the period under study. Descriptive statistics for all raw variables are provided in Table 7.2.

To summarise, the statistical analysis is two-fold. Firstly, the effects of party membership decline on organisational parameters are tested through multilevel modelling with party age, parliamentary status and election year as control variables, as well as an interaction term composed of membership and time. Assuming that the independent variables have additive effects, it tests whether or not, and to what extent membership size has an independent effect on the party organisation. Significant and positive coefficients on party membership are supportive of **H7**, while significant and negative coefficients support **H8**. In a second step party membership and party age as well as their interaction, are used as independent variables in several multilevel models. In comparison to the first

analytical step, this one tests the hypothesis that membership size and party age have multiplicative effects on the party organisations; the variables might be interacting. A significant and positive coefficient on party membership as well as a significant and negative coefficient on the interaction term is supportive of **H9**. Taken together, the results will provide answers as to the parties' visible responses to party membership decline, on one hand, and the nature of the relationship between party membership and party organisational resources more generally, on the other. Studying the observable effects of membership decline over such a long period of time, introduces the threat of history to the results' internal validity. It might be that none of the outcomes is a direct effect of changes in membership size but instead a consequence of other, unaccounted for events that occurred simultaneously. These may be, for instance, the broad societal changes outlined in the introductory chapter or the fact that the meaning of the variables has changed over time. However, it is safe to assume that the meaning of the variables used in the analyses has not changed substantively over the period of study. In addition, in order to alleviate threats to internal validity, a time-lag of the variable of membership is incorporated as well as important confounds (party age, parliamentary status, election year).

Table 7.2. Overview of variables.

Note: 'co' denotes central office, whereas 'tot' refers to entire party. Financial data are expressed in Int'l. \$ of 1990.

Variable	Observations	Mean	Standard deviation
<i>independent</i>			
membership	1,654	1.28	2.44
party age	1,970	54.76	37.69
parliamentary status	1,922	0.33	0.47
election year	1,922	0.30	0.46
<i>dependent</i>			
units/ local government unit	860	2.01	2.80
staff/ member	1,041	6.71	8.43
salary/ staff	642	40550	37598.09
income (co)	1,144	8441000	17292765
income (tot)	758	30860000	57172311
expense (co)	1,020	7498000	16451905
expense (tot)	506	33310000	60262925
subsidy/ due (co)	730	-1.72	7.12
subsidy/ due (tot)	505	-0.73	4.84

For ease of reading and presentation, the results are summarised in most instances in a single table. Full models are displayed in the appendix to this chapter. In

addition, as an exemplary case, one party is followed in its development throughout – the Dutch Labour Party, PvdA. It shows similarities with several other parties in the dataset and serves the purpose of an exemplary case particularly well. It belongs to one of the major ideological families in Western Europe; it was founded immediately after World War 2; it has ample experience in government and as the opposition. But most importantly, it resembles many other parties in that it has lost a considerable number of members during the period 1960-2010. To illustrate this point, consider Figure 7.1 depicting the PvdA's annual membership size in absolute and relative terms, 1960-2010. The primary y-axis depicts total membership numbers, the secondary y-axis relative values. The party has almost continuously lost members and, in 2010, pulled in less than half the number of members (absolute and relative) than it did in 1960. Throughout the next section, the PvdA's development will be presented and discussed as an exemplary case, whenever data availability permits.

Figure 7.1. Absolute and relative party membership PvdA, 1960-2010.

7.2. Results

7.2.1. What are the effects of declining membership size?

For presentational purposes, only full models for the very first dependent variable of the unit ratio are reported (Table 7.3). For all other dependent variables the results are summarised below in a single table. Table 7.3 is structured according to the different

models in columns. In addition, the upper part of the table reports the fixed effects; random effects are located in the middle part and the lower part denotes the models' goodness-of-fit statistics.

The first model (1.1) in the table displays the best fitting growth model, as discussed in chapter 6. Lagged M/E ratios are then introduced as a predictor to the level-1 part in Model 1.2. The coefficient on the variable is significant and positive, indicating that having experienced a loss of one standard deviation of members in the previous year, leads to an estimated decrease in the party's complexity structure in the following year of 0.27 units per local government unit. This effect persists even after control variables are added in Model 1.3. It suggests that party membership decline is associated with decreasing party complexity.

Table 7.3. Multilevel models with units/local government as dependent variable (n = 785; N = 40).

~ p < .10; * p < .05; ** < .01; *** < .001; standard errors in parentheses.

			df = 817	df = 742	df = 739	df = 738	df = 740
			<i>Growth model</i>	<i>Effects of membership</i>		<i>Varying effects over time</i>	<i>Asymmetry test</i>
			Model 1.1	Model 1.2	Model 1.3	Model 1.4	Model 1.5
Fixed effects							
	intercept	γ_{00}	2.03 ** (0.85)	2.12 *** (0.53)	2.60 ** (0.89)	2.48 ** (0.88)	2.34 ** (0.86)
	TIME	γ_{10}	-0.15 (0.27)	-0.19 (0.23)	-0.22 (0.29)	-0.19 (0.29)	-0.13 (0.29)
	TIME ²	γ_{20}	0.01 (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)	0.00 (0.02)
	ME	γ_{30}		0.27 *** (0.06)	0.23 *** (0.06)	0.47 * (0.22)	0.72 ** (0.24)
	AGE	γ_{40}			0.87 *** (0.25)	0.85 *** (0.25)	0.70 ** (0.25)
	GOV_ OPP	γ_{50}			-0.23 *** (0.06)	-0.23 *** (0.06)	
	ELECTION YEAR	γ_{60}			-0.04 (0.05)	-0.04 (0.05)	
	ME* TIME	γ_{70}				-0.04 (0.04)	
	ME* AGE	γ_{80}					-0.43 * (0.21)
Variance components							
Level 1	Within-unit	σ^2_e	0.43	0.49	0.44	0.44	0.47
Level 2	1st grade	σ^2_0	24.14	7.33	23.25	22.56	21.98
	variance	σ^2_1	2.48	1.63	2.60	2.56	2.51
	cov 1st grade	σ_{01}	-0.91	-0.77	-0.96	-0.94	-0.94
Quadratic term	variance	σ^2_2	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01
	cov 1st grade	σ_{02}	0.90	0.74	0.92	0.92	0.93
	cov linear	σ_{12}	-0.99	-0.99	-0.99	-0.99	-0.99
Goodness of fit							
	logLik		-1038	-992	-956	-956	-962
	AIC		2097	2005	1941	1942	1950
	BIC		2144	2057	2006	2012	2011

Table 7.4. Summary of results.

Note: 'co' denotes central office, whereas 'tot' refers to entire party. ~ $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; standard errors in parentheses. Financial data are expressed in Int'l. \$ of 1990.

Dependent variable	Uncontrolled effect of membership	Controlled effect of membership	Asymmetry test
units/ local government unit	0.27*** (0.06)	0.23*** (0.06)	β_1 : 0.72** (0.24) β_2 : 0.70** (0.25) β_3 : -0.43* (0.21)
staff/ member	-0.76* (0.32)	-0.59~ (0.32)	β_1 : -2.56** (0.95) β_2 : -0.86 (0.56) β_3 : 1.85* (0.86)
salary/ staff	2583.8~ (1392.9)	2725.8* (1386.9)	β_1 : 4836.8 (3513.6) β_2 : -5188.8 (3804) β_3 : -1855.4 (3123.9)
income (co)	5467 (408709)	-1754 (403568)	β_1 : 402831 (706248) β_2 : 2738418* (1167093) β_3 : -574378 (766570)
income (tot)	119276 (2260808)	-1864886 (2510775)	β_1 : 2090112 (3851550) β_2 : 3453119 (2811508) β_3 : -4589573 (3135961)
expense (co)	-787730* (382027)	-773752* (371457)	β_1 : -407740 (632527) β_2 : 2613220* (1026624) β_3 : -486480 (680079)
expense (tot)	3169709 (9541016)	1210822 (9222084)	β_1 : 10628908 (10423757) β_2 : 2383722 (3612384) β_3 : -9232147~ (5436654)
subsidy/ due (co)	-0.54 (0.36)	-0.99** (0.34)	β_1 : -0.86 (0.77) β_2 : 1.08~ (0.57) β_3 : -0.04 (0.64)
subsidy/ due (tot)	-1.26 (1.22)	-2.15 (1.38)	β_1 : -1.02 (1.36) β_2 : 1.09* (0.54) β_3 : -1.24 (1.15)

Table 7.4 summarises the results of analysing the effects of membership decline on the remaining organisational parameters. Again, all full models can be found in the appendix to this chapter. Consider first only columns two and three that display the coefficients on membership in an uncontrolled and controlled model, respectively. These show that in several models uncontrolled membership has an effect on the different parameters (4 out of 9). Once the effects are controlled for party age, parliamentary status, and election year, the number of organisational parameters affected by membership size increases by one. In three cases (staff/member; expense central office; subsidy/due central office) the effects of the controlled model are also in the expected direction. They indicate that lower membership size, on average, yields effects of increases in those organisational parameters. For instance, a one standard deviation decrease in relative membership in the previous year is associated with an estimated increase in the expenses at central offices by Int'l. \$ (1990) 773,752 in the following year. Only the unit ratio and the salary/staff ratio are affected in a positive way: a prior decrease of one standard deviation of membership size also leads to decreases in the unit ratio and salary/staff ratio in the following year. The estimated effect sizes are 0.23 units per local government unit and Int'l. \$ (1990) 2,725.8, respectively. According to these results, party organisations are

affected in more than half of their parameters by membership loss. More often these effects are such that decreasing membership rates are linked to increases in the organisational size. The results show that party organisations respond, on average, to membership decline by increasing their staff/member ratio and expenses at central office, as well as by binding themselves closer to the state. In addition, decreases in membership size instigate, on average, a decrease in both the number of local offices and in the average salaries paid to staff. In contrast, parties do not respond to membership decline in other financial parameters.

Only by visual inspection the exemplary case of the PvdA is in line with some of these general findings. Figure 7.2 plots the party's complexity on the primary y-axis and the level of professionalism on the secondary y-axis. First, recall that the party almost continuously lost members in absolute and relative terms between 1960 and 2010 (see Figure 7.1). At the same time, the party's level of professionalism (staff per 10,000 members) seems to have increased steadily in the period of study (Figure 7.2). These developments, contrasting those of their membership size, support the general statistical findings above. For the dimension of complexity too few data points are available to make any connection. Yet, consider Figure 7.3 showing the party's income structure for the same time period. For the case of the PvdA, the graph validates what the multilevel models suggested on average: as membership size declines, parties are more reliant on state subsidies in relation to dues. Contrary to that, Figure 7.4 reports the PvdA's adjusted figures of total income and expense between 1960 and 2010. Both graphs describe a parabola with peaks at the end of the 1970s or early 1980s. Taking into account the party's development in membership size, it is difficult to see any relationship. This is also in line with the results found through multilevel modelling above. In the party sample analysed above, party membership does not show any effects on three parameters of the party organisation. These are income at central office, income entire party, and expense entire party.

Figure 7.2. Level of complexity and professionalism PvdA, 1960-2010.

Figure 7.3. Income structure PvdA, 1960-2010.

Figure 7.4. Level of income and expenses PvdA, 1960-2010.

Overall, the results obtained through analysing the general party sample can be grouped into three categories. Firstly, in some instances membership decline does not yield any effect (income at central office, income entire party, expense entire party, subsidy/due ratio entire party), which supports the null hypothesis. Secondly, in a number of instances membership exerts negative effects, namely for the organisational parameters of the staff/member ratio, expense at central office, and subsidy/due ratio at central office, thereby supporting **H8**. And thirdly, in two instances, unit ratio and salary/staff ratio, membership has a positive effect, which is supportive of **H7**. These results mean that declining membership size does have an effect on the party organisation according to several parameters. The effects are most often such that the organisation increases in size and binds itself closer to the state in response to membership decline.

Next, it is important to find out whether or not and to what extent membership yields varying effects over time. For that, an interaction term between time (*TIME*) and membership (*ME*) is included in the controlled model. Only in the case of the subsidy/due ratio for the entire party does the effect of membership vary over time, as indicated by the significant coefficient on the interaction term in Model 9.4 of Table 8 in the appendix to this chapter. Lagged membership has, on average, a negative marginal effect on a party's distribution of income source. In other words, decreases in membership size are associated with higher reliance on state subsidies as opposed to membership fees. However, this effect lessens over time as shown in

the positive coefficient on the interaction term. To illustrate, the marginal effect of relative membership size on complexity for different values of time is shown in Figure 7.5, alongside the 95 per cent confidence interval within the red margins. The x-axis has been constrained to only the period of study (5-year periods between 1960 and 2010). If the lower and upper margins of the 95 per cent confidence interval are both above (or both below) zero, both confidence intervals are significantly different from zero. Hence, the marginal effect is significant for those values of time.

Figure 7.5 shows that the marginal effect of membership is positive and significantly different from zero for the entire time-span. Contrary to the first impression provided by the negative coefficient on membership, once the range of values is constrained to real-world observations between 1960 and 2010, membership always yields a positive effect on the subsidy/due ratio for the entire party. The effect strengthens in size and uncertainty as time proceeds. It needs to be interpreted as follows: increases in membership size are linked to increases in the subsidy/due ratio, meaning that the difference in shares of income changes towards the advantage of subsidies and at the expense of dues. More pointedly, increases in membership size are associated with a higher relative reliance on subsidies, compared to dues. This effect increases further as time proceeds, as indicated by the positive coefficient on the interaction term. Lagged membership size has only a negative marginal effect on the distribution of income source for earlier periods of time that lie outside the period of study. This outcome is somewhat surprising, given other results so far. So far, the models did not report a statistically significant effect exerted by membership on the subsidy/due ratio for the entire party. In addition, the summary of results in Table 7.4 reports a negative effect of lagged membership size in the controlled model. Now, once the effect is allowed to vary over time, it turns out that the effect is indeed significant for the entire range of observations covered by the sample, and that this effect is positive and increasing, as depicted in Figure 7.5. Party membership size does not explain enough variance and not consistently throughout time to return significant results. But if the effect of membership size is allowed to vary over time and is constrained to the period 1960-2010 it is positively associated with the subsidy/due ratio in the sense that a smaller membership size in the previous year is linked to a shift towards higher reliance on dues as a source of income compared to subsidies.

Figure 7.5. Marginal effect of M/E on subsidy/due ratio (tot); period as mediator.

In sum, the findings show that party organisations respond visibly to membership decline in several instances.¹²¹ The responses are slightly more often proactive by increasing the organisational size and bringing it closer to the state, according to the staff/member ratio, expenses at central office, and the income structure at central level. In addition, party organisations respond conservatively to membership decline in the salaries they pay to employed staff and in the number of local offices they uphold. However, declining membership size does not yield significant effects in any of the other financial parameters. Moreover, time has had a mediating effect in one

¹²¹ In order to check for the robustness of the results, models were rerun using restricted maximum likelihood (REML) estimators instead of full maximum likelihood (ML). A change in estimation method hardly affects the results for the vast majority of organisational parameters. Only when it comes to the entire income does a change in estimation method produce differences. For the analysis of expenses for the entire party, REML produces a coefficient on the interaction term that is not statistically significant. In addition, changing the estimator has an effect on the results obtained for the income structure of the entire party. In both the uncontrolled and the controlled model, the results show a significant negative effect of membership size. Substantially, the results mean that membership size yields a negative effect on the income structure, i.e. decreasing membership size is associated with higher reliance on state subsidies and that declining membership size is linked to lower income for the entire party. In addition, the robustness was checked by including variables into the controlled model that relate to the general determinants of party change, as introduced and tested in chapter 6, i.e. lagged electoral result and leadership change effects. The results are, only in a small number of parameters, substantially different compared to the parsimonious models. For the parameter of income for the entire party, the coefficient on membership size is then negative and significant, indicating progressive response behaviour. A similar effect can be observed for the extended model for income structure for the entire party. In comparison, when introducing the two general determinants into the model for staff/member ratio, membership size is no longer significant. It is also noteworthy that after the introduction of further controls into the model on expenses for the entire party, party age is no longer significant; instead, electoral result is a strong positive predictor on expenses in the following year. All other results remain substantively the same.

instance. Membership size and income structure for the entire party are positively related and this increasingly so during the period 1960-2010. In sum, the entirety of results paints a picture of partial organisational response to membership decline.

7.2.2. Are the effects of membership size conditional upon party age?

Finally, and as way of testing **H9**, multilevel models are estimated that include an interaction term between membership size and age. The final column in Table 7.4 presents a summary of the results. Full information on the models can be found again in Table 7.3 (Model 1.5) and in the appendix to this chapter. The best fitting growth model was taken again and supplemented with the independent variables of lagged membership (ME) and party age (AGE), as well as their interaction ($ME*AGE$). The summary provided in the last column of Table 7.4 displays only the coefficients and standard errors on membership size (β_1), party age (β_2) and their interaction (β_3). As argued for above, in order to be supportive of **H9**, β_1 and β_3 should be significant. In addition, β_1 should yield a positive sign whereas β_3 a negative one. This pattern can only be found for the parameter measuring organisational complexity. Here, membership has, on average, a positive marginal effect that decreases as party age increases. It means that party age as a proxy for party institutionalisation mediates the effects of membership size. During earlier stages of the organisation, party membership size exerts a positive effect on organisational complexity that decreases as the party ages or institutionalises.

This can be substantiated and illustrated again through a marginal effect plot. For this purpose, the x-axis showing the standardised values of party age is constrained to the observed range of the parties' ages in the dataset of -1.448 (equals an age of 0 years) and 3.216 (equals an age of 176 years). That way the graph only shows the marginal effects for values of actual interest or application. In addition, a blue dotted vertical line is added indicating the x-value (or age) from which onwards both confidence intervals are either above or below the horizontal zero line and thus highlighting the area of statistically significant values of x. Figure 7.6 illustrates the relationship graphically for the case of the unit ratio. The figure shows that the marginal effect of membership size is positive when party age takes on values smaller than approximately 104 years. After that the effect disappears. A statistically significant negative relationship lies in the future and thus beyond the range of observed values. Note that around 91.3 per cent of all the unit ratio observations coincide with ages younger than 106 years old. It means that the theory is consistent for the vast majority of unit ratio observations. The relationship between party membership size and organisational complexity is positive, on average, when parties are younger than 104 years. During that stage of party development, increases in membership size lead to increases in organisational complexity. With

increasing age and level of institutionalisation, the effect lessens and even vanishes eventually.

Figure 7.6. Marginal effect of M/E on units/local government unit; party age as mediator.

Two other organisational parameters also return statistically significant interaction effects between membership size and party age. However, they are not supportive of **H9**. The results indicate that, depending on a party's age, membership size exerts different effects on firstly, the staff/member ratio and secondly, the entire party's expenses.

Figure 7.7. Marginal effect of M/E ratio on staff/member ratio; party age as mediator.

Figure 7.7 shows the marginal effect of membership size on the staff/member ratio for different values of party age. It depicts for younger ages (younger than approximately 95 years) a negative marginal effect of membership size. For parties of those ages, membership growth is associated with a decrease in the staff/member ratio. After the age of 95 the negative effect vanishes. The upper bound of this effect for which a positive relationship is estimated lies outside the range of observed party ages. Note that the age group up to 95 years covers around 82.7 per cent of all staff/member observations. The combination of coefficients, as reported in the final column of Table 7.4, also suggests a symmetric causal relationship between membership size and the staff/member ratio. It means that responses to increasing membership size are reversed when membership size decreases. This also makes sense because an increase in membership size increases also the pool of potential volunteers that can take over party organisational tasks. Conversely, a decrease in membership size instigates a need for more employees to take over crucial tasks.

Finally, the marginal effect of membership size on the entire party's expense for different values of party age is depicted in Figure 7.8. The graph also validates again the approach of constraining the x-axis to observed values of party age in the dataset, since the marginal effect is significant for none of them. While the results of multilevel modelling show a mildly statistically significant interaction effect between membership size and age, it is only significant for values outside the actual range of observed values of age. The conclusion to draw is the existence of an asymmetric causal effect between membership size and expenses for the entire

party, mediated by party age. Yet it is not relevant for any of the real-world observations covered by the sample observations.

Figure 7.8. Marginal effect of M/E on expense (tot); party age as mediator.

The remainder of results, as displayed in the last column of Table 7.4, can be divided into two groups. Firstly, in two instances (salary/staff ratio, income for the entire party) neither membership size nor party age has an effect when allowed to interact in a multiplicative model, as shown in the non-significant coefficients. And secondly, the multiplicative models suggest that party age, but not membership size, has an independent, symmetric, and positive effect on income and expense at the central office, as well as on sources of income at both levels. It means that as a party ages or institutionalises, its central office's income and expense increase, and it is relying more heavily on subsidies.

Overall, the results support **H9** only in the organisational parameter of the unit ratio.¹²³ Here the stage of party institutionalisation mediates the relationship between membership size and the parameter in such a way that a more consolidated party is less sensitive to changes in membership size than a newer party.

¹²³ As a way of testing for the robustness of the results, additional control variables were added to the interaction models. These were again lagged electoral result and leadership change effects. The results only change for the dimension of complexity, as there is no longer a significant interaction effect between party membership and party age.

7.3. Discussion and conclusion

Building on previous chapters' findings and existing studies, this chapter set out to investigate membership size as a specific trigger for organisational change and development. More specifically, it aimed at answering two interrelated questions: firstly, what are the effects of declining party membership size on the party organisation? And secondly, how are membership size, party age, and organisational parameters related more generally? For that, two analytical steps were taken, each pertaining to one of the questions. In the first step, individual organisational parameters were regressed on membership size while controlling for important confounds. The findings show that declining membership size has an effect on the party organisation in several instances (five out of nine organisational parameters). Whenever an effect was observable, it was more often that the organisation increases rather than decreases in size in response to membership decline. This finding is supportive of **H8** and speaks of proactive response behaviour by parties towards the diminishing resource of members. Decreasing membership size is linked to increases in the number of staff, expenses, and higher reliance on state subsidies. This proactive responsive behaviour implies that learning theory, as coined in the organisational literature, appears to be also applicable in the party organisational realm. At the same time, it was also found that parties show conservative response behaviour to membership decline by reducing their local presence and the average staff salary. This supports organisational science's threat-rigidity theory. For any of the other organisational parameters no observable responses could be found.

And while in chapter 6 general theories of change could not explain parties' levels in the dimensions of professionalism, this chapter showed that membership size is able to. The findings suggest that membership size can be considered a trigger for change in the dimension of professionalism. The variables of membership size and staff/member ratio show a negative relationship. As membership size decreases, parties respond proactively and increase the number of staff per 10,000 members. In contrast, in the case of the other indicator of professionalism – salary/staff ratio – the relationship is positive. It means that declining membership size instigates, on average, lower salaries per member of staff. On the whole, these findings mean that parties respond to declining membership size by employing more staff, increasing their headquarters expenses, and relying more heavily on state funding. At the same time, they lower the average staff salary and reduce the number of local offices.

In the second analytical step, existing theory and the last chapter's findings of party age being the best predictor of party organisational development was taken into account. It was argued that party age, as a proxy for party institutionalisation, might be a mediating factor in the relationship between membership size and organisational parameters. This is because a younger, non-consolidated party is more dependent on membership support, whereas an established party is more likely to be independent of membership size. This asymmetric or conditional

hypothesis was tested by including an interaction term in the analysis. The findings showed some interesting patterns. The anticipated effect was only found for the dimension of party complexity. Here, the effect of membership size is positive when parties are younger and vanishes when parties are older. This is the only result that is consistent with Michels' theory and existing studies. A symmetric positive effect was found for the organisational parameter of staff/member ratio.¹²⁴ Here, responses to membership growth are mirrored when membership is in decline. This finding can be considered consistent with Michel's theory. In addition, for several financial parameters the results of the multiplicative model show that it is party age that is a significant and positive predictor. The older the parties are, or the more institutionalised they are, the higher their income and expense at the party central level and the higher their reliance on state subsidies. Finally, for two parameters (salary/staff ratio; income entire party) neither membership size nor party age yields an impact when allowed to interact.

In their entirety, this chapter's findings can be summarised as showing that parties on average respond to party membership decline, according to several organisational parameters. Their reactions display more proactive than conservative response behaviour. The party organisation increases in size and binds itself closer to the state in response to declining membership size. In addition, according to two organisational parameters, parties adapt organisationally to any numeric changes – be it positive or negative – in their membership base. One case indicated an asymmetric causal relationship, which validates Michels but also learning theory. Support for a symmetric causal relationship between membership size and the party organisation was found for the parameter of staff/member ratio. Irrespective of causal directionality, the dominant pattern is one of partial party organisational response to changes in membership size. In multiplicative models, membership size yields only an effect when mediated by party age. In general, the results hint again at party age as a proxy for party institutionalisation playing a major role in the development of parties. Yet they also show that membership size is indeed a specific trigger for party organisational change.

¹²⁴ Note that the positive and significant part of the trivariate relationship lies in the future and thus outside the time-span under study.

Appendix

Table 7.5. Multilevel models with staff/member as dependent variable (n = 936; N = 44).

~ p < .10; * p < .05; ** < .01; *** < .001; standard errors in parentheses.

			df = 967	df = 889	df = 886	df = 885	df = 887
			<i>Growth model</i>	<i>Effects of membership</i>		<i>Varying effects over time</i>	<i>Asymmetry test</i>
			Model 2.1	Model 2.2	Model 2.3	Model 2.4	Model 2.5
Fixed effects							
	intercept	γ_{00}	3.71 (0.94)	-4.16 (7.53)	-4.25 (7.65)	-4.54 (7.66)	-3.48 (7.67)
	TIME	γ_{10}	-0.09 (0.31)	1.95 (1.99)	1.84 (2.01)	1.94 (2.01)	1.49 (2.01)
	TIME^2	γ_{20}	0.09 (0.03)	-0.05 (0.12)	-0.03 (0.11)	-0.04 (0.12)	-0.01 (0.12)
	ME	γ_{30}		-0.76 * (0.32)	-0.59 ~ (0.32)	0.18 (1.44)	-2.56 ** (0.96)
	AGE	γ_{40}			-1.43 ** (0.55)	-1.45 ** (0.55)	-0.86 (0.56)
	GOV_OPP	γ_{50}			1.03 ** (0.37)	1.05 ** (0.37)	
	ELECTION YEAR	γ_{60}			-0.46 (0.32)	-0.46 (0.32)	
	ME*TIME	γ_{70}				-0.14 (0.25)	
	ME*AGE	γ_{80}					1.85 * (0.86)
Variance components							
Level 1	Within-unit	σ^2_e	22.63	19.65	19.40	19.39	19.71
Level 2	1st grade	σ^2_0	6.70	2210.68	2276.91	2273.77	2294.68
	variance	σ^2_1	0.27	152.52	154.88	154.56	154.87
	cov 1st grade	σ_{01}	1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00
Quadratic term	variance	σ^2_2	0.01	0.50	0.51	0.51	0.51
	cov 1st grade	σ_{02}	-0.40	0.99	0.99	0.99	0.99
	cov linear	σ_{12}	-0.40	-0.99	-0.99	-0.99	-0.99
Goodness of fit							
	logLik		-3123	-2929	-2921	-2921	-2924
	AIC		6265	5880	5871	5872	5874
	BIC		6315	5933	5939	5945	5938

Table 7.6. Multilevel models with salary/staff as dependent variable (n = 565; N = 36).

~ p < .10; * p < .05; ** < .01; *** < .001; standard errors in parentheses. Salaries are expressed in Int'l. \$ of 1990.

			df = 602	df = 526	df = 523	df = 522	df = 524
			<i>Growth Models</i>	<i>Effects of membership</i>		<i>Varying effects of time</i>	<i>Asymmetry test</i>
			Model 3.1	Model 3.2	Model 3.3	Model 3.4	Model 3.5
Fixed effects							
	intercept	γ_{00}	17520.7 * (8203.4)	12179.8 (7632.9)	8126.8 (7284.6)	6096.3 (7071.7)	9141.2 (7702.7)
	TIME	γ_{10}	8462.1 * (3869.2)	10436.4 ** (3806.6)	10897.4 ** (3889.9)	11526.6 ** (3651.4)	11208.6 ** (3880.6)
	TIME^2	γ_{20}	-633.3 ~ (331)	-766.2 * (332.9)	-768.3 * (341.6)	-814 * (327.4)	-786.7 * (336.3)
	ME	γ_{30}		2583.8 ~ (1392.9)	2725.8 * (1386.9)	4058.7 (2695.9)	4836.8 (3513.6)
	AGE	γ_{40}			-4937.3 (3352.8)	-6218.2 ~ (3654.1)	-5188.8 (3804)
	GOV_OPP	γ_{50}			1961.7 (1733.8)	1716.7 (1736.9)	
	ELECTION YEAR	γ_{60}			2749.4 ~ (1423.8)	2697.6 ~ (1429.7)	
	ME*TIME	γ_{70}				-237.1 (469.9)	
	ME*AGE	γ_{80}					-1855.4 (3123.9)
Variance components							
Level 1	Within-unit	σ^2_e	2.40E+08	2.38E+08	2.36E+08	2.38E+08	2.38E+08
Level 2	1st grade	σ^2_0	1.14E+09	7.28E+08	6.41E+08	3.6E+08	6.31E+08
	variance	σ^2_1	4.13E+08	3.67E+08	4.02E+08	3.21E+08	3.61E+08
	cov 1st grade	σ_{01}	-0.65	-0.57	-0.64	-0.42	-0.53
Quadratic term	variance	σ^2_2	3.12E+06	2958813	3212042	2758118	2935562
	cov 1st grade	σ_{02}	0.48	0.41	0.49	0.26	0.37
	cov linear	σ_{12}	-0.98	-0.98	-0.98	-0.98	-0.98
Goodness of fit							
	logLik		-7203	-6394	-6391	-6391	-6393
	AIC		14423	12810	12809	12812	12812
	BIC		14470	12857	12870	12877	12868

7 – Effects of Party Membership Size

Table 7.7. Multilevel models with income (co) as dependent variable (n = 953; N = 39).

~ p < .10; * p < .05; ** < .01; *** < .001; standard errors in parentheses. Income is expressed in Int'l. \$ of 1990.

			df = 1102	df = 911	df = 908	df = 907	df = 909
			<i>Growth model</i>	<i>Effects of membership</i>		<i>Varying effects over time</i>	<i>Asymmetry test</i>
			Model 4.1	Model 4.2	Model 4.3	Model 4.4	Model 4.5
Fixed effects							
	intercept	γ_{00}	2576688 * (1056262)	1868457 (1464680)	2704536 ~ (1549569)	2858843 ~ (1639749)	2975701 ~ (1562084)
	TIME	γ_{10}	1633893 * (774685)	1918692 * (833050)	1812099 * (841707)	1759946 * (861300)	2009156 * (866434)
	TIME^2	γ_{20}	-130215 * (64098)	-152302 * (67893)	-167560 * (69306)	-163171 * (70988)	-183997 ** (70765)
	ME	γ_{30}		5467 (408709)	-1754 (403568)	-118780 (575351)	402831 (706248)
	AGE	γ_{40}			3022913 ** (1140010)	3065825 ** (1148853)	2738418 * (1167093)
	GOV_OPP	γ_{50}			-622444 (633426)	-615355 (633870)	
	ELECTION YEAR	γ_{60}			2790486 *** (581452)	2786765 *** (581585)	
	ME* TIME	γ_{70}				40233 (140983)	
	ME* AGE	γ_{80}					-574378 (766570)
Variance components							
Level 1	Within-unit	σ^2_e	5.68E+13	6.66E+13	6.46E+13	6.46E+13	6.62E+13
Level 2	1st grade	σ^2_0	6.99E+12	4.87E+12	4.63E+12	4.60E+12	4.80E+12
	variance	σ^2_1	1.77E+13	1.90E+13	1.85E+13	1.85E+13	1.82E+13
	cov 1st grade	σ_{01}	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Quadratic term	variance	σ^2_2	1.21E+11	1.30E+11	1.27E+11	1.27E+11	1.24E+11
	cov 1st grade	σ_{02}	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00
	cov linear	σ_{12}	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00
Goodness of fit							
	logLik		-16579	-16597	-16564	-16564	-16575
	AIC		33179	33217	33156	33158	33177
	BIC		33233	33270	33224	33231	33240

Table 7.8. Multilevel models with income (tot) as dependent variable (n = 701; N = 36).

~ p < .10; * p < .05; ** < .01; *** < .001; standard errors in parentheses. Income is expressed in Int'l. \$ of 1990.

			df = 719	df = 662	df = 659	df = 658	df = 660
			<i>Growth model</i>	<i>Effects of membership</i>		<i>Varying effects over time</i>	<i>Asymmetry test</i>
			Model 5.1	Model 5.2	Model 5.3	Model 5.4	Model 5.5
Fixed effects							
	intercept	γ_{00}	-6647948 (6386334)	-2139204 (4236308)	-344132 (4538101)	330520 (4544469)	28539 (4575629)
	TIME	γ_{10}	8018107 * (3886161)	7079238 ~ (3759437)	6596785 ~ (3753387)	6233070 ~ (3749292)	7130422 ~ (3770493)
	TIME^2	γ_{20}	575356 ~ (310381)	-529442 ~ (304064)	-542374 ~ (302638)	-476128 (309105)	-570933 ~ (302356)
	ME	γ_{30}		119276 (2260808)	-1864886 (2510775)	-3590084 (3172873)	2090112 (3851550)
	AGE	γ_{40}			5038036 ~ (2648830)	5070590 ~ (2649287)	3453119 (2811508)
	GOV_OPP	γ_{50}			-1263200 (1368890)	-1326219 (1372683)	
	ELECTION YEAR	γ_{60}			5044547 *** (1212544)	5014373 * (1211979)	**
	ME*TIME	γ_{70}				1319211 (1425090)	
	ME*AGE	γ_{80}					-4589573 (3135961)
Variance components							
Level 1	Within-unit	σ^2_e	2.13E+14	2.23E+14	2.17E+14	2.16E+14	2.23E+14
Level 2	1st grade	σ^2_0	5.54E+14	1.17E+14	1.75E+14	1.67E+14	1.66E+14
	variance	σ^2_1	4.39E+14	4.29E+14	4.28E+14	4.24E+14	4.21E+14
	cov 1st grade	σ_{01}	-0.64	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00
Quadratic term	variance	σ^2_2	2.84E+12	2.76E+12	2.79E+12	2.77E+12	4.74E+12
	cov 1st grade	σ_{02}	0.60	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
	cov linear	σ_{12}	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00
Goodness of fit							
	logLik		-13666	-12859	-12849	-12848	-12857
	AIC		27352	25740	25726	25727	25739
	BIC		27397	25791	25790	25795	25799

7 – Effects of Party Membership Size

Table 7.9. Multilevel models with expense (co) as dependent variable (n = 845; N = 40).

~ p < .10; * p < .05; ** < .01; *** < .001; standard errors in parentheses. Expense is expressed in in Int'l. \$ of 1990.

			df = 977	df = 802	df = 799	df = 798	df = 800
			<i>Growth model</i>	<i>Effects of membership</i>		<i>Varying effects over time</i>	<i>Asymmetry test</i>
			Model 6.1	Model 6.2	Model 6.3	Model 6.4	Model 6.5
Fixed effects							
	intercept	γ_{00}	2483959 * (1034529)	2635149 ~ (1365894)	2776056 * (1408441)	2751888 ~ (1491449)	3702702 * (1445240)
	TIME	γ_{10}	1732738 * (812984)	1802625 * (875095)	1610037 ~ (887089)	1618443 ~ (903110)	1806915 * (909939)
	TIME^2	γ_{20}	-143275 * (70664)	-153397 * (74599)	-153925 * (76228)	-154644 ~ (77576)	-173619 * (77381)
	ME	γ_{30}		-787730 * (382027)	-773752 * (371457)	-757332 (504107)	-407740 (632527)
	AGE	γ_{40}			2779748 ** (97844)	2774160 ** (984507)	2613220 * (1026624)
	GOV_OPP	γ_{50}			22280 (576038)	21029 (576624)	
	ELECTION YEAR	γ_{60}			3957463 *** (521908)	3958033 *** (522085)	
	ME*TIME	γ_{70}				-5884 (121655)	
	ME*AGE	γ_{80}					-486480 (680079)
Variance components							
Level 1	Within-unit	σ^2_e	4.20E+13	5.02E+13	4.65E+13	4.65E+13	4.98E+13
Level 2	1st grade	σ^2_0	8.20E+12	7.42E+12	4.70E+12	4.71E+12	4.88E+12
	variance	σ^2_1	2.15E+13	2.18E+13	2.31E+13	2.31E+13	2.28E+13
	cov 1st grade	σ_{01}	0.95	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Quadratic term	variance	σ^2_2	1.64E+11	1.64E+11	1.76E+11	1.76E+11	1.73E+11
	cov 1st grade	σ_{02}	-0.97	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00
	cov linear	σ_{12}	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00
Goodness of fit							
	logLik		-17521	-14557	-14526	-14526	-14554
	AIC		35063	29137	29080	29082	291334
	BIC		35112	29189	29147	29154	29195

Table 7.10. Multilevel models with expense (tot) as dependent variable (n = 463; N = 22).

~ p < .10; * p < .05; ** < .01; *** < .001; standard errors in parentheses. Expense is expressed in in Int'l. \$ of 1990.

			df = 481	df = 438	df = 435	df = 434	df = 436
			<i>Growth model</i>	<i>Effects of membership</i>		<i>Varying effects over time</i>	<i>Asymmetry test</i>
			Model 7.1	Model 7.2	Model 7.3	Model 7.4	Model 7.5
Fixed effects							
	intercept	γ_{00}	447740 (5088600)	-1930155 (8187828)	-1488 (8128449)	-1.2E+07 (12623258)	--2.2E+07 ~ (12926925)
	TIME	γ_{10}	11058756 * (5112551)	11726857 ~ (6051859)	11640232 * (5280124)	14123262 ~ (7564478)	17968828 * (7670849)
	TIME^2	γ_{20}	-881263 * (435079)	-916842 ~ (500883)	-986381 * (435369)	-1065310 ~ (590542)	-1338006 * (582310)
	ME	γ_{30}		3169709 (9541016)	1210822 (9222084)	-6564299 (12164468)	10628908 (10423757)
	AGE	γ_{40}			7477297 * (3386114)	5434820 ~ (3072112)	2383722 (3612384)
	GOV_OPP	γ_{50}			-603681 (2129219)	-179842 (2135587)	
	ELECTION YEAR	γ_{60}			6626210 *** (1914375)	6471969 *** (1902907)	
	ME*TIME	γ_{70}				2066302 (2349669)	
	ME*AGE	γ_{80}					-9232147 ~ (5436654)
Variance components							
Level 1	Within-unit	σ^2_e	3.27E+14	3.42E+14	3.38E+14	3.33E+14	3.42E+14
Level 2	1st grade	σ^2_0	1.4307E-09	7.73E+12	1.4278E-07	1.88E+15	1.92E+15
	variance	σ^2_1	5.11E+14	6.77E+14	4.91E+14	1.10E+15	1.11E+15
	cov 1st grade	σ_{01}	0.31	-0.30	0.86	-1.00	-1.00
Quadratic term	variance	σ^2_2	3.76E+12	4.95E+12	3.62E+12	6.66E+12	6.68E+12
	cov 1st grade	σ_{02}	-0.28	0.27	-0.87	1.00	1.00
	cov linear	σ_{12}	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00
Goodness of fit							
	logLik		-9215	-8664	-8656	-8653	-8658
	AIC		18451	17350	17340	17335	17341
	BIC		18493	17396	17398	17398	17395

7 – Effects of Party Membership Size

Table 7.11. Multilevel models with subsidy/due (co) as dependent variable (n = 628; N = 30).

~ p < .10; * p < .05; ** < .01; *** < .001 ; standard errors in parentheses.

			df = 696	df = 594	df = 591	df = 590	df = 592
			<i>Growth model</i>	<i>Effects of membership</i>		<i>Varying effects over time</i>	<i>Asymmetry test</i>
			Model 8.1	Model 8.2	Model 8.3	Model 8.4	Model 8.5
Fixed effects							
	intercept	γ_{00}	-12.25 *** (2.27)	-13.84 *** (1.86)	-10.58 ** (3.54)	-13.07 *** (2.00)	-10.31 *** (2.33)
	TIME	γ_{10}	1.25 (2.18)	3.09 * (1.52)	2.01 (3.08)	3.09 * (1.39)	1.92 (1.91)
	TIME^2	γ_{20}	0.12 (0.54)	-0.19 (0.32)	-0.05 (0.63)	-0.26 (0.82)	-0.02 (0.34)
	TIME^3	γ_{30}	-0.01 (0.03)	0.003 (0.02)	-0.002 (0.03)	0.01 (0.08)	-0.01 (0.02)
	ME	γ_{40}		-0.54 (0.36)	0.99 ** (0.34)	-1.53 ~ (0.79)	-0.86 (0.77)
	AGE	γ_{50}			1.33 ** (0.48)	1.23 ** (0.47)	1.08 ~ (0.57)
	GOV_ OPP	γ_{60}			-0.16 (0.35)	-0.04 (0.36)	
	ELECTION YEAR	γ_{70}			0.70 * (0.28)	0.59 * (0.30)	
	ME* TIME	γ_{80}				0.15 (0.12)	
	ME* AGE	γ_{90}					-0.04 (0.64)
Variance components							
Level 1	Within-unit	σ^2_e	9.24	11.37	9.40	10.79	10.19
Level 2	1st grade	σ^2_0	72.77	30.91	176.49	24.02	74.61
	variance	σ^2_1	116.02	41.00	227.86	22.79	71.58
	cov 1st grade	σ_{01}	-0.23	0.39	-0.03	-0.02	-0.09
Quadratic term	variance	σ^2_2	7.77	1.92	10.24	18.79	2.25
	cov 1st grade	σ_{02}	0.00	-0.53	-0.14	0.04	0.30
	cov linear	σ_{12}	-0.97	-0.96	-0.98	-0.17	-0.95
Cubic term	variance	σ^2_3	0.03	0.01	0.03	0.18	0.01
	cov 1st grade	σ_{03}	0.08	0.55	0.20	-0.05	-0.58
	cov linear term	σ_{13}	0.94	0.88	0.95	0.06	0.74
	cov quadratic term	σ_{23}	-0.99	-0.98	-0.99	-0.99	-0.91
Goodness of fit							
	logLik		-1977	-1766	-1745	-1815	-1756
	AIC		3984	3565	3528	3670	3548
	BIC		4053	3636	3612	3759	3623

Table 7.12. Multilevel models with subsidy/due (tot) as dependent variable (n = 163; N = 16).

~ p < .10; * p < .05; ** < .01; *** < .001; standard errors in parentheses.

			df = 465	df = 129	df = 126	df = 125	df = 127
			<i>Growth model</i>	<i>Effects of membership</i>		<i>Varying effects over time</i>	<i>Asymmetry test</i>
			Model 9.1	Model 9.2	Model 9.3	Model 9.4	Model 9.5
Fixed effects							
	intercept	γ_{00}	-24.43 *** (2.58)	-18.38 *** (3.83)	-15.61 *** (4.45)	-18.73 *** (2.11)	-20.30 *** (1.89)
	TIME	γ_{10}	9.17 *** (1.16)	6.46 *** (1.63)	6.79 *** (1.86)	7.09 *** (1.16)	8.38 *** (1.23)
	TIME^2	γ_{20}	-1.18 *** (0.23)	-0.82 ** (0.29)	-0.97 ** (0.33)	-0.93 *** (0.22)	-1.15 *** (0.24)
	TIME^3	γ_{30}	0.05 *** (0.01)	0.04 * (0.02)	0.05 * (0.02)	0.04 *** (0.01)	0.05 *** (0.01)
	ME	γ_{40}		-1.26 (1.22)	-2.15 (1.38)	-3.35 *** (0.94)	-1.02 (1.36)
	AGE	γ_{50}			0.84 ~ (0.51)	1.09 * (0.50)	1.09 * (0.54)
	GOV_OPP	γ_{60}			0.04 (0.30)	-0.03 (0.30)	
	ELECTION YEAR	γ_{70}			0.02 (0.23)	0.08 (0.24)	
	ME* TIME	γ_{80}				0.59 ~ (0.31)	
	ME* AGE	γ_{90}					1.23 (1.15)
Variance components							
Level 1	Within-unit	σ^2_e	6.11	5.19	5.13	5.75	5.82
Level 2	1st grade	σ^2_0	48.46	93.39	183.00	4.80	0.00
	variance	σ^2_1	8.85	18.62	48.70	7.12	11.8
	cov 1st grade	σ_{01}	0.35	0.08	-0.11	0.74	-1.00
Quadratic term	variance	σ^2_2	0.83	1.30	2.11	0.58	0.79
	cov 1st grade	σ_{02}	-0.72	-0.50	-0.29	-0.90	0.98
	cov linear	σ_{12}	-0.89	-0.89	-0.91	-0.95	-0.98
Cubic term	variance	σ^2_3	0.003	0.004	0.01	0.002	0.00
	cov 1st grade	σ_{03}	0.78	0.59	0.42	0.94	-0.97
	cov linear term	σ_{13}	0.82	0.82	0.83	0.92	0.97
	cov quadratic term	σ_{23}	-0.99	-0.99	-0.99	-0.99	-1.00
Goodness of fit							
	logLik		-1260	-1202	-1202	-1199	-1203
	AIC		2550	2436	2441	2438	2441
	BIC		2614	2503	2521	2522	2517

8 – Party organisational response, members, and democracy

In 1796, George Washington offered a view on political parties and their development that proves to still be fairly accurate in the 21st century. He states that '[h]owever [political parties] may now and then answer popular ends, they are likely in the course of time and things, to become potent engines [...]' (Washington, 1796: 9). With this he observes that parties form a connection to citizens and promote their interests. He also maintains that parties will continue to fulfil this role, in whatever format. This understanding of one of the main functions of parties is considered the standard view, which has not changed since Washington's days. In addition, Washington's statement shows that he viewed parties as institutions or organisations that develop over time, as signified by the use of the word 'engines'. They are not only the function of citizen approval or support but an organisation in itself. But more so, his projection of party organisations as turning into 'engines' can be understood as one that sees them developing into an end in themselves. Arguments in favour of such a view for today's parties are easily found. Approximately 100 years later the idea of party organisations developing a life of their own was picked up again by Ostrogorsky (1902).

Despite Washington's remarkably accurate projection of party development, he could not have possibly foreseen how powerful political parties would become in the course of the 20th century across the Western world. Nowadays, parties shape everyday politics to the extent of being almost synonymous with the democratic process (Dalton et al., 2011). This is the result of mainly three developments: firstly, the advent of mass democracy through the introduction of general suffrage; secondly, citizens' continuing appreciation of parties and their work, in spite of recurring and stark criticism; and thirdly, parties' unremitting adaptation to changing societal circumstance out of their own will for survival or strive for power (see Yanai, 1999). It is the strategic character of parties and their ability to act strategically that possibly mark key characteristics of parties in the 18th century as well as at the beginning of the 21st century. Even today it is still true that political parties promote citizen views and (most often) originate from citizen participation. However, over time, and with increasing institutionalisations, parties' actions, structures, and resources have accumulated to large, capital-intensive institutions of democracy. In some areas parties might resemble the 'potent engine' Washington was predicting. This marks one of the main findings of this present study.

In the following sections all findings are summarised, reflected on, as well as placed into the academic literature and political practice. Section one summarises previous chapters and their findings. Section two points briefly at the limitations of this study before the third section reflects on the implications the findings have for parties,

party democracy, and politics in general. It also discusses future avenues of research that follow from the current study before the final section draws a short conclusion. The chapter argues that the study yields five main implications. (1) Party members are a valuable resource to party organisations. (2) Party organisational development is also driven by membership size. (3) Party organisations and their work are increasingly centred around elections. (4) Levels of party institutionalisation are linked to the financial costs of democracy. (5) Party accountability is torn between citizens who provide votes and the state which supplies funding.

8.1. Party organisational responses to membership decline

In light of recurring signs for citizens' disenchantment with political parties and politics at large, through survey results and their changing modes of political participation, this study set out to make parties the centre of attention and thus emphasise their strategic role. It marshalled empirical evidence to evaluate the research question of *whether or not, and how, political parties respond organisationally to party decline*. While parties provide several possible response areas, the party organisation, as one such area, is first subjected to change in response to a challenge before any other area, as argued in chapter 1. In addition, parties may win or lose elections and may hold fewer or more seats in parliament accordingly, but it is the extra-parliamentary segment of any party, the party organisation, that usually prevails. After election day it immediately starts preparing for the following election. Because of the links party organisations uphold to citizens and the state, they are intrinsically linked to democracy and the democratic process. Their development and response to party decline can also have implications for democracy at large.

An issue arising prior to studying party responses to decline is why we should even care about party decline and its effects. Arguably, if citizens do not approve of parties as intermediaries to the same extent as they once did, the parties' existence may no longer be justified. Chapter 2 took up the task of evaluating the value of political parties to representative democracy. Can we not only empirically explain but also normatively defend parties and their role in representative democracy? In answering this question, the chapter compared party democracy to its next best competitor: pluralist democracy with individual representatives instead of political parties. Its main argument is that parties are beneficial to representative democracy. They reduce voter's information costs but more importantly, they increase predictability and transparency of policy outcomes. This, in turn, facilitates better accountability between voters and their representatives, which is one of the key aspects of representative democracy. In addition, the chapter argued that parties offer – in an ideal case scenario – ideology and a long-term vision for a country that saves politics and policies from becoming a dispersed and possibly even

contradicting set of actions. This means that parties are not only considered necessary by citizens, as survey evidence suggests (see Linz, 2002), but they are also beneficial for the well-functioning of representative democracy from a theoretical perspective.

Nonetheless, empirical studies of the last decades suggest that parties are in decline. The concept of party decline has received much attention in the scholarly literature. Ample empirical evidence for and against the claim has been put forward, yet clearer accounts as to what it precisely encompasses, and to what extent party decline occurs have been scarce. Chapter 3 clarified the concept of party decline by narrowing it down to a declining positive attitude citizens hold in relation to parties as well as citizens' decreasing participation in parties. This means that the party decline thesis only refers to party-citizen relationships and not to party-state interactions. Following this conceptualisation, an ideal-type operationalization should include measures of party identification, party membership, and partisan volatility. A review of existing empirical studies analysing these indicators suggested that if party decline is operationalized through those measures, empirical evidence supports the notion of party decline most through party membership figures. Party identification and volatility also provide evidence in support of party decline, albeit not across the board. The conclusion to draw from this is that the existing literature points at party decline mostly through aggregated party membership figures.

However, existing studies on party membership and the development thereof, use aggregated figures and only a few time-points, as argued in chapter 4. These choices are ill-suited for obtaining insights into the precise magnitude and extent of membership decline. As an alternative, the chapter promotes the usage of more fine-grained data, such as annual data that takes the individual party as the unit of analysis, not the party system. Such data and analyses have the ability to provide a more thorough picture of the development of membership figures within a party system as well as over time. Ultimately, this is also necessary to explain the phenomenon of membership decline. The chapter demonstrated that membership decline does not occur, by far, across all parties in Western Europe. It applies relatively more to parties founded before 1945 and less so to green parties. More generally, membership decline appears to be part of a party's life-cycle, in such a way that the more consolidated parties are, the fewer members they have. Hence, even though membership decline can be easily found across most Western European countries using aggregated figures, party-level data paint a slightly more diverse picture. This, however, is not to divert from the fact that membership decline is widespread and that wherever it has occurred, the magnitude was most of the time substantial between 1960 and 2010.

Such a decline in one of the defining characteristics or resources of party organisations is likely to pose problems to parties, given the important role members fulfil. How might parties cope with or respond to the challenge of enrolling fewer members? How do parties change in response to membership decline? Chapter 5 argued that answers to these questions can be found in a combination of theories of organisational change in management and party politics literature. They provide different projections as to what causes organisational change, as well as what kind of change to anticipate. Theories of party change propose three general determinants: party age, system-belonging, or a combination of electoral result and leadership effects. With increasing age or changing status of institutionalisation, the party faces a different set of opportunities and constraints. Each stage, from the emergence as a new voting alternative to the establishment as a permanent option for voters, includes its own opportunities and incentives, which can drive strategic behaviour and change the party organisation. Likewise, electoral results and leadership change can provide sufficient reasons for party organisations to change. These response triggers are more abrupt, however. In comparison to both, the third strand of literature argues that a party's system-belonging affects organisational change. The underlying rationale is that the success of each party in a system is (also) a function of its competitors' actions. Parties mimic each other's actions and structures in an attempt to alleviate competitive advantages in the market. However, next to these general theories of party change, organisational and party politics literature also include theories about organisational change or response behaviour towards a change in a specific resource, such as members. A shortage of members, as an important resource, can trigger proactive response behaviour, in an attempt to outweigh the resulting deficiency. It implies that parties are responding to declining membership by expanding their organisation. Alternatively, decreasing membership size can hamper a party's manoeuvrability. In order to balance the different parts of the organisation, again, organisational downsizing can occur. Irrespective of the precise response behaviour, the stage of party institutionalisation can play a major mediating force between membership size and organisational parameters. This is because each stage offers opportunities and incentives for the party organisation that can influence the precise response behaviour.

In chapters 6 and 7 it was investigated which of these scenarios took place in 47 Western Europe parties between 1960 and 2010. This necessitated first studying general patterns of party organisational development over the period, as well as testing the general determinants of party change against each other. Chapter 6 argued firstly, that party organisational development has been generally one of increasing organisational size and becoming more capital-intensive across Western Europe until the late 1980s. After that, party organisations continued to increase only in a few parameters but decreased somewhat in the majority. In addition, a party's local presence in the form of local party branches has been generally

declining over the entire period of study. Over time, parties placed, on average, less emphasis on their organisational outreach. Secondly, the chapter demonstrated that out of the three general explanatory approaches to party organisational change, party age as a proxy for party institutionalisation marks the strongest predictor of party development. Systematic differences in the structure of party organisations exist depending on the level of party institutionalisation. The older or more institutionalised parties are, the more capital-intensive their organisation becomes. This finding, and a causes-of-effects analysis in general, is the first important step in studying the particular effects party membership size has on organisational development.

In the second step, party membership size as a specific trigger for party organisational development was investigated in chapter 7. A study of the effects that changes in membership size instigate in the party organisation is similar to a study of visible organisational reactions. With this, chapter 7 set out to pursue two interrelated goals: firstly, to examine what the effects of membership decline on the party organisation are; and secondly, to assess more generally how membership size and the strongest general determinant of party change (party age) relate to organisational resources and structures. The results showed that parties respond, on average, visibly to party membership decline in several of their organisational parameters. More precisely, party membership decline yields an effect on the organisation in five out of nine organisational parameters. More often than not, parties demonstrate a proactive than conservative response behaviour. Parties respond to declining membership size by employing more staff, increasing their headquarters expenses, and relying more heavily on state funding. At the same time, they lower the average staff salary and reduce the number of local offices. In addition, the results also indicate that party age and party institutionalisation play a crucial role for organisational complexity in how parties respond to any kind of change in their membership size. Accordingly, in the emerging phase, parties are more sensitive to and dependent on membership size, while membership size becomes less important for this area during a more consolidated phase. Moreover, the results also show that age and party finances are related. The older parties get the higher their income and expenses become and the more they bind themselves to the state. Overall, the findings paint a picture of partial organisational response to changes in membership size. Just like a business firm, parties do indeed respond visibly to changes in their size, according to several indicators. The results support the idea that organisational and management theory is also applicable to party organisations. They also mean that next to the three general determinants of party change, party membership size can be regarded as a specific trigger for party organisational change, which validates Michels. To be sure, these are the observable effects of declining membership size, after introducing a time-lag and controlling for important confounds. Nonetheless, history poses a non-negligible threat to the

internal validity of these results. It cannot be excluded that the relationships found are due to unaccounted events that occur simultaneous to changes in membership size.

On the whole, these findings underline already existing literature that emphasises party adaptability and party change, instead of party decline across the board (see for instance Dalton et al., 2011; Bartolini and Mair, 2001; Katz and Mair, 1994; Webb, 1995, 2002a). Political parties survive through responding strategically to new challenges brought upon them. Despite the decline in party membership figures across Western Europe, party organisations continue to exist. They will also continue to play an important role in the democratic process, just differently than before (see Dalton and Wattenberg, 2000b; Saward, 2008). Yet, the study also shows that party organisations have been increasing in size and thus, in visibility. This development appears to be linked in parts to a decline in party membership, which makes the discrepancy between popular support for parties and their visibility seem even starker. Related to this, van Biezen et al. (2012: 40) observe that parties are less interested in a smaller yet loyal group of supporters, such as members, and more interested in the mass public: '[T]he large majority of parties seem relatively unconcerned with their membership and are instead more focused on reaching out to the wider public through professional campaigning and marketing techniques.' This study's findings can largely support such an idea. The results suggest that party organisations do indeed respond to declining membership size by focussing more on the wider public. In addition, party organisations are more dependent on, and thus sensitive to, changes in their membership size during their formative years, compared to a later stage of their existence. The conclusion is that parties indeed respond to changes in their membership size and, more often than not, react by increasing the organisational size and bringing the organisation closer to the state.

8.2. Limitations to the findings

Despite careful considerations in setting up this research project, the conclusions to draw from the study are limited with regards to their external and internal validity. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, the data used includes a bias for success stories amongst parties. They were selected on the basis of being in parliament for three consecutive electoral cycles. Hence, the findings cannot be easily generalised to parties of other advanced industrial democracies. Statistically significant results can only be extended to parties in similar countries, which have also survived three consecutive electoral cycles. Threats to internal validity, on the other hand, are present in the form of history or maturation (Shadish et al., 2002), as mentioned previously. Even with the introduction of a time-lag and important covariates into the models, it cannot be excluded that the observed effects are also a consequence of factors other than changes in membership size. The introductory chapter sketched

how societies in Western Europe have been exposed to many different macro- and micro-level changes during the period 1960-2010. Those changes or their consequences may be responsible for the observed effects. At the same time, other common threats to internal validity, such as ambiguous temporal presence, selection, attrition, and regression have been accounted for through the selection of the current research design, cases, and analyses.

8.3. Party organisations, democracy, and future research: five implications

As argued in chapter 2, political parties are beneficial to representative democracy for several reasons. In addition, many empirical theories of political representation already take the very existence of political parties for granted. Next to the citizens' continuing approval of parties, this makes the future of parties and party organisations look rather safe. Yet, what does it mean for parties, party democracy, and political practice that party organisations respond to decreasing membership size, according to several parameters?

To reiterate, the analyses showed that party membership decline is occurring in most parties, yet not all; some parties are hardly affected or not at all. In addition, parties founded before 1945 experience relatively more membership decline than others, whereas ecological parties appear less affected. Moreover, it was found that party organisations respond to membership decline according to five out of nine indicators. They respond, on average, by employing more staff, spending more money, and relying more heavily on state subsidies. At the same time, membership decline is also responded to by lowering the average salary and reducing their local presence. The analyses also showed that party institutionalisation can play an important role for the organisational setup. Firstly, the more institutionalised parties are, the more capital-intensive they become. And secondly, during an early stage of party institutionalisation parties respond to changes in membership differently in their complexity compared to a later stage. All of these findings have important implications for research on parties, party democracy generally, and political practice, which can be summarised in the following five points.

(1) *Party members are a valuable resource to party organisations.* This study followed existing literature in its assumption that party members are important and valuable to parties. Considering members as a resource enabled adapting the resource-based view from organisational research in what triggers organisational response. The empirical results show that parties respond to changes in party membership size, thereby validating some of Michels' (1911) propositions. This might be interpreted as an indication that parties indeed consider their membership base a resource, financially and otherwise, to whose change in size they have reacted. Hence, these findings lend support to the assumption of membership as a resource and thus support the existing literature, as quoted in chapter 5. This is an important

implication as it provides yet another hint for party scholars as to the value parties attach to members. In times of receding membership figures, it still remains largely unknown to what extent parties value their members and for what. This study and its findings contributed to the question of whether or not members play a role at all. Further insights into the value of members can only be obtained by understanding the parties' rationale, studying their precise perception of membership decline, and reading documents such as annual reports or minutes from internal meetings.

Some of Europe's biggest social democratic parties provide initial insights into the importance they attach to members in their official documents. For example, the German social democratic party's (SPD) steering committee recently launched an action plan comprising twelve points aiming at 'strengthening the acquisition of members and their attachment' (SPD-Vorstand, 2008:12).¹²⁵ The action plan comprises, for example, the introduction of membership monitoring technology, permanent staff at all hierarchical levels, as well as the establishment of a task force to develop recruitment strategies for target groups. Similarly, in the UK party members are still valued. According to the 2000 annual report of the Labour Party, the party's main objective is 'to maintain a large membership, representative of the whole of [its] coalition of supporters, and to ensure that all of [its] members are able to maximize their participation and activity within and on behalf of the party' (The Labour Party, 2000: 10). Equally, the Swedish social democratic party, S, expresses its commitment to and concern about its membership base. In 2011 it introduced a so-called activity theme (*verksamhetstema*) designed to connect membership recruitment, activity, and policy development around the same political theme. The intended purpose of the activity theme is to 'increase contact points with other organisations and actors, recruit members, and offer a form of activist activity so that members can become more active' (Socialdemokraterna, 2011: 20).¹²⁶ From these latest documents issued by some of Europe's largest social democratic parties it appears that they attach at least some value to members. Yet, this conclusion might be more easily found for social democratic parties, as they hold traditionally stronger bonds to members than parties of other party families.

In the future, further research is recommended that investigates more thoroughly and in greater detail the assumption that members are valuable to parties, and to what extent. In this way, political science could shed more light onto the parties' self-image and motivations. After all, parties are said to be having firm roots in society; membership represents, arguably, one such root. When it comes to the value parties attach to members it is especially the study of change over time which is of utmost interest. This study's results suggest that parties are developing over time

¹²⁵ In the original German version it says: '[...] zur stärkeren Mitgliederwerbung und Bindung'.

¹²⁶ In the original Swedish version it says: 'Syftet med verksamhetstemat och kampanjen var att [...] öka kontaktytorna med andra organisationer och aktörer, värva medlemmar samt att erbjuda aktivistisk verksamhet så att medlemmarna i partiet kan bli mer aktiva.'

and that their behaviour also depends on their status of institutionalisation. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, societies have undergone major social, economic, and political changes in the past, which have impacted parties. Have these transformations also altered the value parties attach to members? So far we can only observe that parties hold fewer members. But is this the result of a deliberate choice? Answers to that might also differ between party families because social democratic parties, for example, are known for relying more heavily on members. In addition to that, analyses of the causal determinants of membership decline are needed. The analysis presented in chapter 4 only revealed some patterns, yet it did not engage in a full causes-of-effects analysis.

Table 8.1. Comparison in average values of key variables, 1960s and 2000s.

Note. ‘co’ denotes party central office, whereas ‘tot’ refers to the entire party. All differences are significant at conventional levels. Financial data are expressed in Int’l. \$ of 1990.

Variable	1960s	2000s	Percentage change
Membership ratio	2.59	0.52	-80.13
Unit ratio	2.55	1.57	-38.50
Staff/member ratio	2.73	11.16	+308.50
Salary/staff ratio	21,066	45,836	+120.93
Income (co)	6,431,717	7,245,861	+9.05
Income (tot)	13,098,561	24,116,208	+72.08
Expense (co)	5,334,945	8,135,007	+50.01
Expense (tot)	4,801,885	28,214,775	+466.86
Share of subsidies (co) income	17.34	60.58	+249.37
Share of subsidies (tot) income	2.4	40.64	+1,593.33
Share of dues (tot) income	42.13	17.24	-59.08

(2) *Party organisational development is also driven by membership size.* Chapter 6 showed that party organisations have been undergoing substantial changes in the past decades. According to most indicators, parties have been primarily expanding their organisations until the 1980s when they began downsizing. The only exception to this is in the parties’ local presence, which has been decreasing on average throughout the period of study. Comparing the state of party organisations in the 1960s to that in the 2000s gives some impression of the magnitude of change, as depicted in Table 8.1. For example, the average membership ratio has dropped by 80 per cent, while the parties’ number of staff has increased by 308 per cent. The difference in structures and resources of party organisations is substantial. The smallest difference that Table 8.1 reports is an increase of 9 per cent in party headquarters’ income. The explanation that found most support in the data for the development of parties is party age or party institutionalisation. Yet, next to this general determinant of party change, membership decline also showed to be a specific trigger for several organisational parameters. This suggests that party organisational development is also dependent on membership size. Contrary perhaps to common suspicion, party organisations have not been the ever growing

powerhouses. It is true that they did respond to party membership decline more often in a proactive way by expanding the organisation. However, average staff salaries and number of local offices, for instance, decreased in line with membership drops. Parties are in certain areas more sensitive to changes in membership size, and are also downsizing the organisation visibly, albeit only in a small fraction of instances. The point, however, is that party organisational development is also a function of membership size. This supports one of the first studies conducted on party organisations by Michels (1911).

The dependency on size is especially true for the dimension of professionalism, for which none of the general determinants of party change showed to be an appropriate explanatory factor. Instead, changes in membership size determine a party's development in professionalism. This also makes perfect sense, if party members' activities within the party are considered. Party members are usually the ones who offer free labour to the party organisation by taking on roles and responsibilities during and between elections. If party membership size decreases, it needs to compensate for the lack of free labour. Employing more staff is one of the most reasonable reactions. In turn, this is likely to decrease the average salary paid out. This development, from an organisation based on voluntary labour towards one that relies more heavily on paid labour, does not necessarily pose any constraints on how party democracy works. Irrespective of having more paid workers or not, parties can still fulfil their role of promoting citizen interests adequately. Nevertheless, if none of the general determinants are able to explain parties' levels in professionalism, it poses the question of what else accounts for the variation in this dimension.

The number of staff employed, as well as the average salary paid out are important characteristics of party organisations that have largely remained a black box for researchers. Today only a few studies exist that investigate the professional side of parties and of their campaigning (see for instance Farrell and Webb, 2000; Karlsen, 2010; Webb and Kolodny, 2006). Reasons for this deficiency in empirical knowledge can easily be found in a party's reluctance to give away its strategy. However, statements of accounts in several countries already require distinguishing between general expenses and campaigning expenses, for example. Other parties go further and include even the number of consultants hired. These are important pieces of information that can provide valuable insights into party professionalism during and between election times. This study provided another piece of the jigsaw.

(3) *Party organisations and their work are increasingly centred on elections.* The findings of chapter 7 suggested that decreasing membership size might lead to increases in the expenses at the central office. More pointedly, the results provided some evidence that higher party expenses are linked to decreasing membership size. This finding hints again at the specific value members provide to party

organisations. Usually, party members do not only provide free labour to parties but they are also amongst the most loyal voters in the electorate. As already highlighted above, declining membership size makes parties inclined to hire more personnel. This, in turn, requires quite possibly spending more money. However, this marks only the indirect relationship between membership decrease and higher expenses. Directly and more importantly, it might be that parties deem it necessary to spend more money on campaigning as a result of membership decline. If there are fewer or no members to spread the message or on whose loyal votes can be counted, parties need to ensure that the message is being communicated adequately and with the same (or better) result. Without knowing the precise figures on campaign spending, it comes down to speculating that parties spend more on campaigning and advertising, generally, in response to membership decline (but for a similar argument, see Ponce and Scarrow, 2013).

This development hints at a shift towards more election-centred democracy. It appears that parties trade the more permanent and loyal connection with citizens for short-term citizen support on election day (see also van Biezen et al., 2012). Elections mark the pillars of democracy and provide the prime mechanism to establish the representative relationship. Nevertheless, elections are still one-off events every four to five years. For the time period in-between, voluntary communication between representatives and citizens ensures a more continuous back-and-forth (see Esaiasson and Narud, 2013). Party organisations, next to the media, are important institutions to bridge any two elections on the dimensions of time and substance. They are able to stay in touch with citizens' wishes and needs throughout. If, however, parties are moving more towards election-centred work and consequently neglect the much longer time period in-between, connecting citizens with their representatives becomes a more difficult task. A continuous linkage between citizens and parties gets reduced to a short-term utterance of preferences on election day. In-between elections, citizens can communicate their preferences, for instance, in polls or other forms of non-electoral participation, which work as supplements of information gathering for representatives (Kölln and Aarts, 2013).

Nonetheless, election-centred party work can put the well-functioning of representative democracy at risk. While representative democracy is primarily built on elections as connecting citizens and representatives, its core principles of accountability and authorisation, as argued in chapter 2, also apply to the time period in-between. Party organisations that spend more money in response to decreasing membership size appear more focussed on and interested in short-term rather than long-term support. In addition, party organisations continue to exist as permanent institutions, but with few or no members they are only rockets ready to take off again for campaigning purposes. This, in turn, is not entirely in line with normative theories of representative democracy.

(4) *Levels of party institutionalisation are linked to the financial costs of democracy.* One of the findings in chapter 7 was that different levels of party income and expenses are explained by party age as a proxy for party institutionalisation. In other words, the more established parties are, the higher their income and expense. This finding suggests that long-consolidated parties are financial powerhouses, which might be motivated by maintaining and ensuring their existing power in the party system. The consequences for party competition might be that it is more difficult for a party to get established in a party system that comprises already well-established parties. Existing parties will have a substantial financial head start over newcomers, which might be difficult to overcome. From this follows the more general question of how (if at all) party finances and their distribution across the party system affect party competition (see Pinto-Duschinsky, 2002). As stated before, finances are an important strategic resource for party organisations and their size and availability can bring about a competitive advantage in the market (see Scarrow, 2007b). If the level of party institutionalisation is able to explain the financial set-up of party organisations, it poses questions for future research pertaining to the effects on the party system.

Existing research into party finances and the costs of democracy suggests that the length of democratic rule as well as the economic power of a country generally decreases the financial costs of democracies (Nassmacher, 2002, 2004). This seeming paradox between the effects of party institutionalisation and democratic consolidation on party finances can be explained by considering different levels of analysis. The current study only included parties that are part of well-established democracies. Amongst those, it was shown that the level of party institutionalisation explains individual party finances and thus the costs of democracy. In contrast, there could be other factors explaining aggregated differences between countries, such as the length of democratic rule and a country's economy. Disentangling country- and party-level factors as well as studying their interconnection in consolidated and new democracies are important themes for scholars concerned with the quality of democracy and democratization. Equally, the increase in average party finance of up to 467 per cent (see Table 8.1) calls for more research on parties' funding schemes, especially donations.¹²⁷ In addition, it also raises the more fundamental question of whether or not such a highly appreciated ideal as democracy should be increasingly more costly.

(5) *Party accountability is torn between citizens who provide votes and the state which supplies funding.* One of the contributions of this study to the literature on

¹²⁷ On a more detailed note, in chapter 6 attention was raised to the fact that party finances for the two German parties of SPD and CDU were consistently almost twice as high as those of runner-ups. Several data checks were conducted to exclude errors in the data or a 'German explanation'. Still, it is unresolved why both of these German parties are by far the most capital-intensive amongst the 47 parties analysed here.

party politics is the empirical support for a link between decreasing membership size and increasing reliance on state subsidy. Previous research has already suggested such a connection. For example, Mair et al. (2004a: 267) conclude from their comparative case studies that parties have responded to changes in the electorate with a more capital-intensive approach, mainly facilitated through ‘generous state subventions’. The results presented here are indicative of a link between membership size and income through state subsidies.

In general, researchers have been repeatedly concerned with the rise in state subsidies for parties as of late (for instance Austin and Tjernström, 2003; Katz and Mair, 1995, 2009; Pierre et al., 2000; Scarrow, 2006; van Biezen, 2004). Since it is parliament that decides on state subsidies, parties can effectively decide on a higher income themselves, albeit only collectively (Pierre et al., 2000: 2; van Biezen, 2008: 345). Arguably, such a decision signifies one of the most obvious strategic responses a party could give to membership decline. By raising their own state-provided income, parties are able to relieve themselves of a financial dependency on membership dues. Such strategic behaviour can be interpreted as the parties’ efforts to balance their loss in power in the electorate by increasing power on the other end – the state, as maintained, for instance, by the cartel party thesis (Katz and Mair, 1995, 2009). A steady and high income is crucial to finance campaigns, general advertisement, and staff. By securing their income, parliamentary parties, as a collective, not only protect their own parliamentary position but they also strengthen their state-bonds (Katz and Mair, 1995, 2009; van Biezen, 2004; van Biezen and Kopecky, 2007).

The potential advantages, disadvantages, and motivations behind the introduction of state subsidies are subjects of discussion in the literature (see for instance Nassmacher, 2003a; van Biezen, 2004). The advantages of state subsidies refer firstly to the higher costs involved in running democracy, secondly, to the need to constrain private influence on politics, and thirdly, to the preservation of fair party competition. Specifically, it is argued that democracy has become more expensive in the last decades through the mass-media and professionalization tendencies (Nassmacher, 2003a; van Biezen, 2004). Nevertheless, it is in the state’s and, arguably, also in the citizens’ interests that parties adequately fulfil their functions. State subsidies assist this effort. Financial aid could also be coming from private sources, yet this would grant capital-intensive interests potentially a disproportional influence on politics and policy outcomes. It is argued that state subsidies make the need for private donations less imminent (Nassmacher, 2003a; van Biezen, 2004). In addition, van Biezen (2004) maintains that subsidies assist in creating fair competition between parties and ensure equal opportunities. Yet, more often subsidies have been subject of criticism.

Arguments against subsidies posit that they undermine parties' independence and limit electoral competition by favouring governing and parliamentary parties (see Nassmacher, 2003a; Scarrow, 2006; Pierre et al., 2000; van Biezen, 2004). The first argument holds that state subsidies connect parties to the state to an unnecessary degree, which may not always be in line with the democratic ideal. Parties are supposed to be advocates for citizens to the state. By accepting funding from the state, the parties' loyalty to citizens is put at risk and a shift in whom parties are accountable to might occur. The second argument of limiting party competition holds that state subsidies only reinforce existing structures and power distributions but constrain the emergence of new ones. In many countries, party subsidies involve two sources. On the one hand, parties are offered free broadcasting space or other in-kind subsidies. On the other hand, there are also monetary contributions, some of which are ear-marked for specific purposes (see Koß, 2011; van Biezen, 2009). There are different schemes on how to allocate the precise level of party funding. In the UK, for instance, party funding is only granted to opposition parties while in many other countries it is made contingent on prior electoral success. The latter case implies that already successful parties receive higher subsidies than less successful parties. It is argued that such a scheme can limit party competition. However, the empirical evidence in favour of such a view is rather thin (see Scarrow, 2006; Pierre et al., 2000). Scarrow (2006: 636) concludes, for instance, that 'it is easier to find evidence that some kinds of subsidy schemes encourage party fragmentation than to find evidence that subsidies stifle competition'. For the findings of this study, it means that the potential dangers that lie in a closer party-state relationship relate mostly to whom parties are ultimately accountable: to citizens who provide votes or to the state which supplies funding.

Future research should address and investigate this issue more carefully as it can have larger implications for the development of party democracy. Assuming that it is preferable if parties are accountable to citizens rather than to the state, mechanisms could be introduced to foster this relationship further. For example, party subsidies could be made contingent on the size of a party's membership base, as already practiced in the Netherlands. This would encourage a direct linkage with citizens, independent of elections. The aforementioned potential shift towards even more election-centred party work would also be addressed with such a funding scheme. If state funding is (also) dependent on the number of party members, parties are stimulated to connect with citizens beyond election day and a stronger link of accountability might emerge as well.

In sum, the implications this study yields for parties, party democracy and political practice are multidimensional. They highlight the relevance and importance of the research question that was under scrutiny. Beyond that, they also suggest future avenues to enhance scholarly knowledge on party organisations. This study marks only one such contribution. Its findings reiterate once more that party organisations

operate in a space between citizens and the state where they are exposed to many challenges. These may originate from civil society or the state. However, party organisations and their development are not just objects in this relationship; they are also subjects that can react visibly to challenges as well. The above-mentioned multidimensional implications for research and practice are not only indicative of parties' autonomy in several areas of their work but, yet again, also of their importance as connecting institutions in the democratic process.

8.4. Conclusion

This chapter reviewed and reflected on the study's main findings. In short, the implications can be summarised in the following five points: (1) Party members can be considered a resource for party organisations. (2) Party organisational development is also driven by membership size. (3) Party organisations and their work are increasingly centred on elections. (4) Levels of party institutionalisation are linked to the financial costs of democracy. (5) Party accountability is torn between citizens who provide votes and the state which supplies funding.

These implications reflect the very nature of parties as multi-functional institutions, being formed as voluntary organisations but operating in a highly competitive, capital-intensive, and power-promising market. Parties are considered important or even necessary by citizens and the state alike. However, the chapter exemplified that party organisations find themselves in a constant struggle to straddle citizen-based participatory ideals of democracy and elite-based representative principles of democracy. Party organisations are an important component of both models of democracy, as their work reconciles them in a unified framework of party democracy. The development of party organisations is thus also intrinsically linked to the development of party democracy.

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Samenvatting (Nederlands)

Hoe reageren politieke partijen op hun dalende ledenaantallen? In de afgelopen decennia hebben politieke partijen in West-Europa systematisch leden verloren. Dit verlies van partijpolitiek “grondpersoneel” kan worden geïnterpreteerd als een uiting van aanhoudende politieke deceptie of – ten minste – groeiende apathie tegen politieke partijen. Een dergelijke systematische ontwikkeling levert voor partijen zowel een financiële als een organisatorische uitdaging op. Deze studie onderzoekt of en hoe partijen deze uitdaging aangaan.

Partijen kunnen op verschillende wijzen aan deze uitdaging gehoor geven. Aanpassingen van de organisatie van de partij zijn typisch het eerste aangrijpingspunt. Pas in een later stadium, wanneer de toestand verder verergert, – zullen ook wijzigingen in het politieke programma in aanmerking komen als reactie op deze aanhoudende uitdaging. Bovendien kunnen partijen weliswaar verkiezingen winnen of verliezen, maar blijft het extraparlamenteaire deel van de partij, d.w.z. de partijorganisatie, doorgaans bestaan ongeacht het aantal behaalde zetels. Na een verkiezing zal de partijorganisatie immers onmiddellijk beginnen met de voorbereiding van de volgende verkiezing. Voor de voortdurende dialoog tussen burgers en de staat is de organisatorische component van de partij onlosmakelijk verbonden met de democratie en het democratische proces. Mede hierdoor vormt dit specifieke element van een partij een belangrijk object van politicologisch onderzoek.

De normatieve waarde van politieke partijen

Wanneer burgers partijen niet langer aanvaarden als bemiddelaars en vertegenwoordigers van publieke belangen is het bestaan van partijen niet langer te rechtvaardigen. Een beoordeling van de maatschappelijke waarde van politieke partijen voor de representatieve democratie dient derhalve vooraf te gaan aan een empirische studie van de partijreacties. Kunnen we behalve op empirische, ook op normatieve gronden de aanwezigheid en de rol van partijen in de representatieve democratie verdedigen? Hiervoor zet deze studie het idee van partijdemocratie af tegen haar grootste concurrent, de pluralistische democratie met vrije vertegenwoordiging in plaats van partijvertegenwoordiging. Deze vergelijking toont aan dat partijen een efficiënter politiek proces mogelijk maken en een lange toekomstgerichte visie voor een land kunnen nastreven. Partijen verhogen de voorspelbaarheid en transparantie van politieke resultaten in vergelijking met vrije vertegenwoordiging. Ondanks aanhoudende kritiek zijn partijorganisaties belangrijk in de politieke besluitvorming en zijn ze moeilijk te vervangen in de representatieve.

Ledenverlies in West-Europa als onderdeel van de levenscyclus van partijen

Bestaande studies naar partijlidmaatschap en zijn ontwikkeling door de tijd gebruiken doorgaans geaggregeerde gegevens op het nationale niveau en/of slechts enkele tijdstippen. Deze methodologische beperkingen zijn staan een nauwgezet inzicht in de exacte grootte en omvang van de daling van de partijlidmaatschappen in de weg. Als alternatief gebruikt deze studie de jaarlijkse gegevens van individuele partijen. De studie analyseert op jaarbasis het lidmaatschap van 47 partijen in zes West-Europese landen (Denemarken, Duitsland, Groot-Brittannië, Nederland, Noorwegen en Zweden) gedurende de periode 1960-2010, en laat zien dat een daling in ledenaantallen niet bij alle partijen kan worden waargenomen. Dalende ledenaantallen komen vooral voor bij partijen die werden opgericht voor 1945 en voor groene partijen. Meer algemeen lijkt de dalende trend in partijlidmaatschap een onderdeel te vormen van de levenscyclus van een partij: Hoe beter partijen gevestigd zijn in een politiek systeem, hoe meer leden ze verliezen. Niettemin bevestigt deze studie ook eerdere bevindingen die het algemene verschijnsel van de dalende trend in partijlidmaatschap behandelen. Ongeveer 75 percent van de bestudeerde partijen ondervindt een aanzienlijk verlies in het ledenaantal tussen 1960 en 2010.

De ontwikkeling van partijorganisaties afhankelijk van de mate van partijinstitutionalisering

Tegen de achtergrond van partijorganisatorische indicatoren zoals inkomen, uitgaven, salarissen, het aantal lokale kantoren, etc. van de partijen in bovengenoemde West-Europese landen valt het allereerst op dat deze partijen toenemen in omvang en kapitaalintensiever worden tot de jaren '80. Nadien laten slechts enkele partijorganisaties nog een uitbreiding zien. Bovendien laat de meerderheid van de partijorganisatorische indicatoren een geleidelijke maar systematische daling zien. Dit wordt nadrukkelijk geïllustreerd door de dalende trend in het absolute aantal lokale partijkantoren tijdens de gehele periode die hier wordt beschouwd. Ten tweede bevestigt een tijdreeksanalyse dat de mate van partijinstitutionalisering de meest invloedrijke factor is die mede de verandering van de partijorganisatie bepaalt. Er zijn systematische verschillen in de structuur van partijorganisaties als gevolg van de specifieke levensfase waarin partijen zich bevinden. Met name geldt dat hoe ouder en meer gevestigd partijen zijn, des te groter en financieel sterker de respectievelijke partijorganisaties zijn.

Partijreacties op ledenverlies

Een dalende trend in een zeer bepalende en waardevolle hulpbron van politieke partijen – het aantal partijleden – vormt een belangrijke uitdaging voor de

partijorganisatie. Hoe reageren partijorganisaties op deze voortdurende uitdaging? Hoe veranderen partijorganisaties als gevolg van de dalende trend in ledenaantallen?

De empirische analyse van negen indicatoren (inkomen, uitgaven, salarissen, aantal van lokale kantoren, aantal van werknemers, inkomen structuur) van 47 partijorganisaties in zes West-Europese landen laat zien dat partijen daadwerkelijk reageren op de dalende trend in ledenaantallen. Om precies te zijn, structureel ledenverlies heeft een impact op vijf van de negen organisatorische kenmerken van een partijorganisatie. Het merendeel van de indicatoren doet vermoeden dat partijorganisaties een offensieve in plaats van defensieve reactie laten zien op de dalende trend in ledenaantallen. De resultaten van deze studie laten met name zien dat partijen reageren op dalende ledenaantallen met een toenemend aantal personeelsleden, hogere uitgaven en een toenemende afhankelijkheid van overheidsfinanciering. Tegelijkertijd daalt het gemiddelde salaris van personeelsleden en worden minder lokale kantoren onderhouden.

In het algemeen dragen de resultaten van deze studie bij tot een beschrijving van de gedeeltelijke reactie van een partijorganisatie op het verlies van leden. Net als ondernemingen tonen partijorganisaties zichtbare veranderingen als antwoord op een gestage evolutie van specifieke organisatorische componenten – hier het dalende ledenaantal – verduidelijkt aan de hand van verschillende indicatoren. Zo bevestigen de resultaten van deze studie dat theorieën over het gedrag en de beheersing van organisaties ook van toepassen zijn op de evolutie van partijorganisaties. Deze studie bevestigt ook dat een evolutie in het aantal leden van een partij een reden kan zijn voor partijen om zich organisatorisch te hervormen. Deze laatste observatie kan worden gezien als een gedeeltelijke bevestiging van de klassieke studie van Robert Michels (1911) en zijn meer dan 100 jaar oude theorie die een partijorganisatorische reactie beschouwt als een oorzakelijk gevolg van de toename van het ledenaantal van een partij.

Partijleden, partijelites en de functie van partijen in democratische stelsels

De implicaties van deze bevindingen kunnen in de volgende vijf punten worden samengevat. (1) Partijleden kunnen als een bron worden beschouwd voor de ontwikkeling van partijorganisaties. (2) De ontwikkeling van de partijorganisatie wordt mede bepaald door het aantal leden. (3) Partijorganisaties en het werk dat ze verrichten zijn meer en meer gericht op de verkiezingsdag, en minder op de periode tussen verkiezingen. (4) De mate van partijinstitutionalisering is verbonden met de financiële status van een partij. (5) De verantwoordingsplicht van een partij is tweeledig. Enerzijds dienen partijen verantwoording af te leggen aan de burgers die uiteindelijk partijen van stemmen voorzien. Anderzijds dienen partijen

verantwoording af te leggen aan de staat aangezien deze de financiering van partijen verzekert.

Partijen zijn multifunctionele organisaties die allereerst bestaan uit een combinatie van vrijwilligers en professionals, maar die ook dienen te overleven in een zeer competitieve, kapitaalintensieve en maakt veelbelovende politieke markt. Zowel burgers als de overheid vinden partijen belangrijk of zelfs noodzakelijk. De belangrijkste uitdaging voor partijen is waarschijnlijk niet de dalende trend van het partijlidmaatschap per se maar wel de voortdurende spanning die partijen ervaren. Partijen belichamen zowel de burger – gebaseerd op het participatieve ideaalbeeld van een democratie – als de elite – gebaseerd op het representatieve ideaalbeeld van een democratie. Partijorganisaties vormen een belangrijk onderdeel van beide democratische modellen omdat het werk dat partijen verrichten beide democratische modellen verenigt. De ontwikkeling van partijorganisaties is dus onlosmakelijk verbonden met de ontwikkeling van de partijdemocratie.

Translation by Steven Van Hauwaert

Zusammenfassung (Deutsch)

Wie reagieren politische Parteien auf den Mitgliederschwund? In den letzten Jahrzehnten haben politische Parteien in ganz Westeuropa fast stetig Mitglieder verloren. Dieser Verlust an parteipolitischem ‚Bodenpersonal‘ in westeuropäischen Demokratien kann als Ausdruck anhaltender Bürgerenttäuschung oder zumindest Desinteresses gegenüber Parteien gewertet werden. Diese anhaltende Entwicklung stellt Parteien vor finanzielle und organisatorische Herausforderungen. Diese Arbeit untersucht, ob und wie Parteien mit dieser Aufgabe umgehen.

Parteien können wählen mit welchem Bereich der Partei sie reagieren wollen. Dabei stellt die Parteiorganisation denjenigen Bereich dar, durch den Parteien als erstes auf jegliche Herausforderung reagieren. Erst zu einem späteren Zeitpunkt und mit steigender Intensität der Herausforderung wird die Partei auch programmatischen Änderungen in Betracht ziehen. Zudem mögen Parteien Wahlen gewinnen oder verlieren, aber der außerparlamentarische Teil einer Partei, die Parteiorganisation, bleibt in der Regel bestehen, unabhängig von der Sitzverteilung. Nach dem Wahltag beginnen Parteiorganisationen sofort die Vorbereitung für die folgende Wahl. Aufgrund dieser permanenten Verbindungen, die die Parteiorganisation zu Bürgern und dem Staat unterhält, ist sie untrennbar mit der Demokratie und den demokratischen Prozess verknüpft und deshalb als Gegenstand politikwissenschaftlicher Forschung wichtig.

Normative Bedeutung von politischen Parteien

Wenn Bürger Parteien nicht mehr im gleichen Maße als Vermittler und Repräsentant von Interessen annehmen, ist die Existenz von Parteien vermutlich gar nicht mehr gerechtfertigt. Eine Beurteilung des Wertes politischer Parteien für die repräsentative Demokratie steht der empirischen Untersuchung von Parteireaktionen voran. Können wir nicht nur empirisch, sondern auch normativ, Parteien und ihre Rolle in der repräsentativen Demokratie verteidigen? Dafür wird die Idee der Parteiendemokratie kontrastiert mit ihrem stärksten Konkurrenten, der pluralistischen Demokratie mit freien Repräsentanten an Stelle von Parteien. Der Vergleich zeigt, dass Parteien einen effizienteren politischen Prozess ermöglichen und ein langfristiges Zukunftsprogramm für ein Land verfolgen können. Sie erhöhen die Berechenbarkeit und Transparenz politischer Ergebnisse im Vergleich zu freien Repräsentanten. Trotz anhaltender Kritik sind Parteiorganisationen wichtig im politischen Willensprozess und nur schwer ersetzbar.

Mitgliederschwund in Westeuropa als Teil des Lebenszyklus von Parteien

Vorhandene Studien zur Parteimitgliedschaft und ihrer zeitlichen Entwicklung verwenden meist aggregierten Zahlen auf Länderebene und/oder nur wenige Zeitpunkte für eine Bewertung. Diese methodologischen Entscheidungen sind ungeeignet für detaillierte Einblicke in die genaue Größe und den Umfang des Rückgangs von Parteimitgliedschaften. Als Alternative wird in dieser Arbeit die Verwendung von jährlich erhobenen Daten für einzelne politische Parteien vorgeschlagen. Sie analysiert jährliche Mitgliederzahlen von 47 Parteien in sechs westeuropäischen Staaten (Dänemark, Deutschland, Großbritannien, Niederlande, Norwegen, Schweden) im Zeitraum von 1960 bis 2010 und zeigt, dass ein Rückgang nicht bei allen Parteien beobachtbar ist. Vielmehr zeigen sich rückläufige Zahlen vor allem für Parteien, die vor 1945 gegründet wurden und weniger für grüne Parteien. Generell erscheinen sinkende Parteimitgliederzahlen Teil des Lebenszyklus einer Partei zu sein: je konsolidierter Parteien im System sind, desto weniger Mitglieder weisen sie auf. Jedoch bestätigen die Ergebnisse auch bisherige Studien hinsichtlich des generellen Phänomens sinkender Parteimitgliedschaften. Rund 75 Prozent der analysierten Parteien weisen einen wesentlichen Verlust von Mitgliedern zwischen 1960 und 2010 auf.

Entwicklung von Parteiorganisationen in Abhängigkeit vom Grad der Parteiinstitutionalisierung

Betrachtet man die Parteiorganisationsdaten wie Einkommen, Ausgaben, Gehälter, Zahl der Kreisbüros usw. der obengenannten Parteien im Zeitverlauf fällt erstens auf, dass diese Parteien durchschnittlich bis in die 1980er Jahre an Größe zugenommen haben und auch kapitalintensiver geworden sind. Danach verzeichnen Parteiorganisationen eine Expansion nur selten; sie verkleinern sich jedoch etwas in der Mehrzahl der Indikatoren. Darüber hinaus ist die Präsenz in Form von lokalen Parteibüros allgemein rückläufig über den gesamten Zeitraum der Studie. Zweitens zeigen die Ergebnisse der Zeitreihenanalyse, dass der Grad der Parteiinstitutionalisierung den stärksten Einflussfaktor auf den Wandel von Parteiorganisationen darstellt. Es liegen systematische Unterschiede in der Struktur von Parteiorganisationen vor in Abhängigkeit von Lebenszyklusphase. Je älter oder stärker etabliert Parteien sind, desto größer und finanzstärker sind ihre Organisationen.

Progressives Reaktionsverhalten auf den Mitgliederschwund

Ein Rückgang in einer ganz bestimmenden und wertvollen Ressource wie Mitgliedern kann die Parteiorganisation vor große Probleme stellen. Wie können Parteiorganisationen auf diese Herausforderung reagieren? Wie verändern sich Parteiorganisationen angesichts des Mitgliederschwunds?

Die empirische Analyse von Daten in 47 Parteiorganisationen sechs westeuropäischer Länder zeigt, dass Parteien tatsächlich im Durchschnitt erkennbar auf einen Mitgliederschwund reagieren. Konkret hat ein Mitgliederschwund Auswirkungen auf fünf von neun Organisationsmerkmalen der Parteiorganisation. Die meisten deuten eher auf ein progressives und kein konservatives Reaktionsverhalten seitens der Parteiorganisation hin. Das bedeutet, dass Parteien auf sinkende Mitgliederzahlen mit einer höheren Anzahl Beschäftigten, höheren Ausgaben und einer stärkeren staatlichen Finanzierung reagieren. Gleichzeitig sinkt der durchschnittliche Gehalt des angestellten Personals und weniger Kreisbüros werden unterhalten.

Insgesamt zeichnen die Ergebnisse ein Bild, das auf eine teilweise Reaktion der Parteiorganisationen auf den Mitgliederschwund hindeutet. Ähnlich wie Unternehmen zeigen Parteiorganisationen sichtbare Veränderungen anhand mehrerer Indikatoren, die auf eine veränderte Zahl von einer bestimmten Organisationsressource, hier Parteimitgliedern, zurückzuführen sein könnten. Damit unterstützen die Ergebnisse die Annahme, dass Organisations- und Management-Theorien auch auf Parteiorganisationen anwendbar sind. Sie bedeuten auch, dass eine Veränderung der Mitgliederzahl ein Auslöser für Parteien sein kann, sich organisatorisch zu wandeln. Dieser Befund kann auch als teilweise Bestätigung von Robert Michels (1911) und seiner mehr als 100 Jahre alten Theorie der parteiorganisatorischen Reaktion auf Mitgliederzuwachs angesehen werden.

Bedeutsame Mitglieder, Betonung des Wahltags und gespaltene Parteien

Die Implikationen dieser Ergebnisse können unter den folgenden fünf Punkten zusammengefasst: (1) Parteimitglieder können als eine Ressource für Parteiorganisationen betrachtet werden. (2) Die Entwicklung von Parteiorganisationen wird auch durch die Mitgliederzahl bestimmt. (3) Parteiorganisationen und ihre Arbeit konzentrieren sich mehr und mehr auf den Wahltag und weniger auf die Zeitspanne zwischen Wahlen. (4) Der Grad der Parteiinstitutionalisierung ist mit dem finanziellen Status von Parteien verbunden. (5) Die parteiliche Rechenschaftspflicht ist gespalten: einerseits muss sie gegenüber Bürgern erfolgen, die Wählerstimmen liefern, andererseits hat sie gegenüber dem Staat zu erfolgen, da dieser zunehmend die Finanzierung von Parteien sicherstellt.

Parteien sind multifunktionale Organisationen, die zunächst als Verbund von Freiwilligen auftreten und sich aber dann in einem hart umkämpften, finanzintensiven, und machtversprechenden politischen Markt zurechtfinden müssen. Parteien werden als wichtig oder sogar notwendig von Bürger und Staat gleichermaßen betrachtet. Die größte Herausforderung für Parteien ist vermutlich

nicht die Abnahme an Parteimitgliedschaften, sondern das permanente Spannungsverhältnis, in dem sich Parteien befinden. Sie verkörpern sowohl das bürgerbasierte partizipatorische Ideal der Demokratie, als auch das elitenbasierten repräsentativen Modell der Demokratie. Parteiorganisationen sind ein wichtiger Bestandteil beider Demokratiemodelle, da ihre Arbeit beide Modelle in der Parteiendemokratie vereint. Die Entwicklung von Parteiorganisationen ist damit auch untrennbar mit der Entwicklung der Parteiendemokratie verknüpft.