



## COLLECTIVE MEMBERS IN WEST EUROPEAN POLITICAL PARTIES

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## LOS MIEMBROS COLECTIVOS EN LOS PARTIDOS POLÍTICOS DE EUROPA OCCIDENTAL

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### ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the collective members of political parties. Collective members can be defined as organizations having both full self-government rights and entitlements to decision-making processes in the political parties in which they are embedded. This article proposes a basic descriptive typology of collective members that takes into consideration their sociopolitical nature (party political or functional) and their pattern of articulation within the party in which they are embedded (whether they help to articulate the whole party structure or not). It also illustrates these subtypes by examining European organizations that meet (or are close to meeting) the main defining characteristics of collective members. This examination is based on the analysis of all parties that attained at least 4% of the votes in the last national parliamentary elections in 10 European countries. The article concludes with an analysis of the determinants and prospects of this type of party structure.

### KEYWORDS

Collateral Organizations; Party Confederations-Western Europe; Political parties.

### RESUMEN

Este artículo estudia los miembros colectivos de los partidos políticos. Los miembros colectivos pueden ser definidos como organizaciones que poseen a la vez derechos de autogobierno plenos y derecho a participar en los procesos de toma de decisiones en el partido político en el que están integrados. El artículo propone una tipología descriptiva de los miembros colectivos que tiene en cuenta su naturaleza sociopolítica (partidista o funcional) y su patrón de articulación dentro del partido en el que están integrados (si ayudan o no a articular el conjunto de la estructura partidaria). Asimismo, el artículo ilustra estos subtipos a partir del examen de varias organizaciones políticas europeas que cumplen (o se acercan a cumplir) las características definitorias de los miembros colectivos. Este análisis se basa en el examen de todas las organizaciones políticas que alcanzaron más de un 4% de los votos en las últimas elecciones parlamentarias de 10 países europeos. El artículo concluye con un análisis de los determinantes y perspectivas de este tipo de organización.

### PALABRAS CLAVE

Confederaciones de partidos; Europa occidental; Partidos políticos; Organizaciones colaterales.

## INTRODUCTION

Party membership is one of the most important elements of political parties, and its study is critical to understand the nature, dynamics, policy choices and even electoral performance of political organizations (Scarrow 1996). When we think of party members we have in mind mostly single individuals, but as Duverger already saw (1958:22), there are instances in which the links between political parties and militants are indirect. In such cases, individuals are integrated into parties through the channels of collateral, intermediate social or political organizations (Poguntke 2002).

These organizations are sometimes subjected to the statutory jurisdiction of the party (as is usually the case of youth organizations or regional units of parties), even if they have juridical personality. In other cases, however, these organizations are not subjected to the statutory jurisdiction of the party: they enjoy full self-government rights. When these organizations also have the right to participate in the decision-making processes of the political party we can consider them as collective members of the party. On most occasions, intermediate political organizations enjoying both full self-government and representation rights in the party have come into being exogenously, and only afterwards have been integrated into the overall party structure, somewhat resembling the coming-together historical path of some federations and confederations (Stepan 2001:315 ff.; Riker 1964). It is no accident in fact that Duverger (1958:23) established a clear parallelism between indirect parties and confederate states. Certainly, as Duverger himself remarked apropos of the Austrian ÖVP (1958:29-30), endogenously created organizations can also achieve very high levels of political autonomy and give rise to models of indirect party membership. In such cases, however, the central bodies of the encompassing political party usually keep the ultimate authority on intermediate political organizations, which leads to a hierarchical balance of power between both organizational levels. It is for this reason that in this article we restrict the label of collective members to 1) fully self-governing organizations not subjected to the party statutory jurisdiction that 2) have representative rights in the decision-making processes of the overall political party.

These two characteristics, self-rule and participation in shared-rule, resemble the characteristics of what Hooghe and Marks (2003) have labeled as the type I of multilevel governance and of federalism in particular (Elazar 1991; Hooghe, Marks and Schakel 2010). For this reason, their emergence and persistence can be approached in light of the trade-offs posed by different multilevel governance models (in particular regarding their levels of decentralization and the size of governance units) (Hooghe and Marks 2016). However, as will be shown below, collective members do not necessarily have a terri-

torial character. Furthermore, the fact that collective members belong to organizations that compete in the electoral arena in order to reach power, and affect policies, sets specific costs and constraints to the emergence and persistence of this type of organizational structure.

The concept of “collective member” of a party can be considered from a juridical or a political viewpoint. The former meaning can be made precise in every legal system; if thus intended, the latter may have blurred contours, and depends not only on formal rules, but also on informal institutions, behavioral regularities, expectations and normative beliefs. Most typically, collective members are organizations having their own legal personality and resources. As for the relationships of the affiliates of collective members to the party, there are three main possibilities. In the first case, simultaneous membership is excluded. This is the case when a regional party has an agreement with a national party by virtue of which the latter accepts a “hands off” clause: the national party refrains from setting up its organization (and putting forward candidates for elections) in the area covered by the regional party. Automatic transfer of membership in the event of a change in residence may then be part of the agreement. In the second case, simultaneous membership is accepted but simultaneous members are a minority in the collective member. This case typically happens when the two bonds involved are of a different nature (e.g., professional and political). In the third case, simultaneous membership is accepted and prevailing (or even automatic). Here the obvious question is where the real loyalty lies (e.g., associated parties to the French UMP), especially in case of conflict.

The existence of collective members is an important organizational feature of political parties, and as other organizational features, it can affect policy choices and electoral outcomes (Scarrow 1996:11-13). In particular, the presence of collective members has important implications for the types of relationships parties establish with their political activists and voters. Political parties can devise unified and homogeneous party structures that allow them to establish direct and uniform links to voters and political activists, or they can try to accommodate different sources of diversity (functional, ideological, cultural or territorial) by incorporating differentiated and relatively autonomous political structures. Studies on political parties have addressed these alternatives by distinguishing between “direct” and “indirect” parties (Duverger 1958:22), and by referring to different levels of party systemness (Panebianco 1988) and centralization (Duverger 1958); two concepts that map the degree of autonomy of party subunits or subgroups and the power relationships between the party leadership and such party subunits. In turn, systemness and centralization exert a critical influence on the models

and levels of coordination (vertical as well as horizontal) that prevail within party structures (Deschouwer 2006). Systemness and vertical integration also have implications for the relationships between parties, activists and voters (Poguntke 2002), and can be associated to the degree of autonomy parties enjoy with regard to their environment and to their levels of institutionalization (Panebianco 1988). In some cases, party subunits assume the form of corporate members in the political party, thus weakening the direct links between the overall party and individual citizens (Poguntke 2002). When these components or subunits enjoy full political autonomy and specific entitlements to decision-making processes within the overall party, they can be characterized as collective members of the party.

The presence of collective members tends to reduce internal uniformity and negatively affects the control exercised by party leaders on different fields of party life (strategic, programmatic, ideological, electoral, etc.). In so doing, collective members increase the costs of vertical and horizontal coordination (Deschouwer 2006), reduce party systemness, and weaken vertical integration. As in the case of other highly decentralized political structures, collective members can make it more difficult for political parties to adapt to new demands and compete successfully in the electoral arena, as has been shown by Kitschelt's analysis on the relationships among social changes, internal party politics, and the electoral performance of social democratic parties (Kitschelt 1994:207-253). Consequently, as in other multilevel structures, the existence of highly autonomous subunits within political parties can impose significant costs (electoral in this case) to both other social groups and the political organizations in which they are embedded (Hooghe and Marks 2016). On the other hand, collective members provide voters and activists with specific organizational and linkage environments (Poguntke 2002) adjusted to formal institutions (such as multilevel governance and federalism) and diverse sociopolitical contexts and landscapes (Johnston 1990; Deschouwer 2006). These organizational linkages can facilitate two-way communication between party elites and voters and help parties to improve their electoral results among specific social groups (Poguntke 2002:45-46 and 57-58) and their access to different types of resources. They can thus favor decentralized responsiveness and enhance the flow of soft information (Hooghe and Marks 2016). The organizational structures of political parties must therefore balance the goals of internal coordination, electoral success, and access to resources. While the first goal can be enhanced by high levels of vertical integration and systemness, the last two may demand, in certain contexts, the development or persistence of differentiated and autonomous political structures. In turn, in the case of fully self-governing polit-

ical organizations, their integration into political parties will also depend on the benefits in terms of the resources and policy-making impact that they can extract from this type of membership. Viewed from this perspective, the development and persistence of strong links between specific organizations (including here collective members) and political parties will be decisively affected by the mutual benefits rendered by this type of association (Christiansen 2012). Among the most important characteristics affecting the extent of these benefits will be socioeconomic factors, territorial characteristics, interparty competition, and multilevel institutional frameworks (Deschouwer 2006; Christiansen 2012).

In the next section of this article we focus on two concepts that are critical to understand the nature of collective members: membership and articulation. Whereas the former refers to the specific mode of integration of the collective member in the political party in which it is embedded, the latter refers to the position and role of this type of organization in the overall party structure. In the third section we develop a classification of collective members based on their nature (party political or functional) and on the role that they play in the articulation of the overall political party in which they are integrated. In this respect, this article follows the strategy, quite classical in the study of political parties, of developing typologies aimed at mapping differences and similarities among political organizations (Scarrow 1996:28-29; Wolinetz 2002:138). In this section we also examine the degree to which several contemporary Western European political parties meet the criteria defined by our analysis. The cases we discuss here are based on the examination of all parties that attained at least 4% of the vote in the last general elections in Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden. Finally, in our last section we analyze the determinants of this type of political structure, and explore its future prospects by examining some instances of quite recent party formation in which at least some favorable characteristics to this organizational structure were present.

## MEMBERSHIP AND ARTICULATION

As defined above, a collective member of a political party is an organization enjoying full political autonomy and having entitlements to participate in the decision-making processes of the political party. Collective members can be of a different socio-political nature, depending on the characteristics of the groups they represent and target. Collective members can be party organizations themselves representing distinctive ideological traditions or specific territorial constituencies. And they can also target specific socio-demographic groups, often of a socioeconomic and functional nature.

Both the overall political party and the collective member are political actors with an autonomous juridical status. The participation of the collective member in the political party can be carried out by its leadership or directly by the affiliates of the collective member (in the latter case, a weighting may be given to the vote of the members of the collective member if the personal members of the party also have the right to vote). When the participation of an organized group in the power of a political party is mainly carried out directly by the affiliates of the group, the question arises as to whether the group as such is a collective member, or rather the members of the group are directly members of the party. This kind of question was already posed by Duverger when he described indirect parties as based on the union of component social groups (Duverger 1958:23). In fact, the answer to the question of whether either the organized group or its members are members of the party depends on the extent to which the organized group keeps its decisional structure when it participates in party decisions. The *decisional structure* of the group comprises the organization of the group, but also its shared identity and its formal and informal rules. This decisional structure of the collective member of a political party is in principle affected by the fact that it belongs to an overarching political organization. In addition, it is through its decisional structure that the collective member (and thus its individual members if this is the case) participate in the decisions of the party.

What determines the framework for the relations among the collective members and the party and the rights of the collective members in the party decision making processes? In the first place, this framework is determined by the national legislation, the party constitution, and the contracts and agreements established between collective members and the parties in which they are embedded. But in addition to formal rules and pacts, there will always be bargaining and handling among political actors. Overall, there will tend to be a considerable inertia to alter party institutions and the so established balance of power. In any event, the agreement or contract between the collective member and the political party can be discontinued (whether this can be a unilateral decision depends on party rules and national laws), and then the collective member finishes being so. If an organization joins the party as a collective member, then all members of the organization receive rights in the party. These rights in the party come automatically with membership in the organization. The party has no control over this sort of "indirect membership." Certainly, an organization can be expelled from the party if its character becomes unacceptable to the party. A different question, as mentioned above, is whether members of the collective member can also be members of the party.

There are important variations in the types of relationships of collective members with the political parties in which they are embedded. A first critical aspect of these relationships concerns the formal pattern of integration of the collective member into the political party. When there is a contract between an organized group and a political party, it is critical whether this contract makes the group, as such, a member of the party, which entails sharing the ultimate decision power in the party. This is especially the case for constitutional (or statutory) decisions. Sometimes the contract between the collective member and the party is a sort of adhesion contract, and the representative rights of the collective member are to be determined by the organs of the party (in which certainly the collective member may have a decisive weight); such is the case of the membership of the trade unions in the British Labour Party. At the opposite extreme, the rules determining the power relations between the collective member and the party can be set in the clauses of a pact between equals; a pact whose terms are bound to continue except for mutual agreement. In such a case, the party has no possibility to alter these rules on its own accord, and they tend to be rigid. There is no organ in the party able to adapt the rules of the game to changing circumstances. If the maintenance of the relation between collective member and party is politically "unavoidable", a path-dependent and highly inertial political logic prevails (Pierson 2004), and the circumstances that led to the original constitutional pact among two organizations, perhaps exceptional or contingent, continue to exert a strong influence on the future, as in the classical pattern of historical causation. However, notwithstanding the importance of former critical junctures and historical trajectories, both the party and the collective member will necessarily keep re-examining the benefits and costs that they derive from their existing agreements.<sup>1</sup>

A second crucial characteristic concerns the pattern of articulation of collective members within the overall party structure. The presence of intermediate groups is characteristic of the structure of political parties and allows political organizations to come closer to individual members. However, whereas in some cases the party creates specific and specialized organizations (for the young, for women, for the old...),<sup>2</sup> in others, the party integrates intermediate organizations in an encompassing political framework that starts from a partition (in the sense that each individual belongs to one and only one of the constituent units) of the population of the country and covers the whole organization. The term "articulation" refers here to this second model.

The most characteristic and typical articulation of political parties is territorial articulation. In this type of articulation, the intermediate groups correspond to geographical areas. Normally there are several

levels of articulation: local, regional, etc. (often one of these levels is decisive and the corresponding divisions even have juridical personality). The other main, potential source of articulation has a functional character and is based on the professional activity of individual members. By virtue of this structure, the party can emphasize its multiclass character and make visible a sort of corporatist model of interest articulation based on functional representation. This pattern is related to Duverger's (1958) social decentralization model (Duverger 1958:74-75).

It is also possible that the party refrains from integrating in its organization one of the sections of the partition of the population (e.g., a region in a territorial partition), perhaps forced by circumstances. If this section is taken up by some other party, there can be an agreement between this (small) party and the large party active in the other sections. This agreement may be of a coalitional kind or rather involve the small party becoming a collective member of the large party: in both cases the small party *completes the articulation* of the large one. The latter more intimate sort of agreement is more likely if the partition follows a territorial pattern than if it follows a professional one.

Finally, it is necessary to distinguish between the autonomy of the decision-making process of a collective member of a party and the scope of the decisions reserved to the collective member. The former is a consequence of the collective member being self-governing. The latter concerns the sphere where the decisions are applied, that is, the *exclusive competence* of the collective member. Let us consider the case of the collective member being a regional party completing the articulation of a national party in a particular region. If the region has substantial political autonomy within the state, it could be agreed (in practice) that all questions concerning regional politics are to be reserved to the regional party. Alternatively, some key decisions of regional politics affecting national politics (e.g., choices on coalition partners) could be left to the national party (where the regional party has a share of power) or to a negotiation between the regional and national party. Although the scope of exclusive competence of the regional party does not impinge on its character as collective member, it is likely that in practice it will have a bearing on the share of power of the regional party in the national party. Of course, the more or less federal structure of the state is an important consideration here.

## A TYPOLOGY

In the previous section we addressed some key characteristics and sources of variation among collective members in political parties. In this section we take into consideration two main variables in order to develop a conceptual and empirical map of collective members. We have focused here on the role of these types of organizations in the articulation of the over-

all political party and on the socio-political nature of such organizations. This map can serve as the basis of future comparative works on the determinants, implications, and dynamics of different types of party organizations and collective membership. In this section we present also those instances that fit the criteria we defined above. These cases have been identified after examining all the parties that attained at least 4% of the votes in the most recent national legislative elections in the following West European countries: Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, the Great Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden.

We have also considered some cases that come close to these subtypes, but which fail to meet the two criteria that characterize collective members in our classification. Admittedly, some of the cases we address present blurred contours. For them, membership in the subtypes we have developed is somewhat fuzzy, and we have had to decide whether they are "more in than out" in the qualitative sets that we present here. Table 1 shows the main types of collective members on the basis of this typology. It takes into consideration the two variables which we referred to above: their socio-political nature (vertical dimension) and whether they have an articulating character (horizontal dimension).

**Table 1.** A typology of collective members and some instances of each subtype in Western European politics (in parentheses the political party to which collective members belong)

	Articulating	Non-articulating
Political Parties	PSC (PSOE) EUiA (IU) CDA-PNA (CDC)	PCD (UMP) PR (UMP)* PRL/MCC/PFF (MR)
Functional organizations		Trade Unions (British Labour Party)

\* Until 2011. After 2012 the *Parti Radical* became a collective member of the UDI.

### Articulating linkage between political parties

A clear instance of a collective member of a political nature is that of the party of the Catalan socialists (PSC) within the Spanish socialist party (PSOE). In this case, the basis of the articulating linkage between the collective member and the overall party is territorial. Firstly, the PSC is not a sub-organization of the PSOE. Apart from some (substantial) mutually agreed connections, the PSC is a fully sovereign political party. In particular, the establishment and maintenance of the agreement between the PSC and the PSOE is a decision of both parties. The PSC could break the "contract" without altering its structure. The fact that this would almost certainly lead to a split in the PSC lies in the sphere of the political consequences of political decisions.

Secondly, the entitlement to power of the PSC in the PSOE qualifies the former as a collective member

of the latter. The relation between the PSC and the PSOE is governed by the "Protocol" (1978); a document agreed upon on the occasion of the merger of the Catalan branch of the PSOE and two Catalan socialist parties of the time (PSC-C and PSC-R) to create the PSC-PSOE.<sup>3</sup> In this agreement, the direct participation of the members of the PSC in the Federal Congress through delegates elected in the same way as those of the PSOE was established (thereby through the local branches, and in practice the decisional structure of the PSC is kept), as well as a representation of the PSC (proportional to the number of its members) in the Federal Committee and a participation in the Executive Commission. After the Federal Congress elects the General Secretary, he or she proposes to the Congress the members of the new Executive Commission. According to the *Protocol*, the representatives of the PSC in the Executive Commission will be "proposed or endorsed where appropriate" by the PSC delegates in the Congress. Needless to say, this splendidly ambiguous wording has usually led to last minute bargaining between the recently elected General Secretary and the leaders of the Catalan delegates in the Congress. Roller and van Houten (2003) speak of "the PSC PSOE's dual nature as a regional party and an affiliate of a national party."

In the words of Verge and Barberá (2009), "the relation between the PSOE and the PSC has been characterized by a considerable ambiguity" (our translation). Initially, the PSOE and the PSC formed separated parliamentary groups in the lower house of the Spanish parliament, although "under common discipline of speech, action, and vote," with decisions being made after deliberation in common assembly and joint meeting of both permanent committees. Eventually a common parliamentary group was constituted, in whose executive organs the presence of PSC parliamentarians has always been above their proportion in the whole group; the vote discipline has been very strict (Colomé 2003). As in the Spanish Constitution, the President of the Government is elected by the lower house of Parliament, and due to the ancillary role of the upper chamber in the legislative procedure, the common action of the PSOE and the PSC in the lower chamber brings about a common action in national politics. In fact, until very recently, most Spaniards have perceived both parties as "the same thing," at least at the national level.

The incorporation of the Catalan *Esquerra Unida i Alternativa* (EUiA) in the statewide Spanish United Left (IU) is also an instance of party political, territorially-based collective membership. This incorporation is asserted in Art. 84 through 94 of the Statutes of EUiA, while both the independence of EUiA and its representation in the organs of IU are clearly stated in Art. 113 of the Statutes of IU.

A third instance of this type also concerns Catalonia. *Convergència Democràtica Aranese-Partit Nacional-*

*iste Aranès* (CDA-PNA) is a political party of the Aran Valley, in the Pyrenees. By virtue of an agreement between CDA-PNA and the Catalan party *Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya* (CDC), the former has representation rights in the governing bodies of the latter and can be considered a collective member.

By contrast, the cases of the Italian Northern League, the British Conservative and Liberal parties, and the CDU-CSU fail to meet our criteria for collective membership. At first sight, the Northern League (*Lega Nord*) seems to be based on an articulating agreement between different territorial organizations. Its Statutes (Art. 1) indicate that the party is a confederation of different political organizations (national sections according to Art.2.). National sections have the right to participate in the decision processes of the whole party, in so far as the secretaries of each national section are members of the highest political body in the League, the Federal Council (*Consiglio Federale*) (Art. 12). However, national sections lack true political and institutional autonomy and are subjected to the decisions and rules adopted by the whole party. This situation resulted from the formation process of the party in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The party emerged out of electoral alliances among different local political organizations and took shape first in 1989 as a confederation of parties (*Lega Lombarda, Liga Veneta, Lega Emilia-Romagna, Union Ligure and Movimento Autonomista Piemontese*) within the Northern Alliance (*Alleanza Nord*) (Gómez-Reino 2002:95-95). In 1991, however, the Northern League was launched as a unified and even centralized party. In Gómez-Reino's words (2002:96), "what was devised as a confederation evolved into a single centralized party under Umberto Bossi's command." The 1991 statute thus stated that the Northern League had "legal ownership" over all the different regional labels (Gómez-Reino 2002:97). This centralized outcome resulted from the hegemony of the Lombard League and its leader (Bossi), from the internal divisions suffered by several other local leagues, and from the electoral opportunities opened up by the crisis of the Italian party system (Gómez-Reino 2002:96-97).

In Great Britain there are some similarities between the structures of the Conservative and Liberal Democratic parties and the territorial types of collective membership, but none of these parties meet the criteria we defined in our classification. The association of the British Conservative Party with its Scottish organization could seem similar to that between the PSOE and the PSC. In its Constitution, the party considers as members not only the individual members (classified into "party members" and "Scottish party members"), but also the constituency associations and the "Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party" as such. But in fact, the Scottish party cannot be considered a fully self-governing organization. All the

constituency associations (also the Scottish ones) are submitted to the British party and they are also the basis of its articulation. And the Scottish party members participate like the other members in the election of the key organs of the party.<sup>4</sup> There are two substantial characteristics that separate the Scottish Conservative Party from the Catalan PSC. Firstly, the “constitutional power” lies in the (central) Conservative Party, which has the right to define the relation between the Scottish section and the global party. Secondly, the constituency associations in Scotland belong to the (global) party as such associations (although their members are “Scottish members”), and thus the supervision in the selection of candidates to the Parliament in Westminster corresponds to the global party. All in all, the Scottish Conservative Party can be considered an organization within the articulation of the global Conservative Party rather than a collective member as defined above.

As for the British Liberal Democrats, they have an explicitly federal structure, and the Federal party is integrated by the state parties of England, Wales, and Scotland. However, these state sections lack full autonomy and are bound by the Constitution of the Party and by the rules made by it (Art. 2.2 of the Party Constitution).<sup>5</sup> In addition to that, the Federal Party reserves to itself exclusive control on several crucial policy areas (Art. 2.3 of the Party Constitution).

Finally, another instance which is close to an articulating agreement between political parties is that of the CDU-CSU. However, the relation between the CSU and the CDU in Germany is that of a coalition and therefore the CSU is not a collective member of the CDU. In a coalition, none of the parties receives an entitlement to decision power in the organizations of the other parties. Here it is necessary to distinguish between the decisions taken by the organization of the party and those made by their members in the institutions of the state. Sometimes this distinction is not easy, and this is particularly the case with parliamentary groups. In the British tradition, parliamentary groups are part of the organization of the parties and play a role in their internal decisions (McKenzie 1963). In continental political parties, parliamentary groups are not generally part of their organization, although they are arguably part of their decision structure. Then it may be the case that the parties in a coalition join in a single parliamentary group. This is the case of the CDU and the CSU in the German Bundestag. In general, it is difficult to say how far the party allegiances of the members of such mixed parliamentary groups shape the political alignments in the discussions and how a common position is reached, both among the members of each party and in the whole group, either by majority voting or negotiation. As for the CDU and the CSU in the Bundestag, there is one organized subgroup for each party. According to the current agreement between these parties, “funda-

mental political decisions of the parliamentary group CDU/CSU are to be taken only in agreement between both subgroups” (our translation).

Belgian cultural pluralism might seem prone to the structures of party-political, articulating collective membership, but the divisions of socialist, Christian-democratic, and liberal parties along linguistic lines from the 1960s onwards excluded this possibility. In Portugal, the possibility of creating this type of collective members has been excluded by national legislation, which directly prohibits the creation of regional parties (Art. 9 of the Portuguese Law of Political Parties). This exclusion may have played an important role in the development of the party system of Portugal’s Atlantic islands.

### Non-articulating linkage between political parties

We can find instances of a non-articulating linkage between political parties in the small parties embedded in the UMP, the Christian-Democratic Party (*Parti Chrétien-Démocrate*) and, until 2011, the Radical Party (*Parti Radical*) under the framework of Art. 3 of the Statute of the French UMP (*Union pour un Mouvement Populaire*) which contemplates the possibility that legal persons (political parties or not) are associated to the party.<sup>6</sup> The roots of this organizational structure are political-ideological rather than territorial and relate to the historical pluralism of the “non-Gaullist moderate right” (Knapp 2004:199), in which three main types of forces were traditionally present: the Christian Democrats, the Conservatives, and the ideologically oscillating Radicals (Knapp 2004:232). These three currents were also present in the now extinct Union for French Democracy (*Union pour la Démocratie Française*), which was defined in its statutes as a “federation of political parties” (Knapp 2004:216) and which worked in fact as a confederal organization of three main independent forces (the Christian Democratic Center of Social Democrats, CDS; the conservative Independent Republicans, RI; and the Radical Party), all of which enjoyed equal representation rights in the UDF national bodies (Knapp 2004: 216-7). To some extent, these parties of notables (Knapp 2004:217-18) continue the long-standing Orleanist tradition of the French right (Knapp 2004:201; Rémond 1954; Moreno Recio 1918:149). Despite their residual character, they have also held important positions of power at the local, regional, and national levels. For instance, “they enjoyed a constant majority in the upper House until 1980” (Knapp 2004:214 and 217). Given the symbolic, strategic, and institutional importance of the groups of the non-Gaullist right (Knapp 2004:221), it was clearly justified for the UMP to create specific organizational frameworks in order to absorb these parties (2007:219).

For any agreement between political parties, articulating or non-articulating, the question arises as to whether one of the parties becomes a collective

member of the other, or there is merely a coalition between them. The relation between an associated legal person and the UMP is governed by the association agreement, a “*contrat de droit privé*” according to the French Law of Associations of 1901. It is usual to keep most clauses confidential. The agreement between associated parties and the UMP usually stipulates that the joint candidate to the presidential election is to be chosen by the UMP. Also the parliamentarians elected to the National Assembly typically integrate into the common parliamentary group. As for the meaning of this to guarantee common political action, the personalized character of French politics and the fluidity of its party landscape are to be taken into account. Typically the members of the associated legal person become members of the UMP if they wish, a representation in the National Council of the UMP is agreed (under the conditions fixed by the Political Bureau of the UMP), and a subsidy is paid by the UMP to the associated legal person. Thus the associated parties are collective members of the UMP.

The parties integrated in the Belgian liberal party Reformist Movement (*Mouvement Réformateur*, MR) also fit our criteria of collective membership. The MR is integrated by the Reformist Liberal Party (*Parti Réformateur Libéral*, PRL), the dominant component in the party and which in fact is reported to have a “fictitious existence” (Dedecker 2011:149); the Party for Freedom and Progress (*Partei für Freiheit und Fortschritt*, PFF), which represents German-speaking citizens; and the Movement of Citizens for Change (*Mouvement des Citoyens pour le Changement*, MCC), a party of Christian-Democratic origins that split from the PSC and first joined an alliance with the PRL in 1999. In 2002 this alliance gave rise to a new party, the MR.

### Articulating linkage between political parties and functional organizations

There are no instances of articulating linkages between a party and functional organizations. Perhaps the closest case to this combination of circumstances is that of the Austrian Popular Party (ÖVP) and its interest organizations. These organizations have participation rights in the political structure of the ÖVP (Müller 2006:343) and also enjoy very high levels of autonomy, to the point that experts have considered the ÖVP as an indirect party (Müller 2006:349). In fact, there have been different attempts at curtailing the autonomy of the professional organizations of the ÖVP. The concern about intersectoral conflicts and the need to assert the leadership of the federal party can be perceived in the 1979 Organization Statute.<sup>7</sup> Although something has been done since then in this direction, the ÖAAB, ÖBB and ÖWB are still a key factor in the dynamic (and the static) of the party. However, although these organizations enjoy high levels of autonomy, they do not meet the criterium of being fully self-governed, and are subjected to the rules and political decisions of the ÖVP.

In addition to the formal rules that specify representative rights in the party federal bodies (as in the Bundesparteitag; Müller 2006: 343), there are informal criteria for the sharing out of power among the three professional organizations. In this sense Müller (2006: 349) writes: “When the composition of some body of the party is not to be decided through delegation of the professional organizations, but through election, there is an implicit apportionment (*Proporz*) among them, which today reaches still up to the leading bodies of the party, and earlier even included the top positions (leader of the party, general secretary, leader of the parliamentary group)” (our translation).

The ÖVP has a double articulation: territorial (*Landesparteien*) and sectorial, through interest sectors (*Teilorganisationen*). It is an archetypal case where the exclusivity of the territorial articulation does not hold. Both territorial and sector organizations have juridical personality. There are as many territorial parties as regions, and six sector organizations for blue-collar and white-collar workers (ÖAAB), farmers (ÖBB), business people (ÖWB), women (ÖFB), young people (JVP), and senior citizens (ÖSB). Even if it is possible to be a member of the ÖVP without also being a member of one of the sector organizations, this is rare in practice.<sup>8</sup> The three latter sector organizations have correlatives in many other parties, and respond to the idea of “natural groupings” for collectives supposed to need their own channels of representation and the defense of whose interests is not considered particularly “divisive.” In contrast, the three former ones (ÖAAB, ÖBB, and ÖWB) are supposed to represent all occupational sectors, to which are (were or are to be) bound, directly or indirectly, all citizens: they constitute a further articulation of the party, parallel to the territorial one. Certainly the fact that ÖAAB, ÖBB, and ÖWB represent all occupational sectors does not mean that the membership of the ÖVP is a mirror image of Austrian society. Farmers, public servants, and business people are overrepresented in the ÖVP. In the case of the ÖVP, this overrepresentation has reached some crystallization through the professional organizations.

In the German (Bavarian) CSU there are also organizations (*Arbeitsgemeinschaften*) for employees, business people, and farmers (art. 27 of the Statute). The same can be said of the CDU, where there are organizations (*Vereinigungen*) for employees and business people (art. 38 of the Statute). However, this panoply of organizations is not intended to articulate the party, but to look after specific groups by targeting the message of the party and channeling impulses and suggestions. Furthermore, these functional organizations also lack the level of autonomy of the other collective members discussed above. In both respects, the occupational organizations are far from being structurally essential in the case of both the CDU and the CSU (Mintzel 1978).



### Non-articulating linkage between a political party and functional organizations

The trade unions affiliated to the British Labour Party are a clear instance of a functional non-articulating collective member. The origins of this relationship lie in the formation process of the Labour party itself, which was initially an extension of the trade unions (Scarrow 1996:24). The non-Marxist character of British social-democracy may have also favored the persistence of this type of organizational linkage (Bartolini 2000:70-72). The British Labour Party admits not only individual members in its structure, but also “affiliated organizations,” among which the trade unions play a very important role in the life and governance of the party. Half of the total voting entitlement in the Party Conference corresponds to the affiliated organizations (in practice, mostly the trade unions), and half of the elective members of the National Executive Committee (NEC) are appointed by the trade unions. In the election of the party leader, the same voting entitlement (one third each) is apportioned to the affiliated organizations, to individual members, and to members of the Commons and the European Parliament. The election procedure to elect their delegates in the Party Conference is up to every union (these delegates choose in turn the representatives in the NEC), whereas for the election of leader of the party it is laid down that all union members paying the “political levy” should participate on a one-person-one-vote basis.

The members of the affiliated trade unions can opt out of paying the political levy, in which case they have no right to vote in the decisions of their union as an affiliated organization of the party. But this “opting out” must be explicit. In contrast to this, from 1927 to 1946 the acceptance to pay had to be explicit (otherwise the political levy was not exacted), and the result was a marked fall in the number of trade unionists paying the political levy.

When collective members are not political parties, they normally represent interest groups. If a party has such collective members, rival parties may claim to defend the national interest and not that of particular groups. In a time of falling partisanship (Dalton and Wattenberg 2009), parties trying to represent a particular section of society risk missing decisive electoral targets. Certainly it has been affirmed that the trade unions have historically been moderate in applying their clout in the Labour Party: “Restraint has been the central characteristic of the trade union-Labour Party relationship” (Minkin 1992:26). At any rate, after the “winter of discontent” in 1978-79, the prevailing perception among the British electorate was that the Labour Party was too dependent on the unions, and that the interests of the unions did not coincide in several substantial issues with the national interest. A succession of electoral defeats (until the “New Labour” victory

of 1997) prompted the party to gradually reduce the power of the unions *qua* unions in its organization (Quinn 2004). As Kitschelt (1994) has shown, the organizational structure of the British Labour party contributed decisively to the party’s lack of adjustment to new social demands and to its poor electoral performance in the 1980s.

As in the case of the British Labour Party, the Swedish Social Democratic Worker’s Party (SAP) has historically had a strong trade union basis (Verney 1957). It has also been characterized as an indirect party (Duverger 1958:28). From 1909 to 1990, the Swedish Social Democratic Party offered the trade unions a “system of facultative collective affiliation tempered by an opt-out clause”, as characterized by Fusilier (1954:65). Two features distinguished this system from that of the British Labour Party. Firstly, the Swedish collective affiliation operated at the local level: the decision to join the party was not up to the national unions as in Britain, but each local section of each union had to decide. Secondly, in the British case, the members of the affiliated unions become “indirect members” and have a different status from that of “direct members” (and the most committed members of the Unions can also opt to be direct members), whereas in Sweden there was only a category of party members and the “indirect” members were indistinguishable from the “direct” ones. For this reason, in the Swedish Social Democratic Party one can speak of “collective affiliation”, but not of “collective membership,” as defined here. Although the Swedish Trade Union Confederation has a representative on the party’s executive committee, and the relation between unions and the party is strong (Anthonsen et al. 2011), there is nothing that can be described as participation in shared-rule of the unions in the party.

### Concluding comparative remarks. Towards an analysis of the causes and prospects of collective membership

In this article, we have examined different types of collective membership in contemporary political parties. Our exploration has focused on organizations that enjoy full self-government rights and have entitlements to power in the political party in which they are embedded. Our analysis has proposed a basic descriptive typology of collective members based on their nature (party political or functional) and their pattern of articulation to the political party they are embedded in (whether they help to articulate the whole party structure or not).

Although our typology had a mainly descriptive character, the comparative examination of the cases we discussed above makes it possible to explore the determinants of this type of political organization. It is clear, in the first place, that national political institutions do not exercise a direct influence on the emer-

gence of collective members. The electoral systems of the countries considered here include proportional representation (with closed and blocked lists as in Spain or with preferential vote as in Belgium) and relative or absolute majority representation in uninominal districts (Britain and France). Moreover, their political-territorial structures cover very different degrees of regional autonomy, ranging from federal (or quasi-federal) structures to unitary patterns of territorial articulation. National political institutions may have shaped some specific characteristics of collective membership in these parties, but they certainly did not give rise to this type of organizational linkage in these cases.

Certainly, as Duverger already saw apropos of indirect parties, social democratic (particularly of a non-Marxist kind) and Christian democratic political ideas can have facilitated the existence of functional collective members. However, the party political collective members analyzed here lacked these facilitating ideological conditions, even if their existence could be loosely linked to specific idiosyncratic political-ideological traditions (such as the federal tradition of the Spanish left). Furthermore, the Christian democratic and non-Marxist social democratic ideological traditions were present in other parties that did not even approach the development of collective members, functional or of a party political nature.

By contrast, in all positive cases, the creation and persistence of collective members can be related to the heterogeneity of the political and organizational landscapes in which the political parties evolved. The character of that heterogeneity may lie in the cultural-territorial domain (as in the case of the Catalan PSC and EUIA, as well as of the Belgian PFF), in the ideological diversity of a particular political camp (as in the cases of the French and Belgian center right), or in the strength of trade unions before and during the formation process of the British Labour Party.

Furthermore, in all these cases, collective members were created exogenously to the political party they joined. In all these respects, the emergence of these arrangements can be linked to the starting moments of political parties and their underlying social and political conditions. This comparison reveals the importance of path-dependent historical trajectories. The role played by exogenous organizations at starting moments can also be grasped in a negative way, since we have not identified any instance in which a party made a top-down move towards collective membership. In those cases in which a party moved towards a structure based on overarching collateral organizations (as was the case of the Austrian ÖVP), such organizations did not attain the levels of political autonomy that distinguish collective membership.

The formation processes of collective members resemble those of federal and confederal systems (as identified by Riker 1964). Collective member-

ship agreements implied exchanges between the leaders of organizations placed at different levels. But agreements in this case were dominated by electoral and policy-making considerations, instead of the military factors that Riker identified in the birth of federations. Formative agreements between exogenous organizations worked as a necessary but insufficient condition for the existence of forms of collective membership. Balances of power among collective members and national political parties, which are conditioned in turn by different factors such as changes in social and political conditions and individual leaderships, may also lead to the extinction of this type of political structure. The case of the Northern League, which emerged as a political confederation and moved immediately towards a centralized party under the strong leadership of Bossi, shows that exogenous origins do not guarantee the persistence of this type of organizational linkage. And as Christiansen (2012) has shown, changes in socio-economic conditions and public attitudes can also affect the benefits that political parties and interest groups extract from their cooperation agreements, and lead to the weakening or even demise of such privileged links.

Current social and political conditions may have become adversarial to the development of these types of organizational linkages. The decline of socio-political cleavages, rapid changes in social conditions resulting from globalization, the growing importance of new communication technologies, and intense preferences for direct participation all conspire against the development of the comparatively rigid structures of collective membership. In this respect, the diminishing importance of party organizational bases and structures of belonging (Puhle 2002:79-80; Wolinetz 2002) poses some limits on the continuity of this specific type of organizational linkage.

One way to assess the perspectives of this type of organizational linkage consists in examining recent instances of party creation in which a high degree of preexisting political and organizational pluralism was present, and in which party creation did not strictly obey a top-down organizational logic, that is, in cases in which the political conditions were in principle favorable to the formation of structures of collective membership. These are the cases of several new organizations in the political space of the left and radical left in Southern Europe, such as *Syriza* in Greece, the *Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste* and the *Front de Gauche* in France, and *Podemos* in Spain. In all these cases, notwithstanding the high degree of pre-existing political and organizational pluralism, new organizations avoided the creation of collective members.

In the case of the parties of the French radical left, their attempts to deal with the preexisting political-organizational complexity of their ideologi-

cal space did not lead to the formation of collective members. Mélenchon's candidacy in the 2012 presidential elections, which received more than 11% of the vote in the first electoral round, was endorsed by a classical electoral coalition, the *Front de Gauche*. As for Mélenchon's party, the *Parti de Gauche* (PG), its statutes defined it as a party of militants integrated in circles (Art. 8) and they also forbade its members to belong to any other party organization (Art. 2). The party statutes accepted the possibility of enlarging its *Bureau National* in order to include representatives of other parties, but this circumstance was restricted to parties merging with the PG (Art. 13).

The other recently created political formation of the French radical left is the *Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste* (NPA), which was founded in 2009 by political forces of Trotskyite orientation. Its main leader, Olivier Besancenot, attained more than 4% of the vote in the first round of the 2007 presidential elections, and the sum of votes for the three candidates of the Trotskyite parties was over 10% in the first round of the 2002 presidential elections (Sperber 2010). Following the Trotskyite political tradition, the 2009 statutes enabled the creation of tendencies and fractions within the party, and specifically addressed the problem of assuring voice and representation to different positions and platforms in the *Conseil Politique National* (Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste 2009). However, the party chose to reject specific organizational linkages for different political groups or ideological streams. Overall, the party explicitly positioned itself in favor of direct democracy and against internal structures that filter the voice of militants.

The degree of previous political-organizational pluralism was lower in the case of *Podemos*, even if also in this case exogenous social movements and political organizations (in particular *Izquierda Anticapitalista*) took part in its formation process. *Podemos* avoided not only collective membership, but also specific organizational linkages for any kind of collateral organizations. Furthermore, the new party adopted the rule that no members of other national political organizations could be elected to positions of authority within the party (point XI.e of its Ethical Code) (Podemos 2014). This policy of exclusion of internal party political pluralism led to the dissolution of *Izquierda Anticapitalista* as a political party and to its transformation into an association. In the case of *Podemos*, the appeal to direct participation and the mistrust towards exogenous political structures was most likely combined with a strategy aimed at maximizing the strategic and top-down coordination of the party, as became apparent in the voting system chosen to elect the 62 members of its highest national political body, the *Consejo Ciudadano*, by the *Asamblea Ciudadana* (which is com-

posed of all the members of *Podemos*). Under the voting system selected by this party, participants were able to choose in block a general list of 62 candidates (by a computer click in this case). In the 2014 internal election, the 62 candidates elected were part of the list endorsed by the party leader, Pablo Iglesias.

Finally, the exclusion of collective members is also remarkable in the case of *Syriza*, which was created by a wide array of social and political organizations. *Syriza* eluded collective membership, and chose to encourage direct individual participation and open decision processes, as well as to transform its former components into tendencies (Tsakatika and Eleftheriou 2013:12-14; Bournous 2013).

Certainly, these outcomes may have been favored by the linkage strategies adopted by the new radical left, which have emphasized direct, mass-based, and bottom-up participatory procedures, and which have also shown mistrust of bureaucratic structures (including trade unions) (Tsakatika and Lisi 2013:9-14). We may be witnessing a relatively recent trend in this respect. The previously discussed EUiA was integrated into IU in 1998 under the form of collective membership. And a few decades ago, in 1982, a radical left organization, the Galician Nationalist Block (BNG), chose to include collective members in its organization, most notoriously, the Union of the Galician People (UPG); a fully independent organization that is represented in the national bodies of the BNG and which has consistently played a decisive political role in it (Vilas Nogueira and Fernández Baz 2004).

But it is also quite plausible that the rejection of the collective membership formula by new political parties is decisively determined by the goal of achieving greater ideological and programmatic flexibility. Highly decentralized organizations can set strong constraints on the strategic flexibility of political parties, and can thus lead them (as was the case of highly decentralized parties based on socialist clubs) to electorally suboptimal strategies (Kitschelt 1994:218-253).

Both theories on the evolution of party organizations and the empirical examination of recent processes of party formation under conditions of strong political pluralism reveal the limited appeal of this type of party structure nowadays. However, given the inertial character of political institutions, its persistence cannot be discarded. Furthermore, there can continue to emerge circumstances in which this type of political structure is adopted (as in the case of the Belgian MR) or at least considered (as in the case of the Italian Northern League). All in all, the analysis of this type of organizational linkage remains important for our understanding of the determinants and implications of different types of party structures.

## NOTES

1. As in the case of the relationships between political parties and interest groups. See Christiansen (2012).
2. Often there is an attempt to intensify mediation efforts with a particular section of the community, and even sometimes to alleviate misgivings. As an example, the "Protestant Circle" ("Evangelischer Arbeitskreis") has recognition in the Statute of the German CDU (this is not the case for any Catholic counterpart), not without reasons. No less a person than Karl Barth resisted the idea of the interdenominational (but certainly at that time Catholic-dominated) CDU: "...If we were to cooperate with them, we should always be at a disadvantage – whereas we would seek to be guided by the Word of God in practical political questions, the Catholics would make their decisions on the basis of natural law and would take us for a ride before we had reached a conclusion in our deliberations" (quoted in Pridham 1977).
3. The possibility of this particular relation is recognized in the additional provision 1 of the Statute of the PSOE. About the Protocol, Hopkin (2009) stated that "a confederal agreement was established in 1978 on the basis of a "unity protocol" which created a delicate compromise between socialist unity and Catalan distinctiveness. The new party – the PSC-PSOE – was a sovereign organization, but one that would participate in the statewide socialist project".
4. The Constitution of the Conservative Party (Schedule 9) reads: "Scottish Party Members are bound by the provisions of the Constitution of the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party ("SCUP"). Notwithstanding any other provision contained within this Constitution, the SCUP and Scottish Party Members shall therefore have only the following rights and obligations with respect to the Party within this Constitution...".
5. It has to be said that "any alteration to the relative powers and functions of the Federal Party and the State Parties" has to be passed also by each State Party (Art. 2.7 of the Party Constitution).
6. After leaving the UMP, the Radical Party joined the Union of Democrats and Independents (Union des Démocrates et Indépendants, UDI) in 2012, also as a collective member. The UDI is a small center-right political party constituted by the PR and other minor political organizations, such as the Nouveau Centre and the Alliance Centriste.
7. Art. 9.1 of the Organization Statute of the ÖVP reads: "The sector organizations must work together when they carry out federal election issues, campaigns, and contests. The guidelines and tasks assigned for this purpose by the federal party are compulsory" (our translation). When Alois Mock was elected president of the party in 1979, one of the main goals he set was to clearly establish the preponderance of the federal party on professional organizations. For more on the position of the professional organizations in the funding of the ÖVP, see Sickinger (2009).
8. Admissions to the party and to sector organizations are decided independently, although the application form is unified. Expulsion from the party is a joint decision of the party and sector organizations.

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