

*Left-of-Centre Parties and Trade Unions in
the Twenty-First Century*

Presentation of key findings and
general conclusions

Elin H. Allern, Tim Bale, Simon Otjes

*Mile End Institute, Queen Mary University of London,
June 1st, 2017*

Link Data and Coding (2013-14)

- Statutes of all organizational units, other relevant organizational documents and reliable secondary sources.
- Identical (inverted) questionnaires sent to carefully selected key informants in both parties (CPO and LPG) and the union confederations.
- Challenge: missing answers despite high response rate and diverging party-union responses regarding organizational facts in some cases.
- Use 'coded expert judgments' based on survey and multiple sources in cases of missing and divergence.

Frequency of Link Types

Table 15.1. Left-of-centre party–trade union relationships: shares of party–union dyads relying on different link types (%)

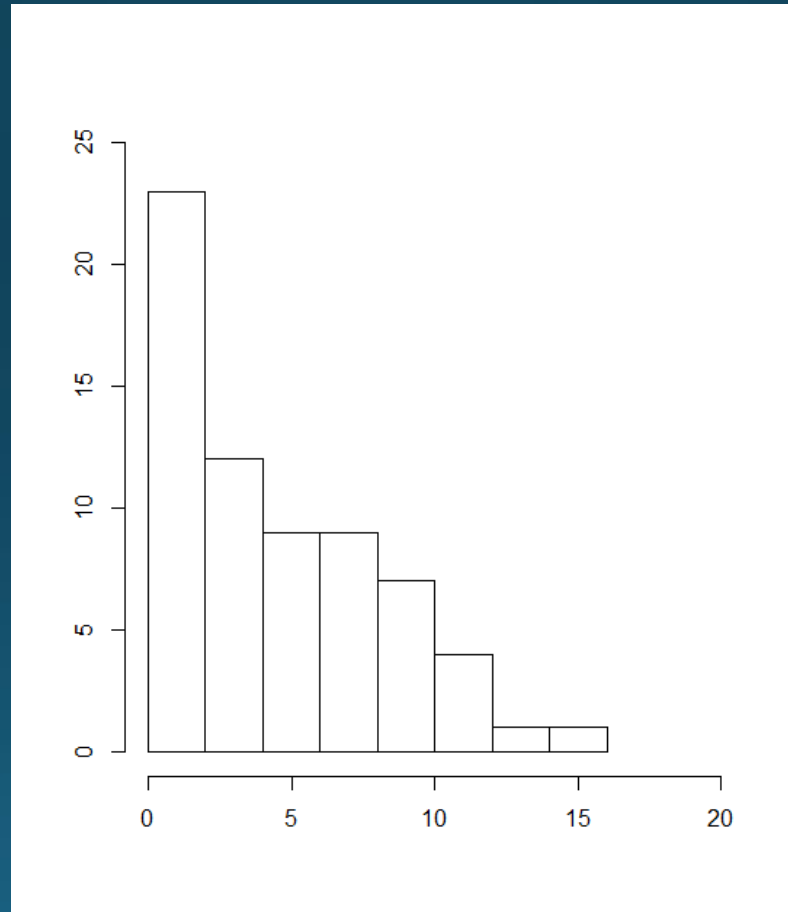
Variable (link items)	Party CPO-unions	Party LPG-unions
Collective union affiliation to party (local/national)	8.6	–
Union delegates at party conference	7.4	–
Party delegates at union conference	3.7	–
Party <i>ex officio</i> seats in union executive	0	–
Union <i>ex officio</i> seats in party executive	1.2	–
Party <i>ex officio</i> seats in union council	0	–
Union <i>ex officio</i> seats in party council	1.2	–
Tacit agreement about mutual representation	18.5	6.2
Permanent joint committee(s)	14.8	9.9
Temporary joint committee(s)	12.3	6.2
Formal agreement about regular meetings	3.7	2.5
Tacit agreement about regular meetings	35.8	24.7
Joint party–union conferences	16	7.4
Joint party–union campaigns	14.8	13.6
Party invited to union’s conference	48.1	44.4
Union invited to party’s conference	53.1	–
Union invited to party’s ordinary meetings, seminars etc.	54.3	48.1
Party invited to union’s ordinary meetings, seminars etc.	50.6	46.9
Union invited to party’s special consultative arrangements	69.1	74.1
Party invited to union’s special consultative arrangements	51.9	49.4
N	81	81

¹ This table concerns the relationships between communist, social-democratic, and other old left-of-centre parties and all confederations of trade unions/selected unions in every country (pairs of individual parties and confederations/unions). The empty cells (-) represent links we assume are mostly not applicable in the case of LPGs and that we have not surveyed.

Aggregate Score: Scaling Analysis

- Calculated **combined link values** for both faces of each party (CPO and LPG); i.e. N reduced to 81.
- 'Mokken scaling' (suitable for dichotomous variables): we *test whether pairs of parties and trade unions that have unusually strong links also enjoy the weaker links that occur in many party-union relationships.*
- Scaling results are strong at the transnational level: create an additive overall score of 'organizational closeness'.
- A low score: only weak (common) ties, the highest scores: both weaker (common) and strong (less common) ties.
- Possible to assign index scores to 66 party-union dyads (of 81).

Distribution of Strength of organizational links: Combined score (CPO/LPG, 0-20)



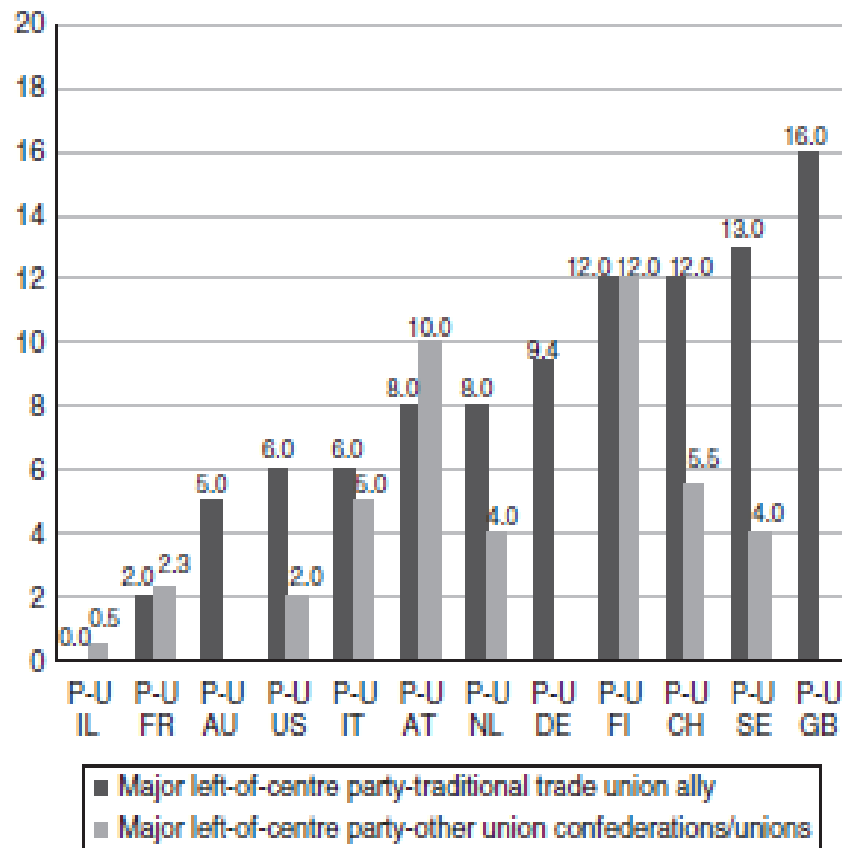


Figure 15.9. Total link scores of party-trade union relationships: the major left-of-centre party and its traditional union ally/allies compared to the major left-of-centre party and other unions, by country (0–20), $N = 40$.¹

¹ The scores represent the value of a single dyad or mean values (if there is more than one relationship). P-U = party-union(s). Mean score across countries for traditional left-of-centre party-trade union dyad: 7.7, others: 4.1.

Analysis of Change and Variation

- Focus on the the major left-of-centre parties and their traditional allies in the union movement (chapter 16).
- Summarize country study results and compare party-union cases in different countries:
 - Qualitatively over time, in light of developments in relevant structural variables and party-union resources.
- Main part: cross-sectional statistical analysis
 - one-level, and bivariat not multivariat, due to limited N of countries and party/unions

Conclusions: Country Chapters

- While differences in the national context make different rates of change more or less likely, nothing is inevitable.
- Pairs of parties and union confederations/unions significantly challenged by structural changes, are still involved in relatively close organizational relationships.
- Long-term changes in the resources the two sides can offer each other provide key pieces of the puzzle, but difficult to conclude (Israel, Italy, Netherlands vs. Sweden, Finland, Australia, UK).

Conclusions: Statistical Analysis

- The strength of party-union links today are **not** just a legacy of the past.
- No convincing support for the hypotheses on *the resources parties can offer trade unions*.
- *Contrary, the resources unions are able to offer parties* do seem to affect the relationship.
- However, the government finance regime seems to be closely related to relationships, as is union fragmentation.

General Conclusion

- Support for the resource exchange perspective but is the relationship between left-of-centre parties and trade unions is essentially lopsided?
- BUT: Need for better data for a few independent variables?
- BUT: Need for further research/data on «policy proximity», «policy rewards» (and the competition on both sides), and to go further back in time as far as party resources go?
- Future research should, if possible, take more countries and parties into account, and look more closely at the connection with party policy and policy outputs.

That said, this study has, we hope, taken us a significant step forward, by documenting that while left-of-centre parties and trade unions may not be as close as they once were, 'there are few countries in which we could say they may as well be strangers'.