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The Relationships between Left-of-Centre Parties and Trade Unions in Contemporary Democracies

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

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Abstract and Keywords

This chapter draws broad conclusions about relationships between left-of-centre (and indeed other) parties and unions from the new and rich data gathered by the country teams, allowing innovative datasets to be created based on the survey of links at the organizational level. This chapter summarizes the comparative findings based on that data, focusing on differences and similarities between and within countries, and between parties' central offices and their legislative party groups. It looks at informal as well as formal links and at personnel overlaps as well as organizational ties. The chapter also touches on change over time and on how and whether parties' and unions' subjective/impressionistic judgements on the state of their relationships match those emerging from the data. Overall, it finds that, notwithstanding considerable variation, there are still many parties and trade unions that continue to enjoy relatively close relationships.

Keywords: parties, social democratic, labour, trade unions, organization, links, closeness, range, comparative dataset

Introduction

The historical examples *par excellence* of close party-interest group relationships, both in Europe and elsewhere, were the old left-of-centre parties

and trade unions. The overall motivation for writing this book has been to interrogate systematically the widespread assumption that these relationships, in organizational terms, are characterized today by distance. Since the 1960s, it has been argued that the traditional links between left-of-centre parties and trade unions have decayed as party–union collaboration has become less mutually beneficial, not least due to changes in the economy and the labour market. But as existing studies of those links have for the most part been ad hoc, indirect, and individual, scholars have been unable to draw clear conclusions across cases. Moreover, as we argued in Chapter 1, there is no determinism implied here even if one believes that structural and institutional factors matter.

This book is an attempt to come closer to the truth by means of a rigorous cross-national study of contemporary relationships. It also represents an attempt to examine whether old left-of-centre parties have forged links with employee associations other than the traditional blue-collar unions. Are they connected with other employee organizations in addition to, or even instead of, their traditional ally or allies. Are contemporary trade unions closely linked with only one left-of-centre party? Or do they prefer weaker connections with multiple parties, or prefer to keep their distance from political parties in general?

Covering a dozen countries that have been democracies since at least the mid to late 1940s, in Europe, North America, and Oceania, we are able to **(p.281)** discover whether the relationships we are interested in look different or similar right across the world. Our country selection (described in more detail in Chapter 2) captures different types of economic, political, and institutional settings, country sizes, continents/regions, and provides us with historical examples of both strong and weak (or at least weaker) links. On the party side, we study old left-of-centre parties—social democratic/labour/socialist/communist and other parties associated with the historical labour movement (including surviving splinter parties), distinguishing between extra-legislative central party organizations (CPOs) and legislative party groups (LPGs). On the union side, we study all today’s peak associations, and where these are relatively unimportant we have also included the major individual unions or super-unions as equivalents. In this way, we are able to examine if the parties have widened their organizational networks to include new employee groups, and whether different kinds of employee organizations differ in their approach to left-of-centre parties. That said, we mainly use pairs of parties and trade union confederations/unions as our unit of analysis. As shown in Chapter 2, our analytical focus means that we cover eighty-one (CPO) plus eighty-one (LPG) party-union dyads.

For the sake of tractability, we focus on the national/leadership level of politics. Analytically, we concentrate on party–trade union relationships in the limited organizational sense, assuming, as we noted in Chapter 1, that the notion of ‘party–union relationship’ refers to the extent to which—and how—parties and trade unions are connected as organizations, and how they deal with each other.

Party–union links are those means by which a party and an interest group may communicate—such as formal affiliation and representation of unions in party executives, joint committees, actual personnel leadership overlaps, or more or less regular elite contact. By mapping organizational links we are able to measure *the general organizational closeness of relationships*, i.e. the strength/weakness of organizational links between, on the one hand, the party in question and the (confederations of) trade unions on the other.

The empirical mapping—unpacked in Chapter 2—is partly based on written sources, including party and union statutes, and partly based on a survey and structured interviews conducted among key informants in the parties and trade unions examined. The new and rich data allow us to draw broad conclusions about relationships that have impacted—and perhaps continue to impact—on politics the world over. We have created four new, innovative datasets based on the survey of links at the organizational level: one each for unions, CPOs, and LPGs, and one with the party–union dyads as units of analysis. The final dataset is based on the first three and is the one we mainly use for the analyses in this chapter. To solve the problem of some diverging party/union answers and some unreturned questionnaires, we have coded expert judgments based on the survey in combination with other sources in the dyadic file (see Chapter 2).¹

(p.282) We assume the dimension of closeness/distance *primarily* reflects the extent to which relationships are institutionalized—the degree to which party–union contact is incorporated into a structured and formalized system or set of arenas in which interaction takes place. This has to do both with the kind of and the number of connections—the extent, if you will, of durable and/or organized links for contact. In Chapter 2, we conducted a scaling analysis across the link items mapped in order to check whether they are hierarchically ordered as we assumed, and whether they vary along a unidimensional or multidimensional scale of closeness. The scaling results were strong at the transnational level. This means that pairs of parties and trade unions that have unusually strong links also tend to enjoy the links that occur in many, sometimes weaker party–union relationships too. Accordingly, we created an additive overall score of ‘organizational closeness’ by counting the number of ‘yes values’ for all the all links used in the scaling analysis for all those dyads without any ‘unclear values’. On the basis of the scaling analysis, a low score points to the existence of only weak (albeit commonly occurring) ties, whereas the highest scores point to the existence of both weaker (common) and strong (less common) links.

We acknowledge, however, that intensive actual contact might also be established through completely informal connections at the individual level. Therefore, we have tried to assess personnel overlaps and transfers between unions (staff and officials) and the legislative party group. Finally, we are interested in the *overall range of left of centre party–trade union relationships*, mainly seen from the party side: are left-of-centre parties only or primarily

linked to their traditional union allies, or have they established links with a wide range of employee organizations? We will also briefly touch upon the relationship of trade unions with other parties.

In the remainder of this chapter, we start by briefly summarizing the main conclusions of the empirical assessments presented in the preceding country chapters (Chapters 3-14). In the countries where union confederation/unions have been close to a centre-right party historically, this relationship has been outlined too. But here—in the comparative summary—we focus on the left-of-centre, seeing the links of other parties to unions as something that might constrain party-union relationships on the left. Thereafter, we move to comparing contemporary relationships via our dyadic dataset. After presenting the general descriptive statistics, we zoom in on the traditional relationships between the major left-of-centre parties and their traditional trade union ally or allies, before we compare the strength of these long-established organizational connections in different countries. Then we widen the perspective again and explore what characterizes party-union relationships in general in the different countries. Throughout, we address the question of possible differences between relationships involving the different ‘faces’ of parties (CPO/LPG), and look at the scores based on *both* CPO and LPG values in **(p.283)** order to get a single measure. Finally, we compare these with available data on personnel overlaps and transfers, and also with the parties’ and unions’ own rating of the degree of organizational closeness/distance. In this way, we get an indication of whether taking account of informal organizational aspects modifies or confirms the picture.

Country Analyses: From Continuous Integration to Virtual Separation

Taken together, the historical descriptions provided by the country chapters—of statutory links, inter-organizational links, and links at the individual level—support the idea that the strength of connections varied right from the outset, even if relationships were generally rather close: the most intimate—institutionalized—relationships developed in the UK, Australia, and the Nordic countries (i.e. Sweden and Finland). Close, though somewhat less integrated relations, characterized Israel and Austria as well. Relatively strong but somewhat weaker party-union links originally existed in the Netherlands, and between the German Social Democrats and the major trade union confederation. In Switzerland, the socialist party and the associated union confederation were both formally independent from the beginning, yet still aligned at the organizational level. Italy and France were from the start characterized by less institutionalized relationships but significant informal ties, albeit that unions there were most closely aligned to communist rather than socialist or social democratic parties. In the United States, relationships between labour unions and the traditional centre-left (Democratic) party have generally been less

institutionalized than in many European countries, but based on significant informal links.

After describing how historical relationships have been challenged by social and economic developments, the country chapters provide a detailed empirical assessment of the contemporary relationship between established left-of-centre parties and all the major confederations of trade unions. Generally, party-union links have declined since the Second World War, but increased autonomy does not in most cases mean full separation, and some cases are characterized by relative stability rather than change, not least if we focus on the relationship between the main established left-of-centre party and its traditional trade union ally or allies.

Countries in which the decline of traditional party-union links has been relatively limited are the United Kingdom, Australia, Finland, and Sweden. Paul Webb and Tim Bale (Chapter 13) conclude that the relationship between the Labour Party and not least the major individual trade unions is still **(p.284)** ‘an integrated, organic one insofar as the formal affiliation of some unions continues to exist and continues to carry with it rights of representation and influence in the party’s institutions and procedures, its structures, and its processes’. Phil Larkin and Charles Lees (Chapter 3) argue that the Australian Labour Party ‘is the creation of the union movement and institutional links between the affiliated trade unions and the ALP remain strong’.

According to Tapio Raunio and Niko Laine (Chapter 5), the links between trade unions and the major left-of-centre party in Finland are ‘solid and fairly well institutionalized’, including ‘routinized arrangements that draw on decades of experience of working together for mutual benefit’. Jenny Jansson’s analysis of the Swedish case (Chapter 11) reminds us that, although collective affiliation of unions no longer exists, the SAP and unions still have joint committees and meetings on a regular basis, and that the Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) still enjoys representation in the party’s board and executive committee: hence ‘the relationship appears to be vital despite changes in social, economic, and institutional settings’.

Likewise, Roland Erne and Sebastian Schief (Chapter 12) conclude in their analysis of parties and trade unions in Switzerland that there continue to be significant links between the social democratic party and the union confederation SGB, and moreover ‘a growing relationship between the formerly distant Travail.Suisse and the SP’. The relationship between the Austrian Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) and the social democratic faction of the peak association ÖGB has not been assigned a total score, and its traditional union ally PRO-GE is given only a medium score, but, as Richard Luther concludes in Chapter 4, the party-union relationships still ‘include overlapping structures, inter-

organizational links that are reciprocal and durable, as well as many others that are occasional' and 'a dense pattern of overlapping directorates'.²

According to our country chapters there are also places where the relationship between the left-of-centre parties and trade unions have grown relatively distant: namely the Israeli, Dutch, and Italian cases. In Israel the traditionally strong links between the Mapai/Labour Party and the Histadrut have dramatically weakened, although links between unions and politicians continue to play a role, as Ronen Mandelkern and Gideon Rahat show in Chapter 8. And Simon Otjes and Anne Rasmussen (Chapter 10) conclude that, in the Netherlands today, political parties and trade union confederations operate independently of each other and the fairly strong links that 'existed between Dutch political parties and trade unions during pillarization have disappeared'. The significant, if not very formal, links that existed between the Italian communist party and the confederation CGIL eventually faded and, after the transformation of the PCI into PD, the relationship became mainly ad hoc. Recently, Liborio Mattina and Mimmo Carrieri (Chapter 9) argue, 'the relationship between the CGIL and the PD has badly deteriorated, **(p.285)** following the generational change which has occurred within the Democratic Party and the electoral success of Matteo Renzi'.

The German case seems to lie somewhere in between the poles of relative stability and significant decline. The *Gewerkschaftsrat*, a permanent advisory body of the social democratic SPD and trade unions, still exists; but the days of a privileged partnership between the SPD and the unions are over. Instead a new pluralized set of relationships came into existence, replacing some of the ties to Social Democracy with connections to other parties, most notably to Die Linke, Tim Spier concludes (Chapter 7). Similarly, but from a lower level of institutionalization at the outset, Christopher Witko suggests that the declining importance of union funds and votes have likely resulted 'in fewer links than in previous decades' between the Democratic Party and major trade unions in the United States (Chapter 14). Finally, we learn from Nick Parsons (Chapter 6) that party-union relations in France 'show both continuity and change'. The relationship between the Socialist Party and trade union confederations continues to be 'loose and ad hoc'. The closest relations are still maintained by the PS-CFDT dyad. Parsons suggests that 'these have not required any loosening as they have always been informal and not based on any durable organizational underpinning'. As a result, party-union relations in France are multi-directional, with no exclusivity in any relationship, on either the union or the party side.

Each and every one of the chapters by our country experts paints a fascinating and detailed picture of the relationship between that country's left-of-centre parties and its trade union confederations/super-unions. Yet the richness of their description need not prevent them from helping to tell a bigger story. We have seen that our concept and measurements have worked well across contexts,

although they cannot capture everything: in Israel, for instance, we have learned that the party-based internal elections of the Histadrut confederation create some indirect connections with parties that our analytical focus misses. In Austria, the far from unitary structure of unions complicates the assessment of links; and, above all, in Sweden and the UK we see some organized links which are not included in our conceptualization and index, such as a joint youth organization and unions until very recently enjoying a privileged position in leadership elections. Generally speaking, however, major changes and variation do seem to be captured by the measurements developed in Chapter 2, and the country chapters have also been able to rely upon our index of organizational connections and perception data from the survey. In the remainder of this chapter we will directly compare the various party-union dyads examined in this book based on the different standardized measures developed, and try to assess what all or at least some of them can be said to have in common, and to what extent variation exists across and within countries.

(p.286) General Frequency of Link Types and Distribution of Total Link Scores Today

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

Variable (link items)	Party CPO-unions	Party LPG-unions
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.

We begin, however, by simply showing the frequencies of the different links mapped at the organizational level. Table 15.1 suggests that such links certainly exist today: nearly all of the items we mapped via our party-union survey occur; some, indeed, could be seen as common.

The frequency varies significantly across link types. Statutory links, creating overlapping organizational structures, are rare. Collective affiliation of unions is reported in less than 10 per cent of the cases. About 7 per cent are connected through the union's right to send delegates to the national party conference, and barely any offer the union *ex officio* representation in the party executive or council. No pairs of parties and unions provide the party organization with **(p. 287)** guaranteed representation in the national executive or board of representative of unions, and only about 4 per cent allow the party to send delegates to the union conference.

Durable and reciprocal inter-organizational links are more common, albeit mainly outside the legislative arena. In nearly 20 per cent of the cases a tacit agreement exists about mutual representation in national decision-making organs—and it should be noted that this could include more than one party/union body. A permanent joint (liaison) committee also exists in 15 per cent of the party CPO-union pairs examined. Some 36 per cent report having a formal or

tacit cooperation agreement concerning regular meetings. As regards relationships between unions and legislative party groups, there are fewer durable links but about 25 per cent report tacit cooperation agreements about regular meetings.

As we move down the list to the occasional one-sided links, connections become more widespread both within and outside the legislative arena. Party/union invitations to annual conferences, ordinary meetings, and seminars and special consultative arrangements are common, though not ubiquitous, both within and without the legislative arena. The most common—and even prevalent—link is the union being invited to parties' special consultative arrangements: this exists in 69 per cent of the pairs involving the CPO and 74 per cent of the pairs involving the LPG. Overall, the frequencies suggest that there are more durable links in the relationships involving the central organizations than in the dyads involving the legislative party groups.

We are, in line with the scaling analysis, able to assign an overall scale (index score) of closeness to the relationships examined. As shown in Chapter 2, 84/82 per cent of cases were included in the scaling analysis. Links exist in the excluded cases as well, but it is not possible to assign an overall score due to one or more 'unclear values'. As noted, we calculated separate total scores for the party-union pairs involving CPOs and LPGs (with 20 and 12 as maximum scores respectively) since we assume the strongest links (those creating overlapping structures) are not applicable in the case of LPGs.

Table 15.2. Descriptive statistics: total organizational link scores (0-12/20)

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. dev.
<i>Party-union dyads</i>					
Party CPO-Unions (0-20)	68	0	16	4.5	4.0
Party LPG-Unions (0-12)	66	0	11	3.3	2.8
Party (CPO/LPG)-Unions (0-20)	66	0	16	4.8	4.0

¹ The 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)

If we focus on the joint link-items across the scale (0-12), ignoring statutory links like collective affiliation and formal representation rights, we find that the correlation between the scores for dyads involving CPOs and LPGs is very strong —0.92 for the left-of-centre/traditional ally dyads, and 0.74 for the others (0.82 in general). As explained in Chapter 2, we have therefore also calculated one combined party/union score to get a single score for the relationship between the union confederation/unions and the party/parties at large.³ In what follows, we present the main results based on all three scores.

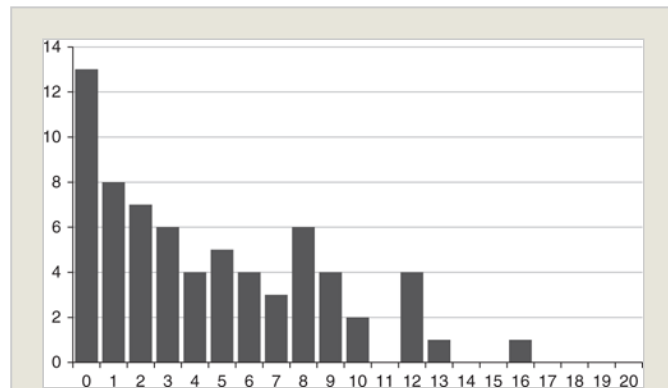


Figure 15.1. Frequency of total organizational link scores of central party organization-trade union relationships (0-20).¹

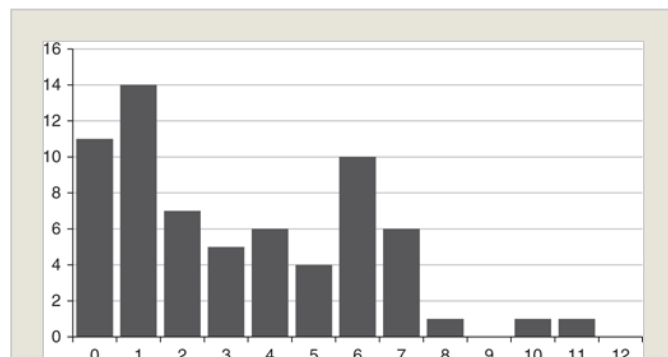


Figure 15.2. Frequency of total organizational link scores of legislative party group-trade union relationships (0-12).¹

From Table 15.2 we see that the mean total link scores are low—4.5 in the case of the party CPO–union relationships, and just above 3 the case of party LPG–union relationships, suggesting that the ‘average’ left-of-centre party–trade union relationship today is characterized by a number of event-based links (regular invitations to congresses, seminars, and special consultative **(p.288)** arrangements, etc.) rather than by formally integrated or in other ways highly institutionalized relationships. However, we see that the range of the distribution is wide: the top score among those surveyed is 16 and 11 respectively (i.e. close to the theoretical maximum score both inside and outside the legislative arena), whereas other relationships are marked by complete separation and are thus virtually non-existent at the organizational level. The standard deviation is 4 and 2.8. For the combined score (ranging from 0–20), the mean value is 4.8, the standard deviation 4. Hence, there is substantial variation in link values to be examined.

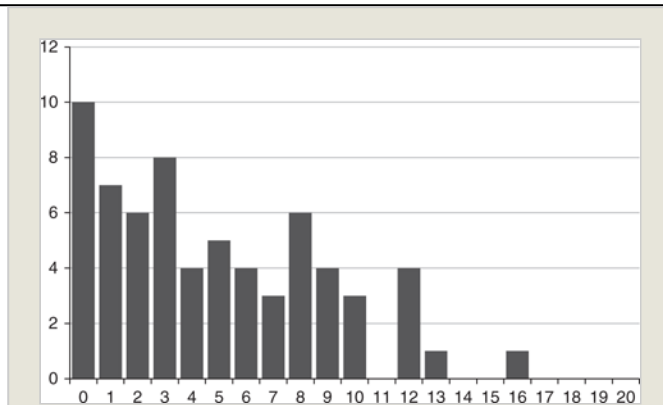


Figure 15.3. Frequency of total organizational link scores of party–trade union relationships (0–20).¹

(¹) All three figures concern 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).

Another way of looking at variation is by plotting histograms of scores. Figure 15.1, 15.2, and 15.3 show that the shapes are far from normal distributions: they are all more-or-less skewed to the right. There are very few relationships with very high link scores outside the legislative arena: only two dyads involving parties’ central organizations have a truly high score (above 12, see Figure 15.1). Thus, integrated relationships still exist but are rare here: the highest scaling value of 16 points is obtained by the relationship between the British Labour Party and the GMB (a ‘super-union’ covering all sorts of sectors). The lowest/low scores are the most common. Among the party CPO–union pairs, 19 per cent have no links at the organizational level at all (13 out of 68).

However, it should be noted that a significant number of relationships (nearly one-third; 19 out of 68) obtain a total link score a between 6 and 10, and thus approaches the mid-level that includes durable inter-organizational links. A closer look at a few examples illustrates the existence of a one-dimensional

scale: the British Labour Party–GMB links include collective union affiliation and mutual representation rights at party/union annual conferences plus all kinds of inter-organizational links. At the lower end we find, for example, the relationship between the French Socialist Party's central organization and one of France's federations, FO. This dyad obtains a scale value of 2, and a detailed look shows that it is based on two 'occasional' links, namely the union being invited to the party's conference and to party special meetings.

As far as the legislative party groups and trade unions are concerned, a similar, generally skewed pattern applies (Figure 15.2). One party-union pair **(p.289) (p.290)** comes close to the highest possible score: once again, it is the British Labour Party and the GMB with 11. Next follows the relationship between Labour and Unite (another super-union) with 10. Strong inter-organizational links between left-of-centre parties and unions, then, are uncommon but they do occur. About 17 per cent of the party LPG-union dyads (11 out of 66) are reported to be without any links at all. However, one third of the dyads obtain a score between 4 and 6 scale points and approach the mid-level. About 14 per cent (9 out of 66) have a higher score.

The distribution for the combined score (i.e. for the parties' CPO and LPG put together, Figure 15.3) is somewhat less skewed to the right. The figure confirms that the large majority of the pairs of left-of-centre parties and trade union confederations/major unions enjoy organizational links. About 15 per cent of the dyads (10 of 66) have no links at all. The lowest/low scores are most common. Less than 10 per cent of the dyads obtain high link scores—12 and above. Integrated relationships are rare: the highest scaling value of 16 points is obtained by the relationship between the British Labour Party and two traditional allies (GMB and Unite), which, although much bigger than most of the other trade unions affiliated to the party, are linked to the party in more or less the same way as they are. That said, 30 per cent (20 out of 66) of dyads obtain a total link score close to the mid-level, which includes durable inter-organizational links (a score between 6 and 10). If we bundle those in with those that score highly, we see that about 40 per cent of the party-union dyads score above the average (of 4.8).

The Traditionally Close vs Other Relationships

After this general overview, we now turn to the main analytical focus of this book—the *relationship between the major left-of-centre party and its traditional union ally/allies* (Figure 15.4a and 15.4b). By ‘traditional union ally’ we mean a confederation/union known for having a historically fairly close/close relationship with one or more established left-of-centre parties or else a centre-right party.⁴ We have values for this/these dyad(s) in all countries (see Chapter 2).

The average score is 7.5, i.e. below the mid-point of the scale for the central party organization–union relationships. As for the legislative party–trade union dyads, the average scale value of the relationships between the major left-of-centre party and its traditional union ally/allies across countries is 5.2—just below the mid-point again (Figure 15.3b). The traditionally closer party–union relationships still seem to be characterized by medium-strong links when it comes to the party in public office and somewhat weaker

mean scores **(p.291)** as far as relationships between unions and central party organizations go, even if, when comparing dyads involving CPOs with those involving LPGs, one should bear in mind that the latter’s maximum involves fewer links than the former’s top scores.

So, have the major left-of-centre parties and *other* trade union confederations established links to each other as well? In most countries, there are peak associations and unions with roots outside what we might traditionally think of as ‘the labour movement’. The second column in each figure (15.4a and 15.4b)

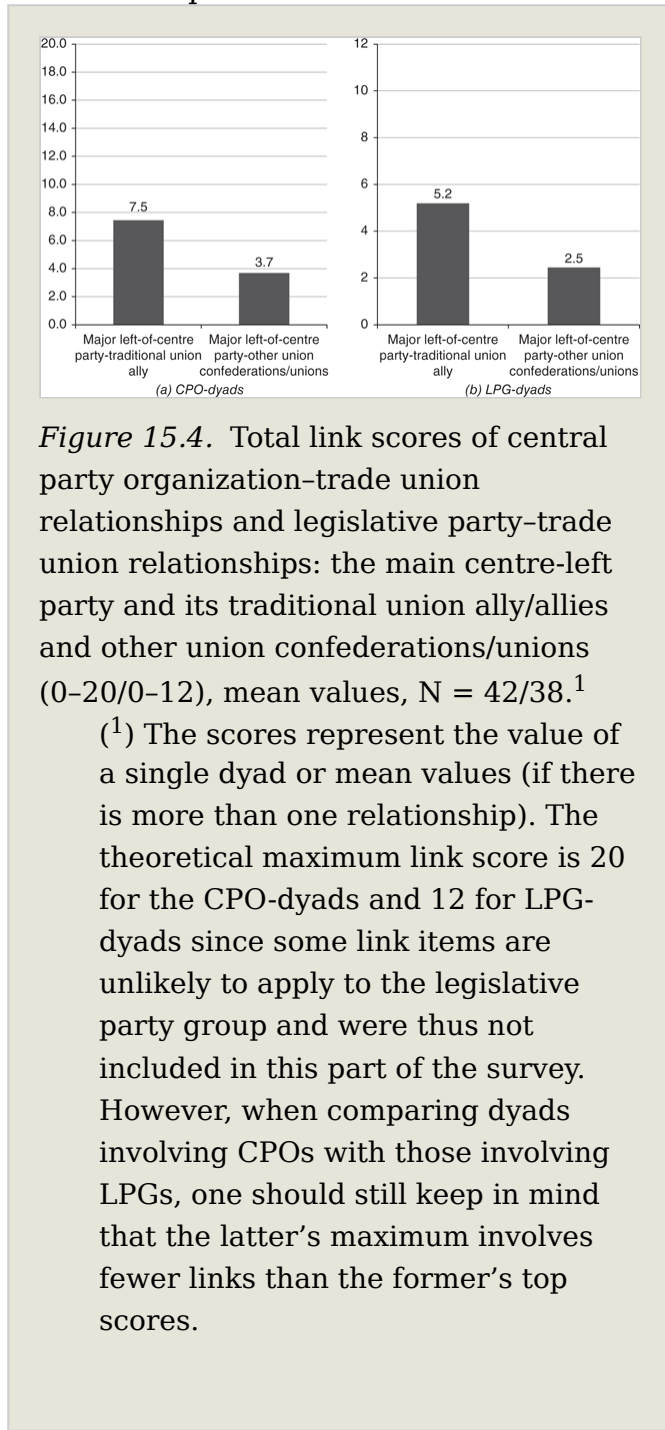


Figure 15.4. Total link scores of central party organization–trade union relationships and legislative party–trade union relationships: the main centre-left party and its traditional union ally/allies and other union confederations/unions (0–20/0–12), mean values, N = 42/38.¹

(¹) The scores represent the value of a single dyad or mean values (if there is more than one relationship). The theoretical maximum link score is 20 for the CPO-dyads and 12 for LPG-dyads since some link items are unlikely to apply to the legislative party group and were thus not included in this part of the survey. However, when comparing dyads involving CPOs with those involving LPGs, one should still keep in mind that the latter’s maximum involves fewer links than the former’s top scores.

shows the average scores of all these relationships. The average total link score is 3.7 and 2.5 for the CPO-dyads and the LPG-dyads respectively, and thus lower than for the traditional relationships.

Hence, the traditionally most intimate relationships, namely those involving today's major left-of-centre parties and their historical union allies, are generally closer in organizational terms than the relationships between the major left-of-centre parties and union confederations not belonging to the historical labour movement. However, on average, the differences are not huge.

(p.292) Variation Across and Within Countries

Figures 15.5 and 15.6 show how and to what extent traditionally close relationships differ across countries in terms of the strength of contemporary organizational links.

We see that the variation is significant: the scale value outside public office ranges from zero in the case of Labour-Histadrut (Israel) to 13 for SAP-LO (Sweden), followed by SPD-SAK in Finland and SP-SGB (Switzerland) on 12. The traditional party-union relationships in the United Kingdom (Labour-TUC/unions) have a score of 10 for the CPO relationship, but would score higher if we had removed the TUC, the non-affiliated union confederation, from the calculation: a score of only 4 points reflects the fact that there is no statutory and only one durable organizational link between TUC and Labour. The highest individual score in the dataset is, as already noted, obtained by Labour and the British union GMB (and, indeed, Unite if we were to use their combined score). Hence, we see

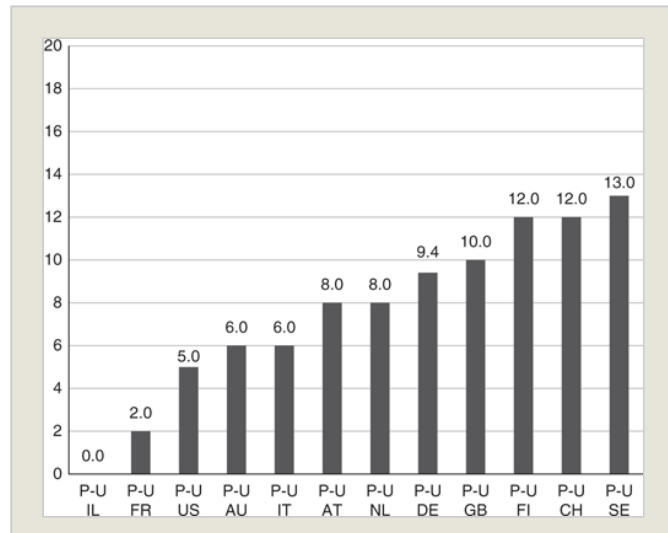


Figure 15.5. Total link scores of central party organization-trade union relationships: the major left-of-centre party and the traditional union ally/allies, by country (0-20), N = 20.¹

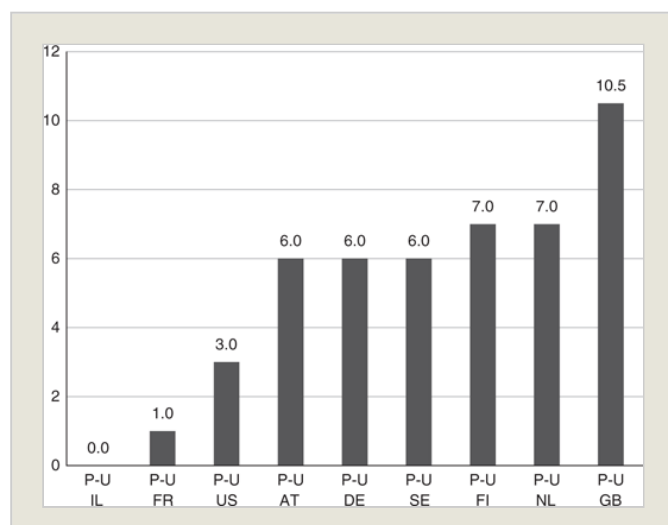
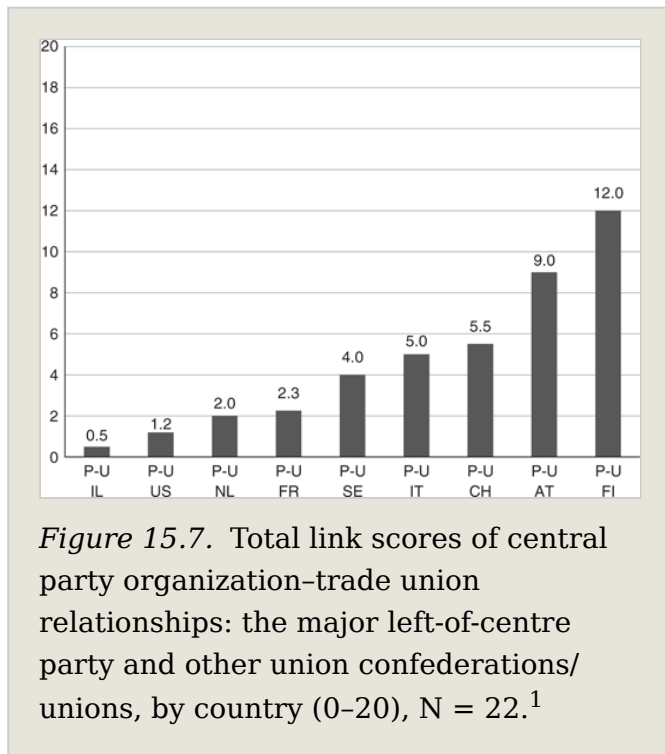


Figure 15.6. Total link scores of legislative party group-trade union

that what were historically very close relationships still seem to be characterized by fairly strong links today. At the mid-level, with a score ranging from 8 to 9.4, we find the traditional left-of-centre party-trade union relationships in Austria, Netherlands, and Germany.

In the case of the relationships involving the legislative party group, the scale value for the traditional relationships ranges from 0 in Israel (Labour-Histadrut), where there are barely any links, to 10.5 in the UK (Labour-TUC/unions).⁵ Overall, the differences in mean scores seem smaller than they do for the relationships between unions and party CPOs. For instance, neither Sweden nor Finland has a (much) higher score than the party-union dyad in the Netherlands, Austria, and Germany. However, as regards Germany's medium scores, one should recall that the scalability values of the German union/LPG-dyads are unimpressive (Chapter 2). This means that in these cases the link items relate somewhat differently than they do in the rest of the cases. Dyads are connected by statutory and/or durable links but not necessarily all those below the given level of institutionalization (see details in Chapter 7).

relationships: the major left-of-centre party and the traditional union ally/allies, by country (0-12), mean values, N = 16.¹
 (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 all countries: 7.5/5.2.



Turning to the relationships between the major left-of-centre parties and trade union confederations *without* historical roots in the labour movement, we see that links exist but that the relationships are less organizationally close across the board, both when it comes to the dyads involving central party organizations and to those involving legislative parties (Figures 15.7 and 15.8).⁶

However, there are two major exceptions—relationships in Finland and Austria. The links between the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and both the professional and managerial and professional confederations, STTK and AKAVA, adds up to an organizational scale value of 12—the same as the traditional relationship between SDP and SAK. We do not have an overall

(p.293) (p.294) (p.295) score for the relationship between the Austrian Social Democrats (SPÖ) and the major peak association ÖGB; but we see that the difference between the scores of the pairs which include the SPÖ and its traditional union ally, the blue-collar union PRO-GE, and the other—the large union GPA-djp—is minor. This finding is confirmed in Chapter 4, where additional interview data suggested that the party’s relationships with the two unions were not that different.

Note also that party-union relationships in Germany are not included because the only full-blown trade union confederation and all the major unions are traditional allies of the left-of-centre party, the SPD. Likewise, there are no union confederations/major unions in the UK apart from those which have enjoyed a close relationship with Labour. In Australia, major unions without roots in the labour movement are included in the study, but these dyads do not have a total score and are thus excluded from the cross-country analysis. Finally, in Israel we note that the Labour party has no organized links to its traditional ally, Histadrut, but one to the Koach LaOvdim.⁷ In other words, then, the conclusions

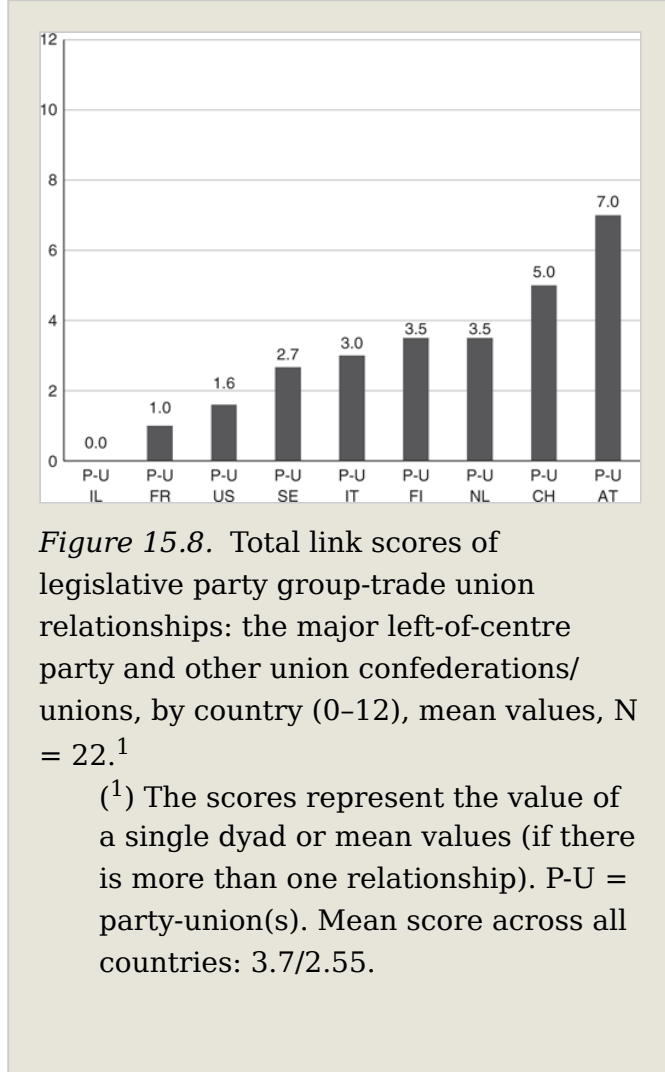


Figure 15.8. Total link scores of legislative party group-trade union relationships: the major left-of-centre party and other union confederations/unions, by country (0–12), mean values, N = 22.¹

(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 all countries: 3.7/2.55.

of the country chapters are borne out in our cross-country comparison focusing on the organizational link score.

To simplify, we will now look at the combined scores, across parties' central organization and legislative party group, for the party-union dyads by country (Figure 15.9). When it comes to the relationship between the major left-of-centre party and its traditional union ally, the highest scores are to be found in Sweden, Germany, Switzerland, Finland, and the UK. As noted previously, the highest individual score is obtained by two of the UK relationships, due to the existence of statutory links. It should be noted that relationships between the Australian Labor Party and formally affiliated unions are not included here due to missing values. The Australian score would probably have been significantly higher if it had proved possible to include these dyads. In Israel, we see—again—that any organizational relationships have come to an end. As far as links between the major left-of-centre party and *other* union confederation/unions go, we see—again—generally lower scores, with the exception of Finland.

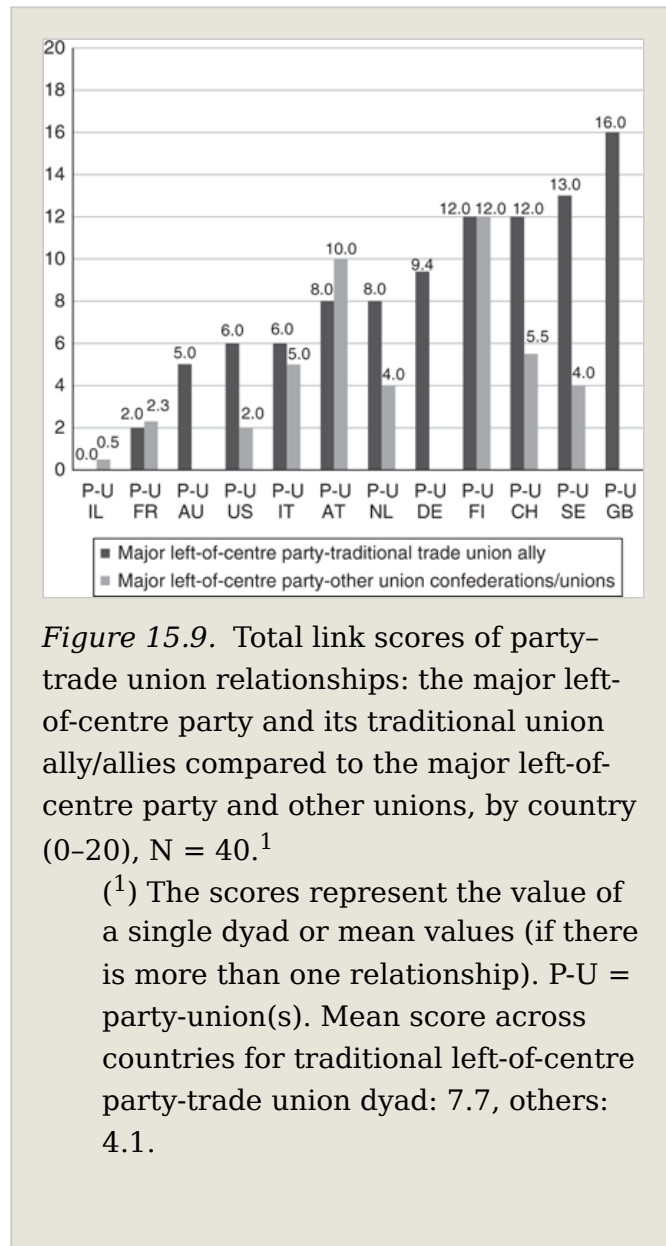


Figure 15.9. Total link scores of party-trade union relationships: the major left-of-centre party and its traditional union ally/allies compared to the major left-of-centre party and other unions, by country (0–20), N = 40.¹

(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.

Additional analysis, we should note, demonstrates that, in countries with surviving communist parties (Finland, France, Germany, Sweden, and Israel) the (former) communist parties' relationships with the traditionally leftist unions tend to obtain lower link scores than the dyads involving the major left-of-centre party—but not always. In Finland, the relationship between the parliamentary group of the other left party—VAS—and the SAK union federation actually achieves around the same score as the SDP-SAK dyad.

To display the variation across all the possible left-of-centre party-trade union dyads in every country studied here, box plots are helpful. Figure 15.10 (p.296) (p.297) shows that cross-nationally the median value for the dyads involving the central party organizations varies from 0 (Israel) to 10 (United Kingdom). That said, we also notice that the degree of within-country variation is significant. The left-of-centre party-union pairs in Austria, Germany, Israel, Italy, and the United States display no or limited variation, but in Finland, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Sweden, and the United Kingdom the variation is significant—and to some extent also in France. The range in the United Kingdom is due to the 'deviant' Labour-TUC relationship: the median score is clearly higher. Israel is also a case apart—an example of a transition to

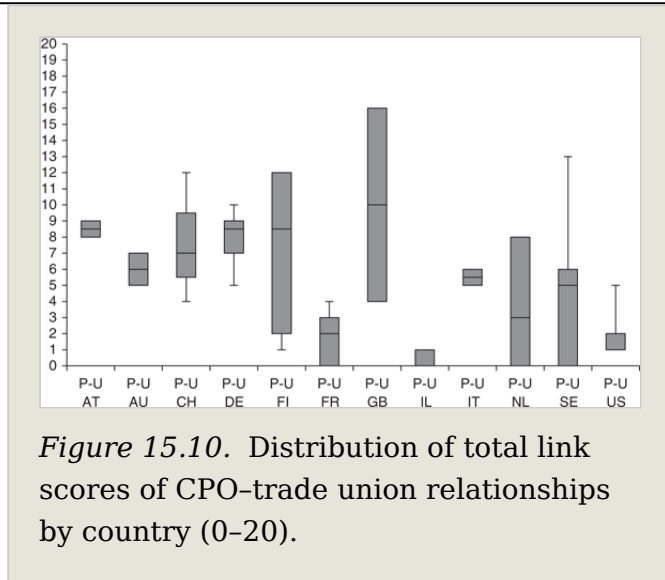


Figure 15.10. Distribution of total link scores of CPO-trade union relationships by country (0-20).

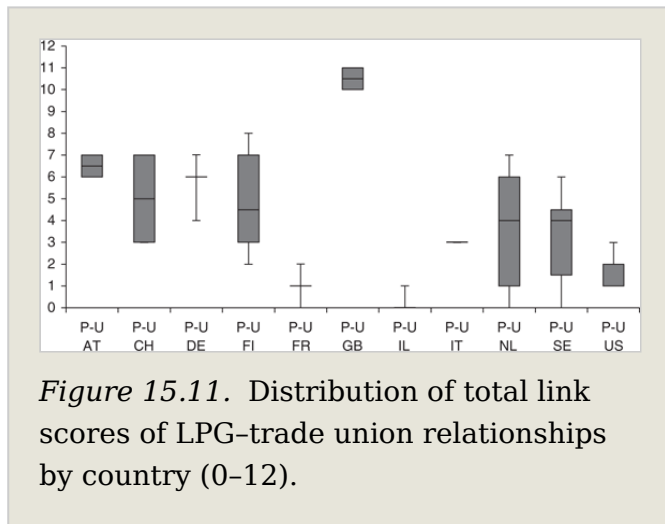


Figure 15.11. Distribution of total link scores of LPG-trade union relationships by country (0-12).

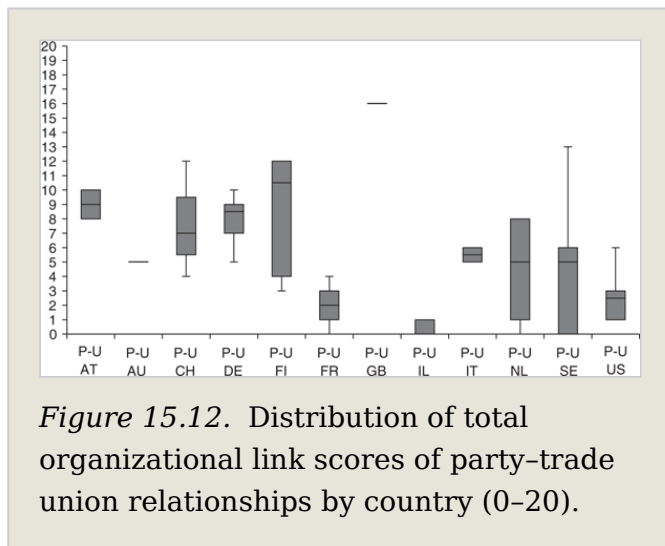


Figure 15.12. Distribution of total organizational link scores of party-trade union relationships by country (0-20).

almost complete detachment at the organizational level across all dyads. A similar pattern exists in the legislative sphere. As Figure 15.11 shows, the median value ranges from 0 in Israel to 10.5 in the UK. The TUC dyad is not included here, so we see limited variation among the party-union dyads in the United Kingdom, but again, significant variation in Finland, Netherlands, Switzerland, and Sweden.

We conclude by looking at the variation based on the combined party-union score (Figure 15.12). We notice that across countries the median value for the dyads still varies from 0 (party-union dyads in Israel) to 10 (party-union dyads in the UK). The figure confirms that the degree of within-country variation is considerable and follows the patterns mentioned above. However, the variation within the United States and Germany also appears somewhat more pronounced than for the separate organizational scores. Israel is certainly an example of barely any variation between party-union dyads at all, following a transition to nearly complete organizational detachment across the board.

(p.298) Individual-level Links: Personnel Overlaps and Transfers

Although our main focus is organizational, we also include less formal, but still politically relevant, links. While we cannot measure the intensity of informal contact, we can measure personnel overlaps/transfers that may well open up multiple opportunities for contact between decision makers. A high rate of transfers or overlaps of personnel between individual unions and confederations, on the one hand, and left-of-centre parties, on the other, would be another indication that the two sides of the labour movement are closer than many routinely assume. Moreover, we should try to look at the relationship *between* links at the organizational level and those materializing at the individual level: are statutory and inter-organizational links supplemented and reinforced by informal personnel links, or do such ties seem to be something which compensates for weak links at the organizational level?

Table 15.3. Share of MPs in 2013/14 that hold or have held positions as officials or staff in the confederations of unions at the national level¹

Party-confederation dyad	Major old left-of-centre party-traditional union ally	Major old left-of-centre party-other trade unions	Other left-of-centre party-traditional left-of-centre union ally	Other left-of-centre party-other trade unions	Average across dyads
Israel	0	n.d.	0	n.d.	–
France	0.3	0	0	0	0.1
Italy	1.2	0.5	n.d.	n.d.	–
Netherlands	2.6	2.6	10.5	5.2	3.0
Germany	7.9	1.6	3.2	0	3.2
Sweden	8	0	0	10.5	4.6
Finland	19	4.8	50	0	18.5
Switzerland	19.6	6.5	n.d.	n.d.	–

⁽¹⁾ Only permanent representatives and deputy representatives who attend the entire term are included. For term years, see country chapters. The Dutch and Swiss shares concern MPs in the lower house. The Italian shares concern MPs in both houses. The German shares include both national and state-level positions. N of old-left-of-centre party MPs is 15 in Israel, 295 in France, 415 in Italy, 38 in Netherlands, 191 in Germany, 112 in Sweden, 42 in Finland, and 46 in Switzerland. N of other left-of-centre party MPs is 6 in Israel, 9 in France, 19 in Netherlands, 64 in Germany, 19 in Sweden, and 14 in Finland. ‘n.d.’ means no data.

First, what did our country experts discover when it came to the individual level? It was clearly much easier for some to come up with reliable data than others: for example, those researching the question in the Netherlands could use a Parliamentary Documentation Centre whereas others had to rely on a multiplicity of more or less reliable sources including personal websites where what is displayed is up to the legislator him or herself. The results are summarized in Table 15.3 for cases where shares of MPs in 2013/14 that hold or have held positions as officials or staff in the confederations of unions at the national level were presented in a graph in the country chapters.

(p.299) It should be noted that not all these figures are directly comparable (see the notes beneath the table), but if we distinguish between weak (less than 10 per cent), medium (10–20 per cent), and strong (more than 20 per cent) links, we see that the major left-of-centre party (social democrats) and its traditional union ally have strong personnel ties in Finland and Switzerland, but that the strongest link is between the former communist party and the same trade unions in Finland (SAK): half of all Left Alliance (VAS) MPs had previously worked for SAK at the national level (but, of course, the total size of the latter's party group is also much smaller than the social democrats' number of MPs). The average across all dyads is as much as 18.5. It is also, according to Raunio and Laine (Chapter 5), very common for SDP officials to have worked previously for the traditional ally SAK, and vice versa. Two of the three most recent SDP party chairs are experienced trade union leaders.

Switzerland's Socialist Party seems to be maintaining its tradition of recruiting MPs with a background in the trade unions as well: fifteen of the forty-six members of the SP parliamentary party in the lower chamber (nearly 20 per cent) are, or have been, union officials at national *or* regional level. In the Senate, the proportion amounts to three out of eleven (see Chapter 12). Erne and Schief also emphasize noteworthy personnel overlaps at the very top-leadership level.

In Sweden, less than one in ten Social Democrat MPs in the 2010–14 parliament had worked for unions at the national level—but note that nearly 30 per cent had worked for them at the regional and local level (see Jansson, Chapter 11), so there is a question as to how big the difference between **(p.300)** Sweden and Switzerland actually is in this regard. Jansson also suggests that the quality of the data probably leads to underestimation, not the opposite. The average across dyads is about 5 per cent. That said, although the tradition of the LO chairman also being an SAP MP came to an end in the 1980s, Stefan Löfven was president of the metal workers union when he was elected SAP leader in 2012, becoming the first LO-affiliated union leader to become party leader in the party's long history.

In all other countries included in Table 15.3, there are few personnel overlaps and transfers (only weak links in this sense), although it should be noted that more MPs have a trade union background in Germany than in the Netherlands, Italy, France, or Israel. Figures from the Netherlands, taken from the 2013 parliament, show that only a handful of Labour Party and Socialist Party MPs have worked for trade unions on average. The numbers in Italy are similarly low, even if some of those with a union background hold relatively important positions in parliament. In France, too, only a handful of the nearly 300 Socialists in parliament in 2012 claimed to have worked for a union, although the Socialist government's recruitment of several union officials, albeit into mainly advisory roles, suggests that party-union relations may perhaps be closer than is commonly supposed, at least in this respect.

However, perhaps the strongest personnel links are to be found among parties and unions *not* included in the table? According to Larkin and Lees (Chapter 3), out of the eighty ALP members of the Australian Commonwealth Parliament, forty-three have previously worked for a union and/or ACTU in some capacity. Almost half of the ALP's MPs in the current parliament and almost all of its Senators—twenty-one out of a total of twenty-five—have previously worked for a union. Union officials are found both in the party leadership and in government. The authors conclude that a post of some sort in the unions' secretariat 'is probably the single most popular route to a seat in the Commonwealth parliament' (see Chapter 3 for a discussion of the organizational mechanism underpinning this recruitment pattern).

In Austria, we also find substantial personnel overlaps and transfers even if we do not have accurate figures for all dyad types. In the spring of 2014, some 27 per cent of SPÖ MPs held or had recently held positions as union officials or staff in sum. Five MPs were linked to the GPA-djp and four to the PRO-GE. Moreover, Chapter 4 shows that there are also personnel overlaps/transfers at the highest executive level of SPÖ and in government.

In contrast, Bale and Webb (Chapter 13) show that, until the election of Jeremy Corbyn (who had worked decades earlier as a union organizer) in 2015, the British Labour Party had not been led by anyone with a trade union background since Jim Callaghan (who had worked for a union as a young man before the Second World War) forty years previously. That said, in 2014 around a fifth of the 'shadow cabinet'—the parliamentary group awarded opposition portfolios by the Labour leader—appeared to have worked for **(p.301)** trade unions before becoming MPs. More anecdotal evidence suggests a more two-way flow of personnel at the headquarters level, personified by the party's general secretary, who, after a career that began in student union politics, moved on to the Labour Party and then back into the union movement with the GMB, before being appointed to head up party HQ in 2011 (see Bale and Webb, Chapter 13). In the US, if there were ever many Democratic members of the House or the Senate

with a union background they are—predictably enough given the very strong contemporary bias towards professional (and rich) candidates—very thin on the ground nowadays (see Witko, Chapter 14).

All in all, then, what we can probably say with some degree of confidence is that Australia, Austria, and Finland on the one hand, and Israel, France, and perhaps the US on the other, represent the opposite ends of the spectrum when it comes to personnel links. By and large, the dyads with the highest organizational link scores also tend to have strong links at the individual level, with the notable exception of the parties and major unions in the United Kingdom. Moreover, we see that the traditional party–union relationships in Australia and Austria strengthen their connection through personnel overlaps and transfer: while they have medium-level organizational scores they have perhaps the strongest personnel links. However, we also know that the organizational data are far from complete in these cases. Hence, albeit with a note of caution, we may perhaps conclude that, even if personnel overlaps and transfers may historically have compensated for limited formal links, this is not the case today. Indeed, if anything it seems as if links at the organizational level are positively correlated with links at the individual level among the established left-of-centre parties and trade unions.

Table 15.4. Changes in personnel overlaps and transfers at the national level over time: major left-of-centre party-traditional union ally and other left-of-centre party-traditional union ally (%)

	SDP-SAK (Finland)	VAS-SAK (Finland)	PvdA-NVV/FNV ¹ (Netherlands)	SAP-LO (Sweden)	VP-LO (Sweden)	Labour- Histadrut (Israel)	Meretz- Histadrut (Israel)
1960s	–	–	18	–	–	–	–
1970s	–	–	8	11	0	44	25
1990s	–	–	14	–	–	46	25
2000s	53	42	11	–	–	–	–
2010s	19	50	9	8	0	0	0

(¹) The secular, socialist Dutch Trade Union Confederation (*Nederlands Verbond van Vakverenigingen*, NVV) aligned with the PvdA, merged with the Catholic *Nederlands Katholiek Vakverbond* NKV to form the FNV in 1982.

When we look at the few available time series on the union background of MPs, we also see an overall decline (Table 15.4). We see that the links between the major old left-of-centre party (SDP) and its traditional union ally (SAK) in (p. 302) Finland have declined from above 50 to 20 per cent since the turn of the millennium (whereas as the left party's share has increased somewhat). The share of Swedish social democratic MPs with backgrounds in the SAP's traditional ally (LO and its affiliates) at the national level has not changed much since the 1970s, although, in contrast to Finland, there seem to have been no such overlaps between the former communist party and the main union confederation.

In the Netherlands, the share of PvdA MPs holding or having held positions in the confederation NVV has declined from 18 to 9 per cent since the 1960s. And, once again, the Israeli case provides a paradigmatic example of precipitous decline. In the mid-1990s, as in the early 1970s, nearly half of all Labour members (and a quarter of all Meretz members) of the Knesset had worked for the trade unions. By the second decade of the twenty-first century, not one of the (admittedly much smaller) parliamentary delegation of either party had done so.

Rating of Overall Organizational Closeness/Distance by Actors

So far the findings have been developed from scales and scores based on technical information about organizational arrangements, routines, and personnel. Does the picture change at all if we ask parties and unions (the key informants) about their own, necessarily more subjective perceptions?

To find out, we asked, 'Overall, how would you rate your party's degree of organizational closeness to/distance from the following confederations/unions in the last five years?' The response categories ranged from 'distant/separated' to 'integrated', and we asked respondents to report the '*the prevailing view within your party*' in order to minimize the subjective element. The results are presented in Figure 15.13. As both the CPO and the LPG was asked about the party as whole, there is only one column per party (see figure note).

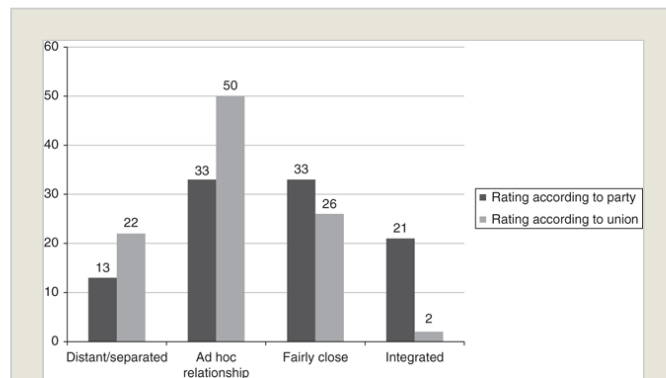


Figure 15.13. Share of parties/unions reporting the different overall degrees of closeness/distance of party-trade union relationships the last five years (c.2008–13), N = 65.¹

(¹) The party ratings reflect the mean value of the central party organization's and the legislative party's ratings. If the party ratings differed, the mean value has been rounded up (e.g. if the central party

Across all left-of-centre party-union dyads, about 20 per cent of them are reported to be involved in an 'integrated' relationship and 30 per cent in a 'fairly close' one. Hence, the reported party perceptions tend to imply a higher general level of closeness than our organizational scores. Fewer unions, however, report integrated and fairly close relationships, suggesting that the most common relationship is 'ad hoc', i.e. based on occasional links. Interestingly, on both sides, there seem to be few relationships that are perceived as distant or marked

by complete detachment. Overall, the key informants' own assessments confirm that many left-of-centre parties and trade union confederations are involved in active relationships today, and that a significant number of these party-union dyads enjoy fairly strong or very strong links.

organization rated the relationship as distant/separated and the legislative party as ad hoc, the party's rating is ad hoc). In two cases, the answers differed with more than one category: Austria's SPÖ-GÖD (fairly close (CPO) vs distant/separated (LPG)), and Netherlands' PvdA-MHP (distant/separated (CPO) vs fairly close (LPG)). Then we chose the alternative in the middle. If only either the central party organization or the legislative party group answered the question, the rating reflects that answer. This is the case for eighteen of the party ratings.

(p.303) To measure the exact correlation between the actors' rating and the organizational scale value we computed a measure based on the average of the LPG and CPO value and then the mean value of this party and the union score, and correlated this with the combined organizational score for the LPG and CPO. The result was a Pearson coefficient of 0.646 (significant at the 0.01 level). The correlation is similar if we look at the dyads involving CPO and the average of the party-union rating separately (0.645) and slightly lower if we only examine the correlation of the LPG-union relationships (0.621) (significant at the 0.01 level) (table not shown). In other words, the correlations are significant but far from absolute. Given that we explicitly asked the respondents to take into account individual-level contacts as well as organizational links, this is no big surprise. The most important finding is that actors consider themselves to be involved in more or less institutionalized relationships.

If we zoom in on the relationship between the major left-of-centre party and its traditional union ally/allies (Figure 15.14), the findings also echo the general tendencies revealed by our organizational mapping: in other words, we see that the answers indicate a similar although not identical order of countries (Figure 15.9). The relationship between the Swedish SAP and LO (**p.304**) comes top, followed by the UK Labour Party's traditional relationships, and then those enjoyed by the Finnish and Swiss. We should of course not read too much into this, but given the description provided by Jansson's country analysis of the Swedish case(s) (Chapter 11), it does not come as a surprise that the two sides still consider themselves to be closely aligned, and perhaps involved in a less contentious alliance than the British Labour Party and unions. The other changes in the rank order might reflect the fact that substantial informal interaction exists, or that the baseline for comparison used is perhaps more national than international.

It may also be worth noting that the German party and unions do not agree: the party informant suggests that the relationship is integrated, whereas the unions believe 'ad hoc' or 'fairly close' would be more accurate. Hence, as is the case when it comes to our more 'objective' organizational scores from Germany, it is difficult to decide exactly what characterizes the German dyads in comparative perspective. The most striking

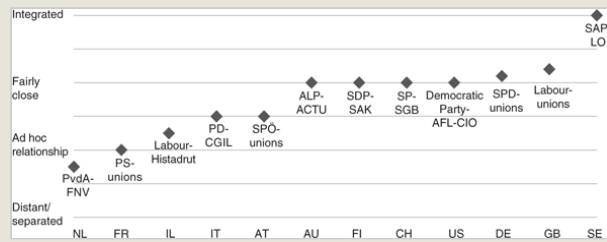


Figure 15.14. Rating of overall degree of closeness/distance (average score) between the major old left-of-centre party and its traditional union ally/allies, last five years (c.2008-13).¹

(1) The ratings represent the value of a single dyad or mean values (if there is more than one relationship). The mean value is calculated based on the union's rating and the mean value of the central party organization's and the legislative party's rating. The central party organization's and the legislative party's ratings differed in two cases: Austria's SPÖ-PRO-GE (fairly close (CPO) vs ad hoc (LPG)), and Netherlands' PvdA-FNV (ad hoc (CPO) vs distant/separated (LPG)). If only either the central party organization or the legislative party group answered the question, the rating reflects that answer. This is the case for Germany, Israel, and the United Kingdom. The American, Australian, and French ratings reflect the union's rating only (the party's rating is missing). For one of the two Austrian dyads, the union's rating is missing.

difference from the organizational scores, however, is the US score: the union confederation AFL-CIO reports having a 'fairly close relationship' with the Democratic Party despite weak organizational links and relatively few personnel overlaps and transfers. However, with no data from the party side, we cannot read much into this other than to note the possibility (no more than that) that significant informal interaction occurs at the individual level.

We might also note that in the Netherlands, PvdA and FNV report something in-between a distant and ad hoc relationship, despite having nearly as **(p.305)** many organizational links as the German SPD-DGB dyad. In Italy, the CGIL considers its relationship with PD to be 'fairly close', whereas the party rate it as an 'ad hoc relationship', in line with the organizational score. Finally, we see that the relationships between the Austrian SPÖ, PRO-GE, and ÖGB are considered to be in-between fairly close to ad hoc, but both the party and union side consider the SPÖ and ÖGB, the traditional left-of-centre party-union confederation alliance, to enjoy a fairly close relationship. As we learned from Chapter 4, the complex partisan nature of the Austrian ÖGB and unions complicates the assessment, but given the organizational links and personnel overlaps that exist, 'fairly close' seems a more accurate description of these relationships than 'ad hoc'. Interestingly, though, not one of the traditional pairs of party and union confederation/unions consistently describes their relationship as distant/separated.

Weaker Links, Wider Networks?

Taken together, the country case studies and the comparative analysis suggest that a few traditional party-union relationships have declined significantly, but also that several are still close—and that organizational links also exist between old left-of-centre parties and trade union confederations (or major unions) without roots in what was traditionally thought of as 'the labour movement'. Empirical assessment of the contemporary strength/weakness of links—from the well organized to the informal—reveals considerable variation across and within countries. Those with the most 'institutionalized' relationships also tend to have stronger informal links when it comes to personnel overlaps and transfers. In general, the organizational links between parties' central offices—their HQs—and trade unions are stronger than the ones between the legislative party groups and trade unions, although we also saw that there is a strong correlation between them.

When asked about whether the relationships had changed or not in the last ten years, the key party/union informants who did respond do not consistently report 'increased distance'. To some extent, answers vary between the two sides of specific dyads, emphasizing that we need to interpret the results with a degree of caution (table not shown). Still, it is worth noting that only in about a third of the pairs involving the major left-of-centre party's CPO and its traditional ally/allies, did *both sides* report 'a more distant relationship' (or one did while the

other didn't respond).⁸ Only in *one* case where the CPO answered 'more distant' did the LPG informant disagree. Thus, the party-union survey suggests that, with one or two notable exceptions, we are *not* about to witness a general disintegration of previously intimate relationships between parties and trade unions.

Table 15.5. Existence of links between trade union confederation/union and (any) other parties during the last five years (c.2008-13), according to trade union (%)¹

Variable (link items)	Union-other parties' CPO			Union-other parties' LPG		
	Yes	No	Unclear	Yes	No	Unclear
Tacit agreement about mutual representation	0	64.2	35.8	0	50.9	49.1
Permanent joint committee(s)	0	64.2	35.8	0	50.9	49.1
Temporary joint committee(s)	0	62.3	37.7	0	50.9	49.1
Formal agreement about regular meetings	0	64.2	35.8	1.9	49.1	49.1
Tacit agreement about regular meetings	5.7	58.5	35.8	5.7	45.3	49.1
Joint conferences	3.8	60.4	35.8	0	49.1	50.9
Joint campaigns	5.7	58.5	35.8	1.9	47.2	50.9
Party invited to union's conference	32.1	30.2	37.7	20.8	30.2	49.1

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Variable (link items)	Union-other parties' CPO			Union-other parties' LPG		
Union invited to party's conference	32.1	32.1	35.8	N/A	N/A	N/A
Union invited to party's ordinary meetings, seminars, etc.	24.5	30.2	45.3	11.3	32.1	56.6
Party invited to union's ordinary meetings, seminars, etc.	20.8	34.0	45.3	11.3	30.2	58.5
Union invited to party's special consultative arrangements	28.3	34.0	37.7	20.8	26.4	52.8
Party invited to union's special consultative arrangements	20.8	41.5	37.7	11.3	35.8	52.8
N	53			53		

(¹) The number of unions with missing data on at least one link item is pretty high (about 50 per cent), so we have not calculated total scores and simply show the percentage that reported having different types of links with other parties' central organization or legislative party group (one or more parties).

(p.306) Seen from the party side, we may conclude that, in the second decade of the twenty-first century, a few established left-of-centre parties have a distant organizational relationship with trade unions, whereas others maintain medium-level links or even strong ones. Many of these parties also enjoy organized contacts with organizations other than their traditional ally/allies. A good number and variety of unions are linked to a given left-of-centre party through at least 'occasional' links, and unions are sometimes linked to more than one left-of-centre party. However, the connections tend to be stronger among the traditional partners of the old labour movement, than in other/newer relationships. The networks have become wider on the left-of-centre but there are still some 'special relationships' around.

A look at the trade union confederations' reports on links with parties other than the left-of-centre parties and the centre-right with a history of ties to particular unions (Netherlands, Switzerland, and Israel),⁹ confirms the impression that old and new acquaintances have yet to be put on an equal footing (Table 15.5). The strongest type of link that exists in this second set of **(p.307)** relationships is a tacit agreement about regular meetings, and only in about 6 per cent (i.e. three) of the cases. We see that occasional (event-oriented) links are more common, but not more than 20–30 per cent of the unions report being invited or inviting other parties to party/union arrangements like congresses and seminars (compared to 40–70 per cent for the established left-of-centre parties, see Chapter 2). Hence, some but not all unions have an organizational network reaching outside the left and centre-left, but existing links to other parties seem generally weaker. In short, there seems to be in most of the countries studied here, an 'inner core' of more strongly linked party-union dyads.

Conclusion

Party-union relationships consist of links that connect decision-makers on both sides. Using a novel comparative dyadic dataset covering twelve countries across three continents, we have assessed the strength of such links among left-of-centre parties and confederations of trade unions and/or major individual unions. We have shown that, even if previous research suggests that traditional party-union allies in these countries have moved apart, they are in many cases still involved with each other. The story is not the same everywhere, but that very variation is enough to question the existence (or at least the strength) of a general trend towards distance and drift.

Links still very much exist. Indeed, some are widespread. True, overlapping organizational structures are rare these days. But what we term 'durable links', rather than simply event-based 'occasional links', are still in evidence, although these are more common between unions and parties' central organization (i.e. their headquarters) than between unions and parties' parliamentary/legislative groups. In short, left-of-centre parties and unions that were once close are rarely completely estranged and a few remain almost as bound up with each other

organizationally as they ever were. Even where parties have established links to unions other than their traditional ally (as the catch-all party and related theses would predict), they do not seem to have put them on an equal footing. Hence, by and large, our first hypothesis (H1) receives considerable support: the links between old left-of-centre parties and trade unions are generally not very strong, but significant variation exists in the strength of links, and in the range of each side's relationships with others, both within and across countries.

We have also examined the connection between *different kinds/types of links* and found that party-union relationships vary along a one-dimensional scale of organizational closeness/distance. Permanent/durable links indicating a particularly high degree of institutionalization are not that widespread these days, but the parties and unions that do still have them also have the kinds of **(p.308)** occasional, weaker organizational links which are nowadays more common. In other words, the latter complement rather than replace the former.

Moreover, the available data on personnel overlaps and transfers suggest that links at the organizational level are positively correlated with links at the individual level among the old left-of-centre parties and trade unions. However, our main aim has been to examine to what extent left-of-centre parties and trade unions are interlinked by organized mechanisms. Of course, regular contact might occur, and some personnel overlaps may exist within party-union dyads which score low on the extent to which organized arrangements connect them. Future research should therefore look further at this individual level, and explore more thoroughly whether informal links may compensate for weak organizational links or are instead part of a single scale of closeness in the organizational sense. Unions' and parties' own subjective perceptions of closeness/distance suggested coherence, but also showed that some felt closer to each other than the arguably more objective measures suggested they would. Perhaps emotional commitments are sometimes stronger than organizational ties.

When comparing party-union dyads, we see above all that the relationships between the major left-of-centre parties and their traditional union allies, across parties' central organizations and legislative party groups, is organizationally closer than the relationships between these parties and other unions. Certainly, the relationship between a country's major left-of-centre party and union confederations without historical roots in the labour movement are more distant. We have also shown that these traditional relationships remain closer in the Nordic countries and in Australia, the UK, Switzerland, Germany, and probably also Austria, than in the other countries in continental Europe and the US. In Israel, relationships barely exist anymore.

The country differences more-or-less echo well-known historical differences: the most intimate party-union relationships are still to be found in Northern Europe, in the United Kingdom and Scandinavia, followed by Switzerland, Germany, and probably Austria, as well as in the Commonwealth country, Australia. In predominantly Catholic nations like France (and Italy), where relationships have historically been less institutionalized, the links are (still) much weaker. Austria, the Netherlands, and Switzerland are countries traditionally split along religious lines, but seem to have taken somewhat different paths. Links are largely maintained in Switzerland and so far also in Austria, but have declined significantly in the Netherlands. In the US, the relationship between the Democrats and trade unions seems to have declined even further than was once the case. In Israel, the traditional relationships are clearly not what they were: indeed, the links have radically decayed.

This is not to say that what we have observed here is simply a legacy of the past. In Chapter 16 we move on to summarize systematically what the country studies suggest might explain these changes in the relationships between the major left-of-centre parties and, primarily, their traditional union allies. Just as **(p.309)** importantly, we run a cross-sectional analysis based on the additive scores presented in this chapter in order to test the exchange model hypotheses presented in Chapter 1.

Notes:

- (1.) As noted in Chapter 2, all these datasets, and questionnaires and code books, will be made publicly available via Elin H. Allern's university website <<http://www.sv.uio.no/isv/english/people/aca/elinal/>>.
- (2.) See Chapter 4 for details on how the country expert has handled the multi-partisan nature of the peak association/unions at large.
- (3.) We computed this combined score by assigning a value of 1 if a union link exists either with the LPG or the CPO and by assigning a 0 if there is no link with either of them. For other cases, namely where there is a 0 ('no link') and at least one entry of 'unclear/don't know' as coded judgement, a missing value is entered. As shown in Chapter 2, these items scale very well ($H = 0.80$).
- (4.) The coding has been done by the country experts. We focus on the main left-of-centre party in all countries even if unions were, historically, perhaps most closely aligned with communist parties in France and Italy for sake of contemporary relevance.
- (5.) The high score for the UK probably reflects the fact that the TUC is excluded from the analysis in the case of the LPG due to 'unclear values'.

(6.) By 'other union confederations/unions' we mean a confederation/union that is not known for having a fairly close/close relationship with the one or more old left-of-centre party or a centre-right party historically (the first union unit(s) we identified in each country). The coding has been done by the country experts.

(7.) Invitations to organizations regarding special consultative arrangements initiated by the party.

(8.) The two dyads where both sides reported the relationship to have become more distant in the last ten years were PvdA-FNV (Netherlands) and Labour-GMB UK).

(9.) We asked about links with Christian Democrats separately in countries with a history of such relationships.

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