Inside the Cartel Party:

Party Organization in Government and Opposition

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Abstract
This paper assesses the internal dynamics of the cartel party model. It argues that a party’s endeavour to increase its societal reach by opening membership boundaries, while keeping candidate selection local (two tendencies ascribed to this model) and the general need to maintain party unity are difficult to reconcile. Therefore a fully-fledged cartel party is organizationally vulnerable which reinforces its resort to selective benefits (i.e. political appointments, patronage) whenever in government to satisfy organizational demands, a trigger intensifying party-state relations which is usually overlooked.

Further, the dominant view of the ascendancy of parties’ ‘public face’ needs to be qualified: The Irish Fianna Fáil, with its permeable boundaries and local candidate selection, reflects the cartel party model without a cartel on the party system level. Majoritarian dynamics have forced Fianna Fáil repeatedly into opposition which reveals the following: Fianna Fáil as cartel party can afford to neglect its infrastructure on the ground as long as controlling government resources. In opposition its leadership initiates reforms to re-invigorate the party’s infrastructure pressed to generate organizational support through other means than distributing benefits.

Keywords
Cartel party, party models, party organization, organizational reform, Ireland, Fianna Fáil

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I. The Internal Life of the Cartel Party Model – A Neglected Perspective

It has long been a dominant tradition in party research to consider political parties as agents of society, as voluntary associations which articulate, aggregate and represent citizen interests. During the last decade this tradition has been increasingly questioned. Parties are perceived as driven by the professional calculus of their elites and as built upon the distribution of selective benefits rather than ideological beliefs. Correspondingly, work on state funding of parties has grown tremendously (e.g. Biezen 2003a; Hopkin 2004). Similarly, party patronage as a means to generate and to reward support has undergone a revival (e.g. Ignazi et al. 2005; Kopecký and Mair 2006).

As one trigger of this changing perception, Katz and Mair’s cartel party (1995) has become one of the party models most frequently referred to as a blueprint for contemporary parties. Although the cartel party argument has undergone critique (e.g. Koole 1996; Kitschelt 2000) or has been refined when applied outside Western Europe (Biezen 2003b), cartel-like tendencies have been observed in many European party systems (e.g. Lawson and Poguntke 2004; Blyth and Katz 2005) and beyond (Yishai 2001). However, while cross-national studies find that parties tend to approach the cartel model in their external relations (increasing dependency on state resources and weakening ties to societal actors such as interest groups), they do so less in their intra-organizational features (Detterbeck 2002: 289). 1

Hence, notwithstanding the prominence of the approach, it is surprising that one major claim has not received much criticism: namely that it is parties’ changing relations to society and to the state which function as triggers for the transformation from the catch-all to the cartel model as two distinct intra-organizational constellations (see for exceptions Koole 1996; Kitschelt 2000). In this regard, Koole’s critique is particularly telling who argued that the cartel party hypothesis as presented in 1995 does not sufficiently separate party system

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1 Detterbeck (2002) examined the argument regarding the developments of the two main parties in Germany, Denmark, UK and Switzerland from 1960-99.
features from intra-party features (1996: 508). Katz and Mair aimed at capturing the impact of parties’ growing dependency on state resources as properties shared by the major parties in a party system on intra-party characteristics, i.e. the declining organizational relevance of mass membership from the viewpoint of party elites on the level of the individual party (1996: 526; also Katz and Mair 2002; 2006; Mair and Biezen 2000). They depict the emergence of the cartel party as a reaction to fundamental changes in democratic competition characterized, for instance, by rapidly increasing costs of electoral campaigning. Thus, changes on the ‘macro level’ to which a party as agent responds are thought to feed back into the internal life of the individual party organization (Katz and Mair 2006: 8-10; Mair 2005: 17-18).

In contrast, this paper turns the argument around and argues that the tightening of party-state linkages can be equally read as a response to the vulnerability of the cartel party as organizational actor. More than other party models, it needs outside resources to generate internal support which reinforces its resort to selective benefits (i.e. political appointments, patronage). This vulnerability roots in the tension between the endeavour to increase its societal reach by opening membership boundaries, while keeping candidate selection local (two tendencies ascribed to the model) and the general need to maintain party unity.

The triggers for intensifying party-state linkages which are rooted in the organizational model itself have been so far overlooked. Flowing from empirical generalizations, Katz and Mair laid out a set of intra-organizational features of the cartel party of the cartel party (1995: 18, Table 1). Observing individual features across a range of countries, scholars have not paid

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2 Note that whether there is a direct and inverse relationship between increasing state funding and declining membership is an open debate. Membership figures might simply decline due to societal individualization and parties try to compensate for their losses through other sources of income. Pelizzo, for instance, argues that German parties, due to stronger linkages to society (measured based on the relative weight of membership fees compared to state funding for party income), have not become as fiscally dependent on state funding as Italian parties with much weaker societal linkages (2004: 138). However, this interpretation is problematic since in Germany – due to constitutional restrictions – the overall party income is simply not allowed to be made up by state subventions by more than 50%. And Pelizzo insists that constitutional barriers (that are absent in Italy) played the major role in explaining why German parties did not become ingrained in the state completely (2004: 134; 137). Thus, an alternative yet opposite interpretation of this finding would be that the intense regulation of parties (also a tendency ascribed to cartelization) is – depending on the content of these regulations – clearly compatible with maintaining societal linkages as indicated by the German case. Evidently, further comparative research is needed to explore the way in which relations of parties to society and to the state are linked.
much attention to the internal consistency of this inductively formulated model (exceptions are Biezen 2000; Carty 2004; Katz 2001). When checking for the empirical occurrence of individual properties, one easily neglects the question of how these properties co-exist or interact within the individual party organization as a (supposedly coherent) collective body. Furthermore, it is one thing to assess the relative power distribution between party subunits which is common in the literature. It is a very different thing to ask how organizational dynamics within one arm of the party affect the internal life of the other arm, a perspective which leads to a more differentiated picture of the ascendancy of the party in public office as hypothesized by the cartel party approach. Identifying the model’s internal tensions, the paper argues that the claimed ascendancy of cartel parties’ ‘public face’ needs to be qualified.

In a first step, the paper unpacks the cartel party model. It starts out from the individual party as unit of analysis and points to the two constitutive dimensions which define the cartel party as organizational actor (II.). Comparing the cartel party’s internal dynamics with its three predecessors – the cadre, mass and catch-all party – reveals that imagining the cartel party ‘ideal-typically’, party unity in public office risks erosion when organizational boundaries are fluid and national elites cease to influence candidate selection (III.). It leads to the hypothesis that only a cartel party in government with broad access to selective benefits (i.e. political appointments, patronage) can afford neglecting its infrastructure outside public office. In opposition, it needs to strengthen its infrastructure to generate support intra-organizationally (IV.). An in-depth analysis of the Irish Fianna Fáil party (FF), with its permeable boundaries and local candidate selection a reflection of the cartel party model, substantiates the hypothesis empirically. It compares FF strategies to keep the party together in times of government and in opposition as periods in which access to resources is open as opposed to periods in which it is closed. The analysis reveals cycles of reform with organization-building
intensifying in opposition and declining in government (V.). The conclusion discusses the results’ general repercussions and points to future lines of research (VI.).

II. The Core Properties of the Cartel Party Model

To understand the intra-organizational tensions lying at the heart of the cartel party model, it is useful to contrast the properties of the cartel party with the properties of its predecessor, the catch-all party. While the catch-all party still can be considered as an intra-organizational equilibrium, this equilibrium gets increasingly under stress imagining the cartel party with all its features fully-fledged. The following table (based on Katz and Mair 1995: 18, Table 1) sums up the core properties characterizing the internal life of the two party models:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal goals of politics</th>
<th>Catch-all Party</th>
<th>Cartel Party</th>
<th>Type of Shift between Models</th>
<th>Reference Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basis of party competition</td>
<td>Policy effectiveness</td>
<td>Managerial skills, efficiency</td>
<td>Qualitative shift</td>
<td>System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of party work and party campaigning</td>
<td>Both labour and capital intensive</td>
<td>Capital intensive</td>
<td>Intensification of tendency in predecessor model</td>
<td>Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal source of party’s resources</td>
<td>Contributions from a wide variety of sources</td>
<td>State subventions</td>
<td>Intensification of tendency in predecessor model</td>
<td>Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relations between ordinary members and party elite</td>
<td>Top down; members are organized cheerleaders for elite</td>
<td>Stratarchy; mutual autonomy</td>
<td>Qualitative shift</td>
<td>Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character of membership</td>
<td>Membership open to all (heterogeneous) and encouraged; rights emphasized but not obligations</td>
<td>Neither rights nor obligations important (distinction between member and non-members blurred); emphasis on members as individuals rather than as an organized body</td>
<td>Qualitative shift</td>
<td>Party</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some of the features imply the intensification or strengthening of ‘catch-all features’ (such as the increasing role of state resources comparing catch-all and cartel model). Some others imply qualitative organizational changes clearly separating the two models from each other. Moreover, some properties refer to the system level, the context in which individual parties are embedded (i.e. the nature of party competition), while others refer to the individual parties as a unit of analysis (i.e. strataarchy).
To understand the tensions inside the cartel party model transcending a gradual intensification of the catch-all model, we need to focus on a) features which represent a qualitative shift in core properties and b) features which refer to the individual party as reference category. These are the stratalarchical relations between party elites and the local branches and the permeable character of membership boundaries (see italics Table 1). They are core properties and the dynamics between them reveal a challenge which modern parties increasingly face: the tension between increasing societal reach reflected in the blurring of organizational boundaries and the need to maintain party unity within and across a party’s different organizational branches despite decentralized selection processes.

III. Two Dimensions of Intra-Organizational Control: A Classification of Party Models

Defining a party’s societal reach (corresponding to the character of membership in the cartel model) and assuring party unity in public office (corresponding to the cartel model’s stratalarchical organization) reflect dimensions of organizational control. Both affect the internal dynamics and, with it, the costs to maintain a party as organizational actor and therefore can be used to characterize the four generic party models – from the cadre to the catch-all party.

A party’s societal reach refers to the degree to which a party controls its organizational boundaries and attempts to steer organizational entry and exit by attaching privileges or duties to membership. The concept draws on grid/group theory which defines ‘group’ as a continuum of social incorporation (referring to the claims a group can make towards its members and the rights it assigns to them). This continuum ranges from open ego-centric networks with weak member loyalties to closed organizations with strong loyalties (Douglas 1982: 190-2; also Douglas and Wildavsky 1982: 138-9). The latter type of organization grants membership only to a specific group. Societal reach is narrow. Intra-organizational repercussions are, first, that members will be quite homogeneous in their
preferences. Hence, to reconcile their demands is not too difficult. Second, membership as a collective asset will be of greater value since others are excluded from it. The need for selective incentives to assure member loyalty is reduced. Third, the party leadership can expel those members (inside and outside public office) who are violating core conditions for membership. The costs of keeping the organization together are comparatively low. Vice versa, if neither privileges nor duties are attached to membership, societal reach is high. Members hold heterogeneous preferences. Since member and supporter status becomes indistinguishable and organizational entry and exit are virtually costless, organizational loyalty is easily undermined (Hirschman 1970). The costs of keeping the organization together are comparatively high.

Low cohesion of the party as a whole (including electorate and membership) invited by open boundaries does not necessarily affect the unity of the party in public office. Here the second dimension – the *intra-organizational control over the party in public office*, in particular the parliamentary party, comes in. Whether heterogeneity of the overall party implies the heterogeneity of MPs depends on the more specific capacity of the national party leadership to assure the unity of the parliamentary party (Katz 2001). Candidate selection is a core mechanism to assure the cohesion of MPs (through pre-selection) and their discipline (through out-sorting rebels) and is most effective when the national leadership selects candidates directly. Leadership control disappears if the broader membership or even citizens are involved in candidate selection (Sieberer 2006: 154). Then, the heterogeneity of the selectors feeds into the heterogeneity of the candidates and office-holders. This is all the more the case if organizational boundaries are blurred: even if candidate selection remains a privilege of members, if it is virtually costless to enter, the distinction between supporter and member becomes meaningless.

Note, however, centralized selection only reduces the heterogeneity of MPs yet does not fully compensate for the decline of a party infrastructure outside public office: Whoever is
selected from an increasingly inclusive pool of potential candidates, he has not undergone the ‘ex ante screening’ that intra-organizational career paths assure (King 1981). With a declining infrastructure, the reliability of its choices goes down and MP behaviour becomes less predictable.

Returning to the core criteria for the cartel party model as specified in Table 1, candidate selection uncontrolled by the national leadership is associated with a stratarchical party organization (see for a detailed elaboration Carty 2004). Combined with a loose definition of membership, this structure nourishes the cartel party’s internal vulnerability as a collective actor. The two dimensions of intra-organizational control – defining societal reach and assuring party unity in public office– also lead us back to party models in general. Their interplay allows us to classify the four party models commonly used to describe the successive stages of party organizational development3 and thereby to capture their internal dynamics:

### Table 2: Configurations of Intra-organizational Control in the four Generic Party Models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High Organizational Control in Public Office</th>
<th>Narrow Reach of Party on the Ground/High Boundary Control</th>
<th>Broad Reach of Party on the Ground/Low Boundary Control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Organizational Control in Public Office</td>
<td>Cadre Party</td>
<td>Cartel Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mass Party</td>
<td>Catch-all Party</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussing the models in chronological order, the *cadre* and the *mass party* share a narrow societal reach both having emerged in societies structured along stable social milieus. It is a problem common to political organizations per se that they, on the one hand, need to be inclusive, while, on the other, inclusiveness debase the value of solidarity as one important collective benefit resulting from organizations’ exclusivity (Wilson 1973: 96). Yet both the cadre and the mass parties’ reliance on specific group support, or put differently, their focus

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3 See a discussion of the party models regarding their mechanism for candidate selection Katz 2001: 282-5.
on a particular type of members, could moderate the tension between inclusiveness and the assurance of collective benefits.

The major differences between the mass and the cadre party are the criteria along which reach has been restricted, hence, the way membership has been regulated, and the respective control over the party in public office. Due to heavily restrictive requirements both for suffrage and for parliamentary membership in pre-twentieth century elections, the cadre party’s reach was necessarily narrow. It relied on a small number of qualified members and on MPs with own resources or individual supporters in their home constituency. Since resources were not centralized, the party in central office was either weak or non-existent as was the organizational control over MPs in public office (Katz and Mair 2002: 115). Mass parties recruited members of the same milieu, the working class. Due to members’ shared socio-economic background, the diversity of expectations towards the party leadership was ex ante limited, while membership was defined both in terms of duties and obligations. The party in central office tightly controlled organizational boundaries, while having access to centralized resources which create a stable internal hierarchy (Katz and Mair 2002: 119).

The catch-all party, in contrast, already suffers from the decline of clearly delineated group support. To maintain its electoral strength facing an increasingly individualized and volatile electorate, it defines its membership boundaries much more broadly than its predecessor, the mass party. Members are still privileged over mere supporters. Yet membership is defined less restrictively inviting an increasingly heterogeneous group of followers with a variety of demands. Thereby the costs to maintain an intra-organizational hierarchy between elites and members rise and internal relations are characterized by conflict (Katz and Mair 2002: 120). Party elites in public and in central office try to counteract these tendencies by maintaining organizational ties to the local level and by influencing recruitment processes. Although organizational boundaries become more permeable, they remain intact through the assignment
of membership privileges. At times, the party leadership clashes with a strong middle-stratum (Katz and Mair 1995: 21). Simultaneously, however, recruitment filtered through this stratum moderates the direct feedback of an increasingly heterogeneous membership into the composition of the party’s public face.

When, in contrast, shifting decision-making rights fully to the party on the ground or leaving local process increasingly unattended, such a feedback into the public arm is fully present in the catch-all party’s successor, the *cartel party model*. Hence, it is only one facet of the picture that the cartel party settles the internal conflict the catch-all party suffers from by the party in public office’s strengthening (Katz and Mair 2002: 122) and a division of labour between national and local elites (Katz and Mair 1995: 21). Conflict between the two faces of party is replaced by a coordination problem inside the party in public office (Katz 2001; Carty 2004). In a fully-fledged cartel party, the party leadership is confronted with an increasingly incohesive parliamentary party composed of MPs over whose fate it has only limited intra-organizational control before they enter the public realm. Both tendencies can co-exist because they have different points of reference: the conflict depicted in the catch-all party refers to the relations *between* distinct arms of party, a conflict moderated in the cartel party. Simultaneously, however, conflicts might become acute *within* one arm, namely the party in public office, unintentionally triggered by parties’ organizational transformation.

This problem becomes particularly acute when the cartel party lowers costs for organizational entry and opens the organization to most effectively draw on short-term support from all corners of society. To do so by propagating the ‘democratization’ of internal party processes can generate electoral advantages, while marginalizing those parties which refuse to follow in

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4 Perceiving this basic tension, Katz argued that elites can resolve it by silencing party activists, while backbenchers are expected to follow the party line anyway (Katz 2001: 288-90). In contrast, it is argued here that withdrawing from candidate selection while opening membership boundaries which formerly functioned as ‘organizational filter’ (a tendency ascribed to the cartel party) is likely to affect party loyalty both inside and outside of public office. In this respect, Katz’s exclusive focus on candidate selection as core mechanism of leadership control blinds out the relevance of state resources as a compensatory mechanism to stabilize a party’s weakening infrastructure.
the long run. Unfortunately, to invite broader participation is one thing; to generate solidary incentives to stabilize the party organization is another. Solidarity incentives presuppose a clear separation of insiders and outsiders. When responding to societal changes by breaking down organizational boundaries, parties as organizations easily reinforce the triggers for their own transformation.

IV. Intra-organizational and Extra-organizational Means of Control: A Trade-off?

Control capacities of a party leadership need not be rooted in organizational mechanisms and procedures. Extra-organizational means of control are equally crucial and gain importance when the capacities to assure control organizationally is restricted as in the cartel party. They consist of resources controlled by the party leadership and desired by MPs, resources which expand considerably when moving from opposition into government. The disadvantage of externally generated control compared to control rooted in the party infrastructure is obvious: If government participation is not secure, organizational stability is much more difficult to assure continuously.

This brings us back to the internal life of the cartel party and its tightening linkages to the state. The latter might not only indicate the party’s need to finance increasingly costly campaigns (a response to the environment) or reflect the self-interest of the party in public office to increase its power and job safety as hypothesized by Katz and Mair (1995; 2006). It might also indicate a compensatory move against the limited capacity to assure party unity through intra-organizational means by using selective incentives – incentives that state resources provide (Bolleyer 2006). Thus, the pressure to tighten state linkages might be nourished by the intra-organizational vulnerability of the cartel party itself. Consequently, whenever in opposition, the party leadership should initiate reforms to re-invigorate the
party’s infrastructure pressed to generate organizational support through other means than distributing benefits.

Accordingly, Table 3 sums up party elites’ repertoire of those means able to generate organizational control inside and outside government distinguishing intra- and extra-organizational means of control. While the latter presuppose government participation, the former do not. More particularly, the classification distinguishes these means along the two dimensions of control constituting the classification of party models in Table 2 – the regulation of the organization’s societal reach and the control over the party’s public face.

**Table 3: Means of Organizational Control in Government and Opposition**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intra-organizational Means of Control (expected to be more intensive use in opposition)</th>
<th>Controlling Societal Reach</th>
<th>Controlling Party inside Public Office</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reforming Membership Boundaries</td>
<td>Assuring Compliance with Party’s Candidate Selection Rules&lt;sup&gt;5&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Attaching New Privileges or Duties</td>
<td>Increasingly Centralized Control over Outcome of Nomination/Selection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Member Registers</td>
<td>- Informal intervention in local selection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counteracting Impact of Permeable Boundaries</td>
<td>- Formal change of selection rules</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Building up linkages to local structures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Reforming local structures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Strengthening party in central office</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extra-organizational Means of Control (expected to be more intensive use in government)</th>
<th>Distributing Resources to Supporters outside Public Office</th>
<th>Distributing Resources to Office-holders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Distributing Resources to Supporters outside Public Office</td>
<td>- Ministries and government posts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Appointments to state boards, etc.</td>
<td>- Policies satisfying particularistic demands (to strengthen MPs’ position at home)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Contracts, benefits, etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating New Posts (political advisers, etc.)</td>
<td>Creating New Posts (ministries, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If the use of intra- and extra-organizational means of control is inversely related, a cartel party should use *intra-organizational means more intensively* when struggling with scarce resources, hence, when *in opposition*. We should observe cycles of reform with measures of organization-building intensifying in opposition and declining in government.

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<sup>5</sup> One might argue that this measure affects the party structures on the ground. Yet since it is directed towards controlling the path of candidates into public office, it concerns the party in public office more crucially.
V. Fianna Fáil: Blueprint not Problem Child

V. Cartel Party without Cartel – Methodology and Case Selection

To examine the trade-off between intra-organizational and extra-organizational means of control, the strategies of the Fianna Fáil (FF) leadership are analyzed in-depth. The party ideal-typically reflects the contradiction inside the cartel party model - broad societal reach through permeable membership boundaries and low organizational control of the leadership over candidate nomination and selection. Comparing its leadership’s strategies to assure internal control in government and opposition, allows us to pin down the hypothesized trade-off: If the reduction of resources related to losing office has repercussions for the internal life of the party, the leadership should respond by compensatory moves whenever finding itself in opposition. These moves should become visible in reform attempts to regain control over and strengthen the party infrastructure as laid out in Table 3. In terms of data used, the analysis is based on material gathered by studies on FF’s organizational development over the last three decades backed up by primary documents and expert interviews.

Mass parties with a distinct policy profile as the (formerly) dominant model in most Western European democracies have never flourished in Ireland. Irish parties have long been considered as deviant in the comparative study of party organization and party systems (Mair 1979: 445; Carty 1981a). Reversing this perspective, Irish parties can now serve as a blueprint for works on party organization: For decades, they anticipated trends by having shown organizational features which contemporary parties are expected to approach according to the cartel party hypothesis. This is all the more the case since the two main parties FF and Fine Gael (FG) are hardly distinguishable in policy terms, also a feature increasingly ascribed to parties in Western Europe.
Particularly FF represents a crucial case since it has mirrored the core features of the cartel party model most clearly – permeable boundaries and stratarchy – for decades. Further, it shows these properties without a cartel at the party system level in place from which organizational change inside the individual party has been expected to flow in the original ‘cartel party argument’. This configuration has three methodological advantages when analyzing the interaction between different organizational layers of a cartel party and the role of government resources:

First, an examination of FF has immediate implications for other parties irrespective of the cartelization of the party system they are embedded in. Second, right from the beginning the cartel party has been conceptualized as part of a cartel, hence, as a government party. Ideal-typically, ‘none of the major parties is definitely out’ (Katz and Mair 1995: 22). One is therefore tempted to treat the access to state resources as a constant. Yet how the cartel party as model for party organization works due to its own structural features can only be evaluated when assessed inside and outside government – ‘backed up’ by government resources and ‘free-standing’. The Irish case provides the ideal setting for this which leads us to the third advantage, due to the majoritarian character of the Irish polity, the accessibility of resources and policy influence are tightly coupled to incumbency. Accordingly, losing government should visibly upset the internal balance of a party as collective actor. If the hypothesized trade-off holds, compensatory responses within the party organization on the side of the leadership should therefore display with particular clarity since FF is used to rely on state resources to maintain its organization due to its long periods in office. Putting it in Harmel and Janda’s terms, since ‘office’ can be considered as the party’s primary goal, intra-organizational reactions to electoral defeat should be particularly pronounced (1994: 265; 269; see also Harmel et al 1995). Since organizationally Irish parties have shown a strong resilience (Murphy and Farrell 2002: 227), the picture resulting from the following analysis of FF as incumbent and opposition party can be plausibly considered as more than a snapshot.
Instead, it reflects the strategies taken by party leaders to reconcile the internal contradictions mirroring core features of the cartel party model.

V.2 Loose Selection Control and Permeable Membership Boundaries

In a preliminary step, this section lays out the internal life of FF as a cartel party. The particular nature of Irish party organization is rooted in its electoral system. Under STV (Single Transferable Vote) the voter ranks all candidates running in multi-member constituency, while the first-choice candidate gets the vote unless he or she is either eliminated during the count or has reached more votes than the necessary quota to secure a seat. Then, the vote passes to the second choice and so forth until all seats are distributed (Gallagher 1988: 128). Consequently, candidates running under the same party label compete. The party leadership tries to place candidates on the local nomination lists to use the available party votes in each constituency most effectively. This means incumbents are asked to forfeit a proportion of their first preferences to help a non-incumbent running mate. Such a strategy can risk the incumbent’s otherwise safe seat and therefore is hardly appreciated by local MPs (Mair 1987a: 133-4). Due to this conflict of interest, the integrative role of the leadership is necessarily limited: it gives FF its stratarchical structure of considerable autonomy between national elites and local branches.

Furthermore, since intra-organizational competition is entrenched in rather reliable support for the national parties, competition for a sufficiently big share of one’s party’s own vote – hence, against fellow party candidates – is candidates’ best strategy to secure a seat (Carty 1981a: 24; Gallagher 1988: 129-30). This constellation impacts upon the

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6 Note that although STV is rare, this does not delimit the generalisability of the overall implications. This electoral system restricts leadership influence on candidates, hence, is relevant since it invites a stratarchical party structure – only one of two dimensions constituting FF as a cartel party. While intra-party competition favored by STV might accelerate ‘stratarchy’, also in many other countries candidate selection is dominated by local elites (i.e. given FPP) or even members (i.e. given primaries).

7 Voters tend to express their dissatisfaction by switching from one candidate of their party to another party instead of switching parties.

8 Accordingly, MPs rarely switch parties. If it occurs, MPs from minor parties tend to join one of the bigger parties.
organization-building strategies pursued by office-aspirants. FF developed into a network of local organizations built around individual candidates. Reinforced by the party’s fluid boundaries⁹ - defined by voters’ affiliation to the Republican cause rather than demarcated organizationally - party machines around individual incumbents or candidates blossom and die. The basic organizational unit of FF, the territorially organized branch, sends two delegates to the constituency council which ensures the nomination and selection of candidates and is a key weapon in internal party struggles (Mair 1987a: 95-6; 118). This constituency party apparatus dominates the nomination process and organizes the local campaign. MPs try to influence the latter by supporting branch secretaries organizationally or members in their brokerage and patronage requests. While trying to stabilize their network of supporters, they also build up multiple personal ties to their local electorate (Carty 1981b: 72-3). Since intra-party competition dominates, capacities to function as ‘welfare officer’ for one’s supporters are more decisive than policy.¹⁰

Consequently, supporters of a particular MP only face low costs to exit a network which invites organizational instability. Equally, party membership forms no precondition for running under the party’s label. For decades, membership in a formal sense did not even exist. Defining itself as a movement, FF has not pursued a strategy of mass incorporation but tried to penetrate civil society as far as possible. Before the internal reforms starting during the 1990s, FF members needed not pay a membership fee and the party run no official register of members (Carty 1981a: 105; Mair 1987a: 102; 114-6). Membership neither implied particular duties nor privileges finding reflection in a heterogeneous pool of voters and supporters. Significant class links with the major parties FF and FG are absent (Mair and Weeks 2005). Ignoring social divisions, solidary and selective incentives become particularly important for

⁹ Note that other Irish parties regulate membership more tightly than FF. Fluid boundaries are therefore no simple consequence of STV.
¹⁰ MPs provide information about available funds and services, help with applications or (claim to) speed up administrative processes through personal ties to the civil service (Gallagher and Komito 1999: 208, 213; Chubb 1963)
the maintaining the party organization (Garvin 1976: 370; Komito 1984) – incentives which form a clearly less reliable source of support than ideological motives (Wilson 1973).  

In sum, the incentives generated by the electoral system inviting stratarchy between national elites and local branches and the membership conception adopted by FF reinforce each other and ideal-typically reflect the cartel party model. While one might expect an incohesive parliamentary party whose members respond to local rather than national imperatives, the national leadership tightly controls the party (Gallagher 2003: 194). The crucial question is how. The following analysis indicates that the FF leadership does so by using state resources in government, while resorting to organizational means in opposition.  

V.3 Intra- and Extra-organizational Control in Government and Opposition  
Despite FF’s dominant status within the Irish party system, in between 1973 and 1997 no incumbent government could fully return to power which starkly contrast with the period from 1932 to 1969 dominated by FF. The following two sections contrast how the leadership tried to maintain internal control inside and outside government.  

V.3.1 Inside Government: Control through State Resources  
Inside government the FF leadership can distribute two types of resources which constitute different avenues to exercise control over particular party units respectively. Inside government, political posts go to MPs and are never given to outsiders, while vacant posts in state boards go to FF supporters outside the public domain to strengthen external support. 

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11 Due to the lack of reliable FF membership data there are no recent analyses of motives for member activism. See, however, a study of activism in Fine Gael (Gallagher and Marsh 2002).

12 State funding for parties is not discussed since its basic determinant is vote strength not government participation (for details about the 1997-8 reforms see Murphy and Farrell 2002: 229-32).
In Ireland, those positions most valuable to public office-holders – foremost ministries - are controlled by the prime minister. In order to maintain organizational goodwill on the side of backbenchers, the Prime minister recruits his ministers from Dáil (O’Malley 2006). It is not recommendable to nominate a senator or even an outsider – although, in principle he can appoint anyone to the Senate and then appoint up to two senators to cabinet. However, since it is MPs who bring ‘organization’ to the national party, the latter needs to demonstrate its appreciation for vote getters’ services. In this sense, the factors which make the life of a party candidate or incumbent MP much more difficult at the local level when competing with party colleagues, turns out to be an advantage as soon as having entered the public realm.

With the exception of a few MPs able to form a separate political base, the route to preferment is by maintaining good relations with the Prime minister, who besides 14 cabinet posts, also appoints 17 junior ministers and disperses committee chairmanships, positions which are paid. They are the means through which the Prime minister is able to keep most ambitious MPs disciplined hoping for future advancement (O’Malley 2006: 325-6).\(^\text{13}\) Especially in FF the path to cabinet is clearly defined. FF ministers are more frequently former junior ministers than FG ministers. Moreover, while FG ministers need to have a higher personal vote than backbenchers, in FF one finds a positive relation between cabinet entry and the support for the party in the MP’s constituency (O’Malley 2006: 333). While the electoral system creates incentives for FF MPs to look after their own electoral fortunes also at costs of party colleagues, later onwards, those MPs are likely to be rewarded by higher office who have succeeded less at the electoral costs of other party candidates in their constituency. Supporting the overall line of reasoning, the career patterns are more clearly structured in FF, which is the party with the most permeable boundaries on the ground, than in other parties such as FG (O’Malley 2006: 333).\(^\text{14}\) Abstentions in parliament are generally infrequent (Gallagher 2003: 194). As if compensating for its permeable boundaries outside

\(^{13}\) The relation of potential receivers of rewards (about about 80 MPs) and those receiving them is obviously quite favourable. Although incentives remain selective, the chance to receive them is pretty good.

\(^{14}\) See for a detailed analysis of the Fine Gael organization (Gallagher and Marsh 2002).
the public realm, FF expels any MP voting against the party line immediately from the parliamentary party.

At times, when policy-derived factions occurred, Prime ministers appointed senior politicians they disagreed with on policy or whom they distrusted. However, to appoint loyal followers seems to be the more common practice. One clear example is Haughey’s take-over in 1979. He not only appointed loyal follower to his cabinet but also established five new ministers of state and gave them to supporters (O’Malley 2006: 326-8)\(^\text{15}\) - a logic running in both directions: One important factor guiding MPs’ choice of their party leader is the patronage at the new (and old) leaders’ disposal and their expectations on how these resources will be used (Marsh 1993: 299; 313).

A second avenue to assure control over the party’s external infrastructure is based on resources and appointments available to ministers (Carty 1981a: 108). Some ministries are particularly desirable because they assure the access to resources attractive for constituencies. Environment, for instance, is attractive since the minister can steer investments in infrastructure (Connolly and O’Halpin 1999: 253). While the distribution of local spoils can be used to stabilize a MPs’ position, appointments to state boards (i.e. hospital boards, port and docks companies or governing boards of universities) go to party supporters outside public office. State boards are an important pool of patronage goods since ministers have complete discretion over them. These bodies are created by ministers and are fully or partially financed by the government. Appointments are made by the government or the particular minister. While civil servants can be members, in many cases outside personnel is recruited (Chubb 1982: 270-3; 276). Accordingly, after governments have changed and alternated back, spates of appointments governed by considerations of party patronage occurred (Chubb 1982: 278), an observation in line with opposition complaints before the May elections that

\(^{15}\) In 1981 Garret FitzGerald deviated from this pattern by appointing a close colleague, Prof. James Dooge to the Senate and then as Minister for Foreign Affairs which was strongly resented by party colleagues.
government appointments have been made for “party political reasons”.\(^{16}\) That the number of state boards has increased from 130 in 1998 to 900 in 2007\(^{17}\) indicates the growing relevance of patronage as organizational resource.

While ministerial advisers – who equally gain relevance - are replaced when the government changes, this is not the case regarding posts on state-boards. New appointments can be only made if posts get vacant. Party supporters keep their positions also when their party loses power. Thus, parties profit from long periods in power still after an electoral defeat since the new party in government cannot reverse past appointments. ‘When a party is in power for a long time, as Fianna Fáil was, the boards tend to become peopled by party supporters and those who deserved well of it’ as Chubb observed (1982: 278). The relevance of these resources becomes particularly evident when government parties expect to lose office: Just before or right after elections they fill all vacancies to use their access as long and as widely as possible – again a dynamic observed before the last election when the government made 400 appointments to state boards.\(^{18}\)

\(^{16}\) The Irish Times, April 2\(^{nd}\) 2007; see also The Irish Times, June 20\(^{th}\) 2007.
\(^{18}\) The Irish Times, April 2\(^{nd}\) 2007.

In an older study, Dooney and O’Toole identified 12 semi-public bodies established in the 1950s and in the 1960s respectively, over 23 and 26 in the 1970s and 1980s respectively, while between 1990-97 78 were created. Distinguishing between government departments, most were created in health and in enterprise & employment followed by environment (Dooney and O’Toole 1998, Appendix 16). Note, however, that these figures give only rough indications since they give no information about the overall number of staff in each, and the relative number of political appointees as compared to the appointments out of the civil service.

\(^{18}\) The Irish Times, April 2\(^{nd}\) 2007.

The civil service itself is rather closed in Ireland. Although the number of temporary civil servants has increased since the 1970s, their number remains limited (Dooney and O’Toole 1998).

\(V.3.2\) Redressing the Balance in Opposition: Control through Intra-organizational Means

How crucial these government resources are becomes most evident when they are absent. If there is a trade-off between extra-and intra-organizational means of control, resource shortages during opposition should trigger reforms to re-invigorate the party’s infrastructure in order to generate support internally. Returning to the two dimensions of the cartel party
model, these reforms should try to counter-act the party’s *broad societal reach* by strengthening local structures able to regulate organizational entry and reforming membership to generate solidary incentives. Further, elites should respond to *weak intra-organizational control* over candidate selection, most notably through efforts to interfere into local recruitment and selection processes.¹⁹

Until today, FF has been three times in opposition for at least three years: between 1973-77, 1994-7 and 1981-87 which was interrupted by a short period of FF incumbency from February to November 1982 (Murphy and Farrell 2002: 220). Each period was marked by internal reforms along the measures laid out in Table 3.

After the 1973 defeat FF lost power after 16 years in office. As one response, the leadership appointed a new party general secretary who started to modernize the party. The post of a press officer was created (Dunlop 2004: 6-7) and the national development manager was replaced after 30 years in office. The number of staff increased from 6-8 before 1974 to 14 people in the four years after 1975 (Murphy and Farrell 2002: 233). Structural changes were equally pronounced: a think tank and a youth branch were set up (Mockler 1994: 165). The youth branch which held its first conference in 1975 and was formalized in 1978 is open for members under 25 and, as Mair indicates, represents ‘a parallel rather than independent organisation’ (1987a: 100). Further, the general secretary closed down over 100 local branches (*cumainn*). Many of which exist only on paper since they allow local MPs to maximize their control over selection conventions (Mair 1987b: 117-8; Murphy and Farrell 2002: 234). Finally, during its long period in office 1948-73 – the party did not publish a formal election manifesto but relied on its record of ‘good government’. Finding itself in opposition, for the first time it published a full manifesto statement (Mair 1987b: 111-5).

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¹⁹ This does not indicate that such endeavours are necessarily absent when FF is in government. They can be triggered by a variety of factors. Still, such moves should be more pronounced when state resources are short.
The creation of new posts and the renewal of core personnel in the party headquarters is one important indication of organizational overhaul strengthening the party infrastructure outside of public office. While the youth branch represented a mechanism to socialize members into the party and thereby counter-acts the party’s open boundaries, the closing of paper branches reflects the national party’s endeavour to increase its control over local processes. The formulation of a manifesto specifies the policy profile of the party, hence, is no indication for structural reform in the narrow sense. Still, its publication indicates a shift away from material incentives as means to generate organizational support as the formerly dominant strategy in government.

After the formation of the FG-Labour majority coalition in November 1982, FF felt again the need to reinvigorate the party machinery. Since the party was at rock bottom in terms of campaign readiness and candidate talent, it set up a ‘constituency committee’ chaired by Charles Haughey, the party leader, to head-hunt talented candidates and supervise the nominating conventions (Farrell 1987: 48). This committee allowed influencing recruitment without being able to centralize these processes fully and functioned as a filter controlled by party elites which counter-balanced the party’s permeable boundaries. While candidate selection remained formally on the local level, the party headquarter decided on the number of candidates per constituency and how many candidates conventions could choose. These core decisions were assigned to the party executive in the late 1980s, a step that formalized an already established practice of influencing candidate selection processes.

Furthermore, the party headquarters tried to strengthen its local grip: In 1983 ‘Operation Dublin’ tried to reinvigorate local structures in an area which at that time was one of the party’s weakest regions but held great scope for electoral gains. The party targeted individual constituencies and again closed down paper branches. Finally, local reform was initiated throughout the country (Farrell 1987: 49). Reflecting intense internal activities,
1980-89 the number of FF staff was with 20-25 the highest during the whole period of 1960-99 (Murphy and Farrell 2002: 233).

Emulating the strategy of creating a youth branch in 1975, in 1984 FF organized a National Women’s Conference (Mair 1987a: 100). Also, Farrell found that throughout the period 1953 to 1990, membership underwent the most pronounced changes in 1983 and 1985. Conditions to expel members were specified and in order to retain their voting rights, members need to attend party meetings regularly (Farrell 1992: 406). By tightening its organizational reach and using affiliate organizations to integrate members more firmly, collective incentives of party membership were increased.

In order to emulate the 1977 electoral success after the organizational overhaul characterizing the opposition years after 1973, in 1990 FF decided to establish a Commission on the ‘Aims and Structures of Fianna Fáil’ in 1990. Although it was in government at that time, it had lost the presidency for the first time and had not gained a clear majority since 1977 and tried to develop counter-strategies (Mockler 1994: 165). When the party lost office in 1994, the party again engaged in reform including the creation of a membership database (Holmes 1999: 32).

FF engaged anew in local reform - a recurring strategy in opposition times to increase national control – and intensified ties to local party structures. Bertie Ahern – party leader since 1994 - met local party *cumainn* to restore the number of active branches and set up a network with local activists and interest groups (Holmes 1999: 32). These activities satisfied the need for ‘mechanisms (…) to ensure that candidates and supporters comply with the party’s strategic interest’, a recommendation articulated by the Fianna Fáil Commission which never made it into the final report (Mockler 1994: 166). After the numbers of party staff had gone down 1990-94 when FF was in government (after its high point during the conflict-ridden 1980s), it went up again after 1994 (Murphy and Farrell 2002: 233). Repeatedly, the resources of party headquarters were systematically strengthened when the
party was in opposition, an indication of the party’s efforts to increase intra-organizational control capacities.

VI. Fianna Fáil, Organizational Trade-offs and Cycles of Reform

Summing up the strategies the FF leadership, it indeed resorts to internal reform more intensively in opposition than in government. There is only one means listed in Table 3 the leadership did not use in order to increase its intra-organizational control over the party as a collective actor: it did not attempt to change the rule for candidate selection formally since the local branches (which have no effective say in policy-formulation) guard their power to control nomination jealously. Still, electoral defeats as external shocks clearly triggered changes inside the party (Harmel and Janda 1994: 281), while the cycles of organizational overhaul in opposition reveal a trade-off between the leadership’s use of intra- and extra-organizational means to keep the party organization together.

This trade-off does not only rationalize FF’s strong office-orientation – the ‘primary goal’ taken as a given in Harmel and Janda’s approach (1994) by pointing to the party’s intra-organizational vulnerability. It also demonstrates that FF as a case study is particularly insightful for research on party organization: The party links two counter-images of party organization - each of which not only reflects a trend in party development in modern democracies but also corresponds to one dimension of the cartel party model: Societal individualization points to the decline of citizens’ collective affiliations. From this viewpoint, an organizational model defined by clear membership boundaries seems to be outdated. Party as an open network comes in as a reflection of increasingly fragmented, individualized societies. Simultaneously, when looking at the professionalization of politics and the growing expectations towards state services, parties as governors need to function within the public realm. To assure this functioning is particularly pressing whenever candidate selection is local
and the use of extra-organizational resources can constitute a compensatory mechanism for weak intra-organizational means of control.

As long as FF can access government resources it can generate organizational support rather easily. The party leadership can afford to neglect internal mechanisms and procedures as a means to control the party infrastructure by using policies, appointments and patronage as rewards instead. In times of opposition the relationship between the leadership and the party as organization changes since the infrastructure becomes a core source of control: Reform is one response to that, the active implementation of party rules on the ground another - most visible in Ireland by the cyclically intense efforts of FF to abolish local paper branches. In this context, ‘stratarchy’ gains a different connotation than distributing labour between national elites and local activists (Katz and Mair 1995: 21): When being in government for longer periods, it simply becomes affordable to care less about the ground rules constituting the party as organizational actor and about the compliance with these rules. Parties as part of a cartel which assures government access continuously might be able to neglect their structures on the ground in the long run. This, however, does not hold for the cartel party as party model. To deal with the implications of ‘broad societal reach’ in opposition, party elites are pressed to define membership more tightly and to strengthen their linkages to the ground. To counteract ‘weak intra-organizational control capacities’ they face incentives to implement party rules more strictly and to interfere in local selection processes.20

To further explore the likelihood for such cycles of reform and to explore the potential to generalize the pattern observed in Fianna Fáil as a cartel party, two future steps are paramount: first, cross-national assessments of different types of party organization embedded in majoritarian as compared to consensual systems are needed. The findings of this paper indicate that, looking at parties corresponding to the cartel model, we should expect these

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20 Correspondingly, between 1960 and 1999 the leaderships of the two main parties in Germany, Denmark, UK and Switzerland tended to increase their power to interfere into local or regional selection processes rather then increasing the autonomy between the organizational layers (Detterbeck 2002: 91).
cycles in majoritarian contexts, while party cartels in consensus democracies should more readily neglect organizational structures in the long term as far as the flow of resources remains fairly stable.\textsuperscript{21} Second, returning to the classification of party models (Table 1 and 2), patterns of reform need to be \textit{compared across different party models} embedded in similar contexts. While we can expect any party to use government resources when available, if the cartel party is indeed more vulnerable than the other models of party organization, reform attempts should be more pronounced in cartel parties than in catch-all parties.

This is what the case study on FF tells us: In opposition, it has moved from the cartel back towards the catch-all model by increasing control over the party’s organizational boundaries and potential candidates for public office. FF’s cyclical moves responding to the party’s access to government resources imply that while the catch-all model constitutes an intra-organizational equilibrium, the cartel model does so much less. The former model seems to function as an ‘organizational fall-back option’ for the latter. In the end, the cartel party might need its cartel. The tightening of party-state linkages, however, seems to be a response as much to the internal vulnerability of the cartel party as organizational actor as to the changing nature of modern democracies as usually emphasized in the debate.

\textbf{References}


\textsuperscript{21} This expectation directly corresponds to Panebianco’s hypothesis on the level of institutionalization parties are likely to develop (1988). One core component of institutionalization is an organization’s autonomy from its environment (i.e. from external resources). If parties, during their formative years, can access government resources, they are less likely to develop a strong infrastructure. In contrast, when they spend their formative period in opposition and need to develop support intra-organizationally, institutionalization is likely to be stronger. This also implies that cartelization and the institutionalization of party organization are inversely related.


