Searching for the Cartel Party: Inter-Party Collusion and Legislative Activity

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Abstract

The cartel party thesis has become one of the most influential theories in political science over the past two decades to explain changes in party state funding or party organizational developments. However until now, there has been limited systematic testing of this thesis. Further, one of the main and yet less explored features of the cartel party is party collusion. This paper uses developments in inter-party bill co-sponsorship in 19 democracies in order to explore inter-party collusion and to scrutinise the cartel party thesis. To do so, we quantitatively test multiple hypotheses to explain differences across parliaments and time. Our results show the possibly counter-intuitive role of ideological distance between parties in promoting rather than preventing bill co-sponsorship, which supports several aspects of cartelization theory.

Keywords: *Cartel party, legislative studies, bill co-sponsorship, party change.*

Replication material

The replication code and data for this study are available at this temporary address for the next six months. For more information about the data, see also Briatte (2016), which is available online in preprint format, along with its data appendix. For further models of the data, see F. Briatte, "Party Polarization and Bill Cosponsorship in European Parliaments" (presented at the 'Science Po Quanti' conference held in Lille in July 2016), which is available from the author per request.

Introduction

While it is a well-established fact that parties and legislators work together in parliament, we know very little on how Members of Parliament (MPs) from different parties cooperate, the frequency of such interactions (Jenny *et al.* 2015: 137), and what makes such interactions increase or decrease. This gap in the literature is rather surprising given that Katz and Mair's (1995) cartel party theory warned us over twenty years ago that MPs will increasingly work together or, in their words, 'collude' with each other to create and sustains the cartel. In fact, in 2009 they wrote, "the concept of the 'cartel party' was first proposed as a means of drawing attention to patterns of inter-party collusion or cooperation" (2009: 755). While the cartel party thesis (Katz and Mair, 1995) has become one of the most influential theories in political science over the past two decades to explain changes in party state funding (van Biezen and Kopecký, 2017) or party organizational developments (Bolleyer, 2009; Sandri *et al.*, 2015), this integral "tendency towards inter-party collusion" (Katz and Mair, 2009: 755) among MPs outlined in the cartel party theory remains very little studied.

This paper aims to address this gap by exploring the developments in cross-party bill co-sponsorship over the last 25 years, which offers one way to explore inter-party cooperation and thus to scrutinise the cartel party thesis. Empirically we address the critic that there is a clear lack in cross-national and longitudinal investigations of the cartel party thesis (Kitschelt 2018), beyond the studies on the development on party funding, which, so far, have produced mixed results. Such studies are vital as cartelization is primarily a process rather than a state of being.

Further, our paper is innovative as we use untapped data on inter-party bill co-sponsorship to test the cartel party theory in general and one of its core premises. Based on this data we test multiple hypotheses to explain differences across countries and time, considering the effects of both party and systemic factors such as ideological distance between parties or the rise of new parties, while accounting also for different parliamentary features. Therefore empirically, this study enhances our understanding of how parties have changed by shedding more light on the alleged shift towards cartelization outlined in the literature. Beyond this, our paper raises some important normative questions and challenges for representative democracy. In particular what does MPs collusion in terms of bill co-sponsorship imply for responsible party government, representation and responsiveness of MPs to votes and/or party members (Enroth 2017; Pelizzo 2008)?

The paper first provides a review of the literature on the cartel party thesis, focusing on the studies aiming to measure cartelisation and, more specifically, on the few works that explored the collusion aspect explicitly. The paper then presents the rationale for the hypotheses affecting parties' cooperation thorough bill co-sponsorship and thus contribute to more of less collusion to advanced party cartel. After having provided details on the data, method and case selection the paper first offers some descriptive statistics before presenting the results of our analysis in detail. The paper ends with a short discussion of the (normative)

implications of our findings. Our results show the possibly counter-intuitive role of ideological distance between parties in promoting rather than preventing bill co-sponsorship, which supports several aspects of cartelization theory.

1. Literature review and theory

Party cartelization and collusion

Katz and Mair (1995) original develop the cartel party thesis to explain the transformation of party organizations, party systems and policy output in the light of membership decline started since the 1960s. Their theory proposed that in reaction to this development, "political parties increasingly function like cartels, employing the resources of the state to limit political competition and ensure their own electoral success" (Katz and Mair, 2009: 753). In short, parties move closer to the state and their survival depends on it rather then their societal roots. Beside the growing interpenetration between parties and the state, we should also observe increasing inter-party collusion.

While this development has vital implication for individual parties' organizational profile, here we focus more the consequences for party system as a whole and to what extend parties, ostensible competitors, cooperate and collude to create a cartel party system. Following Pelizzo's definition, a cartel party system is a "party system in which parties collude to promote their collective well-being and profits by minimizing the representativeness of the party system itself " (2008: 474). In this light MPs work together to promote their own self-referential, professional, and technocratic goals to ensure job security, limit competition among parties in the cartel and try to block access to the cartel (Katz and Mair 1995: 757). These overarching shared goals foster a depoliticization of politics and shift towards efficient and effective management of the polity rather than policy differences. This in turn makes cooperation and collusion even easier overtime. However, MPs and parties still aim to maintain the illusion of competition during elections and campaigns preceding it. At the same time collaboration among MPs and parties can reduce the possible costs of losing an election, given that under normal circumstances no party will always win, parties within the cartel are likely to engage in cooperation that ensure that any disadvantage form an electoral defeat will be as limited as possible.

The possibility of collaboration is further increased by the fact that parties are more integrated into the state and, therefore, influenced by it in the same way (Katz and Mair 1995: 756). Thus, the overall shift of parties towards the state due to decline in party membership, in a first step, requires party to work together to create the cartel party system. Later, in order to maintain and benefit from the cartel, it is necessary for parties to continue and intensify their cooperation. And as Katz and Mair stress "it is clearly a small step from consideration of cooperation and agreement to consideration of collusion" (1995: 756). Thus in order to address the question if and to what extend cartelization is happening fully, we need to find a way to capture and measure collusion and study its development over time. This paper aims to address this gap by proposing a new measure of inter-party collusion to existing measure of

the cartel party system. In this light the next section reviews first the existing measures of cartelisation and then discusses the few cases that focus on inter-party collusion explicitly.

Measuring party cartelization

To start with it is necessary to distinguish between measures that aim to capture the process of cartelization and indexes which are, instead, static. As already mentioned above, the advancement of the cartel party is often measured by looking at party membership development as decline in membership is often used as synonymous with cartelization (van Bizen, Mair et al 2002 and 2012). However, more recently some parties have experience a membership increase (Audickas et al 2018) and have introduced new types of party membership such as *supporters* (Gauja 2014). Therefore, in an age of multi-speed membership (Scarrow 2013) it is harder to established the "real size" of party membership and therefore captures the degree and advancement of cartelization.

The second most often used indicator of cartelization is party finance and, more precisely, the change in share of public in contrast to membership funding (van Biezen and Kopecky 2017). In short, the higher the share of public funding received by parties and the lower the share of party funding through membership fees, the more cartelized the party. But empirical evidence of linking party finance arrangement and cartelization are mixed (van Biezen and Kopecky 2017). As Katz and Mair (2009: 754) put it, while the dependence of parties on public financial subventions was considered "to be one of the expected reactions to the conditions [...] underlying the process of cartelization, both later analysts and we ourselves may not have been justified in giving this such a preeminent position as the key indicator of cartelization."

A third measure of cartelization is the programmatic/ideological convergence of parties overtime (Camia and Caramani 2012). The argument goes that with the emergence of the catch-all party (Kirchheimer 1966) parties target more and more the median voter and thus their programs converge. Further, this convergence is encouraged by two other processes: 1) the interaction of parties and MPs within parliament (often in form of coalition governments), and 2) the shared aim to reduce cost in terms of what policies are implemented in case of an electoral lost. Nevertheless during election times parties present policy alternatives to differentiate themselves and appeal to their voters. However, once elected parties might readily give up policies for office (Müller and Strøm 1999). Additionally, party manifestos might have been drafted with the specific aim to signal to other parties the willingness to work together in the post-electoral phase. It is also true that often manifestos just propose popular policies to win vote with no real intention to push for these later. Given the strategic nature of these choices, it is very difficult to capture cartelization using programmatic/ideological convergence of parties.

Another measure of the advancement of the cartel party is the changing pattern of power distribution within parties (Bolleyer 2009, Sandri and Pauwels 2010). Here scholars focus on how the role and power of the three main faces of parties, the *Party in Public Office*, the *Party in Central Office*, and the *Party on the Ground*, have changed

in order to assess the "ascendancy of the party in public office" hypothesis advanced in the cartel party model (Ignazi 2006; Katz and Mair 1993, 2002; Scarrow, Webb, and Farrell 2000). The main aspects that are analyzed are the concentration of power in t*he party in public office* and the changing role of membership (van Biezen 2000; Carty 2004; Katz 2001). For example, by the use of membership ballots and primaries rather than party congress votes, decision making among members becomes more and more atomized and individualistic. Thus, it is harder for the party membership as a whole to mobilize and act collectively to challenge the party in public office (Sandri and Pauwels 2010:1240). Studies mainly explore these changes by either analyzing rule changes in party statutes, or with party membership surveys. While both methods have their merits, they also have limitations. When relying on party statutes and rules it is hard to capture the difference between formal rules, how they are applied in reality and to what extend informal practices undermine the "full" implantation of these rules. Instead, with survey asking about role and power of party members we often lack enough comparable data overtime and we also have to rely on self-reported data.

The final source and one that is also helpful in capturing inter-party collusion are MPs' surveys. The survey by Jenny et al. (2015), for example, asked MPs about their cross-party contact and to what extent they are politically helpful. They find that in 79% of national MPs in 15 countries have good, political helpful contacts with MPs from other parties. However, similar to party membership survey, we for now do not have enough data overtime to see if contacts across parties have increased over the years or not.

While all these indicators are able to measure some aspects of cartel party thesis, none is totally effective due to various reasons such as data availability or the fact that they are static and not dynamic. In short, they cannot capture the full process of cartelization and, so far, they have not been used to capture an integral part of the theory: *collusion*. Therefore we propose to use bill co-sponsorship to analyse this aspect of the cartel party theory and complement the existing measures to get a more complete picture of to what extent and how cartelization is happening. Before introducing this new measure in detail, the next paragraph discusses the few case studies we found directly exploring the aspect of collusion of the cartel party theory.

Case studies of party cartelization and collusion

In the case of Italy, Pelizzo (2008) explores how Italian MPs engaged in collusive practices and to what extent it is appropriate to regard the Italian party system as a cartel. His analysis shows that as the production of legislation in Italy does not vary in response to changes in political demand. Indeed, inter-coalitional agreements ensure that only bills with almost unanimous fashion are passed, while bills on which there is no general agreement are abandoned. For Pelizzo (2008) this demonstrates that that Italian parties collaborate to decide which legislation can be passed and which, conversely, is not to be passed. Thus Italian MPs and parties collude to create and maintain a cartel party system.

The collusions aspect of the cartel part is also often explored in studies focusing on parties and party systems outside Western Europe. Hutcheson (2012) for example

applies the concepts of cartelization to the Russian case. He finds that inter-party collusion is a key factor to maintain the current regime. He concluded that "despite different inputs and a different path towards cartelization, the behavior of Russian parliamentary parties in defending their privileges and resource base appears comparable with many of their Western counterparts" (p.908). All Duma parties enjoy the incentives of collusion and support the same barriers to entry to new parties, maintaining the 'parties of power' and its policy and own privileged position. This contributes towards the 'freezing' of the party system, and the parties' position inside rather than outside the Duma ensures parties long-term survival, albeit as a marginal actor (Hutcheson 2012, p. 918).

Similar to Hutcheson (2012), Musil (2018) focuses on Turkey and the role of the opposition parties play in reinforcing, allowing and benefiting from the cartel. She finds that the 'main opposition' parties at times enter into a tacit collusion with the dominant party in changing the rules of political competition resulting in systemic benefits in terms of party funding, access to policy process and erect barriers of entry to the other opposition parties. Here again, inter-party collusion among certain MPs is vital for the creation and upkeep of the cartel party system.

The above section started by restating the cartel party argument and stressing the importance of collusion within it. Next it reviewed the most common measures to capture the level and progress of the party cartel and cartel party system. It pointed out the advantages and disadvantage of these measures and how they can be used to capture a specific aspect of the cartel party theory. The last section presented the few case studies that explicitly focus on the party and MP collusion element of the cartel party theory. The above review highlighted the need for further comparative, systematic and longitudinal study of the advancement of the cartel party with focus on the collusion element. Further it shows the need for a new complementary measure for party and MPs' collusion. The next section presents the rationale of our hypotheses on the development of bill co-sponsorship across time and cases due to MPs' collusion and aim to consciously and unconsciously advance the process of party system cartelization.

Hypotheses on bill co-sponsorship and party cartelization

In most European countries, parliamentarians have the possibility to express their support for a given bill by cosponsoring it, which provides an interesting alternative measure to roll-call votes for scholars interested in estimating party cohesion and discipline (Alemán *et al.* 2009, Desposato et al. 2011, Curini and Zucchini 2014).[1]

If, as Katz and Mair (2009, 756) state, "it also makes sense for us to expect that parties will cooperate," then higher levels of party cooperation over bill cosponsorship is one possible consequence of cartel party theory. Such cooperation might be facilitated by smaller ideological distance between parties with converging policy

[1] For a review of bill co-sponsorship and its determinants, see the literature review in the appendix of Briatte (2016).

goals (Camia and Caramani 2012), although, as we offer below, the opposite might be true, as parties might also desire to collude *despite* diverging ideological stances.

Our review offers four broad factors that might explain higher propensity for bill co-sponsorship and, through it, inter-party collusion: ideological proximity between parties, party governing status, and party composition. We choose these factors in accordance with the vast literature that acknowledges ideological divisions and the government-opposition divide as the two main dimensions that structure the voting behaviour of legislators (Hix and Noury 2016), along with other factors known to affect co-sponsorship (Louwerse and Otjes 2015).

H1. Ideology

The ideological distance between parties is our primary explanatory factor, although contrary to the expectation that closeness will increase co-sponsorship, we actually posit the opposite. As Sandri and Pauwels (2010) have noted, according to Katz and Mair (1995) and to many other cartelization scholars before them,[2] *all* political parties are believed to undergo a process of cartelization, regardless of their ideological orientation. If inter-party cooperation might be encouraged by ideological closeness between MPs (see e.g. Peress 2013, Jenny *et al.* 2015), we might also assume that, notwithstanding individual-level differences, cartelized parties might well work against such differences overall, by encouraging cooperation across party lines.

Consequently, we expect cartelization this to mean that **(H1) ideological distance between parties will not preclude bill cosponsorship**, and will even, in the specific context of government/opposition coalitions, encourage it.

H2. Government and opposition coalitions

The second most important factor of our analysis relies on whether parties belong to the governing majority or to the opposition. Indeed, the engagement (enrollment) of opposition parties is one of the central arguments of cartel party theory, which posits that even non-governing parties can benefit from the cartel and will end up becoming involved in it (Katz and Mair 1995, Sandri and Pauwels 2010).

We therefore expect that parties in opposition will either try to use all possible means to collaborate with the governing majority, or rather, will *accept offers to cooperate* over the (rather low-key, when compared to votes) signals embodied in bill co-sponsorship. In other words, **(H2) we expect parties in the governing majority to 'reach out' to both their coalition partners and to the opposition**, in order to build the largest possible front (or cartel) while in power.

H3. Party characteristics

Last, according to cartel party theory, the cartel can survive only if also new parties are incorporated into it: the cartel is thus not completely close (Detterbeck 2005, Sandri and Pauwels 2010), as co-optation of new 'members' is always possible.

[2] See e.g. Aucante and Dézé (2008), Conti, Cotta, and Tronconi (2006), Detterbeck (2005) and Pelizzo (2008).

The collusive nature of such relations, however, can be expected to occur slowly over time. We therefore should expect parliamentary newcomers not to become immediately involved in the cartel, as the established parties need to understand whether new party members want or are able to challenge them or, instead, prefer to collude with them. As a result, we posit that **(H3) parties featuring more senior members will more often form cosponsorship ties** than those featuring less experienced MPs.

2. Case selection, data and methods

To test our hypotheses, we use an original dataset on legislative co-sponsorship developed by Briatte (2016) that covers a geographically and institutionally mixed sample of national parliamentary chambers from 19 East, North and West European countries. The availability of historical legislative data from official parliament websites guided the data collection process, resulting in varying numbers of years T of data – spanning over varying numbers of legislatures L – being collected for each country-chamber (Table 1).

In order to measure our dependent variable, we adopted the same definition of *bills* as Briatte (2016), i.e. "laws initiated by one or more legislators that might become binding if they pass the legislative process of their country of introduction." We therefore focus only on bills nominally signed by individual MPs, for whom Briatte (2016) also collected socio-demographic (age and gender) and career information, including time in office,[3] constituency, committee membership and party affiliation.[4] In total, approximately 18,000 legislators appear on at least one cosponsored bill included in the data.

In order to be able to test the hypotheses put forward in the previous section, we aggregated that data at the party-level. Since cartel party theory looks prevalently at parties rather than single politicians, the expectations present in the literature regarding the theory are usually expressed – and tested – at the party-level. Consequently, we measured our data at the level of political parties nested in national parliamentary chambers, during one or more legislative term(s).

Measurement of dependent variables

Based on the bills co-sponsored by members of each political party, we generated two dependent variables:

1. First, we measured the ***weighted fraction of co-sponsorship ties across party lines*** (WAP), which is based on the co-sponsorship ties between the first

[3] Time in office, taken as a proxy for political seniority, was measured at any point in time as the number of past years spent in the same parliamentary chamber, which means that MPs 'switching houses' in bicameral parliaments (as is fairly frequent in a country like Romania) are not accounted for by that measurement.

[4] For those politicians who changed party group during a legislature (party switching), the longest affiliation was recorded.

author of a bill and his cosponsor(s).[5] Using the party membership variable coded by Briatte (2016), we coded those ties 0 when the first author of a bill and his/her cosponsor(s) came from the same party, 1 otherwise, and then divided that quantity by the total number of cosponsorship ties observed for all first authors from a same party. The resulting quantity represents the fraction of cosponsorship ties that members of a same party were able to attract from beyond their own party.

2. As a complement to this first dependent variable, we also measured the ***weighted fraction of co-sponsorship ties across government lines*** (WAG), which measures the fraction of ties that members of a same party were able to attract from cosponsors belonging to a party situated on the opposite side of the government-opposition divide.[6] This fraction captures an interesting subset of the phenomenon captured by our first dependent variable, by limiting the fraction of cross-party co-sponsorship ties to those that also cross the boundaries of party coalitions.[7]

Once aggregated into those two variables, the co-sponsorship ties under study yield information about 246 unique political parties observed between 1 and 6 times, for a total of $N = 610$ (unbalanced) panel observations. The number of parties observed per country varies between 1 and 8, which reflects the diversity of chamber-level partisan composition as well as the fact that not all parties represented in a given parliament participate in all forms of legislative activity.

Measurement of ideological dispersion

In order to test the ideological component of our hypotheses, we use party positions on the left-right scale initially computed by the ParlGov project (Döring and Manow 2018) and then adapted by Briatte (2016) to the cosponsorship data provided by parliamentary sources. The positions, which are time-invariant in the current version of the data,[8] are computed as the weighted means of party positions taken from

[5] As hinted by the different terms used to designate each end of the co-sponsorship ties, the data under observation are taken from directed graph edges that connect the first author of a bill to all cosponsors of that bill (Briatte 2016). The raw graph data used in the analysis contains over 491,000 co-sponsorship ties for all countries, chambers and legislatures under observation.

[6] In order to measure that variable, Briatte (2016) used government composition data from the ParlGov project (Döring and Manow 2018) in order to separate government parties from opposition parties.

[7] Note that the data collected by Briatte (2016) are time-invariant over the length of a legislature: as a consequence, our data covers only legislatures for which the composition of the government was stable over the entire term (either because the government was entirely composed from members of a single party, or because all government members came from a stable mix of political parties during that period).

[8] Coding party positions as time-invariant scalars is less time-consuming when aggregating data from many different sources over long periods of time, as Briatte (2016) did. However, it also restricts the type of statistical analysis that can be conducted on the data, given that not all panel models allow for time-invariant covariates.

several expert surveys of political parties (Döring and Manow 2018) range from 0 (left-wing) to 10 (right-wing). We complement those scores with a dummy variable coding for whether the party participates in the government coalition (1) of the legislature under observation, or sits in opposition instead (0).

Since each cosponsorship tie involves two ideological positions (that of the party of the sponsor of the bill, and that of the party of the cosponsor), we measured the ideological dispersion of those ties by taking the (unweighted) standard deviation of the difference between the party position of the bill sponsor and every bill cosponsor. This measure increases when the bill sponsor attracts cosponsors from parties that are ideologically distant from his or her own, which is what we expect to happen if parties attempt to 'cartellize and collude' by creating broad consensus across party lines and/or across government and opposition coalitions.

Additional controls

Last, in order to test the rest of our hypotheses while controlling for variations in the structure of parliamentary chambers in which the parties under observation sit, we use the following set of covariates:

- ***Time.*** Since our data contain repeated observations over time, we use the starting year of each legislature as our time indicator, and further control by the overall duration (in years) of each legislature.

- ***Chamber size.*** Furthermore, since our data come from parliamentary chambers of vastly different statutory sizes (from less than hundred MPs to several hundreds of them in countries like Italy or Sweden), we also include that quantity in our covariates, using data from the Inter-Parliamentary Union. See Kirkland (2014) for a discussion of how chamber size can affect legislative co-sponsorship overall.

- ***Party composition.*** Last, in order to account for effects related to the composition of the political parties under observation, we control for the size of the parties by adding their number of unique sponsors, along with two additional party-level covariates coding for

    - ***MP seniority***, measured as the fraction of senior MPs (i.e. MPs already present in at least one past legislature before the current one) among the sponsors; and

    - ***MP gender composition***, measured as the fraction of female MPs among the sponsors.

3. Estimation strategy and findings

Given that both our dependent variables are fractions bounded within 0 and 1 inclusive, we used one-part fractional regression models (Ramalho 2015, Ramalho and Murteira 2011) to estimate the increase of cross-party and cross-coalition

cosponsorship ties at the party-level, while controlling for (country-chamber-party and time) panel effects as well for our other covariates.

All models were run in R version 3.3.3 (R Core Team 2017), using the frm package (Ramalho 2015). In order to test the robustness of the sign of our coefficients, we estimated the models using both logit and probit link functions, and also ran 'naive' versions of the models by measuring both our dependent variables as binary variables, letting any amount of cross-party or cross-coalition cosponsorship ties be equal to 1. None of those tests switched any of our coefficients, nor did estimating the same models with an intercept term.[9]

The results of our no-intercept fractional logit regression models are shown in Table 2, and the regression coefficients for both the logit and probit models are shown with 95% confidence intervals in Figure 1 below. Those results confirm that, after controlling for time and (party and chamber) size effects, our models leave us with three effects of highly unequal magnitudes:

1. **Ideological dispersion** has an extremely large effect on the fraction of co-sponsorship that goes beyond party lines, as well as on the subset of that fraction that goes beyond government/opposition divide.

   To some extent, it is unsurprising that ideological dispersion, which is by definition almost always non-null when bill sponsors are from different parties, would predict some fraction of our dependent variables. It is, still, remarkable that an *increase in ideological dispersion* corresponds to an *increase* in cross-party and in cross-coalition co-sponsorship: in the aggregate, when faced with higher ideological dispersion among potential cosponsors, the parties under observation actually 'embrace' that diversity, seeking cosponsors on all ideological sides.

2. Next, **belonging to a government coalition** is also predictive of cross-party cosponsorship, but only when co-sponsorships come from parties that include the parties of that coalition: when limited to cross-coalition parties, the predictor loses enough magnitude to reach statistical significance.

   This predictor captures an additional (marginal) effect among parties that are part of government coalitions: those parties are (marginally) more active at seeking and attracting cosponsors across the party lines, which might reflect their privileged access to higher-status legislation, or just indicate that government coalitions are more homogeneous than opposition ones, and more active at keeping things so.

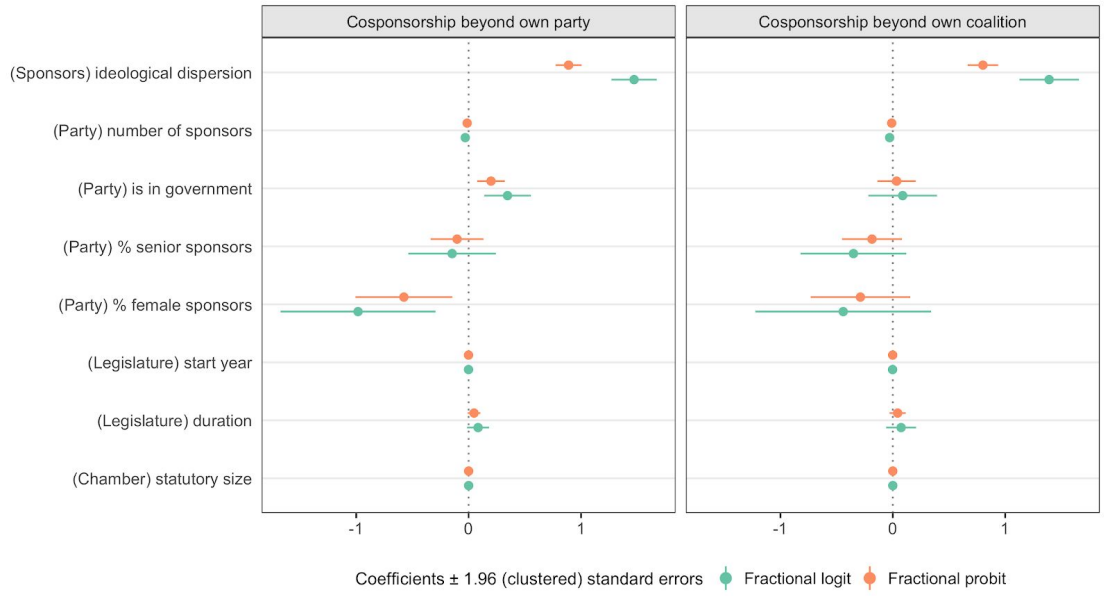
3. Last, **female parliamentarians** are negatively associated with both our dependent variables, although again, the effect is significant only in the case of cross-party co-sponsorships.

   That effect has several possible interpretations. One of those consists in attributing lower success to female sponsors in seeking cosponsors from other parties. Another one is to doubt our reliable, yet tentative measurements of

[9] Given that our control for party size has no true zero, we report no-intercept models.

party composition: it is, for instance, reasonably plausible to argue that higher levels of female sponsors might actually reflect lower party seniority, to the extent that newer, younger parties might be more likely to have enforced gender quotas (Caul 2001). If that assumption were to hold, then we need to question the standard errors around our 'seniority' and 'gender' covariates. Last, of course, it might also be that this part of our analysis confounds with another ideological effect, captured by female memberships but unaccounted for in our current framework.

Figure 1. Summary of model results



4. Discussion and conclusion

If cross-party cooperation is to provide a "key missing dimension in our understanding of party democracies as a whole" (Jenny *et al.* 2015, 138), then a theory of why and how that cooperation is to happen is required. For as long as it has been on offer, the cartel party theory has been very successful at generating insights about party politics and behaviour, however the model has not fully been tested against real-world data and if so with mixed results. In particular, collusion, one of the fundamental traits of the cartel party, has not received so much attention, especially in the context of established democracies. The goal of our paper was therefore to empirically analyse the scope of inter-party collusion and collaboration, by looking at developments in cross-party bill co-sponsorship over the last 25 years. We used cosponsorship as a proxy to study inter-party cooperation and, thus, to scrutinise the cartel party thesis. The paper did so by first reviewing the literature on the cartel party thesis, with focusing on the intra-party collusion argument. We suggested 3 HPs to explore factors affecting inter-party bill co-sponsorship. Based on data on inter-party bill co-sponsorship (Briatte 2016) for 246 parties in 19 countries over the past decades we find that cartelization can lead, at the party-level, to insights that

partly reverse what we might expect to hold at the individual level. Indeed, we find that ideological distance does not prevent bill co-sponsorship, instead expressing some kind of consensus formation that breaks both party lines and, to some extent, government and opposition coalitions.

Our paper is innovative as we use untapped data on inter-party bill co-sponsorship to test the cartel party theory in general and one of its core premises. Further empirically, this study enhances our understanding of how parties have changed by shedding more light on the alleged shift towards cartelization outlined in the literature. Beyond this, our paper raises some important normative questions and challenges for representative democracy. We empirical show that while parties do competition in public trough elections they extensively collude during parliament policy-making process despite large ideological differences and across government -opposition divide. This first raises the question if the opposition can effectively hold the government accountable or not. Beyond the issues with the responsibility of the opposition the increased level of inter-party bill co-sponsorship has potentially negative effects on responsible party government, representation and responsiveness of MPs to votes and political representation (Enroth 2017; Pelizzo 2008). What remains to be studied in detail is therefore the close articulation of country-level, chamber-level, party-level and individual-level of bill co-sponsorships, but also of legislative activity and partisan politics at large, as what might hold at one level cannot be expect to hold at the other.

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Table 1. Overview of data collection

Country	Parliamentary chamber	Type	Years	*T*	*L*
Belgium	*Chambre des Représentants*	lower	1991-2015	25	7
	Sénat	upper	1995-2014	20	5
Bulgaria	*Narodno Sabranie*	unicameral	2005-2015	11	4
Czech Republic	*Poslanecká Sněmovna*	lower	1996-2015	20	6
	Senát	upper	1996-2015	20	6
Denmark	*Folketing*	unicameral	2001-2015	15	5
Estonia	*Riigikogu*	unicameral	2007-2015	9	3
Finland	*Suomen Eduskunta*	unicameral	2007-2014	16	4
France	*Assemblée nationale*	lower	1986-2015	25	6
	Sénat	upper	1986-2015	30	7
Hungary	*Országgyűlés*	unicameral	1998-2015	18	5
Iceland	*Alþingi*	unicameral	1995-2015	21	6
Ireland	*Dáil Éireann*	lower	1997-2015	19	4
	Seanad Éireann	upper	1997-2015	19	4
Italy	*Camera dei Deputati*	lower	1996-2015	20	5
	Senato della Repubblica	upper	1996-2015	20	5
Israel	*Knesset*	unicameral	2009-2015	7	3
Lithuania	*Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas*	unicameral	1992-2015	24	6
Norway	*Stortinget*	unicameral	1985-2015	31	8
Portugal	*Assembleia da República*	unicameral	1991-2015	25	7
Romania	*Camera Deputa ilor*	lower	1996-2015	20	5
	Senat	upper	1996-2015	20	5
Slovakia	*Národná Rada*	unicameral	1998-2015	18	5
Sweden	*Riksdagen*	unicameral	1988-2015	28	8
Switzerland	*Conseil national*	lower	1995-2015	21	5
	Conseil des États	upper	1995-2015	21	5

Source: Adapted from Briatte (2016, Table 1). In the last column, *L* designates the number of legislatures, defined as the period between two nationwide elections.

Table 2. Selection of model results

(Level of measurement) Covariate	DV (1) Cosponsorship beyond own party	DV (2) Cosponsorship beyond own coalition
(Legislature) Start year	**–0.001** (0.000)	–0.002 (0.000)
(Legislature) Duration, in years	0.084 (0.05)	0.074 (0.068)
(Chamber) Statutory size	0.000 (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)
(Party) Total number of sponsors	**–0.03** (0.007)	**–0.028** (0.011)
(Party) Participates in government coalition	**0.346** (0.106)	0.088 (0.156)
(Sponsors) ideological dispersion	**1.47** (0.103)	**1.39** (0.135)
(Party) % of senior sponsors	–0.147 (0.199)	–0.35 (0.24)
(Party) % of female sponsors	**–0.984** (0.352)	–0.441 (0.399)
R-squared	0.55	0.34
Residual standard error	0.21	0.17
N (observations)	610	610

Column (1) DV = fraction of co-sponsorship ties beyond own party.
Column (2) DV = fraction of co-sponsorship ties beyond own coalition.

Both models are fractional logits clustered at the country-chamber-party level. Standard errors are shown in brackets, and coefficients significant at $p < 0.01$ are shown in bold.