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Alignment, realignment and dealignment in multi-party systems : a conceptual and empirical study

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CHAPTER 8

THE PARTY SYSTEM STRUCTURE IN CASES OF REALIGNMENT OR DEALIGNMENT – A MISSING PIECE IN THE PUZZLE

The study of stability and change in the connections between voters and parties or, more specifically, the alignment, realignment, and dealignment of voters, has always attracted a considerable amount of attention in Political Science literature. Yet the study of the effects of realignment and dealignment on the party system structure has received very little attention. This chapter will show the problematic elements of the study of the three phenomena – alignment, realignment, and dealignment – at the party system level, and attempt to address these problems by suggesting a methodology for studying the issue. It will also present the results of my empirical research.

The chapter begins with a discussion of the effects of realignment and dealignment on the party system structure and presents possible scenarios of party system change during dealignment, secular realignment and after critical realignment. It then identifies the pitfalls in the indices and measures used in the literature for recognising transformations of the party system structure. In place of these indices and measures, it recommends an examination of the electoral party system structure and offers definitions and relevant typology that are deduced from typologies or classifications of party systems. After this methodological discussion, the chapter then examines ten case studies of polities that have experienced partial and/or full dealignment, and one case study of a polity that has gone through a partial realignment.

8.1 Between Concepts and Observations

As part of their discussion of measurement validity, Adcock and Collier (2001:530-1) suggested a flowchart to depict the relationship between concepts and measurements. It is a four-step model for valid measurement: 1. the background concept (the broad constellation of meanings and understandings associated with a given concept); 2. the systematised concept (a specific formulation of a concept used by a scholar or group of scholars); 3. indicators (also referred to as ‘measures’ and ‘operationalization’); 4. scores for cases. Researchers following this four-step model will find that the study of the effects of realignment and dealignment on the party system structure is especially problematic for multi-party systems, as some steps from Adcock and Collier’s (2001) model are missing in this type of system.

Background concept of realignment at the party system level for multi-party systems can be found in the literature. Arian and Shamir (2001:691), for example, reported on realignment in the Israeli party system after the 1977 election, and Hazan (2007:285-6) discussed it as a possible scenario for the Israeli party system with the appearance of the middle party, Kadima. Systematised concepts of this type of shift, however, are rare, unlike for two-party systems (especially in the American literature), for which one can easily find systematised concepts of realignment referring to changes of the party system. In realignment, the balance of power within government is modified, or there is a shift of majority parties (Shea, 1999:33). In this latter scenario, variations amongst the systematised concepts are related to the necessity of this shift: some scholars do not consider it essential, since the transfer of voters between parties could even out (Trilling & Campbell, 1980:31) (for more on this subject, see Clubb, et al., (1980:77-83), or the voters could move away from the major parties to support (smaller) third parties (Pinkney, 1986:48). The same discussion is found regarding specific types of realignment: critical realignment and secular realignment. Some have argued that critical realignment includes a change in relative political power as majority parties become minorities (Burnham, 1975:6; Carmines & Stimson, 1984), without which the process could not be called a critical realignment (Petrocik, 1981). Others have not held such a strict view, arguing that this change may or may not occur (Campbell, et al., 1960; Ladd & Hadley, 1975; McMichael & Trilling, 1980; Nexon, 1980; Pomper, 1967). In the case of secular realignment, the differences are

even greater: some have argued that no change in the party system structure is expected (Dalton, 1984; Key, 1959; Nexon, 1980). This is in contrast to those who have seen this type of change as part of the secular realignment process (Abramowitz & Saunders, 1998).

These parsimonious systematised concepts are clear definitions of the effect of realignment in two-party systems. Yet they cannot simply be transferred to multi-party systems, due to the substantial difference between the two. While in a two-party system shifts in electoral strength and balance between parties are straightforward, in the case of multi-party systems these changes are much more minor, since the electoral differences between majority and minority parties are much smaller and there is no clear benchmark by which to identify these modifications. For this reason, Dalton (1996:192) defined a realignment as “significant shift in the group bases of party coalitions, usually resulting in a shift in the *relative size of the parties’ vote shares*” (Italics added).

A systematised concept of the implications of realignment on party systems that can be applied to multi-party systems is that of Wolinetz (1988). He defined realignment as “substantially altering the format of party competition or redefining party alternatives” (Wolinetz, 1988:299). The main drawback of this definition is its ambiguity, as it includes generic terms such as ‘format of party competition’ and ‘party alternatives’. The definition becomes clearer when one identifies several indicators for each of the systematised concepts that Wolinetz (1988:297-9) employed in his empirical discussion in the same paper. Alteration of the format of party system competition occurs when established parties merge, fade into insignificance, disappear, or lose their parliamentary representation. The redefining of party alternatives occurs when a new party succeeds in displacing previously established parties and acquires a major role in cabinet formations or policy-making.

This list of indicators can easily be applied to two- and multi-party systems, yet the relevance of these indicators for the study of the effects of realignment on the multi-party systems is questionable, especially regarding the second component: redefining party alternatives. In a two-party system, a change of the majority party includes a change of the governing party; in multi-party systems (in which the government

usually consists of several parties), by contrast, the pattern of government formation, and more specifically the inclusion of parties in a coalition government, might be due to reasons other than those related to electoral success, such as the coalition formation logic itself. For example, according to de Swaan's (1973) argument on closed coalitions, the inclusion of new parties in government might be related to their positions on the Left-Right axis and not necessarily related to their electoral success.

We should also keep in mind that the disappearance of an established party due to a merger between two or more parties (one of the Wolinetz's indicators for measuring the alteration of the format of party competition) does not necessarily occur for reasons related to electoral circumstances, but can be due to other factors, such as those concerning the party elite. On top of this, as discussed in Chapter Four, a merger between parties is *ipso facto* a shift that forces the electorate to change its patterns of party support: therefore, this factor should be taken into consideration. I will return to this issue below.

The study of how the party system is affected by a dealignment is even more problematic. As seen in the literature of realignment, it is not clear if the party system structure is affected during a period of dealignment. Crewe (1983) and LeDuc (1984) argued that electoral shifts may not translate into the party system, as they conceal each other or move in different directions.

A second problem related to the impact of dealignment on the party system structure concerns the type of change occurring. Crewe (1983:211) studied the British two-party system and suggested several scenarios of new enduring party balance, but also described the possibility of frequent changes. This last scenario, which Crewe named 'unstable dealignment', is the most commonly expected scenario in the literature. Most scholars, however, have not used any definitions for describing the shifts expected during a dealignment. Instead they have employed several indicators to accommodate the dealignment's effects. Some such indicators deal with the party system structure, such as increased fragmentation, the disappearance of old parties and the emergence of new parties, the emergence and marginalisation of new parties or an overall increase in the number of parties. Indicators that signal a change of voting behaviour but are also seen as signalling a change at the party system level,

such as an increase in electoral volatility, are also used. In summary, the study of the effects of dealignment is mainly based on indicators, which have not been developed from definitions. Based on Adcock and Collier's (2001) model, this can be described as beginning research in the middle, i.e., the third stage, as the first two stages of the background of the concept (step one) and the systematised concept (step two) are missing!

This discussion demonstrates the need to develop clear systematised concepts of the possible effects of realignment and dealignment on the party system in multi-party systems. In order to define these concepts, we need to identify the essence of the phenomena we investigate. To this end, we must re-examine the concept of the 'party system' and its meaning in the contexts of alignment, realignment, and dealignment.

8.2 The 'Party System' and Its Usage in the Contexts of Alignment, Realignment, and Dealignment

One of the first uses of the term 'party system' was in Duverger's (1954) 'Political Parties'. Duverger (1954:203) stated that "[w]ith the exception of the single-party states, several parties co-exist in each country: the forms and modes of their coexistence define the 'party system' of particular country being considered." He explained that a party system is defined by particular relationships between characteristics such as numbers, respective size, alliances, geographical localisation, political distribution, and so on (Duverger, 1954:203). The interaction between parties is what Sartori saw as the essence of a party system; according to him, "a party system is precisely the *system of interactions* resulting from inter-party competition" (Sartori, 1976:44) (*italics in original*).

Later, Laver identified the interaction between parties as taking place in two arenas: in the legislative, where "the day-to-day politics of coalition are conducted", and in the electorate, in which "the politics of electoral competition are conducted" (Laver, 1989:203). Each of these arenas, according to Laver, is a separate party system; the first is the 'legislative party system', the second the 'electoral party system'. Therefore, he argued, "[t]here is [...] no simple thing that we can think of as 'the party system'. Rather, there are several party systems operating in different arenas,

similar to each other yet different” (Laver, 1989:203); see also (Bardi, 1996). Along the same lines, Pennings (1998:79) stated that the study of party systems should focus on three aspects: votes, office, and policy, and explained that these elements are independent from each other, since a change in “one of these factors does not automatically involve changes in other factors.” Therefore, we should evaluate the relevance of each the three dimensions to the phenomena we wish to define.

As discussed in previous chapters, the essence of the three phenomena concerns long-term patterns of (dis)connection between the electorate and political parties. That said, we can see that the legislative party system (created because of the functional division between the electoral and parliamentary arenas) has nothing to do with the discussion of alignment, realignment, or dealignment, since the electorate does not have any influence on interactions within this system. The voters do not have any direct influence on the day-to-day interaction of parties in the legislative branch. Moreover, the possible influence of the electorate on the most basic interaction in the legislative branch, i.e., that between the government and the opposition regarding coalition government formation, is minimal. Research has showed that election results are not the only factor to constrain or influence government formation, but rather are one of several institutional and political factors (such as party positions and constitutional regulations) (Mattila & Raunio, 2004:265). Besides this, there may be a reverse relation of cause and effect: a change in the pattern of government formation might lead to electoral change, as Mair (2002a:105) proposed. According to him, within the limited combinations of coalition government formation, (or as Mair put it, the closed structure of competition) voters tend to vote strategically, so their preferences are also likely to be constrained. In party systems where the combination of government formation is broader, there is no need for voters to vote strategically. Following this logic, when the patterns of government formation are modified, the voters change their patterns of party support accordingly (Mair, 2008). This last argument of strategic voting, however, stands in contrast with assumptions of the socio-psychological and socio-structural approaches and with the core argument regarding the phenomena under investigation here: that either partisanship or socio-structural group membership is the main explanation for party support. All in all, it is clear that the first dimension of a party system – voting – should be the core of our interest.

The study of election results, which encapsulates the degree of connection between voters and political parties, should also take into account the supply aspect – the electoral competition patterns between parties during elections. Changes of competition patterns on the supply side may not only affect the election results *per se*, but can even define the domain of this chapter – the party system structure. Recently, Bardi and Mair (2008) argued that a single polity might have several different party systems, such as a vertical division occurs as certain parties run for election only in specific parts of the electorate. All in all, it is clear that the effects of alignment, realignment or dealignment on the party system are manifested in the patterns of interaction between parties both before, and more importantly after, the election. Put differently, our domain in this chapter is *the electoral party system*.

This clarified, I now return to my main task: finding systematised concepts. This chapter's discussion of the existing systematised concepts for realignment in two-party and multi-party systems makes clear that when realignment occurs, the electorate changes its electoral behaviour in such a way that a new structure of the electoral party system might be formed. In a scenario of critical realignment it is expected that the structural change will appear immediately after the critical election, the peak moment of the realignment. In contrast, secular realignment is a long-term process, during which the possible transformation of the party system structure will occur. On top of this, with the appearance of a new alignment, we expect this (possible) new structure to be durable, or, as Sundquist (1983:5) put it, to be “a lasting change”.

Thus, my first hypothesis concerning realignment is:

H1 The structure of the electoral party system will change and a new durable structure of electoral party system will be created immediately after the critical election(s) (the peak moment of the critical realignment), or during a period of secular realignment.

This conceptual and empirical discussion has also pointed out that a new long-term party system structure can also be created during a period of dealignment. However, since all the eleven cases under investigation in this research have an electoral system

of proportional representation, I expect that the increasing numbers of voters with no party allegiance will create frequent shifts in the structure of the electoral party system. Alongside this is the question of the nature of the transformation. Some indicators suggest that during a dealignment period, the party balance will be dispersed, which implies that the party system structure becomes more fragmented (for instance, an increase in the level of fragmentation or in the number of parties, etc.).

This leads me to draw two hypotheses concerning dealignment:

H2 During a period of dealignment, the stable and durable electoral party system structure will disappear without a new, stable structure being formed.

H3 During a period of dealignment, the structure of the electoral party system structure will become more fragmented.

My semi-modular empirical analysis of patterns of partisan alignment and of voter alignment along a cleavage (see Chapter Seven) has demonstrated that the dealignment process develops in two phases. It begins in either one of the manifestations of alignment, and in this first phase the process is partial. In its second phase, the process will inevitably spill over into the other manifestation of alignment and become a full process of dealignment. In addition, as I explained in Chapter Seven, since the alignment mechanism of voters and parties for each of the manifestations is different, the effect of dealignment in each of these manifestations on the party system structure may be different. It would be interesting to examine the differences between these effects.

Therefore, I will examine the two hypotheses concerning the period of dealignment in its two phases: as a partial and a full process. With regards to realignment, I could only examine the partial realignment that is identified in my empirical research.

As my approach is semi-modular, theoretically the causality relationship may be the reverse of what is usually expected or assumed, as changes in the electoral party system might have kicked in *before* the dealignment or realignment began. Therefore, the timing of changes in the electoral party system versus those in the alignment manifestations is important, and will also be examined.

Having defined my expectations concerning changes in the electoral party system after or during re/dealignment, the next challenge is to find an appropriate method for testing these expectations. This brings me to the next problem of studying how a party system is affected by these phenomena: the difficulties of identifying change using various indices.

8.3 The Difficulties of Identifying Alignment, Realignment or Dealignment Using Various Indices

Study of the effects of re/dealignment on the party system is usually undertaken using several indices. Some indices aim to evaluate the party system structure, such as Laakso and Taagepera's (1979) Effective Number of Parties (ENP); Rae's (1967) Fragmentation index (for an explanation of both indices, see Appendix A). Some are a formula for examining the Left-Right polarisation of relevant parties, such as was suggested by Shahla and Belousov (Klingemann, 1985),¹ while others count the number of major parties or number of relevant parties (e.g. (Bardi, 1996b; Dalton, et al., 1984a; Klingemann, 1985; Knutsen, 2004; Lane & Ersson, 1987). Such study is sometimes even done using indices that aim to measure the aggregate change of party support, such as Pedersen's (1979) Total Volatility index (TV) (e.g. (Dalton, et al., 1984a; Lane & Ersson, 1987; Mainwaring & Zoco, 2007; Pennings, 1998:84). Some indices measure electoral support for different groups of parties, for example, the Functional Orientation index and the Radical Orientation index (for explanation of these indices, see notes 8, 9 in Chapter Two) or other categorisations of party families (Sundberg, 1999). Study of the effects of re/dealignment on party structure may also use indices related to the study of cleavage alignment, such as Bartolini and Mair's (1990) Bloc Volatility index (e.g. (Bardi, 1996b; Klingemann, 2005; Lane & Ersson, 1987).

¹ The formula regarding the Left-Right polarisation of relevant parties is:

$$P = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n-1} \sum_{j=1}^{n-1} \text{abs}(P_{j+1} - P_i)}{2X(\text{round}(N/2) \times \text{round}(N/2 - 0.5))}$$

Where P_i stands the Left-Right policy position of the party i and P_j stands for the Left-Right party policy position of party j , and n is the N is the number of parties (Klingemann, 2005).

All my hypotheses deal with change in the structure of the electoral party system. Two of the hypotheses, however, are impossible to test based on the existing indices for two reasons.

The first relates to the failure of the indices to identify change in party system structure. Pedersen (1980:389) demonstrated the inability of the Fractionalisation index to test change in party systems. According to him, this index and the other six indices of fragmentation,² cannot measure change since they are insensitive to the identities of the individual parties. Instead Pedersen suggested the use of the TV index. Mair (2002a) also criticised the application of the Fractionalisation and ENP indices for studying party system change, as both indices treat the differences between party systems as a matter of degree rather than kind. In other words, they cannot identify change in the type of party system. Therefore, a study based on any of these indices would fail to identify change in the electoral party system structure. The same argument can be applied to any other index that measures changes of electoral behaviour, such as the TV index. Evans (2002:160) has already criticised the use of indices that capture shifts in voting behaviour to study party system structure. He argued that their use implies the assumption that there is a connection between these two phenomena, despite the fact that high volatility “is precisely a necessary (though not sufficient) condition of a change in party system type.”

The second failure of these indices is related to identification of the durability of the electoral party system structure. Mair (2002a:63-4) explained that the Fractionalisation and ENP indices treat changes in party systems as continuous phenomena, and therefore are biased against the identification of stability, which is essential for identifying an (new) alignment.

8.4 Finding a New Method to Identify Change in the Electoral Party System in the Context of Realignment and Dealignment

² The other indices were the Gini-coefficient, the index of Fractionalisation as corrected by Sartori, Flanagan’s index of Fragmentation, Milder’s index of Two-Party Competition, the index of Potential Competition and the index of Multipartism.

My challenge is to find a method that enables identification of stability and change in the structure of the electoral party system. This system has two components, which are related to each other: patterns of parties' strength (i.e. electoral support), and party interactions. The new method must be able to capture them both. One way to do this is to examine typologies of party systems that include these two aspects, and to develop necessary conditions for the identification of stability and change in the electoral party system structure in multi-party systems.

Several typologies of multi-party systems can be found in Political Science literature. The first was proposed by Blondel (1968), who suggested distinguishing between two-party systems, two-and-a-half-party systems, multi-party systems with one dominant party, and multi-party systems without a dominant party. Blondel's typology suggested that there are two aspects to the study of multi-party systems. The first is the number of parties – are there two, two-and-a-half, or more parties in the system? The second aspect deals with electoral support for the two largest parties. Blondel observed that in a two-party system the two major parties get at least 90 percent of the votes, in a two-and-a-half-party system the first two parties receive between 75 and 80 percent of the votes, and in a multi-party system with a dominant party, this party will receive about 40 percent of the electorate and gain about twice as many votes as the second-largest party. He also found that in a two-party system the ratio of the difference in electoral support for the two largest parties is 1.6, and in a two-and-a-half-party system the proportion of electoral support between the first two parties is below 1.6.

Sartori's typology (1976) included more categories for multi-party systems, distinguishing between one-party, hegemonic party, predominant party, two-party, moderate pluralism, and polarised pluralism. This classification of the party system was based on two elements, the first of which was the number of parties. Sartori distinguished between limited pluralism, extreme pluralism, and an atomised party system. 'Limited pluralism' includes party systems with three to five parties, while 'extreme pluralism' indicates six to eight parties. Sartori (1976:123), however, did not count all parties participating in the election, but only 'relevant' parties, which in his view were those with either coalition or blackmail potential. There are two problems with this criterion. The first is its meaning. While the first condition – coalition

potential – is clear (defined as a party that has participated in or supported a government coalition), the second is difficult to apply, and researchers have largely ignored it. Klingemann (2005:33), for example, defined relevant parties as those “which either have participated in or supported governments.” The second problem is that Sartori counted parties according to their relevance (or irrelevance) to government coalitions, an aspect that is not part of our domain in this thesis.³ This is also true for the second element in Sartori’s typology: the ideological distance between parties, or, in Sartori’s words (1976:128) “the overall spread of ideological spectrum of any polity.” For this he distinguished between a centrifugal and a centripetal direction of party competition. Our interest, however, is in patterns of electoral competition between parties and party support, and not in the ideological spectrum of the party systems.

Siaroff (2000), who elaborated on Blondel’s and Sartori’s typologies (Wolinetz, 2006), suggested distinguishing between eight different party systems: two-party systems, two-and-a-half-party systems, moderate multi-party systems with one dominant party, moderate multi-party systems with two main parties, moderate multi-party systems with a balance among the parties, extreme multi-party systems with one dominant party, extreme multi-party systems with two main parties, and extreme multi-party systems with a balance among the parties. The allocation of party systems to one of these categories is based on four criteria: 1. two-party seat concentration (2PSC), 2. the number of parties winning three per cent or more of the filled seats (P3%S), 3. seat ratio between the first and second parties (SR1:2), and 4. seat ratio between the second and third parties (SR2:3). The first criterion distinguishes between a two-party system and a two-and-a-half-party system (in the former the first two parties receive at least 95 percent of the vote, while in the second they receive between 80 and 95 percent). The second criterion distinguishes between two-party systems (in which there are only two winning parties), and two-and-a-half-party systems and moderate multi-party systems (in which there are between three and five winning parties), and extreme multi-party systems (in which there are more than five winning parties). The last two criteria will help us to distinguish between a party system with a dominant party (the ratio between the first two parties will be 1.6 or

³ The same can be said against Mair’s (2002a; 2006) typology. He proposed the study of different party systems on the basis of the prevailing mode of government alternation.

more), a party system with two main parties (where the ratio of the shares of the two largest parties will be below 1.6, and that for the second and the third largest parties will be 1.8 or more), and a party system with a balance among the parties (the ratio of the shares of the two largest parties will be below 1.6, and for the second and the third largest parties it will be below 1.8).

These four different criteria again emphasise the most important elements for identifying the electoral party system structure: the number of parties and the electoral support for the two largest parties.

These three typologies of party systems can help us identify important aspects of the study of the electoral party system structure. The first is the level of electoral competition, i.e., how competitive is the contest between parties for votes? Here I distinguish between weak competition, moderate competition, and wide competition. The second aspect is that of electoral strength, or the party dominance structure. Following Blondel (1968) and Siaroff (2000), I differentiate between multi-party systems with one dominant party, multi-party systems with two main parties, and multi-party systems with balance between the parties.

In order to identify the party system structure, I use several indicators.

The first aspect – the level of competition – is identified according to the number of parties. Here I distinguish between three cases: a multi-party system with three to five parties, a multi-party system with six to eight parties, and a multi-party system with over eight parties. Since I am concerned with patterns of electoral support, I count only parties that receive at least three percent of the valid votes. I am aware that by doing so, I will not count all parties that have obtained seats in the parliament, such as the Dutch Second Chamber (*de Tweede Kamer*) (as the (lowest) threshold in the Netherlands (since 1956) stands on 0.67 (Andeweg, 2005:494; Farrell, 1997:70), but I suspect that these parties have very little influence on the interaction between parties before and after the election. Concerning Germany and the second Italian Republic (between 1994 and 2005), which have a mixed electoral system, my research includes only the ‘second vote’ (the votes for party lists). This is in order to make my research comparable to all the other cases, which have electoral systems of proportional representation (PR).

The second aspect – party dominance – is examined by using several indicators to gauge electoral support for the two largest parties. This is a combination of three measures: electoral support for the largest party, electoral support for the two largest parties, and the ratio of the shares of electoral support for the largest and the second largest party. Following Blondel (1968) I hold that a **multi-party system with a dominant party** is a system in which the largest party receives at least 39 percent of the votes and two largest parties together gain less than 75 percent of the votes, or in which the two largest parties gain at least 75 percent of the votes and the largest party receives at least twice as many votes as the second party, so that the ratio of shares of electoral support between the largest and the second largest parties is more than 2. A **multi-party system with two dominant parties** is identified when the two largest parties receive at least 75 percent of the votes and the largest party gains less than twice as many votes than the second largest party. A **multi-party system with balance between the parties** is identified when the largest party gains less than 39 percent of the votes and electoral support for the two largest parties is less than 75 percent.

These two aspects together yield nine different multi-party structures: weak competition with one dominant party (model no. 1), weak competition with two dominant parties (model no. 2), weak competition with balance between the parties (model no. 3), moderate competition with one dominant party (model no. 4), moderate competition with two dominant parties (model no. 5), moderate competition with balance between the parties (model no. 6), wide competition with one dominant party (model no. 7), wide competition with two dominant parties (model no. 8), wide competition with balance between the parties (model no. 9). Table 8.1 displays the conditions for the different models of electoral party system structure.

Table 8.1: The conditions based on the two aspects for different models of multi-party systems			
	Weak competition (3-5 winning parties)	Moderate competition (6-8 winning parties)	Wide competition (9 or more winning parties)
One dominant party (2 largest parties <75% & largest party ≥ 39%, or 2 largest parties ≥75% & largest party/second largest party ≥ 2)	1	4	7
Two dominant parties (2 largest parties ≥75% & largest party/second largest party ≤2)	2	5	8
Balance between the parties (2 largest parties <75% & largest party <39%)	3	6	9

While these indicators can provide a sense of the electoral party system structure, they are based only on election results. It is possible, however, that the main components of the electoral party system change and yet its structure remains the same. This occurs, for example, when the identity of one of the dominant parties changes. Such a change in identity occurs when the largest or second largest party in one of the elections has reached this position for the first time, or when a new pattern is created, for example when a party that has consistently been the second largest succeeds in becoming the largest party for the first time.

These three criteria – number of parties, electoral support for the first two parties, and the identity of the largest parties – encapsulate the possible changes to the structure of the electoral party system. Yet, as I discussed above, this structure might also change

when the parties themselves shift their patterns of electoral competition. This may happen, for example, when there is electoral cooperation between parties, with the parties forming an electoral alliance and creating a cartel. A good example of this is the French party system, in which the parties (due to the French electoral system) encourage electoral agreements during the parliamentary and presidential elections. Another example is that of parties deciding to compete only in specific constituencies and not nationwide, or vice versa. Changes such as these may affect the election results and have consequences for the electoral party system structure; therefore, they will be discussed in depth.

Since each of the criteria can indicate change in the electoral party system, I employed them to test my hypotheses and to examine what happened at the party system level after or during realignment and dealignment. I also operationalised the necessary empirical conditions for validating each one of the possible hypotheses. For identifying the structure of the electoral party system, I analysed its structure in each election year: for each case, in every election year, I decided which model this party system possessed according to my typology, and examined the identity of its two largest parties. The full data is presented in Table 8.2 and in Appendix F. This was done in order to test my hypotheses regarding the possibility of change in the electoral party system and its competitiveness after or during re/dealignment.

H1 concerns the creation of a new durable structure of the electoral party system after or during a period of realignment. A new electoral party system structure is identified when one or more of the typology's three criteria indicate(s) a shift from one model of party system structure to another. The durability of this new structure is identified when it remains in place for a period of at least a decade and in at least three successive elections.

On the other hand, according to H2, during a dealignment the long-standing party system structure will disappear. This is identified when one or more of the typology's three criteria of electoral party system structure indicate(s) frequent changes in the party system structure: at least two changes or more over a period of ten years, in at least three successive elections.

H3 also deals with the patterns of electoral competition during a dealignment period. It is expected that competition between the parties will be increasingly fragmented. This is identified when the typology's criteria point to a shift towards a more fragmented party system and/or when electoral strength is distributed between more parties (for example, a shift from a model of weak to moderate competition, or from two dominant parties to balance between the parties, etc.).

In the next section, I present the results of empirical research into the party system structure in eleven European party systems. In ten of these cases (Austria, Finland, Flanders, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Wallonia) my analysis of the patterns of partisan alignment and of voter alignments along the class and religious cleavages identified a dealignment in both or one of these alignment manifestations at different time-points. H2 and H3 will be examined in all of these ten cases. To examine the effect of partial vs. full dealignment, I will first examine the cases of full dealignment: the periods of time in which both manifestations are in a state of dealignment. I will then analyse partial dealignment, in which only one manifestation is found to be in a state of dealignment.

In two cases, I identified a partial realignment. In Denmark, signs of a partisan critical realignment were found in the 1973 election (which was followed by a new alignment), while the voter alignment along the class cleavage remained stable. In Flanders, a partial realignment was identified when a new voter alignment along the religious cleavage appeared in 1965, during a period of partisan alignment. This situation held until 1985, when voter dealignment along the class cleavage began. However, I decided not to examine the Flemish case as throughout this period (between 1968 and 1978 elections) the current Flemish party system was created as the major parties split one after another (on this issue, see Chapter Four). Thus my hypothesis concerning realignment – H1 – will be tested only for the Danish case.

8.5 The Empirical Results

The principal goal of this analysis is the identification of possible changes in the structure of the electoral party system after or during realignment, and throughout

dealignment, as it is classified by the party system structure – the dominance of a specific party or parties and its competitiveness.

There are two hypotheses regarding possible change during dealignment. One concerns the frequency of shifts in the party system structure. In order to identify a shift, I first need to examine whether a durable structure of the party system has ever appeared in each of the cases under investigation here.

Before identifying any change, I must identify the durable characteristics of the party system structure. Based on Lipset and Rokkan's (1967) seminal piece and more specifically their 'freezing' hypothesis, I assume that the period between 1950 and the mid 1960s was stable, and throughout this period one model of party system structure held firm. Put differently, I expect the typology's three criteria to show that the structure of the electoral party system remained stable from the first election (in or after 1950) onwards, and held at least until the mid 1960s⁴. The data have confirmed this expectation.

Table 8.2 shows that apart from Germany and Luxembourg, the three criteria indicate that in all the cases that experienced dealignment in both manifestations – a full dealignment – or only in one of the manifestations – a partial dealignment – the electoral party systems were stable at least until the mid 1960s.

This is true for Austria (until 1970) and Wallonia (1965) (both with the model of weak competition with two dominant parties, model 2), Sweden (until 1988, with the exception of the 1968 election when the identity of the second party changed temporarily; the model of weak competition with one dominant party, model 1) and Norway (until 1973, the model of moderate competition with one dominant party, model 4). Over the entire period, the Finnish electoral party system structure remained the same (the model of moderate competition with balance between the parties, model 6), but the identity of the first party changed temporarily in the 1962 election.

⁴ As I excluded the German 1953 election, my study of the German party system begins with the 1957 election.

In Flanders, Italy and the Netherlands, the typology suggests that the party system structures were based on two similar models. In Flanders (until 1971) there was weak competition with one or two dominant parties (models 1 + 2) and in the Netherlands (until 1972) there was weak or moderate competition with balance between the parties (models 3 + 6). In Italy throughout almost the entire period the party system can be characterised as exhibiting moderate competition with one dominant parties or with balance between the parties (models 4 + 6), until the first election of the second Italian Republic (the 1994 election), when the identity of the first two largest parties changed.

Concerning my analysis of the structure of the electoral party system in the second Italian Republic, I must clarify that I cannot be sure that the data for electoral support is valid, since the new electoral systems force the parties to form electoral alliances or “pre-electoral cartels of parties,” in Giannetti and Laver’s words (2001:529) (for more details of the new electoral systems, see Chapter Four). As the electoral competition between most of the parties is in patterns of cartels, the share of electoral support for each party does not represent the electoral support for parties competing with each other individually, but it does give an “indication of the relative strength of individual members of the cartel” (Giannetti & Laver, 2001:531).

Only in the cases of Germany and Luxembourg does the typology indicate that the electoral party system stabilised somewhere between late 1950 and the mid 1960s. In Germany, the three typology criteria confirm that the structure of the electoral party system changed in the first two elections – 1957 and 1961 – as the electoral party system structure went from being a moderate competitive party system with one dominant party (model 4) to being a weak competitive party system with balance between the parties (model 3). In addition, in the first election (1957) the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) was the largest party, and in the second election (1961) the Social Democrats (SPD) took its place. These transitions may be due to two reforms in the German electoral system: in 1953, the 5 percent threshold was raised from the regional to the national level, and in 1956 the ‘one-district-seat waiver’ for obtaining a seat amongst the proportional representation distribution seats was replaced by a ‘three-district-seats waiver’ (Sallfeld, 2005:218). These two reforms not only reduced the opportunity for small parties to obtain large electoral support, but they also

explain the electoral alliance between the German Party (DP) and the CDU in some northern constituencies in 1957-61 (Sallfeld, 2005:218). These electoral system reforms together with the DP-CDU electoral pact are the reasons for the decrease in number of parties in 1961 (decreased to four) and for the switch between the CDU and the SPD as the largest party. All in all, the criteria suggest that the stabilisation of the party system emerged slightly later – in 1965 – as the model of weak competition with two dominant parties (model 2), which held until 1987. Concerning Luxembourg, the typology indicates that in the first three elections the party system changed from weak competition with two dominant parties (in the 1951 election; model 2) to one dominant party (in 1954 election; model 1), and then to balance between the parties (in 1959; model 3). This last structure held until 1979, and therefore I assume that the electoral party system only stabilised from the 1959 election onwards.

Table 8.2: Periods of alignment, realignment (and a new alignment) and dealignment in both alignment manifestations, the party system model, and the direction of fragmentation, in every election year, between 1950 and 2010

Austria																										
	1953	1956	1959	1962	1966	1970	1971	1975	1979	1983	1986	1990	1994	1995	1999	2002	2006	2008								
Partisan	Partisan alignment									Partisan dealignment																
Cleavage	Voter alignment along class cleavage					Voter dealignment along class cleavage																				
Party system structure	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	3	3	3	2	2	2								
Direction of fragmentation						*						↓	↑						↓*							
Type of change						7						6	4						3,7							
Denmark																										
	1950	1953	1953	1957	1960	1964	1966	1968	1971	1973	1975	1977	1979	1981	1984	1987	1988	1990	1994	1998	2001	2005	2007			
Partisan	Partisan alignment									Partisan critical realignment and a new alignment																
Cleavage	Voter alignment along class																									
Party system structure	4	4	4	4	4	1	3	3	3	9	6	9	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6			
Direction of fragmentation						↓	↑				↑*	↓	↑	↓	*						*					
Type of change						2	4				1,8	2	1	2	8									7		
Finland																										
	1951	1954	1958	1962	1966	1970	1972	1975	1979	1983	1987	1991	1995	1999	2003	2007										
Partisan	Partisan alignment					Partisan dealignment																				
Cleavage	Voter alignment along class cleavage				Voter dealignment along class cleavage																					
Party system structure	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6										
Direction of fragmentation				*			*						*						*							
Type of change				7			8						7						8							

Flanders

Flanders																				
		1950	1954	1958	1961	1965	1968	1971	1974	1977	1978	1981	1985	1987	1991	1995	1999	2003	2007	2010
Partisan Cleavage		Partisan alignment													Partisan dealignment					
		Voter alignment along class cleavage				Voter alignment along class cleavage and a new voter alignment along religious cleavage							Voter dealignment along class cleavage and a (new) voter alignment along religious cleavage							
Party system structure		1	2	1	2	1	1	3	1	1	1	3	3	6	6	6	6	6	3	6
Direction of fragmentation			↑	↓	↑	↓		↑	↓			↑*		↑			*	*	↓**	*↑
Type of change			4	3	4	6		4	3			4,8		1			7	8	2,7,8	1, 7

Germany

	1957	1961	1965	1969	1972	1976	1980	1983	1987	1990	1994	1998	2002	2005	2009
Partisan Cleavage	Partisan alignment									Partisan dealignment					
	Voter alignment along religious cleavage									Voter dealignment along religious cleavage					
Party system structure	4	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	6	4	6	6	6
Direction of fragmentation		↓↑*	↓						↑	*	↑*	↓	↑		*
Type of change		2,4,7	3						6	7	1,7	3	4		7

Italy (1st & 2nd Republics)

	1953	1958	1963	1968	1972	1976	1979	1983	1987	1992	1994	1996	2001	2006	2008
Partisan Cleavage	Partisan alignment				Partisan dealignment										
	Voter alignments along class and religious cleavages							Voter dealignment along religious cleavage and alignment along class cleavage			Voter dealignments along both cleavages				
Party system structure	4	4	6	4	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
Direction of fragmentation			↑	↓	↑						*	*			
Type of change			4	3	4						7	7			

Luxembourg																								
Partisan Cleavage	1951	1954	1959	1964	1968	1974	1979	1984	1989	1994	1999	2004	2009											
	Partisan alignment																							
	Voter alignments along religious and class cleavages						Voter dealignment along class cleavage and alignment along religious cleavage					Voter dealignments along both cleavages												
Party system structure	2	1	3	3	3	3	6	3	6	3	6	3	6											
Direction of fragmentation		↓	↑				↑	↓	↑	↓	↑*	↓	↑											
Type of change		3	4				1	2	1	2	1,8	2	1											
the Netherlands																								
Partisan Cleavage	1952	1956	1959	1963	1967	1971	1972	1977	1981	1982	1986	1989	1994	1998	2002	2003	2006	2010						
	Partisan alignment				Partisan dealignment																			
	Voter alignment along religious cleavage				Voter dealignment along religious cleavage																			
Party system structure	6	6	3	3	6	6	9	3	3	3	3	3	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6			
Direction of fragmentation			↓		↑		↑	↓					↑	*	*					*	*			
Type of change			2		1		1	2,7,8					1	8	8					7				
Norway																								
Partisan Cleavage	1953	1957	1961	1965	1969	1973	1977	1981	1985	1989	1993	1997	2001	2005	2009									
	Partisan alignment					Partisan dealignment																		
	Voter alignment along class cleavage				Voter dealignment along class cleavage																			
Party system structure	4	4	4	4	4	6	4	6	4	6	6	6	6	6	6									
Direction of fragmentation						↑	↓	↑	↓	↑		*												
Type of change						4	3	4	3	4		8												

Sweden																			
	1952	1956	1958	1960	1964	1968	1970	1973	1976	1979	1982	1985	1988	1991	1994	1998	2002	2006	2010
Partisan	Partisan alignment										Partisan dealignment								
Cleavage	Voter alignment along class cleavage										Voter dealignment along class cleavage								
Party system structure	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	4	6	4	6	4	6	6
Direction of fragmentation						*							↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑	
Type of change						8							1	4	3	4	3	4	
Wallonia																			
	1950	1954	1958	1961	1965	1968	1971	1974	1977	1978	1981	1985	1987	1991	1995	1999	2003	2007	2010
Partisan	Partisan alignment					Partisan dealignment													
Cleavage	Voter alignment along class cleavage										Voter dealignment along class cleavage								
Party system structure	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	1	3	6	1	1	1	3	3	3	3	3
Direction of fragmentation					↑*				↓	↑	↑	↓↓		↑				*	*
Type of change					4,8				3	4	1	2,3			4			7	7
<p><i>Index:</i> Partisan or Voter Alignment/ Realignment/ Dealignment as is found based on my analysis of partisanship and voter alignment along class and religious cleavages in chapters Five and Six respectively.</p> <p>Party system structure is the model of the party system as based on the criteria's typology: (1) weak competition with one dominant party, (2) weak competition with two dominant parties, (3) weak competition with a balance between the parties, (4) moderate competition with one dominant party, (5) moderate competition with two dominant parties, (6) moderate competition with a balance between the parties, (7) wide competition with one dominant party, (8) wide competition with two dominant parties, (9) wide competition with a balance between the parties.</p> <p>Type of change are: (1) no of parties increased (2) no. of parties decreased (3) electoral support for the first party increased (4) electoral support for the first party decreased (5) electoral support for the second party increased (6) electoral support for the second party decreased (7) identity of the first party changed or a switch between the first and second party (8) identity of the second party changed.</p> <p>Signs of ↑ stands for increase of competitiveness, signs of ↓ stands for decrease of competitiveness and sign of * stands for a change of the identity of one of the first two parties.</p>																			

The next question is, what occurred in the electoral party system during dealignment? I begin by examining the cases in which both alignment manifestations were in a state of dealignment – a full dealignment – and will then study the cases for which a state of dealignment was found only in one of the manifestations – a partial dealignment.

Table 8.2 specifies for each case the timing of partisan dealignment and/or a dealignment(s) along the class and religious cleavages, and the different party system structures as identified by the typology's three criteria in each election year. It also shows the direction of change – whether the competition between parties became more fragmented (signed as ↑) (for example, when the party system structure shifted from one dominant party to two dominant parties, etc.), or whether the party system structure became less fragmented (signed as ↓) (when, for example, the number of parties decreased). Changes in the identity of one of the first two parties are also flagged (*). In addition, the table marks the type of change that created the shift in the electoral party system.

A full dealignment was found in eight multi-party systems: Austria (since 1983), Finland (since 1970), Flanders (since 1991), Germany (since 1990), Italy (since 1983), the Netherlands (since 1967), Norway (since 1973), Sweden (since 1991) and Wallonia (since 1987), as is presented by Table 8.2.

Apart from Finland, in all the multi-party systems that experienced dealignment in both manifestations, the party system structure shifted and modification occurred several times, so that at least two modifications are found in a period of ten years and in at least three successive elections, with the exception of the 1980s in the Netherlands, the 1990s in Wallonia and the 2000s in Norway.

In Finland, on the other hand, throughout the period of full dealignment (from the 1970 election onwards), the typology identified only three shifts in the electoral party system: the identity of the second party changed twice (in 1970 and 2007), and in 1991 the identity of the first party changed. On top of this, the modifications were not frequent and occurred a long time after each other: the gap between the first and the second change was more than 20 years (with 6 election years), and that between the

second and the third changes was more than 15 years (with four election years). My finding supports Pesonen's (2001) argument, according to which the Finnish Party System is characterised by continuity at least until the 1990s, with only a few changes occurring. This, according to Pesonen (2001), can be explained by the success of the main parties – the Social Democrats, the Finnish People's Democratic Union (SKDL), the National Coalition (the Conservative), and the Centre party (K) – in broadening their social base with new generations of voters and people in white collar occupations. Shifts in the social base of party support for these parties might be related to the fact that Finland (compared with other Western countries) was industrialised late, and its social changes occurred rapidly (Pesonen, 2001).

Therefore, I can confirm that during a full dealignment the electoral party system changes very frequently, as was expected by H2. Overall, two different patterns of timing for the beginnings of party system structure shifts can be identified. Firstly, there may be a simultaneous shift, as in Germany, Norway, Sweden, where the modifications occurred at the same time that the full dealignment began. Secondly, there may be a follow-up shift, when change in the electoral party system begins several election years after the full dealignment began, as identified in Austria, the Netherlands and Wallonia, where changes were identified after two or three elections (in the 1990, 1972 and 1995 elections, respectively). In Italy, this happened much later. While dealignment in both its manifestations was identified in the 1983 election, changes of the electoral party system surfaced only during the second Italian Republic, when in each election different electoral cartels were formed. While in the first election held after the electoral reform (1994) and in the 2008 election there were three cartels, in 1996, 2001 and 2006 there were only two. In addition, the members of the cartels changed in every election year.⁵ A possible explanation for this late

⁵ The electoral cartels in the 1994 election included: 1. Freedom Pole and Good Government (which included Go Italy (FI), the National Alliance, the North League, the Pannella List-Reformers, the Center Christian Democracy (CCD) and the Center Union (UDC); 2. The Progressive Alliance (which included the Party of Democratic Left, the Communist Refoundation, the Greens, the Socialist Party, The Network, the Democratic Alliance, the Christian Socialists (CS), and the remnants of PSI); 3. Pact for Italy (which included the Popular Party and the Segni Pact). In the 1996, 2001 and 2006 elections there were only two electoral cartels. In 1996 there were the Freedom Pole (that included Go Italy (FI), the National Alliance, the Christian Democratic Centre (CCD), the United Christian Democrats (CDU) and the Olive Tree (with the Party of Democratic Left (PDS), the Greens, Pop – SVP- PRI-UD-Prodi, Dini List – Italian Renewal, and the Sardinian Action Party (PSdAz). In the 2001 election there were the House of Freedom (which included Go Italy (FI), the National Alliance (NA), the Center Christian Democracy (CCD), the Center Union (CDU), the Northern League (NL), the New Italian Socialist

effect is the patterns of clientalism, corruption and patronage evident during the first Italian Republic.

Although the Italian electoral system during the first Republic was PR, scholars described the Italian party system as an imperfect two-party system (Galli, 1966) (as cited in (Koff & Kopff, 2000:33). The two leading parties – the Christian Democrats (DC) and the Communists (PCI) – received 64.3 percent of the votes on average until 1992 (Bull & Newell, 2005:39). On top of this, the electoral support for parties was stable mainly due the *partitocrazia*: “the network of state, party and economic elites infiltrated by clientalism, corruption and patronage” (Koff & Kopff, 2000:33). In this system, party leaders were more concerned with gaining rewards for their parties than with working for the national interest, while the vast public sector made many people feel they owed their jobs to their parties, and therefore they tended to vote for their employer (Koff & Kopff, 2000:33).

I will now examine partial dealignment, in which a state of dealignment is found only in one of the two manifestations. I begin with those cases in which partisan dealignment was found, while voter alignment along the class or religious cleavage remained intact. Three cases are relevant here – Italy (in the 1972, 1976, and 1979 elections), Sweden (in the 1982, 1985, 1988 elections) and Wallonia (between the 1965 and 1987 elections). These cases demonstrate that changes of party system structure can occur when the partial dealignment period begins. Notably, these changes occur much less frequently than in cases of a full dealignment.

As mentioned above, in Italy the changes in the party system began much later – only from 1994. In Sweden, they occurred in the third election after the beginning of the

Party and Independents) and the Olive Tree (with the Democratic Left, Daisy, Sunflower, the Democratic Italian, the Communists, the South-Tyrol People's Party, and Independents). In the 2006 election there were the House of Freedom (with Go Italy (FI), the National Alliance (NA), the Center Union (CDU), the Northern League (LN), the Movement for Autonomy (MPA), the New Christian Democracy (DC), the New Socialist Party (NSPI), Italy in the World, and others) and the Union (which included the Democratic Left (DS), Daisy (DL), the Communist Refoundation (RC), Rese in the Fist (Rnp), the Party of Italian Communists (PdCI), Italy of Values (IdV), the Greens, the Unions of Democrats for Europe (UDEUR), L'Unione-Prodi, the Alliance for the Aosta Valley, and others). In the 2008 election there were the Democratic Party (PD) (DS and *Margherita*, and the Radical Party) and Di Pietro - Italy of Values (IdV), the Left-The Rainbow (the Communist Refoundation (RC), the Party of Italian Communists (PdCI), the Greens and the newborn Democratic Left) and the People of Freedom (PDL) (which included Go Italy (FI) and the National Alliance (AN) (Ignazi, 1994; 2002; 2007).

partisan dealignment (in the 1988 election). Only in Wallonia, the first shift was identified in the election during which the partisan dealignment began: the party system structure changed. However, the subsequent changes in the party system occurred only after more than 15 years, in the 1977 election and the following three elections.

The second scenario of partial dealignment is when voter alignment along at least one of the cleavages disappears, while the electorate (as partisan) remains aligned with its party. This period is very short in three cases – Finland (only between 1966 and the subsequent election in 1970), Flanders (between 1985 and 1991), Germany (only between 1987 and the subsequent election 1990) and Norway (between 1965 and 1973). In Finland, Flanders and Norway, voter dealignment occurred along the class cleavage and in Germany along the religious cleavage. Modifications of the electoral party system were identified only in the German 1987 election and in the 1987 Flemish election. This type of partial dealignment over a longer period is found in other cases: Austria (between 1970 and 1983) and Luxembourg (in which the dealignment along the class cleavage began in 1979, and along both cleavages began in 2004).

In Austria the typology indicates that a shift of party system structure over the period of partial dealignment occurred only at the beginning of the period, in 1970, when the identity of the second party changed.

Regarding Luxembourg, in the period from 1970 to 1999 (when there was voter alignment along the religious cleavage, but dealignment along the class cleavage), the typology suggests that the Luxembourgian electoral party system structure was one of balance between the parties, but the scale of competition swung between weak and moderate (models 3 and 6). In addition, the typology suggests that in the 1999 election the identity of the second party changed.

Fluctuation in the competition scale during this period occurred due to shifts in the supply side: in 1984 the number of relevant parties went down from six to five, when two parties (the Social Democratic Party (PSD) and the ‘list of Enrôlés de force’) did not contest the election. The number of relevant parties also decreased in 1994

election as the two Green parties – Green Alternative (GAP) and the Green Left Ecological Initiative (GLEI) – ran together for the parliament.⁶

All these cases again demonstrate that transformations of the electoral system party system in a partial dealignment do not occur very frequently. In addition, similar to the case of a full dealignment, in some of these cases the shifts occurred either when the process of erosion began (such as in the cases of Austria and Germany), and in the following years (as is found in Luxembourg and Wallonia). In other cases it occurred only in later elections (Flanders and Sweden).

The next question concerns what kind of modification occurred, and whether it pointed in a specific direction. According to H3, I expected that during periods of dealignment the structure of the electoral party system would become more fragmented, indicating that party balance became more dispersed.

My typology, which evaluates changes of the party system structure, identifies a shift based on three criteria: the number of parties, the electoral support for the two largest parties, and the identity of these parties. The first two criteria give an indication of the degree of fragmentation; as I explained above, an increase of the number of parties or a decrease of the electoral support for the first two parties indicate that the party system has become more fragmented. The opposite trend suggests that the fragmentation of the party system has decreased. A change in the identity of one of the first two parties, however, does not imply that the level of fragmentation has altered.

Table 8.3 summarises the shifts identified in all eight cases during periods of full dealignment. I treat each shift as an independent event, regardless of its timing.

In total, 43 shifts were counted. Twelve (27.90 percent) of them indicate that the electoral party system in a multi-party system becomes more fragmented during a period of full dealignment, as the number of parties increased and/or the electoral support for the first two largest parties decreased. However, almost the same number

⁶ The two parties officially merged in 1995.

of shifts – ten (23.26 percent) – reveal that the direction of fragmentation changed, as the number of parties decreased and/or the electoral support for the two largest parties increased. On top of this, many more transformations – twenty-one (48.84 percent) – occurred when the identity of one of the two largest parties changed, indicating no change in the level of fragmentation!

Moreover, upon closer inspection of the trends for each case separately (presented in Table 8.2), it is clear that in all cases except Finland, Italy and Wallonia, two directions of fragmentation were found! Put differently, my examination based on the typology's three criteria demonstrates that during a period of full dealignment, the party system not only becomes more fragmented.

Table 8.3 – Changes of party system structure, as identified by the typology's three criteria, over periods of full and partial dealignment

		The party system became more fragmented	The party system became less fragmented	No change of party system competitive
Full dealignment	Number of parties	4 (9.30%)	2 (4.65%)	
	Electoral support for first-two parties	8 (18.60%)	8 (18.60%)	
	Identity of the first two parties			21 (48.84%)
	Sum = 43 (100%)	12 (27.90%)	10 (23.26%)	21 (48.84%)
Partial dealignment	Number of parties	7 (38.89%)	3 (16.67%)	
	Electoral support for first-two parties	4 (22.22%)	1 (5.56%)	
	Identity of the first two parties			3 (16.67%)
	Sum = 18 (100%)	10 (58.82%)	5 (29.41%)	3 (16.67%)

Different results were found during periods of partial dealignment. In total, 18 transformations were identified, ten of which (58.56 percent) indicate increased fragmentation. In addition, only five shifts (27.78 percent) occurred in the opposite

direction (the number of parties decreased or the electoral support for the first two largest parties increased), and three of these shifts (16.67 percent) occurred in no specific direction (the identity of the two largest parties changed). No difference concerning the type of change was identified regarding the two sorts of partial dealignment.⁷ This demonstrates that during partial dealignment, regardless of in which manifestation it occurs, there is more chance that the shifts of the electoral party system will point towards an increasing level of fragmentation.

The next question is, what occurs during and after realignment in a multi-party system? The only case that may answer this question is Denmark, for which I identified a partisan (critical) realignment. My analysis of partisanship in Chapter Five demonstrates that Denmark experienced a critical realignment (which occurred in the 1973 election) followed by a new alignment.

First, I had to analyse the party system structure before the partisan realignment began and identify the party system structure according to my typology. The typology's three criteria suggest that between 1950 and 1960, the party system structure was that of moderate competition with one dominant party (model 4). In 1964, the structure transformed into one of limited competition with one dominant party (model 1), as the number of parties decreased. In the following election (1966) it again transformed, this time into a model of limited competition with balance between the parties (model 3), as the electoral support for the dominant party – the Social Democrats (SD) – declined below 39 percent. In the critical election (1973) the electoral party system structure became that of wide competition with balance between the parties (model 9). This occurred when the number of parties increased and the Progress Party (FP) (a party that ran for the parliament for the first time in this election) became the second largest party. In the 1975 election, the number of parties decreased and the party system was characterised as that of moderate competition (model 6), but in the following two elections – 1977 and 1979 – it again swung between the models of wide and moderate competition (models 9 and 6 respectively), due to changes in the number of parties. Since then, the party system structure remained one of moderate

⁷ In the case of partial dealignment as is indicated by partisan dealignment, from seven shifts that are identified, four of these changes indicate on increasing levels of fragmentation. In the case of voter dealignment along the cleavage, from eleven transformations, six of them point out on higher fragmentation.

competition with balance between the parties, and only in the 2001 election did the identity of the largest party change: the previously first party – the Social Democrats (SD) – lost its position as the largest party to one of the second largest parties – the Danish Liberals (V) – for the first time since 1950! The Danish Liberals succeeded in holding their position in the following two elections (2005 and 2007).

In the critical election moment and in the two subsequent elections the Danish party system transformed, and has stabilised only since the 1979 election (during the new alignment), retaining the same structure until the 2001 election. This evidence partly supports H1, as it indicates that the electoral party system structure modifies with critical realignment. Contrary to our expectation, the Danish case also suggests that in case of critical realignment in multi party system, post effect shifts may occur in the succeeding elections, immediately after the critical election. The transformations in the 1964 and 1966 elections, *before* the critical realignment phase, however, require closer examination. These changes indicate opposing trends: on one hand, the number of parties in the 1960 election decreased (an indication of less fragmentation), while on the other hand the electoral support for the first party (SD) declined below 39 percent. Nevertheless, the model of party system that appeared in the 1966 election (seven years before the partisan realignment began) and held until 1973 (the critical election) might indicate that shifts in the electoral party system precede those of the alignment manifestation. These findings might suggest that a partisan (critical) realignment can be identified first in the electoral party system, before it gathers speed with the momentum of a critical election.

8.6 Changes in Party System Structure during periods of Realignment and Dealignment –Discussion and Conclusions

This chapter presents a solution to a problem that has been insufficiently discussed in the literature of re/dealignment: the effects of these phenomena on the party system structure in multi-party systems. Firstly, it clarifies that the possible effect of electoral re/dealignment is felt in what is called the ‘electoral party system’. It is expected that with critical realignment a new durable electoral party system will be created. Regarding dealignment, two expectations can be identified. One expectation is that the stable and durable electoral party system structure will disappear without a new,

stable structure being formed, and the second implies that the party system structure becomes more fragmented.

This chapter demonstrates that the existing methods used to examine these possible effects cannot differentiate between the diverse models of party system structure, as the indices (such as the Fractionalization index, and the Effective Number of Parties) produce continuous numbers and are not sensitive to shifts concerning party identity. To address these deficiencies, I developed a typology that can assist in identifying the electoral party system structure at any point in time for every multi-party system. This typology is based on three criteria: the number of parties, the electoral support for the two largest parties, and their identity. The chapter then presented the results of empirical research into ten cases in which full dealignment (when dealignment is identified in both alignment manifestations) or partial dealignment (when dealignment is identified only in one of the alignment manifestations) has been identified at some point between 1965 and 2010, and one case in which a partial realignment has occurred since 1973.

This typology of electoral party systems has shown that during periods of full dealignment, the party system structure modifies very frequently, indicating that this party system is no longer stable and durable. Put differently, the empirical research confirms that when dealignment occurs in both alignment manifestations, it affects the electoral party system structure. The effect is not necessarily immediate, but in a few cases it did appear shortly after the full dealignment started. This later effect is true also for periods of partial dealignment. On top of this, the empirical analysis demonstrated that during this period the party system structure modifications occurred only occasionally.

Equally importantly, the empirical research has demonstrated that during full dealignment, the party system structure does not necessarily become more fragmented, but the direction of competition also swings towards the opposite direction. In cases of partial dealignment, on the other hand, there is more chance that the level of fragmentation will increase!

Regarding the effect of partial realignment on the electoral party system structure, this research has tested only one case in which a combined model of partisan realignment appeared: a critical realignment and a new alignment discovered in Denmark. The Danish critical realignment election was that of 1973. The typology suggests that the party system structure changes not only in the peak moment – the critical election – but also in the first few subsequent elections, while shifts cease as time goes on. In addition, the typology has uncovered a few transformations of the electoral party system that occurred before the process of partisan (critical) realignment began, which might suggest a much more complex effect. However, these last findings are based on only one case study and should be tested in other similar cases.