

Re-viewing the work of Richard S. Katz: Party-democracy and depoliticisation in Southern European from the perspective of “labour.”

Keywords: unions, labour, party-government, cartel party, populism, southern Europe.

Introduction: At the Politics and Labour Network’s 2016 October Workshop, held at Milan University and attracting 20 senior and junior network members from the USA and Europe, a multidisciplinary and geographically disparate workgroup of five scholars plus Richard S. Katz, the Workshop’s Keynote Speaker, was formed around the issue “Labour and the crisis of party-government: Southern European perspectives.” Workshop participants reviewed the oeuvre of Richard S. Katz, ranging from the 1980s’ Party-government project through to his work-in-progress, which links the cartel party and technocratic governance to the resurgence of populism. They discussed the implications of that oeuvre for the study of the relationship between union movements and parties of labour, for repertoires of labour, and critically, for the political category of “labour” in Southern European countries today.

The purpose of this ECPR Research Session is to permit the five members of the “Katz workgroup” to present to each other the first drafts of their exploratory papers and to begin to coordinate revisions that would eventually constitute either a special issue of *South European Society and Politics* or an edited volume to submit to ECPR Press. The second versions of the papers would then be presented at the ECPR General Conference of Prague, at which Richard Katz himself will act as panel discussant. He will also contribute an afterword to the eventual journal/volume.

Why Katz? Richard Katz’ work has been at the centre of the study of party and party systems since the publication of the Castles and Wildenmann-led party-government project (Katz, 1986). His pivotal contributions to that project liberated scholars of parties and party government from over four decades of cul-de-sacs constructed by Modernisation Theory. By stripping the definition of party of ideological imperatives and by conceiving of continuous variables – *partyiness* of government and *party governmentness* – Katz spear-headed a new wave of empirical research that placed party change and party-government diversity at its heart.

By 1990, Katz’ change-seeking efforts *re*-placed “the linkage question” on the research agenda, but this time, conceiving of a move by parties not simply *away* from society, but *towards* the state, thus predicting the advent of the “Third Way” and pre-figuring his future work with Peter Mair, which culminated in the discernment of a new “cartel” party (Katz & Mair, 1995). Together, the linkage article and the cartel party article triggered an explosion of new research that utilized combinations of deductive and quantitative methods for the purpose of theory testing. Concurrently, Katz, as a political theorist, also broadened scholarly discussions when he interrogated the implications of party change for democracy, or, to be more precise, for ideal types of democracy and for the societal groups that each type privileged or penalized (Katz 1997).

Why labour and parties? First, while that flurry of activity often placed parties of labour at its heart, rarely did it conceive of or study *party change from the perspective of organized labour*¹ and the “political category of labour” (Gentile, 2015) – a social category recognized within a polity by its institutionalized domain of labour rights and by organized labour’s routine processes of political exchange with party-government. Second, while Katz’ ingenious use in the linkage paper of existing databases that were developed for purposes other than that of gauging party change inspired much methodological inventiveness of a quantitative and deductive nature, fine-grained *qualitative data and comparative historical analyses* were rarely to be found. Third, even more rarely did the *units of analysis* reach *beyond national party systems*. Indeed, in their auto-critique a decade after the

¹ For a partial exception, see special issue of *Party Politics* (2012).

publication of the cartel party paper, Katz and Mair asked: what factors external to national-states helped produce such major party change across groups of countries at around the same critical juncture of historical time (Katz & Mair 2009)? And finally, but related to the above, party change scholarship has eschewed *historically-grounded grander narratives and theory*.

These are the four tasks that the “Katz Workgroup” will focus on, drawing upon their expertise as political theorists (Prof. Patricia Springborg), as industrial relations specialists (Prof. Domenico Carrieri and Prof. Alan Stoleroff), and as political scientists (Prof. Noelle Burgi and Dr. Antonina Gentile). To broach these issues, the workgroup members will revive the use of ethnographic and archival research and “big theory” development, initially focusing their expertise upon the study of party-democracy and depoliticisation **in Southern European** from the perspective of labour.

Why Southern Europe? Southern European countries have represented the eye of the storm of party-system change in Europe, of party-union relational change, and of the roll back of the political category of labour and attendant social rights in national states, particularly since the beginning of the Euro Crisis. The group holds – and will contextualize – the view that the southern periphery of Europe and its oft seen “deviance,” when placed in historical comparative context, has much to offer the study of change to the party-labour link and of change towards labour *de*categorising regimes of capitalism across Europe and OECD generally. The interdisciplinary workgroup seeks to shed new light on the “crisis of party democracy” and “representation” by first, drawing on each member’s ethnographic and historically informed research into labour in southern European countries. Second, the group will reassess Katz’s complex arguments and open questions in light of the sweeping changes we are witnessing in European polities and, especially, in southern Europe.

As the paper abstracts below detail, the papers will broach: the hegemonic origins of the cartel party in OECD and of that party’s association with diminished labour rights and labour representation; contextualised longitudinal analyses of the changing relations between parties and unions in Italy, Spain and Portugal over the past 50 years; a fine-tuned ethnographically-informed analysis of the cartelization of the Syriza party-government after January 2015 that asks, to what extent does this prefigure challenges to EU-led Austerity in other (southern) European countries? Finally, building out from her close monitoring of the EU’s “negotiations” with Greece, Prof. Patricia Springborg will turn her expertise as a political theorist to the task of theorising “cartel capitalism.”

The workgroup’s publication will promote scholarly discussion about what party democracy was, is or should be from the perspective of labour and of worker and broader social rights. It will shed light on a region of Europe whose labour movements and parties are under great and arguably indicative strain. Critically, it will expand the current repertoire of methods in this research area to qualitative and historical methods, and foster larger analytical narratives and theory.

ABSTRACTS

1. ***The US hegemonic origins of the cartel party: The Southern European Experience.***
Dr. Antonina Gentile, Università degli Studi di Milano. antonina.gentile@gmail.com

In their 2009 restatement of the cartel party thesis, Katz and Mair noted that “external factors drawn from the worlds of international politics and economics” had contributed to the development of the cartel party and cartel party systems. The years surrounding 1990 constituted a major historical watershed that had a “profound—and still largely underestimated—impact on the configuration of domestic politics in most of the European countries we originally studied.” One key but under-specified factor was the end of the Cold War. This study concurs, but adds that, first, 1989 was not the birth point of the cartel party, but rather marked the acceleration of a longer process. Second, the

critical process was that which Epstein called long ago “the contagion from the right”—where the right was represented by the USA’s socially delinked parties as opposed to Europe’s membership-based mass parties with delineated ideologies. This study, based on ethnographic research and archival research, argues that post-WWII US intervention by elite and non-elite actors into parties, party-systems, and union movements projected the US image onto states under US purview. US intervention in all West European party-systems with “Resistance” alliances across the social democratic left and communist left was based on a “politics of (anti-communist) *proscription*.” It was particularly emphatic in Greece, France, and Italy in the 1940s and early 1950s and again in the 1970s in Spain and Portugal, each of which emerged from war/authoritarianism with stronger communist elements within the Resistance alliance than their northern counterparts. Focussing on these countries and two periods of time, this study shows that hegemonic intervention, first, narrowed the ideological range of parties in a party system when it weakened and delegitimised communist parties on the left of the ideological spectrum, thus shifting the party system as a whole to the right. Second and most importantly, hegemonic intervention shaved off the left wing factions of labour and social democratic parties, thus reducing ideological competition *within* parties and facilitating collusion *across* disparate parties. With the end of the Cold War, party government systems were already well structured to engage in a US-led “politics of (neoliberal) *prescription*”. The depoliticisation that Katz notes as a key feature of cartel party systems and of the Third Way party of labour was the end result of a long-term process of hegemonic self-image projection.

2. *Weak or no ties? The relationship between the party in government & unions in Italy*
Prof. Domenico Carrieri, Università di Roma 1 domenico.carrieri@uniroma1.it

The relationship between the parties and the unions, especially between CGIL and the Democratic Party (heir to the past PCI), which were extremely close in the immediate post-war decades, have undergone great changes in more recent times. During the 1990s, the ties between the two had already begun to weaken. In particular, attempts by the party (at that time, the Democrats of the Left) to assume again the strategic guiding role where the union (CGIL) was concerned were in vain. The union leadership had actually adopted a 'self-sufficient' position towards the political sphere, which had attempted, and failed, to win over the majority consensus and the control of the party itself (2001). The weakening of ties has become more marked over the last years, especially since Matteo Renzi, leader of the main centre-left party, the Democratic Party (PD), became Prime Minister. Renzi has theorized and put into practice the need for the government to take decisions without any prior consultation with the union (and, as well, with other social partners). He has progressively adopted a position outside the 'pro-labour' groove, which had been traditionally followed by the leftist parties in office, however, at the same time, not placing himself in an anti-union position. In fact, this style of leadership has mainly been seen in an attitude marked by emphasizing the 'no ties' relationship. An attitude that we can define as 'a-union'. Underlying this change we find on the union side a decline of the large majority of its members in identifying with the party and its role in controlling the main reference ideology for the workers' movement. On the party's side, the reason can be ascribed to Renzi's plan and the present PD majority to position the party outside the traditional social and ideological orbit of the Laborist Left. The consequence is that the relationship between these two players, when not conflictual (as is the case at the moment), has become sporadic and opportunistic and not based on any rapport of 'closeness'. It is difficult to make predictions for the future as it is not clear if this increasing distance between the two will continue and strengthen, or if, instead, there will be a reversal in the present trend.

3. *Trajectories of trade union-political party relationships in Portugal under democracy*
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Consistent with patterns to be found in other Southern European countries, the role of the state in the Portuguese industrial relations system has necessarily placed politics (through legislative and

executive action) in the center of the labor regulation process, thereby increasing the importance of political struggle as a locus of trade union action. Mobilization to put pressure on government is therefore crucial, if not pivotal, for trade union strategy and, as a consequence, the relationships between the trade unions and political parties are particularly influential for the outcomes sought by labor. This paper will explore the evolution of the relationship of the Portuguese union confederations with political parties looking at the parallels in the evolution of the party form and labor unions. To do so, it will attempt to apply the scheme of Katz and Mair (1995, 2009) to the development of the relevant Portuguese political parties and raise a series of derivative questions. As put forward by Katz and Mair, the cartel party thesis concerns the nature of inter-party competition or collusion. Although the Portuguese union confederations are formally autonomous of political parties, their relationships over the 40+ years of democracy have generally been determinant. As such the logic of ideological and political competition continues to characterize their programs and action. Thus the relationships between political parties have been over time crucial for shaping the relationships between the union confederations. The primary question for this paper then becomes the parallelism and influence of party cartelization upon union competition or collusion in the progressive phases of development of Portuguese industrial relations.

4. *Syriza's metamorphosis in government*

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How and why did Syriza morph in an highly condensed timespan from an organization formed in 2004 that was still in 2009 a non-governing fringe coalition of the Greek radical left, into a mass-party in 2012 and ultimately, six months after its sweeping electoral victory on January 25, 2015, into something that looks like a cartelized party despite its claim to rekindle the (vestigial) function of party as linkage? How are we to explain the dramatic turnaround of its leader, Aléxis Tsípras, who campaigned in support of rejecting a third Memorandum that would impose the most destructive and punitive austerity devices upon an already bled dry Greek society, and then, immediately after a massive popular display of defiance to the Troika expressed through a 61.3 percent 'No' vote, not only capitulated to the Troika and the Eurogroup but also clung to power? Explanations do not generally go much further than stressing the lust for power of Aléxis Tsípras and/or the extreme political, economic and structural pressure put on the Greek government. Those are undoubtedly important factors. However, many more issues need to be investigated. Among others: the tension between Syriza's rise as a mass party and the general context in which partyness in policy terms was long over; choices regarding candidate selection and the composition of government; the fact that the government now pretends to have a parallel program likely to reconstitute party as linkage. All in all, the remoteness of the Greek (not to mention the European) elites could not be greater. And its consequences are unpredictable. Jumping off from the Katz and Mair (re)readings, this paper intends to shed light on the somewhat perplexing Greek-European current political crisis and transformation.

5. *Theorising Cartel Capitalism: The case of the Troika and Greece*

Prof. Patricia Springborg, Humboldt University. springbp@hu-berlin.de

It is my thesis developed in this paper focusing on the case of Troika and Greece that Cartel Parties are epiphenomena of the larger phenomenon, Cartel Capitalism, and that the features of Cartel Parties as Richard Katz analyses them at the micro-level, are generally reflected in the larger phenomenon at the macro level. Cartel parties reflect the general decline of parties and ideological differences between parties. They use state subventions to favour the parties in power, which engage in rent-seeking behavior and aim to stay in power at all costs. They limit competition to ensure electoral success and collude to keep items like social welfare off the policy agenda. Following the logic of Neoliberal economic cartels, they favour the privatization of social services. They shift redistribution from productive sectors to the bond holders, not poor to rich. And they shift arbitration to non-political entities like Central Banks, the EU Commission, and the courts. Finally, they disempower activists.

The consequence is what we see in the EU today: the rule of elites and everywhere a populist backlash.

PRODUCTION PLAN

Step 1: ECPR Research Session, June 2016. The group will:

- present the first drafts to each other;
- critique each paper in light of the aspect of Katz' work that the author is focussing on;
- detail the main themes that are to thread the volume;
- detail the revisions to be made to each paper in light of those themes and discussions;
- outline the Introduction to a special issue/edited volume.

Step 2: ECPR Conference, September 2016, Prague. The group will:

- present the second drafts of papers at their own panel;
- receive Richard Katz's comments as discussant of the panel;
- meet post-panel to discuss revisions for the final drafts;
- consult with ECPR Press and the editors of *Southern European Society and Politics* to decide which of the outlets is most receptive to the publication.

Step 3: Third drafts will be finalised by 1 February 2017.

- Language editing and proofing will be the responsibility of each author. A qualified proofer will be arranged by Gentile if required.

*Step 4: Richard Katz will write his Afterword, and Antonina Gentile, the Introduction.
Deadline: 1 April 2017.*

Step 5: 1 May 2017: Submit to either Southern European Society and Politics or to ECPR Press for review and final proofing.

Envisioned publication date: Depending on the publisher, November 2017 to August 2018.

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