

**Polášek, Martin, Novotný, Vilém
and Perottino, Michel et al:**

**MEZI MASOVOU A KARTELOVOU
STRANOU. MOŽNOSTI TEORIE
PŘI VÝKLADU VÝVOJE ČSSD
A KSČM V LETECH 2000–2010.**

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For decades, research into political parties and party systems has been highly popular among political scientists. As Czech political science has developed since 1989, parties and party systems have been a popular research topic for Czech researchers, as well. This research has offered a unique opportunity to focus on the emergence and development of what was basically a new party system and the various entities associated with it. But aside from the advantages this has brought, it has also been something of a hindrance. It has turned out to be difficult to fully utilize the current theoretical basis of political science without bringing in other explanations and adjustments. An example of note would be Lipset and Rokkan's cleavage theory, whose application has been much discussed in papers by Vít Hloušek and Lubomír Kopeček.

After more than twenty years of evolution of the Czech party system, it now seems that despite the results of the last few elections, the Czech party system is relatively stable and certain political parties have become an established part of it. This situation allows researchers to apply theories political scientists commonly use to research political parties and party systems in Western Europe to analyze the Czech party system and political parties, as well. A publication that employs

such theories is the book *'Between the Mass and the Cartel Party'*, written by a team of authors from the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Faculty of Arts of Charles University in Prague.

The book focuses specifically on the development of the two leading left-wing parties in the Czech Republic, the Czech Social Democratic Party and the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia. The research is focused on its evolution from 2000–2010. It does not merely describe the evolution of the political parties, but rather monitors its development through the prism of cartel party theory and multistream theory. This is crucial because Czech political science research regrettably often lacks a meaningful theoretical basis that coheres with the descriptive material it offers. The authors' effort to use theory in a way that allows relevant findings and conclusions to be drawn from empirical research should therefore be seen as a major positive of this monograph. As they note in the introductory chapter, their main objective was not to explore the evolution of the Social Democrats comments per se, but to explore the possibility of applying the theories mentioned to specific empirical material.

In a short introductory chapter, co-written by Martin Polášek, Vilém Novotný and Michel Perottino, the authors attempt to outline the research objectives, theoretical background and structure of the book. They also provide two basic research questions. They intend first of all that readers should learn from the book how the Social Democrats and Communists have changed over the period and how that may be aligned with theory and, secondly, how the specific form taken by this transformation may be explicated. One potential problem connected to the research focus is why the authors have chosen to examine the evolution of the Communists and Social Democrats, leaving aside, for example,

right-wing political parties in the Czech Republic. Unfortunately, no answer to that question is forthcoming in the book.

In the following two chapters, readers are introduced to the theory used in the book. First off, Martin Polášek, an expert on political parties from the Institute of Political Science of Charles University, focuses on the theory of the cartel party. This theory is presented only in précis form which, given its widespread use in global and Czech political science (see, e.g., papers by Michal Klíma, Tomáš Jarmara and Lukáš Linek), definitely need not be seen as a shortcoming. But as the authors themselves state, attempts to employ the theory empirically are found only rarely in Czech political science. The authors draw mainly on the classic presentations of the theory by Richard S. Katz and Peter Mair, establishing working hypotheses at the end of the chapter.

In the next chapter, Vilém Novotný from the Department of Public and Social Policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences of Charles University, presents multistream theory. This theory is not used as often in Czech social science research as is cartel party theory. It is thus not surprising that the author gives more attention to this theory. Multistream theory provides a framework for the interpretation of the process of public policymaking in institutionalized organizations, in this case in political parties. The author also devotes space to discussing the possibility of applying this theory to the Czech political environment. Making reference to the work of Nikolaos Zahariadis, considers it to be doable. We might, however, wish at this point that the author would explain the issue in more detail.

The foundations of multistream theory are also presented and the conceptual framework by means of which application of the theory may be undertaken are introduced. We appreciate the particular form by which the theory

is interpreted by the authors, allowing it to be understood even by readers who are not experts in the field of public policymaking.

The comprehensive presentation of the theory and its subsequent application, about which more will be said below, may be considered one of the book's strongest points. It is not currently possible to decide whether multistream theory may be a suitable theoretical framework for research into political parties. On the other hand, it is necessary to appreciate the innovative approach taken by the authors to researching political parties, in that they have not limited themselves to applying commonly used theories such as the theory of party families.

After the introduction of the theoretical framework comes the empirical portion of the study. The first chapter is jointly written by Jiří Koubek, Radek Buben and Martin Polášek. In it, they present the positions of the Social Democrats and Communists from the perspective of the party system in the Czech Republic. This chapter may be considered an introduction to the more important chapters which fall. The authors place their primary focus on interpreting the position of the Social Democrats, considering the Communists to function merely as supplementary actors affecting the position and strategy of the Social Democrats. Much space is also devoted to the analysis of Czech anti-communism and antiparoubkism.¹

The critical reader might consider certain statements in this chapter potentially misleading. Let us mention, for example, the identification of antiparoubkism with physical disgust for the person, largely denying the ideological appeal that was certainly present, at least to some extent.

The core chapters of the book, written by Martin Polášek and Michel Perottino, are Chapters 5 and 6, which deal with the Social Democrats and Communists from the per-

spective of party organization. The authors discuss the internal organizational aspects of these parties, especially with regard to concepts related to the theory of the cartel party. They analyze in especial detail the professionalization of election campaigns, the transformation of party finance, the centralization of decision-making and the transformation of the role of the party membership. The authors attempt to deal with these issues from an innovative point of view and do not repeat information already discussed by the political science community. This may be clearly seen, for example, in the chapter on the professionalization of election campaigns. The chapters are also complemented by a range of useful graphs and tables.

At the end of each chapter, the authors present partial conclusions that derive from the empirical material with regard to the theory of the cartel party. In the case of the Social Democrats, the authors state that the characteristics of the cartel party are applicable, or at least that there is a trend towards their applicability. This is different for the Communists, since that party has not gone through organizational changes similar to those of the Social Democrats.

The next two chapters focus on the evolution of the Social Democrats from the perspective of multistream theory. Firstly, Vilém Novotný, Kateřina Merkllová and Radek Buben discuss the reform of Czech higher education policy. The chapter is divided into two separate case studies. The first deals with the creation of the 2001 White Paper and the second deals with creation process of the 2009 White Paper on tertiary education. After becoming familiar with the chapter's content, we may pose three questions which are at least slightly critical. First, why do the authors examine exactly higher education policy, which is only a peripheral issue for Czech political parties? Second, why isn't the

theoretical framework presented in Chapter 3 already made comprehensive use of in this chapter? And third, how do the conclusions in this chapter help us understand the transformation of the Social Democrats between 2000 and 2010?

The conceptual framework is much more clearly applied in the succeeding chapter, in which multistream theory is applied to the modernization project of the Social Democrats. Martin Polášek mainly focuses on the process of modernization led by Jiří Paroubek during his party presidency.

To conclude, the publication *'Between the Mass and the Cartel Party'* is a very valuable contribution to the discussion of theoretical research into political parties. The book may be used as an example of theoretical research into political parties in the Czech environment and may serve as inspiration for other researchers. It is also valuable because of the empirical material collected, which may complement existing research into political parties and party systems. Of course, the publication has not managed to avoid minor methodological, factual or formal inaccuracies. But these inaccuracies occur only infrequently and are negligible compared to the benefit the monograph brings to Czech political science. The book may be recommended both for researchers interested in research into political parties, as well as for the public at large and students of political science, whether their interest lie in the subject of the research or the theoretical approach presented.

Notes:

1. A movement which opposes the former Czech Prime Minister and Social Democratic leader Jiří Paroubek.

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