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Directly Elected Mayors and their Parties: The Cases of Genoa and Lausanne

While the literature on directly elected mayors has largely neglected the relationship between mayors and their parties, studies of party transformation have generally ignored how changes in local democratic rules and practices affect parties. This article addresses these questions using a qualitative case study of the relationship between mayors and the three faces of their parties (in local public office, local central office and on the ground) in Genoa and Lausanne. Based on interviews with the mayors, elected representatives and party members, it finds in the two cases that, as long as these mayors can count on high levels of popularity and are not nearing the end of their term, they are 'party detached'. When these factors do not apply and/or party institutionalization increases, the relationship with the party in local central office (although not with the party in local public office or on the ground) becomes more significant.

OVER THE PAST DECADE, SCHOLARSHIP ON LOCAL POLITICS HAS devoted considerable attention to the effects of reforms introducing directly elected mayors in European cities (Bäck et al. 2006; Reynaert et al. 2009). Much of that work has focused on the new pressures faced by mayors, whose greater visibility, legitimacy and formal powers fuel a perceived demand for stronger leadership within a context of increasingly complex local policymaking (Borraz and John 2004; Le Galès 2002; Verheul and Schaap 2010). However, while these and other studies have been extremely useful for understanding many of the effects of the introduction of directly elected mayors, the literature on European local politics has almost without exception (see Copus 2006, 2009) ignored the following key question: How, under the new system, do the different faces of party

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organizations within cities – that is, the party in local central office, in local public office and on the ground (Katz and Mair 1993) – relate to and understand the roles of those directly elected mayors whose candidatures they have backed? And, vice versa, how do the new mayors relate to and understand the roles of their parties?

These are not secondary questions in our view. Not only are they essential to understanding the effects of local democracy reforms on subnational politics, but they can also shed light on long-term changes in contemporary political parties. According to Richard Katz and Peter Mair's theory of party organizational change (1995, 2009), the party in public office has become by far the most powerful of the three faces of party organizations. In tandem with this, political campaigning has become more personalized and we have seen greater presidentialization of institutional leadership (see, for example, Poguntke and Webb 2005). However, these scholars primarily have the national level in mind when assessing and discussing party change. So, while the party in national public office may well dominate far more than previously (especially in the cases of traditional mass-party organizations) and leaders in national office have more power vis-à-vis the party on the ground than in the past, we do not know how party change plays out locally under different contextual opportunities and constraints. Nor do we know whether it does so uniformly.

Indeed, the picture as regards the interaction between the different faces of the party is not accepted by all: for example, some scholars (Scarrow 1996; Seyd and Whiteley 2002) contend that, while absolute numbers may have fallen, the decline of grassroots membership *influence* within parties may have been overstated. Likewise, and of particular relevance to this article, the political salience of local factors within parties at subnational level may be higher amid decentralization processes (Ansell and Gingrich 2003; Hopkin and van Houten 2009) and within long-standing federal systems (Carty and Eagles 2005). To put it simply, while there remains much within the 'black box' of party organization and change generally that we do not know about, this is particularly the case at local level. In fact, as we shall see in this article, and as Annick Magnier (2004: 180) argues, while there has been an 'individualization of the representative process' in subnational politics along with greater personalization and presidentialization, this does not necessarily mean that local party elites, council representatives

and grassroots members cannot play important – and sometimes decisive – roles.

In this article we address the questions raised above. In particular, we consider how the relationship between mayors and parties (and their respective roles) are perceived by the mayors themselves and the different faces of the party: in local central office, in public office and, finally, a group too often overlooked by studies of political parties (van Haute 2011: 7–22): the grassroots members of the party on the ground. In so doing, we draw on a set of 18 individual and two group interviews with mayors, representatives and active party members conducted in two Western European cities, Genoa and Lausanne. This makes our study the first of its type within the literature on local European politics since, to our knowledge, no other scholars have investigated the mayor–party relationship using this type of in-depth qualitative approach across these different groups of actors. Nor, it obviously follows, have they done so in different countries.

The article is organized as follows. In the first section, we discuss some of the broad considerations underpinning our research and shaping our analytical framework. In the second, we introduce our two cases and briefly outline the methods used to examine them. In the third section, we present our findings and compare the relationship between local parties and the mayor in the two cities. In the fourth, we provide a brief epilogue to the two cases and discuss our findings in the context of our analytical framework. Finally, we offer some conclusions and suggestions for future research.

MAYORAL AGENCY BETWEEN PERSONAL, PARTISAN AND INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES

In order to analyse mayor–party relations, we use a strategic-relational approach, in which structures and agents are not isolated. Rather, their existence is seen as mutually constitutive (Hay 2002: 126–34). The strengthening of local executive power, especially the enhanced and often more formally autonomous roles of mayors with respect to those parties supporting their candidatures, affects a series of complex relationships and contains potential effects which may differ considerably from case to case. In principle, the move from indirect elections – with council chambers rather than the

public electing the mayor – to direct ones ought to increase the autonomy of mayors vis-à-vis their executive (their cabinet), the council chamber and local party elites. In other words, the mayor should become more autonomous in relation to the rest of the party in local public office, the party in local central office and the party on the ground. However, in practice, we know little about how this multifaceted relationship is structured. To find out, we need to have a clear framework of analysis which allows us to focus on the different factors in play.

Broadly speaking, relative mayoralty autonomy can be seen as the outcome of a tension between the mayor's twin roles (Fallend et al. 2006: 245). On the one hand, mayors are party representatives or, in the case of 'civil society' and other non-party figures, have at least been selected by parties as 'their' mayoral candidates. On the other hand, mayors should also be representatives of the whole citizenry, thus – to some extent – distancing themselves from their local party. This in turn relates to a key tension in how individual mayors interpret their role, with some being more 'party loyalist' and others more 'party detached' (Copus 2006: 64–5, 2009: 20). While of course it has always formally been the case that the mayor should be 'of everyone', the introduction of direct elections – with the mayor receiving a personal mandate from the public – has often been accompanied in places such as Italy and England by rhetoric focusing on precisely this aspect (see, for example, Diamanti 2002). Nonetheless, we do not know the degree to which this *super partes* role of the mayor is in practice accepted by the mayors themselves and by the representatives and members of the mayor's own party.

While the separation of powers, as a consequence of a distinct election of the mayor, tends to facilitate the presidentialization of representation (Samuels and Shugart 2010), the impact of the introduction of direct elections is not always uniform, but rather interacts not only in each country, but also in each city (Berg and Rao 2005), with a specific related set of institutional, personal and partisan factors. These provide a framework of relationship constraints and opportunities affecting all local political actors: from the party elites to the members of the mayoral executive to the party representatives in the council chamber and, of course, to the mayor.

As regards institutional factors, we also have to consider how direct-election reforms shape new government patterns and the degree to which they strengthen mayors within the city government

and local politics generally (Bäck 2005; Heinelt and Hlepas 2006). Once elected, mayors find themselves within a structure of (formal and informal) institutional rules, cultures and incentives which define the parameters of their leadership and shape their relationship with their executives and parties. Mayors, of course, are not only bound by structures. They also have agency – theoretically, much more so in the cases of directly elected mayors with greater formal powers. They can seek to dominate decision-making prerogatives, presenting themselves as the supreme authority of the government (with a democratic mandate to do so) or they can share their authority to different degrees with the other members of their executive (Bäck 2005; Heinelt and Hlepas 2006; Mouritzen and Svara 2002).

Personal factors may include the degree of party loyalty felt by individual mayors and their particular style of governing, which may be more, as we have said, 'party loyalist' or 'party detached'. As Luigi Burroni et al. (2009: 11) contend in reference to the Italian case, the 'style of the mayor' – while difficult to quantify – can be a crucial variable in understanding how he/she interacts with the executive. In performing their role and in their relationship with their party, mayors can mobilize different forms of capital (Bourdieu 1986). These include: symbolic-reputational capital, such as public and media popularity; social capital, including relational and mediation capabilities; economic capital, including own funding for election campaigns; and political capital, deriving from their prior experiences and career paths, which may define them as party 'outsiders' or 'insiders' (Samuels and Shugart 2010: 67).

Partisan factors can include the institutionalization of the party organization, the party's electoral strength and its candidate selection rules. On the first point, it is clear that the solidity of organizational structures and the capacity of the local party leadership to enforce decisions, especially regarding the recruitment of those standing for public office, are crucial to this discussion (Panebianco 1988: 53–68). Second, the traditional electoral strength of the party in the city is obviously another key variable in the mayor–party relationship – for example, if a party is very strong electorally, this is likely to increase its leverage on individual mayors (since it makes it easier for the party to withdraw support for re-election in the knowledge that a new mayoral candidate sponsored by the party is likely to win). By contrast, the opposite should hold in those cities in which a particularly popular

candidate can deliver victory for a party where it is traditionally weak. Third, a key role is played by the formal (and informal) arrangements for mayoral candidate selection, which can be more or less inclusive, ranging from those placing the choice to different degrees in the hands of grassroots members (the party on the ground) or in those of the elites in the local party central office or in those of the national party (whether in central or public office) (Hazan and Rahat 2010: 33–55).

As we have said, the combination and interplay between these factors may differ between cities (and over time within single cities). Nonetheless, it is possible to envisage how the mixture of such factors could have a great impact on the mayor–party relationship. To take one (extreme) example: in a city with very strong electoral support for the mayor's party, high party institutionalization and low personal capital of the mayor (in terms of popularity above and beyond his/her party identity), we would expect to find that, once in office, such a mayor has to devote great attention to his/her relationship with the three different faces of the party (particularly the party in central and public office) and consequently sacrifices much of the formal institutional autonomy granted by the law in order to safeguard partisan support. This in turn brings us to another key point: it is important to remember that, even with the direct election of the mayor, candidatures (and re-candidatures) for local elections in Western Europe tend to remain a matter of party selection (Bäck 2006: 133; Magnier 2006: 357). Of course, the factors we have identified above will all impinge on how parties exercise that choice, but it remains – even at a time of party organizational decline, personalization, presidentialization and so on – a party prerogative.

There is much, therefore, to keep in mind when considering how the relationship between the mayors and parties continues after victorious election campaigns are over. Not least, as we have said, the need for mayors to consider re-election. Discussing leadership autonomy in presidential regimes, Poguntke and Webb (2005: 5) argue that 'while in office, the head of the executive is well protected against pressure from his own party' but that 'his power to lead depends directly on his electoral appeal'. So too does the mayor's power to *continue* leading. For, while campaigns and media coverage may be more personalized and the practice of institutional roles more presidentialized, mayoral candidates usually do still require

support from parties in order to get elected (and re-elected) – not only as regards securing a party nomination, but also in terms of finance, personnel, mobilization and campaign expertise. Moreover, while in office, and irrespective of their electoral appeal, mayors often require the cooperation and assistance of 'their' parties – party leaders in local central office, councillors in local public office and grassroots members – to achieve consensus on policies at local level. The task we are faced with in this article, therefore, is to understand how this relationship with the different faces of the parties is played out.

THE CASES: GENOA AND LAUSANNE

In our research project, we decided to adopt a small-N comparison in order to consider mayor–party relationships in depth. The empirical work on local democracy to date has tended to be large-scale and quantitative (for example, Bäck et al. 2006; Berg and Rao 2005), looking at broad trends across a large set of cities rather than focusing on a small number of cases in greater detail. We chose instead to examine two mayors and their parties in the cities of Genoa and Lausanne, the former in a recently decentralized democracy with traditionally strong party organizations (Italy) and the latter in a country with a long-standing federalist tradition and weaker party organizations (Switzerland). With a population of just over 600,000, Genoa is the fifth largest Italian city while Lausanne, with around 130,000 inhabitants, is the fourth city in Switzerland. In sum, our qualitative-comparative study is based on a contrast of contexts (Collier 1993: 108; Skocpol and Somers 1980: 170–81), especially with reference to institutional patterns, party legacies and organizations, combined with a common recent electoral system change.

It is worth mentioning at this point that – despite the differences between the two cases – we began the project with the expectation that, in both cities, the presence of direct elections would increase not only the formal autonomy but also the informal autonomy of the mayors vis-à-vis their parties, particularly as regards the mayor's relationships with the party in local central office and the party in local public office. To use Copus's term, we imagined that the mayors in Genoa and Lausanne would be – albeit possibly to different degrees – 'party detached'. However, we did not know whether this would be homogeneous or if there would be

differences – both *within* each case and *between* the two cases – concerning the mayor's relationships with the party in public office and the party in central office. Finally, given the absence of studies on directly elected mayors and party members in Europe, not to mention the general lack of empirical work on party members, our expectations were very tentative in this respect and were largely based on Katz and Mair's theories (1993) regarding the increasing distance between the party in public office and the party on the ground.

At the time of our research in 2011, both Genoa and Lausanne had mayors who were party representatives in charge of centre-left governments – Daniel Brélaz of the Greens in Lausanne and Marta Vincenzi of the centre-left Democratic Party (Partito Democratico – PD) in Genoa. Both had been involved for several decades in politics in their respective cities and had built up strong public profiles before becoming mayor. Both were considered by local media to enjoy wide popularity. There were also important differences, however. Vincenzi was a long-standing representative of a party that had dominated politics for decades in Genoa – the Democratic Party and its various predecessor parties stretching back to the Italian Communist Party (Partito Comunista Italiano – PCI). Despite this, she was seen as a maverick and outside the local party elite inner circle. By contrast, Brélaz was a representative of a relatively young and non-traditional party, the Greens, which he himself had played the central role in building up in Lausanne and the surrounding region. Moreover, for many years he had been considered the dominant personality locally within his party. Thus, while Vincenzi was a member of a former mass party which – as we shall see – is now organizationally (but not electorally) weaker than previously, Brélaz was a member of a movement which is institutionalizing and becoming more like a 'normal' party.

Local government leadership has also differed considerably in the two countries and cities. Prior to the introduction of directly elected mayors in 1993 in Italy (outlined below), local party secretaries and elites usually decided who would be mayor and subsequently wielded enormous influence over 'their' mayors in his/her decisions (Baldini and Legnante 2000: 239). Since the 1993 reform, however, mayors have become – at least formally and in the media perception – strong, independent figures with a clear mandate to govern (Magnier 2004: 167). In Switzerland, the situation is quite

different: at all levels of government, collective and 'consociational' models dominate (Ladner 2005). What makes Lausanne particularly interesting for comparison, however, is that, unlike most Swiss cities, in Lausanne the direct election of the mayor is (as in Genoa) a relatively recent phenomenon. It was introduced in 1980 as a result of a cantonal popular initiative, thanks to which the mayor would no longer be chosen by the city council, but directly by the voters in a separate election, held after two previous rounds, electing first the councillors and, second (from this first group), the members of the executive (with the mayor then being elected from this latter group) (Borraz 1996). Two points are worth noting here as regards the introduction of directly elected mayors in Lausanne: (1) under this system, the mayor may also be elected 'tacitly' – that is, in the event that the parties decide on a common candidate from among those elected to the executive in the second round of elections, the mayor is automatically elected unopposed; (2) much like in England over the past decade, while the new mayors of course have the symbolic capital of being 'chosen by the people', this – unlike the Italian case as we see below – has not been backed up by the introduction of any significant new formal powers. Rather, the collegiate city government continues to be responsible for all executive functions and the mayor presides over this body in a style usually described as consociational (Heinelt and Hlepas 2006: 31–4).

While the introduction of direct elections in Lausanne therefore can be seen as a bottom-up reform that did not, however, provide the mayor with any new formal powers, the first direct elections in Genoa in 1993 were the result of a major nationwide top-down reform, radically changing Italian local democracy's institutional rules, balances and voting system during a period of massive changes generally within the country's politics. The most important innovations of the 81/1993 law relevant to our discussion in this article were that: (1) it made the position of mayor directly elected by the public rather than by the parties in the council chamber, as had previously been the case; (2) the mayor was given sole power to appoint and dismiss the members of his/her executive and these could no longer serve contemporaneously in the council chamber. Mayors would also be responsible for appointing all representatives of the municipality to other institutions, boards and so on. In theory at least, this gave the mayor much greater autonomy from party control over the distribution of such positions, which, previously, had been divided out among parties as part of an elaborate spoils-sharing

process; (3) according to the formula of *simul stabunt simul cadent* ('as they stand, so they fall'), although the council chamber could still pass a motion of no-confidence in the mayor, his/her removal would also now provoke the dissolution of the chamber and hence new elections for all (Baldini and Legnante 2000: 241–2). Not surprisingly, this has provided the new mayors with far greater stability than under the previous system.

The Mayors

There is not the space here to embark on a long description of the political careers of Brélaz and Vincenzi; however, it is necessary to provide a brief overview. In particular, it is worth outlining how each became mayor: in both cases, their reputations as popular vote-getters were the key factors in their initial selection. When faced with the possibility of a defeat by the centre-right, the centre-left in both Genoa and Lausanne opted for the candidate most likely to win rather than the best-placed member of the dominant party elite.

Brélaz became mayor of Lausanne in November 2001, as the candidate of an alliance between the Greens and the party which had dominated politics in the city for many years, the Socialist Party (Parti Socialiste – PS). Given the prospect of the unpopular outgoing Socialist mayor, Jean-Jacques Schilt, being defeated, the Socialist Party elite decided to cede its control of the position of mayor and back the popular Green leader Brélaz, who subsequently easily defeated his centre-right opponent, taking 64 per cent of the vote. His victory was another milestone in a very successful political career. In addition to his central role in the history of the Greens, both locally and nationally, he had been a regional councillor since 1978, a federal parliament member (the first Green one in Switzerland) from 1979 to 1989, and he had also been a member of the Lausanne city council executive since 1989 (indeed, in 1993 and 1997, he received the highest personal vote of all candidates in the council election). He thus was someone who had considerable experience of how collegiate government worked at different levels and, as we have said, was a very popular figure both among the public and in the media.

Until 2006, Brélaz was the sole Green representative in the seven-member Lausanne executive. Since April 2006, a second Green Party representative, Jean-Yves Pidoux, has also been part of the

executive, reinforcing the role of the party within the local red–green coalition government. Over the same period, however, Brélaz's popularity declined. While Brélaz was elected with 52 per cent in 2006 (the highest personal vote of any candidate standing either for the council or the executive), in March 2011 – surprising both media commentators and other politicians – he only finished sixth in the first round of the council elections (see the explanation of the voting system above). Nonetheless, the Green/Socialist Party alliance decided to re-propose him as mayor. Given that the centre-right had no strong candidate to present against him, Brélaz was thus re-elected by default.

As mentioned earlier, Vincenzi's path to the mayoralty – like that of Brélaz – was shaped by centre-left fears that it might lose the election. A lifelong member of the Italian Communist Party and then its social democratic successor parties, Vincenzi had been Left Democrats (Democratici di Sinistra – DS) president of Genoa Province from 1993 to 2002 and was then elected a member of the European Parliament (with a huge personal vote) for the north-western constituency of Italy in 2004. It was therefore to the surprise (and, as various interviewees confirmed off the record, dismay) of the local Left Democratic elite in Genoa that she announced in 2006 her intention to run for mayor in 2007 (for a fuller explanation of Vincenzi's candidature, see McDonnell 2008: 96–9). Had the selection system functioned as it had up until then, with mayoral candidates chosen simply by the local Left Democratic elite (and accepted by their electorally much weaker junior coalition partners), Vincenzi's aspiration would most likely have remained unfulfilled.

However, by 2006, the situation in Italy as regards candidate selection on the centre-left had changed considerably, first and foremost because of its use of primaries at the subnational level to choose candidates for the top directly elected institutional offices. The presence of this new structural element – the primaries – gave Vincenzi far greater agency possibilities. To cut a long story short, given the centre-left coalition's problems in government at national level (where Romano Prodi's administration was in enormous difficulty and its poll ratings were plunging), along with Vincenzi's strong hint that she would stand against an official Left Democratic candidate were she not selected, the national Left Democrats party hierarchy stepped in and expressed its support for Vincenzi. She was duly chosen as the party's sole candidate in the February 2007

centre-left primary, which she easily won. Despite her popularity, she only won the mayoral election three months later with 51.2 per cent of the vote – a result that was considered to reflect more the general dissatisfaction felt by centre-left voters with the national centre-left government than any sudden decline in popularity of the new mayor (McDonnell 2008).

Methods

As explained earlier, our aim in this research project was to investigate the relationship between the directly elected mayor and the different faces of his/her own party and how this is perceived by the relevant actors within that relationship: the mayors themselves, members of their executive, local party leaders, councillors and grassroots party members. To do this, we require in-depth knowledge of the views of these actors. The discussion in the next section is therefore based on a total of 18 individual and two group face-to-face interviews comprised as follows: semi-structured interviews with the two mayors, nine semi-structured interviews with members of the executive in the two cities (four in Genoa, five in Lausanne), six semi-structured interviews with members of the city council chamber (three in Genoa, three in Lausanne), interviews with the Democratic Party provincial party secretary in Genoa and the city and cantonal party presidents in Lausanne (both of whom were also among the three councillors interviewed in Lausanne). Finally, we conducted two group interviews in each city: one with six active grassroots members of the Democratic Party in Genoa and one with six active grassroots members of the Greens in Lausanne. Thus, a total of 30 people were interviewed for the project.[1]

MAYORS AND THEIR MULTIDIMENSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE PARTY

In presenting our findings, we have divided our interviewees – in addition to the mayors, of course – into three main groups that broadly match the three faces of the party as defined by Katz and Mair (1993): (1) the local secretaries of the mayor's party (party in local central office); (2) the party representatives in the mayor's executive and the city councillors (party in local public office); (3) the

grassroots members (party on the ground). While some of these relationships and actors partially overlap (for example, in Lausanne, the local secretaries are also city councillors), for the sake of explanatory clarity, we find it useful to keep these categories distinct. We will therefore discuss these relationships in the order listed above, seeking to find commonalities and differences between the two cases.

The Local Party Secretaries and the Mayor

Our interviews in Genoa and Lausanne indicate, first, that both mayors overshadowed their local party secretaries and the party in local central office and, second, that the balance of power – at least for most of their terms in office – was seen by each side of the relationship as being firmly in favour of the mayor. This is due to a combination of those factors which we presented earlier. On the one hand, it is because of the weight of the mayors' institutional roles, high personal support levels, media profiles and long political histories. On the other, it reflects the current structural weaknesses of their parties. So, to use the terms of our previous discussion: the specific personal, partisan and institutional factors in these cities all play key roles. In the case of the Greens in Lausanne, we are dealing with a movement which has only recently begun to institutionalize and, in that of the Democratic Party in Genoa, with a former mass party which is in organizational decline and has recently attempted to introduce a generational change in the local party leadership. In Genoa, although the Democratic Party and the centre-left enjoyed an uninterrupted period of success between 1993 and 2011, winning all direct elections for the positions of mayor, provincial president and regional president, this was accompanied by a withering of the party as an organization. While its forerunner, the Italian Communist Party, had around 40,000 members in Genoa in the late 1980s, data provided to us by the Democratic Party's Genoa office show that the party had just under 6,000 members in 2010. Moreover, this decline is ongoing: the Genoa Left Democrats in 2006 had around 8,000 members and the fall to 6,000 in 2010 seems even steeper if we consider that the Left Democrats merged with the centre-left Margherita Party in 2007 to form the Democratic Party.

At the time of our research, the Democratic Party provincial secretary – traditionally the most significant subnational party office in the city – was Victor Rasetto. He had been elected secretary of the

Democratic Party in late 2007 when aged just 35 (extremely young by the standards of Italian politics). Rasetto (2011) in his interview with us was very frank about the organizational difficulties he faced, not only in terms of the party's dwindling membership but also concerning the resources at his disposal. As he said:

> I have a young guy here who has just finished his law degree and he is my communications officer. There is a secretary and two pensioners who help me with organization. Then there is another secretary at regional level and the treasury. And that's it. Once upon a time there were 50 functionaries here! Even my recent predecessors Tullo and Benvenuti had 10 functionaries! They had a specialist on economic matters paid for by the party, a specialist on the port paid for by the party … and so on.

As regards his relationship with the mayor, Rasetto said that 'basically, the mayor calls me when she has a problem'. In particular, she would ask Rasetto to intercede when there were difficulties with the party group in the council chamber. When asked how he viewed the formal autonomy of the mayor, Rasetto claimed this was well respected. Nonetheless, he said that he did seek to advise Vincenzi on some appointments to public bodies and, in particular, he believed he should have a strong say regarding the Democratic Party representatives on the mayor's executive (a power that, as we have seen, is formally exclusive to the mayor).

The relationship was not made easy, Rasetto observed, by the fact that 'nowadays we are faced with heavily personalized mayors. And Marta Vincenzi's character is suited to that. She is a strong presence. She wants to take all decisions.' Rasetto also noted that Vincenzi, although invited, did not always attend the party meetings which he organized every couple of months to bring together the Democratic Party's representatives in Vincenzi's executive and the party councillors. In her interview with us, Vincenzi (2011) stated that she 'rarely attends' party committee meetings of any kind locally. One of the reasons she gave for this was that, at local level, 'the debate has really become impoverished: it is like a little war between people or factions.' She added: 'I am a member of the party executive at national level and I go to that, but on the local level, not really.'

The clear impression from our interview with Vincenzi was that she did not place much value on receiving input from the local party elites into her decisions. She explained that this was not just a question of formal rules but was also for practical reasons: 'often

you have to decide something in just a few minutes. It's not as if I can call a meeting of a party committee.' However, she said this is something that 'the [local] leaders of the party do not understand'. Nonetheless, as we expected – given the importance of the party for re-election – Rasetto confirmed that, as Vincenzi was entering the final year of her first term in early 2011, he had noticed that she was now listening to the party 'much more' than previously. This, he said, was strongly linked to the increased leverage of the party on mayors seeking re-election: 'the party still has the great power to choose the mayor. And it will be me, together with other party bodies, who will decide whether Vincenzi is re-proposed as our candidate or not.' Given this role, Rasetto believed that, over the course of the mandate, the power of the party 'at the beginning is almost zero … but reaches its apex near the elections' and this holds true both for the mayor and for the party representatives on the executive.

In Lausanne, Silvia Zamora (2011), a Socialist Party member of the executive, made a similar point, observing that once elections loom into view 'one moves closer to the party. That's when the party counts.' As for the Greens in the city, the relationship between the party in local central office and the mayor seems to follow a similar pattern to that in Genoa, with a distinction drawn by interviewees between 'policymaking periods' and 'election periods'. As Natalie Lutzidorf (2011), president of the Greens in Lausanne since 2009 and a member of the council chamber, noted, meetings between the party city committee and the mayor tended to be 'more formal and relatively less frequent than with the Green members of the council', but they 'intensify as we get nearer to elections'. As in Genoa with the Democratic Party, so too in Lausanne has the organizational transformation of the Greens influenced the party's relationship with its mayor. The history of the Greens is a relatively short one and they have grown very significantly in Canton Vaud (of which Lausanne is the main city) over the past three decades. Brélaz (2011) commented during his interview with us that, in the 1970s, 'when I began, everyone knew everyone. There were 15 of us. Now, there are usually between 70 and 100 people at the party assemblies in Lausanne and 200 in the assemblies for Canton Vaud.' As has been the case for many green parties on the continent (Frankland et al. 2008), the party now not only has numerous elected representatives at a range of institutional levels, but also contains members who have joined the party during different periods of its development.

An increased institutionalization of the party in Lausanne (where the party has around 460 members) occurred during Brélaz's second term in office, beginning in 2006. At this time, Yves Ferrari – who had become president of the Greens in Lausanne in 2003 aged just 29 – was elected to the position of Green Party president for the canton. Having built a strong relationship with Brélaz, he set about modernizing the party organization in Vaud. Ferrari (2011) said that he noticed a change in both his and the party's relationship with Brélaz at this time, reflected not only in a greater role and visibility for Ferrari as regional party president but for the party in general vis-à-vis the mayor. For example, Ferrari observed in his interview with us that, 'until recently, the media would always go to Brélaz' for a 'Green Party comment'; however, this had now begun to change. With the electoral growth and the greater institutional weight of the party, the organizational capacity also increased. Ferrari commented that Brélaz in recent years had realized that 'not everything still revolved solely around him'. As the Greens moved from being a personalized party to a more institutionalized one, questions were also increasingly asked about the autonomy of Brélaz vis-à-vis the party, with members no longer simply being content that a party representative held the mayoralty but also wanting greater degrees of input and accountability. As regards Brélaz's attitude to the party, Lutzidorf remarked that there had been tensions due to the dismissive tone Brélaz adopted in discussions with them (something which was confirmed to us by other interviewees).

The Executive Members, City Councillors and the Mayor

Our next set of actors in the mayor–party relationship consist of the party in public office: the members of the executive and the council chamber. Although there are many obvious differences in their competences, there is some degree of overlap between the two careers: those in the executive have usually served as councillors while, albeit less frequently, the reverse passage from executive to council also occurs (in fact, two of the centre-left councillors we interviewed in Genoa had been members of the previous mayor's executive). They are also both groups of representatives who find themselves – at different points and to different degrees – in a zone between the mayor and local government institutions on the one hand and the local party secretariat and the grassroots membership on the other.

As we have seen, while members of the executive are formally appointed by the mayor in Genoa, the party secretary believed that he should have a say in which Democratic Party representatives were chosen. We found evidence that at least some appointments were indeed the product of negotiations between the mayor and the party. A Democratic Party member of Vincenzi's executive, Simone Farello (2011), told us:

> I was nominated by the mayor, like all members of the executive. However, it was on the basis of a negotiation process … according to old-style logics, with my party. So I feel that I am a representative of my party. I do not only feel like an appointee of the mayor. So I feel both these links of belonging and this is sometimes difficult.

When asked whether the mayor ever consulted exclusively with her fellow Democratic Party members of the executive before making decisions, Farello said that this happened very rarely and that she tended to interpret her role in this sense as *super partes*, not making a distinction between the different executive members on the basis of their party affiliations. It is worth noting on this point that another member of Vincenzi's executive whom we interviewed, Stefano Anzalone (2011) of Italy of Values (Italia dei Valori – IDV), observed that, while 'she is very independent, with regard to her own party … on some questions, at least in the case of IDV, she always calls the party secretaries to keep them informed'.

Giorgio Guerello (2011), a Democratic Party councillor and president of the council chamber, told us that 'the situation in Genoa is very evident: the mayor herself points out that she is very far from her party of origin.' Both Guerello and Green Party councillor Luca Dallorto also noted that, compared to Giuseppe Perìcu (centre-left mayor from 1997–2007), Vincenzi sent far fewer issues for debate to the council chamber before taking a decision on them. However, echoing Anzalone's comment, Dallorto (2011) added: 'Vincenzi seems, in particular, to have a problem with her own party. For example, she consults us … she consults me as a councillor.'

In Lausanne, the Green executive member Jean-Yves Pidoux (2011), noted that, while Brélaz was very good at avoiding conflicts in the executive and acted extremely collegially there, he did not have the same attitude when he met Green members of the council chamber or party bodies. Over time, we were told, the mayor had

become more 'impatient' and less willing to discuss his decisions. When interviewed in January 2011, Pidoux observed that Brélaz was selective about what he listened to from the Green Party group in the council chamber. For his part, Brélaz said his relationship with the Greens in the city council chamber was 'very clear', citing the example that 'if we come to an agreement on a project within the executive after two years of work, opposition from the Green Party in the council chamber is not going to block it'. When asked about his relationship with the executive and his party group, Brélaz put it as follows: 'my role is to defend the projects of the executive before my party group and the chamber. Sometimes I do it in a very resolute fashion, particularly on financial issues. There are people who understand nothing about these questions.' Our overall impression from interviewees in Lausanne was that this attitude on the part of the mayor had created a relationship with some local party elites and elected representatives which was both distant and tense.

The Grassroots Members and the Mayor

Our final category is the members of the party – the party on the ground. In the group interviews conducted in both cities, we found that, although members accepted in principle that the mayor should be *super partes*, they often had difficulty in practice with this. In particular, it emerged that members viewed the relationship as being too one-sided, with the party and its members dedicating time and effort to campaigning, but then not being sufficiently considered and listened to once 'their' mayor was in office. Both in Genoa and Lausanne, this was something which the respective party secretaries had already spoken to us about. In Genoa, Rasetto commented that 'the members feel an enormous distance, an abyss, from local government'. It should be noted, however, that Vincenzi offered a rather different perspective, putting the blame for members being frustrated on the failings of the party itself to provide linkage.

As was also the case in Lausanne, we conducted one group interview in Genoa (albeit with members from different areas of the city). As such, our findings only represent a snapshot of the sentiments of a selection of members. That aside, we did encounter considerable discontent with the mayor among those we spoke to

in Genoa in August 2011. One comment by Franco, a 22-year-old member (of the Democratic Party and, before that, the Left Democrats since he was at school) provides a good example of what we have discussed above. He told us:

> I think the mayor should answer to her party. I think it is right that the mayor is elected by the citizens and that she is autonomous in her actions in some respects, and that she should be the mayor of everyone. However she should not forget that she was elected on a platform that has been constructed by the party that supports her.

Rocco, a 34-year-old member (of the party and its predecessors since his teens), said that he accepted the *super partes* role of the mayor, but added: 'in our areas of the city, we are there on the ground doing our utmost to defend some of her decisions, but we would like that some of those decisions were in line with what we had hoped for!' Alfio, a 75-year-old member (who had been a member of the Italian Communist Party and its successors up to and including the Democratic Party) said that he would like mayoral candidates who paid more attention to the grassroots. Referring to the case of Vincenzi, he commented: 'the party contributed to her victory … with money from everyone, by going out and collecting it. I think that, if someone gives you money, you should at least listen to what they have to say.' On a similar note, Sandro, a 54-year-old member (who, again, had been in the party since the days of the Italian Communist Party), alluded ironically to how directly elected mayors act towards their parties, saying that: 'unless I am wrong, it is those disgraceful parties that finance the election campaign, no?'

In Lausanne too, we found discontent with the mayor among the party members. This had grown in particular following Brélaz's decision to stand in the 2007 federal election (thus taking on a dual mandate). As a result, the Green Party of Vaud adopted a new rule that party representatives would no longer be allowed sit in both the federal parliament and the executives of cities with more than 10,000 inhabitants. Referring to this episode, Ferrari says of the mayor's relationship with the grassroots:

> while he certainly remains someone who is popular with the general public, you can detect within the party, among the grassroots, the view that we could do without Brélaz … it is a view expressed by a whole series of new members, particularly those who do not have a historical perspective, who have not lived through the earlier years of the party.

Like the Democratic Party grassroots members in Genoa, those of the Greens in Lausanne also said, when interviewed in December 2011, that they accepted the *super partes* role of the mayor while, at the same time, underlining the need for him to take into account what the party stands for. Claude, a 66-year-old who had been a member of the Green movement since 1973, said: 'the mayor has to stick to the spirit of the fundamental values of his party … but he also has to consider the general interest. He has to stick to his party's values, but without being sectarian.' Béatrice (46-years-old, a member since 2007) said that she thought the mayor 'should not stand alone and should be capable of asking for advice from the grassroots and the party secretariat'. This does not happen, she explained, because 'I have the impression that the mayor of Lausanne knows everything and nobody can suggest anything to him … perhaps it is because he has served several terms, or simply a question of personality … but he is not really in contact with the grassroots.'

Claude and Robin (a 73-year-old who had been in the party since its early days) both drew attention to the effects of Brélaz's long institutional career, while Bernard (a 70-year-old who had been in the party since the 1970s) commented that 'Daniel Brélaz's charisma lasted for four or five legislatures … but now I think we're dealing with charisma which is a bit residual.' Claude, who had often opposed the party's decisions in recent years, was very clear in his judgement on Brélaz, criticizing the fact that he had changed from being a man of the movement to a politician of the institutions. In his view, Brélaz was 'originally elected because he was a really committed activist….we worked together on the anti-nuclear campaign and it was a real pleasure … afterwards, unfortunately, he was intoxicated by power … I voted willingly for him in 2007, but then I felt betrayed.'

EPILOGUE AND DISCUSSION

It is worth presenting here a brief epilogue to our two cases: in late 2011, the centre-left alliance in Genoa announced that it would hold a primary to decide its candidate for the mayoral election in 2012. This was a new development since the unwritten rule until then had been that primaries were only held in those cases where a sitting

centre-left mayor was not standing again for election. While not amounting to a formal deselection, this was clearly a very serious challenge to Vincenzi's position. It was subsequently reinforced by the Democratic Party senator from Genoa, Roberta Pinotti, announcing (supported by various figures within the local party elite) that she would stand in the primary. If this was considered a fairly safe tactic to remove an uncooperative mayor at a time when the party was doing well in the polls nationally, it was a miscalculation. Vincenzi decided nonetheless to stand in the primaries and, given the first-past-the-post system used, the splitting of the Democratic Party vote between Vincenzi and Pinotti – and the tensions this created within the party's electorate – left the way open for a third centre-left coalition candidate, Marco Doria (an independent, backed by the far left party Left and Freedom – Sinistra e Libertà). Doria took 46 per cent of the vote in the February 2012 primary, well ahead of both Vincenzi on 27.5 per cent and Pinotti on 26.3 per cent. This marked the end not only for the mayor but also for Rasetto, who resigned as party secretary immediately afterwards. Doria duly won the mayoral election in May. The poor relationship between mayor and party during Vincenzi's tenure thus ultimately produced a negative-sum outcome in which both sides lost – albeit Vincenzi more so than the Democratic Party, which at least remains part of the centre-left governing coalition in local public office.

In Lausanne, the decline of Brélaz's appeal both within his own party and among the wider public has resulted in the acceptance by all sides that his current term in office will be his last. Hence, the Greens will no longer hold the mayoralty – which will almost inevitably return to the majority party of the coalition, the Socialist Party. The Greens in Lausanne also appear to have paid a price electorally for the slide in popularity of the mayor. In 2011, for the first time since 2001, the party lost support in the city council elections (decreasing from 21.7 to 17.7 per cent). This seems a by-product of tying a party's image for so long and so closely to one figure: when the latter's image becomes worn, so too does that of the party. The challenge now for the Greens – which, as we have seen, has been taken up by their new secretaries in recent years – is to construct a party organizational structure and public identity that can outlast the compelling presence of Brélaz. Nonetheless, despite the tensions revealed in the interviews, the relationship between mayor and party in Lausanne has broadly had a positive-sum

outcome. Without Brélaz, it seems unlikely that the Greens would have enjoyed the success (and much greater profile) they had in Lausanne and Vaud over the past decade.

To return to the three faces of the party that have accompanied us throughout this article, we can say that, on the evidence presented here, the directly elected mayors in our two cases for much of their time in office possessed considerable personal capital resources of the types discussed earlier and attached little importance to cultivating their relationships with their own party either in public office or on the ground. The latter (the party members) in particular, while accepting that their mayor must also be the mayor 'of all', seemed to have significant difficulties accepting the perceived distant relationship with him/her. We suggest that this becomes a problem for mayors only when their general popularity declines and/or party institutionalization increases. Otherwise, in a time of open primaries and/or generally declining membership levels, it would seem that the thesis of Katz and Mair is confirmed locally as regards the distance from the party in governing institutions felt by those in the party on the ground. As for the relationship between the mayor and the party in public office, we have seen that this is strongly shaped by the different opportunity structures under directly elected systems and whether the mayoralty, in both its formal powers and leadership styles, is more or less presidentialized. While there are differences in this sense between our two cases, we found in both cities that the party of the mayor in public office (that is, party members of the executive and city councillors) seemed to count for little.

The situation is partially different for the relationship between the mayor and the party in local central office, which – although in neither case entirely satisfied with the mayor's attitude towards it – does seem to receive more attention from the mayor than the other two faces of the party, especially during the final year of his/her term in government if seeking re-election. We believe that, at least in these two cases, the evidence is that the most significant face of the party for the mayor–party relationship is therefore the party in local central office – especially, but not only, when the personal capital of the mayor is in decline and/or the mayor is seeking another term. To different degrees, and while these can of course overlap at times with the party in central office, the relationships between the mayor and the rest of the party in public office or the party on the ground appear generally less significant. This greater importance of the

party in central office among the set of relationships which the mayor has with the three faces of the party suggests that, while Katz and Mair's theory (1993) of the pre-eminence of the party in public office may apply at national level, the combination of different structural opportunities locally can produce a different outcome.

CONCLUSIONS

Discussing studies of elected mayors, Colin Copus (2009: 27) notes that 'what we see with most categorisations of mayoral leadership is an absence of any account of the relationship between the mayor and the political parties of which they may be members, or with which they may have to co-operate.' This article has attempted to provide just such an account, by means of a qualitative case study of the mayors and their parties in Genoa and Lausanne. As expected, we found that, in both cases, the mayors are – to different degrees – more what Copus (2006: 66–7) refers to as 'party detached' than 'party loyalist'. Interestingly, although it was not the focus of this article, it also emerged from our interviews that both mayors may not have been 'coalition detached' in the same way as they were 'party detached'. In other words, the relationship with their own parties was taken for granted by the mayors more than that with the other parties of their coalitions. This seems a worthwhile line of investigation in further research on the mayor–party relationship, especially given that, in many countries, mayors are supported by a coalition rather than one single party.

We also found that the relationship with their parties is not always the same throughout the mayor's term in office. However, on this point we need to distinguish between the different faces of the party, since it is particularly with regard to the party in local central office that the relationship changes over time. Local party secretaries in both Genoa and Lausanne confirmed that, as the mayors (and members of the executive) come to the end of their mandates, much more attention is paid to the party in local central office. While we suspected that this would be the case, it underlines that we should not treat the relationships between mayors and the different faces of the party as static ones which are constantly conducted under the same structural conditions and with unchanging possibilities of agency (on the parts of both mayors and local secretaries). While the agency of the party may be weakened for

much of the period in which a popular directly elected mayor is in office, it reacquires leverage as fresh elections loom into view. This is in line with the observation by Magnier (2004: 177) that 'the influence of political parties, weak as they are perceived to be, is nevertheless a major determinant in the choice of the ''big'' mayors' and that, while there are some exceptions, generally 'excessive independence in managing a city does not lead to re-election'. This is particularly the case if the mayor's own electoral appeal is in decline (Brélaz) or if the party's own support levels in the city are high (Vincenzi). In sum, we found that the autonomy and survival prospects of the mayor depend greatly on his/her personal capital – especially symbolic-reputational capital – along with the degree of organizational and electoral strength of the party.

This brings us to another important point: while the literature on parties has spoken predominantly of *decline*, it may be better at local level to also speak of party active *adaptation* to new rules. Party membership may be much lower than in the past (van Biezen et al. 2012) – particularly in the case of (former) mass parties – and party organizations and local elites may struggle to keep pace with local democracy reforms, the presidentialization of institutional roles and the personalization of campaigns. But ultimately, as we have stressed throughout this article, parties in local central office retain considerable power over who does and does not become mayor. To be sure, mayors can exploit the personal, partisan and institutional factors outlined earlier both in the electoral arena and in office, but the cultivation of a good relationship with one's own party at local level – particularly the party in local central office – can prove highly valuable. So, as we have said, while party bureaucracies may no longer be as strong both in terms of own resources and formal power vis-à-vis the mayors as in the past (this is the case, for example, in Genoa), they can still wage considerable influence over the mayor's continuation in office – a factor that is likely to have an impact on the relationship between mayors and their parties, particularly in the latter stages of mayors' terms in office if they are seeking re-election.

Finally, and more generally, we believe that our cases show the benefits of considering the relationship between the party and the mayor as a dynamic multifaceted phenomenon taking place within a contextual configuration of opportunities and constraints. Such an approach in future research – conducted in cities with different

structural opportunities and different institutional, personal and partisan factors – could help to shed further light on the so-far opaque relationships between directly elected mayors and their parties.

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NOTES

[1] We devised guides for all interviews which investigated individually each aspect of the mayor's relationship with the three faces of the party – in local public office, in local central office and on the ground – from the perspective of the interviewee. Interviews in Genoa were conducted in Italian and those in Lausanne were conducted in French. All interviews were recorded, fully transcribed and then analysed using NVivo 9. When quoted for the first time in the text, names of the mayors, party secretaries, members of the municipal executive and city councillors are all given along with their roles at the time of interview. Access to members was gained through contacts with the party offices in each city. Given the small sample size and the associated dangers of relying on a random sample, a purposive sampling strategy was used as far as possible for the members. Interviewees were all active members (they had participated in party activities at local level that year), and a wide range of ages (from 22 to 73 in Genoa; from 20 to 72 in Lausanne) was covered. Ordinary members were guaranteed anonymity. Pseudonyms have therefore been used instead of their real names.

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