



Peter Mair (1951–2011)

PETER MAIR, WHO DIED AT THE AGE OF ONLY 60 ON 15 AUGUST 2011, WAS one of the leading scholars in the area of comparative politics. He is most associated with the development of comparative European politics as an important sub-field in the discipline. His career spanned the creation of an active research agenda on Western Europe (in the 1970s and 1980s) and the transformation, after 1990, to a broader comparative European dimension. As a researcher he was especially noted for his path-breaking work on change in both political party organizations and party systems. His intellectual interests were even wider than this, and he was an academic whose insights into the intersections of politics and society were always worth hearing and reading. As well as being a mainstream political scientist he was a public intellectual whose work on aspects of forms of democracy was published in journals such as *New Left Review* and the *London Review of Books*.

Peter was well known for his publications with both Stefano Bartolini and Dick Katz (with the former these included the prize-winning book, *Identity, Competition and Electoral Availability*). As significant for political science, perhaps, was his massive contribution in facilitating research by others. In part, this involved collaborative projects, often with those at much earlier stages of their careers, who now form part of his academic legacy. The doctoral students, post-doctoral researchers and young academics who worked with Peter will undoubtedly be a channel through which he will continue to have influence on comparative political analysis. He was also someone who undertook the time-consuming and often unrecognized work that enables a discipline to develop; for example, he had been an editor of the *European Journal of Political Research* and was co-editor of another successful journal, *West European Politics*. In addition, he had been one of the leading ‘facilitators’ in the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR), in which he not only organized workshops himself but supported others who were doing so. *Government and Opposition* profited directly from Peter’s devotion to the profession. He gave the Leonard Schapiro Lecture in 2006, his

work was published in our journal and he undertook the often-thankless task of refereeing papers submitted to the editors for possible publication. We were far from being the only beneficiaries of his time and effort.

There was a striking parallel between Peter's own career and his contribution to the study of comparative politics in Europe – it encompassed much of the continent. He was born in Ireland, where he obtained his first degree (at University College, Dublin). He received his doctorate in the Netherlands (at Leiden), and early in his career he taught in Ireland (at Limerick), in Britain (at Strathclyde and Manchester) and in Italy (at the European University Institute (EUI), in Florence). As a senior academic he held posts at Leiden and then at the EUI, where he was a professor and also dean of graduate studies at the time of his death. Peter's generous character and cosmopolitan outlook may have owed something also to his family background. He grew up the child of mixed Protestant/Catholic parentage in an Ireland where Catholic sectarianism was still strong; it taught him early in life the value of tolerance and an open, trusting attitude to other people and cultures.

Peter's friendliness and conviviality is one reason he will long be remembered by his academic colleagues – both in the institutions of which he was a member and by others. Whether it was at the EUI, at ECPR conferences and workshops, or wherever, lunching or having coffee with him was always a pleasure. His conversation was interesting, amusing and stimulating but never intimidating; it always felt good to be with him. He will be greatly missed.

Alan Ware and Michael Moran
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