Postdoc research design

Exploring the relationship between social movements and political parties in the UK and Italy, 1965-2015

Overall approach:

- Today, boundaries between parties and movements are becoming increasingly blurred.
- But the literature on social movements remains disconnected from the literature on political parties and *vice versa*.
- Focussing on that link also gives us a new perspective on the evolution of electoral socialism/social democracy. This develops arguments made by Peter Mair (2013; Katz and Mair 1995, 1996; Koole 1996) about changing party form, where the *growing gap between society and the party* is the key variable.
    - On the changing electoral fortunes, organisational forms & ideological orientations of European socialism, see: Przeworski and Sprague (1986), Kitschelt (1994), Sassoon (1996), Bartolini (2000), Moschonas (2002), Eley (2002), Mudge (2018), Piketty (2020).

- ☐ Historical comparative study of the relationships between political parties and social movements, looking at the Italian and British left.
    - This comparison seeks to maximise variation in the party system, while remaining within the broad boundaries of European socialism (UK: stable system of alternating party rule; Labour regularly in and out of power. Italy: single party dominance until early 1990s when a new party system emerged; PCI never in power, successors in and out of power since early 1990s).
    - Favretto (2002) also demonstrates the value of this comparative approach.

- ☐ Three central research questions:
    i. How did contemporary theorists and left intellectuals think about party-movement relations? How did that thinking evolve over time?
    ii. How did political parties and social movements actually relate to one another? What are the broad patterns of interaction? How do those patterns change over time?
    iii. Are there historical patterns in party leaders' personal relationships to social movements? Do these change over time?

Empirical questions

1. Contemporary theories of party-movement relations

- Review of contemporary theories being produced by party/movement intellectuals:
    - Italy: Operaismo and autonomismo, Eurocommunism, social centres & retreat from politics, search for Third Way, emergence of US-Democrats-inspired PD.
    - UK: New Left critique of Labourism, Eurocommunism, New Times, Blairism/Giddens/Third Way.

2. Mapping the general patterns of party-movement interactions

- Quantitative Narrative Analysis:
    - Newspapers of record - *The Times*, *Corriere della Sera*.
    - Cover to cover reading (keyword searches are problematic).
    - Sampling strategy - three random months per year (see [here](#)).

- Process:
    - Read the main news section of each daily paper (i.e. not commercial, local or international news).
    - Copy transcript into spreadsheet (in original language). Then go back and code at a later date.
    - Winter of Discontent? normal policy (see Bailey 2014) is to replace with *Daily Telegraph*.

- What am I looking for?
    - **"Public** interactions between **movements** and **parties** where **claims are made** bearing on another group's interests" (adapted from McAdam, Tilly and Tarrow's [2001] famous definition of contentious politics)
    - **Public** = is being reported in a newspaper
    - **Movement** = any mass membership organisation or collective
    - **Party** = Labour Party (or it in government) and the PCI-PDS-DS-PD (or it in government)
    - **Claims** = demands being made or supported/resisted
        - What about fights inside the party? Only when a (semi-)external group is involved (including trade unions), or if mass mobilisation features (e.g. individual members).
        - What about fights inside affiliated bodies (trade unions/co-ops etc)? No - they don't involve the formal political party.
        - What about campaigns against local government where I can't tell who was in power? Probably ignore & admit that my analysis isn't so good for local issues.

- - - ■ Should I count ginger groups (formal or informal groups within an organisation seeking to influence its direction and activity)? Yes - they work like a social movement and are often key vehicles of transmission from outside to inside.
      - ■ Ignore external think tanks/NGOs/charities.
      - ■ Differentiate the internal party: 'The Party' means parliamentary presence, then there is the party bureaucracy, local party groups, members, etc.
      - ■ Dynamics of Contention database includes e.g. press releases by SMOs.

- Methods of analysis:
  - *Unsupervised*: block modelling to reveal 'community structure' (actors who occupy similar locations in the networks), [MCA](#)/[scaling](#) to reveal patterns of commonly co-occurring activities (link being different actions used by same actor over time).
  - *Theory-led*: manually grouping actors/actions into categories based on theoretical/contextual knowledge [nb see debate on repertoire of public actions (i.e. verbs - Tilly) vs repertoire of strategies ([Rossi](#)).]
  - *Case studies*: particular movements and their ongoing party relations over time e.g. trade unions; nuclear disarmament; social movements in the [GLC in the 1980s](#) vs social movements and [Communist local government](#) [in](#) [Bologna](#).

3. Connections at the top

- Collate information on party leaders and their personal connections to movements/civil society (using the *Dictionary of National Biography* and the *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*).

- Methods of analysis: simple trends over time approach; treat this as an evolving ego net between party and social movements (with party leaders as the ties between them).

Theoretical implications

- Structure vs agency in repertoires?
  - Agency in tactical decision making ([Jaspers](#), [Ganz](#)) vs Marx/Bourdieu/Tilly's "traditions of dead generations"?
  - Where would pragmatism fall (see importance of 'improvisations' to Tilly)?
- Characterising the political realm as a field/world/ecosystem etc? What is at stake in these metaphors?
- What are the productive contradictions in party-movement relations? Trace recurring patterns of development towards/away from particular forms of relationship.
- Building towards speculative theorising about a new framework for party-movement relations.