

Co-opt, collaborate or compete? Exploring the relationship between social movements and political parties in Britain and Italy, 1980-2019

When political parties and social movements confront one another, they are faced with a series of choices. They could collaborate and incorporate each other's aims. One may try to instrumentalise and co-opt the other. They might compete in more or less visible ways. Or, they may ignore each other entirely. These choices have significant societal implications. On the one hand, they can determine the success or failure of a political project (Ganz 2009). On the other, parties and movements are both fundamental to the working of modern democracies, articulating citizens' demands, providing avenues for representation, teaching crucial democratic skills and forging particular political cultures.

Despite having overlapping roles, sharing the same political space and even blurring into one another (particularly in modern "populist" formations), the interaction between parties and movements remains under-theorised and under-studied, often falling into the gap between two separate literatures (see McAdam & Tarrow 2010, Hutter et al 2018, Piccio 2019). The proposed research therefore extends and departs from existing scholarship in its path breaking focus on the granular detail of tactical choices and strategic interactions. In particular, it seeks to address three initial research questions: (1) What are the dominant forms of party-movement relationship? (2) How do they develop over time? (3) What are the conditions under which these different forms of relationship emerge?

The final research question relates to the role of movements and parties in challenging social inequalities. The dominant explanations for how left-wing parties drifted from their radical egalitarian origins to centrist 'Third Way' positions tend to focus on structural and electoral factors (e.g. Przeworski and Sprague 1986, Sassoon 1996, Moschanos 2002, Piketty 2020). In seeking to enrich and expand these accounts of ideological change, my research will engage with a fourth question: (4) How does the history of party-movement relations inform our understanding of the evolution of European socialism?

Empirically, the proposed research will examine party-movement relationships on the British and Italian left since the 1980s. These two sites were chosen on a 'most different systems' basis: although they both saw similar ideological shifts, they have very different political histories, and their comparison will therefore facilitate an exploration of party-movement interactions under quite different conditions. The research will also be multi-method. I will use Protest Event Analysis based on newspaper reports to generate a systematic sample of interactions, which can then be categorised and coded to enable a rigorous assessment of how they change over time and under different conditions. Because newspaper reports tend to focus on *public* interactions, I will also supplement that quantitative analysis with research in party archives and national biographical collections. This rich qualitative data will enable me to explore the full breadth of strategies being deployed by different political actors. Ultimately, this history of party-movement relationships will provide insights into a vital, though often ignored, area of democratic life and improve our understanding of political conflict and political strategy.