Postdoc research design

Co-opt, collaborate, compete? Exploring the relationship between social movements and political parties in Britain and Italy, 1980-2015

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Political parties and social movements are fundamental to the working of modern democracies: they articulate citizen's demands, aggregate preferences, provide information, teach crucial democratic skills, recruit leaders and staff governments. As well as having overlapping roles, movements and parties also inhabit the same political space, working with, against and in-between one another. Moreover, in the last decade, the boundaries between the two forms of politics have become increasingly blurred, as populist "movement-parties" of the left and right have emerged across Europe.

Despite these commonalities, the two literatures rarely cross paths and the interaction between parties and movements "remains undertheorised and understudied" (Cisar and Hutter 2019: 1; see also McAdam & Tarrow 2010: 529, Piccio 2019: 2). In fact, it is only in recent years that significant numbers sociologists, historians and political scientists have started to explore the interface between these two actors, examining how their interactions shape the level of protest, parties' electoral support, their ideological orientation and the cleavage structures on which political systems are based (for a recent review see Hutter et al 2018).

However, much work remains to be done. In particular, not enough attention has been paid to the granular detail of precisely *how* movements and parties relate to one another: from co-option, collaboration and mediation, to entryism, strategic silence and open competition. Utilising a multi-method approach (combining systematic Protest Event Analysis with archival work and secondary literature), this research will examine the changing relationships between left wing political parties and social movements in Britain and Italy from 1980 to 2015. This will address several important questions, including: What are the dominant forms of party-movement relationship? Under what contextual conditions do particular forms of relationship emerge? Do particular tactical choices lead the relationship to develop in particular directions? What accounts for the emergence and dissolution of relationships? And what constitutes an 'effective' relationship?