

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.
 - Justification for timescale: want to explore changing forms of left politics (Third Way shift starts in the 1980s but really takes off in the 1990s); also want to catch the protest wave of the late 1960s and 1970s; how important is the post-2008 wave of protest?
- 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 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, OccupyPD
 - UK: New Left critique of Labourism, Eurocommunism, New Times, Blairism/Giddens/Third Way, post-2008 anti-austerity protests.
- Methods of analysis?

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 - 1 random month per year (see Bailey 2014)
 - It is taking a bit longer than a day to read one month's worth of newspapers (in English) without coding. 1 month per year would give me 100 days work or 20 working weeks or 5 months (could apply for research assistant money to help with coding).
 - Smaller sample increases need for complementary case studies:
 - e.g. trade unions; nuclear disarmament; social movements in the [GLC in the 1980s](#) vs social movements and [Communist local government in Bologna](#); others?
- 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](#)).]

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.