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SYMPOSIUM/1

Movements and Parties: An Introduction

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ABSTRACT: The article provides an analytical introduction to the Symposium devoted to Sidney Tarrow's "Movements and Parties. Critical Connections in American Political Development". First, it discusses the relevance of the book with regards to the Movement-Parties scholarship. Second, it presents the content of the Symposium, focusing on the main arguments developed by the various authors.

KEYWORDS: movement-parties, Left/Right, American politics, historical political science, comparative politics.

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1. Introduction

Sidney Tarrow's book- *Movements and Parties. Critical Connections in American Political Development* published in the series of *Cambridge Studies in Contentious Politics*-, the subject of this symposium, departs from the idea that relations between movements and parties matters for society and the quality of democracy.

Indeed, scholars coined the term of 'movement parties', precisely in order to stress the hybrid nature of a new type of organization and its origins in the transformation of social movements into political parties (Kitschelt 2006). While in political science and political sociology it is evident that parties are important for movements and vice versa, research has started to use the concept of 'movement party' to refer to actors that are in transition from extra-institutional movements to partisan electoral competition 'as their primary vehicle to bring societal interests to bear on policy-making' (Kitschelt 2006: 278). Social movement studies have tended to declare social movements the defining feature of established post-1968 democracies (Meyer and Tarrow 1998) and generally prioritised the protest arena (for exceptions, see Meyer and Lupu 2007:

120–122). However, important recent contributions to social movement studies have pointed out the need to focus on the electoral arena, political parties, and their interactions with social movements and protest politics (see Goldstone 2003; McAdam and Tarrow 2010, 2013; Kriesi et al. 2012; Hutter 2014; Heaney and Rojas 2015; della Porta et al. 2017). This type of inter-arena interaction constitutes one of the most important challenges of current social movement research (Císař 2015). Moreover, ‘movement parties’, as a new type of political organization, have proved to be very successful in mobilizing voters in some countries (Kitschelt 2006).

Sidney Tarrow’s rich book explores these challenges by focusing more broadly on the role that movements (also in interaction with political parties) play in both the processes of transition to democracy and the transformation of democratic regimes over time.

Moreover, the academic focus has so far been mostly on left-wing and ideologically hybrid organizations, such as those that emerged in Southern Europe during the Eurozone crisis (for example Syriza, Podemos, and the Five Star Movement; della Porta et al. 2017). The radical right has as yet remained out of the focus of this research. Whilst some attempts have been made to bridge the political party literature and social movement studies (for example Minkenberg 2003; McAdam and Tarrow 2010), the two branches of scholarship have only rarely crossed paths in analyses of the radical right (recently, there have been new contributions such as papers in a special issue of *European Societies*, see Gattinara and Pirro 2018; Minkenberg 2018). Sidney Tarrow’s contribution expands the focus on Movements and Parties throughout the entire political spectrum, from Right to Left. According to the author, ‘a social movement – the New Right, with its *mélange* of economic libertarianism, religious fervor, and racial resentment – was the relational mechanism between the old and the new Republican Party’ (246).

It has been argued that movement parties are likely to emerge in times of political and economic crisis, when traditional cleavage structures are transformed and new societal grievances are not addressed by the existing parties (della Porta 2017, Kitschelt 1989). ‘New’ movement parties usually exhibit a strong anti-establishment attitude, deploying a populist discourse of ‘us’ (the people) against ‘them’ (the political elite), and drawing on society’s mistrust of the dominant political class in times of crisis (Lanzone and Woods 2015). In an attempt to bridge social movement and party politics studies within a wider concern with democratic theories, della Porta et al. (2017) present both new empirical evidence on left-wing political organizations such as Syriza and Podemos that emerged after the 2008 crisis, and conceptual insights into these topical socio-political phenomena within a cross-national comparative perspective.

Similarly, Hutter (2014) demonstrates the usefulness of studying both electoral and protest politics to better understand the impact of globalization on political mobilization, including the radical right. He particularly emphasizes how cleavage politics can be helpful to understanding the formation of new social movements and populist parties in Western Europe – although he relies only on quantitative evidence and does not include Eastern Europe. Examining the collapse of the post-9/11 anti-war movement against the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, Heaney and Rojas (2015) focus on activism and protest in the United States. In their book, considering in a comparative fashion the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street, they show that how people identify with social movements and political parties matters. This is an important contribution, but it includes only US movements.

Based on this previous scholarship and going well beyond, the book of Sidney Tarrow covers several of cases and offers a highly differentiated view of how party politics develops across Europe and the US through the interplay between political parties and movements. The broad questions addressed in the book

are: *what are the main relations between social movements and political parties? How do they work? Under which conditions do they produce different outcomes?*

This type of interaction between movements and parties constitutes one of the most important challenges for political science and political sociology. At present, their interaction remains under-theorized and the book of Sidney Tarrow offers a remarkable contribution in this direction, mobilizing concepts from different strands of research in order to disentangle the relation between social movements and political parties.

Therefore, this book focuses on one of the most debated theoretical and empirical research objects in need of being studied. Focusing on the interactions between electoral and protest politics seems especially important for studying the segments of the population that tend to express their grievances not through street protest, but through protest vote (Hutter 2014).

Given that European societies are currently facing multiple challenges, such as the Pandemic, the recent economic recession in some parts of the continent, the rise in political populism, and xenophobic mobilization against diverse representatives of the alleged European ‘other’, the war, this type of research that focuses not only on protest, but also on its electoral consequences is about to become even more important.

The Symposium on Tarrow’s path breaking book, aims, first, at understanding the concept of ‘movement-party relationship’ and reflecting on its conceptual ‘usability’ across countries and ideologies (left-wing and right-wing), and even beyond the traditional actors to which it is usually related. One of the aims of the book is therefore to fill the empirical gap that at present exists in the discussions of these dimensions of politics and political interactions, by providing an illustrative map of tendencies and trajectories. This is particularly relevant since many old and new political movements have globally emerged in recent years, and they may be perceived very differently in terms of both their electoral appeal and political trajectories. Reflecting on the heuristic validity of this concept may help to better understand these new and increasingly diffused phenomena. Second, the Symposium aims at using this theoretical clarification to shed new light on the different ways in which movement party relations have been articulated in various countries (Europe, the USA and beyond) since the economic crisis, and even more recently after the critical juncture constituted by the Covid -19 sanitary crisis (della Porta 2022) . This crisis has acted as an external shock in many party systems and protest arenas, either giving birth to new political parties or consolidating movement actors towards an institutionalisation trajectory. Third, the collection of articles investigates the connections between movements and parties and the political and cultural specificities that form the national context, which may determine the development of different types of relations but also their trajectories. Fourth, it also reflects on the conceptualization of movement-parties, looking into “partially movementized parties”. Besides its descriptive side, this book offers a systematic study of different types of movement-party relations in different countries and it is therefore able to reveal – and possibly explain – differences in the intensity, and especially in the forms of such interactions, while also offering reflections on developments, convergences, and divergences in these interactions. This book is of crucial interest for future research on the topic.

The Symposium is composed of eight contributions. First, starting from a reflection on the assault of Trumpism on democracy in the U.S., from an European perspective, Dieter Rucht, shows that Tarrow’s book is not only timely, but also it attends to fill three gaps: conceptually, shed light and analytical rigours on the under researched links and interactions between social movements and political parties; empirically, offering seven rich case studies from different periods in U.S. history; and, finally, from a social and political

relevance view, emphasize the most recent repercussions related to Trumpism. In his conclusions he argues that there is still a neglected element that only casually pops up in Tarrow's considerations: interest groups.

Second, still from a European perspective, in her contribution Daniela Piccio emphasizes, as many others do in this Symposium, that the scope of the book is very ambitious, aiming not only at capturing dynamics of interaction between social movements and political parties in the United States, but also within particular cycles of contentions and over the long term, as well as assessing how this interaction impacts on democracy. She also underlines that Tarrow's observations travel well beyond the United States and appear particularly useful for understanding contemporary political developments in Europe. She argues that the book reminds us how powerful and fascinating historical comparative analyses can be, calling for a reconsideration of how we do research in social sciences. Lorenzo Mosca underlines that some aspects could have deserved a more in-depth discussion in the book: the concept of movementization; the comparative part of the study, highlighting the role that movements play in the processes of democratic anchoring and de-anchoring; and, finally, the notion of hybridity.

Donatella della Porta assesses the various features of the book through a reflection on a typical and admirable pattern in Tarrow's work, namely to start with a theoretical interest in filling a gap in the understanding of contentious politics and continue then by applying the novel theoretical insights, trying to make sense of a relevant social and political problem. She underlines that in this regard, the book of the scholar, as a comparatist (that often in U.S. means a non-Americanist) uses reflections from social movement studies to understand American politics. In the conclusion she contextualizes the book through the lens of the impact of the movement-party relations for the quality of the U.S. democracy. With a focus on the radical right side of the political spectrum, Minkenberg's contribution critically proposes that the boundaries between radical right parties and movements are more porous than the distinction made by Sidney Tarrow's new book. He stresses that they cannot be understood mainly as different types of actors in contentious politics and their relationship towards each other, instead whatever manifestation of the radical right is studied, they all should be treated as components of the radical right as a collective actor. In line with many other contributions of the Symposium addressing the quality of democracy, he argues in his conclusions that, as the case (the United States) described by Tarrow, if cycles of contentious politics happen on the far right of the political spectrum, they rarely lead to a movement society but, and many cases in Europe show, to ever more disruptive politics threatening the entire democratic order.

Similarly, although from a different geographical and academic perspective, also the contribution of Abers, de Almeida and von Bülow propose a more comprehensive answer to one of the book's central questions on how movement/party relations affect institutions. In particular, they recognize that Tarrow's historical analysis is extensive and fascinating, but focuses on spectacular moments in politics and argue that this focus may limit the understanding of how different types of movement-party interactions can produce different results. Drawing from a relational definition of social movements and from Latin America scholarship, they suggest an approach to movement-party relations that highlights the ongoing, often invisible and extremely differentiated tactics and resources that social movement actors bring to political and party systems, and vice-versa.

El-Ghobashy, also offering personal insights from her university career, stresses, in a comparative perspective, that while outside the United States, the idea that political parties and grassroots movements ceaselessly interact is common, within U.S. political science Departments, until recently movements and parties belonged to two different conceptual universes. Therefore, one of the explicit goals and most significant features of "Movements and Parties" is its gentle yet insistent deflation of American

exceptionalism. Secondly, in her analysis of Tarrow's work she underlines that one of the book's most intriguing yet underdeveloped insights is that the parties' movementization can take different forms. Finally, similarly to della Porta's contribution and others, El-Ghobashy points out that, from an analytical and methodological perspective, embracing complexity (as Tarrow does in his book) does not entail losing coherence or generalizability.

Anria as a scholar of movements and parties in Latin America, focuses on two areas where in his view the book holds particular interest and comparative scope: first, its discussion of hybrid organizational formats and the extent to which the patterns observed in the United States are more broadly generalizable across regions; and second, its discussion of political polarization processes. Students of Latin American movements and parties will be especially curious about Tarrow's notion of hybridity, and about the conditions under which the arguments apply beyond the United States. He concludes arguing that with Tarrow's book further research becomes even more stimulating.

In conclusion, we believe that this Symposium provides an important contribution to the analysis of contemporary variants of movement-party relations within the US context and beyond, highlighting the relevance of a relational, processual, and dynamics approach.

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