SYMPOSIUM/ 4

Movements and Parties: Beyond Contentious Performances

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Sidney Tarrow's *Movements and Parties* stands on the shoulders of a long history of scholarship that tries to untangle the relationships between modern social movements and political parties. One of the earliest examples is the author's own work on communists and peasant movements in Italy in the 1960s. These relationships are still understudied, however, in part because political scientists in general, and party scholars in particular, have long ignored, or at best underestimated, the relevance of social movements. Mainstream political science remains focused on elite actors and presumes that key decisions are made by small groups of people located in institutions such as parliaments and political parties. Beyond the idea that social movements are not *really* relevant when it comes to hard politics, political scientists tend to presume that social movements – often understood narrowly as protest movements – arise only when representative institutions are unable (or unwilling) to channel discontent through formal channels, such as elections. The social movement society thesis (Meyer and Tarrow 1997) did not thrive in a discipline that continued to view cycles of protest as signs of instability and inefficacy. The disconnect between social movement and party studies is, of course, a two-way street. Social movement scholars have lagged in exploring specific variables associated with the party system, such as party competition and issue-space (Cowell-Meyers 2014: 62).

In the past decade, however, we have seen a revival of attention to the interactions between parties and movements, in no small part in response to emerging political phenomena. Scholarship on the rise of new left and right-wing movement parties in Europe has helped understand the connections between electoral and protest politics (see, for example, della Porta et al 2017; Caiani and Císar 2019). The key role of grassroots mobilization in propelling the rise of populist far right leaders, such as Donald Trump in the U.S. and Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, has further demonstrated that movements can have profound impacts on parties and

electoral systems. Even so, the literature on populism has failed to give sufficient attention to bottom-up mobilization processes. As argued elsewhere, discussions of populism often presume that the antagonistic discourse of leaders operates by galvanizing the support of disorganized masses without attention to organized supporters (von Bülow and Abers 2022; see also Pirro and Portos 2021).

In this context, Tarrow´s book is a much-needed contribution that engages with both movement and party scholars, and that includes an analysis of both conservative and progressive actors. Through a sweeping overview of 150 years of U.S. history, Tarrow shows that "rather than being in opposition to each other, movement and party intersected in both institutional and contentious arenas" (p. 123). What is new, he argues, is that "in today's 'movement society,' … the boundaries between movements and parties are more fluid than they were in the past." (p. 25).

We could not agree more. Taking Tarrow's proposal seriously, however, requires advancing on two fronts. First, we need to explore whether previous definitions of social movements hinder our capacity to identify and understand movement-party interactions. Tarrow himself points to this challenge when he argues that although the concept of social movements as a form of contentious politics has been useful for characterizing past phenomena, we now need to explore what he refers to as hybrid forms of collective action (p. 148). He does not, however, offer an alternative definition of social movements that would help conceptualize *what* exactly is undergoing hybridization and *how* this process operates. In this essay, we demonstrate the usefulness of a relational definition of social movements for understanding movement-party interactions.

Second, we propose a more comprehensive answer to one of the book's central questions: "how movement/party relations affect changes in institutions" (p. 24). Tarrow´s book explores five general questions, four of which are quite similar to those raised in his article with McAdam on movements and elections (McAdam and Tarrow 2010). To answer this new, fifth question, Tarrow explores the long-term institutional impacts of movement-party relations, both positive ones - such as the victories of the women's and civil rights movements - and negative ones, with emphasis on the polarization of American politics today. Tarrow´s historical analysis is extensive and fascinating but focuses on spectacular moments in politics. We argue that this focus limits our understanding of how different types of movement-party interactions can produce varied results. Drawing from our relational definition of social movements and from Latin America scholarship, we 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.

Defining social movements

Tarrow argues that the lines between electoral politics and protest are breaking down. On the one hand, contentious repertoires, such as protests, have been employed by political parties. On the other, a new layer of organizations engages in both interest group and social movement tactics within the party system (p. 151-152). In Chapter 7, one of the most intriguing sections of the book, he calls these new organizations "hybrid forms of collective action". This discussion highlights the definitional problem to which we want to draw attention.

Tarrow succinctly defines hybridity as related to "organizations that maintain close ties with individual parties but that are not subsumed by those parties." (149). He further identifies three forms of hybridity. Horizontal hybridity involves collaboration between parties and other organizations in the pursuit of a

common interest. Vertical hybridity involves the provision of resources by some other organization to influence a party. Blended hybridity occurs when both types are present.

Conventionally, hybrids are units of something that are composed of parts belonging to more than one type of that thing. That is, the term suggests a joining together of different things into one object. But for Tarrow it seems to refer to different kinds of relations between separate things – parties and movements – rather than to what Clemens (2022) characterizes as a co-constitution process. Furthermore, Tarrow´s approach does not tell us what the parts are that combine to create hybridism. Do hybrids mix together different types of organizations (social movements versus party organizations), different objectives (ideals or electoral office) or different performances (protests versus lobby)? Tarrow´s discussion of hybridity is an important step to better understanding the heterogeneity of movement-party interactions. However, beyond affirming that it exists, he does not provide us with analytical tools to recognize hybridity in different contexts.

Doing so requires rethinking the definition of social movements traditionally used by the contentious politics literature. Understanding social movements "as a form of contentious politics that combines sustained campaigns of claim making with arrays of public performances, adding up to public displays of worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment" (Tilly and Tarrow 2015: ch. 1) limits our capacity to explore movement-party relations for two reasons. First, as Tarrow himself recognizes, it fails to acknowledge that movements can (and usually do) combine contentious and conventional practices, a point that many social movement scholars have been making for quite some time (Giugni and Passy, 1998; Rossi, 2017). Second, the performance-based definition makes it difficult to discuss the relationships in which movement actors engage, particularly, when they are with non-movement actors. We need an alternative conceptual framework for identifying movements in empirical research beyond the focus on contentious, public performances.

The example of horizontal hybridity provided in the book - the relation between the Anti-Iraq War Movement and the Democratic Party - showcases well the limitations of the contentious politics definition of social movements and, consequently, of the concept of hybridity proposed. Tarrow describes the Anti-war movement as a fragmented set of organizations that brought together diverse worldviews and claims. He affirms that this movement helped elect Obama to the presidency, by mobilizing enthusiasm for an anti-war candidate. The discussion, based largely on Heaney and Rojas´s (2015) *Party in the Street*, is focused on what happened after the election. Tarrow argues that the movement was unable to prosper once Obama was elected because the anti-war movement became divided between moderate groups who prioritized defending the Democratic party and more radical ones who continued to criticize the war.

The brief discussion of horizontal hybridity tells us very little about what actually goes on in the relations between movements and parties after a party wins an election, something that is much more deeply explored in Heaney and Rojas´s original (2015) work. Those authors describe both social movements and parties in terms of Fligstein and McAdam´s (2012) concept of strategic action field. Fields are understood as sets of actors who share "understandings about the purpose of the field, relationships to others in the field . . . , and the rules governing legitimate action in the field" (Fligstein and McAdam, 2012:9, *apud* Heaney and Rojas, 2015: 19). Thinking of movements as fields will sound familiar to scholars who define movements fundamentally as types of networks, as in the tradition of Alberto Melucci (1989, 1996) and Mario Diani (1992, 2015). Referring to parties as fields is more surprising and draws attention to the idea that parties go far beyond their formal organizational structure, including a large informal component. By using the notion of fields, Heaney and Rojas are able to name the kinds of relationships that can occur between movements and parties: fields can overlap and actors – individuals and organizations – can belong to more than one of them at the same time.

Network approaches to social movements are similarly useful for exploring the overlaps between different kinds of actors and organizations. In our research into Latin American social movements, we have found Diani´s (1992, 2015) approach to social movements to be helpful for making relations between movement actors and the political system visible, especially when those actors operate from within government or party institutions. In his 2015 work, Diani defines social movements as a form of social coordination based on "dense networks of informal interorganizational exchanges and processes of boundary definition that operate at the level of broad collectivities rather than specific groups/organizations, through dense interpersonal networks and multiple affiliations." (2015:18) By boundary definition, the author refers to the formation of loyalties and attachments, collective identities that bind members of various organizations. Movements are thus defined not by what they do (their performances), but by the kinds of relationships they foster among members through intense interactions.

Although it has its own difficulties (boundary definition can be hard to pin down), this relational approach allows us to `follow the actors´ rather than predefine what movements should be doing and who they should be doing it with. There are two benefits to this understanding of social movements. First, it enables us to understand the fact that parties and movements overlap through individuals and organizations who are located in multiple networks or fields. This point has been developed extensively by Mische (2009), who argues that activists´ multiple affiliations and identities have complicated and long-term effects on both parties and movements. Sometimes these overlaps are polarizing and paralyzing, but often they are generative of new ideas and practices. Looking at multiple affiliations draws attention to the heterogeneity of subjects within movements and helps capture their internal conflicts and points of convergence (Zaremberg and Almeida 2022).

Second, by focusing on actors rather than types of performances, we are forced to recognize that movement actors might take part in non-contentious activities without necessarily abandoning contentious causes (Banaszak, 2010). Indeed, following the actors allows us to see movement networks even when they infiltrate spaces that we do not necessarily think of as movements, such as states and parties (Abers and von Bülow, 2011). The relational concepts of fields and networks are thus useful for analyzing the connections between electoral and protest politics, but also to better understand what happens after parties win elections. When this occurs, more visible forms of interaction tend to fade away, while other, less visible practices (both contentious and non-contentious) may blossom. This takes us to the second part of our argument.

The institutional effects of movement-party relations

Do movements affect political parties? Tarrow´s book establishes an emphatic Yes! What is less clear is how they do so. Although movement party interactions often take place during electoral campaigns (Andrews, 1997; Blee and Currier, 2006; Heaney, Rojas, 2015), they also occur between them. A vast literature on movement party relations (Schwartz, 2010; Oliveira, 2021; Della Porta et al., 2017) shows that long-lasting, ongoing relations between parties and movements existed before the recent hollowing out of the party system and the advent of the internet, although these events have certainly had a dramatic impact on those relations. Some parties are so proximate to movements that scholars have referred to them as movement-parties (Kitschelt, 2006). To be fair, Tarrow is a voracious and very generous reader and the majority of these authors are cited in the book. However, everyday forms of party-movement interaction are not discussed in detail.

Understanding more constant, less spectacular, and probably more common forms of movement-party relations requires taking into account how different political and party systems influence the tactics and the

resources movements can mobilize in their interactions with parties. Latin American cases differ from the U.S. in two central ways. First, the multiparty and proportional system of some countries reduces the pressure on parties to take positions based only on issues that have the majority support in society. This creates space within parties for movements such as the LGBT, black and feminist movements (De la Dehesa, 2010). Movement-based parties thrive not only in local, less disputed elections, as discussed by McAdam and Tarrow (2010), but also nationally. Second, these are, for the most part, new democracies, with recent and uneven institutionalization of party systems. Social movements have been key actors in the Latin American democratization process, participating directly in the construction of democratic institutions and party systems (Avritzer, 2002).

One renowned example of a party founded by social movements engaged in the construction of democratic political institutions is Brazil´s Workers´ Party (PT- *Partido dos Trabalhadores*). It was created in 1980, with intense participation by a labor union movement struggling against state control and a multiplicity of other movements. In its early years, party structure was deeply decentralized, formed by nuclei largely composed of activists involved in specific struggles. These movements certainly brought financial resources to the party, suggestive of what Tarrow calls vertical hybridity, but they also brought a variety of other resources, such as innovative policy ideas. Over the course of the 1980s and 1990s, as the country transitioned to democracy, cities governed by the PT became arenas for testing these ideas: housing movements engaged in self-governed construction programs; neighborhood activists help invent and implement participatory budgeting, the trash-picker´s movement promoted recycling initiatives, the movement for food security mobilized family farm cooperatives, and so on (Tatagiba and Teixeira, eds., 2021). These actors worked *both* in movements and in the Workers´ Party. Movements were not the dominant forces within the party, however, and interactions were always tense, with actors constantly questioning and struggling to redefine the relationship. These power struggles sometimes resulted in the creation of organizational structures within the party to work for particular issues, such as social assistance, gender, race, and LGBT rights (Gutierres, 2015; Sacchet and Rezende, 2021; Pereira, 2021). When the PT won the nation´s presidency in 2003, these networks of activists mobilized to influence federal government policy.

As movement actors gained greater access to the federal government, they focused their energy on trying to get their alternative policy models adopted. This resulted in diminished levels of street protest and other public displays of worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment. Yet a vibrant literature on the PT administrations suggests that movement activities within the state were far from non-contentious (Abers, Serafim, Tatagiba, 2014). On the contrary, even though social movements now had access to institutions, their efforts to implement policies were almost always an uphill climb, as powerful economic interests continued to dominate the administration. These struggles occurred largely behind the scenes, however. If we see movements as networks organized around collective identities and contentious causes, we can understand such institutionalized activities as part of the movement repertoire. The result in the case of the PT was a long-term integration between movements and the party, as activists cultivated dual identities with their specific movement and with the party.

In sum, our argument is ontological: a relational approach to social movements allows for a more inclusive exploration of social movements' interactions with political parties. It pushes us to analyze less visible actions, embracing interactions with the political system as a natural part of what social movements do. The point is not to declare an end to the conceptual distinction between social movements and political parties. On the contrary: as interactions become more visible and arguably more fluid, it is important to understand the differences between these types of actors and to recognize that even in cases of greater proximity,

interactions among them are awash with tensions and contradictions. Divisive debates over whether to participate in party politics and in governments have haunted movements for as long as both have existed and will continue to do so. Conversely, party actors are wary of the potential negative implications of opening their doors to activists. Tarrow's book presents ample evidence of these tensions and their different outcomes over time.

We hail Sid Tarrow's contribution at breaking down disciplinary fences. In doing so, he effectively proposes a new research agenda, one that strives to dive deeply into the analysis of the impacts of movement-party interactions. The stakes could not be higher: it is, as the author states repeatedly throughout the book, a discussion about the survival of democracy.

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