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Progressive Movement Parties: A Product of the Crisis or Response to the Crisis?

Abstract: Following the post-2008 crisis period, many new progressive left movements emerged in the countries of Southern and Southeastern Europe (such as Podemos in Spain, Syriza in Greece, Levica in Slovenia, and the Možemo! platform in Croatia). They were formed as a result of discontent with the political elites of the old left at both local and central level, who were not able to block the neo-liberal reforms of governing parties, or sometimes even advocated these reforms. These groupings mostly began as urban or social movements calling for more redistribution and more representative democracy. Later, however, many of them tried to become parliamentary parties as they grew aware of the difficulty of achieving their goals while operating exclusively outside political institutions. It is important to stress that their entry into the electoral arena often brought stark changes to the previous patterns of party competition. Some scholars see these new progressive movement parties as the nucleus of new democratic ideas, because of their promotion of a new way of doing politics.

New movement parties are a kind of hybrid party type. Therefore, the main aim of the paper is to analyse their origins and innovations in terms of organisational structure, as well as to shed light on their innovative policy practices. On the one hand, new movement parties extensively use various bottom-up tools and democratic digital innovations (DDIs) to involve members and try to maintain strategic practices of social movements in the arena of party competition. On the other, they often suffer from an unexpectedly high level of organisational centralisation and personalisation, as well as a tendency for their leadership to employ plebiscite practices.

Keywords: social movements, protests, new movement parties, progressive movement parties, party structures, organisational innovation, degrowth

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Movement parties are an extremely interesting party type, acting as a kind of hybrid or "bridge" between parties and social movements (Mosca, Quaranta, 2017, p. 1; Hutter, Kriesi, Lorenzini, 2018, p. 331). Their origins are characterised by the fact that they emerge in periods of major, usually overlapping crises, be they political (the crisis of representative democracy, traditional parties), social (the crisis of traditional society and transition to an atomised mass society), or economic (e.g., the global financial crisis). They can therefore be said to constitute a kind of product of contestation politics – opposition to the current state of democratic institutions, demanding their radical reconstruction. The drivers of collective action are emotions (Castells, 2015, p. 137), with humiliation motivating people to act at the time of the last wave of the emergence of progressive social movements. This was brought about by the "cynicism and arrogance of those in power, be it financial, political or cultural" (Castells, 2015, p. 2). The progressive social movements emerging at the time became "agents of social change" (Castells, 2015, p. 220; yet the impossibility of implementing their demands led their activists to institutionalisation. As Donatella della Porta et al. note, the movement parties resulting from them "represent movements' claims, by channelling their concerns in the institutions" (della Porta et al., 2017, p. 7).

Referring to theories on their origins, scholars note that "new parties are formed primarily to fill representational needs of the society" (Harmel, Robertson, 1985, p. 502), when "old parties have failed to absorb new issues into their agendas and programmes" (Müller-Rommel; cf. Sikk, 2011, p. 466). However, movement parties can be divided along the programmatic line: in the post-Second World War period, these kinds of actors firstly emerged on the left of the political spectrum. Such groupings represented new issues neglected by mainstream parties, such as protection of the environment, anti-war stances, or protection of civil rights (Vittori, 2024, pp. 27, 48). During the last wave of new movement parties, two new and essentially overlapping lines became apparent in the existing sociopolitical divisions. These were the divide between the winners and losers of the process of neoliberal globalisation and the associated split concerning the existing way of doing politics, into the proponents of the old style and the advocates of a new one entailing greater grassroots engagement (della Porta et al., 2017, pp. 31, 49; della Porta, 2020). Naturally, we can also find movement parties among radical-right groupings. These parties (such as the Independent Greeks (ANEL), the Hungarian Jobbik and the Italian CasaPound) share with progressive actors anti-establishment stances and contestation of the current state of representative democracy. However, they mostly try to mobilise their supporters using various resentments and by stirring up fears over migration (Pirro, Gattinara, 2018). As Chantal Mouffe states, the main difference between these two groups of movement parties "lies in the composition of the 'we' and in how the adversary, the 'they,' is defined" (Mouffe, 2018, p. 18). Their prescriptions for reviving representative democracy are also quite different.

Progressive movement parties want "to recover democracy to deepen and extend it" (Mouffe, 2018, p. 18), although their implementation of these aims is sometimes a disappointment. The ideas for reviving democracy put forward by radically right-wing groupings, meanwhile, are by nature regressive, and in reality would significantly restrict democracy, while excluding many categories of people (Mouffe, 2018, p. 18).

With these factors in mind, the analysis in the paper focuses only on new progressive movement parties. The main aim of the article is to analyse the genesis of new progressive movement parties and their organisational structure, focusing on the innovations they have introduced in this respect but also the challenges involved in the process of their institutionalisation. Furthermore, the article aims to shed light on the common progressive demands made in their programmes. The analysis is based on both secondary sources and party documents (above all statutes), newspaper interviews with party officials, and their public statements.

Movement parties and new movement parties: Waves of contestation and the parties' emergence

As Sidney Tarrow states, "There has long been a disciplinary divide between the study of social movements and the study of political parties. […] But many parties begin life as movements" (Tarrow, 2015, p. 93). According to Doug McAdam and Tarrow, the joining of social movements to electoral coalitions or their conversion into political parties is the most institutionalised and radical form of such movements' influence on the electoral process. McAdam and Tarrow highlight several other possible mechanisms of such influence, including "introduction of new forms of political action that influence election campaigns, engagement in pro- or reactive electoral mobilization, internally polarizations of political parties" (McAdam, Tarrow, 2010, p. 533). All the situations they identify may have a long-term impact on both the electoral and the party system. The most visible effect is undoubtedly the transformation of social movements into political parties – although, according to scholars, they are a hybrid of social movements and conventional parties. Herbert Kitschelt notes that "Movement parties are coalitions of political activists who emanate from social movements and try to apply organizational and strategic practices of social movements in the arena of party competition" (Kitschelt, 2006, p. 280). Donatella della Porta and Mario Diani, meanwhile, point to the fluidity of the boundaries between them: "under certain and specific conditions some political party may feel itself to be part of a movement and be recognized as such both by other actors in the movement and by the general public" (della Porta, Diani, 2020). According to Diani, however, such situations are the exception rather than the rule, concerning parties deriving from

social movements, such as green parties (Diani, 1992, p. 15). Moreover, social movements' decisions to enter the electoral arena mean that they become part of "two different systems of action (the party system and the social movement system), where they will play different roles" (della Porta, Diani, 2020).

In recent history, we can speak of several significant waves of the emergence of so-called movement parties, meaning groupings originating from contentious politics. The first wave resulted in workers' movements that became the basis for later social democratic parties. The dominant role in the next wave of social dissatisfaction in the 1980s was played by anti-nuclear movements (Poguntke, 1992, p. 239). Yet the basis of this unrest was not associated exclusively with criticism of arms programmes. It was also triggered by the crisis of traditional parties and the feeling, especially visible among young voters, of their detachment from society. In addition, though, it was caused by a crisis of society itself, manifested in decreasing importance of family ties and the loss of a certain social embeddedness of the individual in mass societies (Ignazi, 1996, p. 557). This wave of contestation gave rise to two radical groups of actors at opposite ends of the political spectrum. On the one hand, the young electorate of the left turned to post-material values – to so-called new politics, creating left-libertarian ecological groupings. A new party family was formed – so-called green parties (Poguntke, 1992). Meanwhile, the "traditional" right-wing electorate, feeling uncertainty as a result of social changes and the ongoing atomisation of society, turned towards authoritarian neoconservatism, resulting in the emergence of postindustrial extreme-right parties (Ignazi, 1996, pp. 557, 561).

Kitschelt highlights four important characteristics distinguishing the left-libertarian movement parties formed at the time: "they are horizontal in structure, with rotating leaders or spokespersons; the active participation of party members is highly valued; they stress their autonomy from the state and from other organizations; and they articulate new post-materialist issues (Kitschelt, 1990; cf. Prentoulis, Thomassen, 2020, pp. 346–347). It is worth emphasising here that the green parties formed during this wave of contestation are an extremely important point of reference and an inspiration for new movement parties, such as the Spanish Podemos or the Croatian platform Možemo!, building their structures or defining certain party procedures. It is also interesting, however, that the organisational innovations introduced by the greens (e.g., a shared leader position) were also adopted during intra-party reforms, first by various left-wing (both radical and mainstream) groupings, and subsequently also by right-wing ones (Weise, 2020).

In the Americas, we should also consider abolitionist movements (which strengthened the Republican Party at the time of the American Civil War) and, in contemporary times, indigenous people's movements, activists from which founded, for example, the Movement toward Socialism (MAS) in Bolivia in 2005, which supported Evo Morales, or, a year later, the Revolutionary and Democratic

Ethical Green Movement (MOVER), providing the political base for President Rafael Correa in Ecuador (Tarrow, 2015, p. 93; della Porta, 2020, p. 127).

Where the crisis hit hardest: The last wave of the emergence of movement parties

The last decade has seen a further wave of the emergence of movement parties, associated with two factors: the global financial crisis in 2008 and the austerity measures introduced at the time. These factors can be regarded as decisive in the formation of anti-austerity movements in Southern and Southeastern Europe (such as the Spanish 15-M Movement, whose name initially referred to the date of the first demonstration, later known as the Indignados Movement, the Greek Aganaktismenoi (Indignants), and the Slovenian 15O Movement, or Occupy Slovenia). The spread of these movements was "viral, following the logic of the Internet networks" (Castells, 2015, p. 252), and they played the role of "agents of change" (Castells, 2015, p. 262). Relevant movement parties later developed on their basis: Podemos in Spain, Syriza in Greece and Levica in Slovenia (Toplišek, Thomassen, 2017, p. 1389; Prentoulis, Thomassen, 2020, p. 349). The new movement parties appeared in those countries "where the crisis has been faster and where it more radically challenged everyday life" (della Porta et al., 2017, p. 19).

Although the origins of these groupings appear ostensibly similar or identical, they underwent somewhat different paths of institutionalisation during the transformation into parties. Syriza and Levica were formed as broad coalitions of parties and social movements, which partly operated even before the outbreak of the crisis and protests (Korsika, Mesec, 2014; della Porta et al., 2017, pp. 70–71; Vittori, 2022, p. 5). The Podemos platform, meanwhile, according to official information from its members, emerged from the 15-M Movement. Interestingly, although this movement was political from the outset, "for the transformation of pseudo-democracy into real democracy" (Castells, 2015, p. 126), initially it was highly resistant to any attempts to turn it into a party (Castells, 2015, p. 145). Podemos was formed when activists from the movement realised that "The logic of the 15-M movement led to exhaustion; it didn't achieve the effects desired by its committed activists, who hoped that the social could substitute for the institutional" (Iglesias, 2015, p. 12). Not all 15-M activists agreed with this interpretation, however; some even thought that Podemos was "betraying the core elements of '15mayismo'" (Calvo, 2020, p. 381).

Furthermore, although issues concerning the crisis and the austerity measures implemented by various governments indisputably proved to be a catalyst for the outbreak of protests and demands for change, their contestation had a much deeper political dimension. As della Porta et al. note: "[…] the geography

of the emergence of the economic crisis – quickly transformed into a crisis of political legitimacy – which hit the different European countries with different strengths and at different times" (della Porta et al., 2017, p. 33). Widespread criticism therefore ensued of the "neoliberal hegemony" (Mouffe, 2018, p. 33), the current state of representative democracy and national party scenes. The protesters particularly emphasised the weakness of left-wing groupings, with "What was in fact a capitulation to neoliberalism […] theorized […] as a 'third way', a form of politics […] presented as the most advanced conception of 'progressive politics'" (Mouffe, 2018, p. 33). They were also unable to admit their mistakes and the fact of the abandonment of "the main losers of neoliberal globalization" (Mouffe, 2018, p. 21). A further important charge generally levelled at mainstream parties was the claim that "they do not represent us", or nobody does – "Because if there is no real representation, there is no democracy" (Castells, 2015, p. 127). They frequently, such as Podemos, called for defence of "democracy which is 'robbed and kidnapped by the oligarch'" (della Porta, 2020, p. 122), calling the political elites of the time a "caste", in contrast to the demonstrators, who were "the people" (Calvo, 2020, p. 374). They therefore employed in the rivalry a new dimension of sociopolitical division based on "anti-establishment division" and contrasting the old style of doing politics (which they contested as cynical) with the new one, whose aim was to reconstruct the existing democratic institutions through greater engagement of citizens (della Porta et al., 2017, p. 49).

The combination of radical political demands (renewal of the democratic order) with fierce opposition to political and economic elites and criticism of the implementation of austerity measures resulted in several classifications of the groupings being made in the literature. Some scholars, emphasising the aspect of their contestation and underscoring the dichotomous division into elite and ordinary citizens, classified them as populist left groups, and even populist radical left parties (Katsambekis, Kioupkolis, 2019, pp. 1–2) – although in this case not everybody treated populism as a negative and stigmatising label. Chantal Mouffe even noted that "Left populism […] wants to recover democracy to deepen and extend it" (Mouffe, 2018, p. 24). The emergence of a new type of radical parties, such as Podemos or Syriza ("establishing a synergy between social movements and party politics"), meanwhile, should be treated as a "challenge [to] neoliberal hegemony through parliamentary politics" (Mouffe, 2018, p. 20). According to Mouffe, the protests preceding the creation of these groupings showed the weakness of traditional "social-democratic parties, who in many countries have played an important role in the implementation of neoliberal policies" (Mouffe, 2018, p. 21), and were "the signal of a political awakening" (Mouffe, 2018, p. 19). Indeed, this "awakening" is a frequently used metaphor in the statements of members of various social movements (Castells, 2015; Poguntke, 1992).

However, it was not only the almost universal turn of the left towards neo-liberal politics that lay behind the formation of new groupings, but also general disillusionment with mainstream political parties. Della Porta shows that, in 2013, lack of trust in political parties was at a record level of 94% in Spain, 95% in Greece, and "only" 87% in Italy (della Porta, 2020, p. 105). In Slovenia, the lack of trust in political parties was lowest in 2013–2014. In 2014, distrust was at a record level for the country, at 79.3%. At the same time, just 2.3% of citizens trusted parties (Malčič, Krašovec, 2019, p. 127), compared to a figure of 1% the previous year (Krašovec, Haughton, 2014, p. 50). In other countries, while frustration with parties did not reach such a high level, it also deepened clearly and consistently. To this we should add the fact that the dominant party model in this period became groupings that della Porta calls neoliberal populist parties – "less and less ideological" (della Porta, Fernández et al., 2017, p. 15), "organizationally light, heavily personalized, split into non-ideological factions, characterized by heavily manipulative use of mass media but also by power rooted in the occupation of institutional positions, often used for clientelistic or corrupt exchanges (della Porta, 2020, p. 101). Only the accumulation of these factors, often combined with prominent corruption scandals among the current elites, led to the "opening of windows of political opportunity" and put wind in the sails of more idealistic (at least by design) attempts at political activism (Mosca, Quaranta, 2017, p. 3; della Porta, 2020, p. 105). This was activism which ultimately, and paradoxically, saw the remedy for mistrust in old political parties, as being the creation of new ones, albeit organisationally and programmatically distinct from mainstream groupings that were closer to progressive social movements – so-called movement parties.

A second group of scholars, considering particularly the anti-establishment nature of the demands made by the groupings, classified them as anti-establishment or challenger parties. As well as the groupings already mentioned, these classifications often also included the Italian Five Star Movement, founded by the comedian Beppe Grillo (Vittori, 2024, p. 2).

Last but not least, a third group of scholars highlighted the origins and certain distinguishing organisational aspects of these groupings, which was what led to their classification as movement parties. They also sought to clarify this name, hence the expression "anti-austerity movement parties", emphasising their programmes and the circumstances of their foundation. Vittori speaks of "new" movement parties, noting that they "extensively use bottom-up and direct democratic tools to involve members, thus expanding internal party democracy" (Vittori, 2022, p. 12). Later, however, he was rather sceptical about whether this objective had in fact been realised. Meanwhile, in his analysis of the operation of Podemos, Kerman Calvo defined one further type, "strategic movement parties" as a certain "limited version of a movement party" (Calvo, 2020, p. 378). These are, he argues, "political parties that appeal to a strong link with pre-existing

grassroots mobilizations in terms of claims-making, organization, framing, and actions repertoires. This link, however, serves only as a political and heuristic resource. The goal in doing so is to avoid the comparison with traditional political parties, which are invariably presented as unresponsive to societal interests" (Calvo, 2020, p. 373). Two issues undoubtedly connect the groupings formed at this time. Firstly, to quote Pablo Iglesias, the secretary-general and de facto leader of Podemos, referring to the relationship between the 15-Movement and PSOE (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party), the main party of the Spanish left, the progressive social movements from which they derived or on whose basis new movement parties emerged "held up a mirror to the left, revealing its deficiencies" (Iglesias, 2015, p. 12). "We saw ourselves as a force of renewal" (Iglesias, 2015, p. 15), Iglesias continues, explaining that the objective of creating new groupings was "[…] to aggregate the new demands generated by the crisis around a mediatic leadership, capable of dichotomizing the political space" (Iglesias, 2015, p. 14).

On the other hand, according to della Porta, "contemporary movement parties on the Left reflect an evolution in the organizational structures, identity frames and repertoires of action of progressive social movements" (della Porta, 2020, p. 103). One proposal in this respect was to open up the decision-making process in parties (Iglesias, 2015), including rank-and-file party members and even supporters in decisions. After all, membership is not defined strictly in all movement parties. Kitschelt even notes that "They make little investment in a formal organizational party structure. Movement parties may have no formal definition of membership role. Anyone who comes to a meeting or activity of the party is considered a 'member' in the sense of entitlement to participation (and voting on motions, where it is called for)" (Kitschelt, 2006, p. 280). Yet such an open structure also poses certain problems and challenges.

An interesting group of progressive movement parties has also emerged in the last few years in the post-Yugoslav states – more specifically Croatia (Možemo! – politička platforma (We Can! – Political Platform)) and Serbia (the We Must! coalition, which became the Green-Left Front party in 2023). Both groupings can be classified as new-left green movement parties. They stemmed from urban movements, initially with a limited, local scope and operating in the countries' capitals (Zagreb Is Ours in Croatia and Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own in Serbia), contesting the neoliberal devastation of the local environment. In Zagreb's case, the urban movements protested against the controversial Floral Square project being implemented by an equally controversial local businessman. In Serbia, meanwhile, it was the Belgrade Waterfront investment, backed by the prime minister and later president Aleksandar Vučić, that was the bone of contention. More broadly, however, the two groupings had in common a deep conviction about the crisis of legitimacy of mainstream parties and the cynicism of centre-right politicians in power in their countries (the Croatian Democratic

Union – HDZ and the Serbian Progressive Party – SNS), but also the profound crisis of the domestic left (the SDP in Croatia and the Democratic Party – DS in Serbia), to which they aimed to be the answer. Their activists often cited the neoliberal actions of previous left-wing governments, such as the labour law adopted under the rule of the social democrats in Croatia, which significantly reduced employee rights (Bajruši, 2021, p. 132).

An interesting phenomenon among the new generation of movement parties is the fact that, owing to their criticism of mainstream groupings and a desire to stand out from them, despite registering as parties in a formal sense, they consistently avoid this term in their names, but also public statements. Asked about the question of being a party, Pablo Iglesias, Podemos secretary-general, classified the grouping as a "movement for political renewal" (della Porta, 2020, p. 122). In the early period of its operation, he would call it a "tool for popular and civic unity" (della Porta, 2020, p. 109) or the "principal political expression of the 15M" (Iglesias, 2015; cf. della Porta, 2020, p. 123). Activists from Možemo! in Croatia, meanwhile, often emphasised that the idea of seeking a "broader" operating format, formally disassociated from being a party (as an idea strongly deprecated by mainstream parties), was to encourage the activity of people close to left-wing ideology or green policies but who rejected the possibility of party membership, even at local level (Lukić, 2017; Bajruši, 2021, p. 85). Hence their use of the term "platform", which even at a linguistic level was associated with greater openness. Furthermore, although some new movement parties also position themselves on the axis of the old left–right divisions, such as the Slovenian Levica or Croatian Možemo!, others, such as Podemos initially or, consistently, the Five Star Movement, avoid such unequivocal declarations.

Despite a kind of affirmation of the anti-party stance, many of the leaders or top politicians of the new progressive movement parties and the people seen as their ideologues work as university professors and belong to the national academic elites, such as the economist Yannis Varoufakis, associated with Syriza, or the political scientists Pablo Iglesias from Podemos and Danijela Dolenec from Možemo! These are just a few examples from a much longer list. The individuals in question boast extensive knowledge and political awareness, and their criticism of the current state of democracy and democratic institutions has firm theoretical foundations. At the same time, their proposals for addressing these problems, while often regarded as idealistic and difficult to implement, are not purely demagogic. Of course, the presence of academics is also not surprising in other groupings, but two questions are interesting in this case. Firstly, movement parties enter the party scene in times of profound and multifaceted crises, to which they offer solutions. Secondly, researchers of these groupings, as well as the aforementioned politicians, often perceive their role by referring to Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony. In their activities, they therefore combine an understanding of social moods with intellectual engagement, which is the key

to human agency in the process of social change. Indeed, it is the task of social movements to enrich the language, and thereby also to expand the political imagination and social experience (Briziarelli, 2016, p. 301). Without this, no radical social or political change is possible.

We will survive... Organisational and adaptational challenges

Movement parties can be called a product of social dissatisfaction and contestation politics. It is therefore not surprising that a certain challenge in their operation and building of organisational structures is the so-called "radical flank effect" described in the subject literature, meaning an internal division into moderate and radical factions. The explanation for this division can be found in the origins of these groupings, which are usually based on several heterogeneous communities. As a result, although their activists generally have a common goal, they differ when it comes to the tactics for achieving it (Tarrow, 2015, p. 93). This is a good illustration of the post-election dilemma of movement parties in general, but also the progressive movement parties formed in the last wave of contestation, which quite quickly achieved good election results and faced the dilemma of whether to enter a coalition government (at local or national level), which always means making certain concessions. The question is whether to emphasise maintaining their credibility and pursue a non-institutional policy so as not to lose the "'outsider' advantage", as Iglesias vividly put it (Iglesias, 2015, p. 22). The trajectories of development and the problems encountered by the new progressive movement parties analysed in the article also show a large convergence with the operation of this type of groupings formed in the previous wave of contestation, i.e. mostly green parties. It therefore makes sense to cite research on them. Thomas Poguntke's previous research on green parties showed that the internal factionalisation of movement parties that were in any case fundamentally factionalised was increased by entering government, as well as leading to splits. Moreover, owing to the level of their electoral support they tend to enter the government as a junior partner, resulting in the need for significant concessions (Poguntke, 2002). Additionally, they frequently create coalition governments with mainstream left-wing groupings, which they previously criticised strongly for their lack of ideology or lack of leftist thinking. This was the case with the German Greens – who entered government with the SPD led by Gerhard Schröder, then advocating a third-way policy – or the Spanish Podemos, which formed a coalition government with the PSOE.

It is worth noting that, although numerous studies have shown a greater political awareness among supporters and voters of green parties, this has not resulted in increased involvement in their operation (Poguntke, 1992, pp.

247–249). Indeed, the German Green Party has even been referred to as "a party of non-partisans" (Poguntke, 1992, p. 248) – despite having greater opportunities for influencing the formation of party policy or decision making than in traditional parties. However, activists have tended to be passive. Yet the fact that green parties emerged from contentious politics meant that, following their entrance to political institutions, their supporters were more involved in various unconventional political activities than the voters of more traditional groupings, such as protests, street blockades and occupation of public space. And it is a similar story with the movement parties formed during the last wave of contestation (Castells, 2015, p. 137; della Porta, 2020; Bajruši, 2021, p. 141). The actions of activists from the Croatian Možemo! provide a good example. In May 2020, they spent a night occupying the square in front of the parliament building in Zagreb to force the government to adopt the plan for rebuilding of the capital following the earthquake of a few weeks earlier before the pre-election dissolution of parliament. They employed a similar form of protest in February 2024 against the appointment of the controversial judge Ivan Turudić as prosecutor general. Danijela Dolenec, a Croatian political scientist and one of the platform's founders, often cites in this context the principle affirmed by Spanish progressive social movements (and borrowed from green parties) that they would operate "with one foot on the street and the other in political institutions" (Lukić, 2017; Bajruši, 2021, p. 76). They thus emphasise that certain goals can be achieved solely through engagement in institutionalised politics. Yet entry to institutions is also linked to costs, conscious or otherwise, as demonstrated well previously by the trajectories of development of green parties. By entering institutions, movement parties seek to change them from within (Bajruši, 2021, p. 144), but simultaneously institutions change parties, for example by gradually bringing about the deradicalisation of their demands.

What also sets movement parties apart from traditional groupings is their desire to preserve an image of political outsiders. The purpose of this is not only to express a certain lifestyle or promoted values, but also a more utilitarian maintaining of ties with their often antipolitical or anti-establishment electorate. Movement party activists often resort to unconventional behaviours or styles of dress. Della Porta notes that Podemos MPs "challenged the existing rules by refusing to use official government cars; substituting suits, ties, leather bags and traditional hairstyles with jeans, backpacks, dreadlocks and T-shirts with printed political messages" (della Porta, 2020, pp. 115–116). In Croatia, the trainers or Converse pumps worn by Možemo! politicians, including Zagreb mayor Tomislav Tomašević and also at official events, were particularly controversial (Mitrović, 2021).

The internal structure of new progressive movement parties and its organisational innovations

A factor that undoubtedly links new progressive parties is their imitation of certain organisational solutions or methods of political activity previously introduced by green parties. This is despite the interesting fact, noted by della Porta et al. (2017, p. 181), that new progressive movement parties are stronger in countries in which green parties did not previous achieve significant results. However, the new progressive movement parties engage in a certain specific form of political transfer by modelling themselves on the earlier ideas of green parties, which we can classify as "transfer[s] through inspirations as probably the most significant form of internal influence" on domestic groupings (Zaborowski, 2005, p. 30). These include resting on a more horizontal organisational structure, placing greater emphasis on the activation of members, or emphasis on "autonomy from the state and from other organizations (Prentoulis, Thomassen, 2020, p. 347), but also the principle of collective or rotating leadership and restrictions on how long a person can hold office within party structures – which in practice has proved difficult to implement (Poguntke, 1992, p. 242). On the other hand, as shown by the example of the German Greens, rigid adherence to the rule of limited terms regarding the possibility of running for parliamentary seats representing the party often initially entailed one more latent danger. This, as Poguntke puts it, was that "rotation may lead to the situation where functional oligarchies replace democratically legitimized power centres" (Poguntke, 1992, p. 243). This was because the rotation of MPs meant a growing role for assistants, who were not bound by this rule. As it later turned out, a further major challenge in the process of institutionalisation of party movements has been maintaining a horizontal structure or collective leadership. As Poguntke notes (2002), the greatest test for movement parties is in fact entering government, when, on the one hand, "they quickly realise that their 'reaction time' has been drastically reduced and they need more centralised leadership structure". On the other hand, however, "To a greater or lesser extent, all parties share the somewhat sobering experience that whatever was left or grass-roots democracy was hard to sustain under pressures of participation in national government" (Poguntke, 2002). A recent good example of this has been provided by Podemos.

A new proposal linking movement parties and borrowed from progressive social movements was the introduction of a salary cap and restriction of privileges for politicians (Castells, 2015, p. 139). The limit proposed by Podemos was three times the minimum wage. Surpluses were to be directed to party funding, but also directly to social causes. The party's funding model was also distinguished from other groupings by the fact that it sometimes used crowdfunding, which partly financed its election campaigns (della Porta, 2020, p. 114). It

is therefore evident that the parties not only adopted solutions transferred from their predecessors in the previous wave (green parties), but also exchanged ideas with other movements emerging during the last (for the time being) wave of contestation. Indeed, they make no secret of the fact that cooperation provides an important source of inspiration and transfers – in terms of both organisation and political programmes (Lukić, 2017; della Porta, 2020, p. 109; Bajruši, 2021).

Movement parties share another proposal also deriving from green movements: entrenching grassroots democracy to be based on two foundations: decentralisation (ensuring maximum autonomy to each level of the party organisation) and civic oversight of party politicians in the parliament and government (Poguntke, 1992, pp. 240–241). The biggest organisational challenge posed by this decentralisation, covered at length in the subject literature, is finding a balance between the horizontality characteristic of social movements and the vertical nature of traditional political party structures. Horizontality ensures inclusive participation of the widest possible range of members of a given grouping and corresponds to the generally accepted rule of social movements – "the self-government of the movement by the people in the movement […] at the same time an organizational procedure and a political goal" (Castells, 2015, p. 253). A vertical approach, meanwhile, is characteristic rather of typical hierarchical party structures emphasising efficiency. In contrast to right-wing movements or groupings, which are said to be "impatient with procedures […], aiming rather at reducing checks and balances" (della Porta, 2020, p. 154), new progressive movement parties have always emphasised greater deliberation. To achieve this, they promote "hybrid organizational models, blending innovative and traditional characteristics (della Porta, 2021, p. 1354). Yet the degree to which these solutions are combined varies significantly – it is much greater in Podemos or the Five Star Movement, for instance, than in Syriza, which in fact had an identical structure to traditional parties (della Porta et al., 2017, p. 93).

An interesting example of organisational and structural innovation is the structure of the Spanish Podemos, which combines a "grassroots participatory structure and personalized style of decision-making" (della Porta, 2021, p. 1355). The party is organised in "circles" by territory and subject area, inspired by the circles introduced by Venezuelan "Bolivarians" (Lisi, 2019, p. 253). This can therefore be regarded as a kind of organisational policy transfer. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the same structure was also later adopted by the Croatian Možemo! party (see: Articles 11 and 45 of the Možemo! statute). According to the Podemos statute, these circles comprise a "tool that can promote participation, debate and active linkages with society, including social movements" (articles 6 and 56 of the Organisational Principles of Podemos; cf. della Porta, 2020, p. 111). Party membership is not required for participation in the circles. In practice, it soon turned out that they play only a marginal role in the party's organisational life (Calvo, 2020, p. 381), focusing mostly on local

problems or irrelevant policies (Lisi, 2019, p. 254). Additionally, as Marco Lisi notes, "the functioning of the party on the ground through the 'circles' has revealed some limitations in Podemos' capacity of representation and mobilization". This is because many are "zombie circles", meaning that they are inactive (Lisi, 2019, p. 254).

Formalised membership is essential, however (an online declaration suffices, as Podemos does not require its members to pay fees) (Calvo, 2020, p. 381), to take part in party primary elections or adoption of the party programme – but not in the debate on it. Yet this open structure has drawbacks, such as the problem of the identification of the party's unregistered supporters identifying with the grouping – sometimes they feel part of it, and at other times not (della Porta et al., 2017, p. 79; 2020, p. 111). Problems are also caused by overlapping memberships, with some activists also being active members of social movements or smaller groupings within movement parties. Such dilemmas were highlighted by activists from the local Croatian grouping Zagreb Is Ours in the process of its incorporation into the structures of the Možemo! platform, when not all activists of the local Zagreb movement decided to formalise membership in the nationwide platform (Penić, 2023).

In order to increase and deepen supporter engagement, movement parties adopt certain innovative practices, such as using social media and democratic digital innovations (DDIs) (Meloni, Lupato, 2022, p. 254). In fact, some scholars focus only on this technological aspect of their operation and use of the internet, even calling them digital parties (Gerbaudo, 2019). The digitisation trend is by no means confined to new groupings. Indeed, the process is described in relation to mainstream, more established groupings as "migration of parties into the digital sphere" (Fitzpatrick, 2020, p. 24; Sandro, Lupato, Meloni et al., 2024). However, research reveals stark differences in the use of DDIs. For mainstream parties, based on strong vertical organisational structures, going with the Zeitgeist and using digitised forms of mobilisation or social media to attract new supporters has been an additional, secondary activity. Furthermore, as Marco Lisi notes with regard to Spanish groupings, previously mainstream parties did not make such large-scale or successful use of them as new movement parties (Lisi, 2019, p. 252). Basing new groupings largely on digital communications and mobilisation tools also, of course, had its consequences. It made it difficult to build organisational structures based on "reasonable territorial penetration", particularly as this process was often restricted in terms of time by looming elections, making it impossible "to create a basic party structure from scratch" (Lisi, 2019, p. 252). In principle, however, their use was designed to build a new model of participation, and thus also a new model of party, labelled, among others, as a digital party (Gerbaudo, 2019) or "post-modern" party (Lisi, 2019, p. 258).

In Podemos's case, not only were they active on social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, from the outset (before the elections to the European

Parliament in 2014 the grouping had 610,000 and 200,000 followers respectively on these platforms (della Porta, 2020, p. 109)), but they also promoted their own tools such as Plaza Podemos and Appgree, whose objective was to give members and allies of the grouping a forum for discussion and increase their influence on intra-party decisions. Appgree, for example, was used for mobilisation before protests, but also to conduct quick surveys on issues not requiring the approval of the Citizen Assembly (the body bringing together all registered members), such as creating electoral coalitions (at both local and national level) (Lisi, 2019, p. 253; della Porta, 2020). It soon turned out, however, that activists often do not make decisions so much as ratify those taken previously by a small group of party elites. As Paolo Gerbaudo notes (2019, pp. 189–190), referendums within parties usually employ a so-called "dilemma referendum" strategy, meaning "Yes/no votes on highly divisive and symbolic issues". Therefore, "digital platforms may favour participation, but they are not intrinsically democratic" (della Porta et al., 2017, p. 83). César Rendueles and Jorge Sola analyse the use of such solutions in Podemos, going as far as to argue that "Behind the participatory and inclusive rhetoric, a hierarchical organization and unfriendly political culture have been created. Its future effects are not very promising in the democratizating terms of the project championed by Podemos" (Rendueles, Sola, 2018, p. 44). In turn, Marco Lisi points out that that Podemos's organisational structure from the outset was based on "an odd mixture of direct democracy (especially at the local level) and a plebiscitary leadership" (Lisi, 2019, p. 259). It is also worth adding that Podemos ultimately abandoned the use of some of the aforementioned DDIs, such as the Plaza Podemos app (Meloni, Lupato, 2022, p. 274).

Indeed, similar criticisms have been levelled concerning parties' practice of using primary elections to select their candidates in local and national votes (Gerbaudo, 2019, p. 151). As early as 2015, the candidate selection process employed by Podemos before the parliamentary election showed a clash of opposing trends: decentralising (supported by local activists) and centralising, plebiscite-based (supported by the party leadership). Ultimately, the leadership decided to reject the proposals put forward by regional and provincial activists, centralising and taking control of the candidate selection process (Lisi, 2019, p. 254), despite its previous criticism of mainstream groupings for such actions.

Furthermore, the activists of progressive movement parties have often alleged that, while pro-deliberation consultation tools are often used at the stage when the party is institutionalising and competing for seats in local and national elections, there is significantly less interest in members' views after they accomplish this objective (Stubbs, 2021). Such allegations were also made of the Možemo platform after it came to power in the capital (Stubbs, 2021), but also of Podemos, which abandoned consultations after the PSOE's election win in January 2020, despite significant conflicts within the coalition (Meloni, Lupato, 2022, p. 265).

Scholars discern one more trap in the possibilities offered by networking if it takes place at the cost of the creation of local structures (Gerbaudo, 2019, p. 188). This is important because previous research on new parties' chances for survival has shown that failure to emphasise the importance of creating local organisational structures significantly weakens these prospects. The weakness of the party organisation makes it more difficult for it to survive the shock caused by electoral defeat or party splits (Beyens, Lucardie, Deschouwer, 2016, p. 270). It is also worth noting an interesting strategy for getting around this problem used by some new movement parties, which enter a kind of coalition marriage of convenience with previously existing small niche groupings with access to certain local structures. Good examples are Syriza, Podemos, or the Slovenian Levica. In each case, these niche groupings (such as the Spanish Anti-Capitalist Left) offered the chance to make use of the infrastructure necessary for a party to operate, while movement parties could benefit from recognisable leaders enjoying momentary popularity (Lisi, 2019, p. 252). Consequently, each of the actors had access to the resources they were lacking.

New visions of social development

Of course, inter-party transfers are not limited to borrowing organisational ideas. Concerning the proposals made in their programmes or further visions for social development, which are indeed adopted from progressive social movements, we can certainly mention the "proactive vision of progressive transformations of the welfare system towards conceptions and practices of the commons" (della Porta et al., 2017, p. 107; 2021, p. 1354). This means that some refer outright, and others only indirectly to the broad left-wing concept of degrowth. Manuel Castells, studying the Indignados Movement in Spain, noted that its supporters were fiercely critical of capitalism per se, saying "This is not a crisis, it is the system", with many of the members of the movement opposed to the very idea of growth for the sake of growth, raising environmental concerns, while "the opposition to a consumption-driven society was running deep" (Castells, 2015, p. 126). They stressed that the most important mental change is the transition to a "non-productivist logic" (Castells, 2015, p. 147). And although they had no idea how to topple capitalism, they had an idea for a certain alternative economic culture. This was manifested in "everyday life practices that emphasize the use value of life over commercial value and engage in self-production, cooperativism, barter networks, social currency, ethical banking and networks of reciprocal solidarity" (Castells, 2015, p. 130). All the indicators identified by Castells, and also highlighted by other scholars (della Porta et al., 2017; 2020), are part of the broad social concept of degrowth (Demaria et al., 2013; D'Alisa, Demaria, Kallis, 2016), also reflected in the programmes of progressive movement

parties. Looking at the previous historical, political and social experiences of the countries of the parties cited in the article, an important and interesting field of further research should be an attempt to study the impact on their current actions and demands of the community practices functioning in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia as part of "experimenting with socialist self-management" (*samoupravljanje*) (Domazet, Dolenec, 2016, p. XIX).

In terms of their programmes, the parties are not limited to domestic issues. An important demand they share, except for the more Eurosceptic Syriza (della Porta et al., 2017, p. 120; della Porta, 2020, p. 121), is for greater openness and democracy in the functioning of European Union institutions. Indeed, this was an important tenet for the Greens in Germany, for example, who, early on, despite generally accepting the idea of integration, also criticised its "undemocratic and elitist model" (Trzcielińska-Polus, Zuba, 2015, p. 21). More recently, similar allegations concerning the democratic deficit of the integration project have been made by Podemos, the Slovenian Levica and the Croatian Možemo!

Conclusion

To quote Castells's words on the 15-M Movement, we could say that the new progressive movement parties are "not a surrogate for an old left always looking to find fresh support for its unreconstructed view of the world" (Castells, 2013, p. 186), but rather a tool of the renewal of old-fashioned leftist thinking. They call for the essential transformation of political parties themselves, but also demand radical change and replacement of the previous model of democracy with a more open and representative form.

These parties can be regarded as a product of crisis, but also as kind of cure and an attempt to respond to it. The economic crisis, which quickly evolved into a crisis of political legitimacy in combination with certain local circumstances and the process of rapid transformation of channels of mass communication, opened a window of political opportunities to them, giving them the chance to operate on domestic stages. For some, this prospect was provided by European parliamentary elections, while for others it was offered by regional ones, usually treated by voters as second-class elections, but enabling the new groupings to make a name for themselves and carve out a position on the party scene. On the other hand, their emergence was seen as a chance for renewal, especially in a left riven by identity crises, which accepted and sometimes even openly endorsed neoliberal policies pursued at the cost of its traditional electorate. However, the appearance of new movement parties offered a hope that another style and quality of politics was possible. Della Porta vividly called even progressive social movements and the new progressive left-wing groupings emerging from them incubators of new democratic practices (della Porta, 2020, p. 156).

Movement parties are often called utopian or (labelled) populist owing to their calls for greater participation (in party and national politics), offering hope that a change in the existing way of doing politics is possible. Of course, critics accuse them of utopian demands, in terms of both organisation and programmes. Over time, the practice of their operation also often proves a disappointment, with the solutions they implement to increase engagement of members or supporters being excessively superficial. This in turn has resulted in recent years in a decline in their support at elections. It is important to note, however, that a social or political change requires above all a change in the way of thinking, for which time is needed. One of the main slogans of the Spanish 15-M Movement, later also adopted by other progressive movement parties (e.g., the Croatian Možemo!), proclaimed "We are slow because we go far" (Castells, 2015, p. 147; Lukić, 2017; Bajruši, 2021, p. 77). Not all idealistic aims can be implemented immediately, because both movement parties themselves and their supporters are a product of the circumstances and societies they live in. Certain associated patterns of thinking are thus also inevitable, even if they contest them. But this does not mean that idealistic demands should be abandoned. As Oscar Wilde aptly put it, "A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at" (Wilde, 2019). Despite early hiccups in the implementation of such plans, idealism, or a certain utopianism in social sciences and thinking about formation of political institutions, remains important as in the longer term it can result in overcoming certain formulaic models of thought, and may ultimately lead to social change.

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