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Social Movement Studies for East Central Europe?
The Challenge of a Time-Space Bias on Postwar
Western Societies

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Abstract¹

The paper claims that through its genealogy, Social Movement Studies (SMS) as a discipline incorporated a time-space bias on postwar Western affluent societies which defined the way it conceived of movements and their socio-institutional contexts. Two interrelated effects of that bias were the assumption that material claims belong to the past, and a focus on short-term contextual factors in movement dynamics. As a new wave of movements after 2008 raise material claims in Western contexts again, earlier frameworks of SMS are being transformed so as to capture the relationship of movements to long-term structural processes. However, a newly forming consensus that links new movements to the “crisis of democratic capitalism” seems to maintain the bias on Western experience. East Central European (ECE) countries, where austerity and democratization came hand in hand after 1990, hardly fit that picture. The paper asks whether new transformations within SMS, and an increased attention toward ECE movements due to their new proliferation provides a possibility for comparative perspectives beyond the time-space bias. It identifies a tendency in SMS of post-socialism to translate the time-space bias of SMS frameworks into a normative framework of development toward Western models (or lack thereof), which worked to obscure the long-term history of movements in ECE, as well as forms of popular politics and state-society relations different from Western models. The paper proposes a world-systems approach to the task of comparative understanding of movements in different contexts, and illustrates its possible gains through the conceptualization of new middle class movements in ECE.

Keywords: Social movements, Social movement studies, East Central Europe, Global, New middle class movements

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“It is to Mayer Zaldts credit, not his blame, that his creative lifetime of writing on social movements drives us back to fundamental questions of democratic theory.”

Charles Tilly
(Tilly, 1999: 6)

In the light of new movements after 2008, some notions of Social Movements Research (SMS) have come under reconsideration. In the form of a theoretical essay on that ongoing transformation, the paper asks how a new interest in East Central European (ECE) social movements may benefit from, and be part of that transformation of SMS frameworks. It argues that throughout its solidification as a discipline, SMS incorporated a time-space bias on the postwar development of Western affluent societies, excluding a broader perspective on long-term global historical developments – a bias which defined the way it conceived of state-society relations, politics, popular participation, and social movements.² One of the main assumptions, based on the Western postwar experience, was that social movements are less linked to material conditions than “old” movements and their theories assumed. SMS came to focus on the immediate contexts and dynamics of movement development, and leave aside long-term structural patterns. New movements’ material claims today bring back the question of long-term structural processes into SMS questioning. Looking at new movements in ECE, however, a contextual bridging of Western and Eastern European long-term processes seems to be necessary. While previous research on ECE social movements tended to incorporate the time-space bias of SMS, and treat movements as either signs of catching up with the postwar Western model of development, or a lack thereof, the paper proposes a world-systems framework to make sense of the actual simultaneous relationship between Eastern and Western European developments. It illustrates the perspective provided by that framework through a conceptualization of the specificities of new middle class movements in ECE vis-à-vis contemporary Western ones.

A time-space bias in the genealogy of SMS

SMS has been codified and institutionalized as a relatively late branch in the history of modern Western social sciences. As Cox and Flesher Fominaya underline, the making of SMS as a discipline has been codified since in a story of origin, ritually repeated in SMS texts (Cox and Flesher Fominaya, 2013). This story served to solidify SMS as a coherent field, despite the diversity of disciplinary backgrounds in addressing the movement phenomenon.

In the narrative of that origin story, the birth of SMS as a systematic field of social scientific study is linked to the abolition of the psychology-based theories of collective behavior or “mass society” in the 1960’s (Le Bon, 1897, Smelser, 1963, Blumer, 1969), and, influenced by the inflow to university departments of young

² For a treatment of the effects of such a time-space bias on the understanding of labor movement dynamics, see Arrighi and Silver, 1984.

academics involved in, or sympathetic to the 1968 movement wave, the reconceptualization of movements as structural, rational and organizational elements of democratic politics, worthy of systematic study (Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta, 2001). The main steps of disciplinary evolution then, are conventionally identified in the subsequent formulations of Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT, McCarthy and Zald, 1977), political opportunity and political process theory (Eisinger, 1973, Tarrow, Meyer, McAdam), the introduction of cultural/symbolic elements as well as an emphasis on the self-constitutive nature of movements (Snow et al., 1986), and the formulation of the synthetic approach of dynamics of contention, partly in answer to criticisms to political process theory (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, 2001).

To this mostly US-centered narrative, the element of European New Social Movement (NSM) theory is conventionally added. With the 1968 movement wave, European scholarship faced a surge of interest toward social movements by engaged or sympathetic academics similar to that in the US. Here, in a somewhat more organic connection to earlier critical theories due to historical reasons, researchers such as Frank Parkin (1968), Alain Touraine (1981), Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985) formulated an understanding of their contemporary social movements as different from “old” (labor) movements. Contrary to the latter, new social movements were understood as organized around immaterial, cultural and identity values. In assessing that difference, NSM relied on theories of a new, affluent middle class society, especially on the postmaterialism thesis of Ronald Inglehart (1977). Through its focus on immaterial, symbolic elements, NSM put a high emphasis on the self-constitutive nature of movements – something that was strongly linked to the ideas of communicative democratic organization in the line of late Frankfurt School theorist Jürgen Habermas, or of discursive theories such as in Michel Foucault.

As Hetland and Goodwin (2013) note, both the US and European originating moments of SMS were characterized by a key gesture of turning away from long-term historical and economic factors, and emphasizing instead the mechanisms of internal movement constitution, and its short-term, primarily political, context. This move, in both cases, was based on the insight that economic deprivation or class position alone does not cause movements. That insight allowed scholars to exclude long-term historical and economic factors from their main field of questioning. To determine when movements emerge, both the US SMS branch started by RMT, and the European stream of NSM, turned to the internal dynamics of movement construction, and its immediate interaction with its context. This approach made it possible for a specific methodological toolkit to be forged to address specifically the immediate dynamics of movement constitution in various contexts. In McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly’s canonic synthesis, the study of these dynamics was defined as the main object of SMS or “contention” research.

While the positive aspect of that genealogy of SMS is that it allowed for a distinct area of knowledge production on a specific object to be forged, one of its drawbacks may be that disciplinary debates on conceiving the object and its context in societal organization remained in the background. Contemplating the promises of a new wave of SMS attention toward Eastern Europe, one significant consequence of that limitation seems to be an unreflected time-space bias on Western modern societies which may lead to faulty generalizations. Besides general problems such as

defining the state, polity, democracy, civil society or the middle class in non-Western societies, that bias is present in the SMS origin story and its theoretical projections.

In both US and European contexts, the separation of the systematic study of social movements from long-term historical and economic causation happened in an era when, exactly and only in these two locations, the affluence of post-war Western societies made it possible for the first time in history for entire populations to participate in material welfare. It also created a so far unseen growth of US and European middle classes – a basis for their paradigmatic participation in non-material movements in 1968, the inspirational moment of both US and European SMS scholarship.

This context of affluence, and consequently, the relative lack of material focus in social movements, can hardly be generalized throughout space or time. Non-core countries faced lack of affluence and greater levels of social contention over material issues during the same period. Even within European movements, paradigmatic accounts of non-materialist middle class movements tend to obscure the strength of spontaneous strikes within the European Fordist industry throughout the late 1960's and early 1970's, which virtually repeated the effect of 1930-1940's strikes in the US, carving out strong labor rights, and putting a burden on the profitability of capital, which led to cost-cutting efforts from the late 1970's on (Silver, 2003). In the origin story of SMS, long-term historical and economic causation appears as something of the past – both in the sense of past theories (of deprivation or class struggle) already surpassed, and in the sense of “new” movements themselves not being any more centered on material issues. This timeline, too, has been harshly overturned by the raise of a new movement cycle, which, in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, voices explicitly material requests in Western countries as well as elsewhere.

The transformation of SMS in the face of new movements

In response to the new cycle of mobilizations along material issues, today the field of SMS is going through significant transformation both in its academic structure and its content. In terms of internal academic structure of SMS, the new movement cycle brought a change comparable to that of the 1968 wave. Throughout the last few years, SMS has been expanding manifestly, under the influx of a new generation of scholars engaged and sympathetic to new movements. In the aftermath of the 2008 crisis, the social groups of protesters threatened by precarization and (especially young) academic researchers threatened by precarization increasingly overlap. Similar to earlier moments when academic and movement interests overlapped, movements against academic precarity and higher education austerity reforms become part of the movement spectrum, while academic forums of SMS open themselves toward activists as audience and discussion partners (Cox and Fominaya, 2009).

The new movement context seems to be having a transformative effect on the very paradigms of SMS, too. Most significantly, the issue of economic claims reemerged as a focus of attention, due to its prevalence in new movements. Beyond empirical description of new movement claims, this fact brought the theoretical problem of how movements relate to economic conditions back to the forefront of

SMS. Addressing that question required a new emphasis on social structure, global economy and the relationship between democracy and capitalism. Due to those changes, tools derived from earlier SMS paradigms are combined with ongoing experimentation with frameworks from other social science disciplines.. Probably the most emphatic amongst these experimentations has been the “bringing back” of the issue of capitalism to SMS (Hetland and Goodwin, 2013, Della Porta, 2015), engendering a plethora of disciplinary intersections with political economy (Streeck, 2014), world systems analysis (Silver and Karatasli, 2015), or Marxism (Barker, 2013; Cox and Nilsen, 2014).

Presently, that new process of experimentation does not provide a coherent picture. Diverging paradigms of various traditions are quoted without any authoritative conclusion of their significance to SMS as a discipline. And yet, the introduction of broader structural and economic causation factors, and the opening toward other disciplinary frameworks addressing those factors has already brought about a dismantling of the earlier SMS paradigm (e.g., as concluded by McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly). There, the condition of carving out the specific object of SMS was the premise that structure itself does not cause movements (McCarthy and Zald, 1977), so the construction of movements is basically not linked to traits of structure, but to traits of movements, and immediate movement-context interactions. Accordingly, movements can be studied as phenomena in themselves, and compared across cases as such (as the “dynamics of contention” paradigm proposes). As SMS scholars experiment with other social science frameworks, their focus of questioning shifts from characteristics of the movement phenomenon as such to the movement phenomenon as element of various broader questions of social dynamics - e.g., the transformation of Western democracies under the impact of crisis, new movements and populisms (Della Porta, 2013b; Stavrakakis and Katsambekis, 2013), movements as elements of democratization (Della Porta, 2014), or of class struggle (the 2014-2015 series of the Marxisms in Social Movements Working Group at the European University Institute). A third effect of the new movement context on SMS has been a turn toward historical-theoretical self-reflection. Opening toward other disciplinary paradigms dealing with questions of economy and social structure did not only bring additions to previous SMS paradigms, but also their critique. E.g., the lack of attention to the effect of the capitalist economy on movements has been thematized as a deficit of SMS (Hetland and Goodwin, 2013). Departing from the conventional story of SMS finally reaching objective scientific standards, founding paradigms are opened up for further inquiry and historical analysis, and SMS researchers think their own discipline and its cognitive tools within the same context of historical change in which movements operate. Cox and Flesher Fominaya (2013) demonstrate how the focus on the US academic context in the origin story hides the actual continuity of movement studies with earlier streams of social studies and critical theory in the European context, where social movements have always been conceptualized together with basic theorizing on politics, the state, or modern society. Cox and Nilsen reconsider the birth of Research Mobilization and New Social Movement paradigms within the context of political-ideological transformation of Western critical thought after Prague 1968, when the domination of Marxism gives place to an avoidance of Marxist paradigms (Cox and Nilsen, 2014). The relationship between research and activism is

increasingly problematized, and makes its way into the core of SMS questioning. This shift raises questions not only on how movements produce knowledge but also opens a broader field of reflection over researchers' position in a historical space shared with movements (Cox and Fominaya, 2009).

The expansion of SMS to East Central Europe: a challenge and an opportunity

In the context of the above transformation of SMS, its extension to ECE seems to be timely and promising. After what has been widely considered as a lack of civil society and movement activity after the regime change, the new movement wave makes itself felt in ECE countries, too. After 2011, anti-austerity and anti-corruption mobilizations popped up in each country in the region, in some cases leaving significant marks on the political landscape, with two government changes in Romania and Bulgaria, a new 6% party in Slovenia, and a network of local movements winning several local elections in Poland. In face of that new activity, local and international scholars of ECE movements are pressed to reconsider previous understandings of the lack of mobilizations in the region, a process in which they meet the general challenge of reconsidering previous frameworks in SMS. The promise of such a reconsideration is fueled by a new wave of interest in ECE within SMS (e.g. Saxonberg and Jacobsson 2013; Pleyers and Sava 2015).

A limit to that reconsideration may be that while earlier SMS frameworks are opened toward scholarly traditions dealing with social structure on a longer term in order to understand the change from post-material to material claims in Western movements, the spatial bias on Western countries remains unquestioned. In the treatment of the contemporary movement wave, this resulted in a widely consensual diagnosis according to which new movements are answers to a deficit of democracy brought about by the economic crisis. In this narrative, democracy has been expanding throughout the modern period, reaching from bourgeois revolutions to the incorporation of rights and material needs of full populations in the postwar welfare era. That level of democracy came under siege by neoliberalization, and later by increasingly autocratic measures of austerity. New movements claim "real democracy" and use tools of horizontal and populist politics to withstand that process, and reclaim popular sovereignty in the face of market forces. In line with this narrative, North American and European scholars speak about the end of democratic capitalism (Streeck, 2014), the crisis of democracy (Fraser, 2014), a need for left-wing populisms (Mouffe, 2014; Stavrakakis and Katsambekis 2013), and the potential of new movements in saving democracy (Della Porta, 2013a).

Looking at other global positions, the spatial bias of this diagnosis becomes obvious. Democratic capitalism with the incorporation of social rights of whole populations was characteristic only to the postwar period of affluent Western states. That story of democratization and its later decline through neoliberalization and austerity does not describe the historical experience of peoples in other positions of the same global history. Generalizing from this limited spatial scope may prove a major limit to understanding the relationship between the crisis and new movements in different global positions. The very notion of a new global movement wave, beyond

the mere empirical registration of a new proliferation of movements, is haunted in its conceptualization by a precipitous diagnosis of all movements in the “crisis of democratic capitalism” framework – an interpretation seemingly sustained by the diffusion of similar slogans and repertoires amongst movements (Della Porta and Mattoni, 2014), yet refuted by more in-depth studies placing local movements into local contexts (e.g., Guzman-Concha, 2012 on Chilean student protests; Anderson, 2011 on the Arab Spring; Gagyí, 2012 on ECE instances of Occupy).

Within the European Union, the “crisis of democratic capitalism” framework is strengthened by the vivacity of Southern European anti-austerity movements, and the political significance of the party coalitions which build on them. Especially through the Greek and Spanish cases, the latter became paradigmatic models for the social conflict and politics engendered by austerity (Katsambekis 2014; Tietze and Humphrys 2014). However, defining that conflict in terms of the “crisis of democratic capitalism” narrative, which, in the case of Southern Europe, focuses on the undemocratic nature of new austerity policies as “class war from above” (Radice, 2014), hides from view the experience of Eastern European member states, where similarly harsh measures of austerity have been the condition of post-socialist transition and EU accession. In the historical experience of those transitions, democracy came not before, but together with austerity, with problematic relations between the two which cannot be ironed out into a story where crisis and austerity bring democratic decline. Using the spatially biased “crisis of democratic capitalism” framework to make sense of present ECE movements would put serious limits on their understanding. To transcend that limit, the universality of the “crisis of democratic capitalism” framework needs to be “provincialized” (Chakrabarty, 2009), and the conceptualization of European postwar politics reintegrated in a global picture.

On the side of ECE SMS, too, several effects of internalizing the time-space bias of earlier SMS paradigms need to be transcended in order to understand the new proliferation of movements in their systematic interconnection with other new movements on the globe. Mirroring the time-space bias of SMS on Western movements, research on ECE movements from late socialism worked with the assumption that the experience of core countries is a universal model, and asked how ECE movements are doing in fitting that model. During late socialism, movements in socialist countries were framed by local dissidents, sympathetic Western activists and Western scholars as movements toward democracy (Máté, 1993; Bugajski, 1987; Bakuniak and Nowak, 1987). After 1990, the question of movements in ECE fit into the larger literature on post-socialist transition and democratization. Two main conflicts signaled in the literature were that between democratization and economic austerity (Przeworski, 1991; Ekiert and Kubik; 1998, Greskovits, 1998), and low popular participation vs. the proliferation of civil society organizations (McMahon, 2001; Howard, 2003; Tarrow and Petrova, 2007). In the conceptualization of both conflicts, researchers worked with the assumption that Eastern European societies will develop in a linear scale defined by earlier Western models – or if do not, differences from core models will be described as a backdrop in normal development.

This normative bias toward core models, together with a focus on short-term institutional factors, preconditioned a series of momentary typologies fast overwritten

by history. As East European countries did not actually “catch up” with Western models, but rather went through various waves of catch-up efforts and sliding back typical of semi-peripheral development efforts (Böröcz, 2012), various points of those dynamics were prematurely described as signs of greater tendencies, or types of post-socialist development. Such typologies needed correction as soon as the next wave of semiperipheral development dynamics set in. From liberal eminent, Hungary turned to be an exemplary of illiberalism. In Slovenia, the model of neocorporatist capitalism Greskovits and Bohle (2012) described as the socially most sustainable version of post-socialist market economies, came to be disintegrated by neoliberal reforms after 2008. Soon after Beissinger and Sasse (2014) concluded that their “end of patience” thesis does not work for Ukraine, as post-socialist disillusionment does not engender political mobilization due to institutional reasons, the Ukrainian crisis broke out. In my reading, such inadequacies do not signal individual authors’ mistakes, but rather a built-in incapacity of core-based, short-term frameworks to grasp the dynamics of non-core post-socialist development.

Another effect of incorporating the focus of SMS paradigms on affluent Western postwar democratic contexts was that the reception of SMS in ECE tended to look for movement phenomena similar to paradigmatic cases described by Western literature: environmental, feminist, anarchist, human rights, minority, trade union, alterglobalization and anti-war movements (Einhorn, 1993; Hicks 1996; Jehlička et al., 2005; Flam, 2001; McMahon, 2001; Ost, 2006; Vermeersch, 2006; Císař and Vrábliková, 2010; Navrátil, 2010; Piotrowski, 2011; Gagyí 2012). The search for movement types similar to Western cases was completed by a focus on movements identified as negative forms of the expected development: nationalist (Beissinger, 1996) or uncivil (Kopecky and Mudde, 2003). One result of the narrow focus on post-socialist, Western-type movements was a narrative according to which ECE traditionally lacks social movements in general, due to the suppression of civil society’s political involvement during state socialism (Howard, 2003). That narrative risked a complete historical dismissal of the various nationalist, populist, social democratic, fascist, communist, countercultural, millennial, ethnic, religious, and other movements which shaped the political landscape of the region throughout the modern period.

The focus on movement phenomena similar to Western models also worked to obscure forms of societal organization which do not fit those models, yet are constitutive of local societies’ social, economic and political organization – i.e. networks of kinship, nepotism and mutual help, forms of communal self-support, strategies of labor withdrawal (Seleny, 1993; Creed, 1995). Instances of rediscovery of popular politics on the communal level – such as in Jacobsson (2015): “Community organizations exist in Russia and other post-Soviet countries” – may be illustrative of the effects of bracketing the ongoing practice of community organizing from the relevant themes of research on popular politics, despite its significance as an elementary level of social survival and reproduction in contexts where neither the state or the economy provide guarantees for that.

As Charles Tilly noted in 1999 in his debate paper “Social movements here and elsewhere, now and then”, Zaldt’s definition of social movements is linked so tightly to the context of postwar Western democratic polity and high-capacity

redistributive state, that by his definition one would need to say that there are no social movements in post-Soviet Kazakhstan, despite the variety of ongoing social struggles (Tilly, 1999). To Tilly, this proves not the lack of movements in Kazakhstan, but the deficiency of Resource Mobilization Theory and the theories of democratization, democratic politics, and state structure incorporated in it. To make sense of movements in ECE, there is a need to redefine basic frameworks of SMS in such a way as to incorporate movement dynamics in global positions with political, social and economic structures different from paradigmatic Western cases. In a moment of transformation within the SMS field, and its challenge to tackle movements at various points of the globe, that challenge for ECE SMS may prove to be an opportunity for the field as a whole. In the remaining section of the article, I will draw out several principles which may inform the transformation of SMS frameworks so that they can address ECE movements simultaneously with movements occurring elsewhere, as part of an interconnected global history.

Addressing East Central European movements in global context

In order to transcend the time-space bias in previous paradigms of SMS, and forge tools to tackle movements in different points of the globe with a systematic perspective on their interconnection, the range of background assumptions incorporated into earlier movement theories need to be revisited. The comparative practice in SMS frequently relies on the assumption that the context of movements in terms of state, polity, and economic-social relations can be grasped in the same categories throughout different locations (Della Porta, 2013a). The conceptualization of these categories, however, is imbued with the experience of Western modernization. Definitions of such categories as state, sovereignty, democracy, formal and informal politics, “old” and “new” movements are abstracted from a limited scope of global history, and then generalized as definitions of the same phenomena everywhere.

Following from the above bias, forms of state-society and economic relations that do not fit generalized Western categories, cannot but be described as mistakes, deviations or pathologies (Grosfoguel, 2002). If movements are conceptualized as elements of a progressively ongoing democratization process, non-democratic movements cannot but be defined as irrational mistakes (Kopecky and Mudde, 2003). If movements are supposed to be tools of grassroots popular politics, fuzzy relationships between movements and parties can only be understood as pathologies of movement development (“captured movements”), and not as systematic elements of political life. Phenomena which fit Western definitions of movements will be described as “movements” in a sense that supposes a Western socio-political context, irrespective of their actual role in local society. Simultaneously, locally significant processes of popular politics will be omitted. Due to the time-space bias of the discipline, movement waves caused by systematic restructuring processes of the global economy will be sliced up in space, and categorized in time as different moments of the same (Western) history – e.g., “late” state-seeking ethnic and national mobilizations in ECE in times when those questions have been already settled in the West, “new” labor movements in China when labor mobilization is already defined as

“old” in Western countries. Traditions of global historical sociology and anthropology (Moore, 1966; Wolf, 1969; Tilly, 1999), postcolonial and decolonial studies (Chakrabarty, 2009; Quijano, 2000), or of world systems analysis (Wallerstein, 1974-1989; Arrighi 1994) have widely addressed that problematic, and provide conceptual toolkits and historical empirical knowledge to grasp the interconnected history of different social developments across the globe. Relying on these traditions, I will draw out several consequences of that perspective to illustrate its potential contribution to the conceptualization of ECE movements in a global sense.

Reconceptualizing macro-concepts of socio-political organization as elements of global history

To separate basic macro-concepts such as state, sovereignty, classes and polity will from their “paradigmatic” Western forms, and redefine them to cover the totality of global social experience does not only mean that a bigger variety of constellations will be incorporated into conceptual definitions, but also that the interrelations between various local social forms throughout global history will become part of their definition. In the world systems tradition, the term world system refers to this change of perspective: that the analysis takes as its basic unit the whole circle of significant interactions within various social organizations. For the modern period, that unit is the modern capitalist world system. To make sense of local economic, social and political forms, this approach looks simultaneously at their local characteristics and their interactions.

Looking at the notion of state, what this approach emphasizes is that in the formation of modern states in an interrelated process of global modern history, the dispersion of Western state institutions and the inclusion of a growing number of states into interstate agreements over sovereignty is paralleled by an increasing global distribution of labor and accumulation potential. In the interstate system, for some states that increasing distribution means higher potential to influence global processes, while for others, higher subordination to such organizational powers (Arrighi, 2000). State formation and sovereignty, despite similar categorizations or institutional forms, do not cover the same realities across different global locations. For analysis, that means that instead of comparing states as phenomena of the same type on a case-by-case basis, their different roles in global interaction needs to be taken into consideration.

Similarly, a consequence of this perspective will be to look at social groups in one state – e.g., local economic or political elites, local middle classes or local proletariat – as not the “same thing” across country and country, but as occupying functional positions relative to other groups within the world system. Typically, elites of semi-peripheral and peripheral countries will find their decisive power curtailed by their country's economic and political dependence on the center. The employment and working conditions of the labor force in the peripheries will depend not only on their own bargaining power within local politics, but also on the priorities of the core economies they depend from. Class dynamics within states will take shape not only relative to each other, but relative to transnational alignments of coalitions and

opportunities within the whole space of the world system (Wallerstein, 1989: 80-125.; Amin, 1991). The fields of local socio-political relations, and social movements within them, will need to be analyzed according to the global dynamics into which their local constellations feed into.

Social movements have been addressed from that perspective by various authors (Wallerstein, 1989; Arrighi et al., 1989; Arrighi et al., 1990; Smith and Wiest, 2012; Chase-Dunn and Kwon, 2012). Probably the most illustrative study is Beverly Silver's investigation of global waves of labor movements (Silver, 2003). Applying a long-term, global perspective, Silver traces how the effects of transformations in global production are followed by transformations of labor organization throughout modern history. Following the dynamics of global product and profitability cycles, movements for labor's social rights appear wherever capital builds out major industrial structures, yet their lasting success depends on which point of the product cycle they appear in. While industries with new and profitable technologies in core positions are able to accommodate labor's demands and keep their profit margins for longer periods, in more peripheral positions, where the same technologies arrive in a later point of the product cycle (not independently from labor pressure in core locations), the same type of movements can be less successful due to the lower profitability of their later position in the product cycle. Silver's analysis illustrates the pitfalls movement research may run into, should it compare the fate of the same type of movements across locations without taking into consideration the whole scope of global industrial cycles they are part of.

Looking at the relationship between movement types and forms of social organization, a typical hardship of generalizing Western models is that social forms which in the Western experience are perceived as past, traditional, or non-modern, continue to preside over many other global locations. Consequently, oligarchic, religious, tribal or kinship organizations might appear as mistakes or pathologies, while in fact they form a systematic base of local social, economic and political organization. Decolonial authors argue that through the construction of global capitalist modernity, the distribution of forms of labor control was done according to a certain racial hierarchy, yet that distribution was obscured by an Eurocentric narration of modernity that exceptionalized white, free wage labor as the paradigmatic form of labor, and dismissed other (feudal, slave, debt) labor relations subservient to Western industrialization as "past" (Quijano, 2000). Global labor studies emphasize that even today, after multiple waves of industrialization on the peripheries, free wage labor is statistically but a fraction of the global reality of labor relations (Van der Linden, 2008). What follows from this is that if we are to look for movements related to labor or economic redistribution, we need to take into consideration labor and social relations different from canonic forms of Western labor history. As Wolf notes (1969), different forms of production and social organization, such as capitalist, tribute-paying and kinship-based organizations favor different forms and opportunities for political expressions. It might be the case that much of the popular politics that reacts to global labor relations cannot be found while looking for canonic (Western) forms of social movements in canonic forms of polities.

Reconceptualizing historical forms of ECE social organization as elements of global history: the example of new middle class movements

The practice of SMS on ECE to focus on movement phenomena similar to Western ones, and bracket other forms of popular politics, or to consider post-socialist movements as late/weak versions of Western movements, and dismiss the long-term history of ECE political movements, feeds into a broader tradition of understanding ECE forms of social organization as late, backward and pathological versions of Western history. This broader tradition, and its various consequences on categorizations of ECE social development, e.g., “backwardness”, “double society”, development as “form without substance”, or the East-West slope of civilizational worth, has been described and criticized as element of the hierarchies of global knowledge production by various authors (Todorova, 1997; Boatecă, 2006; Böröcz, 2006; Melegh 2006). I will only point at the element of “middle class” in ECE forms of social development to show how a reconsideration of basic macro-concepts in a global perspective would inform the understanding of local social movements.

Democracy and democratic movements have been largely associated with the presence of a proliferating middle class (Moore, 1966). In the SMS tradition, the most paradigmatic examples of modern movement activity are of democratic, middle class (non-materialistic) movements. The main challenge in front of SMS today, the new global wave of movements has often been addressed as a global movement of the middle class (Rohe, 2013; Faiola and Moura, 2013). Silver’s (2003) account of typical social dynamics throughout hegemonic cycles of the secular history of modern capitalism tells us that in periods of hegemonic decline, middle-class mobilization increases. In such periods, as the profitability of material investments falls, and capital turns to financial markets, financialization disrupts earlier structures of material production and commerce, and redistributes existing wealth in an increasingly polarized way. That reorganization pushes large sections of middle classes out of their earlier positions globally, causing their political alienation from earlier elite coalition partners, and a search for political tools to regain their positions. Middle class movements in earlier phases of hegemonic declines described by Silver feature characteristics uncannily similar to today’s movements: claims for (lost) democracy, complaints of nepotism, oligarchy, and a general decrying of illegitimate gain by elites, contrary to earlier gains accepted as legitimate (Silver, 2003). These general traits can be detected in both Western and ECE movements today. However, the mutual relationship between simultaneous movements in different locations requires a closer investigation of the mutual positions such groups occupy globally.

In ECE, besides second serfdom, self-supporting kinship-based agriculture, socialist “bound” full employment (Seleny, 1993), or waves of outward migration following the dynamics of global modernity, a typical characteristic of its modern class relations “irregular” from a generalized Western perspective has been the state-related oligarchic nature of its middle classes. In the global development of modern class structures, that has been a typical feature of non-core societies. In the integrated system of the world economy, central economies became the main markets of the world, making it possible for broad middle classes to proliferate, feeding from and feeding into those markets. Non-core economies of the same system cannot sustain

similarly broad middle classes, despite the ambitions of local groups for middle class life standards. Non-core middle classes rather typically act as narrower, oligarchic formations, securing their life standards through occupying higher positions within their country's subordinate integration into the world market, and spending their incomes on products imported from central economies, thus contributing to core markets rather than their own (Arrighi, 1990). To be able to hold on to some profits from that integration, most often than not they will need protection from the state, often resulting in forms called, from a central perspective, corruption networks. It would be mistaken to describe ECE semi-peripheral middle classes as the same sort of social formation as middle classes of the core, who, for some reason, are additionally oligarchic/corrupt as well.

In the history of ECE class and state formation, that oligarchic characteristic of local middle classes has been associated with their affinity toward political entrepreneurship, and the construction of extensive state apparatuses. As Andrew C. Janos put it, in the environment of relative economic backwardness, social groups aiming for Western middle class life standards tended to “use the institutions of states to accomplish what they had not been able to accomplish as economic entrepreneurs” (Janos, 2000: 133). That specific relationship between the economic ambitions and political movements of local middle classes, and the construction of rent-seeking state-related oligarchies is rather a systemic characteristic of the region's global position, than an irrational mistake in normal grassroots movement development through party capture.

Finally, the relationship between local economic-social relations and local political ideologies in ECE might be considered “irregular”, too, in paradigms based on Western experience. As Janos (2000) demonstrates, contrary to the paradigmatic understanding of local politics as expression of local social relations, the political history of the region throughout the modern period mirrored varying relations of hegemony with external greater powers. Janos notes that institutional-ideological alignments with stronger external allies necessarily contained deviations from hegemonic models, following from the difference in local economic and social relations from those of hegemonic partners. Janos traces a recurrent pattern in ECE middle class political entrepreneurs to internalize political ideologies of hegemonic partners. As such ideological imports reflect not so much local social realities as the position and resource structure of local middle class political entrepreneurs, their political stances often impress local audiences as rootless or theatrical.

Looking at middle-class movements in ECE today, the above considerations might warn us from seeing local movements as versions of the “crisis of democratic capitalism” paradigm. While activists do refer to movements elsewhere as examples of their own paradigms (Bruner, 2011; Shenker and Gabbath 2011), new ECE middle class movements continue to feature traits that disturb such identifications. In their social and democratic claims, new ECE middle class movements reflect the above-mentioned tendency to internalize ideologies of external hegemonic partners. Differences between local realities and the ideologies quoted come to be expressed in the framework of a modernization lag (i.e. the success or failure of post-socialist catching-up projects), bound, in the context of new geopolitical tensions, with the

expression of present grievances in terms of Eastern vs. Western geopolitical alliances. (Gagyí, 2013 and 2014).

The effect of external sponsorship and framing on East European NGOs and movements has been the topic of empirical research and theoretical discussion (McMahon, 2001; Henderson 2003; Stark et al., 2006; Aksartova, 2006; Tarrow and Petrova, 2007; Císař, 2010; for an overview of the “cooptation debate”, see Císař, 2012). While that debate addresses differences in the contexts, function and organization of Western and Eastern European movements and NGOs, it does so within the framework of linear development toward Western models. E.g., the relative lack of social embeddedness of externally funded NGO activity features either as proof of dysfunction – since NGOs should, as in the Western case, work with wide civic participation –, or as proof of compensatory well-functioning within political contexts dysfunctional from the perspective of civic activity in Western terms. As Císař puts it: foreign-dependent social movement organizations “became relatively efficient advocates capable of challenging the prevailing social norms not in spite of their foreign dependency, but rather due to this dependency, which liberated them from the domestic political and cultural context often non-conducive to their goals” (Císař, 2010: 4). The focus on linear development toward Western models, while interpreting sets of characteristics of local movement and NGO activity in categories that have their referents in development tendencies or the lack thereof, may work to obscure the actual East-West relations at work in the specific forms of in ECE middle class political activism. Maintaining that bias may hinder SMS to ECE in drawing the consequences of new ECE movements’ specificities on the conceptualization of new European middle class movements.

Conclusion

The article argued that the genealogy of SMS, codified in an “origin story” that helped solidify SMS as a discipline, is bound to a specific time-space context which informed the basic concepts of SMS. In the environment of postwar Western affluent democracies, social movement scholars conceptualized movements as the object of scholarly attention based on the types of movements and state-society relationships characteristic to those environments: identity claims instead of “old” material claims, a stable reliance of democratic rights, the availability of material resources, etc. This environment favored SMS tools which focused on short-term contextual and movement dynamics, and disfavored questions on the relationship of long-term structural processes and material claims. With a new movement wave in Western societies voicing material claims after 2008, the latter question came again to the fore of SMS interest. However, a recently forming consensus which links new movements to the “crisis of democratic capitalism” tends to maintain a bias on Western contexts. In contexts like ECE, where austerity came together with the wave of democratization after 1990, the story of democratic welfarism decomposed by neoliberal austerity does not help to disentangle the relationship between movements and structural processes. As a new wave of movements makes itself felt in ECE, too, and consequently, SMS scholars turn their attention toward the region, the paper asks about possibilities to

transcend the time-space bias implied in earlier SMS frameworks. Looking at the study of post-socialist movements in the region, it argues that the tendency to incorporate the time-space bias on Western postwar experience worked to define movement activity in ECE according to the level of correspondence with Western models of movement and civic activity. That focus on Western models and short-term dynamics worked toward a narrative of weak social movements (due to the socialist past), hiding from view the role of movement politics in the region's modern history, as well as forms of popular politics and state-society relations not compatible with SMS codifications based on Western contexts.

The article proposes a framework based on the world systems approach to conceive of differences in state-society relations, politics, and social organization in a common global space. It uses the example of new middle class movements against austerity and corruption/oligarchies to illustrate how movements with the same slogans can be compared across contexts using that framework. While slogans and repertoires are similar, the position and function of local movements differ, due to long-term differences in the development of local middle classes, their relations to the state, and the long-term characteristic of East European politics linked to external stronger allies. The short proposition at conceiving East-West differences in new middle class movements within a world systems framework makes those differences appear not as effects of a time lag in a linear development toward Western models, but as simultaneous relations, embedded in a common, yet diverging history of modern development.

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