

10 Norming Participatory Practices of Movement Parties in Southeast Europe

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Introduction

Mainstream political parties enjoy low confidence levels in almost all European democracies, due to their negative image as self-referential and top-down organizations, insufficiently open to their membership's wider and deeper participation (Mair 2013). Distrust in political parties is also connected with their low mobilization capacities and declining party identification; it is not limited to those exercising power but also to traditional opposition parties, meaning that, overall, the legitimacy of mainstream political parties is decreasing (Ignazi 2021). At the same time, social movement studies emphasize the increasingly important role of social movements in mobilizing citizens for various social and political causes, and high levels of participation of the followers of social movements in social movement activities (della Porta et al. 2017; Giguani and Grasso 2019). Only recently have researchers started to underscore the relevance of movement parties, hybrid forms of organizations based on substantial participation of their membership, that use both protest and electoral mobilization of the citizens (Anria 2016; della Porta et al. 2017; Hutter, Kriesi and Lorenzini 2019). It is assumed that, influenced by the legacy of social movements, movement parties do not adopt a hierarchical organizational structure and strong leadership, typical of mainstream political parties, but instead maintain a more horizontal structure based on broad participation of members and deliberation on political decisions typical of social movements (della Porta and Rucht 2013; della Porta et al. 2017). However, we do not know much about the success of movement parties in maintaining those principles and practices once they enter the institutional arena (Anria 2016) since research on movement parties has focused less on intra-party democracy (IPD) than on their origins (Le Bas, 2011; Glenn 2003). That area of research is even less studied in the Southeast European (SEE) region, where movement parties represent a relatively recent phenomenon (van Biezen 2003). In this chapter, therefore, we look at two movement parties, MOŽEMO! (We can) and Zeleno-levi front (ZLF – Green-Left Front), from two SEE countries, namely, Croatia and Serbia, examining how democratic they are in terms of their internal decision-making practices and distributions of authority. Both parties are

relatively new on their respective political scenes; both were formed from very vocal bottom-up social movements and claim to be different from traditional, leadership-based, hierarchical political parties. MOŽEMO! won in the municipal elections for Croatia's capital Zagreb, whose mayor consequently is a MOŽEMO! member, in addition to several seats in the national parliament. ZLF was formed more recently (August 2023) as an outgrowth of the social movement *Ne da(vi)mo Beograd* (Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own), which has held seats in both Serbia's national parliament and the Belgrade Municipal Assembly since the last elections.

In this chapter, we analyze MOŽEMO! and ZLF statutes to see how they conceive and implement intra-party democratic principles in their highest normative acts. This will help us understand to what extent these movement parties have been able to articulate the principles of internal democracy. In the following part of the text, we identify and define the main dimensions of IPD, which we then use to analyze the party statutes of MOŽEMO! and ZLF. The third part of the text traces the evolution of MOŽEMO! and ZLF from social movements to electoral agents, taking into account their differing national contexts, and the fourth section is dedicated to the analysis of the statutes through the lens of IPD main dimensions. Finally, we conclude with a discussion of the main findings and their relevance for understanding the IPD of party movements in SEE and beyond.

IPD: Conceptualization and Measurement

IPD is a concept that refers to the internal democratic organization of political parties, focusing, above all, on the rights and possibilities of party constituencies to participate in decision-making processes broadly understood to guarantee the dispersion of power at different levels (Anria 2016; Cross and Katz 2013; Cular 2004; Wolkenstein 2018). While there has been a general agreement among scholars and democracy-promoting organizations¹ that IPD is desirable and necessary, and that if we want to improve democracy at the level of the political system, we need to have truly internally democratic political actors (Hazan and Rahat 2010; Scarrow 2005; but see also the critical view: Bäck 2008; Teorell 1999), there is no single, agreed upon definition of what it means to be internally democratic. However, some key dimensions can be discerned in the literature. Those are, above all, inclusivity and decentralization of decision-making processes (Anria 2016; Cross and Katz 2013; Cular 2004; von dem Berge et al. 2013; Wolkenstein 2018). Following von dem Berge et al. (2013), whose coding scheme for measuring IPD we use in our analysis,² we understand inclusiveness as the scope of the party's decision-making circle (also Scarrow 2005). Inclusiveness is operationalized as a continuum where on the one side lie parties with a single leader or small group making the main decisions, while on the other are the most inclusive parties, in which all members of party constituencies have the formal possibility to decide on key decisions (von dem Berge et al. 2013). The second criterion, complementing

inclusiveness in the abovementioned coding scheme, is decentralization, which refers to the role and autonomy of subnational units within a party. The more decentralized the electorate, the more internally democratic the party, according to the criteria of decentralization. However, the authors of the coding scheme acknowledge the possibility for a party to lack internal democracy even when being decentralized, in instances when “control over candidate selection has passed from the national oligarchy to a local oligarchy” (Hazan and Rahat 2006: 112; von dem Berge et al. 2013). Following these broad analytical criteria of inclusiveness and decentralization, and the literature on the topic, von dem Berge et al. (2013) further identify the three main categories of their coding scheme as members’ rights, organizational structures and decision-making.

Regarding membership rights, which belong to the dimension of inclusiveness, parties decide the criteria for membership but also whether to limit the participation of members in certain areas of decision-making. Some parties restrict formal influence on long-time activists while others invite all members to take part in their decision-making. Further, solutions could vary within a single party; thus, for instance, one group could have authority over candidate selection, another could choose the leader, while the third could be in charge of defining policy positions (Cross and Katz 2013). In the coding scheme we use, members’ rights are defined as general members’ rights and minority rights. General members’ rights are understood as the rights of all party members regardless of position and operationalized in the coding scheme through questions referring to the rights of members to be informed about party activities, the rights to express their opinions within and outside of the party, the rights to participate in decision-making processes but also the right to present and discuss alternative preferences within the party and to attempt to build alternative majorities. As rights to alternative positions do not equal minority positions, the level of safeguarding of minority rights in intra-party decision-making processes is assessed through the existence of minority quotas (above all gender, age and ethnicity) for intra-party and public office but also through the ex officio membership of minority-group leaders in executive organs of the party. Even though the literature focuses above all on women and youth as the most relevant minorities (Norris 2004; Vuletic 2005), the von dem Berge et al. (2013) coding scheme also assesses the rights of ethnic minorities in ethnically diverse societies that can have great relevance in understanding the level of inclusivity of the party.

A high level of inclusiveness can also be reached through an organizational structure that guarantees the right of decentralized and inclusive bodies, such as member assemblies and the party congress, to overrule decisions of more centralized and less inclusive organs. The basic idea that stands behind this criterion is that the scope of competencies of all political party bodies is derived from the members’ will (von dem Berge et al. 2013). An additional criterion is the separation of the judiciary organs from other bodies of the party.

Within the category of organizational structure, the von dem Berge et al. (2013) coding scheme first assesses whether the party congress exists and then

also its competencies, the frequency of its meetings and whether Congress is the highest authority within the party. From an IPD perspective, the Congress should decide about statutory issues, the party program and the party line; it should elect the members for party organs of the organizational level it represents, and it should elect delegates for the Congress of the next organizational level (von dem Berge et al. 2013: 9). The second subcategory assessed under organizational structure regards the existence of conflict-solving agencies or measures and further assesses whether those serve to further guarantee the rights of membership and their protection from the party leadership decisions, corresponding to a high level of IPD. This issue of control over the party executive is further assessed through the third and fourth subcategories that refer to the national executive and to the executive committee. Those categories demonstrate the existence of obligations of executive bodies and the presence of accountability and control mechanisms. Above all, the division and scope of the competencies of all these bodies should be distributed in such a way as to prevent autocratic leadership. The sixth subcategory considers the extent to which the party president has prerogatives over other party organs. From an IPD perspective, this subcategory assesses the degree of the president's power and the possibility to challenge them. The last subcategory that refers to the dimension of organizational structure – the relationship between the national and local levels – considers how much the relations between different levels of a party are decentralized and allows us to understand how much power is concentrated in the leadership and central party organs.

The categories that refer to the decision-making process also assess the level of inclusiveness and decentralization but are focused mainly on the national level, given that offices on the national level are more revealing of the overall level of IPD. The first group of subcategories within the category of recruitment include Recruitment to the National Public Office, Candidate Selection for Parliamentary Office and Candidate Selection for Presidential Elections and Relationship between the National Level and Subnational Levels with regard to Candidate Selection. The measures in these subcategories range from those indicating very inclusive to very exclusive recruitment and selection processes, except for the subcategory Relationship between the National Level and Subnational Levels with regard to Candidate Selection that focuses on assessing the degree of decentralization in the selection process. The level of IPD in decision-making processes is also measured through the category Recruitment to National Intra-Party Office (Election of the National Executive and Election of the Executive Committee), which focuses on assessing who determines the composition of the party leadership. Because of the high relevance of the president, the measure of inclusiveness of the electorate who can elect them represents a separate subcategory within the category of recruitment. The third category of decision-making procedures focuses on procedures: voting procedures, Relationship between the National Level and Subnational Levels with regard to Candidate Selection for Subnational Public Office and

Relationship between the National Level and Subnational Levels with regard to Candidate Selection for Subnational Intra-Party Office. While the first sub-category focuses on assessing the level of inclusiveness, the second and third are oriented toward evaluating the level of decentralization of procedures. Finally, the coding scheme shows how inclusive the process of deciding on the adoption of a party manifesto is, although it also assesses the level of decentralization by exploring the role of subnational party units in voting on the manifesto.

Contextualizing MOŽEMO! and ZLF

The decision to put a comparative focus on MOŽEMO! and ZLF had several rationales. They represent some of the most prominent and impactful examples of party movements in a region not typically associated with the strong political engagement of social movements. However, the last ten years have seen a rise in bottom-up social activism: both MOŽEMO! and ZLF are the result of these processes, having evolved from street activism into electoral agents. In addition, the region of SEE is politically dominated by traditional, hierarchical parties, often accused, when in power, of political abuses and of capturing state institutions and broader political processes (Fiket and Pudar Draško 2021; Keil 2018; Richter and Wunsch 2020). In this sense, amid discussions of ‘democratic backsliding’ in the region (Bieber 2018) and beyond (Cinetti, Dawson and Hanley 2020; Haggard and Kaufman 2021), it would be interesting to investigate the normative outlooks of novel and different political actors claiming the legacy and principles of social movements’ progressivism, horizontalism and participation. It would be a research step toward examining their abilities to democratize their respective societies and bring about potential democratic innovations.

To further contextualize MOŽEMO! and ZLF, it is necessary to acknowledge what they have in common and the differences in national and political contexts and their internal developments. The ideological inception of both party movements can be traced to the early 2010s, when a wave of social protests shook the region, echoing global protest. From anti-corruption demonstrations to student blockades to citizens’ mobilizations to saving parks and squares, what these various bottom-up mobilizations across countries in the region had in common was the articulation of a need to protect the public good from the increasingly unaccountable political regimes and their strengthening ties with the economic interests of the few (Bieber and Brentin 2019; Fiket et al. 2019; Pudar Draško, Fiket and Vasiljević 2020; Vasiljević 2021, 2023). Hitherto, dominant political concerns of progressive civil society, like Europeanization, economic transition and democratization, made space for new ones like the protection of the commons, socioeconomic rights, public good and the protection of the environment. In this context, two municipalist initiatives, *Pravo na grad* (Right to the City) from Zagreb and *Ne da(vi)mo Beograd* (Don’t Let Belgrade D(r)own)³ from Belgrade, gained special

prominence in their respective struggles against the usurpation of urban public spaces and ‘investor urbanism.’ The latter is defined as “a form of spatial development where the investors and the central or local government make decisions regarding the city development without allowing input from citizens or other community representatives” (Penčić and Lazarevski 2021: 526).⁴ Both activist initiatives are also closely tied to environmental organizations, insisting on the connectedness of struggles for urban and green commons. They became renowned for their green activism and for advocating greater citizen participation at all levels of political decision-making. Internally, they promoted horizontalism and democratic participation. Right to the City and Don’t Let Belgrade D(r)own were the respective nuclei of MOŽEMO! and ZLF. In addition, they influenced each other, were under the similar international influence of other green-left movements, and therefore went through similar evolutionary phases, although nevertheless developed idiosyncratic characteristics, having to conform to different national political circumstances.

The Zagreb movement Right to the City emerged in the mid-2000s from a cooperation between various independent cultural and youth nongovernmental organizations focusing on environmental and urban planning policies (see more in Dolenc, Doolan and Tomašević 2017). They gained wider recognition after fiercely opposing – through various public performances, petitions and other actions – a development project in Flower Square, one of the city’s central public spaces. The proposed project – which required the urban master plan to be rewritten – envisaged upscale residences, a shopping mall and a parking garage to be built in the historic downtown, reducing public and pedestrian space and demolishing protected buildings. From that moment on, Right to the City became a symbol of civic struggle against the usurpation of public space (while politically standing up to the controversial Zagreb Mayor at the time, Milan Bandić), attracting other progressive and left forces that had started to emerge in Croatia and, for the first time since the dissolution of Yugoslavia, rehabilitating the idea of democratic socialism. As Milan (2022) noted, new municipalist movements in the region took their inspiration not only from similar movements exploding globally but also from the Yugoslav heritage of a decentralized system of self-management and its elements of direct democracy.

In 2017, the initiative joined other green activists and smaller parties, creating a new political party – Zagreb je naš (Zagreb Is Ours). In the municipal elections held in May 2017, the coalition won 7.6% of votes (four seats) in the Zagreb City Assembly. For the 2019 European Union elections, the party further networked with similar grassroots initiatives, establishing a national political platform MOŽEMO! In local elections in 2021, Tomislav Tomašević, the MOŽEMO! candidate won the majority of votes to become the mayor of Zagreb. Today, MOŽEMO! is a national political party, holding a mayoral position in the capital city of Zagreb, with 22 seats in the city assembly and four seats in the national parliament of Croatia.

In Serbia, Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own, or Ne da(vi)mo Beograd (from now on NDMBGD), came into existence in 2014 through active opposition to the execution of the Belgrade Waterfront (BW) project. BW is a multibillion-dollar “urban megaproject” (Perić 2020), covering an expanse of 177 hectares of mostly waterfront property adjacent to the historical core of Serbia's capital, Belgrade. The project is financed by a United Arab Emirates investor, with considerable subsidies from the Serbian government. The dubious legal procedures allowing the project, as well as unlawful demolitions (which perpetrators have yet to be brought to justice) that cleared part of the proposed construction site, sparked controversy and some of the biggest protests Serbia has seen in recent history. Various cultural organizations and associations working in urban and cultural policy and urban development joined the protests and supported NDMBGD. The initiative became emblematic, advocating for sustainable urban development, greater participation of citizens and protection of the commons. In the rather unfavorable political context of 2018 (Kralj 2022), the activist group decided to run in local elections in Belgrade. Although failing to reach the 5% election threshold, it won 3.44% of the votes and thus started to transform into an electoral agent. For the national elections in 2022, NDMBGD was a key partner in the formation of a green-left coalition Moramo (We must).⁵ The coalition won 13 seats in the national parliament and the same number of city councilors in the Belgrade city assembly. The coalition remained loose, and the partners involved pursued different political developments, although cooperation continues. NDMBGD went on to network with other local initiatives, and at the moment of writing this chapter, a new political party has been registered – Zeleno-levi front (Green-Left Front) or ZLF – marking the final stages of transformation of NDMBGD from a social movement to a political party.

We can observe many similarities in the paths taken by both party movements in question, but many differences as well, which requires taking into account the national contexts. While both Croatia and Serbia could be considered flawed democracies, the situation is much graver in Serbia. In 2019, Freedom House ranked Serbia no longer as a “semi-consolidated democracy” but as a transitional or hybrid regime (Nations in Transit 2020). Serbia's scores continue to fall, chiefly due to the ruling party's role in significantly eroding political rights and putting pressure on independent media, opposition parties and civil society organizations. A growing body of scholarly analysis points to Serbia's illiberal and authoritarian turn (Bieber 2018; Castaldo 2020; Rogers 2022; Vladisavljević 2020). Given this, it has to be noted that parliamentary life, the work of the opposition and attempts at improving institutional work meet serious obstacles not comparable to Croatia. One should not doubt that this influences the agency and internal arrangements of any democratic initiative striving to bring about democratic innovation or institutional change.

Methodology

In what follows, we analyze the statutes of the two movement parties with a significant history of action in SEE, particularly in former Yugoslav states. Even though party statutes alone cannot guarantee the life of the participatory principle within parties, their analysis helps understand the envisaged scopes of action and limitations for party members, as well as the general value-based culture. Statutes and other norm-prescribing documents are exciting fields of analysis, especially for the case of party movements that have emerged from bottom-up movements advocating a participatory turn in politics.

We have conducted deductive content analysis following the developed model of von dem Berge et al. (2013), including qualitative coding and quantification necessary for building the internal party democracy index.⁶ The analysis is based on three main categories of IPD theoretically defined in von dem Berge et al. (2013): members' rights, organizational structure and decision-making. Each of these categories is further developed through subcategories reflecting the importance of the specific category for the overall internal democracy index. These subcategories include individual items, which serve as a scheme for coding through questions about the party statutes. The category of *decision-making* is the most detailed one, as it represents the complex multidimensional aspect of IPD. Decision-making on the party's representation, whether in public institutions or internally, contains more items than other dimensions. However, in order not to allow predominance of those dimensions with numerous aspects, like decision-making, we have calculated the items for each specific subcategory and then within each category. In this way, each of the three main categories bears the same weight.

After coding each item, we used the predefined quantification scheme, which departs from observing implications on IPD regarding inclusiveness or decentralization. The value +1 is given to all answers with positive implications on IPD, the value -1 to all answers with negative implications on IPD and the value 0 is allocated to answers with no specific effects on IPD (von dem Berge et al. 2013: 31).

Empirical Analysis

The analysis was conducted on two statutes adopted *after* the party movements in question entered the national parliaments in Croatia and Serbia. The Statute of MOŽEMO! was adopted in 2021, with amendments adopted in 2022, while the Statute of ZLF has been registered at the time of conducting this analysis (August 2023). Notwithstanding some of the differences in the development of these two party movements, their statutes represent legal milestones in their evolution into national movement parties.

Both parties declare their commitment to the principles of more inclusive democracy in the opening paragraphs of their statutes. Article 6 of the MOŽEMO! Statute sets the objectives of the party, and one of them reads,

Table 10.1 Internal party democracy index for ZLF and MOŽEMO!^a

<i>Code</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Mean ZLF</i>	<i>Mean MOŽ</i>
10-00-0-0	Members' rights	0.750	0.333
20-00-0-0	Organizational structure	0.769	0.487
30-00-0-0	Decision-making	0.215	0.125
IPD	Index	0.578	0.315

Notes

^a Since the number of observations in our study was one statute per party, it was not possible to express minimum and maximum value, but only the actual mean for each of the categories.

“Strengthening democratic institutions and improving forms of representative and direct democracy.” ZLF has a participatory principle explicitly stated in Article 8, which guarantees direct decision-making through party referendum or interpellation. Article 6 sets the organizing principles of ZLF: “[C]ooperation and agreement when making decisions and implementing policies, not imposing decisions, arbitrariness and obedience.”

The overall internal party democracy score of the two parties reveals that ZLF stands better than MOŽEMO!, with an IPD index of 0.578 compared to 0.315. ZLF performs better in all three main categories (see Table 10.1).

In the following paragraphs, we elaborate on the three key dimensions and complement the findings with the qualitative analysis of the statutes' content. The analysis is mindful of the (national) contextual factors that have influenced the development of both the party movements themselves and their normative documents.

Members' Rights

In the IPD index dimension tackling rights of the members, ZLF shows a better score compared to MOŽEMO! (see Table 10.2). Reading carefully through the statutes gives us some explanations for the differences.

General members' rights are similarly defined by both parties. Both explicitly mention binding gender quotas within the party organs for greater representativeness and inclusiveness. In Article 6, ZLF emphasizes, as one of the six key organizational principles, “equal participation in the work of the Party and respect for the contributions of all members and all ideas in the discussion

Table 10.2 Comparison of members' rights in the statutes of ZLF and MOŽEMO!

<i>Code</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Mean ZLF</i>	<i>Mean MOŽ</i>
10-00-0-0	Members' rights	0.750	0.333
11-00-0-0	General members' rights	0.833	0.333
12-00-0-0	Minority rights	0.667	0.333

and decision-making process.” ZLF also declares the right to express divergent opinions without repercussions in Article 12:

No member may suffer consequences due to a public opinion expressed at the party forum of which he/she is a member, which was in the minority during decision making within the ZLF body, except in cases where it directly contradicts the Statute, the Code of Ethics and the basic values of the ZLF.

ZLF also clearly defines lines of participation for minority groups in the party, as the statute defines autonomous groups that comprise youth, women and elderly among their members ranks.

MOŽEMO! defines only a basic set of rights for its members without further elaborating on inclusiveness and care for minorities in the party. Also, unlike ZLF, MOŽEMO! sets a barrier for becoming a party member in Article 11 of the Statute, declaring that

in order to become a member of the Party, the interested person must previously be involved in the activities of the party through work in local, thematic or operational groups for *at least six months before submitting the application* for membership.

Generally, we may conclude that ZLF has better developed and embedded the principles of equal participation and has more open admission of the members to the party, compared to MOŽEMO!

Organizational Structure

Organizational structure is significantly simpler with MOŽEMO! than with ZLF (see Table 10.3). MOŽEMO! structure reflects the structure of the movement that was registered as a civic initiative. The General Assembly is the highest body of the party and comprises all party members. Executive bodies are

Table 10.3 Organizational structure of ZLF and MOŽEMO!

<i>Code</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Mean ZLF</i>	<i>Mean MOŽ</i>
20-00-0-0	Organizational structure	0.769	0.487
21-00-0-0	Party congress	0.600	/
22-00-0-0	Conflict-solving agencies	0.750	0.250
23-00-0-0	The national executive	1.000	0.667
24-00-0-0	The executive committee	0.667	0.667
25-00-0-0	Party president	0.600	0.600
26-00-0-0	Relationship between the national and subnational levels	1.000	0.250

the Governing Board (executive committee), the Council (national executive) and two co-presidents. All executive body members are voted on in the General Assembly. MOŽEMO! does not have a party congress; therefore, this battery of items was not taken into account for the coding process and analysis. The Council presides over elections and electoral programs, while the Governing Board governs the party between annual General Assemblies.

ZLF's structure resembles the traditional party structures more. The highest organ of the party is the Congress, set to regularly meet every three years. Executive bodies of the ZLF are the Great Council (national executive) and Presidency (executive committee) with two co-presidents and five members. The Presidency is voted on in the Congress, while the Great Council is composed of the party members who perform functions in the party and in the state organs, plus delegates from the minority groups (autonomous units) and territorial units.⁷ The Secretariat is an implementing organ of the party, taking care of the administrative and technical operations. ZLF also has advisory organs, the Political Council and the Program Council, which are dedicated to the development and advancement of the party program pillars. Finally, ZLF has a Supervisory Board, Ethics Committee and the Statutory Commission acting as the highest party court.

The MOŽEMO! Statute recognizes only a general disciplinary process that may lead to a warning or exclusion of a member from the party. On the other hand, ZLF dedicated a specific article to disciplinary procedures but also to the mediation of the conflicts within the party by establishing a one-off Mediation Commission through Article 15 of the statute:

In case of disputes between individual ZLF members that have a negative impact on the proper functioning of the Party and on party discipline, the Grand Council establishes a mediation commission.

All parties to the dispute must agree on the composition of the mediation commission and the number of members must be odd.

The decision on the establishment of the mediation commission determines its composition, duration, method of decision making, the subject of the dispute and other issues of importance for resolving the dispute.

Finally, when it comes to the inclusion of the subnational units and preserving their autonomy, ZLF explicitly defines autonomy of the territorial and also its autonomous units in Article 8: "The principle of participation and immediate autonomous decision making on issues that directly concern territorial organizations, i.e., autonomous organizations, is guaranteed by this statute."

The MOŽEMO! Statute defines subnational units belonging to the coordinating bodies of the party. However, the Governing Board establishes these units, which significantly limits their statutory autonomy.

Overall, we can conclude that ZLF has evolved from a civic movement into a party movement that manages to preserve principles of inclusiveness and deliberation in its key official document. MOŽEMO! still runs its activities

Table 10.4 Decision-making of ZLF and MOŽEMO!

<i>Code</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Mean ZLF</i>	<i>Mean MOŽ</i>
30-00-0-0	Decision-making	0.215	0.125
31-00-0-0	Recruitment	0.097	0.083
31-10-0-0	<i>Public office – national level</i>	0.308	–0.033
31-11-0-0	Candidate selection – public office	0.667	–0.500
31-12-0-0	Candidate selection – parliament	0.200	0.200
31-13-0-0	Candidate selection – president	0.167	0.167
31-14-0-0	Relationship between the national level and subnational levels	0.200	0.000
31-20-0-0	<i>Intra-party office – national level</i>	0.067	0.533
31-21-0-0	Election of the national executive	–0.200	0.600
31-22-0-0	Election of the executive committee	0.200	0.600
31-23-0-0	Election of the party president	0.200	0.400
31-30-0-0	<i>Procedures</i>	–0.083	–0.250
31-31-0-0	Voting procedures	–0.750	–0.750
31-32-0-0	Relationship between national and subnational units –subnational public office	0.000	0.000
31-33-0-0	Relationship between national and subnational units –subnational intra-party office	0.500	0.000
32-00-0-0	Programmatic issues	0.333	0.167

much more as a civic movement, which has the advantage in the implementation of direct democracy through the General Assembly. However, it is challenging to think of the mass membership with the normative framework as defined at this moment.

Decision-Making

Decision-making comprises several dimensions: two aspects are procedures of recruitment and procedures of making decisions on program issues. Further, recruitment is observed through the selection of the candidates, selection of leaders and transparency of voting procedures and inclusion (see Table 10.4).

MOŽEMO! has a very modest definition of party procedures for selecting candidates for public functions. The only mention of the procedure is with the competencies of the Council (Article 37), which “makes decisions on the model for selecting the Party’s candidates in the elections and confirms the final selection of candidates.”

ZLF defines its own procedure through Article 54 of the Statute, which states,

The list of candidates for deputies in the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia is determined by the Great Council, except for candidates for deputies to the Assembly of AP Vojvodina, which is determined by the Vojvodina Regional Committee.

The lists of candidates for councilors are determined by the ZLF territorial, municipal and city organizations.

Personal proposals for participation in the executive power are made by the competent territorial body for the territory where the executive body, a public company or institution or other body to which the ZLF representative is delegated.

Therefore, neither party's statute clearly defines how the candidates on the list are chosen, i.e., who has the right to propose, how the order of candidates on the lists is formed and whether voting is public or secret. Both parties prescribe the decision-making to an independent body chosen by the membership, but not much else can be concluded from the statutes. However, even if the procedures are not so clear, we can confirm that ZLF explicitly preserves the autonomy of the territorial units with regard to decision-making of candidates becoming officials.

Regarding internal competition and selection of the party officials, ZLF is closer to established parties' principles, with decisions through representative organs like Congress, while MOŽEMO! retains the direct democracy principle by keeping the General Assembly as its highest body with decision-making powers on every aspect of the party's life. The Council of MOŽEMO! has responsibilities exclusively related to the party's electoral activities, while the Governing Board and the two coordinators are directly elected by all members. The General Assembly elects all elective members of the party bodies, while the Council and the Governing Board also have *ex officio* members, such as representatives of the Territorial, Thematic and Technical coordinating bodies; members of the Coordination for Cooperation with Political Initiatives; and party employees serving in the Croatian Parliament and the European Parliament.

The decision-making structure of the ZLF is much more complex. Its bodies are clearly defined by respecting the inclusiveness of different groups and interests within the party. The Congress and the Great Council have shared control over the appointment of the party's advisory bodies. The Congress decides on the executive committee, i.e., the Presidency, the Supervisory Committee, the Statutory Committee (party court), the Ethics Committee and the coordinator of the Political Council. The Great Council appoints the Secretariat and decides on program groups and territorial units. The Great Council also has the right to propose the impeachment of the Presidency.

Finally, we have analyzed decision-making on how party policies are being developed and implemented. MOŽEMO! defines its party policy at the initiative of the Governing Board and upon adoption at the Party Assembly. The election program of MOŽEMO! is adopted by the Council, which is the supreme authority in election affairs. We can deduce from Article 45 that thematic groups, as a part of advisory bodies, work on certain program areas of interest to the party: they are established by the Governing Board, as we have already mentioned in presenting the structure of MOŽEMO! Since the party program is adopted at the General Assembly, we can assume that the proposals go through the Governing Board and for the final adoption by the Assembly.

ZLF takes an elaborate approach to the creation of the program direction of the party. Article 46, dedicated to the program groups, states that there are “three mandatory program groups: environmental protection and climate change group; a group for the struggle against social and economic inequalities; and a group for democracy.”

In addition to the defined priority topics for which program groups are created by default, the Great Council can also form other program groups after the proposal of the Program Council, which consists of coordinators of all existing program groups. Also, the Great Council adopts the electoral program of the party on the proposal of the Program Council (Article 29):

The Program Council prepares the Electoral Program of the Great Council based on the plans of the program groups and proposes to the Presidency priority programmatic areas of action, but also works on the basis of the instructions and initiatives of the Presidency in connection with the development of the ZLF program and the election program.

In addition to the Program Council, the direction of the party is determined in Article 28 by the Political Council as a “political advisory body of the Party composed of prominent individuals from the political, academic and local community who share the values of the ZLF, support its program and are not members of another political party.”

Programmatic issues are key in providing spaces for participatory forums within the party and with its constituents. The analysis of the embeddedness of the potential forums for participation in the party statutes reveals that ZLF has paid attention to defining these spaces, while MOŽEMO! relies on the direct democracy principle by setting the General Assembly as its highest and most inclusive authority.

MOŽEMO! does not define special measures to ensure deliberation within the party. In its statute, the concepts of dialogue, discussion or deliberation are not used, while participation is mentioned only once. ZLF sets the task of inviting and moderating participatory forums to the Program Council, defining this as one of the Council’s four activities in Article 29:

[Program Council] Moderates dialogue within the organization as well as with the general public regarding program initiatives of the membership and program decisions through fora, public hearings or other models of consultation and participation that are designed, such as convening special program conferences, i.e., the Congress program.

Spaces of deliberation also appear indirectly in ZLF through the definition of the duties of co-presidents. They are bound by Article 23 to initiate the development of political, strategic and public policy documents to be discussed at the meetings of the Presidency, the Great Council and the Congress.

Our analysis of the decision-making process shows that ZLF has evolved into a national party that defines its procedures in a way that allows growth and potentially a mass party. ZLF has dedicated considerable efforts to defining and embedding participatory and inclusive principles in its key legal document. MOŽEMO!, on the other hand, retains its direct decision-making as the most important tool of direct democracy. However, it remains to be seen how the party documents will change in light of the potential mass growth of the party, which could make decision-making more difficult.

Conclusion

Given the deepening crisis of the legitimacy of institutional politics and traditional political parties, a growing number of citizens are seeking new, more participatory forms of democracy. Some have argued that social movements, or party movements in particular – as a form that bridges electoral, conventional politics and bottom-up mobilization – can bring about desired democratic innovations, given their focus on participation, horizontality and transparency. Can they perform a different type of electoral politics; can they reform institutions without being co-opted by the existing structures; can they thrive and make a lasting impact without succumbing either to bureaucratization (and moderation) or radicalization (and dissipation) (Tarrow 2011)? Above all, we believe, it is important to examine their ability to preserve, or to (re)build, strengthen and protect internal democratic capacities, based on the values so highly cherished by democratic social movements: participation, equal access to opportunities, democratic decision-making and transparency. That is why we decided to explore the characteristics of internal democracy of the two most prominent party movements in the SEE region, MOŽEMO! and ZLF. Both have started as municipalist movements, and after successfully avoiding “the local trap” (Russell 2019), have evolved into national electoral agents.

Their national contexts have many shared features but also many differences, especially concerning the overall quality of democracy. Both party movements emerged from green activism, with a strong demand for greater citizen participation at all levels of politics. Their internal practices are therefore also reliant upon values of horizontal and inclusive decision-making. Both parties evolved by joining forces with other cultural, urban and environmental movements, and were finally registered as national parties after entering national parliaments.

Our analysis shows that, despite strong mutual influence and transfer of experience, the two party movements exhibit significant differences in their normative frameworks. Although both parties declare their commitment to more inclusive democracy, detailed analysis reveals that ZLF has embedded these principles much better in all three main domains of IPD: members’ rights, organizational structure and decision-making. ZLF has designed its structure to accommodate the demands of a mass party, while MOŽEMO! has

de facto remained a social movement, now in the legal status of a political party. ZLF paid much more attention to the inclusion of the subnational and thematic units and to preserving their autonomy. The structure is designed in such a way as to prevent presidentialization and centralization of power in the one-party body.

The weakest aspect of the IPD in the normative frameworks of both movement parties is the decision-making process: it is inclusive and participatory but lacks a definition of how it is organized, which contributes to poor transparency of procedures and provides fertile ground for manipulation and potential creation of power centers. In this respect, the programmatic profiling of the ZLF is somewhat more elaborate, with efforts to foster a participatory and inclusive deliberative forum for program design. Finally, the issue of the barrier to membership that exists in MOŽEMO! compared to ZLF indicates a different logic of party growth – a lack of available human resources for political action is, apparently, much more severe in Serbia than in Croatia.

The key difference between these two movement parties' normative documents points to the fact that MOŽEMO! relies on participatory democracy performed by carefully selected members, while ZLF is attempting to become a democratic party, open to new membership, with carefully balanced power centers. Such a structure will enable ZLF to grow faster but also poses a challenge for putting the defined norms into practice – in other words, to keep participatory practices alive. Nevertheless, both MOŽEMO! and ZLF represent true trailblazers in the region regarding internal party democracy and participatory politics. As such, it is certainly worth further following and researching their future electoral and political struggles but also challenges in the implementation of their statutes' IPD principles.

Notes

- 1 See the 'Venice Commission' Code of Good Practice in the Field of Political Parties, [https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD\(2009\)002-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD(2009)002-e); the Third Assembly of the World Movement for Democracy, <http://www.wmd.org/assemblies/third-assembly/workshops/political-parties-and-finance/how-strengthen-internal-party-demo>, IDEA, http://www.idea.int/parties/internal_democracy07.cfm USAID, <http://serbia-montenegro.usaid.gov/code/navigate.php?Id=23>.
- 2 Here, we only briefly describe all the categories of the coding scheme; a detailed explanation of the coding scheme and procedure can be found in the guide for the content analysis of party statutes for measuring intra-party democracy (IPD) published in the *Guide for the Content Analysis of Party Statutes with Examples from Hungary, Slovakia and Romania* (von dem Berge et al. 2013).
- 3 Its sister organization was also called *Right to the City*. The name was chosen as a direct reference to the famous banner of Henri Lefebvre (1968) and to signal the link with critical urban theory and other struggles against neoliberal urbanisation taking place globally at the time.
- 4 For a discussion on democratization of urban planning using participatory innovations, see Chapter 5 in this volume.

- 5 The name is a nod to the Croatian counterpart MOŽEMO!, We Can. Over the years, activists from the two movements have cooperated and exchanged ideas, given not only their similar political contexts but, above all, sharing a Yugoslav legacy and the same language.
- 6 It must be disclosed that two of the three co-authors are members of NDMBGD, the movement that initiated the formation of ZLF, and they currently served as Belgrade city councilors until December 2023. Because of their personal involvement with one of the party movements under the study, the third co-author conducted the coding process.
- 7 Article 20 of the Statute defines that Great Council consists of members of the Party Presidency, National Parliament and Government, mayors, coordinators of the Political Council, the Supervisory Board, the Ethics Committee and the Statutory Commission; members of the Program Council in a number not exceeding 10%; two delegated representatives of autonomous organizations (youth, women and elderly); and two co-presidents of each municipal/city committee, of whom at least one must be female.

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