

## ***Section 6 – Partecipazione e movimenti sociali***

### **Panel 1. Social movements and elections between movement parties and abstentionist choice.**

**Chairs: Gianni Piazza, Fabio De Nardis**

Social movements have always been a challenge and an alternative proposal to the traditional model of representative democracy and its main actors like the political parties, promoting direct and participatory democracy. Nevertheless, in the last two decades we have witnessed a transformation of the relationship between social movements and political parties. According to the literature, social movements act within and are affected by a specific political opportunity structure. Among these opportunities, there is undoubtedly their possible alliance with political parties (usually of the radical left) within the institutions. The crisis of legitimacy of classical political actors in the neoliberal era and the processes of radical depoliticization of representative politics has led to a change in the relationship between parties and movements. In the era of austerity policies, some social movements – or better some social movements sectors – in addition to having a privileged relationship with specific political parties, they have chosen to participate directly in electoral competitions, creating hybrid formulas of movement parties or social parties. Cases of this type are Syriza in Greece, Podemos in Spain, in some ways even the Movimento 5 Stelle (Five Star Movement), but also the most recent experience of Potere al Popolo! (Power to the people!) In Italy.

The rise of these party movements challenges simplistic expectations of a growing separation between institutional and contentious politics. Bridging social movements and political party studies, it is possible to investigate these actors also in a comparative perspective. On the side of the organizational theories, the fundamental concept is that of hybridization of political participation borrowed from organizational studies and socio-political science's reflection on governance and democratic transition processes. Yet, other social movement (sectors) have continued to criticize involvement in institutional politics and run for elections, preferring to maintain the abstentionist choice. The success or failure of some of those abovementioned experiences can certainly contribute to the continuation of this path or reinforce the original diffidence in institutional practices. Comparative analysis between similar (different actors participating in movement parties and elections) or dissimilar cases (similar movement actors making different choices), but also single case studies are welcome.