
H-France Review Vol. 18 (January 2018), No. 6

Pierre Monforte, *Europeanizing Contention. The Protest Against 'Fortress Europe' in France and Germany*. Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books, 2014. x + 252 pp. Tables, figures, notes, bibliography, and index. \$95.00 U.S. (hb). ISBN 978-0-85745-996-1.

Review by Stefan Berger, Ruhr-Universität Bochum.

Within the field of social movement studies, an increasing number of scholars have been paying attention to the Europeanization of contentious politics for a number of years now. The book by Pierre Monforte that emerged out of PhD under the supervision of Donatella della Porta at the European University Institute in Florence is part and parcel of that trend. Monforte examines the French and German pro-asylum movements since the end of the 1990s and analyses the transnational networks, discourses, and actions that these movements have taken. And he considers the significance of such transnationalizing processes for the construction of a European public sphere.

In the introduction to his book, Monforte looks at the Europeanization of social movements with special attention to immigration and asylum policies and traces the emergence of a multilevel framework on immigration and asylum policies. He contextualizes the French and German pro-asylum movements in their respective national contexts. Monforte's chosen research sample of 38 pro-asylum organizations in both France and Germany, as well as at the European and international levels, is impressive. His methodological arsenal is eclectic but serves the purpose of his leading research questions well. Thus he uses network and discourse theories, and he works with the concept of "frames" as well as Pierre Bourdieu's concept of the "field." The wealth of in-depth semi-structured interviews and documents constitute the rich empirical basis upon which the book's convincing conclusions rest.

The book's first chapter deals with the evolution of the French and German pro-asylum movements since the beginning of the 1990s. For the French case, the author stresses the dense inter-associative coalition-building (with trade unions, politicians, journalists, academics, artists, and a range of other social movements) that strengthened the movement as a whole. The German movement, by contrast, is presented as more fragmented and isolated. Collective protest action was more prominent in France than in Germany. Both countries were characterized by different levels of contention and cycles of protest. The legal framework changed much more rapidly and frequently in France than in Germany in the period under consideration. Any coalition-building in France took place at a national level, within the highly centralized French political system, whereas it was more local/regional in the federal political system of Germany. A strong anti-immigrant party in the form of the Front National in France is juxtaposed with a more diffuse anti-immigrant milieu in Germany. Of course, the latter context has changed significantly of late with the meteoric rise of the Alternative für Deutschland as an anti-immigrant political party, but this could not have been foreseen by Monforte at the time of writing. A final contextual difference highlighted by the author is that immigrants in Germany were both less visible and more isolated.

The next chapter looks at diverse components of the pro-asylum movements in greater detail. It highlights different perspectives from which solidarity with asylum seekers can be mobilized and it stresses the cleavages between humanitarian and politicized social movements mobilizing for and on

behalf of asylum seekers. The third chapter looks at the construction of European networks, the emergence of European frames, and the construction of European collective actions around asylum issues. Overall, the Europeanization of asylum movements in France and Germany is presented as a substantive phenomenon.

The fourth chapter distinguishes different modes of Europeanization of the pro-asylum movements. While the author traces a process of externalization in the Europeanization of humanitarian associations (where nation-state-centric and European actions remained separated), he analyzes developments in politicized associations in terms of a move from domestication to the construction of transnational and multi-level movements. The last chapter presents the organizations active at the EU level as a closed European advocacy coalition and examines why and how humanitarian organizations were included in this field while politicized organizations remained excluded. One of the main factors has been the “NGO-ization” of movements at the European level that work in the lobbying mode preferred by EU institutions rather than mobilizing protest from below—the preferred frame of action for politicized organizations. The latter, however, have constructed alternative transnational coalitions.

The book concludes by affirming a process of Europeanization of pro-asylum movements in France and Germany. The linkages and solidarities that are built across national frontiers aim at the harmonization of asylum regulations across the EU which makes the EU the natural target of their mobilization efforts. Another interesting conclusion of the book is that although the contexts of mobilization differed substantially in France and Germany, such differences did not impact the degree of Europeanization. Access to more resources in France does not necessarily lead to more efficient Europeanization. Traditional national specificities with regard to asylum politics also did not impact significantly the levels of Europeanization in both countries’ social movements. The author contends that these somewhat surprising results have to do with the fact that asylum policies are a global concern and are less rooted in local conditions than, say, agricultural policies. Furthermore, asylum politics is a field in which EU competences are high and therefore national paradigms are less important. Hence, the author concludes, “European social movements that overcome national specificities are more likely to emerge around the contestation of policies that relate to global issues and that constitute a priority in the agenda of European institutions” (p. 231).

Distinguishing three different spaces of mobilization—the national, the transnational, and the European—the author distinguishes humanitarian from politicized movements and argues that both show different relations to the spaces of mobilization. Whereas the humanitarian movements address the national and the European spaces separately, the politicized movement address both spaces simultaneously. The consequent fragmentation of pro-asylum movements is due to the polycentric and multi-level nature of European governance. Humanitarian associations have greater access at the EU level, as they adapt better to discourses of expertise and lobbying techniques, whereas more politicized movements rely on mobilizing the public sphere outside of EU institutions.

Another important conclusion of the book is that Europeanization does not replace the nation-centered activities of pro-asylum movements. The latter remain important and Europeanization is seen largely as an extension from the level of the nation-state. At the same time, the author shows that these social movements direct similar protest action at the EU as they do with regard to nation-states. In other words: the EU is increasingly treated by those social movements as a state-like actor which seems to confirm a process of “statization” of the EU that is much discussed in the literature on the European Union. The study also produces much evidence that a European public sphere is emerging, albeit one that is highly fragmented and diffuse. Overall, this book will be of great interest to anyone working in the field of Europeanization of social movements and Europeanization processes in general. It will also be of great benefit to scholars interested in asylum policies in Europe.

Stefan Berger
Ruhr-Universität Bochum

stefan.berger@rub.de

Copyright © 2018 by the Society for French Historical Studies, all rights reserved. The Society for French Historical Studies permits the electronic distribution of individual reviews for nonprofit educational purposes, provided that full and accurate credit is given to the author, the date of publication, and the location of the review on the H-France website. The Society for French Historical Studies reserves the right to withdraw the license for edistribution/republication of individual reviews at any time and for any specific case. Neither bulk redistribution/republication in electronic form of more than five percent of the contents of *H-France Review* nor republication of any amount in print form will be permitted without permission. For any other proposed uses, contact the Editor-in-Chief of H-France. The views posted on *H-France Review* are not necessarily the views of the Society for French Historical Studies.

ISSN 1553-9172