Five Stars and a Cricket. Beppe Grillo Shakes Italian Politics

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The article focuses on a new political player: the Five Star Movement led by the comedian Beppe Grillo. The party lies at the junction between different organisational models and conceptions of democracy: it combines an online and an offline presence; it has 'horizontal' structural elements, but a top-down decision-making process; it is positioned 'beyond' ideologies, while its electorate comes from various political families. The work considers the history, message, leader, organisation and electoral base of the movement, as well as the political opportunity structure that facilitated its growth in 2012 and the challenges it faces in the delicate phase of institutionalisation.

For some time now a new actor has been present on the Italian political scene, attracting interest from scholars and observers at both a national and international level – the MoVimento 5 Stelle ('Five Stars Movement') led by Beppe Grillo (whose surname, in Italian, means 'cricket'), hereinafter referred to as the M5S or MoVimento[1]. The M5S has made internet and the potential offered by Web 2.0 one of its major organisational resources, but also a fundamental element of its conception of politics and democracy. However, the mobilisation stimulated and encouraged by the M5S does not just take place online but also offline in local communities. This has given rise to an innovative experience in Italian politics. In some ways, it can be likened to that of other emerging groups in Europe, especially to the various expressions of the pirate party, though it has certain specificities that set it apart.

One of the most significant aspects in this regard is the character and role of its leader. His profile differs both from that of the traditional professional politician and from that of the various figures who, in the last twenty years, have come to Italian politics from professions, associations and institutions (businesspeople, magistrates, union leaders, university professors). In fact, Grillo comes from the world of show business. He is a comedian with a rather particular background regarding his relationship with politics and television. He is one of the figures most active in giving

voice to the anti-political sentiment that is making a deep impact on the orientation of Italian citizens in the 2010s. But he also animates such sentiment: a political entrepreneur who mobilises resources, activating the potential 'protest energy' widespread in a considerable section of public opinion. Also interesting (and controversial) is his role within the MoVimento: he is the inspiration and mouthpiece of participation from the bottom up, but, at the same time, he also exercises a total control over the movement's strategic choices.

An important surge in the *grillino* phenomenon took place at the local elections held in 2012. The results confirmed the upward trend of the M5S, which has become a major actor on the Italian political scene. It is a subject of the 'new transition' that started in Italian politics with the end of the Berlusconi government (and possibly the Berlusconi era) in November 2011 (Ceccarini, Diamanti & Lazar 2012). The MoVimento is progressively filling the 'void' left by the traditional parties. In fact, the de-structuring of the Italian party system, already under way for some time, accelerated significantly in 2011 (Bosco & McDonnell 2012). The global economic crisis undoubtedly favoured the growing popularity of the M5S: uncertainty about the future and the demand for protection clashed with the anti-crisis measures, stoking the anti-party sentiment. If the fall of the Berlusconi government marked the end of an era in Italian politics, and started the transition from the Second to the Third Republic, the M5S, together with Mario Monti's government of technocrats, seem to express the most interesting elements of the new phase.

This article examines the structure of political opportunities (Tarrow 1994) that led to the success of *grillismo* in 2012. But it is also an opportunity to try to explain what the M5S is today: what organisational model it propounds, what challenges it poses for the system and what challenges it has to deal with internally. More generally, the aim of this work is to shed light on the main characteristics of the M5S, and to see whether they can be read from a perspective of continuity or change with respect to the distinguishing features of the Second Republic's political system: a system marked by the personalisation and presidentialisation of politics (Poguntke & Webb 2005), and by the birth of personal parties (Calise 2010, Bordignon 2011).

To answer these questions, the article has been divided into six sections: the first one briefly sketches the history of the MoVimento and its leader; the second outlines the content and style of *grillismo* by describing the political message of its leader (in public appearances and as a blogger); the third concentrates on the innovative organisation of the movement; the fourth analyses the structure of opportunities which, over time, has enabled the movement to grow and to become, in 2012, a significant force in national politics; the next section draws on survey data to examine the transformation of the M5S's electoral base following its rapid growth; and the sixth and final section pulls together the threads and offers some concluding remarks.

Grillo and the Crickets: The Whole History

To understand the experience and political vision of the M5S, it is necessary to examine Grillo's whole career: from being a comedian and a scourge, in his shows, of political and economic power, to his role as a full-fledged political entrepreneur, web guru and founder of one of the most interesting novelties on the Italian political scene. Grillo's involvement in politics can be divided into at least four major phases (that overlap partially from a chronological point of view).

From TV to City Squares

Grillo became a celebrity in the 1970s and 1980s as an actor, comedian and television presenter, working on a number of successful programmes broadcast by the RAI, Italy's public television network. During the crisis years of the First Republic, Grillo was a safe bet to obtain high audience ratings, but his increasingly anti-establishment views made him an awkward figure in the eyes of the powers that be. In 1986, a caustic quip about the Socialists in government, described as thieves, led to him being ousted from the RAI. This marked the beginning of a rocky period when he was in and out of television, which came to an end when he left it definitively in 1993. His *persona non grata* status turned into a voluntary and polemical choice to avoid any television appearances—a proudly paraded 'exclusion'. From the middle of the 1990s, he worked in theatres, sports centres and city squares, where Grillo performed monologues consisting of a mixture of satire and carefully documented denunciation. He focused, in particular, on a number of big scandals that shook the economic and financial worlds.

The 'Discovery' of the Web and the V-Days

Supporters of Grillo, made up of fans of his touring shows, found a new home on the web in the 2000s. Grillo, who used to detest computers, to the point of destroying one at the end of each of his shows, became an enthusiast of the web. In 2005 he created the blog beppegrillo.it, where his political initiatives would then take shape. The blog has been remarkably successful: in the same year it was launched, *Time* magazine nominated Grillo as one of its European Heroes of the year in the media world, describing him as a cross between the physicality of John Belushi and the social conscience of José Bové; in 2008, *The Observer* ranked beppegrillo.it ninth in a classification of the world's most influential blogs; and the following year, *Forbes* put the Italian blogger seventh in its Web Celebs list.

On 22 November 2005, the *International Herald Tribune* featured a page, self-financed through the blog, about the Clean Up Parliament initiative, highlighting the presence of '23 MPs convicted of a variety of crimes and yet [who] are allowed to sit in Parliament and represent their citizens'. In the meantime, Grillo continued to tour Italy: his stage performances and his activities as a blogger became intertwined,

gradually giving shape to his political message and raising the consciousness of his public. He then invited his community of followers on the blog to organise themselves independently through the beppegrillo.meetup.com platform. The peak of this ascendant phase coincided with the first big event in a public square: the Vaffanculo Day (or V-Day), which can be translated as the 'Fuck Off Day'. On 8 September 2007, in the main square of Bologna, 350,000 signatures were collected for a bill to be presented by the general public, proposing that: a) no Italian citizen who has been found guilty at any one of the three levels of justice envisaged by the Italian legal system can stand for Parliament; b) no Italian citizen can be elected to Parliament for more than two terms (valid retroactively); c) parliamentary candidates must be voted into office by preference voting.

From Civic Lists of Candidates to the M5S

During the course of the V-Day, Grillo stated his intention to act as a kind of guarantor for certain civic lists, awarding them his own 'warranty label'. And in the first of his 'political communiques', published on beppegrillo.it, he announced that he would not be running in the general elections of 2008, deemed to be 'against the constitution' (PC1, 2008)[2], because the electoral law, based on closed lists of candidates, did not allow electors to choose their own representatives through preference voting. The 'new Renaissance' (*ibidem*) would start from the local elections, where various lists of candidates described as 'friends of Beppe Grillo' were put up. The years 2008 and 2009 saw the election of the first members on local councils. Grillo also backed the election to the European Parliament of two independent candidates, Luigi De Magistris and Sonia Alfano, in the lists of Italia dei Valori (Italy of the Values, IDV), the party led by Antonio Di Pietro, the former magistrate who had played a leading role in the 'Clean Hands' inquiry in the early 1990s.

Although the logo had already been used in the local elections, the M5S was not officially established until October 2009. There was just one prerequisite for joining: not being a member of a political party. For anyone wishing to run for office there was the further requirement of not having been convicted of a penal offence. The MoVimento logo was designed with five stars, representing the focal issues of its mission: the safeguarding of public *water* and the *environment*, the growth of *public transport* and *connectivity*, and *development*. At the regional elections in 2010, the M5S ran in five regions, winning over half a million votes, with peaks of six per cent in Emilia-Romagna (seven per cent for the candidate for governor, Giovanni Favia) and four per cent in Piedmont (where the M5S's performance also proved decisive to the overall outcome). At the local elections in 2011, the M5S put up candidates in 75 municipalities, and achieved further important successes, including 9.5 per cent of the vote in Bologna.

In the meantime, Grillo kept up his commitment to demonstrations in public squares. Just after the 2008 elections he held the V2-Day in Turin: while the first 'fuck off' had been directed at the political parties and Parliament, the second targeted

journalists. The date he chose for the event was 25 April (a public holiday in Italy, commemorating Liberation Day), attributing to it a new symbolic value: 'On 25 April [1945] we freed ourselves from Nazi fascism. Sixty-three years later we can free ourselves from the fascism of the news media' (PC8, 2008). In the Autumn of 2010 Grillo supporters met in Cesena for a musical (and political) event called 'Five Star Woodstock', in which the MoVimento's manifesto was presented.

The Triumph of 2012 and the Crumbling of Internal Unity

The 2012 local elections, especially the first round on 6–7 May, marked a turning point in the political course of the M5S. In the first months of the year, opinion polls were already indicating a significant surge in electoral support. More than any other political player, the M5S managed to capitalise on the window of opportunity offered by the economic crisis and the social discontent about the new government's austerity measures, in addition to the climate of increasing hostility towards the traditional parties, at the centre of investigations into corruption charges.

The MoVimento's electoral success gave further impetus to its advance. In the municipalities where it ran, it obtained just under nine per cent. Compared with the data for the regional elections in 2010, it more than doubled its electoral clout: in the 43 municipalities with more than 15,000 inhabitants where it was present in both elections[3], the M5S's support rose from less than four to over ten per cent. It reached double figures in as many as 31 large municipalities (out of 74): in Veneto and Emilia-Romagna it came close to or exceeded 20 per cent, but also obtained significant results in other Northern regions. With 14 per cent of votes, it nearly got through to the run-off vote in Genoa, Liguria's regional capital. These results were undoubtedly not 'representative' of the national electorate: the approximately 100 municipalities where the MoVimento put up a candidate in 2012 are concentrated in the urban areas of the Centre-North (Pinto & Vignati 2012). However, this performance did give the party a prominent position in the national political arena.

Compared to 2010, the M5S's capacity to field local candidates had grown considerably. Moreover, in these elections, it completed its metamorphosis from being a voice of 'protest' or of a minority (albeit active and noisy) within local elective assemblies to being a full-blown (local) government force. Overall, there were more than 150 *grillini* sitting on local councils. Above all, in 2012, the MoVimento managed, for the first time, to get four mayors elected. Of these, the election of Federico Pizzarotti in Parma, an important city in Emilia Romagna, caused the biggest stir, attracting the attention of the national and foreign media even more. This further broadened the consensus and potential voting support of the movement. Thanks in part to the parallel processes of demobilisation and disalignment of the electorate in the weeks following the elections of May 2012, the opinion polls recorded a new surge in voting intentions in favour of the M5S. The regional elections in Sicily, held on 28 October 2012, offered further confirmation of this trend. Grillo embarked on an electoral tour of the island, and, in a context distinguished by great fragmentation, the

M5S won 15 per cent of the vote, making it the first party, even though the governor's post was won by the candidate supported by the Partito Democratico (Democratic Party, PD) and the Unione di Centro (Union of Democratic Centre, UDC).

In the summer of 2012 the M5S was the third, and according to some opinion polls, second most popular party with Italians: ahead of the Popolo della Libertà (People of Freedom, PDL) and not far behind the PD. Weighing undoubtedly on these estimates is the sizeable proportion of voters – over a third of the total – who have taken refuge in the grey zone of uncertainty and abstention. Nonetheless the M5S appears able to intercept significant numbers of voters disaffected with the main parties. In 2013, as the general elections of February 24–25 approach, the M5S still ranks third around 16 per cent. The MoVimento, however, is also marked by the crumbling of internal unity, due to rifts between Grillo and some local leaders over the issue of internal democracy (as we shall see below).

The Talking Cricket and His Political Message

A profile, albeit provisional, of this new political actor can be drawn up by examining the political message proposed by the M5S. The 'identikit' can be sketched out around a series of points: the issues at the centre of its political battles; the main targets of its polemics; the role of the web and the associated notion of democracy; the style and charismatic traits of the leadership; and the movement's position within the party system.

Old and New Issues

A number of themes run through Grillo's different 'lives', and form the backbone of the M5S's programme. His monologues have always been pervaded by political and pre-political questions. The core of his message concerns battles on environmental issues, combined with harsh criticism of the economic and political power of the big industrial groups. His shows go hand in hand with major whistle-blowing/awareness raising campaigns on environmental sustainability, food quality and transport. In some cases, the initiatives are launched by Grillo himself, and then fuelled by word of mouth on the web. In other instances, he promotes actions already embarked on by spontaneously organised citizens' groups, giving them visibility and importance with a wider public. One example are the 2011 referendums promoted by the IDV against the privatisation of water services and the return of nuclear energy, together with the question of legitimate impediment.[4]

Traditionally, the M5S leader is also critical of consumerism and money. Some of the various initiatives directed at the banking system and specific industrial groups are distinguished by their impact and mode of action. One of these was his careful reconstruction of the financial scandal that was to involve Parmalat (a large dairy products and agro-food multinational), about which he gave advance warning, to the point that Grillo was called to testify as a witness in the judicial investigations and the

subsequent trial. Another recurrent target is the telecommunications system: in 2006 he launched a share-action, obtaining thousands of proxies from small Telecom Italia shareholders, in order to attend the board meeting and demand the resignation of the company's chief executives. The same strategy was used again at the beginning of 2013, after scandal rocked one of Italy's major banking groups, the Monte dei Paschi di Siena. Representing some stockholders, Grillo went to the extraordinary shareholders' meeting where he harshly attacked the bank's executive board, supervisory bodies and the PD (traditionally close to the MPS). In recent years, he has also dealt with issues regarding work and employment, especially workplace fatalities and temporary employment, about which he wrote a book, *Schiavi Moderni* (Modern Slaves), based on accounts and experiences gathered on beppegrillo.it. His stand on sensitive issues such as public security or immigration, have aroused controversy. In particular, Grillo has declared his opposition to the granting of citizenship to the children of immigrants born in Italy, according to the principle of *ius soli*. Previously, he had strongly criticised the enlargement of the EU to include Romania, and the presence of Roma in Italy, evoking the sacredness of the borders of the fatherland. Such views are probably designed to tune in to the wavelength of the Lega Nord (Northern League, LN) and right-wing parties.

The War Against the 'Two Castes'

Amongst the various targets of Grillo and his supporters, two occupy a position of special importance: the political system and the news media, regarded as a single corrupt entity. Grillo's assault on the political class has to be read in the light of the two major crises in the Italian political system in recent years the transition from the First to the Second Republic, and the crisis of the latter. Grillo can be viewed as one of the main interpreters of the pervasive anti-political sentiment in public discourse in Italy. His attacks are stoked by widespread indignation about the political ruling class, which has become commonly known as the 'caste' (Rizzo & Stella 2007). The parties and career politicians are seen as a self-referential elite, chiefly interested in defending their privileges and their ties with the economic world. This criticism extends to Parliament as well, considered to be illegitimate in that it is not elected through a system of preferences. Candidates are selected by the parties, and a large number of parliamentarians have convictions: 'when we talk about unlawful people, we naturally think of unauthorised windscreen cleaners or car park attendants, and whores, while the real unlawful people are in our Parliament' (S, V-Day 2007). Other matters Grillo frequently picks out for attention are the lack of transparency of public authorities and, in particular, the system of the public funding of parties.

The other 'caste' targeted by Grillo is that of journalists, daily newspapers and television companies. His criticism of the news media mirrors that of the parties: they are accused of being in cahoots with big political and economic interests, of hiding the truth and of dulling the consciousness of citizens. The three referendums proposed during the V2-Day (2008) demanded the abolition of public funding for newspapers;

of the order of journalists; and of the (Gasparri) law regulating radio and television broadcasting.[5]

Internet and Bottom-up Democracy

Grillo's discovery of the web was not just an organisational turning point, but also a programmatic and even ideological one. From around 2005, there was growing space in Grillo's vocabulary for words like connectivity, Wi-Max, open source, creative commons and copyleft. He has come out explicitly in favour of 'fantastic piracy', to the extent of prompting many observers to liken his MoVimento to the pirate parties established first in Scandinavia and then in various European countries. In the M5S's message, the web is a tool for breaking up the news media system and for monitoring those in power. This can be achieved because internet makes it possible to get round the double intermediation of journalists and political parties because on the web 'no one is a journalist, we are all journalists' (PC10, 2008) and, at the same time, the web 'makes people aware and encourages new forms of aggregation and participation' (PC43, 2011). In this way, Grillo's 'triple step' is completed: laughter, counter-information and political action (De Maria, Fleischner & Targia 2008).

Furthermore, it is around the web that the *grillini* construct their own idea of democracy, founded on a *direct* relationship between citizens and the *res publica*: 'The country', according to Grillo, 'can only be rebuilt from the bottom up. By citizens who turn themselves into the state' (PC21, 2009). 'Each person counts for one' is a recurrent refrain in Grillo's discourse: with the web, political delegation itself has no further reason to exist. Citizens, in so far as they are the real 'owners' of the state, must exercise a constant action of guidance and control. Politicians are, at the most, 'employees' with a temporary mandate, fixed-term workers continually monitored and *sub iudice*. Grillo also stresses the importance of aspects of *lifestyle* politics: 'It is up to us to do politics everyday, a little bit more each time. Everyday, when we do the shopping, when we travel by bus, when we are at a stop in front of a traffic light, when we go to school' (S, V-Day, 2007).

Grillo's rhetoric oscillates between correction and rejection of representative democracy, defined by the journalist Massimo Fini, from the stage of the first V-Day, as a fraud: 'a way of sticking it up people's arses with their own consent'. Initially Grillo seemed still to 'believe' in the paths of direct democracy envisaged by the Italian constitutional order. At a certain point, however, his position shifted abruptly: 'The time of referendums and bills submitted by the general public is over. They use the sheets of signatures to wipe their arses. [. . .] I will never again ask for anything from this political class. To change [Italy], politicians have to be replaced by the citizens' (PC15, 2008). For these reasons elected members in the MoVimento's lists have to respect certain rules designed to ensure they act in compliance with the view of politics as a form of civil service and not as a career: a limited number of mandates; the self-reduction of salaries; the rejection of electoral reimbursements and of any kind of public funding; the obligation to submit themselves periodically to the judgement of

the electors through votes on the web; and maximum transparency in dealings with citizens (M5S representatives often film council sessions and make them available on the web).

A Populist Discourse

The concept of political representation proposed by the M5S should be understood, then, as representativeness. The leader underlines this whenever 'his' candidates run for elections: the *resemblance* between the public square and the MoVimento is explicitly presented as an alternative to the *distance* between citizens and politics: 'They are all people like you. They are your mirror, democracy back to front' (EM, Siena, 2012). 'They are your people, taken from here and placed there [. . .] Surveyors, an engineer, a student, a lawyer, a drug dealer to keep our morale up a bit there are all sorts' (EM, Feltre, 2012). Politics, for Grillo, is a simple matter: the lack of professionalism and the inexperience of political employees are regarded as values, offering a guarantee that these people are extraneous to the circuits of power.

It is a clearly anti-elitist approach, typical of populist rhetoric, which harks back to the virtues of the people as the source of political legitimacy (Meny & Surel 2002), and draws a clear-cut line between 'us' and 'them': between the morality of ordinary people, uncorrupted by power, and an elite that is by definition separate and self-referential. The majority of the political communiques published on beppegrillo.it end with the sentence: 'they will never surrender . . . Neither will we.' What Grillo proposes is a black-and-white world without any shades of grey. Of the pairs of opposites that can be found in Grillo's discourse, his favourite one is also the most radical: the antithesis between life and death. 'The political parties are dead. Citizens need to detach themselves from the dead while they are still in time' (PC19, 2009). 'Politics is long since dead. Only vultures remain, who divide up the body of Italy' (PC28, 2009). Other recurrent contrasts are between truth and deceit, but also between small and big: 'We are like David and Goliath. We only have the web, the MeetUps, our enthusiasm and my meetings. They have all the rest. We are the last, the excluded, the derided. That's why we will succeed' (PC28, 2009). Another opposition dear to Grillo is between new/young and old: 'These politicians don't know what they are talking about. They talk about the future. They are seventy years old and they talk about a future they will never see. We need young blood' (S, V-Day, 2007).

The Leader as Message

Another fundamental component of the populist repertoire is the presence of a charismatic leader and Grillo undoubtedly fits the bill perfectly. Above all, he is a great showman: he knows all the rhetorical techniques to enthuse his audience. The constant leaps in his argumentation serve to keep the public's attention during the long monologues. Comedy is the first weapon he uses to take on his political adversaries, to make fun of them and to show, finally, that the emperor has no clothes.

The palace of power described by Grillo is populated by strange characters, each with their own nickname. Of the last three prime ministers, Prodi is 'Valium', Berlusconi is 'Psychodwarf' or 'Tarmac Head', and Monti 'Rigor Montis'.

The leader's personal life story is always present, implicitly or explicitly, in his speeches. The aim is to underline his extraneousness to the establishment. Like all anti-political leaders, he uses his background as an outsider as an asset to be exploited on the political market: the misfortunes of a person unacceptable to the powers-that-be, excluded from the media, and, for this reason, in a position of having to reinvent his career. Exclusion and underestimation are, by extension, the lot of his people as well. But, as in every success story, they are followed by redemption, by rebirth, through the discovery of alternative channels of action, and ultimate success.

His verbal and non-verbal language, his style and even his body serve to reinforce the message (Calise 2010). The shouts, the wide-open eyes and the sweat on his brow in the shows and meetings suggest the indignation, exasperation and suffering of the citizen in the face of a degenerate system. In Autumn 2012, he opened the electoral campaign for the regional elections in Sicily by swimming across to the island: 'I'm 64 years old and I have physically crossed the Strait of Messina. I am a different man!' (EM, Messina 2012).

The use of a coarse, everyday language stresses that he is in tune with the man on the street. The debunking style, which often slides over the edge into insult, emphasises his desire to distance himself from the political establishment. Grillo is therefore also part of his 'public', the guru and preacher of a new 'religion'. But he is a great divulger as well. Although his experience as a 'comedian in politics' recalls that of the French comedian Coluche (Lazar 2007), in some respects his shows-meetings more closely resemble a Michael Moore documentary, as Tobias Jones commented in *The Guardian* (2012). Grillo presents facts, reconstructs 'cases' of public interest and illustrates scientific theories, often drawing on the support of specialists. This information is delivered, however, in a simple language, which makes the solutions appear within grasp.

The M5S's Position in the Party System

The distance from the party system is also underscored by the rejection of any scheme of political classification. At every public manifestation, Grillo lays into anyone who tries to display political flags in the square. 'The MoVimento 5 Stelle does not have ideologies, but ideas' (PC33, 2010). Above all, he refuses to align the movement on the most traditional political axes: the M5S is neither left-wing or right-wing, but 'ahead of' or 'above'. This approach also helps to stress the similarity and connivance of the other political forces: 'Right and left do not exist. What exists is a business group. Italy is its business' (PC10, 2008). For this reason, the two main Italian parties are considered the same, to the extent that he refers to them in his speeches as PDL and PD-minus-the-L.

The 'Grillo phenomenon' can, in certain ways, be tied in with the different forms of anti-Berlusconian mobilisation/opposition that developed in Italy from at least as early as 2001. As regards legality and, more in general, the moralisation of public life, Grillo raises some issues already pursued by left-wing grassroots activists. But over the course of time he has tended to engage with the different voices of the Italian left in a spirit of competition rather than of collaboration. A crucial step in this direction was his provocative self-candidacy in the primaries held by the Partito Democratico in 2009. His application to join the party was, however, rejected. In 2012, during the electoral campaign in 'red' Tuscany, he declared: 'I expected the left to welcome us with open arms. And that they would say, "let's fight the battle together". Instead they were the first to offend us' (EM, Siena, 2012). Moreover, his previously mentioned views on immigration and also certain positions on tax matters 'if we paid double the amount of taxes, they would eat double the amount, they would steal double' (EM, Feltre, 2012) seem to place him in the sphere of the right wing and the message of the Lega Nord. During the Tsunami Tour for the 2013 electoral campaign, Grillo went so far as to propose the elimination of the unions, 'a structure as old as the political parties' (EM, Brindisi, 2013). Such an attitude also emerges in relation to the sensitive issue of alliances. In an early phase, the M5S leader seemed to leave the door open, but he then shut it by declaring that 'the MoVimento 5 Stelle does not want any deadly embraces with the corpses of the left and of anti-Berlusconism' (PC35, 2010).

The Organisation: the Blog, the Meetups and M5S

One of the key organisational resources of the M5S is the web, in particular Web 2.0 applications such as the blog and meetup.com. In fact, the MoVimento revolves around the blog beppegrillo.it, set up in January 2005, and has a local-level organisation thanks to the decision, made in July of the following year, to activate the *meetups*.[6] Visitors to the blog were invited by Grillo to use this platform to organise themselves independently in local activist groups. At a central level, the distinguishing features are great professionalism, the availability of sophisticated technical skills and a strong orientation towards political marketing. At the peripheral level, groups of 'friends of Beppe Grillo' form the backbone of the organisation.

Observers tend to associate the *meetup* groups with the leader and his anti-political message. But actually they are instances of local-level participation and activism with a significant degree of civic and political involvement. Using web technology, the groups are engaged, from the bottom up, in providing information, in mobilisation and in active citizenship of a *monitoring* nature (Keane 2009). They deal with local issues, and forge links between society and institutions. The campaigns, whistleblowing, inquiries and reportages published on the web make real problems more visible, stimulating citizen involvement and commitment. The web was also used, in Autumn 2012, for online M5S primaries. Grillo called them *parlamentarie*, their purpose being to select parliamentary candidates for the forthcoming general election. Criticism was raised

about the transparency of the method used, and the low number of participants, about 40,000 according to the MoVimento sources.

In January 2013 there were 708 *meetup* groups, dotted around in 574 cities from 13 countries around the world, from the USA to Australia. However, the vast majority are active in Italy. There are over 99,000 members. The largest groups are in Naples, with over four thousand members, followed by Catania and Bologna, with around two thousand. The groups in Rome, Milan and Florence are a little below that figure, while those of Turin, Genoa, Palermo, Brescia, Bergamo, Venice and Modena have over one thousand. Many groups are made up of a few hundred or a few dozen people. Some have just a handful.[7]

In this way, the organisational structure started a process of decentralisation, effectively marking the birth of the M5S (Lanfrey 2011, p. 146). In a set-up like this, the blog is viewed as a locus for active citizenship and as a space for interaction between *meetups*. The MoVimento can thus be regarded as a 'meta-organisation' (*ibidem*, pp. 144–45), that is, a web-like structure consisting of micro organisations conducting a heterogeneous range of activities. These groups have considerable independence and are only partially coordinated, at the central level, by the blog, and therefore by Grillo and his team. In other words, it is a structure resembling a stratarchical organisation, where the parts at both a horizontal and vertical level have varying degrees of reciprocal autonomy (Carty 2004). In certain respects the M5S enjoys the flexibility typical of parties operating according to a franchise system. It interacts freely with the diversity of contexts and local issues. Through the mobilisation of the *meetups*, various independent initiatives are pursued in the local context. At the same time, however, there is also a rather particular relationship with the higher level. The 'proprietary' and top-down management of the Five Stars symbol makes elected members subordinate to non-appealable sanctions (expulsions) from the central node of the membership network, which is in Grillo's hands.

Provision is made for such action in the 'non-statute',[8] the seven articles of which regulate various aspect of the organisation. Article 3 is particularly important for our purposes. It concerns the logo with which the M5S is associated: it is 'registered in the name of Beppe Grillo, the sole owner of the rights of use of the said logo'. Essentially, the power to grant or refuse, maintain or withdraw, the political and electoral use of the symbol by local groups is concentrated in the hands of the leader, who therefore has the faculty to expel from the movement militants and elected members not to his liking. What the organisation lacks, then, is a genuine space for democratic discussion. In this sense, the M5S is dissimilar to the pirate party, which has adopted instruments and practices of liquid democracy, by employing technologies for the decision-making process, such as the *LiquidFeedback* platform.

The question of internal democracy is a big issue, which exploded in the Autumn of 2012, when 'stolen' off-the-air comments made by Giovanni Favia, (at that time) a leading M5S politician in Emilia Romagna, were broadcasted. In the video, he complains about the absence of debate, and the role of 'overlord' played by Grillo and Gianroberto Casaleggio. The latter is president and founding partner of Casaleggio

Associati, which offers marketing and web strategy consultancy to companies. He also oversees the M5S's presence on the web: in short, Casaleggio is the spin doctor, ideologist, and, in some people's view, the man at the helm behind the MoVimento. The video, broadcast by the programme *Piazzapulita* on La7 television in September 2012, testifies to growing restlessness among M5S activists: ill feeling about the top-down management, the way decisions are formulated and the handling of internal dissent. The expulsions of some local members of the movement, including Favia himself and Federica Salsi (the latter for having taken part in a well-known political talk show), decided and posted on the web by Grillo (and Casaleggio), have caused a particular stir.

But criticisms of this kind did not just arise after the Summer of 2012. Casaleggio himself, some months earlier in response to charges of being the 'puppeteer' who controls the MoVimento in the leader's shadow wrote a letter to one of Italy's leading daily papers to clarify his role:'[...] together [with Grillo] we designed the beppegrillo.it blog, proposed the Meetup network [...], organised the V-Days in Bologna and Turin, the Five Star Woodstock event in Cesena and other national meetings, like the one in Milan on 4 October 2009, where [...] the Five Star Movement started. For those people asking who is behind Grillo, or who talks about a "shady marketing company", I would like to point out that I have never been "behind" Beppe Grillo, but at his side [...]. Essentially, I am the cofounder of this movement together with him. With Beppe Grillo I wrote the "non statute", the cornerstone of the Five Star Movement' (Casaleggio 2012).

The Five Star Bus at the 2012 Stop

The structure of opportunities which in 2012 enabled the M5S to become a relevant political force consists of several factors: the ongoing crisis of the Italian party system; the rise of anti-political sentiment among the public; the consequences of the international economic downturn, and the arena offered to the new party by a bunch of local elections.

A System in Crisis

The Italian party system has changed profoundly in recent years. Its de-structuring became especially evident at the end of 2011, after the fall of the Berlusconi government. This led to the political unfreezing of the system, characterised by changes between and within the parties. The 'void' created by the shrinking of existing parties, the redefinition of the political supply and, more in general, the opening up of a competitive electoral space have ended up benefiting the protagonism of the M5S – a phenomenon particularly visible in the middle of 2012. The bipolar political supply – since 2008 structured around the two largest parties, the PD (centre-left) and the PDL (centre-right) – crumbled and then partially re-formed. From November 2011 to the end of 2012 the main parties, together with the UDC and the centrist groups, all

supported Monti's technocrat government, while the PD's and the PDL's former allies, respectively the IDV and the Lega Nord , remained in opposition.

In the centre-right camp, both the PDL and the LN have experienced a very turbulent phase. Inside the PDL there has been lots of debate about the possibility of changing the party's name and symbol, and, above all, about the choice of the candidate for prime minister. The idea of holding primaries, which seemed feasible in the Autumn of 2012, was subsequently dropped, because Berlusconi, after a series of announcements and denials, finally decided to run again as the head of the centre-right. The LN, following a scandal about the management of public funds, chose Roberto Maroni (the former interior minister under Berlusconi) as its new federal secretary. Furthernore, after a year on opposite sides of the fence, just weeks before the general elections of February 2013, the LN finally reached an electoral pact with the PDL.

The centre-left camp, indicated by polls as the likely winner of the general election, shows a number of internal problems. First, the PD remains divided into a leftist and secular wing and a democratic Catholic one (Diamanti & Ceccarini 2007). In addition, the younger generation of the PD, led by the mayor of Florence Matteo Renzi, has been seeking to increase its clout in the party. Renzi ran in the primaries for the coalition leadership in October 2012, and though he did not win, his good showing weighs in this component's favour. As the renewal of the political class is a deeply felt issue with the public, Renzi continues to be something of a beacon (for the present and, above all, for the future). The winner of the primaries, the PD secretary general Pier Luigi Bersani, has the non easy task to manage the different spirits of the coalition, hemmed in as he is between an electoral pact with the radical left Sinistra Ecologia Libertà (Left. Ecology. Liberty, SEL), led by Nichi Vendola, and a possible post-electoral pact with Monti's fledgling centrist grouping.

The Anti-political Climate

The widespread social delegitimation of 'traditional' leaders and parties set the tone for the local elections in May 2012, with the ensuing growth of the M5S. Distrust toward parties and their leaders was made worse by various practices that came to light in the course of the year. These concerned the illegal, or, at the very least, questionable use of public funds allocated to the parties. The resulting judicial inquiries further weakened the party system. Big and small parties alike, from across the whole political spectrum, have been implicated.

In the Lega Nord, where the funds received as a state contribution for political activities were used in a far from transparent manner by the party leaders, strong tensions arose within the party and the grassroots militants. Umberto Bossi, the Lega's historic and charismatic leader for over 20 years, resigned as federal secretary following the involvement of some members of his family in the scandal. There was also a major scandal regarding the Margherita (Daisy), a centrist party which had merged with other political forces in 2007, giving rise to the PD. The former treasurer of the

Margherita was accused of embezzling large sums of money, allegedly used to buy property, the title deeds of which were in his name or that of fiduciaries. In Autumn 2012, similar cases came to light in other parties, in the assemblies and governments of two of Italy's biggest regions, Lazio and Lombardy, both governed by the PDL. The respective governors have now resigned, and the regional elections will be held in February, at the same time as the general elections. The IDV has also been implicated in similar episodes in Lazio. These cases, which cut across the board, have exacerbated the 'anti-caste' attitude in society and further strengthened the M5S.

The Economic Crisis as Background

Another factor favourable to the development of the MoVimento is the global economic and financial crisis. It impacts on the internal affairs of South European countries, putting pressure on political systems and governments (Bosco & Verney 2012). In the case of Italy, the crisis accelerated the end of Berlusconi's government and the formation of Monti's technocratic government. The latter was supported by an anomalous 'grand coalition' (PDL, PD and UDC). But while the country seems, at present, to have avoided default on its public debt, this is a very real risk for the parties, given their lack of credibility and the near-collapse of the party system (Bosco & McDonnell 2012).

The financial and economic crisis is one of the factors that explain the de-structuring of the system and the crisis of the parties, though certainly not the triggering one. But it has contributed, indirectly, to creating favourable conditions for the M5S's success. Economic crisis, as is known, undermines citizens' faith in those in office, who are called upon to provide social protection. The centre-right government led by Berlusconi felt the full impact of this situation, through to its fall in November 2011. Although Monti enjoyed high personal credibility, his anti-crisis measures have been harshly criticised by citizens for their social cost.[9] The lack of resources, the austerity measures and the increase in taxation frustrated public expectations and reinforced ill feeling. They also reduced tolerance of wasted resources in politics. Mismanagement of economic and financial resources, on the other hand, is a recurrent target of Grillo's rhetoric.

The Importance of Second-order Elections

The local elections in Spring 2012, followed by the Sicilian regional one in the Autumn, were particularly favourable to the M5S. These types of elections, like the European ones, are defined by political scientists as second-order elections, because citizens consider there is less at stake than in the first-order national ones. In Italy, however, the 'ideal-type' features of second-order elections are only partly reproduced. In fact, considerable value is always attributed to them, and they are not considered less important than the general ones, at least judging from the attention they receive in the media, the debate about the significance of the results and the voting figures. It is

interesting, however, that voters feel freer in second-order elections, and are more inclined to vote for parties they would not vote for in a first-order election such as protest parties or those with little chance of getting elected. Therefore, voters often use these elections as an opportunity to punish government parties. Or, sometimes, to reward new and perhaps even 'anti-system' forces in order to send a message of disaffection and dissent to mainstream parties. In the Italian context, it appears that these second-order elections have been deliberately used by electors to convey their strong disappointment in the political class, and to stimulate changes in political practices, using the M5S as a vehicle.

A MoVimento In Movement

The metaphor that best captures the sense of the M5S phenomenon at present is probably that of the bus:[10] the MoVimento can be viewed as a means of transport driven by its leader Grillo together with Casaleggio. In recent years the Five Star bus has attracted lots of new passengers, especially in the most recent phase. The composition of grassroots support has thus changed noticeably with respect to the early days. As it has grown quantitatively, the M5S electorate has also redefined itself qualitatively, becoming more similar to the profile of the Italian electorate. This metamorphosis is reflected in the development of the MoVimento, and in certain respects makes it more complicated to manage politically. As has already been stressed, the 2012 elections, though they only involved a limited number of voters and local councils, represented a very significant phase for the M5S. How has the party's electoral base changed? What are the salient features of the voters swelling the ranks of the movement?

The Metamorphosis of the Electoral Base

The data from Demos opinion polls conducted in 2007 at the time of the first V-Day offer a very precise profile of the supporters of Grillo's initiatives: young, well-educated, living in medium or large cities, and, naturally, with a higher than average rate of internet use. From a political point of view, the *grillini* declared themselves prevalently to have centre-left sympathies, while expressing some difficulty in positioning themselves on the left-right ideological axis, reminiscent of old political categories. This profile basically remained in place until 2011. But the widening of electoral support in 2012 brought important changes in socio-demographic characteristics and in the political origin of would-be M5S voters.

The results of opinion surveys carried out between 2010 and 2012 by Demos and analysed by the LaPolis Electoral Observatory of the University of Urbino 'Carlo Bo' make it possible to build up a sequence of identikits of the 'Five Star voter' taken in different moments.[11] The most significant variations can be seen in the dimensions of age, profession, geographic distribution, and political orientation, and they all suggest the 'normalisation' of the movement's electoral base. In fact, these variables
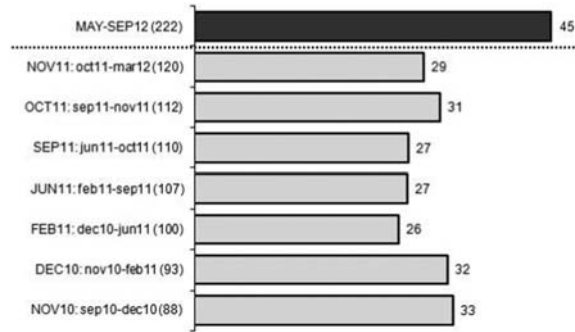
Figure 1 M5S voters' age: over 45 - trend 2010/2012 (percentage).
Source: Osservatorio Elettorale LaPolis (Università di Urbino 'Carlo Bo') based on Demos&Pi surveys.

suggest that the profile of the M5S voter is moving towards that of the average voter, which, in turn, leads to an increase in the internal heterogeneity of the MoVimento's electoral base.

The Socio-demographic Profile

Originally over-represented in the regions of the Centre and North(-East), the *grillini* now seem to be distributed fairly evenly throughout the country. Although the local elections of 2012 confirmed the previous territorial distribution and the continuing difficulty in organising lists in the South, the success in Sicily shows that the M5S can make inroads there as well. The distribution of people intending to vote M5S is now aligned to the distribution of Italian voters (with high growth rates precisely in the Southern regions). As for the urban dimension, the M5S electorate now reflects the distribution of the general population.

The marked prevalence of males (about 60 per cent of the electorate) was confirmed, while there were interesting age variations. The over-45 group has progressively become more significant (see Figure 1). While it previously oscillated around 30 per cent, an increase of about fifteen percentage points was recorded after the 2012 elections. The current figure is 45 per cent, which is still lower than the national average (57 per cent), confirming the profile of a young electorate.

The trend in the socio-professional categories is also interesting. The self-employed workers and entrepreneurs have grown from 7 to 18 per cent. At the same time, there has been a reduction in the size of employees, from almost 60 to below 50 per cent, though the latter is still above the Italian average. An increasingly composite base, in this respect, certainly makes it more complicated for the M5S to represent its voters and to adopt positions on issues such as employment.
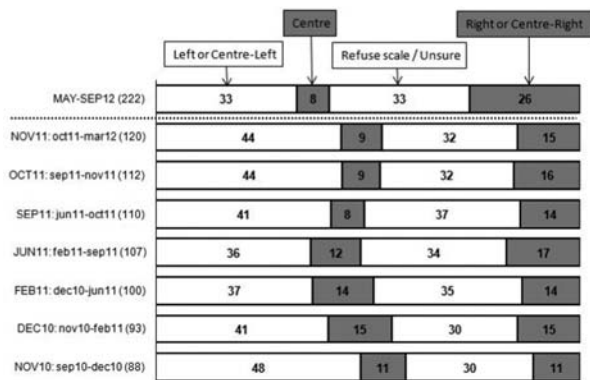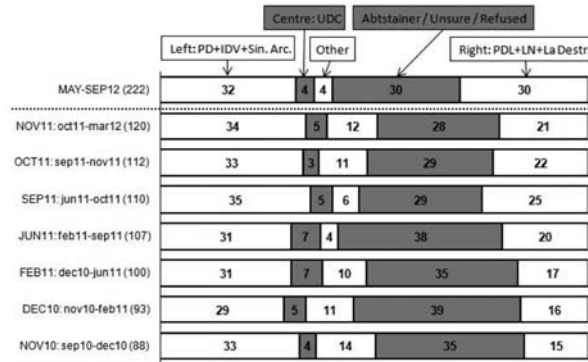
Figure 2 M5S voters' self-placement on the left-right axis - trend 2010/2012 (percentage). *Source*: Osservatorio Elettorale LaPolis (Università di Urbino 'Carlo Bo') based on Demos&Pi surveys.

The Political Profile

Corresponding to the redefinition of the sociographic features of Grillo's electoral base is a significant increase in its political heterogeneity. In this respect, the results of the Demos/LaPolis surveys are in line with findings from analysis conducted by the Centro Italiano Studi Elettorali and the Istituto Cattaneo (using ecological data).[12] Estimated electoral flows (in five large Centre-North municipalities) show that, among voters who chose the M5S in 2012, almost 40 per cent had voted for the IDV or LN in the 2010 regional elections. This suggests the idea of protest behind the vote. Furthermore, although Grillo and many of his supporters have always refused to be pigeon-holed according to traditional political divides, voters from the centre-left had always formed the largest segment of the M5S's base. Recently however, the most noticeable trend lies precisely in the growth of flows coming from the centre-right, which is consistent with the previously mentioned increase in support from the self-employed category.

If at the end of 2010 almost half (48 per cent) of M5S voters were from the left or centre-left, this proportion gradually shrunk to 33 per cent in surveys carried out after the May 2012 vote (Figure 2). At the same time, the amount of support from those with right and centre-right sympathies grew from 11 to 26 per cent. The movement now appears to have two wings – one oriented to the right and the other to the left; of similar weight, they account for about six voters out of ten. The proportion of those unable or unwilling to position themselves on the left-right axis remains stable at 33 per cent.

More explicit indications, which are in line with the ideological orientation of the movement's support base, emerge when considering voter preferences at the 2008 general elections. The proportion of M5S supporters that chose a centre-left party on that occasion – PD, IDV or the radical leftist Rainbow List (Lista Arcobaleno) –

Figure 3 M5S voters' distribution according to their voting choice at 2008 general elections - trend 2010/2012 (percentage).
Source: Osservatorio Elettorale LaPolis (Università di Urbino 'Carlo Bo') based on Demos&Pi surveys.

remains stable over time: a little over 30 per cent (Figure 3). However, from the second half of 2011, it is possible to note the growth in voters who had voted for a right-wing party - PDL, LN and La Destra (the Right): they almost doubled, from 15 per cent in 2010 to 30 per cent in surveys conducted in May and September 2012.

Furthermore, if the North-East regions (Veneto, Friuli Venezia-Giulia and the province of Trento) are considered, the fraction of votes wrested from the centre-right is actually the majority, as shown by data from a specific survey conducted by the Demos Observatory in the North-East. Here, 38 per cent of *grillini* had chosen the LN and Berlusconi's party in 2008. The data suggest that the M5S has taken over from the Lega in the role of 'protest party'; indeed, almost a quarter of M5S votes in the North-East came from the Lega Nord support base (22 per cent). In other words, the M5S seems not only to be pushing the LN back behind the line of the river Po, but also undermining the party in its traditional strongholds. In the electoral campaign held in the North-East on the eve of the 2012 vote, Grillo tried to tap the Lega vote, and did not reject the comparisons made between his movement and the original spirit of the Lega: 'when people call me "Bossi as he was at the beginning", I'm not offended, because he battled on the streets, in a vest, and shouted at Berlusconi: "You're *mafioso*". Do you remember? He said some really bold things. Then he entered the system. And the system is rotten' (EM, Feltre, 2012).

Between Old and New: The Challenges Facing the M5S

Politics and the parties are being shaken by a deep crisis of legitimacy. Economic problems, judicial investigations and lack of faith in the political class recall the situation in the early 1990s, when an already weakened system imploded under the

impetus of the 'Clean Hands' judicial investigations. This prompted the so-called *Italian political transition* towards the Second Republic. Berlusconi's entry into politics in 1994, and the twilight of Berlusconism that began in the Autumn of 2011, with the fall of his government, delimit this long phase. Now, the country is witnessing the beginning of a new transition. Where it will lead is hard to determine, but the M5S is certainly one of the major protagonists.

The 'X-ray' of the movement provided in this article makes it possible to take stock, in a necessarily provisional manner, of the positioning of Grillo's 'invention' in the evolution of Italian democracy, especially in terms of party model and the relationship between citizens and politics. The experience of this party it is hard to avoid this label now, even for a movement that defines itself as a 'non-party' is inscribed within the broader picture of the changes affecting the relations between society, politics and new forms of participation. The M5S combines an offline presence, in public squares, and an online presence on the internet: from the blog it has spread out to the local level, creating opportunities for involvement and for monitoring politics through the activism of the *meetups*.

One of the distinctive aspects of the web is that it fosters 'post-bureaucratic political groups' (Bimber 2003), characterised by the collective action of lightweight organisations that have weak relations with their militants. Activists mobilise to form single-event groups and single-issue groups. In this framework, the M5S marks a turning point based on the choice of the web as an organisational tool and as a conception of democracy. The movement promotes the idea of the *monitoring citizen*, countering the inactive television public with the committed web militants. It is a revolution that also concerns the MoVimento's inner functioning, and promises to extend to government activities by introducing instruments of *liquid democracy* that give citizens a direct role in shaping political and programme decisions, besides the selection of candidates.

On the other hand, the path taken by the M5S suggests a certain continuity with the past. The movement carries an anti-political charge that clashes with professional politicians and with the parties of the Second Republic, seen as cumbersome and hierarchic organisations, or, to use Grillo's language, 'zombies'. At the same time, the M5S is an actor with a permanent organisation, a high degree of professionalisation and a (web) marketing company embedded within its 'central committee'.

Finally, the establishment of the M5S has not changed the process of personalisation that has been going on for a long time in the Italian political system. A system which during the Second Republic has resembled the model of 'audience' democracy (Manin 1997). In fact, Grillo's party is a strongly personalised and in many ways 'owner-run' organisation led by a charismatic leader deploying a rhetoric with evident populist features.

As for internal democracy, a top-down, personalised management has already underscored the problematic issue of the control of dissent and the way criticism is handled within the organisation. The M5S's TV visibility/invisibility (Nizzoli 2012) played a key role in the recent enlargement of the electoral base. At the same time, Grillo is still the owner of the Five Star symbol, allowing him maximum discretion in

deciding who is in and who is out. This type of set-up seems to take to an extreme the characteristics of the business firm model of party organisation (Hopkin & Paolucci 1999), paradigmatically applied on the Italian political scene by Berlusconi and Forza Italia. On the other hand, in its relations with the peripheral structure, the M5S can be likened to the idea of the party as franchise organisation (Carty 2004).

The M5S seems to be positioned at the junction between different organisational models and different views of democracy. Behind such ambivalence it is possible to glimpse the challenges the MoVimento will have to address in the near future. Its success at the 2012 elections, and the upcoming electoral contest, pose several challenges: a) the ability of the M5S to draft shared programmes that suit all its political wings; b) the way candidates are selected; c) the structuring of mechanisms of internal democracy. The bus metaphor suggests why these challenges are not simple. Grillo (and Casaleggio) is driving a vehicle with very different subjects on board, who have climbed on at various moments, adding to the complexity of the supporters' profile and its management. While in local elections it is relatively simple to find shared positions between the different wings of the movement, it is much more complicated with a general election. Reaching common positions on issues of great public importance and keeping dissenting voices on the web under control will be a delicate and potentially disruptive challenge. In addition, Demos opinion poll data indicate that almost half of Italians consider the M5S capable of governing in the cities and locally, but almost 70 per cent doubt it can do so nationally. This is also the opinion of four in ten of M5S voters (Bordignon & Ceccarini 2012, 2013).

Electoral success and the winning of office in some local municpialities have made even more explicit and unavoidable the underlying question that has dogged the movement from the start, namely its capacity to reconcile its (apparently irreconcilable) genetic traits. So far the movement has managed to combine (and turn into consensus): the 'rational' elaboration of political proposals with iconoclastic and anti-political impulses; technical competence with charisma; the party understood as a company that sells a product on the political market with the party understood as a consumer advocacy group; the centrality of engagement and discussion with the leader's extreme and uncompromising verbal style and propensity for monologue; the inclusive demands of the grassroots with the (democratic?) centralism of the leader; the insistence on the 'shared' nature of the political organisation with the 'proprietary' mindset that still regulates its functioning; the emphasis on deliberation from the bottom up with the necessity to 'decide'. Will the body of the MoVimento continue to synthesise these elements in a virtuous manner, or will it end up triggering a rejection crisis?

During 2012 and at the beginning of 2013, the M5S grew into much more than just a 'niche' phenomenon, becoming a prominent political actor on the national scene. Indeed, it seems highly probable that the movement will win a certain number of seats in Parliament at the upcoming general elections. The management of the electoral campaign and the ensuing presence in Parliament will prove a crucial stage for the future of the M5S.

Notes

[1] With the capital 'V' recalling the V-Days, which will be discussed below.

[2] From here on Grillo's declarations will be referred to using the following acronyms: PC: political communique on beppegrillo.it; S: public speech; EM: electoral meeting; I: interview.

[3] For councils with populations larger than this figure, the law on local elections makes provision for a run-off vote.

[4] This is a law introduced in 2010, judged to be partly illegitimate by the Constitutional Court and then abrogated by the referendum in 2011. It granted the premier and cabinet ministers the possibility to request the postponement of penal hearings to which they were summoned to appear, on the grounds that their government commitments represented a justified impediment.

[5] The referendum proposals were subsequently rejected by the Supreme Court of Cassation for vices of form and, in some cases, due to the failure to collect the necessary number of petition signatures (a decision harshly contested by Grillo).

[6] This platform had been used in the past for political and electoral campaigns, for instance by Howard Dean, a candidate in the US Democratic primaries in 2003–04.

[7] http//:beppegrillo.meetup.com (visited on 28 Juanuary 2013).

[8] http://www.beppegrillo.it/iniziative/movimentocinquestelle/Programma-Movimento-5-Stelle.pdf

[9] See Atlante politico 34, www.demos.it/a00753.php

[10] The metaphor was used by Ilvo Diamanti (1995) in reference to the Lega Nord, and then in Diamanti (2012) for the M5S.

[11] The analysis uses data gathered through 11 surveys between September 2010 and September 2012. A moving average was used to obtain adequate numbers (between 88 and 120 cases) in order to study the initially quite limited proportion of M5S electors. The calculation of the moving average was applied to the nine surveys conducted before the 2012 elections, employing overlapping clusters of three surveys for each temporal point. The last two surveys, conducted in May and September 2012, were isolated from the previous analyses and considered together, in order to take account of the change that took place after the elections.

[12] See http://bit.ly/dossiercise1 and http://www.cattaneo.org

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