CONTEMPORARY POPULISM IN ITALY: THE FIVE STAR MOVEMENT

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Marco Milani

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ABSTRACT

The thesis focuses on the Five Star Movement, a political movement in Italy based on an Internet blog, which was founded by the Italian comedian Beppe Grillo and which in just four years from its birth received the greatest number of votes in that country's 2014 European election. The thesis focuses on the rise of 5SM, which was established in a critical political and economic context that provided a fertile environment for its founder's anti-establishment platform and rhetoric. The structure, ideology and actions of the 5SM movement are examined as are the political and economic contexts in which it arose and now operates.

The 5SM is analyzed as a product of an Italian political culture where populist leaders have dominated the political scene for many years. The thesis asks whether this movement can be defined as populist, using as a framework for analysis the work of Mény and Surel "Democracies and the Populist Challenge" (2002), by comparing the 5SM to other European anti-establishment political parties and movements.

DEDICATION

To my wife,

for being the woman she is.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Focus of Thesis (The 5SM)

The recent impressive surge of the Five Star Movement (5SM) is currently at the center of scholarly debate in Italy and in Europe. The 5SM is the only protest movement in western democracies that, only four years from its birth, has managed to receive 25.5% of votes in the 2013 Italian national election, the largest percentage of votes received by a single party or movement that contested that election. This fact is even more astonishing given that the 5SM lacks physical headquarters, officials, and employees, and that it is a movement based on an internet blog managed by a private company specializing in online marketing and communication.

The major themes in the platform of the 5SM are protecting the environment, fighting against corruption and demanding more participatory democratic institutions. The 5SM's leader, a famous Italian comedian known as Beppe Grillo, has criticized Italy's party system and that country's backward capitalistic economy for many years before entering politics. Grillo decided to remain outside Parliament and has asserted that he is simply the spokesman for the movement because the 5SM was deliberately structured to have no leader. Nevertheless, in practice his style of leadership is rather authoritarian in that he has tolerated neither the emergence of other prominent figures within the movement nor having open discussions on many crucial topics.

The 5SM considers itself part of a global process because it believes that the web's technological capacity will facilitate the replacement of representative democracies with direct democracies. Therefore, its goal of eradicating corruption in the Italian political system is

coupled with the messianic promise of a political regime that will be governed directly by citizens. This so-called webtopia is reinforced by the 5SM's communication strategy of relying on the Internet and apparently neglecting traditional media such as television and newspapers. Because Grillo's ideas and platform are difficult to classify in traditional scientific categories, some scholars (Bartlett, Birdwell & Littler, 2011; Madhi, 2013) have coined the phrase "digital populism" to define this new political message and rhetoric and the media used to spread it.

The 5SM is still a somewhat ill-defined political organization with conflicting internal tendencies. This is evident in the following principles and practices: it talks about progressive themes, yet does so in a way that also attracts people with right-wing orientation; it advocates participatory democracy yet is based upon absolute leadership; it emphasizes the importance of fighting corruption but does not firmly condemn tax evasion. Consequently, even if there is general agreement on labelling the 5SM a populist movement, it is unclear whether this is right wing, left wing, environmental or neo-libertarian populism.

1.2 Value of Thesis

Since its great success in the 2013 national elections, many scholars and commentators have analyzed the 5SM and its main characteristics. Some elements drew much attention because of their uniqueness in the European political scene: the history of Beppe Grillo as anti-system comedian coming from public television, its synergic union with the web specialist Casaleggio; the communication strategy of the 5SM, which combines grassroots classical mobilization with web-based activism; the astonishing growth the 5SM experienced when its anti-establishment rhetoric started attracting voters from all political inclinations; the organizational difficulties the 5SM had to face after his success, especially in dealing with internal dissent; the peculiar nature of its "web-topia", a project that aims to change representative democracy with a system of

digital direct democracy and, finally, the rather authoritarian nature of Grillo's leadership inside the movement.

From the point of view of the political classification, almost all the scholars are cautious, recognizing the populist nature of Grillo's message, but still waiting for the institutionalization and normalization of the movement, that still appears liquid and containing diverse ideological positions (Corbetta & Vignati, 2014; Diamanti, 2014; Bordignon & Ceccarini, 2013). Biorcio (2014) compares the 5SM with the German Green Party at the beginning of its political history and other scholars compare it with the neopopulist right-wing parties (Corbetta & Gualmini, 2013), but always highlighting the significant differences that still divide Grillo's movement from these parties.

Santoro (2012) highlighted that Grillo's rhetoric and anti-politics attitudes come from a right-wing political culture that has been widespread in Italy by commercial television. Others intellectuals (Wu Ming, 2013; Scalfari, 2007) point out that his attacks against the political opponents and his tactical positioning neither on the right nor on the left on many political issues are themes that are typical of new right-wing parties, especially at the beginning of their political trajectory.

Some commentators, instead, see the 5SM as a progressive movement that expresses the voice of social groups that have been hit the hardest from the economic crisis (Spinelli, 2013; Travaglio, 2013) and that do not feel represented by traditional parties these experts support the idea that the 5SM's threat can be a positive stimulus for a reform of Italian political system.

The present thesis takes into considerations all the characteristics the 5SM as a political phenomenon, puts together. The main attitude is not to deny that Grillo's movement is something new both in the Italian and in the European political scene, but to understand in what sense it is innovative and what its innovations imply. This thesis is also an attempts at interpreting the 5SM's characteristics in light of the Italian political culture and at analyzing whether and to what extent its anti-system message is extremist and authoritarian.

1.3 Research Objectives and Research Questions of Thesis

The two central objectives of this thesis are to explain the rise of the 5SM movement, and to explain the challenges in classifying the 5SM movement both as a party and a movement.

Defining the 5SM's message and political strategies according to existing conceptual frameworks of parties and movements in the political science literature is the central objective of this thesis. My exploration will tentatively characterize the 5SM's populism by comparing it with different families of movements and parties, in both the Italian and the international arenas.

The sub-question the analysis generates deal with: whether the 5SM is a movement or a party; whether it can be considered populist; whether its populism is conservative or progressive, whether it has elements that can be called extremist or even totalitarian, and what sense it can be considered "an evolution" of the recent Italian populist parties.

1.4 Organization of Thesis

The remainder of this thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter 2 provides an explanation of the emergence and success of the 5SM within the Italian political system. In providing that explanation this chapter focused on the economic and political factors that facilitated the unexpected emergence of this movement. Although the principal is on the economic and political crises in Italy, some attention is also devoted to the economic and political crises in the rest of Europe.

Chapter 3 describes the main characteristics of the 5SM as a political entity. The analysis focuses on the structure, the internal governance, the political strategies, the composition of its constituency, and its ideology. Special attention is devoted to the important role the Internet plays in every facet of the 5SM as a political entity. Chapter 4 explains whether the 5SM is popular movement or a party, and what kind of populism is embodied or evident in its

ideological orientation and political behavior. It also explains whether that orientation and behavior reflect continuity with Berlusconi era of 'cultural regression', and whether the 5SM ideology and position on policy issues reflects democratic moderate and centrist attitudes or authoritarian or totalitarian and extremist radical attitudes.

Chapter 5 compares the 5SM to other populist movements and parties in Italy, a few selected European countries, and two international movements. In Italy the focus is on recent populist parties like The Northern League, Forza Italia and the Italy of Values. In the selected European countries the focus is on the groups of neopopulist parties of the new-left, the new radical left (exemplified by SIRIZA in Greece) and the Pirate parties in Sweden and Germany. The comparison with international social movements focuses on Occupy Wall Street and the Indignados. The focus of the comparison between the 5SM and all those movements is on the structure, leadership, ideology and policy positions.

Chapter 6, the concluding chapter, summarizes and analyzes the findings related to each of the major objectives, and discusses the need for further research.

CHAPTER 2: THE GENESIS AND SUCCESS OF THE 5SM

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an explanation of the emergence and success of the 5SM. In providing that explanation this chapter focuses on the economic and political factors that facilitated the unexpected emergence of this movement. Although the principal focus is on the economic and political crises in Italy, some attention is also devoted to the economic and political crises in the rest of Europe.

The chapter consists of two major sections devoted in turn to the following: the factors that led to the emergence of the 5SM, and the factors that contributed to the success of the 5SM.

2.2 Factors Leading to Rise of 5SM

2.2.1 The Political Factors that Led to Rise of 5SM

As noted in the first chapter of this thesis the 5SM movement is a political movement started by a charismatic comedian who specialized in political satire. It is fair to say that without Giuseppe "Beppe" Grillo, the 5SM would not exist. Grillo was born in Genova in 1948. His father was a small entrepreneur and his mother was a pianist. After he left University he started to work as a stand-up comedian in local clubs and theaters. At the end of the seventies, he began to work for Italian public television. His caustic satire, mainly concentrated on politicians, caused his expulsion from public television in 1986. After that controversy, he continued to appear on TV programs intermittently, until 1993, when "he left definitively" (Bordignon & Ceccarini, 2013, p. 3).

This contentious relationship with public television enhanced his image as an "anti-system warrior". In the following years Grillo performed his shows in public squares and theaters, and his critique of the economic and political systems sharpened. His main themes were the dominance of financial capitalism that controls politicians at every level, as well as the need for an environmental revolution. During this period Grillo addressed the public about issues that he would later support in his political campaigns, such as opposition to the privatization of the water supply and the lack of objective and independent information in Italy. In particular, the theme of information freedom became very important for progressive public opinion because Silvio Berlusconi, when he was prime minster, had almost total control of both private and public television. International commentators and sources such as Reporters Without Borders denounced and stigmatized this deficit of pluralism in the media system (Reporters Without Borders, 2003).

A matter that led to a huge growth of credibility for Grillo as something more than a simple comedian was his well-timed warning of Parmalat's financial collapse of 2003 (Grillo, 2004). Parmalat, at the time a big multinational Italian dairy and food corporation, went bankrupt with a huge uncovered debt (Chalkidou, 2012), and many Italian investors lost their investment in the company. This financial disaster brought to light the lack of transparency within the system: no public authorities, politicians and none of the main newspapers and television chains shed light on the situation before it was too late. Grillo had the indisputable merit of raising the issues many months in advance, and this earned him the plaudit of many Italian and foreigner observers as well as a huge rise in popularity.

Grillo's main polemical target until 2007 was, undoubtedly, Silvio Berlusconi. He never overtly supported the opposition political parties, but nevertheless he criticized them much less than Berlusconi and his allies. In 2006 Grillo expressed his preference for Romano Prodi, the leader of the center-left coalition, over the center-right leader in the coming national elections. His endorsement, of course, was not enthusiastic, declaring that Prodi was "just the slightly less

bad alternative" (Scanzi, 2012, p. 5), but he demonstrated that he still accepted the rules of democracy and the necessity of making the most rational possible choice.

2.2.2 Grillo's Encounter with Casaleggio

In 2004 Grillo, after one of his shows, met Gianroberto Casaleggio, an expert on web communication, who talked about the Internet in an enthusiastic and utopian way. In Grillo's words: "It was quite clear, he was a madman; mad with a new madness in which everything goes better thanks to the web" (Hooper, 2013, ch. 3). Casaleggio convinced Grillo to start a blog on which he could share his ideas with his followers and receive feedback from them. So in 2005 the blog beppegrillo.it was established and, from the first moment, it was hugely successful. The blog contained articles, news, comments and videos about Grillo's various performances. The blog also promoted political campaigns that the comedian waged in public squares or theaters, the most famous among them being the fight against Italian participation in the Iraqi war and the initiative "Clean Parliament" that aimed to expel from the Parliament all the MPs convicted of criminal offences.

In July 2005 Grillo announced the creation of the 'Meetup' project. The project envisioned the use of the online platform 'Meetup' comparable to the one that had been used by the American Democratic politician Howard Dean in the 2004 presidential primary elections. The anti-corruption and environmentalist agenda that Grillo was then putting forward could, in this way, take root and be supported by local groups and associations that were already active at the grassroots level. The goal was connecting these local groups and individuals, allowing more structured support for the comedian's ideas throughout the country.

The establishment of these groups was very successful and they sprang up all over Italy. After a number of years there were more than one hundred 'Meetup' groups in Italy and at the beginning of 2014 there were more than one thousand (Gruppi Meetup Beppe Grillo, 2014). As

explained by Biorcio "the 'Meetup 'platforms allow the followers of the blog to organize themselves as local activists in constant reciprocal connection and to maintain, at the same time, a strong relationship to the blog's management at a national level" (Biorcio, 2013, ch. 2).

Grillo received several acknowledgments from foreigner observers: In 2005 Time magazine listed him among the "European heroes of the year in the media world". In 2008, The Guardian included Grillo's blog among the world's most influential, and in 2009 Forbes listed him among the ten web celebrities of the year.

Casaleggio was born in Milan in 1954. He grew up in a middle class family and began his career in the eighties as a software designer at the famous Italian electronic company, Olivetti. Over the years, he held positions as CEO, chairman and managing director in such high tech companies as Logica Plc, Finsiel and Telecom Italia (Tanda, 2013). In particular, he was CEO of Webegg SpA, a group specializing in web and network strategies. He was removed from this office by the shareholders in 2003, after some disappointing financial results. In 2004 he founded his own web counselling company, Casaleggio Associati Srl.

Casaleggio's communication company is the editor of Grillo's blog and of some books written by the comedian. In 2009 he founded the 5SM together with Grillo and he is considered both the spin-doctor and the strategist of the movement. Many critics talk about him as "the guru", stigmatizing his visionary ideas and his eccentric appearance.

Casaleggio believes that the Internet can revolutionize the existing democratic structures: "The current political and social organizations will be deconstructed, some will disappear. Representative democracy, by delegation, will lose meaning. It is a revolution that is cultural even more than technological; this often is not properly understood or is trivialized." ("La democrazia va rifondata", 2013) This democratic revolution will be consequence of a world transformed by the power of global connection, where communication is horizontal and immediate. This vision is at the basis of the political mission of the 5SM. It inspires in   his

supporters the conviction of being an instrument that will accomplish a political revolution that follows from the technological progress of human society.

2.2.3 Grillo's Critique of Established Parties

After Romano Prodi was installed as Prime Minster in 2006, Grillo arranged to speak with him to demand action on his favorite issues. The meeting was video-recorded and posted on Grillo's blog. Prodi listened to Grillo's torrential speech and to his unattainable proposal with an attitude that was ironic, but not hostile. The new center-left government had a very narrow majority in the Senate, so it was impossible for him to implement some reasonable proposals (like an anti-trust law to forbid the dominant position of Berlusconi in the media sector) advocated by Grillo's blog, let alone the most radical ones.

As a result, the comedian began to criticize center-left policies with the same anger and sarcasm with which he criticized Berlusconi. The idea that Grillo started spreading was that the center-left was not substantially different from Berlusconi's center right and that Italian politicians of all colors constituted an out-and-out "caste" of the people's exploiters. That is why he called the big rally he organized in Bologna in September 2007, Vaffanculo-DAY, or V-DAY ("Fuck-off Day[1]"). That day Grillo collected 350,000 signature for a bill that would: (1) bar people found guilty of crimes from being elected to and maintaining the status of parliamentarian; (2) forbid parliamentarians to remain in office for more than two terms; and (3) introduce the discretion to choose the candidate and abolish the parties' blocked lists in the

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[1] "Vaffanculo Day" in Italian. The initial V, drawing from the movie V for Revenge (In Italian Vendetta) has become a part of the 5SM's logo, indeed there it is written with the capital V, "MoVimento" (MoVement, in English).

electoral system. These proposals had a strong appeal to progressive and independent voters, because after years of Berlusconi's premiership, the parliament was teeming with members convicted or accused of serious crimes.

Prodi's center-left government fell at the beginning of 2008, so new national elections were to take place in the spring. Grillo this time did not express any preference, saying that the Democratic Party and Berlusconi's party were just two facets of the same problem. The comedian declared that he would start to support lists in local elections, allowing the use of the logo "friends of Beppe Grillo" by all the groups that met the requirements of being without a criminal record and lack of party affiliation. As a result of his endorsement, these lists managed to elect some representatives to municipal councils.

On April 25, 2008 Grillo organized another V-DAY in Turin, but this time he focused his anger on the "fascism of the Italian media" (V2daychannel, 2008). He accused the main newspapers and TV networks of not providing objective and neutral information. This was a major issue for many progressive people at the time, also because a big scandal regarding the management of state owned televisions during Berlusconi's government (2001-2006) had just emerged. The situation that came to light through wiretaps of an inquiry initiated by the courts, was that of a secret agreement between managers of Berlusconi's networks and managers of public television to broadcast and interpret the news in a manner that would not endanger the reputation of the center-right government[2]. (Mauro, 2007)

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[2] The Italian newspaper La Repubblica reconstructed the relations between the management of the two media Corporations http://www.repubblica.it/2007/11/sezioni/cronaca/media-rai/struttura-delta/struttura-delta.html

2.2.4 Rejection of Grillo by the Partito Democratico (PD)

During the summer of 2009, Beppe Grillo, to the surprise of many, presented his candidacy as secretary of the Partito Democratico (PD). The officers of the PD, though, did not allow him to become a member of the party because he had too harshly criticized it during the previous years. The secretary of PD, Piero Fassino, commented on the barring of the comedian from being accepted by the party with a sentence that will be remembered for a long time: "Let Grillo form his own party and let's see how many votes he gets." (theGianlucaTV, 2013) That is precisely what Grillo went on to do.

Grillo and Casaleggio founded the 5SM in October 2009, declaring that it was time for citizens to overthrow the corrupt regime of traditional parties. The "five stars" represent five key issues the movement aims to pursue: public water supply, sustainable development, widespread Internet connectivity, clean and accessible public transportation and environmental protection. The movement was based on citizens participating in Grillo's blog and in 'Meetup' local groups, so no headquarters or intermediate offices were needed.

2.3 The Electoral Success of 5SM

Within one year of its founding the 5SM started experiencing electoral success that would continue in subsequent years through elections at various levels of the Italian political system. The foundations for the electoral success of the 5SM in national elections started being laid at the same time as the national governing institutions were perceived as becoming increasingly dysfunctional as a result of the increasingly chaotic and unpredictable behavior of its principal political agents. Of particular significance was the behavior of Prime Minister Berlusconi in the midst of one of the most significant economic and financial crises in recent history.

The situation became so problematical that by the end of 2011 Berlusconi was forced to resign after the country came close to financial default. This had been caused by the international

market's lack of confidence in Italy's economic and budgetary management. Mario Monti, an economist and notable academic, was nominated by the President of the Republic as Prime Minister. He undertook radical policies of deficit reduction to regain the market's confidence. The market reacted in a positive way and the confidence in Italian bonds rose sharply. After a few months, however, as the financial situation improved, Berlusconi's party, that sustained the government together with the PD, started to undermine the actions of the executive, so that further major reforms became impossible.

Monti was a big disappointment for the Italian people who needed a change after years of corruption and inefficiency. Although initially he was highly popular, as he was seen as an agent of modernization combatting a traditional opposition to progress, eventually after he was hobbled by the parties, people began to see him as a part of the problem because they did not support his austerity measure and started depicting him as another member of the caste of the political-financial elite that opposed people's interests. The disappointment with Monti's government spurred a general revulsion of politics that favored the growth of the 5SM.

2.3.1 Success of 5SM in Local and Regional Elections

The first significant electoral success for the 5SM amidst the political and economic crises of that era occurred in the 2010 regional elections in which it fielded candidates. The most notable success was in Emilia-Romagna, where it received 7.0% of the vote and two of its candidates were elected as regional councilors, and in Piedmont, where it received 4.1% of the vote two of its members were elected as councilors.

The 5SM experienced more electoral success in the local elections of May 2011. The Movement ran in several municipalities, including 18 provincial capitals. Notable results were attained in the cities of the center-north, especially in Emilia-Romagna and in Piedmont. The most notable performance was in the historically left leaning city of Bologna, where the 5SM got very close to 10 percent of the vote.

The success of the 5SM in the 2011 local elections was repeated in the local elections of 2012. In the 2012 local elections the 5SM gained many votes in several cities of the North, approaching 20% in some cases. In a small north-eastern town, the M5S elected its first mayor with more than 30% of the votes. In the run-offs the movement gained three more mayoralities. The most important victory was in the city of Parma, a city of 180,000 inhabitants famous in the world for the Parmigiano Reggiano cheese, its raw ham and the multinational corporation Parmalat. The previous center-right administration had brought the city to the brink of bankruptcy ("La Spip verso il fallimento. Comune sul precipizio", 2013), and many cases of corruption were prosecuted in the courts ("Tutto sullo scandalo corruzione", 2011).

In the first round of the 2012 municipal election in early first week of May the 5SM's candidate, Federico Pizzarotti (a former project manager in a local bank without political experience), won about 19% of the vote, which allowed him to run in the second round against the candidate of the center-left who had a huge advantage of votes in the first round (he got 39%). The run-off, held two weeks later , was a big surprise as Pizzarotti captured the center-right votes and was elected with more than 60% of the total vote. That particular election was symbolically very important because it showed that the 5SM could compete for power against the major parties. It demonstrated its capability to attract constituents that traditionally voted for centrist or right wing parties. The vote for the 5SM was no longer just a "protest vote" that reflected progressive people's disappointment with the policies of center-left parties, but it came to be seen a vote that could lead to a reliable alternative to all traditional parties.

The success in the municipal elections of the 2011 and 2012 revealed that the 5SM was on a strong and positive trajectory in continuing to gain electoral support at the local level. In 2012 the 5SM also started to experience some electoral success in regional elections. The ability of Grillo to attract attention to the existence and platform of the 5SM was very important for that purpose. An example of this is that in the Sicilian regional elections of October 2012, Grillo launched his campaign with a three mile swim from the mainland to Sicily.

His promotional efforts held Giancarlo Cancelleri, 5SM's candidate for the regional presidency, to come in third with 18.2% of the vote, and for the M5S placed first in Sicily's election for the regional legislative assembly with 14.9%[3]. Although the candidate of the center-left coalition became president of the regional assembly, 5SM's unexpected result was a meaningful demonstration that the movement could attract many votes among the very traditionalist southern Italian voters.

2.3.2 Success of the 5SM in the National Elections

In February 2013, M5S participated in national elections. Grillo was not an electoral candidate, though his name was written on the ballot under the symbol of the movement. The candidates were chosen from among non-elected members of the local lists of the previous years, by way of an online referendum ("I numeri delle quirinarie", 2013) in which only a restricted number of people participated (about 28,000 supporters voted using the blog). In the 2013 national elections, the M5S attained an astonishing result: 25.55% of the vote (8,784,499 voters), the most voted party. It obtained many seats in both chambers but, since it was not in a coalition, it ended up third after the center left and the center right coalitions.

The polling experts suggest that in the last days before the elections some voters (four or five percent) shifted from the PD to the 5SM (Diamanti, Bordignon & Ceccarini, 2013) in a way that was unpredictable just 15 days before. This shift was probably due also to the huge rally Grillo organized on San Giovanni square in Rome (the square where left-wing party and unions historically rallied) to close his campaign, with the participation of about 80,000 people. (La Stampa, 2013). The 5SM elected 108 deputies (of 625) and 54 Senators (of 330). With these

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[3] The Sicilian electoral system provides the direct election the president of the assembly, but, at the same time, gives citizens the possibility to elect representatives by way of a proportional system form different lists.

results, the Parliament was split into three parts, none of which had a majority of the seats required to form a government: the center left, the center right and the 5SM.

2.4 Electoral Strategy Accounting for Electoral Success

The electoral success of the 5SM at the national, regional and local levels, can be largely understood in terms of the ability of the leader to develop an electoral strategy based largely on framing key issues that resonated with a wide range of voters from across the entire political ideological spectrum.

The 5SM's voting constituency, like its core membership, is quite diversified and spans the full political spectrum from the left to the right. A substantial proportion of its constituency is from the left end of the spectrum. That support from voters on the left side of the spectrum has paid dividends in several places including Emilia Romagna, which traditionally has been a very progressive region and where the 5SM had its first major round of electoral successes. The votes from the left end of the spectrum came from left-leaning people disappointed with the left-wing parties' policies and even misconduct, as well as from people who voted for minor environmentalist parties or who did not vote at all. The analysis of the 2010 local elections demonstrates this trend, and arguably the trend has continued in 2011, with the 5SM receiving a considerable percentage of votes in cities where the center-left parties were traditionally strong. In particular, the 5SM attracted voters from the "Italia dei Valori", a party that was founded by a former magistrate, Antonio di Pietro, and that had often been part of the center-left coalition in the previous years. This party's major issue was the fight against corruption and the rhetoric it employed to pursue that goal was explicitly populist (Tarchi, 2008).

The analysis of the 2012 local elections revealed that the 5SM had also started to attract voters that came from the center-right coalition (Bordignon & Ceccarini 2013; Biorcio & Natale, 2013; Corbetta & Gualmini, 2013). In particular, what is evident is a considerable shift of votes

from the Northern League, a party that fought for the autonomy and independence of northern Italy and that expressed both anti-establishment and anti-immigrant attitudes (Diamanti, Bordignon & Ceccarini, 2013). Thus, the 5SM was able to attain notable results also in the north east where the first 5SM mayor was elected ("Sarego primo sindaco movimento 5 stelle", 2012).

Analyzing the increasing 5SM support in the polls, the percentage of citizens inclined to vote for the 5SM was conventionally about eight percent nationally, but after May 2012 – when the 5SM conquered Parma, the first city of considerable size - there has been a huge rise: after that month the percentage increased to about 20% and since then it has not fallen (Diamanti, Bordignon & Ceccarini, 2013). The 5SM's potential constituency, in that period, was still mainly composed of former progressive voters (46%), but the part coming from center-right parties had remarkably increased (to reach almost 40% of the total) (Biorcio & Natale, 2013).

How can this startling surge of the 5SM be explained? One element is the already discussed progressive loss of popularity of the Monti government. The other element is the several scandals involving the illegal or, at the very least, questionable use of the public funds allocated to the parties. All the parties were subjected to judicial inquiries, which had a huge public impact: during the worst recession since the thirties, while many citizens were desperately striving to make ends meet, the "caste" of politicians spent public money for their own advantage leading a luxurious lifestyle. The Northern League and the Italia dei Valori were also involved in the scandals. This is important because it is very likely that the 5SM directly benefited from the decrease in popularity that afflicted these anti-system parties.

The analysis of the 2013 vote (in which the 5SM had an impressive 25.5%) demonstrates that the movement has completed its transition and become "a catch-all party" (Diamanti, Bordignon & Ceccarini, 2013): attracting about a third of votes of the center-left and one third of the center-right. Also the social composition of the 5SM's constituency reflects this tendency towards "normalization", i.e., to reflect the composition of the voting public (Bordignon & Ceccarini 2014). At the beginning, Grillo's voters were mainly young, male, Internet savvy with

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a progressive outlook. Gradually, as the movement increased in popularity, the 5SM increased its support in every social category, with the significant exception of those over the age of 64. According to the "Lapolis" institute (Diamanti, Bordignon & Ceccarini 2013, chapter 5), in the 2013 elections the 5SM was the party of choice among workers, (40.1%), entrepreneurs and small businessmen (40.2%), professionals (31.3%) and unemployed (42.7%): all categories that were hit hard by the economic crisis; it was relatively weak among housewives (20%) and retirees (11%). Overall, the 5SM's constituency is younger than the national average and better educated (younger people usually are better educated than elderly people).

As Biorcio and Natale (2013) show, the members and supporters of the 5SM constitute a rainbow coalition of voters who are more sensitive than other Italians to the need for a renewal of the political establishment, but in terms of other issues they tend to have the same priorities as voters of traditional parties. This is revealing about the nature of the movement, explaining how: "the world of movement is traversed by numerous subsets, which can be united by the bond represented by their spokesman, Grillo." (Biorcio and Natale, 2013. Chapter 3) Diamanti (2014) depicts this heterogeneous constituency through the metaphor of the bus:

> Like the driver of a bus, he has always planned new itineraries and different destinations, constantly picking up new and different passengers who, rather than remaining on foot, are prepared to follow the driver for part of the route, getting off at some stop short of the final destination, and with a very clear idea of the destinations they wish to avoid. (p.5)

2.5 The Italian culture & media

To fully understand why a movement founded by a comedian, who uses vulgar and even violent tones was able to gain such popularity in Italy in so short time, it is necessary to focus on the Italian political culture. Indeed, Italy has some anomalies that makes it unique among western liberal democracies. The first anomaly is the lack of pluralism in the Television system. The second, which is influenced by the media system, is the lack of a civic culture and care for common goods.

These two characteristics have interacted in the last thirty years, and this interaction generated a political culture that mixes a libertarian mindset with very backward, historically rooted attitudes.

2.5.1. Media concentration and hegemony & political culture in Italy

Italy until 1974 had a state public television (RAI) monopoly, financed by a compulsory license fee. At the beginning of the 1980s, Berlusconi's private TV stations were given the privileged position of being the only RAI competitor, thanks to his linkages with important politicians. At present, even if other media groups are now active in the TV market, Berlusconi's group continues to enjoy a dominant position as it controls many available frequencies. When he was prime minister, Berlusconi was even able to appoint the administrators of state television, his actual competitor.

This concentration of media power explains why he still has political approval in Italy, in spite of his misconduct, crimes and mismanagement of public finances that renders him detestable and ridiculous to the majority of Italians and even more to foreigner observers. Studies conducted during Berlusconi's government clearly show, first, how important television was (and still is) compared to other media in providing political information to Italian citizens (Diamanti, 2007 ; Sartori, 1998) ; and, second, how the agenda setting of TV news broadcasts was manipulated in order to deemphasize scandals and the major failures of the Italian government.

As some authors have pointed out, commercial television supported a popular culture that was conducive to the spread of neoliberal ideas and values. The genre "infotainment", in which unbiased fair and useful information is mostly absent, is the epitome of this new cultural trend. Panarari (2012) describes this "revolution" by resorting to Gramsci's concept of hegemony: the cultural supremacy of the left over the masses – with its emphasis on public social programs and Keynesian economic thought– has been replaced by the individualistic sub-culture of private entertainment.

In Italy, this phenomenon was more evident than in other western countries. Indeed, there were no significant alternatives to that kind of commercial television. Therefore it had a strong effect on shaping the popular imagination. As Gandini (2012) shows in his movie, "Videocracy"

, this new pop (trash) culture mixed elements of libertarian individualism and elements of traditional culture like opposition to feminism and to women's emancipation.

The cult of personal success, of the self-made man, that Berlusconi embodies, was upheld without regard to the ethical issues of respect for rules and for other people. Taxes and social programs were discredited. They were depicted as damaging to the most productive people, as they took away from them resources that were wasted in a corrupt and inefficient way by the public sector. Another element was the barbaric exploitation of women's bodies in TV ads and broadcasts: the intensity of sexual objectification of women constitutes a unique case in western TV broadcast systems (Cosenza 2012). This male chauvinist vision has been accompanied by the upholding of local cultures and traditional family values, but in a way that fully assimilates the commercial models of mass consumption.

2.5.2. Culture of "Familism" and "Clientism"

To understand this unique combination of cultural factors, it is necessary to briefly describe the traditional south European elements of "familism" and "clientelism", which are still present in present-day Italy. As Ginsborg (1995) shows, the traditional familial ties, mostly vertical, based on authority, have prevented the formation of a modern civil society, based predominantly on horizontal ties among individuals. The popular ethics of clientelism permeates public administration as well as citizens' mindset, so that both find the "arbitrary use of modern state resources for private gain" and the search of political approval through personal favors inevitable.

That kind of mentality extends the model of the family to the larger community, both in terms of values and in terms of personal relations. The disadvantaged position of women and their role in Italian society is a consequence of that attitude: it is part of a pre-modern legacy that is very difficult to get rid of.

2.6 Contextual Factors Accounting for Success of 5SM

An understanding of the electoral success of the 5SM at the national, regional and local levels during this era requires attention to the national and continental political and economic contexts in which it occurred. These contexts, which were marked by historic crises are discussed, in turn, below.

2.6.1 The Political Contextual Factors

Anthony Painter (2013), in his recent essay on populism, describes the Italian political situation as one in which a democratic system faces great stress leading to a potential loss of political legitimacy. He likens Italy to Greece and explains that: "their democracies have shown to be incapable to respond to the complexities instigated by the Eurozone crisis." (p.14). In another part of the essay, Painter talks about Italy as an almost unique case of a consolidated democracy that has not been able to get rid of populist threats: "the exceptions are perhaps Hungary under Fidesz and, arguably, Italy under Berlusconi where legal systems were brought under tighter control of the executive" (p. 21).

Italian democracy has been undermined during the last 15 years by the great concentration of power in the hands of Berlusconi. His privileged position in the media system allowed him to collect a huge fortune and at the same time, to have a strong impact on public opinion. Furthermore, to explain the Italian political crisis that contributed to the emergence and the initial and continuing success of the 5SM, it is necessary to consider that Berlusconi's era is not yet over.

In fact, despite his many political failures, despite his recent conviction for tax fraud and despite the countless scandals in which he was involved, Berlusconi still has his media empire and still can influence a considerable part of Italian public opinion. In November 2011 he had to

resign as Prime Minister because the yields of Italian bonds had skyrocketed, and the country was on the verge of bankruptcy.

To placate the markets the President of the Republic decided not to go to elections, and to nominate an economist with limited political experience – Mario Monti – as chief of the government. Berlusconi supported this executive for almost one year, but at the end of 2012 he decided it was time to go to the polls and thereby brought down Monti's government.

The 2013 elections did not give an absolute majority of the seats in both chambers to the Democratic Party, so it was forced, due to the refusal of the 5SM to join the PD, to compromise with Berlusconi to set up a government. At the end of 2013, Berlusconi decided that he wanted to stay in opposition, but this time a faction of his party abandoned him and allowed a majority with the Democratic Party and the centrists. Nevertheless, this new political formation did not break up with Berlusconi in a traumatic and definitive way, so that this coalition government will not probably be able to act against the interests of the Italian tycoon.

After years of economic disasters, pandemic corruption and low credibility in the International arena, almost two third of Italians strongly dislike Berlusconi. Nevertheless, many of these people blame the Democratic Party for not being able to get rid of him before, and some of them even think that the left parties were not willing to undermine him. The fact that the Democratic Party had been in coalition with Berlusconi to support Monti's emergency government reinforced those popular suspicions.

In this chaotic and challenging situation, it is not illogical that Italian people distrust both European and national political institutions. Europe used to mean wealth, peace and civilization for Italians after WWII, and support for European integration has always been particularly high in Italy (Eurobarometer, 2013)[4]. The recession, the austerity measures and the experience of a

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[4] Data from Eurobarometer, http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb80/eb80_publ_en.pdf page 75 and following.

lack of solidarity among the member states have changed the way Italians look at the EU. One of the latest polls says that just 32% of Italian trust the European Union. In the matter of internal institutions, data are even more dramatic: less than 10% of Italian have confidence in the national Parliament and in political parties (Demos, 2013).

2.6.2 Economic Contextual Factors that Account for the Success of 5SM

The success of the 5SM was clearly rooted in the economic context that has existed in Italy and Europe during the past decade, and particularly the economic and financial crises they faced that are explained in this section of the thesis. The objective in this subsection is to briefly discuss each of those two contexts.

2.6.2.1 The Economic Context in Italy

From a macroeconomic point of view, Italy is a nation with a big public debt (about 130% of GDP) and a fast aging population. For these reasons insufficient economic growth and a lack of more efficient policies on immigration can significantly endanger the sustainability of the entire social security system in the medium term.

To understand the seriousness of the Italian economic situation after the last recession it is necessary to consider a 14-year period. From to 2001 to 2007, unlike other European countries, Italian GDP did not grow in a significant way, so the recent slump hit an economic system that had been already struck by years of stagnation. No wonder, then, that GDP per capita in 2013 – at the end of the period - has fallen back to the level of 1997 ("Il Pil italiano torna ai livelli del 1997", 2013).

The numbers are dramatic. The unemployment rate at the end of 2013 was 12.5%, with 3.2 million unemployed (Istat, 2013). To this figure we should add about 500,000 workers who did not work but received a social-insurance paycheck (Cgil, 2014) (the name of the program is "Cassa di Integrazione") and are not counted as unemployed by ISTAT, the Italian statistic center. The youth unemployment rate is 41.3%, and there are about 3.7 million people between

15 and 35 years of age who are not in education, employment or training ("Istat, 3,7 milioni non studiano e non lavorano, 2013). The consumption rate regressed to the level of 40 years ago ("Istat, cala ancora il potere d'acquisto delle famiglie", 2014) and the real estate sector experienced a deep downturn as well ("Sondaggio Bankitalia: Il mercato immibiliare resta debole", 2014). The banking system, as reported before, is trying to solve its huge problem of undercapitalization and, therefore, it is reluctant to lend money to business or private citizens (CGIA Mestre, 2014).

The Italian economic system has several structural issues that have worsened in the last 15 years: high tax evasion, widespread corruption (European Union, 2014), lack of internal economic competition and lack of competitiveness (World Economic Forum, 2013). During the economic crisis the EU urged the Italian government to reform its pension system and to cut public expenditure but did not demand immediate actions on these issues. This probably explains why Italian people now have such a bad opinion of EU Institutions: they imposed sacrifices on ordinary people but they did not recommend an effective program to deal with rent-seekers, conflict of interests, tax evaders, rich real estate owners and corrupted elites.

In Italy, as in several other European countries, the economic crisis and the lack of a strong common European response have caused a widespread deterioration of the confidence in European institutions. The lack of real integration among the member states has emerged, and this turned out to be especially related to a too feeble feeling of solidarity among different European peoples. The discussion, including scholarly debate about Eurobonds as a way to solve the problems of the debt crisis, has not succeeded in convincing neither the governments nor voters of the richest states of the Union that such a solution can produce benefit for all the European countries.

2.6.2.2 The Economic Context in Europe

The economic context Italy during the past decade that contributed to the emergence and electoral success of the 5SM cannot be understood in isolation from the broader economic context of Europe during that period. Of particular importance are the recession and debt crisis,

the banking crisis, the austerity measures, and the economic imbalances between European countries.

2.6.2.3 The European Recession and the Debt Crisis

In 2007-2008 the western world was hit by a recession that had originated in the United States. In Italy and in other Southern European countries there was a rise in unemployment rates and households were forced to cut their consumption levels, leading to a fall in aggregate demand. In 2010, while the US and the countries of northern Europe experienced a weak economic recovery, the states of the south of Europe began to see financial speculation concentrate on their sovereign bonds. The spread of the yields between the Greek, Irish, Portuguese, Spanish and Italian bonds, on the one hand, and those of Germany (the most solid economy in Europe), on the other, skyrocketed in a brief period of time.

The ECB and the EU had to act to avoid the sovereign default of these states. The procedures followed were different depending on the depth of the financial difficulties of the states, but the logic followed was the same: states were required to cut their social programs to improve their financial balance and in the return they would receive the financial help from the EU and the ECB in the form of massive purchases of national bonds. These have been called 'the

austerity measures'.

In that period European public debate was focused on the excess of expenditure in the social systems of the southern European countries, especially of Greece and Italy. The hypertrophic dimension of the public sector in Greece and the generous salaries of (often corrupt) Italian politicians were two famous examples that have become very popular in Europe. So, austerity was conceived as a way to restore virtue on peoples that had been profligate and lazy and who had too long tolerated corruption.

Europe has seen a growing cleavage between north European states (Germany, the Netherlands, Austria, Finland) and the southern European states; the former wanted austerity

measures to be enacted in order to avoid having to spend money for future bailouts of their southern partners in the EU; the latter asked for ways to avoid excessive pain for their populations. Austerity became popular among north European peoples and became hideous and detested among southern Europeans. This idea and the policies it inspired had terrible economic and social consequences, and fell abundantly short in achieving even the primary goal of reducing the burden of public debts.

2.6.2.4 The Banking Crisis in Europe

The current economic crisis exploded in 2008, after the Lehman Brothers meltdown and the financial crisis in the USA. The crisis of the American banks soon became a global problem, affecting many banks in the Eurozone. Some of these banks eventually had to be bailed out by the state, leading to an increased public debt in many European countries and contributing to a crisis of confidence that led the system to the verge of collapse. The bank crises in Europe have had very heavy consequences on the economy because of the undercapitalization of many of these financial institutions. The dimension of the potential losses was so big that it is possible to say that while American banks were said to be too big to fail, we could consider European banks too big to bail (Blyth, 2013).

The situation of the European banks was much worse than that of American banks. The top six US banks, added together, had in 2008 assets of about 61% of national GDP. In the same period "the top three French banks had asset foot-print of 316% of France's GDP.....the top two German banks had assets equal to 114% of German GDP.... the top three Italian banks constituted… 115% of GDP" (p.83) and "the top four UK banks had a combined asset footprint of 394% of UK GDP"(p. 83).

In Spain and Portugal the situation was no better. Highly leveraged banks which were literally too big to be bailed out were, and is still are, the biggest economic problem for the EU economy. In 2010-2011 a lack of confidence and a credit crunch among the banks was looming. Thus the ECB devised the LTRO (Long term re-financing operation) extraordinary lending

programs to give the banks temporary relief and to ameliorate the situation of the national bond markets (through massive purchases from the banks). But despite the fact that the banks acquired a huge quantity of their own nation's debt, the yields of national bonds still tended to go up.

The situation of the EU's banks was really much more tragic than that of the US's banks, consequently there were not enough funds in the states' national balances to absorb the shock of a possible breakdown. Recently, an agreement has been reached at the Economic and Financial Affairs Council (ECOFIN) to manage bank failures in the EU, but this just slightly improved the overall situation.

EU banks are deleveraging (Wehinger, 2012) but not at a fast rate (Brierley & Safraz, 2013). The fear of the need to inject public money into sick banks is still very high among officials. This is probably the main reason for austerity: keeping resources available to avoid sudden bank collapses. This "truth" is difficult to tell to the public of the different countries, for the obvious reason that people would not be willing to sacrifice themselves for the sake of the banks. This is particularly true in some counties in which the people are feeling the adverse effects of the banking crises as well as other crises more acutely than their counterparts in other countries.

2.6.2.5 The Austerity Measures in Europe

Austerity measures were requested by the "Troika" EU-IMF-ECB[5] of the states whose bonds were hit by financial speculation in the period 2009-2013. They consisted essentially in cutting the public deficit by cutting public jobs and social expenditure and by increasing taxes. These

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[5] The so-called "Troika" is an informal entity in charge of control over the balance of the states in financial distress, and is composed by the European Union, the International Monetary Fund and the European Central Bank.

measures were aimed at achieving the result of showing the investors these states' renewed ability to meet their financial commitments.

Nevertheless, the economic situation of the states that were exposed to these "neoliberal" austerity measures worsened in a very dramatic way (Quigging, 2010). The recession sharpened in Italy, Spain, Greece and Portugal. Their unemployment rates got higher and consumption decreased to reach its lowest level in thirty or forty years. The crisis has also damaged the health care systems (Karanikolos and al. 2013) of these states, threatening even the basic needs of existence. And the most important evidence of the failure is that the sustainability of the public finances of the southern European states is still at risk: in fact the most important indicator, the debt to GDP ratio, has worsened in Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain, and it is on the rise also in Ireland (Kelpie, 2013).

The austerity doctrine's supporters and in particular many moderate conservative parties of the north of the Eurozone characterize the public debt crisis in a way that has some elements that are typical of populist rhetoric. In particular, pitting north European virtuous countries against south European profligate countries is an element of oversimplification that also creates a strong contraposition between good and evil that is typical of populist discourse. Even if these parties do not have all the other characteristics to be called populist (they do not rely upon heightened or violent emotions of their constituencies and they do not have a mainly charismatic relationship between the leaders and the people), the doctrine they support is dangerous because it fails to represent to their constituency the real dimension of the problems that the north European countries also face, albeit to a lesser degree. This depletes the public debate and can set the stage for the rise of populist movements.

What went wrong since the beginning in the Eurozone is not reducible to a simple dichotomy between prudence and profligacy. The dynamic of capital flows resulting from the creation of the European common currency and their effects on various counties is summarized cogently by Paul Krugman (2013):

The first effect of the euro was an outbreak of europhoria: suddenly, investors believed that all European debt was equally safe. Interest rates dropped all around the European periphery, setting off huge flows of capital to Spain and other economies; these capital flows fed huge housing bubbles in many places, and in general created booms in the countries receiving the inflows. The booms, in turn, caused differential inflation: costs and prices rose much more in the periphery than in the core. Peripheral economies became increasingly uncompetitive, which was not a problem as long as the inflow-fueled bubbles lasted, but would become a problem once the capital inflows stopped.

Most EU nations had increases in labor costs (Fatas, 2012) greater than Germany's. Germany, instead, managed to restrain its labor costs and had a positive export balance in the following years. Those nations that allowed "wages to grow faster than productivity" (Emsden, 2012) lost competitiveness.

When the inflow of capital to the south of Europe stopped after the financial crisis, the result was that there were highly uncompetitive states (not able to export enough), with an internal demand that started to get very weak. As a result, there was a need for a devaluation of the currency, but those countries no longer had their own currency because of their membership in the Eurozone. The way of "internal devaluation", that is cutting social programs as well as the cost of labour, is very unpopular and slow and difficult to achieve in a fair and balanced way.

2.6.2.6 Lack of Solidarity and Integration in Europe

The austerity measures contributed to crisis of legitimacy faced by the European Union. Austerity measures and prolonged recession had undermined the so-called "outcome-legitimacy": the notion that "so long as the common project produced evident benefits in the form of prosperity, economic opportunities and job creation, voters would accept it" ("An ever deeper democratic deficit", 2012). The institutional structure of the Union was not able to help the undermining of this equation. In the words of one observe of the continental economic situation at that time, the European Parliament "has increased its powers with every

EU treaty, including the fiscal compact; but has seen no parallel growth in its legitimacy" ("An ever deeper democratic deficit", 2012) .

In the European commission[6] and in national capitals alike, frustration with the EU parliament has been growing. It is almost always in favour of new regulation and always in favour of more spending. Any claim that this is what the voters want is undermined by the fact that the voters show ever less interest in it. At every election for the European Parliament since 1979, the turnout across the continent has plumbed a new low" (An ever deeper democratic deficit, 2012), while national elections registered a general increasing turnout.

The limitation in the power of the ECB, that is not allowed to lend money directly to the states nor to interfere in the economy to reduce unemployment like the American Federal Reserve, engenders among the peoples a sense of general frustration when they compare its functions to the functions the national central banks were able to perform before. Moreover The European Union seems to miss a demos (Grewal, 2012), a popular basis that feels European as well as German, Italian, French. To reduce this elitist kind of a representational deficit (Bellamy & Kroeger, 2013) there are many proposals by numerous scholars to enlarge common functions and to further the procedure to build other forms of common government and of common representation.

The role of Germany (Beck, 2013) as the de facto leading state in the Union, and the lack of willingness of its people to fully accept and take on this role, created a situation in which European elites did not seem to know which direction to take. T. Garton Ash (2013) explains that there are historical reasons that justify this German attitude. Germans, in fact, did not want to give up their own currency and they never chose to shape the EU in this way. France and Italy pushed Germany to agree to this common currency, but refused to integrate further in parallel with monetary integration. So it is unfair to blame the Germans for taking advantage of the monetary union in the bond market (attracting capital form the south of Europe) and for their

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[6] The European Commission is the Executive body of the EU, sometimes referred to as European government.

export surplus (having a weaker currency than the Deutsche Mark would have been), as they had to adjust to conditions they did not impose, and that they did not ask for.

Many scholars have advocated a major revision of the treaties, and the proposals are diverse. Some would try to involve the people directly in the election of the president of the commission, or even in the election of the entire commission; others would like to increase the powers of the national government in influencing the choices of the union; others again concentrate mainly on the economic reform of the ECB and on the communalization of national debts (Gallino, 2013). In May 2015 European elections will take place, and at the moment the polls register a huge growth of anti-European populist parties in many countries (Brown, 2014). The protest against austerity in many cases blends with old nationalism and regionalism.

Regardless of their precise effects and what other factors may be considered important, it is clear that the economic crises within Italy and the European Union had a significant effect on economic management, governance and electoral politics in Italy. Of particular importance for this thesis, is the effect they had on the emergence and electoral success of the 5SM.

2.7 Summary

The chapter has provided an explanation of the emergence and success of the 5SM within the Italian political system. The chapter reveals that the emergence and success of the 5SM are attributable to a combination of economic and political and factors and the capacity of its principal agents (i.e., Grillo and Casaleggio).

The major economic factor was the harsh economic recession in Italy that worsened as a result of European austerity policies and the inability of the European Union to make much progress in dealing with them. That problem was compounded by the fact that during that time, after years of bad governance and public management, the political system was once again in a chaotic state and policy and decision-making had reached an impasse. These economic and political crises led citizens to lose confidence in both the Italian and the European political and financial institutions to the point where it reached one of lowest levels in the postwar period.

Grillo and Casaleggio managed to exploit this discontent through a strong anti-establishment message and, as explained in more detail in the next chapter, the mobilization of ideas and individuals through the effective use of the internet and other media.

CHAPTER 3: CHARACTERISTICS OF THE 5SM

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the main characteristics of the 5SM as a political entity. The analysis is focused on the organizational structure, the internal governance processes and dynamics, and some of the strategies both in the 'political/parliamentary arena' and also in the 'policy arena'. In examining the major strategies in the 'political/parliamentary arena' the focus is on the way it positions itself within that area vis-à-vis other national parties. In examining the major strategies in the 'policy arena' the focus is on three notable policies positions —institutional reform policy, environmental policy, and European Union policy.

3.2 The Organizational Structure of 5SM

The 5SM is a very 'flat' rather than a very "hierarchic" organization. Both in theory and in practice it operates with two levels in the hierarchy—the singular and centralized leadership and the widely dispersed and diverse grassroots membership. The leadership consists only of Grillo. The grassroots consists of several categories of members dispersed across communities and connected by the Grillo's blog. The first major category includes two sub-categories of blog followers: one sub-category consists of non-voting members and the other consists of voting members. Both groups are allowed to follow and comment on Grillo's posts on the 5SM website. However, only the accredited voting members are allowed to vote in the online plebiscites/referenda.

The second major category of members includes what might be termed political activists who participate in local campaigns, such as the 'Meet-up group' participants who organize petitions, local events, debates among citizens and public protests. Many of them are certified activists who are authorized to participate in the 5SM's online referenda. There are no public registers where one can verify the numbers of accredited members so the available data are based on Grillo's and Casaleggio's statements.

Although the most apparent differences from traditional parties are the lack of "physical" headquarters and the concentration of the bulk of its political interactions on the blog, the most significant structural difference between them is that the 5SM does not have layers of leadership between the national leaders and grassroots members at the local and regional levels. More specifically, whereas traditional parties have locally and regionally elected leaders who participate in the activities of local and regional party councils or assemblies and contribute to the internal organization of the party, the local and regional politicians elected for the 5SM do not have a say regarding the management of their organization.

In the 5SM, neither the non-elected members nor the elected members in the local, regional and national legislatures are allowed to criticize the official positions decide by Grillo and Casaleggio. Indeed, as explained below, elected candidates from the 5SM lists who have criticized Grillo's positions publicly have been expelled from the movement. The 5SM leadership asserts that this centralized structure is aimed at preventing the institutionalization of hierarchy, and avoiding the exploitation of the 5SM brand by individuals exclusively interested in their personal political career. Actually, given the heterogeneous composition of its constituency, it is evident that what Grillo fears is the formation of internal factions led by prominent members, which can make the movement unmanageable or even cause its dissolution.

The major linking mechanism between the leadership and grassroots membership of the 5SM is the Internet. The 5SM website is acknowledged to be the linking mechanism between the leadership and the grassroots, and a prime tool in the consultations, deliberations, decisions of the 5SM as well as for the selection and campaigns of 5SM candidates for national, regional and

local elections. These are organized through the Internet ("Non statute", 2009). More specifically, the website (www.beppegrillo.it) is used to the identify and select candidates who support campaigns for social, cultural, and political awareness, which reflect the goal articulated by Grillo, and also to facilitate the work of the 5SM's "Meetup" groups, the public demonstrations, and the certified "Civic Lists".

Grillo used online consultation for different purposes: to decide what people are to be presented as candidates in the national elections, to decide 5SM's candidate for President of the Republic, to decide what position was to be taken regarding illegal immigration, to decide whether Grillo should go to meet the Prime Minister, to decide what electoral system was to be supported in Parliament and to decide whether to expel some elected MPs who were at odds with Grillo's official positions.

First, in these online consultations only people who had been registered on the blog for at least six months and whose identity had been verified are allowed to participate. At the moment, there are about 500,000 people ("Grillo, il M5S ha mezzo milione di iscritti, siamo democratici", 2014) registered on the website and the number of citizens who can vote in these consultations is about 80,000 to 100,000 ("Risultato della votazione sul reato di clandestinità, 2014). Second, these consultations are managed by Casaleggio's company, which decides when to announce the consultations, when they are to take place, what phrasing to adopt to formulate the alternatives and who is in charge of counting the votes and disclosing the results. Third, the vote is not secret, because the company that manages the blog can identify the participants and their vote. Fourth, the announced results cannot be verified either by the 5SM's activists or by external observers.

One criticism that has been made about this procedure is that the issues submitted for consultation are not of fundamental importance. For instance, Grillo did not ask its supporters whether to try to align with the Democratic Party (PD) to form a government that could enact some reforms supported by both parties, and he did not ask people whether to participate in the discussion about constitutional amendments with the other parties. Moreover, Grillo always tries to influence his supporters by clearly and forcefully stating his positions before the consultations. The only issue in which the majority of online voters opposed Grillo's decision was on

decriminalization of illegal immigration. Whereas Grillo had declared that it should not be decriminalized, the majority of 5SM supporters voted in favor of decriminalizing it, thereby aligning the movement with the position of the center-left parties on this controversial issue.

Grillo's and Casaleggio's narrative describes the Internet as a tool that allows a horizontal and democratic interactions among the users. The new modes of communication offered by the web is different from traditional media like TV and newspapers that are doomed to disappear. Similarly, the 5SM represents a new way of doing politics as it relies on the new media system; this movement will overthrow the old party system that is based the vertical communication of the old media. Cyber utopian views like this share two things: first, the "cultural myth" about the web, which will kill the old media as a consequence of inevitable technological progress; and second, the assumption that human progress tends inevitably to more democracy, human rights and political participation.

The scholar Morozov (2011) demonstrated that the effects of Internet diffusion in many countries of the world have very rarely brought about real and lasting improvements in peoples' freedom. Therefore, the general unequivocal tendency towards more democracy and a more horizontal, egalitarian structure of power, which is described by cyber-utopians, has not been observed at all. Indeed, several authors depict web communication in a quite different way from the simplistic vision of the 5SM leaders. They argue that there is a tendency towards centralization and concentration in web interactions, therefore, whether it is theoretically true that every source has the same ability to reach many users, in practice there are very few actors really able to do so.

Miconi (2014) recently discussed the most important studies on the structure of the web, and delved into the analysis of Italy's particular web structure as well as interactions within Grillo's blog. He observed that the structure of Grillo's blog and its internal dynamics are very centralized, rather than horizontal and pluralistic. Similarly, Miconi described Grillo's leadership as a case of Weberian "charismatic authority" and argues it is the result of the combination of the

web's centralizing tendency and an Italian social-cultural trend towards traditional family-style authority.

Corbetta & Vignati (2013) confirmed that in 5SM's internal dynamics, "the Internet has so far proved inefficient in ensuring the participation of the movement's adherents"(p. 60). Moreover, he denounced an evident lack of transparency in the management of online consultations the 5SM undertook. Mosca (2014) observed that "the 5SM adopted some of the tactical innovations introduced by Moveon[7]: a small coordinating staff, no offices, use of the Internet for organizational purposes, decision-making and fund raising" (p. 40). Nevertheless, he stated that while Moveon relies upon "an open and inclusive model", the 5SM puts several "barriers to participation", excluding members of political parties and allowing to vote in online consultations only people who were already registered on the blog for several months.

Grillo demonstrates that he is aware of the limitations of web communication. Indeed he recently changed his mind on the participation of 5SM MPs in TV broadcasts. As Diamanti (2014) pointed out, "Grillo exploits TV to his own advantage, pushing the lever of communication to 'full on' when an election is in sight" (p. 8). So, in spite of the cyber-utopia and the alleged imminent death of traditional media, the 5SM already employs a 'hybrid' communication strategy (see Chadwick, 2013), taking into account the complex interplay between diverse sources of information.

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[7] Moveon is a non-profit, progressive advocacy group that raise money and organize public campaign for progressive or liberal candidates in American electoral campaigns. This group, as well, organizes petitions and promotes active participation of citizens in political life. See http://front.moveon.org/about/#.U6J6-tJdUeg

3.3 The internal governance of the 5SM

When one focuses on the internal governance of the 5SM there is a substantial difference between the rhetoric and the reality. Grillo likes to depict the 5SM as a loosely structured and highly egalitarian and democratic organization. In practice, however, it is much more centralized and substantially less egalitarian and democratic than in his depiction. Michel's "iron law of oligarchy" (1915), regarding the ubiquity of rule by a few in all organizations applies as much to the 5SM as does to any other movement or party. This is evident in the rules that it has established, the way it deals with internal governance issues, its decision-making and policy-making processes, and also in the way it treats members who dissent from the leadership's positions on various issues. These features of the 5SM are discussed, in turn, below.

The rhetoric of the 5SM regarding its egalitarian and democratic features is embodied in its bylaws, which are curiously referred to as the 'non-statute' in its documents. The 'non-statute' of 5SM states that it will be governed and guided by the collective wisdom of its supporters. In this regard, the 'non-statute' states that: "The '5 Stars Movement' will gather the experience gained through the blog found at 'www.beppegrillo.it', the 'Meetup' groups, the public demonstrations and other initiatives and the certified 'Civic Lists' ".

In practice, however, the authority and autonomy of the grassroots is very limited. Instead, organizational authority is highly concentrated in Grillo and to some extent also in Casaleggio. They are the ones who have the authority and autonomy (i.e., the power) to determine the composition of "certified lists. They are the ones who manage the internet blog, regardless of the views of the majority of their supporters, who declare through their internet blog which lists, groups, or individuals are to be included and supported within the movement. There is neither highly systematized and democratic decision-making process nor a legitimate and properly established decision-making panel(s). Instead, Grillo, as the owner of the Logo and

the blog[8], is the one who decides on the composition of lists, candidacy for political offices, and which groups or individuals can use the 5SM brand for any political purposes.

The recent case of the February 2014 Sardinia's regional elections perfectly illustrates this paradox. Competing local lists asked Grillo to use the logo to participate in the elections ("Sardinia general elections without the M5S", 2014). Since these lists were incapable of reaching an agreement between them, Grillo decided that the 5SM would not take part in that electoral contest. Recognizing that he might be accused of centralization of decision-making authority within the movement, he posted a declaration related to this matter in which he held out the hope for democratic decision-making by stating that in future the 5SM would let its supporters decide such matters through an online local consultation ("Elezioni generali in Sardegna", 2014).

The 5SM demands substantial obedience and loyalty from its members. Members who are not loyal or obedient face expulsion based on decisions made by Grillo. This approach applies not only for members seeking or holding electoral posts within the Italian political system, but also for other members who are not seeking or holding such posts. In effect he can bar them from being part of the movement without approval by anyone else. It is possible for him to do this legally because Section 3 of the 5SM's "non-statute" (i.e., bylaws) state that: "The name of the " '5 Stars Movement' is connected to a trademark registered on behalf of Beppe Grillo, the sole owner of the rights of use it" ("Non- statute", 2009). Legally, therefore, Grillo has the right to prevent anyone from using the 5SM logo and brand for political purposes even in claiming that they are members of the 5SM.

Grillo recognizes that if he made too many decisions on his own regarding expulsions without some input by members, he might be accused of operating too much contrary to the spirit of democratic governance and would be criticized both within and outside the 5SM. Consequently, in an effort to at least give the semblance that some element of direct democracy

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[8] According to article number 4 of the non statute: "The name of the "5 Stars Movement" is connected to a trademark registered on behalf of Beppe Grillo, the sole owner of the rights of use".

exists, he has used some deliberative or consultative procedures in dealing with expulsions. To date this procedure has not been precisely defined, but the last expulsion of elected officials started with a vote of the "Meet-up groups" in the ridings of the elected officials, continued with the vote of the assembly of all elected 5SM MPs and finally was ratified by a national referendum on the blog.

The expulsions have been frequent since the 5SM started electing people to local councils. From the first session of the Parliament until March 2014 (about one year in total), thirteen 5SM senators (out of 54) and about ten deputies (out of 109) were expelled or abandoned the 5SM after conflicts with Grillo's official line. These numbers reveal how high the tension is inside the movement and how difficult it is for Grillo to keep the MPs disciplined and abiding by official political choices and positions. The first expulsion was that of Valentino Tavolazzi, a municipal councilor in Ferrara, who was guilty of participating at a convention summoned by some 5SM activists to discuss the organization of the 5SM ("Ferrara, Consigliere comunale primo espulso dal M5S", 2012).

It was March 2012 and the movement was on the rise. This blatant expulsion did not damage the 5SM's ability to attract voters. A few months later, in October, Federica Salsi, a municipal councilor in Bologna, was expelled for participating in a TV talk-show on political matters. Grillo expelled her because he felt that such TV broadcasts could damage the movement because TV journalists are biased against the 5SM and are committed to damaging its image. After eighteen months Grillo would change his opinion about participation in TV broadcasts.

In December 2012, the most famous and widely discussed expulsion took place ("M5S, Grillo caccia Giovanni Favia e Federica Salsi", 2012). Giovanni Favia, a regional councilor in Emilia Romagna, was recorded, without his consent, while talking to a journalist about the problems of democracy within the 5SM ("Federica Salsi vs Beppe Grillo: ecco la lettera di espulsione", 2012). According to Favia, the movement was not democratic, as the Grillo-

Casaleggio duopoly controlled all activities, decisions and policies. Since then, there have been several 5SM "purges" all over Italy, in almost all regions and in many municipal councils.

In summary, expulsion can result from the misuse of the symbol[9], participation in TV broadcasts or – in the majority of the cases - public disagreement with Grillo's political line. In any case, it is evident that Grillo does not tolerate the emergence of distinguished personalities who can discuss and criticize his statements and political choices. The comedian explains this approach as necessary to defend the movement form the many enemies that surround it ("Grillo, fuori dalle palle chi accusa me e Casaleggio", 2012). These enemies are the traditional political parties, but also the financial interests that are linked to them as well as the media that contribute to maintaining their power.

This "wartime" psychology, so widespread among activists and elected representatives of the 5SM, implies generalized suspicions as well as an elevated fear of conspiracies and intrusions. This almost paranoid psychological attitude leads Grillo to dismiss every criticism as triggered by ulterior motives. The journalists, politicians and scholars who criticize the 5SM, including those who previously had been appreciated by Grillo, are treated as dishonest enemies who are ferociously criticized and condemned.

3.4 The Strategies of the 5SM

To reiterate, the objective in this sub-section is to provide a brief overview of the political strategies of the 5SM both in the 'political/parliamentary arena' and in the 'policy arena'. In examining the major strategies in the 'political/parliamentary arena' the focus is on the way it

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[9] 'Misuse of the symbol' is a very broad and vague concept. It is arguable that what Grillo wants to forbid is that elected councilors or MPs declare that the 5SM support some causes without the consent of the supporters (and especially of the founders), or that they use the symbol just to gain popularity.

positions itself within that arena vis-à-vis other national parties. In examining the major strategies in the 'policy arena' the focus is on three notable policies positions—institutional reform policy, environmental policy, and European Union policy.

3.4.1 Strategy in the Political/Parliamentary Arena

The 5SM's main strategy within the political/parliamentary arena might be described as 'non-alignment' and 'anti-coalitionist'. This is quite evident in the fact that after the 2013 national elections Grillo refused to align with the PD to form a government that could definitively transcend the Berlusconi era, and preferred to stay in opposition. This refusal forced the PD to form a government in coalition with Bersluconi's party and put the 5SM in a convenient position whereby it could criticize the "caste of politicians" and thus reinforce its uncompromising anti-establishment profile. This choice led to strong opposition to almost every act the government proposed.

The protest was put forward in a very resounding way, trying to give the media the image of a very extreme and desperate fight for freedom against an undemocratic regime. Nevertheless, this attitude was at odds with the opinion of many 5SM MPs who thought that it was better to cooperate with the government to improve the situation of the country incrementally. This led to conflicts within the movement that were eventually solved with the expulsion of many MPs. Moreover, this strategy probably also led to a decrease in popular consensus, as in local election in April and June 2013 the 5SM got very bad results compared to the great success of February 2013.

Grillo's efforts to avoid even the semblance of being aligned with or supporting any other party or party leader was clearly evident in February 2014 when the Democratic Party decided to replace prime minster Enrico Letta with Matteo Renzi. The other parties followed the tradition, and met the new prime minster to discuss his political plans.

Grillo, however, did not want to meet Renzi ostensibly because he thought it was just a waste of time. Nevertheless, he asked his supporters through an online consultation whether he

had to accept the invitation. The majority of 5SM followers voted against Grillo's position on this matter, urging him to meet the prime minster. Grillo went to the meeting, which was broadcast via streaming (Cinquestelle Milano, 2014). However, rather than having a congenial conversation, he used the opportunity to assail Renzi with strong and torrential invective that prevented Renzi from speaking for even one minute ("Anti-elite activist Grillo lambasts Italy PM-designate Renzi", 2014).

The philosophy of non-cooperation and non-alignment within the political/parliamentary sphere continued as a mainstay of the 5SM's political strategy in other aspects of parliamentary business related to some major reform proposals. In September 2013, for example, the 5SM opposed a proposed reform to the national constitution's amendment rules. In opposing that proposed reform of the constitution, 12 5SM MPs climbed on the roof of the Chamber of Deputies, and remained there for more than 24 hours ("M5S, dodici parlamentari occupano il tetto di Montecitorio", 2013). Many commentators characterized this action as an exuberant though useless protest. Nevertheless, it was appreciated by other more left-leaning observers, because that constitutional amendment affected the method for amending the constitution, and the change proposed would have rendered the fundamental law too easy to amend in future.

The 5SM also adopted a non-cooperation and anti-reform stance in relation to restructuring Italy's central bank. In January 2014, the 5SM filibustered a decree for a fundamental restructuring of the Italian central bank entailing a reevaluation of its assets. Since the time for the conversion was almost over, the President of the House decided to enact a very unusual – though legitimate – measure that abruptly ended the debate (de facto neutralizing filibustering). The 5SM's MPs protested in Parliament against this action, that they deemed anti-democratic, in a very disrespectful and chaotic way, which included insulting the President ("Imu-bankitalia è legge. Proteste", 2014).

3.4.2 Strategies in the 'Political Sphere'

The strategies of the 5SM within the 'policy sphere' also reveal a strong tendency to avoid seeming closely aligned with any other parties, and they also echo a combination of good governance and public management themes, anti-establishment themes, nationalism themes, pro-environmental themes, and digital democracy themes.[10] In the case of the pro-digital democracy theme the movement promotes the direct participation of citizens in the management of public affairs through the use of "digital democracy" (Bordignon & Ceccarini, 2013). These themes are evident in numerous policy positions, including the three discussed below: institutional reform policy, European integration policy, and social and environmental policy.

3.4.2.1 Institutional Reform Policy of the 5SM

The 5SM has a broad and vague institutional reform policy. It is one that is heavy on rhetorical criticism and short on substantive details. The 5SM feels that the failures of Italy are largely a function of the failures of its established political and economic institutions. This is quite evident in its anti-establishment rhetoric that prevails in its oral and written communications.

Among the primary targets in those colorful and vitriolic rhetorical attacks are parties and parliament. Few institutions, including unions, are immune from his attacks. In 2013, Grillo had this to say about the unions: "I want a State with balls, eliminate the unions, which are an old structure like political parties. There is no longer a need for unions. Companies must be owned by those who work in them" ("Grillo, eliminiamo i sindacati", 2013).

Grillo maintains that Italy suffers from a political and economic crisis caused by the political parties that still form the country's government and control the national parliament and

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[10] The program of the 5SM can be found at the link
http://www.beppegrillo.it/iniziative/movimentocinquestelle/Programma-Movimento-5-Stelle.pdf

regional and local assemblies. For the 5SM the right-wing parties and the left-wing parties are essentially the same and equally at fault. The 5SM indicates that they represent the interest of political and economic elites in defiance of the general interest of the people. These parties are to blame individually and collectively for the impoverishment of the country. The 5SM accuses members of those parties of stealing a considerable amount of public resources with cynical indifference to millions of poor and unemployed people.

What is noteworthy and important regarding these anti-establishment messages vitriolic and offensive manner in which they are communicated. The 5SM disparages its political enemies through mangled names, satirical jokes and sometimes even through direct insults (Bordignon and Ceccarini 2013). Grillo talks about politics –as the de facto leader of a big political movement - the same way he used to talk about it as a comedian: his style was not temperate at all, and he often had to face trials for defamation. In three cases he was found guilty and had to compensate the victims of his invectives economically ("Tutti i guai giudiziari di Grillo", 2014).

In distancing themselves from the established parties, Grillo and his supporters firmly declare that the 5SM is not a political party, it is rather a movement made up of citizens who want to restore democracy as prescribed by the Italian Constitution; that in the 5SM there is no leader, there is no hierarchy (the motto is "one weighs as one") as it is simply an association of citizens; that the founder Beppe Grillo in not a political leader (in fact he chose to stay out of Parliament) but simply "the megaphone" of the movement (Biorcio & Natale, 2013). Grillo depicts the 5SM as an agent of progress and modernization. He believes that the political change that will result in less reliance on parties and parliament(s) will be brought about through the effective use of the internet as the key instrument of political communication.

To promote direct political participation of citizens, Grillo and Casaleggio advocate greater reliance on web-based plebiscites and referenda. To enhance free thought and true democracy they also call for an independent media system. For that reason they advocate an end to public subsidies to newspapers and a radical reform in granting access to airwave frequencies (in a way that prevents excessive concentration). Grillo is firmly convinced that citizens can

access fair and balanced information through the internet, therefore he calls for an improvement of the internet infrastructure to increase the scope and speed of connection to all the citizens of the country.

Grillo and Casaleggio believe that the traditional instruments of representative democracy are not compatible with the principle of popular sovereignty, so they have proposed a major overhaul of mechanisms of representation. Toward that end, the 5SM's program calls for the abolition of the prohibition of a binding mandate, as provided by the Constitution, and the introduction of mandatory instructions for the elected. The MPs' duty should be limited to implementing the electoral program approved by voters.

Recently, Grillo proposed the mechanism of recall (La7 attualita, 2014; Biorcio, 2014): each candidate must sign a contract that will oblige him to pay a fine of 250,000 Euro if he refuses to resign after an assembly in his district votes to dismiss him. Grillo and Casaleggio believe that as web technologies develop, citizens will no longer need the mediation of parties or politicians to manage the affairs of the state. Therefore Grillo talks about existing political parties and unions as "dead" or as "zombies" ("Grillo: Partiti zombie", 2013) that will be blown away by historic advancements in technology.

In opposing established institutions of all kinds, Grillo relies heavily on framing and articulating conspiracy theories. This is quite evident in posts found on his website.   In explaining economic problems, for example, Grillo argues that the meetings of the Bilderberg club – a private conference attended by people of influence from many countries of the world - determine the future of Italian and European policies ("L'informazione dimentica il bilderberg, il M5S no", 2013).

He adds that the economic and political problems are also rooted in plotting that occurs between lobbyists of powerful and privileged interest groups, bankers and politicians. His conspiracy theories also extend into the realm of science and scientific explanations. In his shows, Grillo has also repeatedly supported positions that are contrary to mainstream science regarding vaccines and some diagnostic tests (like mammography) arguing that these are useless

or even harmful. In addition, he maintained that the HIV virus does not lead to AIDS, and supported a cure for cancer, firmly dismissed by scientists, devised some years ago by Dr. Luigi Di Bella (Arcovio, 2012).

Some critics describe Grillo's approach on such issues as scientific populism (Moatti, 2013), some as denial of science, others as mere hoaxes. This popular epistemology, which is opposed to the complex explanation of scientists and experts, is a constitutive feature of the appeal of Beppe Grillo and of 5SM's unofficial ideology (Mautino, 2012). The web, as pointed out by the World Economic forum , is the most common medium for the spread of conspiracy theories (Brewster, 2013; "Truth and lies: conspiracy theories are running rampant…", 2011), as each user can choose the explanation that appeals to him on every single issue. The 5SM takes advantage of it in order to gain political support.

Grillo's strategic approaches to politics and public policy are also rooted in a fundamental belief that he and the 5SM's other principal actor, Casaleggio, share. A book published by Casaleggio is titled: "We are at War" (Casaleggio & Grillo, 2011). Grillo often repeats this sentence in his public speeches, saying that the 5SM does not believe in the legitimacy of the present political institutions.

This view explains why the comedian gave his support to some movements that vigorously contest the state and its actions, like the NO TAV movement[11] in Piedmont or the

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[11] The so called NO TAV is a movement that opposes a new railway line that will link Turin with Lyon, by a new tunnel under the Alps. Many inhabitants of the Italian Val di Susa (a Valley of Piedmont) began protesting in the nineties because they are worried that the new infrastructure would damage the environment of the Valley as well as the health of the population. In the following years the No TAV movement spread all over Italy and many more people and political activists joined it.

"Forconi" (Pitchforks) movement. During the "Forconi" protest[12] in particular Grillo urged the policemen not to protect the politicians anymore and he asked them to join the protesters ("Lettera aperta ai responsabili delle forze dell'ordine", 2013). When he talked to some activists of the far rightist movement "Casa Pound" (CasaPound Italia, 2013) he said he showed himself well-disposed towards them because they shared one important common goals with the 5SM: overthrowing the current political class.

3.4.2.2 European Integration Policy

The 5SM is also very careful in how it positions itself in relation to the European integration policy. Like some of its other policy positions, its position on European integration is ambiguous and vague. However, insofar as some coherent policy on European integration is detectable, it might best be described as Euro-skepticism.

In many of his posts, Grillo expresses an anti-European attitude that is not based on identity-driven nationalism, but on economically driven nationalism. In recent years, the 5SM has strongly advocated a radical reform of EU institutions to ensure that better decisions are made that are sensitive to the needs of Italy and other southern European countries. In Grillo's view, the EU pursued economic policies that favored Germany and northern European countries and penalized the states of the South. In making his case, Grillo suggests that by allowing (and even fueling) the market's pressure on Italian public bonds, Germany and France caused a huge capital outflow from Italy, thereby allowing companies from those countries to buy many Italian firms for little money ("L'Italia in mano agli usurai", 2014; "Il made in Italy che scompare",

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[12] The so called "Movimento dei Forconi", (Pitchfork) is a protest movement that arose at the end of 2013, organizing protests and road blocks in many Italian cities. The goal of the movement was to evict the government and go to new elections.

2013). He maintains that the austerity policies prescribed by the EU must be changed as soon as possible and the public debt of the member states must be communalized.

Despite Grillo's discourse that echoes some elements of the discourses of typical of far-right leaders in Italy, his opposition to Europe and the Euro is less clear and strong than that of Italian right-wing parties. Indeed, while the so-called neopopulist parties champion an outright return to national currencies, the 5SM proposes referendums to decide whether to stay in the Eurozone or to abandon the common currency, and on other major changes in the EU's economic policies, like the creation of Eurobonds or the dismissal of the so called "Fiscal Compact"[13]. Grillo does not divulge what option he would choose if a referendum were held. For now, it seems that he is trying to use the threat of a referendum to motivate Germany and other northern European countries to immediately change the economic policies of the EU.

Grillo's Euro-skepticism is partly the result of his electoral positioning beyond the traditional political ideologies and divisions. During the past year he has rebuffed efforts both by left and right wing parties inside and outside Italy to adopt particular positions on European integration. In the Italian political context Grillo has been invited and even taunted by Barbara Spinelli, a famous columnist for the major Italian newspaper La *Repubblica* and recently nominated as candidate for the left-leaning list Tsipras Italy, to consider future collaboration in the European Parliament in efforts to reduce the EU's level of control on Italy.

However, she was not optimistic that Grillo would respond positively to that appeal because in her estimation the 5SM is likely much less anti-European than it looks ("Lista Tsipras, Barbara Spinelli: possibile iniziare un rapporto con Grillo…", 2014). Adopting an ambiguous

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[13] The so called "Fiscal Compact", formal name is "Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union", is an agreement signed in 2012 by almost all the EU member states. With this agreement, the states that were highly indebted have committed to strengthen the measures to contain their deficit.

posture on that appeal, Grillo stated that he likes Alexis Tsipras, but he did not speak of agreements or future anti-European Union collaboration by the 5SM with any groups of the left.

Similarly, during the electoral campaign for the 2014 European elections Grillo did not declare with which parliamentary group the 5SM's MPs would be aligned within the European Parliament. The 5SM was courted by Marine Le Pen, the leader of French Front National, who asked all the Eurosceptic groups to form a common front to bring freedom and democracy to Europe: "I ask all euro-skeptic parties in Europe to work together to defend nation states and to restore democracy, rule by the people and national identities ("France's National Front chief wants eurosceptic alliance", 2014).

Grillo, however, indicated that he does not want any alliance with the French Front National, because he believes it would make the 5SM appear as a right wing or even as a neo-fascist movement to Italian voters ("Marine Le Pen tende la mano a Grillo, ma lui rifiuta…", 2014). Among other right-wing leaders of anti-European parties, Grillo was also courted and praised by Nigel Farage from the British UKIP, who has become famous for calling for the exit - or at least for extreme autonomy – of Great Britain from the EU (Grillo: non lascio il tema immigrazione alla Lega….", 2014). Although Farage showed appreciation for the 5SM by praising its criticism and protests against European technocrats, Grillo has not agreed to any common future project with him, or anyone else, on this file. Clearly, Grillo was to be ambiguous, vague and free in dealing with European integration policy as it suits him and not any grand coalition either from the left or the right, or even a left/right coalition.

3.4.2.3 Social and Environmental Policy

In the case of social and environmental policy, a prevalent strategy used by the 5SM is to appropriate the high ground on what might be termed 'good governance and public management'. In appropriating that ground it resorts to issuing general calls, rather than detailed proposals, for

better governance and public management in relation to every policy field. Notable examples of this include improving governance and public management in the pensions, health care and educational systems by, among other things, increasing and improving the level and quality of services and/or benefits provided, providing more transparency in public administration, and engaging citizens in deliberations and decisions by relying much more extensively on digital democracy.

The 5SM's policy platform contains some popular but very expensive social policy reform proposals that are almost impossible to realize, especially for a state whose finances are in dire straits. The first is a return to the preexisting pension system, which would allow workers to retire at 60 years of age, instead of at 67 after Monti's 2011 reform. The second is the introduction of a large, permanent and universal subsidy for the unemployed for as much as approximately 1,000 euro per person per month (Movimentocampania, 2013).

Invariably, of course, the policy script of the 5SM, like that of other parties, in any given policy sector is designed to build its support among those who care about that particular policy issue. In the case of environmental policy, for example the 5SM has tried to appeal to those who care about the environment regardless of where they stand on the political spectrum in relation to other issues. Thus, in building support among those who might be considered by to be part of the environmental movement, the M5S has decided to embrace the theory of "de-growth" (Latuche, 2004) which postulates that environmental sustainability depends on gradually reducing the dependence on economic growth and rising consumption of goods and services. The 5SM supports the green economy as a driving force for the creation of new jobs in many sectors of the economy. In doing so, it places an emphasis on the improvement of the process of garbage recycling, and expresses strong opposition to the building of incinerators and garbage dumps. The 5SM also opposes large infrastructural projects like the High Speed Railway in Piedmont (TAV) and in general it is against further urbanization of Italy. It proposes to adopt large-scale programs for energy efficiency, environmentally friendly transportation and to increase the production of renewable energy.

The way that the 5SM strategically positions itself both in relation to the aforementioned policy issues and also in relation to the machinations in the political arena is a reminder that the 5SM is constantly thinking, like other political entities, about how to maximize support among some constituent groups. Grillo is very careful in taking a strong position on issues on which there is widespread consensus among the population, and not to take a strong position on issues that can be highly divisive. There are several notable divisive issues on which is position tends to be relatively vague, ambiguous and muted.

One of these is the issue of tax evasion, which in Italy is traditionally very widespread. The necessity to approve measures to increase fiscal compliance is strongly supported by the progressive constituents while it is opposed by conservative ones. Another divisive issue is immigration: in Italy there are about 500,000 illegal immigrants ("Immigrazione regolare, clandestina e rifugiati", 2013) and in the past years the center-right coalition based its popular support on policies that were aimed at limiting the illegal inflow of foreign people. The same can be said for civil rights, especially for the debate on same sex marriage where Catholics and center-right constituents oppose any concessions. Grillo is aware that if he takes a stand on these themes he could lose his ability to attract a considerable part of voters, so he remains vague and concentrates on the most popular issues.

3.5 Summary

This chapter has provided a description of the main characteristics of the 5SM. The movement does not have a conventional institutionalized organizational structure. Instead, it has a relatively 'flat' two level organizational structure with a singular leader at the top and the membership at the bottom. The link between and among them is a website that articulates policies, connects the 5SM to actual and potential supporters, and coordinates the action of many local groups (or cells) linked virtually around the country. Grillo's leadership is exercised in a relatively authoritarian manner and his charisma is fundamental for the movement's cohesion. Although 5SM's ideology – or political philosophy - aims to establish a new form of 'direct democracy' where the citizen

no longer needs political representation, its political and policy platform consists of articulating strong positions on many issues on which there is a high degree of consensus and unity among the public, and relatively silent on politically divisive issues. Its platform is built mainly around the need for a renewal and moralization of the political system.

This chapter described the main characteristics of the 5SM. The political analysis carried on in chapter 4 and 5 tries to define and classify the movements on the basis of the facts and features illustrated in this chapter.

CHAPTER 4: THE CLASSIFICATION OF THE 5SM

4.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to classify the 5SM as a political entity. The effort at classification revolves around the following interrelated questions:

1. Is the 5SM a party, a movement, or a movement-party?
2. Can the 5SM's mobilization be called populist?
3. Is the 5SM's message left-wing, centrist or right-wing?
4. To what extent the 5SM can be called extremist?
5. Can some characteristics of the 5SM be defined as totalitarian?

4.2 Is the 5SM a Party, a Movement or Movement-Party?

Major scholars agree on two facts regarding the issue of the political definition of the 5SM. First, the movement is a party, no longer a movement, since it acts in the political arena, elects representatives in legislative assemblies and aims at exercising political power. Second, it is a "political animal" that is very difficult to define. Grillo and 5SM supporters maintain that the 5SM is not a party, and they consistently try to prevent its complete institutionalization, defining their MPs as simple spokespersons that transmit the people′s will in Parliament.

The best definition of the 5SM is that provided by Herbert Kitschelt (2006) when he described the concept of the so-called "movement-parties". Their characteristics are: they are a "coalitions of political activists who emanate from social movements and try to apply the organizational and strategic practices of social movements in the arena of party competition" (p.280); they have open membership; they have light organizational structure and no "physical infrastructure of communication"; they make low investment in the process of internal discussion on problem solving and social choice; there is an attempt at "combining activities within the arenas of formal democratic competition with extra-institutional mobilization" (p. 281).

The 5SM can be considered a "movement-party", but it does not have the very egalitarian and sometimes anarchical model of environmental parties. Indeed, it is located at the opposite extreme, where there are parties "led by a charismatic leader with a patrimonial staff and a personal following over which he exercised unconditional and unquestioned control" (Kitschelt, 2006, p.280). In this thesis, so far, the 5SM has been referred to as a movement, according to its name and to his origins, but from this section on it will be called a movement-party to better reflect his hybrid political nature.

4.3 Can the 5SM be defined as populist?

The concept of populism has been used by many authors to define a large array of phenomena. Moreover, the term has been recently used by many political leaders to stigmatize their political antagonists. As Taguieff (2002) points out, the risk of using the term in a pejorative way is always present, therefore it is very important to clarify the meaning of the word and to specify the political context in which it is used.

The definition of populism as used in this chapter is the one given by Mény and Surel in their famous book "Democracies and the Populist Challenge" (2002). They describe populist mobilization as characterized by three distinct factors. First, the importance of "people" as "the center of their vision of the world and of the political institutions which organize the community" (p.12).

This community is usually conceived as one single entity, homogeneous, composed just of the "true" people and excluding some enemy, some parts that do not really belong to it. The nature of the exclusion depends on the kind of populism, but it is always present: the tendency is " to deny horizontal cleavages (such as the Left/Right divide) and to promote the fundamental unity of the people while introducing a new vertical dimension, which may exclude, for instance, elites at the top and foreigners at the bottom" (Mény & Surel, 2002 p.12).

The second tenet of the populist message is that the people has been "betrayed" by those in power. Financial or political elites are the favorite targets in the populist narrative. They are blamed for the difficult conditions that the people are experiencing and for having pursued their own personal interests instead of the people's general interest.

The third element is the necessity to restore "the primacy of the people". The goal is to oust politicians in national and international institutions and to implement forms of "pure" democracy like referenda or recall. Mény and Surel point out that this democratic ideal "is generally counteracted by the central position taken (or assumed) by the leader" who is the depositary of the authentic will and aspirations of the people.

The narrative of the 5SM exalts the people as the bearer of virtues and pits its interests against those of Italian and European elites of politicians, bankers and technocrats. Grillo can easily draw on the numerous scandals that have emerged in Italy in the past twenty years, where public expenses have constantly increased but services for the citizens declined. Corruption has spread at every level of public administration, and in every geographical zone of the country. Even many northern regions and municipalities that are historically richer and better administered, have been hit by inquiries into waste of public money, embezzlement and nepotism. Many public corporations have been used to reward people that have supported and have been loyal to politicians and to political parties.

Grillo's rhetoric explains that the 5SM is the instrument that will allow citizens to enter the institutions and thus to regain sovereignty over their nation. The 5SM attacks politicians, institutions and political parties with a great violence and vulgarity, totally denying their legitimacy. As other populist movements, the 5SM supports the adoption of mechanisms of direct democracy, like referenda and the "recall"; nevertheless the main goal it pursues is to overcome representative democracy to establish a real direct democracy through the use of the new web technologies. Moreover, in spite of his emphasis on the right of citizens to decide without intermediaries and of his assumed position of simple "spokesperson" of the movement, Grillo's authoritarian leadership is evident as he is still responsible for – or at least, strongly involved in - all the major political decisions of the movement.

As we can see, the 5SM perfectly fits the flexible definition proposed by Meny and Surel. Grillo's populism can be called "a pure" populism, as it does not have ideological connotations that position it on the right or on the left of the political spectrum. Its strength comes from the very particular situation Italy is experiencing: it is living a national moral and economic crisis in the midst of a broader European crisis. This probably explains why Grillo's movement succeeds

in having major support by just pushing the anti-politics rhetoric to the extreme, without the need for scapegoats other than elites of politicians and technocrats.

4.4 Is the 5SM a Left-Wing or a Right-Wing Populist Movement-Party?

As shown in chapter 3, 5SM's platform is 'all over the map' ideologically on various issues. It is fair to say that the movement has a hybridized public philosophy which mixes slogans and proposals that come from diverse political traditions. For instance, like the leftist parties, it supports environmental protection, public education and public health care, while, similarly to the libertarian right, it champions a reduction of taxation. But the most important feature that characterizes the 5SM's platform is that it does not take a clear stand on politically contested issues. The reason for that consistent ambiguity is that the 5SM wants to be perceived as new, revolutionary, not linked to the political logics of the past in order to be able to attract voters with every political position. As a consequence, divisive issues are almost always neglected in Grillo's speeches.

From these elements, it is reasonable to draw the conclusion that the 5SM cannot be classified either as a right wing or as a left wing movement-party. Nevertheless, Grillo's populist message arose in a country where right-wing populist parties have attained great success in the last twenty years. As explained in chapter 5, Grillo's rhetoric and his anti-establishment attitude are quite similar to those exhibited by recent Italian populist leaders, whose stance is identified with the political right.

The 5SM does not belong to the right side of the political spectrum, but it arose in contiguity with a conservative-commercial culture that became dominant in Italy in the last thirty years. As explained in chapter 2, the role of commercial television, which is functional to the rise of a neoliberal popular mindset, in combination with atavistic elements in Italian culture and with a conservative push by the Vatican hierarchies, have determined the establishment of a conservative (low) cultural hegemony in the thought of the masses. The 5SM's anti-state attitude and its aversion towards experts and the world of culture, derision of institutional demeanor, rejection of a politically-correct rhetoric and contempt towards politics and mediation in general

are elements that Grillo took on from the right-wing cultural milieu just to propose them again with a new political movement.

4.4.1 Ambiguity towards fascism and immigration

The new right-wing cultural hegemony, directed by professionals appointed by the right-wing leaders, accomplished a rehabilitation of the Italian fascist past. History has been reframed and retold with the removal of some terrible misdeeds Italians had committed before and during the Second World War (Del Boca, 2010). Italy′s responsibilities in the Holocaust have been almost completely erased; the terrible war crimes committed in eastern Africa and in former Yugoslavia have almost been forgotten; the role of partisans who fought against the Nazi-fascist occupation during the war has been debunked or at least strongly deemphasized (Mammone, 2006).

Moreover, this new national popular narrative established a strong link between insecurity and immigration that resulted in widespread anti-immigrant attitudes. Studies show how media coverage in particular periods has created a sort of xenophobic psychosis that has been exploited for electoral purposes (Diamanti, 2008 b). Racist and xenophobic violence in Italy has increased in recent years as certified by several scholars (Andrisan, Naletto 2009 ; Associazione Lunaria, 2011, and the international observer, Human Right Watch, 2011).

4.4.2. Grillo′s narrative as an expression of the dominant right-wing television culture

Grillo's narrative is based upon this right-wing (low) culture in three specific ways. First, from the point of view of rhetoric, it is vulgar, aggressive and disrespectful of his opponents (in particular it is very similar to that of Bossi at the beginning of his political career). Second, Grillo expresses the same tolerance of tax evasion and opposition to state authority as does the Northern League and Berlusconi (Wu Ming, 2013). The violent attacks on Equitalia, the main agency that collects taxes for the central and for local governments, perfectly epitomizes this anarchic and subversive attitude.

Third are his opinions about women, immigrants and fascism. For instance, Grillo called the five young women that the Democratic Party has proposed as top candidates of their electoral lists for the European elections as ″veline″, which refers to scantily clad TV showgirls ("Grillo: capoliste Pd? 4 veline...", 2014). When the 5SM municipal councilor Federica Salsi participated

in a TV broadcast without Grillo′s permission, he declared that participating in talk show is like the "G spot" for many people ("Il talk show ti uccide, digli di smettere", 2012). Regarding immigrants, Grillo would use terms like "wild migrations" and "where can we put them?", and "illegal immigrants should be put in jail" that are typical of xenophobic parties. He said that on Tunisian shores all women are like "Ruby" (the underage Moroccan girl who allegedly had sex with Berlusconi) and he blamed the Roma for committing crimes in Italy ("Beppe Grillo e l'immigrazione", 2013).

To a journalist asking him whether he is anti-fascist, Grillo answered that this is an issue he was not interested in and that if neo-fascists supporters wanted to join the 5SM they would be welcomed ("Grillo ai fascisti di Casapound, 2013). He also used the inscription on the gate of the concentration camp of Auschwitz to attack the Italian government, by changing "Arbeit macht frei" to "P2 macht frei" ("Se questo è un paese, 2014). Unfortunately, controversial and offensive declarations similar to Grillo′s, pronounced by 5SM′s MPs are many and have stirred up violent arguments and even law-suits.

There is another sense in which Grillo is linked to Italian television culture. As the scholar Giuliano Santoro (2012) maintains, Grillo's relation to his supporters is essentially the one a TV star has with his public: it is as though his TV show never ends and invades the field of politics. The selection mechanism of the 5SM′s MPs is similar to that applied in reality shows, that is, the spectator has the illusion of being able to decide who will win and lose a contest, and where the same spectator can even dream of becoming the star of the program. Moreover, even if the comedian describes the Internet as a separate medium that follows a different logic from the others (more democratic and horizontal), in fact he uses all media by imposing the top-down TV model of his shows. This is evident when reading the comments on his blog, where the majority of people use the same words as Grillo pronounces, the same nicknames and the same reasoning.

The TV communication model implies a deep asymmetric relationship, which Pasolini (1973) refers to as the intrinsic fascism of television, as it allows a few people to influence many others without giving the latter the possibility to reply or to respond in any effective way.

4.5 Is the 5SM a Moderate or Extremist Populist Movement-party?

Anthony Painter (2013) in a recent paper on the rise of European populism devotes attention to whether the various populist movements are either moderate or extremist. In discussing extremism Painter pointed to two specific characteristics. The first characteristic is the way extremist movements exploit the democratic institutions. He suggests that extremists "take a more instrumental view of democracy: it either serves their purpose or it does not…. Therefore, they enter democratic space and depart from it at intervals depending on the degree to which it serves their purpose" (Painter, 2013 p. 25).

Given that conceptualization of extremism, some analysts have suggested that the 5SM has some extremist characteristics. As explained in Chapter 2, the 5SM uses its presence in Parliament to attain a double aim: to hinder any possible reforms of the system with the justification that compromise is the absolute evil, and to gain visibility in the media through blatant protests. Moreover, while Grillo clearly states that the 5SM's main goal is to undermine representative institutions and to overthrow the current system, every time that the government acts by decree (without consulting Parliament), the 5SM ferociously complains about an alleged "demise of Italian democracy" or a "coup d'etat". The respect of democratic procedures is invoked only when they advance the movement's interests, not as a value in themselves.

The second characteristic of extremism identified by Painter is a tolerance or even acceptance of violent actions. The evidence presented in Chapter 3 suggests that this characteristic has been evident in the 5SM. In addition to the frequent use of insults and verbal violence, there is support for every movement that resorts to illegal and even violent protest. The epitome of this attitude is the open support for the sometimes violent No-Tav protest in Piedmont, the unauthorized road blocks of the group "Forconi" and the movement for the independence of Veneto from Italy that threatens not to pay taxes to Italy anymore. But the more clamorous case has been the public urging to policemen and public servants to stop obeying orders and join the rebels.

Florian Hartleb (2012) enumerates the features of extremism explicitly, including both right-wing and left-wing extremism as well as fundamentalism. These are: "dogmatism; use of conspiracy theories; anti-constitutionalism; the use of stereotypes; economic anti-liberalism; and utopianism" (p. 49). From the report provided above, it is evident that the 5SM, in many respects, incarnates these features. The reason it is not considered as an extremist movement by many commentators on mainstream media is that they consider Grillo's statements just as a comedian's provocations that are not to be taken too seriously. Other experts (Santoro, 2013; Scalfari, 2007; Wu Ming, 2013; Merlo, 2013), though, maintain that the friends-versus-enemies psychology of many activists and their non-critical acceptance of the movement's doctrine are already similar to that of activists of parties that ended up being dangerous for democracy.

Indeed, unlike right-wing neo-populist movements (like the Northern League, the French Front National and the British UKIP) the 5SM does not dream of going back to the past with the certainties of old ethnically homogeneous communities (Aime, 2012). Instead, it is focused on the future, towards a world dominated by green technologies and perfect democracy. This is not unlike some of the fascists of the last century who were thrilled in thinking about the future and perceived themselves as something new and not linked to values of tradition and conservation. Moreover, their members were not aware of what they were helping to create and what the real aim of their violence was. This is the reason that the famous journalist, Corrado Augias, called some 5SM supporters and MPs "unaware fascists" (Maurihal100 , 2014).

The mix of naivety and ignorance which mark these people's attitudes and actions are a threat to liberal democracy. Equally dangerous is the "millenarian" conception of truth explained above that accounts for the paranoia of being surrounded by enemies, which is quite prevalent within totalitarian regimes. This paranoid attitude, in turn, determines a psychology of suspicion that views every criticism as a betrayal and every free thinker as a saboteur. This explains the numerous cases of expulsion of members that occurred both in the 5SM and in various totalitarian movements of the past.

Finally, there is one other important element described by Arendt (1973) that is typical of authoritarian leaders in the phase of pursuing power that applies to the 5SM: this is the

opportunistic ways in which they position their movements. The opportunistic behavior of the leader is allowed by the vagueness of its platform that gives him the ability to act tactically with little risk of contradiction of previous stances. In the case of the 5SM, the program just avoids divisive issues and this gives Grillo the ability to refuse compromise with other parties by constantly changing his positions on these issues (Laudonio & Panarari, 2014). He can always find a reason not to agree on some particular point and thus maintain his ambiguous and advantageous political location of being neither right nor left. At the same time, by refusing to cooperate, he renders political compromise on divisive issues more difficult to attain by the other parties.

4.6 Is the 5SM a totalitarian movement-party?

The final question in classifying the 5SM is whether it is a democratic, authoritarian or totalitarian movement-party. As noted in previous sections of this thesis, the 5SM likes to depict itself a democratic movement, but its discourse and actions are not very consistent with that depiction. The 5SM is not a highly democratic or egalitarian movement-party. Unlike some other movement-parties it does not have the very democratic or egalitarian organizational model that in its most extreme forms begins to look like an anarchical organizational model with little, if any, concentration of power in either one or a few individuals.   5SM's discourse and actions both in relation to internal party governance and governance within the Italian polity in general manifest or exhibit what arguably might be described as authoritarian and possibly even totalitarian themes and tones (Rondolino, 2014; Santoro, 2013; Flores D'arcais 2012).

It must be noted here that to suggest that the 5SM manifests or exhibits such themes and tones is not to conclude that it is authoritarian or totalitarian. What the thesis wants to argue, instead, is that these dangerous elements should be considered together with other elements that are more compatible with a liberal democratic regime: the totalitarian features constitute a possible development path that the movement can take or refuse depending on which of its tendencies will emerge and prevail on others. In pointing to those characteristics the chapter focuses on the positions and messages articulated by the leadership and membership of the 5SM.

There are at least four such characteristics that are often associated with authoritarian and totalitarian regimes.

4.6.1. Characteristic #1: Claiming that the Movement's Doctrine is Supported by Science

The first of these characteristics is the creation of the illusion that the doctrine of the movement is supported by science. When science does not seem to support the movement's core beliefs the leaders resort either to criticizing science or creating and invoking a pseudo-science that produces falsehoods and utopias (Mautino, 2012; Moatti, 2013). In effect, they are trying to create some kind of "revealed truth" which gives the political leaders a semblance of infallibility.

This tendency is evident when Grillo maintains that "ordinary" or "mainstream science" is often corrupt and directed by big economic interests. In place of science he then invokes false assertions, which resonate with 5SM members who are very resistant to all refutations of assertions in the movement's dogma by experts and scientists. Indeed, efforts at refuting the assertions of the leadership are depicted as conspiratorial attempts by those who aim to discredit, derail and defeat it.

Like totalitarian leaders described by Arendt (1973), Grillo proffers prophecies and predictions that do not need to come true, as they are part of an action of liberation based on a deeper truth, which sooner or later will be made manifest. Indeed, Grillo talks about other parties or about old media (newspaper and TV) as if they were walking dead that will be swept away by history (Natale & Ballatore 2014); and even if this were not to happen, nobody in the 5SM seems to notice the falsehood of these prophecies. So Grillo can still launch prophecies and at the same time work to realize them without ever facing the scrutiny of reason because he is the bearer of a deeper knowledge that goes beyond "ordinary" reason.

4.6.2 Characteristic#2: Overthrow of Existing Political Institutions

A second major characteristic of authoritarian mindset is a fixation on the need for overthrowing the existing regime and existing institution by any means, not explicitly excluding violent means. The promise is that great freedom and effectiveness can be achieved through a new political order in which all citizens will have either equal say or at least equal treatment, and possibly even both. Such a mindset was revealed in a recent interview by Casaleggio, the 5SM's ideologue, who explained the goals and strategies of the movement as follows:

> In the coming months, in Italy, there will be unrest and riots that the police cannot control. The parties, by now, are archaic structures: the future is direct democracy through the Web… They will be replaced. The word 'digital democracy' is a more encompassing word than the concept of direct democracy. And it is direct democracy that is emerging... It has already brought to the fore many instances of people that had not participated in political life. ("Casaleggio: nei prossimi mesi shock economico, rivolte e disordini", 2013)

Direct democracy, in Casaleggio's words, means: "to carry, to transfer to the citizens the weight of decisions, participation, and then replace the existing proxy, which is a blank proxy…" it also means "the eruption of the citizen in political life, the citizen becomes a politician in the first person."

The 5SM aims to abolish representative democracy to create an authentic govern of the people. The founders of the movement believe that this will be a global process that is spurred by improvements in internet and other communications technology that will foster a more egalitarian society. To attain this objective, there is, first, a need for a popular rebellion that would blast away old political structures. Recently, as is mentioned above, the 5SM has supported all the movements threatening the state's authority and challenging the established order. Moreover, as Casaleggio explained, the 5SM refuses to cooperate with any political party that attempts to improve the economic and social situation by reforming the system. Indeed, when a journalist asked the ideologue what he would do if the 5SM entered in a government with the center-left parties, Casaleggio replied he would quit the movement ("Casaleggio: nei prossimi

mesi shock economico, rivolte e disordini", 2013). As it is evident also from the activities of

5SM MPs, they almost always refuse to agree with the other parties on any reform and they

tactically defend positions and provisions that are popular but impossible for the government to

adopt.

4.6.3 Characteristic #3: Acceptance of Violence to Change the System

A third characteristic of an authoritarian or totalitarian mindset is its acceptance of violence to

overthrow and to control political and economic systems. Although the 5SM is not explicitly

calling for violent actions as a means to produce change, it is not entirely opposed to the use of

violence to varying degrees. The notable difference between the 5SM and some radical and

violent movements like Golden Dawn, the Greek neo-Nazi party, is that the 5SM's supporters do

not use physical violence against any particular group. Instead, they engage in what might be

termed 'oratorical violence'.

Grillo's speeches are full of violent verbal attacks and insults directed at political enemies

and even leading politicians and statesmen, like the President of the Italian Republic or the

German Chancellor (Mackenzie, 2014). Many 5SM supporters express themselves on the web

with some of the same words and with some themes and tones that are even more offensive and

hateful than those of Grillo (Parboni, 2014). In some cases their views have stirred up very

strong reactions and even led to lawsuits against them.

Another way that Grillo encourages verbal violence against individuals on his website is

by posting the names of journalists or politicians who have criticized or opposed the 5SM. He

does this in order to allow supporters to attack them in their posts, and this often results in insults

and obscenities. Many of the people who write on the blog do not act like political activists but

like irrational supporters (hooligans) of a football team during a match in a stadium (Ruffini,

2014). In this way, insults and rage are a new kind of political language as the room for

ideological debate and exchange of ideas within the movement is no longer available.

Some analysts suggest that the 5SM gives voice to people who can no longer express

themselves because of economic and social distress, the same way fascism and Nazism did with

soldiers who returned from the horrors of war or were unemployed in the 1930s (Benjamin, 2011; Santoro 2013). So, like the voices of desperate and disoriented people almost a century ago who expressed rage and violence, many of Grillo's followers show that the blog gives them the venue to express these same feelings against an enemy that is hindering the movement and its efforts to liberate people.

In defending the aggressive oratorical violence that he and his followers engage in, Grillo has stated several times that if the 5SM did not exist in Italy there would be dangerous subversive parties like Golden Dawn that would express popular outrage in a very physically violent way ("Grillo: senza il M5S qui sarebbero arrivati gli estremisti…", 2012). One of the premises of this statement is that under certain economic conditions people always (or naturally) act in a violent and irrational way like totalitarian movements did in the past against institutions, politicians and minorities. This premise is wrong as is evident in the case of Spain and Portugal where the effects of the economic crisis were more severe than in Italy, but where there are no movements such as 5SM or Golden Dawn. Moreover, the tragic conditions of Greece are not comparable with those of Italy since the Italian economy still has a dynamism that the Greek economic system does not have, and Italian people are on average considerably better off than the Greeks.

At any rate, following the premise of Grillo's statement, the 5SM expresses public rage, and by doing so it is saving the country and the people from the adverse effects of physical violence. In short, Grillo justifies what he and his supporters do as relatively harmless expression of popular rage that serves as an important warning for the establishment to start governing and conducting politics differently.

4.6.4 Characteristics #4: Encouraging People to feel like a mass

A fourth characteristic of the authoritarian and totalitarian mindset that is evident in the 5SM is the tendency to encourage people to reject liberalism and pluralism in favour of communitarianism and monism. People should abandon their individual and group interests and embrace the national interests. As Hannah Arendt (1968) explained, fascism and Nazism arose in a context where the class system had been destroyed by war and the ensuing economic

depression, so that people felt they were no longer part of any distinct associations, political groups or social groups.

Citizens had become a mass, where individuals felt isolated and unable to express their distress through traditional means. Such feelings of isolation have been augmented by the progressive weakening of unions, political parties and business associations: these are intermediary bodies that structure society by dividing the masses according to the diverse interests of each group. These structures allow citizens to establishing horizontal ties and relationship between individuals. In this way they empower citizens and workers by giving them a precise identity and a sense of dignity by being be part of a particular distinct category within society.

The existence of unions, parties and diverse associations renders the individuals richer and stronger,   preventing the emergence of the sense of solitude and anonymity which, instead, arises when the individuals feel just part of an undistinguished mass. This is the reason why totalitarian leaders do not want class divisions and conflicting interests within society; indeed they need a shapeless mass that can develop a strong affective link with its leader.

As discussed in chapter two, Grillo and Casaleggio have tried to capitalize on this type of context in Italy in recent years. The recent economic crisis brought millions of Italians to the brink of poverty (Ricciardi, 2013). Millions of temporary workers, who are exploited and paid very little, do not feel represented by unions and political parties. The long-term unemployed have lost confidence in the political system. In other words, the Italian social system is in jeopardy, and many people have lost their status, economic security and their confidence in the future (Iannello, 2013).

Grillo and the 5SM have tried to exploit this situation and add fuel to the fire of people's discontent by trying to frighten those who still have a secure income and faith in the current system, in the existing political parties and unions. Also by opposing every possible solution and criticizing every action the government takes to improve the situation, the 5SM cynically pursues its political interests. So, it is evident the 5SM attempts to facilitate the deterioration of political and social conditions to be able to seize power by exploiting popular discontent. In addition, the will to undermine the existing political institutions to be able to exercise power over a mass of people that will no longer be divided by distinct interests is also clear. Santoro (2013) maintains

that: "the aspiration, often repeated, of the 5SM's supporters is to represent all the Italian people… there is no partiality, and there are no class differences and conflicts… The people is the homogeneous and peaceful mass."

4.7 Summary

This chapter has explained that the 5SM can be defined as a movement-party as described by Kitschel (2006). The chapter has also established that the 5SM exhibits the characteristics of populist mobilization as described by Meny and Surel (2002). It also revealed that 5SM's populism espouses a hybrid ideological framework articulated in its narrative consisting of political and economic values that span the political spectrum from the left to the right. In the 5SM narrative and behaviour there are elements that are typical of extremist movements, in particular its strategy which aims at destabilizing existing democratic institutions.

Finally, the chapters described a set of similarities between some characteristics of the 5SM and those of totalitarian parties of the past. In particular, Grillo's movement-party seems to be encapsulated in a collective psychology that perceive as a dangerous enemy every entity (institutions, thinkers, scientists and organizations) which criticizes its strategy and beliefs .

CHAPTER 5: COMPARISON OF THE 5SM TO OTHER ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT
MOVEMENTS AND PARTIES

5.1 Introduction

This chapter compares the 5SM to other populist movements and parties in Italy, a few selected European countries, and two international movements. In Italy the focus is on recent populist parties like Forza Italia, Partito della Liberta, the Northern League and the Italy of Values. In the selected European countries the focus is on the groups of neopopulist parties of the new-left, the new radical left (exemplified by SYRIZA in Greece) and the Pirate parties in Sweden and Germany. The comparison with international social movements is to "Occupy Wall Street" and the "Indignados". The focus of the comparison between the 5SM and all these movements is on the following: their organizational structure, their leadership style, their constituency (i.e., members and supporters), their ideology, and their policy platform.

The goal of the comparison to Italian populist parties is to verify whether the 5SM is explainable as an evolution of Italian populism and, if so, whether it comes from a rightist or a leftist political tradition. The goal of the comparison to International anti-establishment parties and movements is to examine whether Grillo's movement party fits in any of the category established by the literature. The comparison also helps analyze more depth the characteristics of the 5SM.

5.2 Comparison with Italian populist parties

This section compares the 5SM to other Italian populist parties. Toward that end it provides an overview of the genesis, key characteristics, and platforms, and leadership of major populist parties in Italy.

After the Second World War, Italian politics was dominated by two large rival parties: Democrazia Cristiana (Christian Democracy) (DC), and the Italian Communist Party (PCI). The government was supported by coalitions centered around the DC and several smaller parties. The PCI was for many years the biggest communist party in the western world and it has always stayed in opposition. After the fall of the USSR and the Eastern European regimes, the PCI changed its name (it became PDS, Democratic Party of the Left) and experienced a mutation: it became more moderate, following the European social democratic model, so the more orthodox communists founded a new leftist party called "rifondazione comunista" (communist refounding).

In the period from 1992 to 1994 many scandals, involving corrupt relationships between the political parties that formed the government and the main corporations and industries of the country, emerged. There was a major judicial inquiry, "Tangentopoli" (from tangente, kick-back) that substantially destroyed the DC's reputation and that of parties aligned with it (Waters, 1994). Public prosecutor Antonio Di Pietro, who investigated and grilled many entrepreneurs and politicians, shot to fame as the trials against corrupt elites were broadcasted on TV.

During this critical period, the electoral system was overhauled and became first-past-the-post, although it conserved a small proportional quota. Italy looked ready for a modern two party democracy where two major blocs could alternate in governing the country. New political parties emerged and other traditionally minor parties grew significantly, gaining unexpected popular support. The neofascist party, Alleanza Nazionale (National Alliance), the regionalist and separatist northern Italian movement, Lega Nord (Northern League) and the new Berlusconi libertarian party, Forza Italia (Forward Italy), formed a center-right alliance. Later, in 1996, the prosecutor Antonio di Pietro entered politics, joining the former communists (then PDS), and in 1998 founded his own anti-corruption party, the Italia dei Valori (Italy of Values), joining the center-left coalition.

During the Second Republic, the bipolar political pattern increasingly affected voters' behavior (Massari, 2004) with the centrist parties, which did not want to coalesce with either of the blocs, progressively losing voters and political importance. The political scene has been dominated by a struggle between a populist center-right front and an internally divided center-

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left coalition (D'Alimonte & De Sio., 2012). This bipolar pattern stayed in effect from the 1994

national election until the most recent election in 2013, when the 5SM suddenly burst onto the

political scene. The nature and the political trajectory of the populist parties of the Italian Second

Republic will be analyzed in the following paragraphs, to underline trends that can partly explain

5SM's populism.

5.2.1 Forza Italia and the Popolo della Libertà

As explained in chapter two, Silvio Berlusconi is an entrepreneur who made his first fortune in

the construction business in the seventies; Then he moved into the media industry and due to his

good connections with the parties that governed during the First Republic, he gradually built a

financial and media empire. Berlusconi decided to enter politics in 1993 after the parties of the

anti-communist bloc had disappeared and when the courts began inquiries into the management

of his corporations and his relations with politicians. In a few months he organized Forza Italia,

his political party. Largely due to his massive economic resources and his huge propaganda

machine his party gained more than 20% of votes in the 1994 national election.

Forza Italia's platform was based on two antinomies: anti-politics and anti-communism

(Bardi, 1996). Berlusconi created and projected an image as a self-made man and rich

entrepreneur who provided jobs for many people, and who was opposed the parasitic

professional politicians of the left. Second, he championed neoliberal reforms that opposed the

big welfare program and high taxation scheme of the left parties. Berlusconi represented small

business and self-employed professionals who felt vexed by high taxes and a smothering

bureaucracy.

As we have seen above, after many years and three Berlusconi administrations, the

situation of the country did not improve as taxes actually increased and social programs,

although still in place, were significantly reduced (Ascoli & Pavolini, 2012). In recent years it

became clear that Berlusconi's main goals have been to protect his economic interests from

market competition in the TV sector and to evade criminal prosecution. To achieve these goals,

he needed popular approval, which he pursued by every available means such as distributing favors, promising unrealistic tax breaks to many people and publicly justifying tax evasion, as well as nominating candidates facing criminal charges and/or with convictions as long as they could bring votes (Cottone, 2008).

In order to better protect his personal interests, in 2008 Berlsuconi also decided to merge with the neo-fascist party - called National Alliance - so that he could be the master of the biggest Italian party. The paradox resulting from this merger is that Gianfranco Fini, leader of the former fascists, became more moderate and respectful of the institutions than Berlusconi. Moreover, because he demanded more internal pluralism, Fini was eventually chased out of the party. (Redazione Contenuti Digitali, 2010). Recently, many former fascist politicians ended up supporting Berlusconi and becoming the fiercest watchdogs of his power and authority (Ceccarelli, 2009).

Berlusconi's party evolved over time. Initially it was markedly libertarian, more moderate than the neo-fascists (Pirani, 2010), and expressed anti-establishment sentiments. After 20 years, however, he has transformed his party in a very conservative coalition where former fascists, former Christian Democrats and former socialists are kept together by Berlusconi's charisma and his huge fortune. To summarize, his party shifted from being a charismatic protest party of the center-right to personal "patrimonial" party of the far right. This political shift to the right has been noted by many representatives of the more centrist and progressive European People's Party, who considered expelling Berlusconi's party from their parliamentary group.

5.2.2 The Northern League

Founded by Umberto Bossi in the early 1980s, Lega Nord (LN) or Northern League elected its first two representatives in the Italian Parliament in 1987. The party's principal political goals are to achieve greater authority and autonomy to northern regions (the richest in the country), and the elimination of existing political parties that governed Italy corruptly and inefficiently for

many years. The support of the LN for more autonomy oscillated between a roughly-conceived federalism and secession from Italy. Indeed, the LN invented the "Padania" (Oneto, 1997), a land that extends all through northern Italy and whose inhabitants had a different ethnic origin from the rest of Italians. Of course, this alleged heartland has a different history from what the LN supporters alleged, but this distortion of history was useful to create a nationalistic passion among the diverse northern Italian peoples.

In its fight for autonomy for those regions, the LN demonstrated some xenophobic bias and promulgated stereotypes against southern Italians, charging them as idle and exploiters of social programs. Its xenophobia also extended to immigrants. This was amply evident starting in the 1990s when, as immigration to Italy increased, immigrants became the favorite polemic target for the LN. Xenophobic tones became more aggressive and the party concentrated on the defense of local tradition from the foreigners' "invasion". In particular, the LN, like other European populist movements, focused its anger against immigrants coming from Islamic countries (Avanza, 2010).

Nevertheless, until the end of the First Republic, the main focus of Bossi's flamboyant and aggressive rhetoric were the politicians, who were blamed for wasting taxpayers' money, nepotism and blatant pursuit of personal interests. The LN conveyed the rebellion of the small entrepreneurs of the North, who wanted fewer and lower taxes, a more efficient state and less bureaucracy. This protest party strongly supported the inquests led by the public prosecutor's office based in Milan, known also as "Mani Pulite" (clean hands) team, against corrupt politicians, which accelerated the fall of the parties that had governed throughout the First Republic (Biorcio, 2012).

In the 1994 national elections, the LN aligned itself with Berlusconi's party, but the two parties parted ways by the end of the year. After several years of intense conflict, the two populist parties formed a new alliance in 2001 (which is still in place) that has allowed the parties to govern the country for more than nine years (from 1994 to 1995, from 2001 to 2006

and from 2008 to 2011). Umberto Bossi's charismatic leadership lasted until scandals for mismanagement of the party's funds blemished him. Bossi exercised his power in an absolutist way, expelling numerous party members who contested the party's official positions (Passarelli, 2013).

During the last Berlusconi government from 2008-2011, Roberto Maroni, an LN member and minister of the interior, initiated several restrictive policies designed to limit immigration and to penalize immigrants who were already in Italy. These measures have been harshly criticized by many international observers and some of them have been condemned by the European Court Human Rights as well as by the Italian constitutional court. The most shocking of Maroni's proposals was to keep a file on the nomadic peoples living in Italy, by fingerprintint Roma gipsy children in order to clamp down on street begging (Colombo, 2012; Milani, 2013).

Like the Forza Italia, over time the LN shifted towards the right (Ignazi, 2005). At the same time it became indifferent to the needs of the country, because it was primarily focused on exploiting the popular discontent to gain electoral support. Indeed, while in 1995-1996 during a difficult political crisis, Bossi's party agreed to participate in a government with the left and the centrists. During the 2011 crisis, when Italy risked a disastrous economic default, it refused to cooperate with other parties to support action to secure the country's finances.

In recent years the LN has sided with the French Front National and proposes a European action to limit immigration as well as a return to the national currencies by the European states (Mudde, 2014). Its original anti-politics attitude faded as the movement completed its "institutionalization", and xenophobic motives took front and center in its platform, and their expression became increasingly manifest and vulgar (Dematteo, 2011).

5.2.3 Italia Dei Valori

After examining the two major Italian populist movement parties, the focus shifts now on the history of a left-wing anti-establishment populist movement parties (Andrews, 2009) founded by a former magistrate, Antonio di Pietro, who left his judicial career in 1996 and decided to enter

politics by joining the former communist party (PDS). In 1998 he founded his own party, the Italia dei Valori or Italy of Values (IDV), and in the following years he positioned the party either within the center-left coalition or very close to that alliance.

The platform of the IDV was focused on the need for more transparency in public administration and the need to fight against corruption at every political level. Traditionally, the value of "legalità" (observance of the law) is a right-wing value, while the so-called "garantismo" (i.e. the protection of civil liberties for people accused of crimes but not yet sentenced) is a leftist value. In Italy during the last twenty years after Berlusconi entered politics, the right defended a double, or even triple standard of justice: harsh with the poor and foreigners, indulgent of public administrators and the rich, and easy on tax evaders. Therefore, "law and order" populism in Italy is politically located on the left.   For many years Antonio di Pietro was Silvio Berlusconi's nemesis, accusing him of being a criminal in a very direct and confrontational way (Presidentemalefico, 2010).

The IDV experienced a crisis during the 2011-2012 inquiries into the management of the party's regional funds, as one of its regional councilor was accused of embezzlement (Sarzanini et al., 2012). Afterwards, in a TV broadcast (Giannini, 2012), Di Pietro's management of the party's funds and assets was examined, casting doubts on his personal honesty. This tarnished the party, especially because just at that time, Beppe Grillo's 5SM was on the rise and attracting voters who were disappointed with the existing parties. Di Pietro tried to arrange a common action with Grillo against corruption, but the comedian, although not disparaging Di Pietro as did the other politicians, refused, preferring to fight his battles against "the caste" alone. The IDV, then, tried to align with a movement founded by another former anti-mafia magistrate, Antonio Ingroia, but in the 2013 election they could not attract enough votes to enter Parliament. Although Di Pietro was a charismatic leader, he never attracted more than five or six percent of votes. His populist tones and his over-simplified message probably alienated many highly educated center-left voters. At the same time, his lack of extremism did not allow him to attract the votes of people who felt outraged by the ongoing economic deterioration of the country and misconduct of many politicians.

5.2.4 Conclusions of the comparison between the 5SM and recent Italian populist parties

The trajectory of both Berlusconi's parties and the LN is similar: they began as anti-establishment and libertarian parties and ended up positioning themselves at the extreme right of the political spectrum. They are still successful parties despite the numerous scandals involving their leaders. Instead, the IDV, which aimed to attract moderate and progressive voters to fight against corruption but without attacking the country's democratic institutions, seems headed toward political death. What is relevant in this development is the electoral behavior of "moderate" voters. In voting they seem to gravitate primarily towards the conservative parties rather than progressive or socialist parties. A 2008 study conducted by the political scholar Ilvo Diamanti (2008) compared the results of the 2008 elections with the 1948 polls, the first elections in the postwar period. The results were surprisingly similar in term of support for conservative parties as opposed to socialist parties. The study revealed that in 2008 the Berlusconi - Bossi coalition gained roughly the same percentage of votes as the DC and it was strong in the same areas where the Christian Democrats were dominant in 1948. Similarly, the left achieved almost the same results it obtained 60 years earlier.

This suggests that the traditional cleavages between conservatives and progressives have remained the same. The notable difference between 1948 and 2008 was in the kind of messages and types of leaders the conservative constituents supported. The DC was not a personalized party and had a strong sense of democratic institutions. Moreover, it had deep Catholic roots that espoused values like solidarity and protection for ethnic and cultural minorities. Bossi's and Berlusconi's parties defended the Church's positions on ethical issues such as in vitro fertilization or euthanasia but, at the same time they championed individualism and xenophobia and neglected social marginalization all of which contradict the Christian spirit (Sigona, 2010).

The Italian center-right experienced the same mutation that affected American conservatism from the eighties on and more strongly with the rise of the Tea Party movement. The more popular positions within the center-right became more extreme. Increasingly Christian religion has been interpreted in an identity-making way (Garau, 2010) in distinguishing

Christians from members of other faiths, and the rhetoric against their political opponents became more abrasive and polemic. (Bianchi, 2009) In this way, moderate Italian conservatives apparently disappeared. Indeed, in the 2013 national elections after Berlusconi and the LN had brought the country to the verge of collapse, moderate voters did not abandon them, and Monti's centrist coalition obtained just 10.5% of votes.

Grillo and the 5SM arose after two decades in which public opinion had been dominated by the right-wing populist parties that brought about a sharp deterioration of the political language. Indeed, more than 50% of Italian voters in 2008 had voted for parties or movements that could be classified as populist, and the nadir of the economic crisis was yet to come. Although the recent recession may have expanded the number of leftist voters attracted by populist campaigns, the largest room for the expansion of populist parties has been on the right.

The characteristics that Grillo has had in common with Berlusconi and Bossi are leadership style vis-à-vis members of the party; the violent rhetoric against political competitors and political institutions; the charisma needed for exciting crowds with a mix of fanatic and buffoonish attitudes (Bordignon and al. 2013); the lack of tolerance for internal opposition; the consideration of the movement as a personal fiefdom; and the polemic against the symbols, dynamics and rules of liberal democracy. (Santoro 2012) Given these similarities among the leaders and their key policy positions, the 5SM is likely to have much room for future growth among right-wing voters. This is especially true as Berlusconi becomes less appealing to his supporters due to his political management style that reflects a strong sense of entitlement, his legal problems, and his age.

5.3 Comparison to European Anti-establishment Parties and Movements

This section compares the 5SM to several groups of populist parties. This includes the neo-populist right-wing parties, new left parties, and international social movements.

5.3.1 Comparison to the Neo-populist Right-wing Parties

Paul Taggart, in a 1995 article, describes a new class of political parties that he calls "neopopulist". Drawing on contributions by scholars like Pietro Ignazi (1992) and Hans George Betz (1993), he characterizes this new form of populism as:

(1) An expression of the radical right alternative to neo-fascist parties;

(2) Opposition "to the system and to those who run the system" (Taggart, 1995, p.39);

(3) Linked to the idea of "heartland" of a national or regional homogeneous community, and thus attacking immigrants and minorities;

(4) Linked to the idea of "ordinary man", thus attacking "politicians, bureaucrats and intellectuals;"

(5) Neo-liberal and individualistic from an economic point of view, and thus opposing taxation, expensive public programs and attacking welfare recipients;

(6) Cultivating an "electoral base that crosses from the left to the right, but with a prevalence of male voters (p. 39); and

(7) Based on a charismatic leadership and strong central power, thus opposing the traditional model of "professional-bureaucratic parties".

The main European parties that, at present, best incorporate many elements of this model are the Italian Northern League, Marine Le Pen's Front National in France, Belgium's ethnic-separatist Flemish Interest, the Netherlands' Party for Freedom, the Freedom Party of Austria

and Nigel Farage's United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP). These parties have in common strong opposition to the European Union, and their rhetoric involves bringing monetary and political sovereignty back to the nation states (Mudde, 2014).

The 5SM has several characteristics that differentiate it from this group of parties. First, the 5SM opposes the neoliberal ideology and supports an enlargement of public programs including the social security network. These proposals, nevertheless, are not accompanied by the enforcement of a new culture of rights and equality – that would locate the movement on the left. Indeed, the 5SM seems to represent an individualistic protest against the deprivation and the inequalities that originated from the failure of the neoliberal system.

Second, the 5SM does not express nationalistic or regionalist narratives and it never exploited ethnic divisions within Italian society. Grillo resorts to nationalistic themes just when he talks about economic advantages for the single states within the Eurozone. Third, it follows from the second point that an anti-immigrants polemic is not a part of the 5SM's narrative. Although Grillo's personal positions seem not to be too friendly towards foreigners ("Beppe Grillo e l'immigrazione", 2013), he chooses to remain neutral on this highly divisive issue.

Fourth, the anti-Europe attitude of the 5SM is more moderate than that of neopopulist parties. Indeed, Grillo proposes to use the weapon of the referendum to quit the common currency to force Germany and the states of northern Europe to change their economic policies. His violent aversion is not to Europe or the Euro, it is directed to the austerity policies and to the impoverishment they have brought about.

Although there are not enough points of overlap to be considered part of this group of neopopulist parties, Grillo's movement-party has many characteristics that are similar to them: the style of leadership, the violent fight against representative institutions and traditional political parties and the composition of its constituency (encompassing all social groups with a slight predominance of males). Moreover, there is an important element in the 5SM narrative that is typical of populist parties and of movements that have subversive goals: it aims at gaining consent among groups in social and economic distress. Mèny and Surel (2000) argue that one

feature of populist rhetoric consists of pitting the people against the elites by stressing the economic cleavage between the working class and small entrepreneurs on the one hand and bankers, capitalists and financiers on the other. In doing so "the people" becomes a particular social class which is experiencing material distress and growing anxiety for the future (Mény & Surel, 2000, p.195).

Corbetta and Gualmini (2013), in their book on the 5SM, deny the validity of this comparison with neopopulist parties, because the social categories these parties represent are those frightened by globalization and technological progress while the 5SM mainly talks to young, educated, Internet savvy people. But an original feature of the recent economic crisis in Europe is that young people have been hit hardest by social plagues like unemployment and job insecurity, so the highest levels of anxiety and discontent are to be found among these social groups.

Grillo is aware of this situation and he knows he is less popular among retirees and public sector workers, the categories that feel more protected from the crisis. Indeed, he often blames these categories for giving political support to the existing parties (public employees mainly to the center- left and retirees mainly to the center-right), calling them "colluded" or "accomplices" ("Grillo: chi vota ancora per i vecchi partiti è colluso", 2013) and he tries to frighten them by saying that this system is going to crumble and that their income and benefits will not be guaranteed for long ("Grillo: referendum online sull'euro", 2013).

In summary, even if it is not possible to put the 5SM in the group of neopopulist right-wing parties, the similarities are numerous and significant, especially when the focus is more on the rhetoric and the actions of the movement and less on the platform and on officially supported values.

5.3.2. Comparison to the parties of the "new left"

In 1988 Herbert Kitschelt described a new group of parties that were gaining support in many western European countries:

> They share the traditional Left's concern for egalitarianism and political control of the economy, but they question centralized planning, a political process dominated by small political elites and the desirability of increased material affluence. Instead, they emphasize participatory democracy, political decentralization, and quality of life issues, such as environmental protection and more personalized social services. All left-libertarian parties shared the same core constituencies: younger, educated, urban, secular members of the new middle classes who work overproportionally in the public service sector. (p.127).

At the beginning of his political adventure, Beppe Grillo seemed to have in mind a movement that could pursue these post-material ends and that could really empower the citizens and encourage them to take care of their communities and of the environment. The idea of supporting local groups made up of common citizens by allowing them to gain visibility in the media, was based on the desire to support a modernizing and environmentalist platform. The blog too, in its first years of activity was centered on this agenda and many left-wing voters who felt the need for a civil reaction against corruption, misgovernment and environmental abuse shared its battles. Indeed, in the very logo of the 5SM the five stars represent these issues and, consequently, the first activists and supporters of the movement had characteristics that were comparable to the supporters of left libertarian parties: young, progressive and highly educated.

Also from an organizational point of view, the 5SM was conceived following the model of left libertarian parties: they "have a low level of structural articulation and very loose networks of communication and control across levels of party organization. They bar cumulation of offices in order to create a diffuse power structure. Tenure in office is confined to short term and renewable at most for a second term. Executive party offices are volunteer posts, and paid parliamentarians are required to share their salary with the party" (Kitschelt, 1988, p.140).

Grillo, in designing his movement-party, not only tried to replicate this model, but he tried to render it even more democratic through the use of web communication technologies. He thought the movement did not need executives and he implemented the rotation of the MPs in

institutional offices such as president of the Parliamentary group. The blog could provide the possibility to communicate and to involve the grassroots activists in political decisions.

The 5SM, in practice, has been developed very differently from the original pattern. As explained before, the anti-politics attitude prevailed; the metaphor of the war against the party system became pervasive and the organization became more and more authoritarian. The profile of the average voter changed as well, becoming more and more distant from that of left-libertarian parties and more similar to catch-all parties, attracting voters also from the right and the center. Some critics think that Grillo meant to build such a movement-party from the beginning, while others say that this is Casaleggio's main idea that was gradually accepted by Grillo, What it certain is that the 5SM can no longer be defined as a left libertarian party even if its platform is still officially inspired by some left-libertarian ideals.

5.3.3. Comparison to SYRIZA, epitome of the new European radical left

The Coalition of the Greek Radical Left, better known by its acronym SYRIZA, is a coalition of left-wing and radical left parties and movements. At the moment, SYRIZA is the most popular left-wing party in western Europe. Therefore its leader, Alexis Tsipras, has recently been proposed as candidate for the presidency of the EU commission by the European left parties (Pietrafita & Vilde, 2014). Tsipras is a very charismatic leader who has been able to bring the party from a five percent share of vote in 2008 – when he became leader - to 27% in the 2012 national elections (Moschonas, 2013).

Altourgh Tsipras's rhetoric often uses populist themes pitting the people and the workers against powerful economic and political elites (Vasilopoulou, Halikiopoulou & Exadaktylos, 2013), his style of leadership does not suffocate pluralism inside the party (Borreca, 2013), so he cannot be conceived of as a populist leader. SYRIZA's platform does not support the exit of Greece or other countries from the Eurozone, but it demands a sharp change in the "ruinous"

neoliberal policies the EU adopted to exit the great recent recession (Gilson, 2014). It advocates the end of austerity measures and the adoption of expansive (more Keynesian) monetary and economic policies (Gallino, 2014), but it also demands redistribution to reduce inequality and ease the plagues of poverty and social marginalization.

As is evident, SYRIZA's "Euro-skepticism" is framed within an organic platform which is inspired by traditional leftist values such as social justice, solidarity and empowerment of people. Indeed, Tsipras blames European technocrats for having built a union that is far from the people and that does not support solidarity among the diverse nationalities of which Europe is constituted. The platform of the lists supporting Tsipras all over Europe ("The Economic program of SYRIZA-USF", 2014), is a document of more than 20 pages that contains an extensive analysis of the economic and political situation and proposes solutions that deal with the complexity of the present European problems.

The 5SM, let alone Grillo's authoritarian style of leadership and his violent rhetoric, is different from SYRIZA and from leftist parties in general,. The other differences are in the form and content of platforms. 5SM's proposals for a new Europe, mainly expressed by flamboyant declarations of its leader, are presented in a very fragmentary and simplified way. They are not accompanied by a consistent strategy. Indeed, the 5SM did not declare which group it wants to align with in the EU Parliament.

Moreover, 5SM's European platform lacks a consistent ideological framework. In his narrative, Grillo mixes left-leaning ideas and right-wing "protectionist" rhetoric in order to appear original, not confined to one part of the old political right-left cleavage. The song the 5SM chose to accompany its electoral campaign is titled "Thumping the Table" (Marra, 2014), and the idea is that the movement, not being corrupt and tied to strong economic interests, would be able to obtain more favorable conditions for Italy in the EU negotiations. The

oversimplification of this rhetoric is the most evident difference when compared to SYRIZA's message.

5.3.4 Comparison to the International Protest Movement (Occupy Wall Street and Indignados)

Grillo praised international protest movements like the "Indignados" and "Occupy Wall Street", and repeatedly stated that the 5SM is one of them as it pursues the same goals of freedom and more participatory democracy ("Grillo alla CNN: «La mia pistola è la parola»", 2013). In October 2013, Micah White, one of the most well-known activists of the Occupy Wall Street Movement, wrote an open letter to his followers in which he described the 5SM and the Occupy movement as part of the same international project of liberation. He suggests that the movements in every country follow the path and the organization of the 5SM:

> In Italy and in America we are fighting the same enemy: the world of finance, the interest rate lobby, people who control the economy through financial systems. The difference is that in Italy you are building a civic movement that participates in the elections; M5S has on its side 25.55% of the population, while in America there is no such thing as a vibrant opposition party. There is currently no strong movement in America that can hope for an electoral win. That is why we are observing and learning from the things that the 5 Star Movement is doing in Italy. (White, 2013)

As it has been noted by Castells (2012), these international movements use a combination of online activism and occupation of public squares. The 5SM clearly adopts the same strategy, but in a more organized and centralized way. So its online activism has its proper venue where it can be disciplined and "inspired" (the blog) and its physical protests are enacted through the participation in Grillo's shows in public squares. This observation leads us to the theme of leadership that sharply differentiates the 5SM from these protest groups). Indeed, "the Occupy and the Indignados refuse any long term leadership" (Natale & Ballatore 2014 p.110) (see also Milkman, Bamyeh, Wilson, William & Gould, 2012; Stavrides, 2012) while no one in the 5SM

really thinks of calling into question the role of Beppe Grillo. His strong authority transformed the organization of the movement as well as the possibility of internal pluralism within it.

The second element that distinguishes the 5SM from the aforementioned protest movements is the different levels of importance given to the issue of economic inequality. Occupy Wall Street and the Indignados highlighted the necessity of redistribution and endeavored to render this theme visible to public opinion through the famous slogan "we are the 99%" (Wdess, 2013). The 5SM is not as clear about this issue, as it proposes higher social expenditure for social program but it does not support higher taxation on rents and large estates. This vagueness is probably due to Grillo's will to preserve the 5SM from being perceived as a left-leaning movement and so putting at risk its appeal to right leaning constituencies.

5.3.5 Comparison to the Pirate Parties in Sweden and Germany

The Pirate Parties of Sweden and Germany are political organizations that make the case for a more participatory democracy through the use of web technologies. They strongly criticize the political and economic establishments and the role of the traditional political parties in the political system (Niedermayer, 2013).

Moreover, these parties support global action to "democratize" the web, granting free and secure access to the Internet in order to preserve this instrument from the control of the more powerful corporations and states. The 5SM's platform pursues these ends, and its emphasis on environmental themes is similar to that of the Pirate parties (Hartleb, 2013). Things change when we consider themes like immigration, civil rights, and separation of state and religion. The platform of the Pirates parties is very progressive when it deals with the issue of migrants and asylum seekers:

> We consider diversity, which also develops when people of different heritage live together, as an enrichment to society. We recognize the mutual influence of discrimination by the social majority and segregation of people stigmatized as "foreign".

This situation is not compatible with our concept of human dignity …. People who seek refuge in Europe have the right to a life in dignity, to free movement and to participation in the workforce, in education and culture. (Piratenpartei, Migration and Integration, n.d.)

The Pirates state their position on racism and discriminations against minorities very clearly:

"Violence and intimidation due to heritage, religion or culture are unacceptable in all instances. Therefore, we must oppose racism and xenophobia in any form, just as all other ideologies of hate directed against particular groups". The Pirates also support the right of each citizen to determine his or her sexual identity and not to be subject to discrimination. In their words: "The Pirate Party stands for a policy which respects and promotes free self-determination of gender and sexual identity/orientation. We reject any allocation to specific genders or gender roles by others" (sic) (Piratenpartei, Migration and Integration, n.d.).

Finally, it is worth mentioning the Pirates' position on the relations between the state and religious diversity, where they support a sharp separation of church and state in order to prevent the state from favoring any particular religion. While the Pirate parties have positions that are very close to those of left-libertarian parties on these issues, the 5SM does not include any of these themes in its platform. Again, this is evidence of Beppe Grillo's tactical refusal to take a stand on divisive matters.

The second difference between the 5SM and the Pirates, as Natale & Ballatore (2014) and Hartleb (2013) point out, is that the Pirate parties do not have a leader nor a very centralized organization: they actually tried to implement a form of "webdemocracy" through the use of an electronic platform for the participation of the activists in political decisions, but they experienced many difficulties and numerous internal disputes arose.

This failure to successfully realize this hyper-democratic web agora was probably the main factor that caused a sharp decrease in their popularity after the electoral success of 2011 and 2012. The 5SM, on the contrary, has an energetic and popular charismatic leader who takes

all major decisions and proposes the topics for the online discussion on the blog (Corbetta & Vignati, 2014). The goal of direct democracy is just something that will be established after the system has been defeated, and the democratic process inside the movement, as we have seen, it is far from being realized.

Unlike Pirate parties, Grillo expresses violent emotions and insults in his speeches. This difference represents an element that allows the comedian to maintain cohesion within the movement by shifting the attention of his followers towards external threats and enemies. This distinction reveals that, although there are common features between the 5SM and protest movement or with the Pirate parties because of their common belief in a future webtopia, Grillo's movement uses the web and its alleged democratic tendency to conduct very different political action.

5.4 Summary

The objective in this chapter has been to compare the 5SM to other populist parties in Italy, populist parties in some other European countries, and some international social movements. The comparison has mainly considered the criteria of structure, leadership style, constituency, and ideology and policy platform. The findings regarding each of these criteria are summarized below.

The overview reveals that the 5SM is less structured than rightwing neopopulist parties, and more structured than International social movements profiled in this chapter. Its refusal of institutionalization is similar to that of the parties of the new left at the outset of their political history, nevertheless, unlike these parties, the 5SM's leaders exercise a strong centralized control on the movement.

Beppe Grillo's leadership style is similar to that of neopopulist leaders like Bossi, Le Pen or Farage. Indeed, he is a charismatic leader, he takes all the major decision regarding the movement's policies and he hardly tolerates internal dissent. This is the biggest difference the 5SM has with the international social movements, the Pirate parties and the progressive parties.

The 5SM's constituency at the beginning was similar to that of the parties of the new left (and also to the Pirate parties' constituencies): young, left-leaning and highly educated. As the movement grew, its anti-system rhetoric also started attracting right-leaning voters, with the consequence that, at the moment, the 5SM can be defined as a catch-all party, as it appeals to voters with different viewpoints. Moreover, the 5SM attracts voters from every social group with the significant exception of those over 65. These features are more similar to the constituency of right-wing neopopulist parties.

5SM's platform puts together many heterogeneous elements. It proposes reforms aimed at reducing politicians' privileges and at allowing citizens more direct control over the elected. This is a proposal historically supported by many populist movements. Moreover, it proposes environmental protection, a theme that is typical of the parties of the new left. In addition, the 5Sm advocates a program to reduce taxation that is similar to that of neopopulist parties. Finally, it wages a strong polemic against European austerity policies, similar to that of the radical left. 5SM's ideology expresses a strong anti-establishment attitude which is similar to that of international social movements. Moreover, Grillo's movement-party shares with the Pirate parties a sort of cybertopia - namely a belief in the establishment of direct democracy based on the possibilities offered by the new web technologies.

As it is evident, the 5SM does not fit in any categories of anti-establishment parties and movement the literature proposes. Nevertheless, many characteristics of Grillo's movement-party, especially the leadership style and its rhetoric, can be better conceived as "an evolution" of the recent right-wing Italian populism.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Introduction

To reiterate, the objective of this thesis has been to explain the rise and success of the 5SM movement within the Italian political system and its classification as a populist movement-party. The objective in this concluding section is to summarize and analyze the findings related to each of those objectives and discuss the need or prospects for further research. Accordingly, this chapter consists of three major sections devoted to each of those objectives in turn.

6.2 Summary of Findings

Chapter 2 revealed that the rise and success of the 5SM are attributable to a combination of economic and political factors and the capacity of its principal agents? The major economic factor was the harsh economic recession in Italy that worsened as a result of European austerity policies and the inability of the European Union to make much progress in dealing with the economic crisis. That problem was compounded by the fact that during that time, after years of bad governance and public management, the political system was in a chaotic state and decision-making had reached an impasse. These economic and political crises led citizens to lose confidence in both the Italian and the European political and financial institutions to reach one of lowest levels in the postwar period. Grillo and Casaleggio managed to exploit this discontent through a strong anti-establishment message and, as explained in more detail in chapter three, the mobilization of individuals through the effective use of the Internet and other media.

Chapter 3 described the main characteristics of the 5SM as a political entity. The analysis focused on the structure, the internal governance, the political strategies, the composition of its constituency, and its ideology. Special attention was devoted to the important role the Internet plays in every facet of the 5SM as a political entity. Chapter 3 also explained that the movement has not had a conventional institutionalized organizational structure. Instead, it has been

organized around a website that coordinates the action of many local groups (or cells) linked virtually around the country.

It also revealed that although 5SM's ideology – or political philosophy - aims to establish a new form of 'direct democracy' where the citizen no longer needs political representation, Grillo's leadership is exercised in an authoritarian way and his charisma is fundamental for the movement's cohesion. This is also demonstrated by the way the movement uses the official website. There, the dynamics between the users and the management reflect the tendency towards concentration of power and influence that has been observed in Internet interactions. In other words, the communication within the movement is very vertical and centralized so that the participants do not all have the same opportunity to spread their ideas and proposals.

Initially the 5SM's constituency was composed mainly of young and progressive left-wing voters, but later the movements also started attracting voters from the right-wing parties and a wide range of social groups. Its political platform is silent on politically divisive issues, and is mainly built around the need for a renewal of the overly corrupt Italian political system.

Chapter 4 explained that the 5SM has been and continues to be a movement-party as described by Kitschel (1993) — a party which elects candidates to Parliament, but resists a complete institutionalization as a party. Chapter 4 also established that the 5SM has had the characteristics of populist mobilization described by Meny and Surel (2002). The chapter concluded that 5SM's populism cannot be defined either as right wing or as left wing because it does not subscribe to some of the extreme ideological views of the left related to redistribution of wealth, or to some of the extreme ideological views of the right regarding rule by a particular group and the lack of concern for minority rights.

Grillo's message comes from a "cultural regression" that has happened in Italy in the past thirty years and that has been exploited and supported by conservative populist leaders like Berlusconi and Bossi. Chapter 4 also explained that some strategies used by the 5SM can be called extremist, as they use the democratic institutions for ends that transcend reform of the

system. Moreover, the attitude towards political opponents and internal pluralism is in many respects similar to that of totalitarian movements of the past.

Chapter 5 revealed similarities and differences between the 5SM and other populist movements and parties in Italy, and other groups of Western anti-establishment parties and movements in terms of their structure, leadership, ideology and policy positions. The analysis of the characteristics and the political trajectory of the Northern League, Forza Italia and the Italia dei Valori provided a description of the recent parties and leaders who dominated the Italian political scene in the last twenty years. Grillo′s populism is very similar to Di Pietro′s anti-corruption mobilization; nevertheless his violent rhetoric, his disrespect for democratic institutions and his buffoonish attitudes place him closer to Berlusconi and Bossi.

As explained in Chapter 2, Grillo can be considered an offspring of the culture that spurred anti-politics from the beginning of the Second Republic and that led to Berlusconi's era right-wing cultural hegemony. That explains why, though the 5SM cannot be considered a right wing movement, it is likely to find room for the development of his populist message on the right of the political spectrum, especially if Berlusconi continues to lose appeal as happened in the last three years.

The comparison, then, shifted from Italy to an international dimension. The focus has been on the groups of right-wing neopopulist parties, on the parties of the new left, on the new radical left (exemplified by SIRIZA in Greece), on the Pirate parties in Sweden and Germany, and on the international social movements. The main goal was to see whether and why the 5SM belongs, or if it is at least very close, to any of these groups of parties.

The 5SM is more structured than the international social movements and the Pirates parties and less structured than the right wing neopopulist parties and the parties of the radical left. The comparison revealed that the 5SM is structured like the parties of the new left at the beginning of their political experience. Indeed, Grillo's movement resists institutionalization and refuses the selection of a group of party leaders, and conceives of the MPs as simple citizens who are given access to political institutions. Nevertheless, the strongly centralized control exercised by the 5SM's leaders over every activity of the movement is an element that differentiates this movement from the parties of the new left and the environmentalist parties.

Strong, charismatic leadership sharply differentiates the 5SM from all the group of parties considered except the neopopulist right-wing parties. Grillo's style of leadership and rhetoric is similar to that of right wing populist leaders like Berlusconi, Bossi and Farage. The 5SM's constituency, at the beginning, was similar to those of the Pirate parties or to the environmentalist parties of the new left: young, left-leaning and highly educated. After the first electoral victory in May 2012, the 5SM started attracting voters also from the right side of the political spectrum, and its support grew consistently among every social group.

5SM's platform puts together diverse proposals. Like the parties of the new left, it supports environmental protection; like SYRIZA and the radical left it strongly opposes European austerity policies without resorting to an outspoken nationalist rhetoric; like the neopopulist right-wing parties it opposes high taxation; like the international social movements and the parties of the new left it demands a radical reform of politics that gives the citizens more control over politicians.

5SM's ideology essentially consists of two elements. The first is a very extreme opposition to the political and economic establishment, both at the national level and at the international level. This attitude is very close to that of international protest movements. Second, the 5SM, similarly to the Pirate parties, aims to establish a new form of direct democracy based upon internet technologies. This utopian view always includes the firm critique of today's representative democracies.

6.3 Commentary on the Findings

It is evident that the outstanding success of the 5SM is explainable primarily through an analysis of the socio-economic situation in Italy. For Italy, the ongoing recession is surely the most dramatic slump after WWII, and its causes are diverse and have different origins. Some of them are internal and are mainly due to the legacy of the Berlusconi era and with the lack of competitiveness of the Italian economic system. Others are European and are linked to, first, the failure of European integration (manifesting itself in the lack of solidarity among member states) and, second, with the difficult situation of the European banking system. As a result, this crisis appears to the Italian citizens to have no end, but what is worse is that they perceive they do not

have any political control over it. The complexity of the situation is difficult to explain by the politicians to the mass of citizens, and this brought the people to dramatically lose confidence in the political institutions in an unprecedented way.

Italian democracy is really in bad condition. Indeed, after years of misgovernment, where corruption flourished and growth stagnated, the recession undermined the economic security of many citizens as well as their hope for a possible redemption. Anthony Painter efficaciously explains this tragic situation by making a distinction between the concepts of 'stress' and 'crisis'. He states that the latter occurs when "a political system is no longer legitimate… it can no longer complete the tasks that are set for it". Even in the crisis of public debt, and after the harsh austerity measures imposed by the Troika, many European states just experienced stress, with the exception of Greece and Italy: indeed, these democracies "have shown to be incapable of responding to the complexities instigated by the Eurozone crisis", therefore they "have faced democratic crises or at least extreme stress" (Painter, 2013 p. 14).

From the point of view of political agency, Beppe Grillo undoubtedly succeeded in interpreting the rage and the desire for change many citizens felt. He, along with his spin doctor Casaleggio, devised a brand, a structure and a platform that really seemed new and revolutionary to the Italian voters. Grillo's charisma, until now, has been fundamental both in giving visibility to the 5SM and in keeping the movement united. Nevertheless, the effort to maintain this image of a "pure", "uncontaminated" neither right-wing nor left-wing movement, intensifies the contradictions that are latent inside the 5SM. The most important of these contradictions is the contrast between the conservative-leaning and the progressive leaning activists within the 5SM, and the inconsistency between the formal praise of pluralism and the strong political control over the movement exercised by Grillo and Casaleggio.

Up to this moment, the political strategy used by Grillo was clearly that of betting on the forthcoming collapse of the political system, by refusing both institutionalization and consistent

and effective cooperation with the other parties. Anyway, if the Italian political system overcomes this period of extreme stress, it is likely that the 5SM will take a stand on many positions, embodying a more consistent agenda and a more complete and definite political profile. For what concerns the analysis of the 5SM's characteristics, the most relevant finding has been that the web has not been used to increase political participation, more shared decision-making and horizontal communication among activists and followers. Quite to the contrary, the 5SM's blog is organized in a very centralized way: it is used as a tool that allows the leaders to control the debate inside the movement in order to limit internal pluralism. This factor is very important because it allows a better understanding of the style of leadership and the organizational structure of the 5SM. Most importantly, it demonstrates that the very idea of direct democracy through web technology is still far from being realized inside Grillo's movement-party.

From the point of view of political classification, it is clear that the 5SM does not fit existing political categories. It can be conceived of a mixing of characteristics that come from diverse political traditions. Nevertheless, many of these elements are grounded in the Italian political culture, where the conservative populist parties exploited their supremacy in the media system and their connection to the Catholic Church to establish the regressive popular mindset that has been described before.

This so-called "low-culture hegemony" (Panarari, 2012) favored the rise of right-wing populist movements that have dominated the Italian political scene for the last 20 years. Many centrist voters, who for decades supported the moderate Christian Democratic Party, became increasingly extremist and ended up voting for leaders that incarnated authoritarian anti-state attitudes. Approximately 20 years after the First Republic crumbled, there currently exists much room on the right of the political spectrum for populist discourses and leaders; the majority of Italians are located in this area. Moreover, Berlusconi and Bossi gradually normalized an abrasive and often subversive rhetoric that rendered constructive public political debate almost impossible.

It is from this popular culture that Grillo emerged. His style of communication, as Santoro points out, draws on the television pattern, which a showman performs in front of a passive audience. The alleged horizontality of the web does not exist in interactions within the 5SM. Indeed, the most widespread tendency of the Internet is one favouring concentration of power and influence (Miconi, 2014) and the 5SM ironically epitomizes this trend with its very centralized organization. If participatory democracy through the web is the decisive element that would make the movement-party new and innovative, then it is evident that thus far this attempt was unsuccessful.

In Italy the most notable political commentators are currently debating the nature of the 5SM. While some experts classify the movement-party as essentially right-wing, others highlight its role in expressing the voice of socially distressed people. Therefore, while the former perceive the 5SM as a dangerous entity for Italian democracy, the latter consider it as a stimulus for political change and are not fearful of Grillo's violent rhetoric against the institutions.

Eugenio Scalfari (2007), one of the most famous Italian commentators, maintains that Grillo's political message incarnates one central characteristic of the Italian right, the rhetoric that make people feel not responsible for the destiny of the state. As did Berlusconi, Bossi, Guglielmo Giannini and other populist leaders in Italian history, Grillo incites individuals to not feel responsible for the failures of the country and for the common good of the state. Therefore, the state is only seen as limiting citizens' activities and as an intrusive tax collector.

The left-wing Italian intellectual group Wu Ming (2013) states that, although it is not possible to define Grillo's movement as fascist, many fascists actually vote for the 5SM. Moreover, Wu Ming continues, "the 5SM is indebted with (sic) different right-wing traditions… and, certainly, the right-wing elements of the programme are more relevant than the left-wing ones". Also the "confused neitherism" (Wu Ming, 2013) that refuses any political location is typical of right wing movements like fascism at their beginnings. Therefore, Wu Ming describes the 5SM as an entity that would prevent any substantial reform of the Italian political system and

of the austerity-driven neoliberal logic that inspired recent economic policies. The reason Wu Ming derives these conclusions is that it argues that the 5SM essentially arises from an individualistic libertarian culture that constitutes the basis for recent right-wing populism. In Wu Ming's opinion, while Grillo maintains his aim is to destroy the system, the effects of his actions are just the opposite.

From what is discussed in chapter 3, it is not possible to classify the 5SM as a right-wing movement due to its many contradictory stances on divisive issues. Nevertheless, the cultural milieu Grillo exploits is the same that favored the domination by Berlusconi and Bossi of Italy in the last 20 years, and this is epitomized by the similarity of leadership style. The recent populist Italian movements such as Forza Italia and the Northern League arose as anti-politics libertarian parties and ended up on the extreme right of the political spectrum. It is clear that the commercial television culture that followed the huge concentration of media power in Berlusconi's hands induced an expansion of populist movements on the right of the political spectrum. From these observations it is reasonable to expect that if Berlusconi's ability to attract voters should decline any time soon, Grillo is likely to gain the support of many right-wing voters. Consequently, the 5SM's message is expected to change in order to attract this conservative constituency.

Scholars thus far have been cautious in classifying Grillo's movement-party because it currently remains ill-defined in several aspects as it refuses institutionalization and opposes taking a precise stand on the issues that would identify it with a part of the political spectrum (Diamanti, 2014; Biorcio & Natale, 2013; Corbetta & Vignati, 2013; Corbetta & Vignati 2014). The mix of political characteristics represented by the 5SM is unique, and the way it uses the web is different from all traditional parties. Therefore it is necessary to observe how the movement-party will act if it governs some major cities or regions: whether it will use the web to give a voice to citizens in political decisions, and whether, and in what sense, it will take a stand on the issues that still divide the right from the left in terms of ideology and interests.

Nevertheless, what is evident from this analysis is that besides the 5SM's ill-defined nature there are some behaviours that are typical of extremist or totalitarian movements, such as frequent declaration that parties and unions are no longer needed and will be abolished in the future; the repeated prediction of the imminent collapse of the system to increase popular anxiety and thus reduce society to an indistinct mass without divisions and interests; the violence of the insults towards institutions, political enemies and critics; its refusal to institutionalize itself; and its refusal to set a precise platform to avoid being tied to it, and therefore to be free to pursue maximum popular approval.

According to Painter's recent distinction between populism and extremism (2013 p.25-26), there are two characteristics of the 5SM that would change its populism into extremism: the attitude towards hate and violence and the instrumental use of the democratic institutions. The 5SM has not yet been physically violent as Golden Dawn has been in Greece, nevertheless verbal attacks of its critics are frequent and encouraged by the leader. Moreover, Grillo expressed support for every rally and protest that threatened to overthrow the legitimate institutions and urged the police to act in concert with the protesters against the legitimate political establishment. Regarding the instrumental use of democratic institutions, it is evident that the 5SM uses its MPs and their presence in Parliament as a hindrance to political reforms and as a means of making propaganda for the movement-party. The systematic refusal of a constructive dialogue with the other parties in Parliament is central evidence of this destabilizing political strategy.

In conclusion, if it is true that there is still room for a democratic evolution of the 5SM and that its function for the political system can still be positive, it is necessary to point out some essential factors. Its populism is still impossible to place somewhere along the right-left spectrum, but the movement declares some totalitarian ends and often enacts strategies that can be deemed as extremist. It is not clear to what extent these elements are linked to the situation of extreme stress that Italian democracy is experiencing and whether they will disappear if the situation improves. However, the tendency towards authoritarianism is present in the movement and the way the web has been used so far is consistent with this tendency. The paradox of

populist movements is that they often become something completely opposed to what they initially dreamed of becoming; that is why the delusion of direct democracy can engender another hard blow to the already feeble Italian democracy.

6.4 Directions for further research

The first issue that should be at the center of the debate deals with the political evolution of the 5SM. This topic is important to determine in a more definite way the nature of the movement-party as well as its role both inside the Italian political system and the European institutions. Second, the topic of the 5SM's use of the web should be examined in greater depth. Indeed, for Grillo's movement Internet communication is fundamental both from the point of view of the movement-party's internal organization and as the privileged tool of political marketing.

On a more general political perspective, in the globalized world of the last decades, nation states are losing sovereignty to global forces over which politics does not have any control (Bauman, 2000). As a result, almost everywhere citizens are losing confidence in the efficacy of representative liberal democracy (Blumler & Coleman, 2009). This trend provides a favorable context for the rise of populist personalized movements that try to establish more direct relations with the constituency and at the same time attempt to give citizens more weight in political decisions. Furthermore, the new tools of web communication are changing the way political issues are discussed at every level.

Research, therefore, should concentrate on three directions: first, on studying the evolution of populism and evaluating its effect on liberal democratic political systems; second, on assessing to what extent web communication is affecting the management and the discussion of political issues (Chadwick, 2013); and, third, whether the new internet technologies constitute means of democratization that increase political participation or whether they are tools that just increase the influence and the power of wealthy and powerful groups (Morozov, 2011).

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