

M5S between movement and party

English summary

Introduction

The present study aims to analyze the phenomenon of the 5 Star Movement, a movement-party recently formed that has greatly influenced the Italian political system in recent years. The M5S was marked by innovations in the methods of political communication and the selection of candidates, through the usage of the internet.

A leading role in the movement was carried out by its leader, Beppe Grillo, a comedian who engaged in political action.

How and when was established M5S

Beppe Grillo, a famous Italian comedian, began his political career by changing gradually the repertoire of plays that proposed in his tours throughout Italy. Originally claimed numerous political and social happenings in disclosing the ideas, projects and goals within his shows. Starting from these assumptions Grillo began to actively support the need for a direct participation of citizens, so as to limit the excessive power of the political class and to encourage the protection of the real interests of the population.

The political program, as a result, it comes together with the blog www.beppegrillo.it in January 2005.

The communication newness and the same birth of the blog are related to the meeting and subsequent collaboration between Grillo and Gianroberto Casaleggio, web marketing expert and, according to some, the real mastermind behind the 5 Star Movement.

The web was chosen by Grillo as the main mean of communication, as the comedian thought the internet was growing and that for the future, to improve the quality of life of citizens, could not be apart from the use of this tool that allows direct interaction between political actors and citizens, and relevant feedback.

The M5S has developed into a historical period in which the parties and their power practices are judged by the people in an increasingly negative way. M5S represents a discontinuity both in the institutional aspect and in the daily life from the previous social life.

Meetup

M5S used the online platform Meetup that allows visitors to the blog to organize among themselves as local activists in continuous contact with each other, while maintaining a very close relationship with the conduct of the blog at the national level.

The most notable circumstance from the point of view of the organization are the two V-Day (8 September 2007 and 25 April 2008), who see the militants involved in the Italian squares to collect signatures in support of a number of bills of popular initiative.

Only after this experience many of these groups begin to give stability to its organizational structure and force action on the ground.

Through the platform Meetup, topics were discussed, opened debates and this has helped to shape the initial organization of local groups, allowing keeping to a minimum the hierarchy. Apart from the organizer (the coordinator of the group), in fact, all participants are on an equal footing, regardless of their length of service, and may also participate in the discussion.

Movement

The official birth of the Movement is proclaimed on September 9, 2009 in Milan, when it was announced participation in the 2010 regional elections.

The rules were established in a document of only seven articles, the first of which defines the M5S a non-association. In fact, it is a platform and a vehicle for discussion and consultation which originates from the blog www.beppegrillo.it, which is referred to as the site of M5S.

Article 3 states that the name of the Movement and his mark are registered in the name of Beppe Grillo, the sole owner of the rights to use it.

This is the article discussed more because configures the Movement as a sort of commercial project that at the summit has a boss who is the owner, so as to bring to the extreme forms of personal party known in recent decades.

Joining the Movement does not require for the registration formalities more than a normal website (Article 5) and it is not expected to adhere to pay of any fee (Art. 6). Membership is therefore open to all age Italian citizens who do not belong to political parties or associations whose object or purpose conflicts with those of the Movement.

Does not occur reference to anybody designated to ensure internal democracy and decisions on aspects of policy are taken by majority vote through consultation with members via the web. The M5S rejects the idea of building a party organized and professionalized as an apparatus which has as its representative / mediator between citizens and institutions.

The fundamental objective that justifies the formation of M5S is the project to bring citizens at the center of politics.

The main differences compared to traditional parties depend on the use of the potential offered by the Internet to encourage direct participation. This is perhaps the most innovative element of the new political entity, which allowed the M5S to overcome the tendency to collapse of participation involving all political parties.

The Web has enabled the recruitment of many activists in the past disconnected from politics.

The political orientations are more often center-left, but it is very large presence of sympathizers and activists who in the past refrained from voting or voted for parties of the center, center-right and right.

Regardless of the social and political profile, sympathizers and activists of the movement share some common traits, including the fundamental one that is the attendance of the web to find out trying to bypass the traditional media, often conditioned by the parties and by the power of large financial groups.

The fight against system, clear essence of populism, is the main thematic strand of the movement. The M5S arises out of the system and from there challenges it, though with many contradictions (because wants to reach Parliament, even if with a type of candidates completely different from that which currently makes up the policy framework).

Program

The proposed objectives are primarily aimed at encouraging participatory democracy of citizens, to defend universalistic welfare state and the common goods. The M5S aims to support the claims arising from the many mobilizations in recent years in promoting the school, the work, and against the building of major projects potentially dangerous for local communities. The 5-star, contained in the symbol, in fact indicate the 5 founding values and political objectives around which the movement was born: water, environment, energy, transport, development.

Purely local issues and public policy, which closely affect the interests and demands of the citizens, have a universal nature, and where everyone can identifies.

Strong struggle against neo-liberalism, global capitalism, banks and multinationals, seen as the powers that are imposed on citizens stifling their freedom and their power of choice.

The lack of a public position consistent over time from the Movement, reflects the heterogeneity in the origins of policies and social profiles of those who join the Movement. The same success, rapid and unexpected, has helped to limit the construction of an official policy of the party. The M5S brings together topics left (fight to big capital, in favor of the

common goods, for new lifestyles more environmentally conscious, a bottom-up participation of citizens) with topics right (liberalization, anti-statism) and mixes them with the strand of populism in general (constant reminder to citizens, civil society, the guardian of public virtue which is in contrast to the governors accused of corruption and malpractice).

The M5S has training outside the box, neither left nor right. It feeds the resentment of the political class and parties. Among the activists is a strong belief that the movement represents a pole of attraction for all those disappointed by the left and the right, comes up with a general distrust towards all parties, seen as self-referential entities, committed only to defend themselves and their survival. Grillo has transformed indignation into a political moral: this was the starting point. And in this he was helped by the constant scandals that, even at election time, they explode in Italian politics.

The undisputed leadership of Grillo, sanctioned by a legal point of view in the symbol properties, introduces nonetheless, a form of hierarchy unknown to social movements and the presence of M5S in the political elections, the form of participation in conventional politics par excellence, furthermore the election of their representatives in the institutions make it very difficult to superimpose his political experience to that of any social movement, while taking into account all specificities and instead makes it much more like a party.

Why M5S was so successful

The reasons why the movement has had so rapid and unstoppable success is mainly due to the crisis of traditional politics, dragged along for a long time, and worsened in the last two years, of the serious economic crisis.

The real social problem of the past two years has been, in fact, the increase in unemployment, especially among young people, due to the general decline in production and as a result of missing hiring and firing.

The great success of a comedian who became political player, however, can also be explained by the fact that it suggests the possibility, even the people unprepared, to intervene in politics, with new languages and proposals for change, as did several populist leaders who have been successful.

The crisis of political parties

The M5S has been introduced as part of Italian politics, facilitated by the loss of reliability of the political system, after much indecision and inconsistency in all parties and after the arrival of the economic crisis.

The Italian crisis of recent years is represented by the decline of parties as support of the political system. They are no longer collegiate system, organizational and ideological, but personal cars at the service of this or that political leader. It is a phenomenon that concerns oblique right and left.

There has been a growing professionalization of political parties.

The media have become a new intermediary subject between citizens and the institutions. There's been a change in the communication, forced to adapt to the times and to the language of television. The ideal candidate must possess, as well as skills with a strong personality, the ability to bring them out on very strong stage TV. To pierce the video, are indispensable great communicators with the magnetic personality and instinct of the ruler of the crowds.

Beppe Grillo's enemies are not only the caste and the parties, but also the TV and the newspapers: traditional media, integrated into the system of power and subservient to political parties. The M5S is a reaction to the political parties and the centers of power rooted, perennial and unchangeable. It is not a rejection of politics, but perhaps, on the contrary, starvation policy.

The economic crisis

The year 2008-2009 have also seen a general crisis, recession and heavy dizzying collapse of GDP in many countries of the world and especially in the rich western countries.

Between 2010 and 2011 there has been the enlargement of the sovereign debt crisis to the public finances of many countries especially the Eurozone. These problems, particularly accentuated after the austerity measures taken by the EU and implemented by national governments, have directed the attention of Italian voters towards a new political force that has always opposed to the European policies of austerity. This attention is coming in the highest degree by the unemployed, temporary workers and young people, social groups hardest hit by the economic crisis today.

Constituency of the movement

In the analysis of the electorate of the movement is clear the gap between north and south Italy and this could be due to various factors, such as the different degree of development of information infrastructures, which certainly favored in those northern

areas a better result and diffusion of a movement that has done the network his basic tool of information and political participation, the different impact of the exchange vote, as well as more contingent factors, such as the collapse of the Northern League that has made available in the Centre-North regions a wider pool of votes than in the South. The electoral component represented by former voters of the center- left seems to be the main electoral base of M5S, but there was also attractiveness to the voters of the center-right, former voters of IDV and the Northern League. Over time, this difference is attenuated almost to disappear in the last elections.

The M5S is therefore not fully classifiable nor between the movements of the libertarian left and the Greens neither among the European neopopulism right, even if you have certain characters of both.

Election Campaign: candidates, strategies, tools.

Candidates

A series of rules have been established to designate, select and control the election candidates. The elect is committed to "control" the power exercised by the institutions, trying to achieve the goals stated in the political program, without compromise and without alliances with interest groups and political professionals.

The proposed rules and constraints for the behavior of parliamentary M5S reproduce, in new forms, the principles and criteria of the behavior of large mass parties of the past; they expressed a parliamentary representation that always kept a strong link with their political leadership, with their programs and their social base. The procedure for the nomination and selection of candidates to the Parliament by all members of the movement has been prepared on the Net: the Parlamentarie.

Internet

As a consummate connoisseur of television, which provided him at least its initial popularity, Grillo has immediately launched a fierce fight against the deepening political talk shows on national television networks, whose conductors are also considered an integral part of the caste and this self-exclusion has often been provided by the applicants as a positive differentiator from their opponents. In place of the old TV, the network and, in particular, YouTube. It has already been shown, however, as in truth Grillo uses the network in unidirectional and authoritative manner, in the same way it works, in fact, the TV.

Internet has been chosen by Beppe Grillo and activists of the Movement as the main field through which to launch the challenge to political parties and also to the information

system. Grillo's blog offers insights and ideas with which to frame the communication of the activists; the subsection of the blog dedicated to the movement provides some tools for discussion and coordination sites which, in synergy with the groups on Meetup, bring forward campaigns at the local level, supported by the profiles of the candidates on the various social media.

Meeting

When Grillo takes tangible form and the virtual world of the internet lands among humans, becomes more human than human. In the flesh, his presence, occupies the whole scene and its communication engages the body as well as the word. Grillo has also used a lot of campaign rallies around Italy to communicate with citizens. It really only needed him on stage. Grillo shows all his skills as a showman and immediately ignites the relationship between him and the audience. So there is a complete overlap between theater and politics.

The simplification is furthermore enhanced by an aggressive, tough and direct language on the politicians, that he apostrophizes always with a nickname to highlight physical or behavioral fault, with a typical mechanism of satire.

Leader and party

At the head of M5S is unquestionably Beppe Grillo, whose action is justified by the success of his blog, the visibility of his shows, the effectiveness of its communicative action, by being not only the founder of the movement but also the legal guardian and the holder of the logo and the website that hosts discussions.

The relationship between the comedian and the M5S is very different from those of the typical "personal parties," in which the leader creates a political party in his own image and likeness, consisting of simple followers.

The rapport this time is reciprocal: Grillo's choices were often influenced and directed by the activists of the movement; remain open, however, many of the problems that arise at all stages of "institutionalization of charisma": the construction of an organizational form in which the relationships between leaders, executives and activists are more defined and functional, without swinging between anarchy and authoritarian interventions.

Relations with the other parties

The successes achieved so far by the movement of Beppe Grillo report a number of open questions for Italian democracy where political parties do not know or do not want to provide appropriate responses. Emerges strongly in this situation the issue of participatory democracy, and the growing importance of movements and political actors who

experiment, with new practices, to increase the capacity to act and the powers of citizens. This is the bet that the M5S policy would win.

Today we are faced with a fact completely new, at least for Italy: for the first time a "movement" is the electoral list that has the greatest number of votes in national elections: no matter what will be the future destiny of the Movement, what happened is a point that is a different story.

The future of the movement

As has always been unimaginable a democracy without parties, if M5S wants to be part of the game, the party of Grillo must find a way to gear up to manage the transition from the local to the national and ensure work organization functional, democratic and non- authoritarian, selecting men certainly honest but also prepared.

At this point Grillo must transform negative moral indignation into a positive policy proposal, it must institutionalize somehow M5S.

As a consequence of the great elections result obtained, appear also clear the limits of the lack of a general program, the essential choices, the possible alliances that constitute the necessity to make clear the fact of being political national subject for the M5S.

Fight all the way waste and various robberies, it's certainly not minor point, but for M5S the process to the making of more adequate political agenda, means finding a path of action, whether solitary or shared dependent on the numbers in Parliament and attenuate a certain intransigence, which occurred shortly after their settlement, in respect of possible alliances, that served to confirm their specificity, but taken to extremes can also prevent the implementation of minimum parts of the political program and the alienation of the favor of voters disappointed by the lack of actual results.