Abstract
This paper is a qualitative interpretative case study whose aim is to analyse the development and structural changes in the Italian populist Five Star Movement (M5S) in the period after the European Parliament Elections in 2014 including the campaign before the constitutional referendum in December 2016. The main goal is to analyse a shift in the party organization from original grassroot movement towards more institutionalized political actor with office-seeking behaviour using the theoretical framework of Kenneth Janda and his theory of institutionalization. The structural factors which caused this shift (role of the media, new electoral system, style of politics of Matteo Renzi, “going mainstream” in order to get more votes, less apparent political appeal of Grillo) will be examined. Question of direct and arbitrary control exercised by the movement’s indisputable leader Beppe Grillo with regard to possible successors and internal factions will be also discussed. The paper will work with the hypothesis that the Five Star Movement in order to maintain office-seeking behaviour and with an ambition to win the next election became closer to political establishment and that this appeal to moderate electorate is possible only by going through the process of institutionalization.

Keywords: Five Star Movement, Beppe Grillo, Italy, populism, institutionalization
1. Introduction

The collapse of the ‘frozen’ party system of the First Republic in the early 1990s hand in hand with personalization and de-ideologization of Italian politics contributed significantly to the development of populist tendencies in the country. Together with the growing discontent and frustration of the population and with unresolved consequences of the economic crisis it led to a reaction in the form of an increase of ‘anti-politics’ populist movements, especially Beppe Grillo’s Five Star Movement (Movimento 5 Stelle, M5S). This movement unlike populists in the past can’t be regarded as extreme in terms of its location on the left-right scale. On the other hand, it tries to stay ‘beyond’ party system, which leads to the paradox that the M5S is by many regarded as a leftist (even by its own elected representatives),\(^2\) while its rhetoric is a mix of all sorts of ideas with an important element of the radical right thoughts (Biorcio and Natale 2013).

The aim of this paper is to show a shift in the party organization away from the direct and arbitrary control previously exercised by the movement's indisputable leader Beppe Grillo and to show how the Movement reacted to its growing success at local level by changing its own organisation structure and its relation between the leadership and local grassroots groups.

2. Populism of the Five Star Movement

Since its beginning, the Five Star Movement is linked with the former TV comedian Beppe Grillo and its development can be divided into six phases. Initially, Grillo in his comedy sketches ignored political issues, but after a series of corruption scandals and the formation of the Second Republic he started to go round the country and glossed in his performances former political development. From the perspective of his future opinions it’s interesting that at that time he was strongly opposed to use of modern technologies, during one of his shows he even smashed a computer with a hammer (Santoro 2012, 32). The second phase of the development of the future movement, Lorenzo Mosca called it ‘latent’ (Mosca 2014, 41), began in January 2005 when Grillo started to work closely with the marketing specialist Gianroberto Casaleggio and at his instigation he chose a blog as the main tool of political communication. There he gradually shifted from general comments on globalisation and lifestyle to harsh criticism of political parties, in that time particularly Silvio Berlusconi and his PdL (Santoro 2012, 41). Grillo thus put aside his role as a comedian and became a

\(^2\) M5S deputies considered in 2015 as their closest political subject the radical Left, Ecology and Freedom party (Sinistra, Ecologia e Libertà, SEL) with which they also manifested the highest match in voting in the parliament, 81% (Farinelli and Massetti 2015, 220).
political entrepreneur (Biorcio and Natale 2013). He also invited his followers to create online groups on Meetup called ‘Beppe Grillo’s friends’ as platforms for internet discussions.

The growing dissatisfaction with the ruling ‘caste’ Grillo further utilized in the third phase when he moved from the web to the squares and organized the first so-called ‘V-day’ which was held in Bologna and in other Italian cities on 8 September 2007. He presented a platform for a ‘clean parliament’ (ban of all convicted persons from the parliament and two terms limit of holding a seat). The second ‘V-day’ was held in Turin on 25 April 2008 against the ‘caste of journalists’. Following the success of both events Grillo instigated a transformation of Meetup groups from on-line platforms to local backbone cells of the future movement where people could meet face-to-face (Passarelli, Tronconi, and Tuorto 2013). At the beginning of 2008 there were 63,000 ‘Beppe Grillo’s friends’, currently (July 2016), there are 1,310 Meetups with more than 158,000 members (Blog di Beppe Grillo 2016a). These certified electoral lists took part in municipal elections in 2008 and 2009.

This passage also led to the fourth phase of the movement development in which in March 2009 the Florence Charter (Carta di Firenze) was approved by Grillo’s supporters and thus the Five Star Movement as a political entity was founded. The Charter defined a common programme based on environmentalism and identifying the main issues, the so called five stars: water (to maintain public ownership of sources of drinking water), environment (post-materialist defence of local resources and territory), mobility (enhancement of a public transport at the expense of the private), development (of local production), and energy (transition to new energy sources) (Passarelli, Tronconi, and Tuorto 2013, 148). The Charter also officially drew up the certified electoral lists which competed under the unified banner of the M5S in the municipal elections in 2009 (Mosca 2014, 43). The first success came in the regional elections in the spring 2010, when the movement received 7% of votes in Emilia-Romagna, respectively the following year in municipal elections in Bologna with nearly 10% of voter support (Bosco and Verney 2012, 148).

The success of the M5S in the municipal elections in 2012 is connected with the beginning of the fifth phase, in which the movement became a relevant and competitive political force at national level. The M5S gained over 150 local representative seats and in Parma even managed to occupy the position of the mayor (Bordignon a Ceccarini 2013, 430). The breakthrough moment came in the general elections in February 2013 with a result of

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3 ‘V-day’ stands for Vaffanculo-day (an insult to politicians) and also recalls a famous novel and subsequent film V for Vendetta (Mosca 2014, 42).
4 At present, there are seven programme areas – state and the citizens, energy, information, economy, transport, health, and education (Blog di Beppe Grillo, 2016b).
25.6% of votes and 108 deputies (and 54 senators) becoming the first party in the Chamber of Deputies (Ministero dell’Interno 2013).5

What kind of programme Grillo used to achieve such a formidable result? Unlike some other populist actors, the M5S can’t be considered as a single issue party. On the contrary, its programme is a mix of left-right themes. The base has been Grillo’s continuous critique of economic and political power of large corporations; defining against ‘consumerism’ and domination of money; and the fight against further European integration, including the question of the Euro (Maggini 2014). The main target of Grillo’s attacks have been two ‘castes’ – corrupt political elites looking for their own economic benefits and biased Italian media, who write in the pay of the former (Bordignon a Ceccarini 2013, 433). As part of his vision of direct democracy, Grillo came up with suggestions on how to return power to those who are the true ‘owners’ of the state (citizens), who alone can perform a constant monitoring of their ‘employees’ (politicians). This control can be achieved only by a maximum transparency using internet technologies (Bordignon a Ceccarini 2013, 434). The M5S has built its programme on two macro-thematic areas – ‘neo-environmentalism’ (defence of local environment, renewable energy, fight against major construction projects – bridge over the Strait of Messina or high velocity railway corridor in Val di Susa) and ‘morality’ (transparency, responsibility, deliberative democracy, and limited power of politicians) (Passarelli, Tronconi, and Tuorto 2013, 148–152).

These programme points Grillo promoted using the classic populist rhetoric based on the anti-elitist approach and the dichotomy of ‘us’ versus ‘them’, i.e. on the difference between the virtuous people and corrupt elites (see Mény and Surel 2002). Grillo thus offered black-and-white vision of the world and presented his struggle against traditional political parties as a struggle of life and death, old and young blood, or as a clash of David and Goliath (Bordignon a Ceccarini 2013, 435). Grillo reinforced his message by both verbal and nonverbal communication and by mocking his opponents, often accompanied by theatrical gestures (Calise 2010).6 Using specific jargon, nicknames and hyperboles he also repeats the same phrases over and over until the audience on the internet starts to accept and defend them as their own ideas.

5 Excluding the votes of Italians abroad (M5S gained 9.7% and 1 seat). In these elections the M5S managed to attract 19 % of the ex-voters of the PD, 18 % from PdL, 25 % coming from the LN and massive 51 % of those who previously voted IdV (Diamanti, Bordignon, and Ceccarini 2013, 214). It’s no coincidence that the biggest shift of votes took place among populist parties themselves.

The above mentioned success in the general elections in February 2013 led to the sixth and so far the last stage, Mosca calls it the phase of ‘institutionalization’ (Mosca, 2014, 44). The movement gained a significant representation in both chambers of parliament and thus strengthened and stabilized its position on the political scene; on the other hand it’s too fast grow meant a problem for the internal organisational structure and for the whole process of institutionalization. The internal structure was too fluid and unprepared for the electoral success of 2013. The absolute control of the movement by Beppe Grillo from ‘outside’ together with his persisting anti-institutional appeal and voluntary political isolation led to a severe stress in compactness of the M5S parliament group (Franzosi, Marone and Salvati 2015, 110).

What were the factors which led to this unprecedented success of Grillo and his movement? 1) **Collapse of the bipolar party model** – the fall of Berlusconi’s fourth government in autumn 2011 marked the end of ‘fragmented bipolarism’ and opened political space for newcomers to whom also helped the subsequent period of the caretaker government of Mario Monti, who had to implement the necessary austerity measures. This destructuring of party system caused high electoral volatility, which in the parliamentary elections in 2013 reached 39.1, which exceeded the value from 1994, from the first elections after the collapse of the First Republic (D’Alimonte, Di Virgilio, and Maggini 2013, 30). Unlike the nineties, however, the high volatility in 2013 was achieved without changing the voting system and the demise of the ‘old’ political parties.

2) **Social delegitimization of political elite** – repeated scandals of established political parties were one of the main causes of the loss of voters’ confidence in the existing political representation, and contributed to strengthening the climate of anti-establishment and anti-politics. It was evident especially after scandals linked to the financing of the Northern League and the Italy of Values. Their populist rhetoric based on criticism of corrupt parties in opposition to their own ethics and moral purity turned against them. Both parties had to cope with a large outflow of disillusioned voters which in the case of the IdV led to its demise and the LN managed to survive only at the cost of replacement of the leader and leaning towards sharp anti-immigrant and anti-Islam rhetoric.

3) **Window of opportunity of the economic crisis** – although the crisis has hit Italy a very hard way, it was not the main cause of the rise of populism in the country. Its impact was more indirect in the form of political pressure on South European countries from the

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Typical example of this strategy is post-electoral negotiations between the M5S representatives and then secretary general of the PD, Pier Luigi Bersani, in direct streaming (YouTube 2013).
European Union and its institutions (Bosco a Verney 2012). The loss of credibility among European partners eventually led to the fall of the Berlusconi’s government and forming of Monti’s coalition, whose politics of reform packages and austerity measures raised a demand for a new alternative political actor.

3. Movement organizational structure and the role of the local level

From organizational point of view, the Five Star Movement can be characterized as a ‘hybrid’ party (Pedrazani and Pinto, 2013; Bordignon and Ceccarini 2013). The Movement was originally formed by diffusion (spontaneous initiatives of isolated local groups under the brand the M5S controlled by Grillo) rather than by penetration from above (see Panebiancio 1982). At the very beginning, the M5S showed signs of a ‘cyber party’, with Beppe Grillo’s blog being in the centre instead of a classical party secretariat. The M5S was a highly personalised entity with a dominant role of the leader and with Beppe Grillo being an absolute owner (together with Casaleggio) of the M5S logo, name, and symbol (Calise 2010; Vignati 2015). On the other hand the movement structure also contained elements typical for mass parties – relevance of extra-parliamentary groups, important role of volunteers and activists, funding through small contributions, and a clear division between ‘followers’ (being part of the movement network with rights to participate in intraparty elections) and ‘supporters’ (Farinelli and Massetti 2015, 215).

In other words, the movement could be characterised as a ‘meta-organisation’, a sort of stratarchy with a high level of decentralization and autonomy of local meetups (Lanfrey 2011, 144). However, these groups have been under ‘the ownership’ of Grillo as some form of franchises (Bordignon and Ceccarini 2013, 438). This absolute authority has been clearly manifested in the movement non-statuto, in which it’s stated that the M5S is not a political party, nor won’t be in the future, and doesn’t have governing bodies, instead it’s organized around the Grillo’s blog. Article 3 of this documents also states that the name and the logo of the M5S is under the exclusive ownership of Beppe Grillo without whose permission nobody else could use them (Blog di Beppe Grillo 2009). The graph number one shows the original organisational structure of the M5S:
In the centre of the whole movement there was an undisputable leadership of Beppe Grillo backed by the movement ‘guru’ Gianroberto Casaleggio. They exercised direct control over ‘programme purity’ of the M5S and kept tough internal discipline, which included a ban on participation in TV discussions and expulsion of ‘dissenting’ members through on-line plebiscites. There were no party offices and the executive decisions were communicated downwards solely on-line by half-anonymous ‘staff’ (Mosca 2014, 40). All public relations on behalf of the M5S were handled by Casaleggio Associati, a PR company owned by Casaleggio and his son Davide, which was paid by money returned by the Movement MPs according to their ‘code of conduct’. In 2014 the company received over one million euro (Farinelli and Massetti 2015, 218).
Grillo has also certified creation of each local branch of the movement basically lending his name and the M5S logo and allow them to participate in the elections as his ‘supporters’. However, these local groups were often created in order to tackle some local issue neglected by traditional political actors. These issues could be divided in two groups – 1) so called ‘neo-environmentalism’, including post-material protection of the territory, protection against big construction projects with a negative impact to the environment, for alternative energy and better waste management; 2) ‘hyper-democracy’ trying to change relations between local politicians and the people based on transparency and responsibility (Passarelli and Tronconi 2013, 157). In the same time these local groups didn’t receive any financial support from the movement leadership and had to finance their activities by collecting membership fees and donations. Thus Grillo could maintain a relatively non-expensive operation and until the election in 2013 he allowed local supporters to keep an autonomous development. This led to the strengthening of a particular identity of isolated and interdependent local groups which significantly slow down any future attempt of party institutionalisation (Passarelli and Tronconi, 125).

Membership in these local groups (meetups) was quite traditional and the process of the admission didn’t differ from other political parties. Potential candidate had to fill a form and agree with the rules of the non-statuto and after she or he had to been approved by the members of that particular meetup. Only those registered members could participate in the online decision making, including choosing candidates for the elections or expelling dissidents (Lanzone, 2013). This non-transparent system of choosing candidates has also proven to be problematic. An on-line on-line bottom-up selecting mechanism was designed by Grillo and Casaleggio who imposed their rules on who could vote and who could be voted. For example in the selection of the candidates for the general elections in 2013 (called parlamentarie) only members of registered in the Movement before September 30, 2012 could vote and candidates had to have past experience of running in the local and regional elections. These rules caused a very low turnout; in many cases a candidate won his or her contest with less than 100 votes (Bordignon and Ceccarini 2013).

The biggest challenge for the original movement structure was the relationship between the leadership and elected officials, first at the local level and after the overwhelming success in the general elections in 2013 also with 163 newly elected parliamentarians. Even before this electoral contest, the M5S had to cope with first signs of discontent at the local level. As Diamanti puts, Grillo “nationalized local movements on ‘common good’ and nationalist resenments” (Diamanti 2013, 7) which was questioned by some of the veteran
M5S activists. In March 2012 there was a gathering of some movement members in Rimini where they criticized internal democracy and infamous article 4 of the non-statuto about the ownership of the logo and the name. Ferrara city councillor Valentino Tavolazzi also called for creation of the vertical decision-making structure with an executive power of local assembles which caused a harsh critique from Grillo and Casaleggio and Tavolazzi became the first elected official expelled from the Movement (Repubblica 2012).

The most illustrious case of what could happen with an internal critique was the fate of one of the founding members of the M5S in Emilia-Romagna, Giovanni Favia. He was elected to the regional council in 2010 and soon went into odds with Grillo over his own independent political behaviour. During 2012 he participated in several TV talk shows where criticized especially the influence of Casaleggio over the Movement and in December of the same year he was expelled together with Bologna city councillor Federica Salsi (Corriere della Sera 2012). In that time there was no internal mechanism how to handle expulsions which were entirely in the hands of Beppe Grillo who could expel any member without further consultation or consent of the relevant local meetup. Before the general elections in 2013 in total seven regional or city councillors were expelled from the M5S, most of them after being critical over internal movement democracy. They saw negatively how Grillo has been using on-line voting to suppress internal democracy and plurality of opinions (Corbetta and Vignati 2015, 435).

The problem of too rigid internal structure was multiplied by the success in the general elections in 2013 and by the fact that the M5S became less ‘cyber-mass party’ and more a ‘catch-all’ party that lacks a precise ideology and thus could present itself to a heterogeneous electorate with diverse expectations and objectives (Diamanti 2014, 13). Movement MPs couldn’t exercise any control over the public image of their movement and were seen as mere ‘executors’ of the will of the people which is identical with the M5S programme. Grillo even called for the abolition of art. 67 of the Italian Constitution (prohibiting of binding mandate) and proposed an institute of recall election (Falletti 2014). This authoritarian style with zero tolerance for internal critique along with the heterogeneous opinions inside the Movement resulted in expulsion or leaving of 19 deputies and 18 senators, which makes 23 % of all elected representatives of the M5S.

Rigid control over party discipline, unclear process of selecting candidates, and low ‘personal space’ of deputies were signs of a high risk of party switching (voltagabbana), so common during the Italian second republic (see Heller and Mershon 2005). All this led to ‘slowed institutionalisation’ which, according to Janda’s theory of institutionalisation, could
be reversed only in response to the unsatisfactory election results (see Harmel and Janda 1994). This occurred only a few months after the general elections. In the local elections in May 2013 the M5S managed to attract to the polls only its core ‘identifying’ voters who had high trust in Beppe Grillo and used internet as their primary source of information (Biorcio 2014). These constituted only 40% of voters who supported the Movement in the general elections (ITANES 2013). The same situation repeated in the European elections in May 2014. The M5S with its ambivalent ‘Europhile Euroscepticism’ got 21.2% of votes and 17 seats and lost heavily to the victorious Democratic Party (Corbetta and Vignati 2014). They failed again to win support over ‘occasional’ voters, those who decide whom to vote for less than a week before the elections (they constituted significant 30% of the Movement electorate in the general elections; Biorcio 2014, 50).

Faced with this stagnation of the election results Grillo decided to change the structure of his movement and to speed up the process of institutionalisation in order to overcome the vague anchoring of the Movement in the Italian political system accompanied with a lack of readiness to take over of government responsibility (Corbetta and Vignati 2015). In November 2014 he introduced the creation of struttura di rappresentanza, first governing structure in the Movement’s history. Within that framework he forwarded most of the daily agenda to the newly created Directorate composed of five MPs selected personally by Beppe Grillo and confirmed on-line by the members of the Movement. The most important task the new governing body started to deal with was mediation between Grillo’s leadership and elected officials in the Parliament and on the local level with the goal to stop defections among M5S’s deputies and senators and suppress the growing dissent of local mayors and councillors. To do so, the Directorate came up with a set of rules of internal procedures and created the ‘Appeals Commission’ under whose jurisdiction passed disciplinary hearings with dissenting members (Franzosi, Marone, and Salvati 2015, 111). From the creation of this mechanism in January 2015 in 20 months only one senator was expelled from the Movement. The most notable example of local ‘dissent’ is the case of the mayor of Parma and another long-term movement activist Federico Pizzarotti. He was elected mayor in May 2012 and soon started to do his own independent politics regardless of the positions of Grillo.

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8 Only bigger town where the M5S succeeded was Ragusa in Sicily. In all other cities they didn’t pass to the second round.
9 Five proposed Directorate members (Alessandro Di Battista, Luigi Di Maio, Roberto Fico, Carla Ruocco, and Carlo Sibilia) were overwhelmingly confirmed by 92% of on-line voters (Repubblica 2014).
10 The most conspicuous case was the construction of the city incinerator against directly expressed disagreement of Grillo.
Pizzarotti also called for better and more transparent internal structure and when he found himself under the investigation for alleged abuse of office he was suspended from the Movement by ‘staff’ di Grillo on the ground of lack of communication with the leadership (il Fatto Quotidiano 2016a).

Another issue which helped on-going institutionalization of the Movement was the alteration of the media strategy. Beppe Grillo on several occasions expressed his ‘tiredness’ of politics and especially after death of his long-time political companion Gianroberto Casaleggio in April 2016 he retreated more in the seclusion and kept the position as ‘guarantor’ of the Movement. On the other hand the five members of the Directorate and ‘spokesmen’ from both chambers started to appear regularly on TV shows, give interviews to Italian journalist and present official Movement positions on their own behalf. Nevertheless this doesn’t mean Grillo relinquished control over his movement or went completely out from public life, he is still managing his blog and recently he started to campaign for ‘no’ in upcoming constitutional referendum in October 2016.

Advancing party institutionalization and changes in the relation between the leadership and local level were apparent during the campaign before the local election in May 2016. In anticipation of the potential breakthrough in big cities the M5S started to organize local political operatives, toned down previous anti-politics rhetoric and campaigned more as a classical political party focusing on local issues than a protest movement using frustration and anger in the society. Even Beppe Grillo didn’t play a key role in the campaign. He didn’t fill the headlines with his bombastic statements; instead for the first time in the Movement, the actual candidates became the faces of the elections and had to show their political capabilities on their own. In the previous local elections in 2013 the M5S couldn’t offer distinguishable mayoral candidates but in 2015 the more institutionalized party structure generated more visible and autonomous candidates.

This has been most noticeable in the elections in Rome where the candidate of the M5S, 37 years old lawyer Virginia Raggi, confirmed her ‘pole position’ and won in the second round run-off against Roberto Giachetti from the PD with 67 % of votes (Repubblica 2016). She is first women ever as well as the youngest person in that position. Her election also marked a change in approach of what candidates the movement base prefers. She ran the campaign based on her previous political experience (she was elected to Rome city council already in 2013) and in the movement primaries she defeated Marcello De Vito, a grassroots activist who was the M5S’s nominee for the Mayor in the same elections. She was in fact criticized by some activists to be too close to old political establishment (il Fatto Quotidiano
2016; il Tempo 2016) and in the same time praised by mainstream media which had previously been critical of the Movement. As even The Economist noticed: “A talented debater, Ms Raggi, illustrates how Italy’s second-biggest political group is increasingly coming to resemble a normal conventional party” (The Economist 2016).

Local victories in Rome and Turin showed the ability of the M5S to attract an electoral majority, including moderate voters previously scared-off by too radical and anti-system rhetoric of Beppe Grillo. With his less dominant position in the Movement the process of institutionalization may result in the fully stabilized political party with young and dynamic political leadership. Recent polls from July 13 in fact showed that the M5S is currently the most popular party in Italy (30.6 %) and would have a good chance to beat Renzi’s PD in the second round of the general elections (IPSOS 2016). However, the path to the electoral victory is not given; there is still a big Grillo’s influence over the Movement’s ideology and development and his inability to tolerate even a small deviation from his ideological line. He is still the main reason why the M5S’s heterogeneous electorate holds together, which makes the question of his succession even more important. His successor won’t have the aura of the ‘founding father’ and in order to deliver an electoral victory he will have to rely on fully institutionalized party.

Current organizational structure:

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11 In case of a potential run-off between the M5S and the PD, the former would win by net 8 points (56 to 44 %) (IPSOS 2016).
4. Conclusion

The main goal of this paper was to analyse a shift in the party organization away from the direct and arbitrary control previously exercised by the movement’s indisputable leader Beppe Grillo and to show how the Movement reacted to its growing success at local level by changing its own organisation structure and its relation between the leadership and local grassroots groups.

The Movement could be considered as a new political actor with original characteristics of so-called ‘internet populism’ (Corbetta 2013). The M5S, as a classic example of a protest party, used more an anti-political and anti-establishment rhetoric in order to attract people from both parts of the political spectrum without ideological distinction. However, its rhetoric and political style are based on traditional formulas of Italian populism. Not without reason Grillo is often compared to the pioneer of European populism Guglielmo Giannini ans his Common Man’s Front (Fronte dell’Uomo Qualunque) (Tarchi 2015, 357).

From the organization point of view the M5S has undergone crucial changes towards more institutionalized party which declares its readiness to bear government responsibility. Recent victories in the local elections gave them an opportunity to show their competence in major executive positions. Ongoing softening of radical anti-establishment rhetoric together with building an institutionalized party structure could attract a significant part of moderate voters who are disappointed by politics of Matteo Renzi or who feel unrepresented after the political demise of Silvio Berlusconi. As the date from current polls show, a vast majority of the right-wing voters (supporters of the LN, FI, FdI) would support the M5S in the second round of 65% of the voters of the FdI, 55% of the LN and 45% of the FI would support the M5S in the run-off against the Democratic Party who would attract only 10-20% of the right-wing voters. The rest of them intend to stay home (IPSOS 2017).

The Five Star Movement succeeded in mobilizing local activists around issues that other political actors ignored but at the same time raised unrealistic expectations (Biorcio and

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12 This scenario was confirmed by the results of the local elections in May 2016; most notably in Turin, where Chiara Appendino from the M5S attracted an overwhelming majority (84%) of voters who in the first round supported candidates from the LN, FI and independent Roberto Rosso. On the other hand, the incumbent mayor and veteran PD politician Piero Fassino got only 8% of these votes. This allowed the victory of Appendino even though she trailed Fassino by 10% in the first round (Istituto Cattaneo 2016). In general, the M5S won 19 out of 20 second round run-offs in these elections, mostly against the candidates of the PD.
Natale 2013, 125). Thus the main goal for the Movement is to become a fully institutionalized political party which can turn their protest ‘occasional’ voters into a consolidated loyal electoral base which will help them to win the general elections scheduled for 2018. The question of a possible disputed succession in the leadership after Grillo’s departure and persisting heterogeneous ideological background of the Movement members and supporters could severely hamper this process.
Bibliography


