

# The survival of the 'Anti-Party Party Paradox': Evidence from the Five Stars Movement

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## ABSTRACT

As of June 1, 2018, Italy is governed by two populist factions: the Five Stars Movement (5SM) and the League. The former, being an anti-party party, has become the first political force in only nine years of existence by advocating for a desired change of Italian politics. The latter is instead an extreme-right wing populist faction that has previously ruled with Berlusconi's Forza Italia party and was heavily involved in corruption scandals. At first sight, this governmental coalition seems antithetical with the proclaimed purity and difference of the 5SM from its ordinary political competitors. What is more, not only the 5SM has recently adopted internal rules which resemble those of established parties, but it has also performed behaviours which are in sharp contradiction with its ideology and values. In light of this contrast, this paper extends Cas Mudde's (1996) anti-party party paradox to the 5SM by examining how anti-party parties behave in power with other populist factions. It adopts party routinisation theory to analyse how changes of internal organisation within the movement have effectively translated into external behaviours which are 'party-like'. What emerges is that the Five Stars Movement, despite governing with another populist faction, has become internally and externally routinised as a normal party in the necessary limitations of the Italian political reality. As such, the anti-party party paradox survives even when compromise is achieved at the national level with another populist party.

## 1. Introduction

The peculiarity of Italian politics has served as a political laboratory for later developments in world's history. The fascist dictatorship of Benito Mussolini, the surge of powerful mass parties in the postwar reconstruction, and the rise of Silvio Berlusconi's personal party in the 90s, are just few of the striking political experiments which anticipated political trends elsewhere (Weststeijn & Corduwener, 2019). The same might be true for the surge of populist forces across Europe. According to Tarchi (2008) populism "found its richest ground, its paradise in Italy" (p. 84) because of the low level of trust towards public institutions and political actors, which are increasingly seen as too distanced by the citizens. This seems to be true as of June 1, 2018, the country is governed by two populist factions which, together, have obtained 49% of votes (Electoral Geography, 2018a): the 5 Stars Movement (5SM) and the League.

The rise of the 5SM has been a spectacular and unprecedented change in Italian political history. Many factors have been suggested by scholars to explain this extraordinary performance. Movarelli (2016) has highlighted how its anti-system rhetoric secured "a large share of the protest vote, which has its origins in widespread anger and discontent with both the current situation in society and the political and economic situation" (p. 214). For this reason, Tronconi (2015) qualified the 5SM as a true anti-party party because of its harsh ideology and program which totally rejects the party etiquette and distance it

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from mainstream political forces. Indeed, Russo, Riera, and Verthé (2017) underline the catch-all and changing nature of the movement which has managed to attract consensus from non-voters, but also from those who were voting for mainstream parties, by adopting both left and right-wing stances. Together with strong anti-Euro and anti-immigration discourse, and firm advocacy for direct democracy to bypass the 'corrupt' political system (Musso & Maccaferri, 2018), the 5SM has succeeded in exploiting citizens' anger from all over the political spectrum, thus becoming the first political force in only nine years.

However, it was relatively unexpected that the 5SM would have decided to share the leadership of the country. Beppe Grillo, the historical founder of the movement, repeatedly recalled on his blog the pure and different nature of the movement, and its willingness to rule only alone, foreclosing any possible compromise with other factions (Becchi, 2015). The same was over and over restated by Luigi Di Maio, the official running candidate for the 2018 elections. Still, following this striking success, the 5SM committed to govern with the League, an extreme-right populist force which previously shared the executive with Berlusconi's Forza Italia party, and which still owes to date €49 million to the State's finances (Tizian & Vergine, 2018a). At first sight, this seems to confirm the anti-party paradox drawn up by Mudde (1996), namely the theory stating that forces which have been the most radical in outlining their total differences from other parties, find themselves victims of their "own electoral success" (p. 272) as they become socialised within the limitations of political reality by the pressure of achieving compromise.

Scholars are indeed divided on whether the movement has *de facto* become completely routinised as a party following its electoral success. The academic debate agrees that the 5SM inevitably resembles the internal structure typical of a party by assuming a centralized organisation, rules on candidates' elections, and political leadership (Bordignon & Ceccarini, 2014; Movarelli, 2016; Vittori, 2017). Ceccarini and Bordignon (2018) even claim that the 5SM has become a '5 Stars Party' due to a slow and controversial shift from anti-system movement to ruling party. However, there is no agreement on whether changes within the organisation have also provoked a parallel shift in its external behaviour (Becchi, 2015; Biorcio & Sampugnaro, 2019). In a nutshell, whether the 5SM has effectively routinised as a party in the necessary limitations of political reality, or if it managed to distance itself from previous political forces by respecting its core values.

In light of the coalition formed between the 5SM and the League, it seems relevant to investigate how anti-party parties behave when leading the executive with other populist forces. Thus, the academic literature has not adequately studied how anti-system and anti-establishment forces operate when they get into power. For instance, Müller (2016), and Rovira Kaltwasser and Taggart (2016) have indicated behaviour that populist parties display when they lead the executive. However, they have not focused *per se* on anti-party parties specifically, but on populism in general. Instead, Mudde (1996) has analysed the behaviour of Belgian anti-party parties at the municipal level to infer that a paradox exists between the ideology of these political forces and their actual acting since they are pressured to compromise with mainstream forces. Nevertheless, it has been omitted how the anti-party party actually behaves when it is in power with other forces as the analysis has stopped at the formation stages of local alliances. Hence, it has not been considered how the paradox survives in light of coalitions with populist forces at the national level: whether the anti-party party paradox still endures when compromise is achieved with other political forces which also reject and distance themselves from the 'so-much hated' mainstream factions.

Therefore, this paper asks: To what extent does the anti-party party paradox hold in the context of the alliance between the 5SM and the League at the national level? To answer the research question, the current Italian government is adopted as a least likely case study because it permits to analyse the anti-party paradox in light of alliance with a populist faction. As such, one would expect that in these favourable conditions, anti-party parties do not become socialised in the political reality because they govern with political forces which also take distance from previous mainstream forces. However, evidence seems to suggest the opposite. By adopting party routinisation theory, and analysing separately the changes of internal factors from the external ones, this paper claims that anti-party parties, despite finding compromise with populist factions, still behave as normal parties, thus confirming routinisation. This has been achieved by conducting document analysis in two different stages: firstly, on the two internal charters which have been adopted by the movement since its foundation: the 2009 and 2017 Statutes. Secondly, by analysing newspapers' articles reporting on its behaviour since the formation of the coalition. By comparing the two, it emerges that a change of internal factors has been followed by a parallel change of external behaviour as the movement seems to have become routinised into a normal party. Indeed, the changes within the 5SM have also fostered a behaviour which is party-like and, therefore, contradicted the values which are at the core of its ideology. This confirms Mudde's (1996) anti-party paradox which survives even in times of coalition government with a populist force that also repudiates previous political actors.

Therefore, this paper first gives an overview about the academic debate concerning anti-party parties. Second, it illustrates the logic of party routinisation theory by highlighting how changes of internal factors translate into an institutionalised behaviour. Then, the methodology of the work is explained in light of the theory, and justifications are provided for the case selection, data, and sources. After that, in two different stages, party routinisation theory is applied on the internal and external behaviour of the 5SM to determine if a change in its statute has provoked a parallel shift in its external behaviour when leading the executive with the League. Finally, the results are discussed in light of their contribution to the academic debate and, at the end, a conclusion summarises the research findings and suggests further research.

## 2. Anti-party Parties in the Academic debate

The academic debate has extensively covered anti-party parties, specifically in light of citizens' attitudes towards political forces, and pointed out many factors which account to their rise (Daalder, 2002; Gidengil, Blais, Nevitte & Nadeau, 2001; Torcal, Gunther & Montero, 2002). This is because the 20<sup>th</sup> century is deemed to be the 'anti-party century' par excellence due to the decay of the traditional party system (Poguntke, 1996; Zulianello, 2017) and because of deep anti-establishment values which are rooted at the core of democratic societies (Ware, 2005). Specifically, Immerfall (1993) refers to this phenomenon as 'party vexation' and 'crisis of acceptance' since political actors are increasingly seen as "overly self-interested, eternally squabbling instead of striving for the common good, incapable of devising consistent policies and prone to corruption" (Poguntke, 1996, p. 319). Thus, it is in this hostile environment that anti-party parties lurk in the opposition spectrum of politics and increase their electoral base. As Barr (2009) explains, in this time of anger, it is the populists' task to capitalise on general political discontent by spreading an acceptable system of narration which depicts reality as

divided between two opposing groups: “the people, against both the established structure of power and the dominant ideas and values of the society” (Canovan, 1999, p. 3).

Populism and anti-partisanship are indeed two interrelated and consequently indivisible concepts. Zulianello (2017) best explains this by establishing two characteristics that any anti-party party must hold to be called so:

- (1) Its ideological orientation towards the status quo does not simply result in the articulation of a conventional anti-incumbent and policy-oriented opposition, but also in questioning the established metapolicies, and;
- (2) It has not taken part in visible cooperative interactions at the systemic level, whether because of its own antagonistic self-perception and/or the attitudes of the other parties in the system; or despite a previous involvement in such interactions it deliberately favours a return to the margins of the party system through the process of radical disembedding. (p. 657)

If these two cumulative conditions are fulfilled, political movements can be classified as anti-establishment since they then cannot fit the traditional party label. Thus, anti-party parties do whatever it takes to emphasise their distance and diversity from mainstream political competitors. This includes the adoption of different internal rules, more democratic statutory documents, different communication techniques and decision-making procedures (De Petris & Poguntke, 2015). As such, their divergence does not rely so much on their ideology as they are inevitably populists. Instead, it banks on their style, organisation and rhetoric which indicates a clear estrangement from the conventional style and functioning of democratic party politics.

As a result, their popularity depends on the level of aversion that citizens have towards the established elites. For instance, Torcal et al. (2002) pointed out the confidence gap which has undermined citizens’ trust towards public institutions as the determining factor for success. This would be part of an historical and irresistible trend of tension between political elites and the citizens they are supposed to represent. For this reason, anti-party parties propose direct democratic tools, such as referenda or petitions, to bypass the existing political constraints (Poguntke, 1996). On the contrary, Webb (1996) points to economic performance as the crucial element in explaining high or low levels of anti-partisanship. Accordingly, self-perception of general economic downturn is enough in explaining anti-party vote. Finally, dissatisfaction arises from the failure of political parties in setting up the agenda according to people’s interests and to effectively bringing the change they are expected to see (Bardi, 1996; Gidengil et al., 2011). In this regard, the complex process of globalisation would play a pivotal role in parties’ failure to be accountable to their citizens in the decision-making process (Castells, 2012). As a result, the emergence of anti-party parties would be strictly connected with poor performance of the larger system.

On the other hand, very little attention has been devoted to how anti-party parties effectively behave when they gain power. This is because, ideologically, anti-party parties seem to be political forces which are destined to stay in the opposition spectrum of politics due to their aversion with the existing political system (Zulianello, 2017). This would be in line with the Schelerian concept of *ressentiment criticism* whereby these parties do not desire to change the existing system as they “do not want to cure the evil: the evil is merely a pretext for the criticism” (Scheler & Frings, 2003, p. 34). Nevertheless, due to their rise in contemporary Western politics, there is an increasing academic and

societal need to investigate how these forces behave when they get elected and how they change their power relations with other factions.

Müller (2016), and Rovira Kaltwasser and Taggart (2016) have highlighted behaviour that populist parties display once elected. Their moral justification for failure seems to resort to previous governments' inadequacy in taking the right decisions. It emerges that "many populist victors continue to behave like victims; majorities act like mistreated minorities" (Müller, 2016, p. 75). Nevertheless, although populism is a core essence of anti-establishment (Poguntke, 1996), anti-party parties have not been the specific focus, but rather populist forces in general. Only Mudde (1996), after analysing the behaviour of Belgian anti-party parties at the local level, held that a paradox exists between their ideology and actual political acting. It seems that these forces, which have done their best in stressing their total difference from previous mainstream parties, "have now become the victims" (Mudde, 1996, p. 272) of their own electoral success, since they become willing to compromise with the 'so-much hated' elites. As such, it seems that they inevitably become socialised within the necessary limitations of political reality to achieve any sort of change and development (Flanagan & Dalton, 1984).

However, there is still much room left for research. For instance, the anti-party paradox was only held true at the municipal level but it was never examined in light of compromise at the national level. This is because Mudde's (1996) analysis has stopped at the coalition-building stages and omitted their actual behaviour when in power, specifically when it is shared with another populist force which also rejects and distances itself from their mainstream opponents. To fill this gap, this paper adopts Italy as a least likely case study and analyses whether an explicit anti-party party, such as the 5SM, manages, when in power with another populist faction, to behave in accordance to its core values or if it becomes routinised as a normal party. In other words, whether in these favourable conditions, the anti-party party paradox survives the challenge of governing with another self-declared anti-elite force, or behaves according to the limitations of political reality. Therefore, the next section unfolds party routinisation theory to explain how changes of internal factors within a political movement result in a shift of external behaviour that is party-like, which confirms institutionalisation.

### 3. Party Routinisation theory: Internal and External Factors of Behaviour

In order to understand how political movements become routinised into parties, party routinisation theory must be explained. As such, this section is devoted to illustrate two factors which account for this theoretical framework: first, institutionalisation as value infusion, namely changes of written rules within the movement's organisation, and, second, behavioural routinisation, the actual behaviour of the movement following its internal changes (Levitsky, 1998). When factors of internal change match those of external behaviour, it can be said that the movement has been routinised into a normal party, thus becoming well established and widely known by acquiring internal value and behavioural stability (Mainwaring & Torcal, 2005).

#### 3.1 Value Infusion

This first concept covers the process by which movements assume an organisation which resembles that of institutionalised political actors. This means that the key feature of value infusion is when the party changes its procedures and rules, and makes them explicitly known to its members (Casal Bértoa, 2016). Therefore, important indicators are the modifications which have occurred in party statutes or

political programs (Harmel, Svasand & Mjelde, 2016). However, this is difficult to be proven as movements have very different organisations.

Thus, it is important to start from the realisation that movements per se do not display written rules typical of parties. This is because, according to Kitschelt (2005), movements are “coalitions of political activists who emanate from social movements and try to apply the organisational and strategic practices of social movements in the arena of party competition” (p. 280). Hence, their organisational structure is fundamentally weak and professionalism is mainly absent. Consequently, there are few formal and clear decision-making procedures because they revolve around the charismatic leadership of its founder who, *de facto*, owns, runs, and controls the organisation (Vittori, 2017). This is best expressed by Panebianco (1988) who claims that movements are exclusively founded on personal ties linked to the charismatic leader, whereas parties are structured according to specific rules and procedures which are emanated by its members.

Therefore, an organisation becomes internally institutionalised when its members become increasingly involved in the decision-making process, “strengthen their commitment to the preservation of the organisation itself” (Levitsky, 1998, p. 80), and behave according to the organisation’s goals and not for their personal interests. Value infusion occurs when the leadership of the movement is not owned anymore by the founder but rather by its members, and its internal organisation displays routinised procedures based on statutes which have been approved democratically.

Consequently, value infusion is a key step in determining party routinisation. Yet, it is only one side of the coin. Although internal factors can be separated from the external ones, the two are connected since parties’ external behaviour inevitably depends on the changes which have been undertaken within the organisation (Harmel et al., 2016). Accordingly, if a movement becomes internally depersonalised, it would also behave externally as a normal party, thus aiming to gain election to public office in the name of the group. Therefore, as internal factors are deemed to automatically provoke an external behaviour which is party-like, it must be explained what is meant by behavioural routinisation.

### 3.2 Behavioural Routinisation

This second concept focuses on how movements become constrained actors to the “rules of the game” (Levitsky, 1998, p. 80). Hence, external institutionalisation is understood as the process by which changes of internal rules within the movement translate into a shift of external behaviour which is also party-like. This includes the political choices and acting of the movement in light of the other competitors, specifically on the alliances pursued with them (Vittori, 2017). Therefore, at this point, the movement is deemed to behave as its competitors if its acting becomes regularised and predictable around a stabilised set of rules and practices which are also shared by the other players.

For this reason, O’Donnel (1996) claims that once a movement becomes routinised in a party, the rules of the game reduce “actors’ behavioural options” (p. 58) since in the context of institutionalisation, their acting becomes easily predictable as they adopt behaviours which are party-like and, therefore, in sharp contrast with their previous obsolete style. Although they could still depart from institutionalised patterns by taking action which falls outside the system, they would enter into significant costs which could involve the risk of losing the party label forever (Jepperson, 1991). This is because behavioural routinisation inevitably leads to external party stabilisation since the rules governing the game become normally interiorised by the player at stake (Harmel et al., 2016).

It follows that external behaviour matches changes within the organisation when the party performs standardised actions, namely experiences power-relations which are normally encountered by other political forces. These include the decision to participate in national elections, to win seats in national assembly and, possibly, to get into power via alliances or individually (Vittori, 2017). Nevertheless, for the purpose of this work, which is to determine if the anti-party party paradox survives in times of coalition government with other populist forces, it is necessary to focus exclusively on the moment when the movement gets into power. The latter permits to determine if previous changes of internal rules have also been followed by a corresponding shift of external behaviour. For this reason, other theories such as external institutionalisation (Arter & Kestilä-Kekkonen, 2014) and objective durability (Kenneth & Gillies, 1980) are not specifically suited as they do not tackle routinisation in light of internal and external changes of behaviour. They rather focus on the perceptions that other players have that a specific party has become an established player, or on the probability of continued survival of the concerned actor (Harmel et al., 2016). On the contrary, party routinisation theory allows to tackle the issue in two different steps as it permits to analyse anti-party parties in light of their internal and external behaviour.

Although this theory best fits to analyse the institutionalisation of the 5SM, the theoretical framework must be linked to the anti-party party paradox. For this reason, value infusion and behavioural routinisation must be conceptualised in order to measure whether anti-party parties become socialised in the political reality or if they manage to perform in accordance to their values and core ideology. Therefore, the next section explains the methodology of this work by explaining how this theory has been operationalised in light of the adopted method, case study and sources.

## 4. Methodology

In order to verify whether the anti-party party paradox survives in times of governance with another populist faction, it must be clarified what is meant by party's internal and external behaviour. Therefore, this section explains the methodology of the work and justifies the selected case study and sources.

### 4.1 Linking Anti-party parties to Party Routinisation Theory

The two main concepts which need to be defined in order to operationalise party routinisation theory are internal and external behaviour of political movements. Internal behaviour includes all the changes which are experienced by the movement within its organisation, namely new rules concerning candidates' elections and decision-making procedures. This conceptualisation has been employed extensively in the academic debate which has operationalised value infusion in accordance to their changes in internal statutes (Ceccarini & Bordignon, 2018; Levitsky, 1998; Pedahzur & Brichta, 2002). Accordingly, if a movement changes its structure by adopting more clear and formal rules, it is held to have been internally institutionalised as a normal party.

However, what is more problematic is the conceptualisation of movement's external behaviour, as scholars have measured it differently. For instance, Pedersen (1982) looked at party's electoral volatility index to infer that parties become routinised when they tend to enjoy the same vote shares from election to election. In contrast, Mainwaring and Scully (1995) took a different approach by looking at party's popularity in the public opinion, and Morlino (1998) at the stability of the political class, namely at the percentage of newly elected and senior members in national assemblies. Finally, Bielasiak

(2001) has directed his attention at the stability of political contestation by analysing the structure of party competition between new and established forces. Nevertheless, although these approaches manage to explain parties' institutionalisation, they are not specifically suited for explaining anti-party party routinisation. This is because their focus mainly lies on factors which are essential for parties to experience power-relations, but they do not concentrate precisely on the moment when parties get elected. Hence, they cannot be adopted for analysing anti-party parties' external routinisation since a more focused approach, on how anti-party parties behave in conjunction with other political forces, is required.

Therefore, in order to determine if the anti-party party paradox subsists in times of coalition government with other populist forces, it is necessary to focus exclusively on the moment when that movement gets into power as the unit of analysis is its behaviour when occupying a governmental position. For this reason, this paper conceptualises behavioural routinisation by looking at the actual behaviour of the 5SM during the coalition with the League. Specifically, in light of the novelty of the government, two main episodes have been identified as being in sharp contradiction with its core values: (1) the very decision to form the government, and (2) the parliamentary vote on the *Diciotti* case. The latter is a political and judicial case where the current minister of interior and Lega's leader Matteo Salvini, was accused of abduction by the Court, following his decision to impede the berthing for ten days to the *Diciotti* motorboat, a boat of the Italian coastguard which rescued one hundred and eighty-seven migrants in the Mediterranean Sea ('Caso Diciotti, il film', 2019). Accordingly, the Senate had to vote to decide whether the Court could initiate proceedings on a member of the government, thus deciding whether granting parliamentary immunity to Matteo Salvini or not (Italian Constitution, 1946). Because of this, the 5SM was in a crucial position since its vote was decisive for the future of the governmental coalition.

## 4.2 Case Selection

This paper adopts the current Italian government as a case study because it permits to analyse the anti-party party paradox in light of an alliance with another populist force. Although many other European countries are facing populist governments, none of these coalitions are built in conjunction with another anti-party party. Rather, they are composed of alliances between right-wing extreme factions. For instance, in Hungary, the executive is shared between Fidesz and the Christian Democratic People's Party (Electoral Geography, 2018b). Similarly, in Poland, the majority is owned by the Law and Justice Party (Electoral Geography, 2015). Nevertheless, none of these populist governments are built in conjunction with a self-declared anti-party.

Thus, the case selection is justified by the current peculiarity of the Italian political system which permits, for the first time in European history, to analyse the behaviour of a coalition government between an anti-party party and a populist force (Weststeijn & Corduwener, 2019). This is due to the fact that the academic debate conceptualises the League as an extreme-right populist party (Biorcio & Sampugnaro, 2019; Ceccarini & Bordignon, 2018) and the 5SM as a populist anti-party party (Tronconi, 2015). Therefore, this scenario allows to test Mudde's (1996) inference in light of anti-party party behaviour with another populist force at the national level.

As such, this is a least likely case study because one would expect that anti-party parties do not become socialised in the political reality when governing with another populist force which also does its best in highlighting distance from previous political players. In fact, even though the 5SM would



assumingly adopt an internal organisation which resembles that of established political forces, it could still behave in sharp contrast from its predecessors and, therefore, avoid routinisation. It follows that, in these favourable conditions, the 5SM should not encounter difficulties in respecting its core values of anti-partisanship instead of assuming an external behaviour which is party-like.

### 4.3 Sources and Methods

Different sets of documents are analysed when looking at the internal and external factors of the 5SM. When assessing internal behaviour, the organisational changes enshrined in the 2009 and 2017 Statutes of the movement are analysed, since they are the two major reforms the movement has undertaken at the internal level (Ceccarini & Bordignon, 2018). This is in accordance with the way this theory has been operationalised. Thus, regarding value infusion, changes within the organisation which are party-like, determine whether the movement has been internally routinised. This refers to the rules specific to candidates' elections and decision-making procedures which have become more democratic and do not revolve anymore around the 'will' of its founder.

In the second step, when assessing external behaviour, document analysis is also carried out, but on newspapers' articles reporting on its performance. These selected articles have been selected because they represent the only available primary sources which permit to conduct research in light of the novelty of the government. Moreover, they are particularly suited in analysing the external behaviour of the 5SM as they report on the daily activity of the coalition. By picking twenty newspapers' articles, which both gravitate in favour and against the current government, the validity of the research is enhanced as the analysis does not revolve around internal biases of the selected sources. Hence, the selected newspapers are *'il Fatto Quotidiano'*, which is renowned for its anti-establishment stance (Giostra, 2018), and the *'Repubblica'*, which is instead known for his centre-left wing ideology (Comunitàzione, 2019). The articles have been selected in the timeframe spanning from October 2017 to February 2019, and they are equally divided between the two newspapers.

Therefore, the adoption of document analysis in two different stages allows to determine if an internal depersonalised change has also been followed by an external behaviour which is party-like. This method particularly fits the operationalisation of the theory in light of the anti-party party paradox because the theoretical postulates of value infusion and behavioural routinisation are assessed on the basis of document analysis in two separate steps. This analysis permits to determine if an internal change within the party has also provoked a behavioural shift which confirms its routinisation in the political reality.

## 5. Analysis

By applying the methodology to the selected sources, this section analyses the internal and external behaviour of the 5SM to determine whether value infusion and behavioural routinisation have occurred.

### 5.1 Value Infusion in the 5SM

The internal structure of the 5SM possesses internal traits which are in sharp contrast with those of established parties. This is because the root of Beppe Grillo's decision to found the movement in 2009, was the desire to question "the historical structure of the Italian party system under all perspectives:

founding documents, programs, communication strategies, political goals" (De Petris, 2015, p. 125). Yet, in the last years, due to its willingness to take actively part in the political life of the country, the internal structure of the movement has changed and turned to routinisation. Therefore, this section analyses the internal structure of the movement by looking at the two charters which have been adopted since its foundation: the 2009 and 2017 Statutes.

### 5.1.1 Internal Structure with the 2009 statute

The 5SM has always refused to be labelled as a party. This is shown in its first internal document, which is indeed called the 'Non-Statute' (2009). A clear difference from other parties already emerges as the movement categorically refused to adopt internal statutes aimed at regulating its internal behaviour. Although this choice might give rise to doubts about its democratic nature, internal documents that dictate the procedural functioning of the organisation are considered party-like and, therefore, rejected a priori. This is confirmed by art. 1 which defines the 5SM as a "non-association", and by art. 4 which declares its commitment never to become a party in the future (Non-Statute, 2009, p. 3). Instead, it is highlighted how the 5SM is a mere vehicle of discussion for its citizens, whose epicentre is located in 'Beppe Grillo's blog'. The importance of this platform is outlined by the interesting fact that the actual headquarter of the movement is claimed to be located in the web address "www.beppegrillo.it" (p. 3).

This has some major repercussions on the actual nature of the movement. For instance, the fact that Beppe Grillo owns the blog, and that the movement is 'physically' located in his website, unveils a very strict and hierarchical structure where Grillo resides at the top (Bordignon & Ceccarini, 2014). This has major implications because membership and expulsion are subject to his unconditional will, as well as communication tools, the possibility of presenting documents, and candidates' selection (Ceccarini & Bordignon, 2016). This is confirmed by art. 3 which stipulates that "Beppe Grillo is the sole owner of the right of use of the 5SM trademark" (Non-Statute, 2009, p. 3). Although art. 4 outlines the horizontality of the movement by pointing out the crucial role played by the internet in fostering unmediated exchanges between their members and elected deputies, the only available mean is again Beppe Grillo's own blog (p. 3). This means that the so-called 'democratic exchanges' contained in art. 4 are constrained by the watchdog function exercised by the founder who inevitably supervises and strictly regulates its daily activities (Movarelli, 2016).

In addition, the 5SM showcases other traits which ascertain a clear difference with conventional political forces. Art. 5 covers the procedure to become a member of the movement and stipulates that there is no need to purchase a membership card (Non-Statute, 2009, p. 4). The sole condition for membership, besides being an adult Italian citizen, is simply "not to belong to other political parties" (p. 4). Moreover, the article recalls the personalised nature of the movement by stating that when a member does not meet anymore the membership requirements, the organisation of the movement, implicitly Beppe Grillo, is entitled to expulsion (p. 4).

Furthermore, art. 6 outlines another element which distinguishes the 5SM from any other Italian political force: the fact that membership is completely free of charge and that financial resources are collected exclusively through fund-raising activities and voluntary donations (p. 4). This implies that the movement does not rely on public funding as the other Italian parties do and, therefore, commits itself to a different political behaviour. This is pursued because "money scandals involving politicians have been everyday affairs for decades" (De Petris, 2015, p. 131), and the 5SM attempts to invert this trend. Finally, art. 7 states that candidates running for the 5SM must have no criminal records, "no matter

what the nature of the offense" (Non-Statute, 2009, p. 5). This is another element in sharp contrast with the other political actors as they have been predominantly characterised by criminal and corruption scandals of mafia nature.

As a result, it emerges that, at its early stages, the 5SM had an internal structure which was clearly aimed at stressing its total difference from other political forces, thus confirming its anti-party party nature. However, following its striking results in the 2013 elections, and the rejection of the 2016 Constitutional Referendum which brought about the dismissal of former Prime Minister Matteo Renzi, it is argued that the 5SM has adopted internal rules which are party-like (Ceccarini & Bordignon, 2018). Therefore, the next section explains how the 5SM has undergone value infusion following the adoption of the 2017 internal Statute.

### 5.1.2 Internal Structure after the 2017 Statute

When the 2018 parliamentary elections began to approach, Beppe Grillo decided to change the internal structure of the 5SM to define clearer and more democratic procedures to elect candidates' representatives in the parliament. This decision was primarily dictated by Grillo's increasing awareness that he could not be a suitable candidate for the position of prime minister due to his contradictory rhetoric and previous professional career as a comedian (Becchi, 2015). Therefore, in 2017, the 5SM issued a new Statute (2017) with the aim of making its internal nature more transparent and democratic in light of its increasing success. The structure, according to Biorcio and Sampugnaro (2019), inevitably resulted in resembling that of mainstream political parties.

Hence, art. 1 (Statute, 2017, p. 1) immediately states that the 5SM now has physical headquarters which are located in Rome and are not online anymore. In addition, the banner 'www.beppegrillo.it' is deleted from its symbol, and replaced with a more neutral web address, "ilblogdellestelle.it", thus suggesting the de-personalisation of the movement (p. 1). Yet, the most striking element of rupture is found in its new institutional asset. In fact, art. 6 stipulates the existence of six new organs which account for the functioning of the movement. These are the members' assembly, the political leader, the guarantor, the guarantee committee, the board of arbitrators, and the treasurer (p. 4). All of these bodies work in conjunction with each other and have clearly defined functions. As Ceccarini and Bordignon (2018) note, a previously self-declared horizontal and anti-hierarchical movement has acquired a precise organisation.

In addition, Beppe Grillo decided to relegate himself to the position of guarantor, leaving the leadership to a younger representative, Luigi di Maio, who was overwhelmingly elected leader with 30,936 votes out of 37,000 members (Biorcio & Sampugnaro, 2019). Although Grillo renounced to the external leadership of the movement, he still retained substantial power over the internal functioning of the 5SM. As stated in art. 8 (Statute, 2017, p. 6), the guarantor position does not have temporal limits, whereas the leader has a defined mandate of 5 years. In addition, the guarantor has the exclusive right to interpretation of the Statute's norm and the exclusive right to call a no-confidence vote over the political leader as well as much room left on decisions concerning expulsions (p. 6).

Nevertheless, despite these arbitrary prerogatives, Grillo's power was for the first time codified and procedurally limited. In addition, new voting rules for the 2018 elections were adopted to make candidates' election more accountable to democratic procedures. Thus, the 'Parlamentarie' Regulation (2018), which is the follow-up of the 2017 Statute, recognised members' prerogative to elect their

representatives, something that was previously under the unconditional control of Grillo. Accordingly, candidates' election can only take place online on the 'Rousseau Platform', a direct democracy software which is owned and regulated by the 'Casaleggio Associati', a private company which is responsible for most of the financing of the 5SM (Biorcio & Sampugnaro, 2019). This is not by chance as the founder of the company, Gianroberto Casaleggio, and his son Davide, are Grillo's major partners (Ceccarini & Bordignon, 2018). Furthermore, the *Parlamentarie* Regulation (2018, p. 4) stipulated the obligation to pay a monthly contribution of €300 for each candidate in order to finance the maintenance of the online platform. This contradicts the 2009 Non-Statute where membership was unconditionally declared free of charge and funding exclusively dependent on voluntary donations.

It emerges that the 2017 Statute is particularly different, and in some cases even in contradiction with the original 2009 charter. This is because the movement has adopted a clear institutional asset and internal procedures which regulate its functioning, organisation and candidates' elections. On the contrary, the 2009 Statute was granting Grillo unlimited power in regards of 5SM's internal and external leadership. Thus, there were no defined internal bodies within the movement as the 'Beppe Grillo's blog' trademark was granting him unconstrained control over the organisation. Although he still retains particular power within the internal functioning of the movement, it can be argued that the movement has become more democratic and depersonalised, by adopting clear functions and bodies. In addition, the 5SM has started to be financed in a partisan manner by getting closely entangled with third-parties private bodies, and by obliging some of his members to donate a fixed sum of money.

Therefore, it can be claimed that the adoption of the 2017 Statute has impacted the internal organisation of the movement, thus making it routinised. This is because its internal changes have brought about a clear organisation, distinct set of rules, and democratic procedures typical of parties. As such, value infusion has occurred since the internal structure of the 5SM has become more depersonalised and regulated. Nevertheless, in order for a movement to become completely routinised into a party, its external behaviour must also change in favour of socialisation. Therefore, the next section analyses whether an internal change of the 5SM has also provoked a parallel shift in its external behaviour which is party-like. For this reason, the acting of the 5SM during the coalition government with the League is analysed in order to determine whether the anti-party party paradox subsists in light of alliance with another populist faction at the national level.

## 5.2 Behavioural Routinisation of the 5SM

In order to assess whether a shift of the internal rules within the 5SM has also been followed by a contingent routinised behaviour, newspapers articles from '*il Fatto Quotidiano*' and '*La Repubblica*' are analysed. Specifically, they have been clustered around two main actions of the 5SM which seem to be in contradiction with its core values during the first months of governmental activity: the decision to form the governmental coalition with the League, and the parliamentary vote on the *Diciotti* case.

### 5.2.1 The Decision to Form the Governmental Coalition with the League

At the 2018 elections, the 5SM emerged as the winning faction with 33% of total national votes (Electoral Geography, 2018a). However, since the electoral law set out the governmental threshold at 40%, the 5SM found itself in a situation where it was obliged to negotiate with other political forces if it sought to get into office. Talks initially began with the previous ruling party, the Democratic Party (PD),

which has always been heavily criticised by the 5SM (Bordignon & Ceccarini, 2014). Nevertheless, Matteo Renzi, the leader of the PD at that time, closed any possible compromise on the grounds of their ideological differences ('Renzi fa il padrone', 2018). As such, it was the leader of a mainstream political force who refused to initiate talks with a populist party in the very first place. By contrast, if we follow the anti-party party logic, Di Maio should have ideally blocked any sorts of talks with previous ruling parties, but instead remained completely open to compromise with other political forces ('M5s, Di Maio: Faremo convergenze', 2018). Thus, 5SM's openness to negotiate with other parties seems to suggest a contradiction with its initial intransigent values.

As the PD refused to compromise, the 5SM started to negotiate with the most successful force on the other side of the political spectrum: the League. Nevertheless, due to their ideological differences and conflicting pre-electoral tones, it was quite unexpected that the two parties would have managed to form a governmental coalition. Specifically, the League had previously governed for three mandates with Berlusconi's Forza Italia party and was heavily involved in corruption scandals ('Fondi della Lega', 2018). In addition, during the 2018 legislative elections, it was part of a pre-electoral alliance with Berlusconi's party and Giorgia Meloni's 'Brothers of Italy' extreme-right party ('Berlusconi: No alla fiducia', 2018). Thus, Di Maio repeatedly stated, during the electoral campaigning period, that the 5SM would have never sought any alliance with extreme parties ('Governo, quando Di Maio diceva', 2018). As Scali (2019) reports, Di Maio harshly criticised the xenophobic nature of the party which was initially conceived as an emancipatory force to liberate the north of Italy by emphasising the superiority of northern Italians ('Dalle mazzette ai diamanti', 2019). In addition, other famous party exponents, such as Danilo Toninelli and Roberto Fico, declared that the League, by forming a pre-electoral coalition with Berlusconi, preferred to gain parliamentary seats instead of choosing to work with the 5SM to change the country ('M5s, Toninelli: Salvini?', 2018). Accordingly, the 5SM considered any alliance with the League completely impossible on the ground of its political past which has always gravitated around the figure of Silvio Berlusconi ('Governo, Di Maio a Salvini', 2018).

In addition, when the previous party leader, Umberto Bossi, was in charge, the League was involved in heavy corruption scandals. Thus, between 2008 and 2010, the party had falsified its internal budgetary figures to get extra-financing from the State, namely €49 millions of public funds ('Ecco perché la Lega', 2019). This money, instead of being spent for the public interest, was invested according to the personal interests of some party whips. These included the purchase of a luxury resort in Croatia, the buying of academic titles in Albania for Renzo Bossi, Umberto's son, but also the repaying of speed fines obtained by the party members, alongside with their houses' renovations, dinners, and even for eleven diamonds and ten gold bars ('Così la Lega ha fatto sparire 49 milioni', 2018). The remaining sum was also transferred to two different funds in Luxembourg and Tanzania where first instances of money-laundering were discovered and put to an end ('Fondi Lega, cosa dice la legge', 2018). The party was consequently condemned by the Court of Cassation to reimburse on the grounds of aggravated fraud to the State ('Fondi Lega, la Cassazione conferma', 2018).

However, politics is a devious game where power, instead of values, takes precedence and rules arbitrarily. After long talks, the 5SM decided to form an alliance with the League in order to be able to form a government ('Contratto di governo', 2018). Although most of 5SM's voters remained astonished by this decision, Di Maio justified the agreement on the grounds that it constituted a mere political contract instead of an alliance, since it was aimed at containing the clear ideological differences between

the two forces, but at the same time ensuring the existence of a government (Biorcio & Sampugnaro, 2019). In this light, the cooperation was deemed necessary to proceed with the necessary reforms that the 'people' had voiced the need for ('M5s, Di Maio: Faremo convergenze', 2018). Hence, Di Maio acknowledged the substantial differences between the two electoral programs, but failed to point out the political and ideological diversity which was previously stressed in the last years.

As such, it emerges that, by initiating talks with other parties, and by even signing a political alliance with a political force which was previously involved in corruption scandals and electoral alliances with Berlusconi, the 5SM behaved in sharp contrast with its original values. Incoherence dominated the political acting of the movement and took the place of its recalled purity contrasted to other factions. Thus, if the 5SM would have not behaved as a normal party, it would have never sought an alliance in the first place and being willing to compromise other parties. Instead, even at the first stages of the government's formation, it tried to find a compromise instead of stressing its aversion. This is why the next section analyses another inconsistent behaviour which was exercised when leading the executive with the League: the granting of the parliamentary immunity to Matteo Salvini.

### 5.2.2 The Parliamentary Vote on the *Diciotti* case

Following the formation of the government with the League, the 5SM faced a major challenge which put at stake its ideology and previous electoral promises: the parliamentary vote on the *Diciotti* case. The latter was a judicial and political case in which Matteo Salvini, Lega's leader and current minister of interior, decided to deny entrance in the harbour of Catania to the 'Diciotti motorboat', a ship of the Italian coastguard which, last August, rescued 187 migrants in the Mediterranean Sea ('Caso Diciotti, il film', 2019). The Court accused him of abduction as he denied, for ten days, the landing on the Italian soil, following the refusal of the Maltese government to host the fugitives ('Diciotti, per Salvini', 2018). Nevertheless, in order for the Court to initiate proceedings against a member of the government, art. 96 of the Italian Constitution (1946) stipulates that the Senate must vote with simple majority to determine whether the concerned public official has acted pursuant to his mandate and in accordance to the national interest ('Diciotti, il Senato vota no', 2019). As such, the outcome of the vote, and the very survival of the government, strictly depended upon the 5SM as it was the largest force in the Senate, and the main political ally of the League.

Thus, the 5SM faced one of the biggest dilemmas of its political history: whether to grant parliamentary immunity, a renowned practice in Italian politics which the 5SM has always contested; or to grant the Court the power to initiate proceedings, hence putting an end to the governmental coalition with the League. What is more, the 5SM has always criticised the logic of parliamentary immunities as they have impeded in the past years, the trial of many controversial government officials ('Diciotti, così la diabolica strategia di Salvini', 2019). Specifically, the movement has always underlined that when ordinary citizens commit mistakes, they face an ordinary and objective trial, so shall political actors encounter the same treatment ('Caso Diciotti, per salvare le poltrone', 2019). Accordingly, the parliamentary immunity was considered a mere instrument in the hands of the Italian political elite, used to safeguard its existence, because it permitted previous forces to determine the judicial outcome of its members ('Caso Diciotti, il suicidio dei 5 Stelle', 2019). For this reason, the 5SM has always promised that once in power, it would have immediately deleted this parliamentary benefit which served as a tool for the old political establishment to remain in power.

Nevertheless, as the movement was once again faced with a question related to its power and survival in the parliament, it decided to cast aside its pre-electoral promises and values, and to act in accordance to its political interest. After having consulted its members via an online vote on the Rosseau platform, it chose to grant the parliamentary immunity to his main political ally ('Caso Diciotti, il suicidio dei 5 Stelle', 2019). This sparked great criticism amongst voters as coherence was deemed to once again have been replaced by the necessity to keep the government alive. Hence, Salvini thanked the 5SM for its loyalty, and reassured the support of his party to the next reforms which were envisaged by the executive ('Caso Diciotti: M5s dice no', 2019). As such, the will to remain in power prevailed over the political desire to change the system, as the movement acted as its predecessors.

It must be then concluded that, during the *Diciotti* case, the 5SM has also behaved in sharp contrast with its values and electoral promises as it acted in accordance with the limitations of the existing political reality. Instead of respecting what was promised to its electors and creating a new phase of change in Italian politics, it behaved as its predecessors by granting the parliamentary immunity to its main political ally. This occurred as it saved Matteo Salvini from the ruling of the Court, thus adopting a strategy which was heavily employed by the previous parties that were harshly criticised during the election campaigning period. For this reason, it can be stated that the 5SM has also undergone behavioural routinisation since it has behaved according to the existing limitations of political reality, thus confirming its external routinisation as a normal political force. Therefore, the next section discusses these findings in light of their contribution to the academic debate, and comparatively assesses the internal and external routinisation of the 5SM in light of the anti-party party paradox.

## 6. Discussion

After having analysed the internal and external changes of behaviour of the 5SM in two different stages, it must be concluded that the movement has become routinised as a normal party in the necessary limitations of political reality, both internally and externally. This is because changes within the internal functioning of the organisation have been followed by a parallel shift of external behaviour which is also party-like. Concerning value infusion, the 5SM has changed its internal structure by adopting rules which regulate the functioning of its internal bodies and candidates' selection procedure. This has involved the depersonalisation of the movement as the figure of Beppe Grillo has been put aside to favour more democratic and codified procedures. Similarly, regarding behavioural routinisation, the 5SM has also acted in sharp contrast to its core values and electoral promises as it displayed behaviours which contradict its anti-party party nature. As showed in these two episodes, the movement has performed in contradiction with its previous obsolete style, since it has been limited by the restrictions of the existing political reality. It has favoured its political interest and will to preserve power instead of acting in accordance to its ideology and electoral propaganda. Therefore, it can be concluded that the 5SM has experienced the same power-relations encountered by the other political actors as it has become a constrained actor by the rules of the game. Consequently, it has also undergone behavioural routinisation as it acted as a normal party.

Therefore, the findings of this paper reveal that the 5SM has become routinised as a normal party in the existing limitations of the Italian political reality. These results contribute to the academic debate concerning the state of development of the 5SM. Scholars agreed that the movement was internally assuming an organisation which resembled that of ordinary parties (Bordignon & Ceccarini,

2014; Movarelli, 2016; Vittori, 2017). Nevertheless, they failed to determine that it had effectively undergone value infusion, and that it experienced the same process externally during the governmental alliance with the League. As such, these findings confirm Ceccarini's and Bordignon's (2018) inference that the movement has become a '5 Stars Party', following the adoption of the 2017 Statute, which deeply contradicts the 2009 charter. In addition to that, this paper adds the external dimension to the debate, as the 5SM has also adopted behaviours which are party-like as they confirm its external institutionalisation.

Concerning the literature dealing with anti-party parties, this paper has demonstrated that the anti-party party paradox survives even in times of coalition government with other populist forces. Therefore, these findings validate Mudde's (1996) work even when the anti-party party works in conjunction with populist parties, and even when compromise is built at the national level and not only locally. But most importantly, this paper has shown that the paradox not only holds at the coalition-formation stages, but also when the anti-party party leads the executive with another populist force. As such, these findings also add to the works of Müller (2016), and Rovira Kaltwasser and Taggart (2016), which deal with behaviours that populist parties display when they get into power. Hence, their acting does not only consist in blaming their predecessors for their previous political decisions, but also involves the performance of political decisions and choices which are in sharp contrast with their ideological values and electoral promises. As a result, it seems that anti-party parties really become the victims of their own electoral success (Mudde, 1996) because their proclaimed purity and aversion with the political system seems to be a mere pretext to get into office and gain power. In the case of the 5SM, as showed by this paper, the movement has become routinised as a normal party, even when power was shared with another populist party, as it performed actions which are against its recalled purity and declared difference from ordinary political actors. This confirms that the anti-party party paradox also survives in these favourable conditions, as unconventional political actors become socialised in the limitations of political reality.

## 7. Conclusion

This paper has argued that the 5SM has become routinised in a normal party, following its internal and external changes of behaviour. The institutionalisation of the movement confirms that the anti-party party paradox still holds, even in the context of alliance at the national level with another populist party, which also does its best in stressing its diversion from previous political competitors. By adopting party routinisation theory, and analysing in two different steps the internal factors from the external ones, this paper has demonstrated that an internal change within the movement has also provoked an external shift which is party-like. Hence, the replacement of the 2009 statute with the 2017 charter has also been followed by political choices and decisions which are in sharp contrast with the values at the core of its ideology. By focusing on two episodes, which have involved the decision to form a governmental alliance with the League, and the choice to grant the parliamentary immunity to Matteo Salvini, the movement has clearly put aside its anti-party party nature as it has favoured power and stability at the expenses of change and innovation. The movement has behaved in a similar fashion to its mainstream predecessors as it has become a constrained actor by the necessary limitations of the political reality.

The findings of this paper reveal that the anti-party party paradox survives even in favourable conditions where the anti-party party has higher chances to avoid socialisation and bring about the desired change. In these first months of existence, it seems that the recalled purity and difference of the



5SM was just a pretext to gain office as the movement has become the victim of its own electoral success. So far, the movement has not been capable of acting in sharp contrast from previous parties, and to govern according to the main reason voters decided to support it: to finally bring a change in the Italian political system. Instead, the will to preserve and gain power have been prioritised at the expenses of its ideology and electoral propaganda.

Nevertheless, these results are limited by the temporal constraints of the research as the novelty of the governmental coalition does not permit to give a completely objective overview of its activity, but only an analysis of its initial steps. Specifically, concerning external routinisation, the findings only cover the first months of existence of the government. Therefore, further research should extend this study to the future political choices of the 5SM, to determine if the anti-party party paradox can also survive in later political stages. This seems to be feasible as the two parties hold a strong majority, both in the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies, thus suggesting their commitment to lead the country for the next years.

However, despite these first months of activity, the 5SM has already displayed instances of behaviour which are in sharp contrast with its pre-electoral tones and ideology. Although the novelty of the government, the movement seems to have become already a socialised actor in the limitations of the political reality, following its internal and external changes. Therefore, future studies should still consider the results of this paper whose findings hold true that even during the first months of existence, that the 5SM has become routinised as a normal party. The latter confirms the anti-party party paradox even when compromise is achieved at the national level, and even when in it operates in conjunction with another populist force which also repudiates previous political forces.