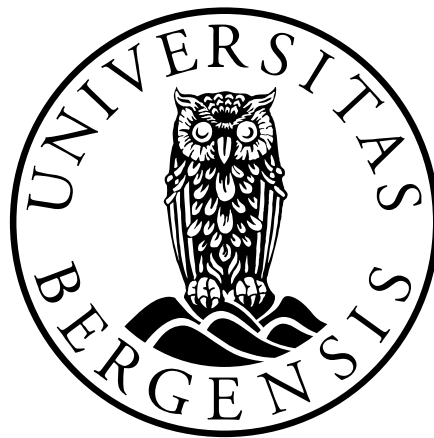


# **From Anti-establishment Social Movement to Successful Political Party**

Following the Emergence of the Five Star Movement in Italy



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# Abstract

Using Social Movement Theory (SMT) and political party theory, this paper has explored the phenomenon of anti-establishment social movements transitioning to political parties. The focus has been on four propositions (P) that emerged as plausible explanations while studying theory. These propositions have been analyzed and discussed in relation to the chosen case of study, the Five Star Movement in Italy. The propositions were analyzed with data collected by the author in the field, using semi-structural interviews, and then compared to empirical evidence drawn from literature. The research question became, *what main factors paved the way for the Five Star Movement to transition from an anti-establishment social movement to a successful political party?* The interesting aspects of this research lies in its actuality. Anti-establishment movements and parties are on the rise. My research has given insight for understanding and developing a new theoretical path that combines SMT and political party theory. My findings: All the proposed propositions had influence, but some more than others. The most important ones were P4 (lack of trust in established institutions), then P2 (charismatic leader), then to some extent P1 (social media) and lastly with little influence P3 (neglected issues).

## List of Acronyms

DC	Democrazia Cristiana
FSM	Five Star Movement
LG	Lega Nord (The Northern League)
PD	Partito Democratico
R1	Respondent 1
R2	Respondent 2
R3	Respondent 3
R4	Respondent 4
R5	Respondent 5
R6	Respondent 6
R7	Respondent 7
SMT	Social Movement Theory

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# 1. INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVE

SYRIZA and *Golden Dawn* in Greece, the *Piraten Partei* (PP) in Germany, *Podemos* in Spain and *The Five Star Movement* (FSM) in Italy are all examples of new anti-establishment political parties that have swept across their respective countries. What these new political parties focus on differs significantly from country to country. Some of them may focus on issues seemingly neglected by the traditional parties. Others, try to discredit or change the political system itself (Mosca 2014, 39, 48). Anti-establishment movements and parties are on the rise. We see this as a political trend that is spreading especially through Europe, but also to other parts of the world. Illustrated recently by the results of both the Brexit referendum in UK and the US presidential election. There have been many possible explanations for this recent growth of the anti-establishment. One of them is the economic crisis of 2008 opened a gap in the political landscape that filled with opportunistic actors taking advantage of the situation. The consequences of austerity measures are generally hard on people, and does not lead to support for the sitting incumbents. One could argue that these new political actors play up on an already underlining feeling of distrust towards established political institutions and use it to their advantage (Mosca 2014, 47, Conti and Memoli 2015, 516). The parties often began as social movements, and then developed to become a political parties. I want to look at, explore and explain the process from where an anti-establishment movement takes the institutional step and evolves into a political party. These opportunistic political actors are something new and quite unexplored by traditional social movement and political science theory. I therefore want to contribute a new form of theoretical approach and to enrich the general discussion concerning movements turned to party.

I approach this by doing a case study of the Five Star Movement (FSM) in Italy. I build my analysis on semi-structured interviews with political commentators, scholars and people within the movement itself (politicians). In other words, elite-interviews. I prepared and conducted the interviews myself. They were executed in early April 2016 on various locations in Rome, Italy. In addition to doing interviews, I use document-analysis of gathered empirical writings about the FSM to discuss the propositions that emerged from the theory discussion. I argue that the propositions can from a lesser to a larger extent explore my chosen puzzle. These propositions will be analyzed and discussed and finally lie as the foundation for my concluding remarks.

## **Presentation of Research Question**

One of the traditional views in social mobilization theory is that social movements and interest groups are in competition with political parties. Social movements have organizations that often resemble interest groups, and sometimes political parties, but they are very different in areas as internal institutionalization, preferred method and execution of their goals (Cowell-Meyers 2014, 63, Kriesi 2014, 268). Nevertheless throughout this century there have been many successful cases of movement-to-party processes. Good examples are the worker parties, and now just in the last 30 years the Green movement. Also in the last decade there has been a surge of successful movement-to-party processes. This involved new movements, which are new, in the sense that they use new methods of mobilization and that they are extremely hostile to the existing political environment in which they are operating. One prime example is the FSM (The Five Star Movement) in Italy, which not only managed to be elected into parliament, but also became the most voted for party in the election of 2013 (Conti and Memoli 2015, 516).

The Five Star Movement is unique in its design. It began as an interactive blog forum initiated by the satirical comedian Beppe Grillo and the well-known communications director Gianroberto Casaleggio in 2004 (Mosca 2014, 40). The main purpose was to shed light on the many shady dealings from the government and proposing a new form of policies. They wanted to do this by new means of communication that they consider not contaminated by the traditional media and established political elites. The FSM has used social media, the blog forum, public gatherings and protest rallies to attract followers. The Five Star Movement officially became a political party on October 10<sup>th</sup> 2009 (Mosca 2014, 43). Only four years later, it had mobilized to become one of the biggest political actors represented in the national elections of 2013. In fact, the FSM became the most popular single party in the nation, and the third most popular coalition (Turner 2013, 178).

I used quite some time and energy formulating my puzzle. Formulating a research question is a process in itself; it is not an easy task. In fact Gerring (2012, 37) says that the research question is the most crucial stage of all when doing research and that nothing of interest is likely to emanate from research on topics that are trivial, redundant, or theoretically bland. Maxwell (2013, 73) supports this: “Qualitative researcher often don’t develop their final research questions until they have done a significant amount of data collection and analysis. Well-constructed, focused questions are generally the result of an interactive design process, rather than being the starting point for developing a design.” The function of the research



questions is to explain what my study is intended to learn or understand. Two other functions are; (1) to help focus the study and (2) to give guidance in how to conduct it (Maxwell 2013, 75). After careful consideration I have formulated my research question: **What main factors paved the way for the Five Star Movement to emerge from an anti-establishment social movement to a successful political party?** There has been research on the topic of anti-establishment movement turned party before, but little with the FSM as case. It is therefore interesting to explore it further to gain insight and knowledge, and to enrich the research field that combines social movement's theory with theory on political parties, with a particular focus on anti-establishment movements turned party.

### **Structural outline**

We start with a theoretical discussion where I present my chosen theoretical framework, discuss theory and definitions, and finally present the propositions that grew out of this discussion. In the next part, I have chosen to present my case. I focus on aspects that I find relevant for its present state. Especially the Italian history and the political context the FSM grew in. I also discuss the FSM's history, what the impact it has achieved and the reason it is interesting to study them. Then I have chosen to present the discussion on method. I focus on my chosen method. I explained why I did what I did, how I did it and the problems I faced while doing it. After the evaluation on the method used, I present my findings. I have done a throughout analysis of the propositions that grew out of the theory, and have established patterns to make light inferences. I found this analysis and the following discussion to be especially fruitful and interesting. In addition to discussion the propositions, I discussed the future of the FSM and finished it all off by summarizing my findings.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theoretical analysis should be able to give me different explanations as to how too “solve” my research question. I want to combine Social Movement Theory with theories of political parties in an attempt to not to “underfit” by chosen study. First, I will present and discuss existing theories on both fields, then discuss and operationalize prepositions that has emerged as viable factors that could explain the successful transition of the FSM from social movement to a political party.

I will present my theories in the following order:

- Social Movements Theory
- Theories on the formations of political parties

The reason I chosen to look at exactly these theoretical paths is the interesting aspect of doing an analysis where I use a combination of them or at least look at my puzzle across two different theoretical paths. This is theoretically interesting and will further the debate surrounding the transition of a social movement to a political party.

### **2.1 Social Movement Theory (SMT)**

Social Movement Theory (SMT) is a concept that has been continually developed from the 1960s. SMT is an interdisciplinary study within the social sciences that generally seeks to explain why social mobilization occurs, the forms under which it manifests, as well as potential social, cultural, and political consequences (Metzger 2014, 1). Studying SMT implies taking a nosedive into a theoretical landscape characterized by chaos and heated discussions. Political Theorists often disagree and represent different theoretical paths. Leenders (2013, 274) thinks that the attempts to generate a general theory of mobilization or “contentious politics” has failed. Contentious politics is the use of disruptive techniques to make a political point, or to change government policy. Tilly (2008) defines contentious politics as “interactions in which actors make claims bearing on someone else’s interest, in which governments appear either as targets, initiators of claims, or third parties.” Others argue that attempts to generate a general theory should not happen at all, namely that it will bring little or nothing to the field of research. Even though some think, there is no general theory it is still interesting and necessary to take a nosedive into the world of contentious politics.

What does the concept of contentious politics really entail? What does it consist of? What have we learned from it and how should we use that knowledge in future research?

Sidney Tarrow, Charles Tilly, and Doug McAdam, developed throughout the 1990s and into the 21st century the concept of contentious politics. One of the primary goals of these three authors was to advance the explanation of social movements, (the strike, revolutions and other contentious politics) under a single research agenda. On the other hand there still remains a significant plurality of agendas in addition to the one these three propose. In the most simplistic way we can say that contentious politics involves people struggling over which political program will prevail. One could also say that contentious politics is about making claims against the authorities or more in general on someone else's interests. Actors begin making claims on behalf of other people which leads to coordinated efforts on behalf of shared interests. Contention brings together people in a form of collective action against something (Tarrow and Tilly 2007, 4, McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001). Collective action means coordinating efforts on the behalf of shared interests. Most collective action happen without a connection to contentious politics. Churches, sports teams and neighborhoods all engage in collective action every day, but they do not engage in contentious politics. We enter the realm of politics when we interact with state agencies, governments and other authorities of the state (Tarrow and Tilly 2007, 5).

### **2.1.1 What is a social movement?**

Studying social movements means focusing ... on how ideas, individuals, events, and organizations are linked to each other in broader process of collective action, with some continuity over time (Porta and M. Diani 2006, 5). Social movement as a method of making claims against a government became common in the twentieth century. It emerged through labor struggles and other similar causes and became a popular mean of action in democratic regimes (Tarrow and Tilly 2007, 8).

Many have tried to define what a social movement is. However, the art of really finding the perfect definition is something that is hard to achieve. Some are too broad, however if one should try to narrow it down it seems destined to exclude certain movements (Crossley 2002, 2). Even though it seems hopeless, there have been attempts to try in the last couple of years. We can first try and define a social movement by different characteristics. The most common is to say that it consists of a group of people involved in some sort of conflict, sharing the same opponents, a common identity and acting collectively (Kriesi 2014, 268-269). This definition is quite broad and therefore it becomes difficult to exclude networks or other more

feeble forms of organization that do not last. Another way of defining social movements is to say that they are defined by the fact that they lead a sustained campaign of claim-making combined with public performances like marches, rallies and demonstrations. Also, that there has to be repeated public displays of unity, numbers and commitment that draws on organization, networks and traditions (Tarrow and Tilly 2007, 8). Della Porta and Diani (1999, 16) explains that social movements as:

1. Informal networks, based on
2. Shared beliefs and solidarity, which mobilize about
3. Conflictual issues, through
4. The frequent use of various forms of protest.

I think that the definition proposed by Della Porta and Diani is one that is easy to understand and that I will use myself. I would in addition add a sentence that the protest has to be repeated over time. As Tarrow (2011, 12) says; it is only my sustaining collective action against antagonists that a contentious episode becomes a social movement.

## **2.2 How Social Movements emerge**

I have discussed the definition of what a social movement is, now it is important to look at how they emerge and why. I will do this in a general way and then I will use the theories as a starting point for my own research. First some general theories, then I will become a bit more specific. In general, the theoretical approaches to social movements can be divided into three different models. The classical model, the resource mobilization model and the political process model (Kriesi 2014, 270). In the next section, I will explore these three models in chronological order.

### **2.2.1 The Classical Model: Strain Theory**

Strain theory in short implies that Social movements are a response to some sort of strain in society. The main argument is that collective action arises out of people's efforts to cope with things in life within a social system under strain. The most important branches of this theory is the Collective Behavior and Mass-society models (Marx 1994, 78). MORE!

Kriesi (2014, 271) says that strain theory implies that strain and breakdown of standard routines of people's everyday lives have a disruptive effect on individuals, which triggers some sort of collective behavior. It is possible to argue that this could be the case with the

Another aspect with this line of thinking is that if the apparent strain is perceived to have been caused by certain political parties or political actors. Then the direction of anger and the belief that its someone's fault has to come from somewhere. Social media has in recent times become an extremely low-cost way of giving this kind of information (Enjolras et al. 2013, 32-33). Of blaming the strain on someone's life on a distinctive political actor or class.

There has been quite some criticism towards this line of thinking. McAdam (1982, 11-19) points out that social strain is necessary, but is not a sufficient cause of social movements. He says that the classical model is too deterministic, does not take into account political actors and the larger political context and is therefore insufficient as a model to explain social mobilization.

### **2.2.2 Resource Mobilization Model**

The Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT) states that social movements are something normal, rational and healthy done by aggrieved groups to challenge politics. This is a shift in paradigm from deterministic to agency-oriented. Historically the resource mobilization theory emerged from American sociologists in the 1970s that started to reflect on the processes where resources for collective action are mobilized (Kriesi 2014, 271). The Resource mobilization theory claims that discontent is more or less constant over time and thus inadequate as an explanation of the emergence of social movements. The fundamental basis of the theory is that social movements develop from a significant increase in the level of resources available to support an emergence. Resources can be solidarity, organization and external support. These resources are central in the theory and imply that – the more organization, the better the prospects for mobilization and success (Kriesi 2014, 271).

However if we consider their use of the social media as a resource in itself, then we can look at another aspect of it. Proposition 1 emerges as a viable alternative. Can a movement use social media to gain more legitimacy, also internationally? Did the social media aspect help their image to seem something new fresh and uncontaminated by the old ways of doing politics? If it became a resource they could manage, control and use for their own benefit, then we can consider it vital to their existence and eventual success. It became their source of solidarity, organization and external support.

There is a lot of criticism towards this way of looking at mobilization. One of the most outspoken ones are McAdam (1982, 29) who especially wants us to consider that the Resource Mobilization Theory fails to acknowledge the political capabilities of the

movement's mass base. It fails to acknowledge the power inherent in the disruptive tactics of the powerless. There is too much emphasis on external influence and too little on the indigenous resources of the population. Another criticism against the theory is its apparent lack of focus on the importance of leadership in social movements (Kriesi 2014, 272). Aldon D. Morris and Staggenborg (2008, 171) describe leaders as critical to social movements: leaders inspire, mobilize resources, create and recognize opportunities, devise strategies and frame demands. In sum, we can say that they are the very essence of the social movement. Leaders of social movements can be defined as strategic decision-makers who inspire and organize others to participate in their form of organization. From this discussion a propositions emerge related to the importance of leadership. Especially the importance one person can have on the success or failure of a movement or party. I will discuss the operationalization of this proposition later. What was the importance of Beppe Grillo in the process of the consolidation and success of the FSM? Hypothetically, would the FSM even exist if not for the charismatic comedian?

### **2.2.3 Political Porcess Model and Political Opportunity Structure**

Based on his criticism of the resource mobilization model, McAdam has formulated a third perspective on social movements; the political process model. This model shares the basic assumptions of the resource mobilization model but also considers the level of organization within the aggrieved population as a crucial element. The model tries to fit everything into a political context and focuses on political opportunities and constraints these groups have on their mobilization. According to this model, a restructuring of existing power relations promotes the mobilization of social movements (Kriesi 2014, 272).

Another aspect of this model is its focus on the subjective meaning that people attribute to their own situation. The emergence of a social movement implies a transformation of consciousness within a large part of the aggrieved population (Kriesi 2014, 272). Porta and Diani (2006, 13) say that a social movement develop when a feeling of dissatisfaction spreads and the existing institutions are unable to respond. If we assume that a movement has managed to change people's consciousness to the level that they actually changed their views into support this new movement, how did the they manage to communicate their message? Could the use of the social media as a mobilizing platform have something to do about it? "The expansion of conflict beyond those immediately concerned plays a crucial role in democratic politics. Conflicts are frequently won or lost by the success that the contestants

have in getting the audience involved in the fight or in excluding it, as the case may be (Schattschneider 1988, 4). Because of technology in recent years, social media has become a widely used method of mobilization and communication. Social media is used as a collective term for platforms on the internet that open up for social interaction, and makes it possible for the users themselves to create and share content. This content can be text, images, videos or links to other web pages (Enjolras et al. 2013, 11). Can a movements use of social media be something that can help it when it wants to make the transition to a political party?

Even though I speak quite highly of the the Political Process model and especially the aspect of the Political Opportunity structure, the political processes model has also been criticized. Even the very concept of political opportunity has been criticized for its all-inclusive character. In addition, it has been pointed out that social movements focus on the political process can be drastically different; some do not depend at all on political opportunities for their mobilization and success. Should we then disregard this model?

The fact that some social movements may not depend on political opportunity structures, may even be argued that includes the FSM. The FSM can be one of the few who did not need political opportunity, at least at the initial stage, but instead used what mechanism they could to avoid this dependency (charismatic leader and social media). The essential aspect we have to remember is that this mainly take into account the process of establishing a successful social movement, and the process I am most interested in is the process where a social movement transform itself into a successful political party. Although the political process model has been met with serious criticism many think it holds the greatest promise for comparative politics (Kriesi 2014, 272-273). Therefore I think is necessary and fruitful to look further into the world of political opportunity.

### **Political Opportunity structures**

What are political opportunity structures? According to Kitschelt (1986, 58), political opportunity structures are comprised of specific resources, institutional arrangements and historical precedents for social mobilization, which in some cases facilitates the emergence of protest movements and in other cases constrain them. The core of the political opportunity structures consists of formal political institutions (Kriesi 2014, 273). We know that contentious mobilization can be promoted by emerging divisions within a regime and by cracks in state strength can expand opportunities for mobilization (Leenders 2013, 275,281). Tarrow (2011, 12) argues that it is changes in public political opportunities and constraints that create the most important incentives for triggering new phases of contention for people

with collective claims. Is it possible that a movement can play up on the mistrust people have of established institutions, seize the rising political opportunity and then emerge as a political party? Could influential charismatic leaders “lead” this quest and be an important reason for its success?

Initially, it was the work of the American scholars like Charles Tilly, Doug McAdam and Sidney Tarrow who began linking institutional politics and social movements. Their work led to a new tradition in social movements that used comparative dimensions when studying political opportunity structures (McAdam 1996, 3-4). Comparison can show that political opportunity structure influence the choice of protest strategies and the impact social movements can have on their environment (Kitschelt 1986, 58). One method a social movement can chose to make more impact is to transform into a political party. This is a way to gain direct access into the very political institutions that can be a restraint on their work.

#### **2.2.4 A combination of approaches – a social movement paradigm?**

There is a growing tendency for a combination of theoretical approaches. This can be seen as an attempt to integrate the different models (Kriesi 2014, 272). McAdam, McCarty and Zald (1996, 2-6) is authors who argue that only a combination of the different theoretical perspectives is necessary. They empathize on three factors in analyzing the emergence and development of social movements or revolutions. I presented some of these not as factors but as theoretical viewpoints earlier in the chapter. The first factor is about the structure of political opportunities and constraints (political opportunity structures). The second concerns what forms of organization is available (mobilizing structures) and the last one is about the collective processes of interpretation, attribution and social construction that works as a mediator between opportunity and action. this I will present a discussion on political party theory and formation.

### **2.3 Political Party Theory**

To really get an insightful understanding of the world of political part theory, it is first necessary to explore some core aspects about political parties. What role do political parties have in society? How could we define them? Why are they important? After a discussion on these questions (and more), I will present a theoretical discussion on the formation of political parties. Then finish of with a discussion on typology to try to “fit” the FSM into some kind of categorical context. This is an important “evil”. One of the main aspect of a political scientists



life is to collect information, organize this information, categorize, and then analyze it to gain more knowledge about the world. Political parties are an aspect that has already been analyzed to the bone, but it always seems there is something more, and interesting to explore about them. What are the reasons for this?

### **2.3.1 Political parties**

Political parties are the most central actors in politics (Katz 2014, 200). Political parties are in fact the very foundation of modern representative democracies. The parties should work as the bridge between the people (civil society) and the system of governance. Parties have traditionally had the task of choosing elites to represent the people and being the place where policies are being developed (Berntzen 2013, 28). A definition of what a political party really is or at least should be will always be contested and discussed. Here, I will present the most common definition of a political party and discuss its application on my case. According to Sartori (1976), a party is an organization that nominates candidates for election. The function of presenting candidates for election is something that distinguishes them from other organizations (Hug 2001, 12). Any party function by this proposed definition as an electoral vehicle, otherwise it would function as a pressure group or a movement instead (Bolleyer 2013, 14).

Another more specialized definition is; Political parties are organizations that, for the most part, recruit candidates to contest elections in the hope that they can then participate in government, or at least push it in the direction of their own ideas – ideas that, more often than not, reflect the socio-economic interests and/or moral values of those who support them (Bale 2005, 105). One thing is to define what a party *is*, another is to describe how a party functions in its own right. There are parties that refuse to either contest elections at all, or if they do, make it clear that their eventual aim is not to work within the system but to dismantle it. Others exist only for their own (and hopefully other's) amusement. There may be no link between a party's ideas and interests and/or values. Its ideas may reflect the personal values of a charismatic leader.

### **2.3.2 The formation of new parties**

A formation of a new party is a problem that always have attracted scholarly attention, but even more so now in these times when new parties have increased in number and electoral size, particularly in established democracies in Europe (Conti and Memoli 2015, Bolleyer 2013, 1). There is a lot of controversy when scientists discuss the reasons behind a successful

establishment of a new political party. It all depends on their theoretical foundation and methodical ways. Something else that needs to be considered is the political foundation on which this new party's political platform is built on, mainly what the main goal and ambition is. Another thing to consider is how this new party is formed. A new political party can be seen as a result of an interaction between the pre-existing political actors and the group that is considering to form a political party (Hug 2001, 2). There are also multiple consequences for the political system when new parties enter the electoral arena. The success of some leads to the demise of others. New parties represent new competition in the electoral arena and their appearance implies that other political actors have to disappear. But when they have managed to stabilize as a party, new parties are on the other hand extremely sensitive to what established parties do.

Parties often emerge with the goal of replacing or at least as a protest against existing political parties (Hug 2001, 14). This protest can develop in many ways. It may originate from a general mistrust towards the establishment. It is a fact that anti-establishment parties has grown, especially in long-standing democracies of Western Europe. Hartleb (2015, 41) is one of those who believe this. He points out that the creation of anti-establishment parties is a real threat to conventional parties. He says that the rise of anti-establishment parties mirrors the changing European electorate, which is more volatile, more skeptical of the political elites and, in some respects, frustrated by 'big politics'. Citizens today express more skepticism about political parties as state institutions, and the process of representative democracy based on political parties than ever before. (Hartleb 2015, 42). This relates directly to the issue of trust. According to Norris (2011, 19) trust can be defined as reflecting a rational or effective belief in the benevolent motivation and performance capacity of another party. A lot of citizens do not believe that parties care what they think, are not responsive to public interests and therefore cannot be trusted to represent them. If you have this position as a voter, it is a small step to protest vote. Anti-party sentiment increases vote volatility (Hartleb 2015, 42-43). The overall support for new parties in a party system signals the discontent of voters with the mainstream. It has been widely recognized that increasing volatility in Western democracies supports the rise of new parties (Bolleyer 2013, 5). In fact, there has been a tendency of increasing electoral volatility in advanced democracies over the last decades. We can define volatility as the growing willingness of voters to switch parties from one election to the other. Literature argues convincingly that growing electoral volatility opened a window of opportunity for new parties in gathering votes, especially from those citizens frustrated with

the traditional parties (Bolleyer 2013, 7). The decline of group attachments is an expression of a growing individualization of the electorate, which again affects citizen's relationship to political parties. More and more citizens are less reliable in their vote choice and generally are more open to alternative offers (Bolleyer 2013, 29). From this discussion I propose a proposition that it is the lack of trust in established institutions that made it possible for the FSM to make a smooth transition from a social movement to a political party (Proposition 4).

A general thrust of a larger part of the literature suggest that new parties are primarily the consequence of new issues or values ignored by other existing political parties (Harmel and Robertson 1985, 502). Potential new parties sometimes grow out of a social movement, or parts of one, as is the case with Green parties, that in most cases came from the anti-nuclear movement. Post-materialism has often been cited as a likely cause of the formation of new parties to present new issues, most commonly environmental concerns (Harmel and Robertson 1985, 505). I propose a proposition that it could have been the focus that the FSM had on seemingly neglected topics that led to their success as a political party This will be my Proposition 3. This focus came then at the exact right time for it to have the most impact possible (political context).

Another possibility is that a party originates as an idea from an individual who present candidates to office based on this person beliefs. For example, the Anders Lange's Party in Norway, which today is a one of the parties in government (Hug 2001:14-15). Another option is that a new party grows out of an old one. This can be an example of a group who is not content with their original party and decides to take action in their own hands. Not all potential new parties become parties. The group, organization, or political entrepreneur needs to take the steps to actually presenting candidates to office. A party achieves national representation when it enters into the first house of parliament, (the chamber that directly represents the citizens in a democracy) and tends to be superior in terms of formal competences and legitimacy (Bolleyer 2013, 31).

### **2.3.3 What challenge a new political party?**

Formation costs are something concrete that can stagnate a potential party's progress. A potential party needs resources to be able to maintain their goal of becoming a fully-fledged political party (Hug 2001, 56-57,99). In traditional politics, it takes a lot of funds to run for office. In recent years however, some parties have begun taking advantage of new methods of mobilization that do not involve expensive electoral campaigns. Social media has opened the electoral arena to those who know how to take advantage. This is something the FSM has

taken advantage of, and relates directly to proposition 1, which states that it is the new communication methods that facilitate the emergence of the FSM.

Another thing that is important for a new party to succeed it is that the initial institutionalization process runs smoothly. Whether a new party is likely to institutionalize depends of the structural conditions in which it is formed. In other words, its origin. Another vital aspect is the capacity of its elites to overcome the core aspect of the tension between the founder's self-interest to protect their own position, and the need for the party to invest in a viable infrastructure autonomous to its leadership (Bolleyer 2013, 2).

### **Institutional restraints and the institutional context**

Institutional restraints seem to be important when we look at reasons for formation of new parties. One example that has showed to be an institutional restraint is the electoral system. Most research agrees that proportional representation should be favorable for the emergence and success of new parties (Kriesi 2008, 42-43). However, not everyone agrees. Harmel and Robertson (1985) show that an electoral system based on proportional representation only holds when we consider the success of political parties, but not the emergence. In their study the emergence of new political actors seem more likely in majority systems (Hug 2001, 4). As with all theories there can never be consensus. Kitschelt (1988) argues that electoral systems probably have little to do with the formation of new parties.

The FSM has managed to emerge in a system that it is difficult for new parties to emerge in. The main reason is because of the election system and the low gains even though you got the most votes as a single party, because the largest block gains a lot of additional seats after the election. This new election law has been widely discussed along with the last three, actually. They have been developed to stabilize the system, but actually they cause more problems and are considered "un-democratic" by its critics.

### **2.3.4 Different types of political parties and party system**

Although political parties have been around for about 200 years, they still sometimes seem easier to recognize than to pin down. To understand what a political party is and does it is important to be acquainted with its development, history and typology. The first parties were called cadre parties or elite parties – which originated as loose alliances of groups of elites in parliament. Examples include nineteenth-century Liberal and Conservative parties. Next, there were the first mass parties. They originated from outside parliament. They had lot of members, a well-built party organization and close connection to different social groups,

classes and interest organizations. The classical example of mass parties are the early twentieth-century Socialist parties. Another type of party is the catch-all-parties. They combine an unclear political profile with fewer members and strong leadership. They seek to broaden their support beyond their traditional support and attract the ‘floating voter’ and interest group backing. Such parties downplay ideology in favor of pragmatism. The parties are often dominated by career politicians employing experts to track public opinion. Examples are the mid-twentieth-century Social Democratic and Christian Democratic parties. The second to last type I want to mention are the ‘Cartel parties’. They are characterized by the view that politics is a profession, where the election campaign is the ‘commercial’ for the product, and where the parties share power with other parties as would happen in a cartel. They are reliant on public subsidies and so distant from their largely symbolic membership that they have become not so much brokers between society and the state as components of the latter. Examples include most twenty-first-century mainstream parties (Berntzen 2013, 28-29, Bale 2005, 105-107). The last type of party worth mentioning is the ‘anti-system parties’. The anti-system parties are a reaction to the collusive consensus which results when established parties join, a superficially competitive cartel. Examples include 1980s Green Parties, 1990s far-right parties (Bale 2005, 107), and recently the populist anti-establishment parties.

We can define a party system by the composition of the relevant political parties in a country. These include parties that are represented in parliament and play an active role in the political game. It has become a norm to divide parties into party families, partly by ideology and partly by the interests the parties represent. A normal divide is socialist, Christian-democratic, liberal, conservative, agrarian, green (“new politic”) and ethnic/regionalist/nationalist. Some also include populist as a part of the divide (Berntzen 2013, 29). It is interesting to consider and evaluate these different types because of what it entails. There is a difference to the acceptance of the different types. Building on the new category of populism, in recent years new types of parties have emerged. We can begin by calling these unorthodox parties. Unorthodox parties are often defined by what they are not, namely mainstream. Multicolored outsiders from the left, right and no fixed ideological abode are attacking the mainstream center-left and center-right. They consider “regular” politics to be a redundant activity and argue that there is no distinction between the parties of the establishment. A general strategy for these anti-establishment parties is to advocate the idea of the people against the politicians.

Another approach is to ridicule politics either with provocations or with comedy – as has been the aim of the Five Star Movement in Italy (Hartleb 2015, 41-42).

### **A closer look at populism**

According to Mudde (2004, 543), populism is “an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite’, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people. Populism usually appears combined with other ideologies but is always characterized by two dimensions: people-centrism and anti-elitism (Luengo, Marín, and Fernández-García 2016, 24).

## **2.4 Movement-to-party theory**

I have discussed SMT and theories concerning the formation of political parties. Now I will explain why it is possible to combine these two theory aspects.

Hug (2001, 14) says that new parties often emerge with the goal of replacing or at least as a protest against existing political parties. When we look at movements this also corresponds well. Some social movements often emerge with the goal of replacing the existing political environment, which they perceive as corrupt or even broken. Is this what the FSM tries to do in the Italian political system? Often, especially when the established parties are perceived as failing their mandate, there can be an opening to a new critical voice in the political scene (Hug 2001, 41). The spread of new values and issues in advanced societies and the rise of political distrust have been identified as important factors underlying new parties (Bolleyer 2013). If this is correct, it refers directly back to my main propositions 3 of neglected topics and proposition 4 of lack of trust.

Researchers say that there has to be an opportunity “pull” motivating the emergence of a new party. These “pulls” are both institutional and political factors that are contributing to the possible emergence (Hug 2001, 37). I have already talked about Political Process theory in regard to SMT but, when we consider the formation of parties it builds on the same logic. In SMT they call the opportunity pull; the political opportunity structure. It is practically the same, and therefore ideal when I want to combine the world of social movements with the world of political parties.

## **2.5 Theretical Operationalization**

Hug’s (2001, 14) definition of a new political party is as follows: a new political party is a genuinely new organization that appoints, for the first time, candidates at a general election to

the system's representative assembly. A party becomes established at its second participation at a general election. One should point out, when we look at my case that the FSM still has a barrier to really be called an established party. They have only participated in one national election.

### **2.5.1 Propositions**

It is common for qualitative researchers to explicitly state their ideas about what is going on as a part of the process of theorizing and data analysis. These may be called "propositions" rather than hypothesis (Miles and Huberman 1994, 75). The distinctive characteristics of hypothesis in qualitative research is that they are typically formulated after the researcher has begun the study; they are grounded in the data and are developed and tested in interaction with them (Maxwell 2013, 77).

I have thorough extensive study of theory developed four main propositions that I wanted to explore and that I figured could have or would have some consequence when we consider the formation of the FSM. I have taken into consideration both SMT and theory on the formation of political parties. I did all of this before conducting the actual interviews. I always had my propositions in mind and tried to center the interviews around them. At the same time, I tried not to exclude other reasons/factors that could explain my puzzle.

#### **Proposition 1: Social media**

This proposition suggest that it was; *social media that facilitated the transition from an anti-establishment social movement to a successful political party*. In the section below, I will explain and operationalize how this proposition grew out of the discussion of the theoretical paths I have chosen to study.

The fundamental basis of the Resource Mobilization Theory is that social movements develop from a significant increase in the level of resources available to support an emergence.

Resources can be solidarity, organization and external support. If we consider their use of the social media as a resource in itself, then we can say it has had a great influence on the movements formation cost, and therefore its successful transition. Did the social media aspect help their image to seem something new fresh and uncontaminated by the old ways of doing politics? If it became a resource they could manage, control and use for their own benefit, then we can consider it vital to their existence and eventual success. It became their source of solidarity, organization and external support.

Theory on political parties also talks about formation costs. Formation costs are something concrete that can stagnate a potential party's progress. A potential party needs resources to be able to maintain their goal of becoming a fully-fledged political party (Hug 2001, 56-57,99). In traditional politics, it takes a lot of funds to run for office. In recent years however, some parties have begun taking advantage of new methods of mobilization that do not involve expensive electoral campaigns. Social media has opened the electoral arena to those who know how to take advantage. This is something the FSM has taken advantage of, and relates directly to the proposition, which states that it is their use of social media, that facilitated the emergence of the FSM.

Another way of looking at it is to take into consideration the importance of social media to get attention and to change people consciousness. When it comes to the importance of social media in regard to theory on political parties, there is an agenda setting approach that considers the struggle for attention of the public as the central element of democratic representation (Kriesi 2014, 270). If we consider this to be true, then the media plays an extremely important role in politics, it is the way to get public attention and as a result public representation. This is also very important to those who do not have regular access to the decision-making arenas, like social movements. However, there is a difference when we regard the importance of the media in comparison to the importance of social media. Studies of political parties show that there are few examples of political parties creating activity and discussion with its supporters through social media (Enjolras et al. 2013, 97). This differs significantly when we look at theory concerning the establishment of social movements (SMT). This is shown through the Political Process Model. An important aspect of the political process model is its focus on the subjective meaning that people attribute to their own situation. The emergence of a social movement implies a transformation of consciousness within a large part of the aggrieved population (Kriesi 2014, 272). But how do you transform the consciousness of an aggrieved population? As I have discussed earlier, theory argues that this can be done by using social media.

When we look at social movements, mass media conventionally was the main way of expanding a social movement's reach in the population. Mass media was a channel where social movements could spread information, communicate their message and mobilize followers. The social movement had to visualize its ideas to gain legitimacy to obtain resonance in the general public, and so the mass media was the way to do it (Kriesi 2014, 270). Because of technology in recent years, social media has become a widely used method



of mobilization and communication (Enjolras et al. 2013, 11). A good example of mobilization based in the internet where the consciousness of an aggrieved group was changed is the Seattle demonstration against the World Trade Organization in 1999 (Tarrow and Tilly 2007, 13). Another example is the moveon.com campaign on behalf of Governor Howard Dean in 2005 that showed that through skills in electronic media it is possible to mobilize thousands of people on the behalf of a common cause (Tarrow and Tilly 2007, 20). In recent years there are movements that have almost entirely based their mobilization and campaigns on the instruments developing as a result of the times (i.e. blog forum, Facebook, Twitter and Youtube). Was the FSM's use of social media a grand part of their success? Was it the use of social media (to promote and illustrate their views), that made them able to transform the consciousness of a large segment in the Italian population, and get so many people to actually vote for them?

### **Proposition 2: Charismatic Leader**

This proposition suggest that it was; *the charismatic leader that was the main reason for the smooth transition for a new anti-establishment social movement to become a political party.* In the section below, I will explain and operationalize how this proposition grew out of the discussion on the two theoretical paths I have chosen to study.

One of the most important criticism against the Resource Mobilization Theory (which is a part of SMT) is it's apparent lack of focus on the importance of leadership in social movements (Kriesi 2014, 272). Especially the importance one person can have on the success or failure of a movement. When we look at the importance of leadership in social movements, it is quite obvious that they can be an essential part of the eventual success. An example of political scientists who feel this way are Aldon D. Morris and Staggenborg (2008, 171). They describe leaders as critical to social movements: leaders inspire, mobilize resources, create and recognize opportunities, devise strategies and frame demands. In sum, we can say that they are the very essence of the social movement. Leaders of social movements can be defined as strategic decision-makers who inspire and organize others to participate in their form of organization. What was the importance of Beppe Grillo in the process of the consolidation and success of the FSM? Hypothetically, would the FSM even exist if not for the charismatic comedian?

When we consider the this issue in relation to theory surrounding political parties there is a similar argument to be made. Several political scientists have underlined the importance a leader can have for the establishment of a political party. Hug says (2001, 14-15) that a party

can originate as an idea from an individual who present candidates to office based on this person beliefs. For example, the Anders Lange’s Party in Norway, which today is a one of the parties in government. Another example is the FSM in Italy with its leader Beppe Grillo. The importance of the leader is unquestionable. A political leader can make or “break” a new social movement or a political party. A great political leader has charisma, personal radiance and a gift-like connection to the people he/she



Beppe Grillo at an election meeting in 2013  
Collected the 05.09.16 from:  
<http://www.termometropolitico.it/media/2013/12/Beppe-Grillo.jpg>

governs. Leadership is a form of power that is located within people, which gives it a sort of undefined quality. It’s an art to be able to govern. A leader should show its strength in critical situations, have the ability to unite its members, face new challenges and show good judgement. The leader has to fit the political context he/she is a part of. Some situations require immediate and independent vigor, while other demand for corporation, inspiration and meticulous coalition building (Østerud 1996, 193). The art to succeed is to be the right leader, with the right kind of attitude at the right time.

There is an increasing focus on media in politics. Because of this it has led to greater visibility and importance of the candidate to the detriment of the party’s apparatus. With the new technologies of information and communication, the party leaders can interact directly with the public, favoring the charismatic personal leadership (Luengo, Marín, and Fernández-García 2016, 252).

The notion of charismatic leadership involves assigning a key role to the followers in imputing charisma to leaders. There will be an emotional character of the community and the appointment of officials will be based on the loyalty to the charismatic leader (Morris and Staggenborg. 2008, 172). A charismatic party, or leadership-dominated parties, are usually created top-down by an individual or a small elite (Bolleyer 2013, 63). Which certainly is the case with Beppe Grillos within the FSM. However, did the leader aspect of the FSM really have an impact on their success?

### **Proposition 3: Formation Because of Neglected Topics**

This proposition suggest that it was; *focus on seemingly neglected topics that facilitated the transition from an anti-establishment social movement to a successful political party.* In the

section below, I will explain and operationalize how this proposition grew out of the discussion of the theoretical paths I have chosen to study.

As discussed previously is one theory on the formation of political parties that new parties develop when they use their opportunity to replace established parties or front policies neglected by the traditional parties. New issues or unresolved political problems should therefore lead to the emergence of new parties (Hug 2001, 54, Bolleyer 2013, 28-29). One example of this is that problems with *immigration* increase the chance that new right-wing parties manage to consolidate and be successful. Another example is the discussion on *nuclear energy* that has said to have paved the way for green- and left-libertarian parties (Hug 2001, 3). A third example is a focus on environmental issues. There is a general thrust of a larger part of the literature that suggest that new parties are primarily the consequence of new issues or values ignored by other existing political parties (Harmel and Robertson 1985, 502). That the poor representation of peoples anxieties and urgent demands by the other parties, favored the electoral emergence of this new party (Conti and Memoli 2015, 531)

As I discussed in the section on SMT, social movements develop when a feeling of dissatisfaction spreads and the existing institutions are unable to respond (Porta and M. Diani 2006, 13). I think this argument is more relevant for the development of proposition 4. However, it is possible to make an argument saying that the dissatisfaction people feel is because of a mismatch with their desires and the actual policies that are being fronted by other parties. Therefore when a new social movement manage to represent new issues they sauté the dissatisfaction people have with the existing institutions (political parties). Was this the case with the FSM? Was it because of their focus on seemingly neglected topics that the FSM was able to transform into a successful political party?

#### **Proposition 4: Lack of trust**

This proposition suggest that it is: *the lack of trust in established institutions and the political parties made way for a new anti-establishment/anti-party movement*. In the section below I will explain and operationalize how this proposition grew out of the two theoretical paths I have chosen to study.

As I discussed in the section on SMT, social movements develop when a feeling of dissatisfaction spreads and the existing institutions are unable to respond (Porta and M. Diani 2006, 13). We know that contentious mobilization can be promoted by emerging divisions within a regime and by cracks in state strength, that again can expand opportunities for

mobilization (Leenders 2013, 275,281). The political opportunities increase. In Italy the public dissatisfaction with especially the political institutions reached a new time high with the economic crisis in 2008 (Norris 2011, 71,74,76). The extreme unemployment that followed, hit the young people hardest of the country. In addition to this was the political system infested with scandal after scandal that opened up the political arena. One could argue that The FSM used this window of opportunity to their advantage and seized the moment to establish as a party in 2009 (Mosca 2014, 36). In the Italian population there has been a rather hopeless view on the honesty and effectiveness of the Italian political system and the general political institutions in general.

Another theoretical view to consider is strain theory. Kriesi (2014, 271) says that strain theory implies that strain and breakdown of standard routines of people's everyday lives have a disruptive effect on individuals, which triggers some sort of collective behavior. It is possible to argue that this could be the case with the Italian society, where people are extremely dissatisfied with the institutions and how they function (Borghetto, De Giorgi, and Lisi 2014, 10). This is something that directly influences the everyday life of the average Italian man and woman. Therefore, we can say they mobilize because of strains in their lives. The strain theory aspect has been a part of the reason for the development of proposition 4. People tend to blame the established political parties for their predicament. The proposition to explore is if the FSM used this feeling to their advantage. Did they play up the things that the old political class and system did wrong, and say that they will change the way things are done? We can however, look at it quite differently. Within my particular case, one could say that this situation (the strain on society) has been a part of the Italian political culture and life for a lengthy period time. Therefore not a good enough reason for social movements to emerge. They are already used to the hardships of life, and therefore it has no impact.

As I discussed in the political theory section, parties often emerge with the goal of replacing or at least as a protest against existing political parties (Hug 2001, 14). The reason for this frustration can be manifold. It can for example be an issue of general mistrust towards the established institutions. The fact is that there has been an erosion of trust in representative democracies. This has been evident especially in Southern Europe, where trust in mainstream political parties and democratic institutions is very low (Luengo, Marín, and Fernández-García 2016, 254). It in fact presents a lower average in the south than for the rest of Western Europe. While in the Southern Europe the mean for the last decade, (2003-2012) is 17.7

percent, in Western Europe the level of confidence is, on average 28.8 percent (Borghetto, De Giorgi, and Lisi 2014, 10).

With this in mind, can we say that proposition 4 is correct, that a corrosion of trust in established institutions facilitated the FSM road from an anti-establishment social movement to a successful political party?

## 3. THE CASE: CONTEXT AND HISTORY

My research question asks *what main factors paved the way for the Five Star Movement to emerge from an anti-establishment social movement to a successful political party*. To understand the Five Star Movement it is necessary to understand the country it originated from. First, I will explore some of Italy's interesting history, look at the political system and the political parties, current political situation and in the end present the movement and its history. I will do all of this with my case in mind and explain how history is influencing the present.

### 3.1 Italy's history

Italy is a paradox. This is because it is a country with a rich culture and history. At the same time, Italy has been characterized by fragmentation and a incapacity to appear united (Cotta and Verzichelli 2016, 13).

#### 3.1.1 "The United Italy"

The united Italy is a young state compared to for example France, Portugal or Spain, but older than Norway, Germany or Greece. The history of Italy began with the consolidation of the different regions to a united Italy in 1861. The transition from many regional states, more or less independent, to a unified country was far from easy. There were huge gaps in both language, economics and social standards between the different regions, and the unification did not do wonders for the integration and feelings of mistrust between the people. The unification was done by elites, for elites, and influenced by the political thinking at the time permeated by nationalist thoughts about nation and state (Cotta and Verzichelli 2016, 32-34). The goal was to make a nation. Have they succeeded?

According to Deutsch (1969) a nation is, "*A group of people united by a mistaken view about the past and a hatred of their neighbours*". The Italian people are not especially proud of their recent past. In the last decade, the past of the Italian people has been painted by war, fascism, corruption and economic crisis. "The hatred of their neighbors" has in some cases become the hatred of "people from the south" (The Northern League), or hatred towards people different from myself. There has always been feelings of us versus them that has marked the Italian political environment. There has been a political manifestation of the big internal divisions in the country ever since unification. The political parties have often used these divides for their own benefit. The parties have played up on feelings as the north versus the south, the rich

(capitalism) versus the poor (workers), fascism versus everyone else, Catholicism versus secularism, and now recently the politicians versus the people. (Cotta and Verzichelli 2016, 37). Why has this been possible?

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the living conditions of the average Italian were not good. Even in the most modern cities, whole families lived in small one-room apartments where they shared the sanitary facilities with other families. Even worse was the level of education. At the beginning of the century 50 percent of the total population illiterate and 70 percent of the illiterate people were in the south. Eventually when the north developed industry, the difference between the developing north and the cliental rural south increased (Wanderlingh 2010, 7-9). The issue of literacy is relevant because it gives us a plausible explanation to why politicians became elites. The people who got involved in politics were traditionally men who came from money, had the necessary education and could benefit from their connections. It became a high-profiled job to do politics, which “ordinary” people could just dream of achieving. This has not changed in Italy, maybe not until the anti-establishment sentiments grew in the Italian population.

### **3.1.2 Political system (party system) and political parties**

To better understand the situation in Italy, it is important to consider the political landscape and especially the political system. Cotta and Verzichelli (2016, 15) says that understanding the political system, is a key requisite to understand many political phenomenon's in general. A party system can be fundamentally defined on the composition of the relevant political parties in a country. It is the more or less stable configuration of political parties which normally compete in national elections. The party system is normally characterized by how many parties there are, what they stand for and their strengths. Parties play an important role in the political game (Heidar and Bakke. 2013, 29, Bale 2005, 105).

The “tardiness” of the Italian unification had a huge influence on the political system. Italy became something of a stamping ground for the bigger countries in the region. Italy needed help from big brother France and more indirectly the United States in military matters. This put Italy in a difficult position internationally and the feeling of inferiority grew. The feeling of inferiority eventually became reflected in the political system. A lot of people wanted to raise the status of Italy. Consequences were among other things, the rise of fascism, failed colonialism and the very unfortunate participation in both of the world wars (Cotta and Verzichelli 2016, 32). History matters when it comes to parties and are certainly an influence on the party system. We can classify different party system on the basis of certain criteria's.

Today Italy is characterized by “polarized multipartyism”. This means that there are lots of parties and a big difference between the most left- and right-wing parties (Bale 2005, 106-107).

### **The First World War and its consequences**

The First World War came and ended and the consequences for Italy both accounting for materialistic values and human lives were devastating. Six million men were at the front lines, six hundred thousand dead and four hundred thousand wounded. If that was not enough just after the war ended, came the Spanish-flu outbreak that killed another six hundred thousand people. More families than not had lost loved ones, unemployment was high and the economy was not promising. The people blamed it on the government (Wanderlingh 2010, 31).

The decline and internal division of the traditional established parties were obvious. The result in the next election was not surprising, but marked a passage to something new. This was the rising of parties that based its support of the masses and not the elites (the Partito Popolare and the Partito Socialista). The main reason for this was that the universal right to vote was extended to men above the age of 21 and the election system was changed to that of proportional representation just before the election in 1919 (Berntzen 2013, 268-269). It was a political landslide, surprisingly the new parties managed to have the majority in parliament elected in 1919 which people considered positive, but at the same time we experienced the birth of the nationalist movement. The parliament was divided into fractions, the old parties and the new. One of the consequences were a highly unstable political environment with short lived governments. Another consequence was that the Fascist Party (il Partito Nazionale Fascista) seized the rising opportunity to gain more influence, after just getting 35 out of 535 seats in the parliament in the election of 1921. Only after a few months, they became one of the main political actors (Cotta and Verzichelli 2016, 45).

The devastating consequences of the First World War, The Spanish Flu, internal division in established parties, the short lived governments all led to a general feeling of frustration in the Italian population. The distrust towards the established grew. In this environment there was a movement growing. Benito Mussolini played up on the people’s frustration and distrust towards the establishment. His movement soon gained support, and it eventually became known as the Fascist party.



## **Fascism**

The March on Rome forced the appointment of Mussolini as the prime minister in October of 1922. This was actually done within the “legal” boundaries of democracy. Soon the Fascists got tired of playing by the rules. The Fascist party had little trouble taking over, much because of the inability of the other parties to agree and cooperate with each other. In fact, The Fascist Party did not have plurality in government. Nevertheless, the existing parties could not agree to ask a vote of distrust towards Mussolini. Even if they discussed it to greater lengths (Cotta and Verzichelli 2016, 46). In consequence, by 1925 the Fascist Party managed to illegalize all parties opposing them. The Fascist dictatorship was thus established (Berntzen 2013, 269).

Through the following years “Il Duce” managed to consolidate his regime. He liberated himself and his party progressively from the traditional ways of doing politics and “invented” a new form of political construction. One of the main aspects of the new construction was that the role of the leader was absolute and central to all things concerning the nation. Mussolini was the Head of Government, the Head of State and the undisputed leader of the Fascist Party throughout the period of the Fascist regime (Cotta and Verzichelli 2016, 46).

If we are quite bold we could compare him to Grillo at present times, as the undisputed leader of the FSM. He was the founder, he is the head of their organization and he has almost a cult-like status within the group itself. For those in Italy who still remember or know enough of history to understand what happened when the Fascist regime took hold of the nation agree. The rising of a new anti-establishment movement with a strong leader can be rather frightening. The focus on “making everything better” by getting rid of the established is much of the same rhetoric that was used back then. I am not suggesting that the FSM would take over government and do the same as the Fascist party did. But the prospect of one party taking a hold over politics, with a charismatic leader and a “hidden” internal democracy is something one has to consider. The things that happened in the past may happen again. It is relevant to consider this because what really lies behind peoples support may not change that much.

Back to history, after decades with propaganda, coadaptation, violence and the terrible consequences of the Second World War, the Fascist regime began to crumble. Mussolini had gone into the war with bold promises. He had proudly proclaimed that the Italian nation would sit at the winners table and retake their pride. Which was considered lost in the aftermath of the First World War (Cotta and Verzichelli 2016, 48). But it did not quite work out as he had hoped. The Allies efforts to free Italy between 1943-1945 led to the fall of the

fascist regime and prepared the country for the following transition to democracy. In 1946 following a referendum, Italy became a republic. During the same year, the republic held its first parliamentary election. In 1948, a new democratic constitution was enacted (Berntzen 2013, 269).

### **3.1.3 After the Second World War – The First Republic**

The year 1948 marked the beginning of what we today call the first republic. The period of the first republic is also called “The blocked” epoch of Italian democracy (Cotta and Verzichelli 2016, 48). This period the politics were dominated by one single party, so there was little alternation of power. The Christian Democrats and their allies monopolized power up until 1981, when they had to for the first time share the responsibilities of being in government with someone else (Berntzen 2013, 268).

#### **The Influence of Religion**

The Catholic Church is strong in Italy and has been since the Vatican was founded. When Italy became united, the Catholic Church was in opposition to the new political liberal regime. They wanted to stagnate the state’s secularization. They had a lot of support in different segments of the Italian population. One example of the Catholic Church trying to fight the progress back was a papal decree from 1874 (*Non expedit*), that explicitly encouraged people to refrain from participating in politics at the national level. We had to wait to 1913 before The Catholics returned to politics when the current pope opened for participation. Following this in 1919, the first religious inspired party was founded, *Il Partito Popolare* which immediately became the second biggest party in the political system (Cotta and Verzichelli 2016, 35). The difficult relationship between the Catholic Church and the state was not resolved before the Fascist regime offered to sign the *Patti lateranensi* (treaty) in 1929. The treaty guaranteed the catholic church a little bit of territorial sovereignty (the Vatican) and solved the financial problems that occurred after the unification process (Cotta and Verzichelli 2016, 36).

To prove the importance of the Catholic Church to the average Italian, it’s enough to remember that in the first forty years of the republic (post WWII). This religion-based party, The Christian Democrats, was the largest political actor in the Italian political system. The Christian Democrats dominated Italian governments in these years. This political hegemony ended in 1981 (Cotta and Verzichelli 2016, 36).

### **3.1.4 The Parties and the Political Situation in the after 1981**

It is important for the understanding of the political situation today to trace back the steps of the electoral and political situation in the Italian contemporary history. What “caused” the surprising electoral result of 2013?

In the late 80 and 90’s a new political movement based on regionalist thoughts developed the political scene. *Lega Nord* (The Northern League) based in the industrial regions of Piedmont, Lombardia and Veneto wanted a drastic reorganization of the map of Italy. Their rhetoric was hard against other parts of Italy that they perceived was taking their money and resources without giving anything back. Their success must be seen in relation to the decline of the *Democrazia Cristiana* (DC) in these regions. The *Lega Nord* (LN) represented a divide in Italian politics based on territoriality, and other parties soon followed. La Lega Nord was based in the north, the Communist Party (*Partito democratico della sinistra*) in the center and the DC in the south (Cotta and Verzichelli 2016, 40).

### **3.1.5 The Second Republic and the Tangentopoli Scandal**

The second republic began in the aftermath of the Tangentopoli scandal in 1991, when the major part of the big political actors were accused and convicted for corruption. The scandal led to a political landslide. Many of the traditional political actors disappeared or reinvented themselves to cope with a new and even more distrustful political landscape. The crisis hit hardest on the two parties that traditionally had alternated government power. The Christian Democrats support reduced from 34.3 to 5.8 in the period from 1987 to 1996. The Socialist Party which previously had an election result of 14.3 percent, totally vanished by 1996, and the leader had gone in exile (Hjellum 2010, 73).

Tangentopoli is an Italian term that we in English can translate to something like ‘Bribes Ville’. It is supposed to describe the omnipresent corruption present in the Italian political system exposed in 1992-96 by a series of judicial investigations called the ‘Clean Hands’ project (Diamanti 2014, 14). We call it omnipresent because almost all the existing established political parties had something to do with it. Many prominent politicians were prosecuted and the party system imploded (Conti and Memoli 2015, 528). We still see repercussions of this crisis even in today’s politics. Party failure is particularly strong in Italy, and this may be associated with the long-term attitudes of “anti-partyism” and the legacy of the crisis of the party system experienced during the 1990s (Borghetto, De Giorgi, and Lisi

2014, 11). The same anti-partyism that is being used by the FSM to increase their electoral ability today.

### **The Berlusconi Era**

The LN(The Northern League) had participated in the election in 1992 and received then 9 percent of the votes (Hjellum 2010, 73). In 1993 and 1994 when the Christian Democrats and other established parties collapsed, the LN managed to make their mark in the new bipartisan system and their goal of more power to the regions seemed in reach. Questions on federalism became something on the agenda. Even the center-left had to take it seriously. There was a devolution of power from the center government to the regions (Cotta and Verzichelli 2016, 40-41).

The election of 1994 was won by a center-right coalition led by Silvio Berlusconi. His party Forza Italia (FI) got 21 percent votes and became the largest party of the election. It was not enough to take power, so FI allied themselves with LN and another more controversial party. The last collaboration partner was the new fascist party (Alleanza Nazionale) led by Gianfranco Fini. This party wanted to carry on the legacy after Mussolini which they considered as their mentor and the greatest politician of the last century (Hjellum 2010, 73-74). Because of the extreme heterogeneity of the alliance, the government lasted only seven months. A technocratic executive replaced it (Borghetto, De Giorgi, and Lisi 2014, 9).

In 1996 the center-left coalition, led by Romano Prodi won the election. It was a narrow victory. Berlusconi and his alliance had gotten 46 percent of the total votes, but this was not enough to take power (Hjellum 2010, 74).

In the election of 2001, the center-right forces won the election and formed a new government. For the first time, there had been an incumbent government that had competed for power with an identified and alternative opposition. The 2001 election was the start of Silvio Berlusconi's reign over Italy. His first government lasted until the end of the legislature. The 2006 election was fought on the basis of a new electoral law, but ended up giving a narrow victory to the center-left coalition led by Romano Prodi. The senate majority was a fragile one, and lasted only two years. The election of 2008 marked a peak of the bipolarization in the Italian political system. The center-left against the center-right. The result of the election was that Berlusconi and his party, the PDL could rely on the largest political majority ever formed in the republican history. The coalition included only one other

partner, The Lega Nord (LN) (Borghetto, De Giorgi, and Lisi 2014, 9). Even though the starting point for the new government was promising, problems soon appeared.

### **The Economic Crisis and its Consequences**

The economic and financial crisis has taken its toll on all the Southern European countries. Italy was one of the European countries that were hit hardest by the international economic crisis of 2007. The costs were not only economic but also political. Austerity measures are unpopular and so naturally is the government who has to implement them. In 2011 the Italian prime minister resigned (Berlusconi), leading to a government crisis and their replacement (Borghetto, De Giorgi, and Lisi 2014, 4-6). Many attributes caused the premature resignation of Berlusconi. It was in fact a combination of the international economic crisis, internal problems in the main governing party (the PDL), personal scandals of the PM, political corruption and maladministration (Borghetto, De Giorgi, and Lisi 2014, 9). The fall of the last Berlusconi government marked the end of an era in Italian politics, and started the transition from the Second to the Third Republic (Bordignon and Ceccarini 2013, 428).

#### **3.1.6 The Beginning of the Third Republic**

In November 2011, a new parliamentary majority decided to support a technocratic government with Mario Monti as the prime minister. The new government lasted until December 2012 and a new general election was held in February 2013 (Borghetto, De Giorgi, and Lisi 2014, 6). Many expected the election to deliver a stable left-of-center government, but this hope was betrayed by the actual results, as illustrated below. The PD's coalition came first with almost 30 percent of the votes. Berlusconi's PDL performed solidly, and was only half a percentage point behind. The real surprise was the FSM, which performed beyond anyone's expectations (Turner 2013, 188).

The general election in 2013 expressed a strong demand for a change and renewal in politics and was characterized by deep transformation in electoral behavior (Bordignon and Ceccarini 2015, 456). One of the indicators was that the new and eclectic political movement led by Beppe Grillo, after the election represented more than one fourth of voters at the national level (Borghetto, De Giorgi, and Lisi 2014, 18).

### The Italian election results of 2013

<b>Coalition Name</b>	<b>Main Component Parties</b>	<b>Percentage of Votes in Chamber of Deputies</b>	<b>Number of Seats in Chamber of Deputies</b>	<b>Percentage of Votes in Senate</b>	<b>Number of Seats in Senate</b>
Common Good (Centre-Left)	Democratic Party, Left Ecology Freedom, Democratic Centre, South Tyrolean People's Party	29.54%	345	31.63%	113
Centre-Right	People of Freedom, Northern League, The Right, Pensioners' Party	29.18%	125	30.71%	116
Five Star Movement	Five Star Movement	25.55%	109	23.79%	54
With Monti for Italy	Civic Choice, Union of the Centre, Future and freedom	10.56%	47	9.13%	18
Civil Revolution	Italy of Values, Federa-tion of the Left, Federa-tion of the Greens	2.25%	0	1.79%	0
Act to Stop the Decline	Act to Stop the Decline	1.12%	0	0.90%	0

Italian 2013 Parliamentary Election Results. Data: Ministero degli Interni, 2013. Collected from: (Turner 2013, 188-189)

### 3.2 The current situation and the impact of the 2013 election



The logo of the Five Star Movement  
Collected the 12.10.16 from:  
[http://www.beppegrillo.it/2016/02/da\\_oggi\\_si\\_usa\\_il\\_nuovo\\_simbolo\\_d  
el\\_movimento\\_5\\_stelle.html](http://www.beppegrillo.it/2016/02/da_oggi_si_usa_il_nuovo_simbolo_del_movimento_5_stelle.html)

Due to the success of the anti-party FSM at the election in 2013 it caused a crisis in the Italian political system. Because of the election results, the political system evolved from bipolar to a tripolar competition. In this election we can say that the FSM challenged the very notion of political identification and competition between parties on a left and right axis (Bordignon and Ceccarini 2015, 454). It's no question that they, by their very existence, changed the political game in a way that hadn't been done since the

breakdown of the first republic. The FSM succeeded in breaking down traditional, frozen electoral blocks, producing an unprecedented electoral mobility. In fact 40 per cent of the voters changed their chosen parties between the election in 2008 to the election in 2013, which makes it the highest electoral volatility in the history of the Italian Republic (Bordignon and Ceccarini 2015, 459-460, Borghetto, De Giorgi, and Lisi 2014, 17).

It was not only Grillo and his FSM that began to shine after the 2013 election. Matteo Renzi a young new politician from Florence, quickly became the new star of Italian politics. He became the leader of the PD and later the Prime Minister in Italy. Why do I mention this? Because Renzi is actually crucial to the evolution of the FSM. He is the most dangerous competitor for Grillo and the FSM. His public image has enabled him to appeal to a wide cross-section of the electorate, his popularity even among the center-right and the FSM voters. He expresses without being radical, the anti-political attitude that has become widespread in Italy. In the European election of 2014 the competition between the two leaders and the parties bloomed. There was a strong expectation that the FSM would win the election. The result which placed the FSM as the second largest party, was therefore a result that was considered a defeat for the FSM. Renzi and the PD got an amazing election result of 40,8 percent. This put them in a position of strength that could have consequences not only for the government but also for the evolution of the political system (Bordignon and Ceccarini 2015, 460-462).

### **3.3 The Five Star Movement: from popular blog to political party**

First in this section, I will explain how the Five Star Movement (FSM) came to be. Then I will take you on a tour on how they developed and in the end discuss a bit on their impact on Italian politics. It is important to underline that the FSM is an extraordinary example of how fast it is possible for a party to grow and develop. In fact within less than four years since its foundation, it became the single most voted for party in Italy (Bordignon and Ceccarini 2015, 454).

#### **3.3.1 The FSM as a movement: new forms of mobilization strategies**

The Five Star Movement rose from a very unstable and deprived political environment. The founder and leader of the

Movement, the popular satirical comedian Beppe Grillo had since the 1980s criticized the political system through every media channel and method he managed (Mosca 2014, 40). By the 2000s he was an experienced and well known actor and standup comedian. He was famous for his abrasive style and at times controversial arguments (Turner 2013, 180).

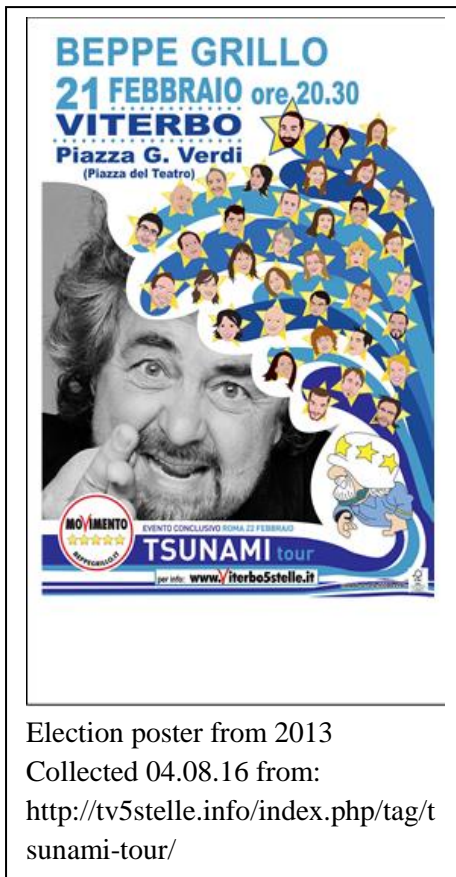


Beppe Grillo and Gianroberto Casaleggio  
Collected 04.08.16 from:  
[http://www.beppegrillo.it/2012/05/honi\\_soit\\_qui\\_mal\\_y\\_pense.html](http://www.beppegrillo.it/2012/05/honi_soit_qui_mal_y_pense.html)

The FSM came to existence in 2004 after Grillo meet with Gianroberto Casaleggio, a well-known communications director. They shared the same beliefs that the political system and the media was depraved and needed change. They realized after talking together that they could benefit from each other. Casaleggio persuaded Grillo that using technology was the way to go. (Mosca 2014, 40). In 2005 Grillo founded his own blog, ‘[www.beppegrillo.it](http://www.beppegrillo.it), which



enjoyed rapid success, gaining viewership which in the early days was much higher than that



Election poster from 2013  
Collected 04.08.16 from:  
<http://tv5stelle.info/index.php/tag/tsunami-tour/>

of Italy's main political party websites, and, more surprisingly, higher than those of Italy's main newspapers. It thus became the most visited political forum in Italy (Turner 2013, 180, 2012, 215). After a year the blog ended up being tenth in the world out of 50 million blogs, with 200,000 visitors a day (De Maria, Fleischner, and Targia 2008, 16).

The FSM used Twitter and Facebook to spread what was posted in the blog. They had a sort of anti-television attitude, so therefore they created their own YouTube channel where they reproduce and live-stream various events and meetings (Bordignon and Ceccarini 2015, 463). The internet was also important to mobilize and organize followers. By using a Meetup system they could organize local activists in groups to further foster their interest and involvement. Today there are almost

3000 FSM Meetup groups, totaling 300,000 members (Bordignon and Ceccarini 2015, 464).

### 3.3.2 The FSM as a political party

The Five Star Movement is a populist anti-system party that campaigns direct democracy, free use of the internet and condemn corruption in Italian politics. They are Eurosceptic and oppose the Euro. The main goal of the FSM had always be to bring "ordinary" people into the political institutions (Bordignon and Ceccarini 2015, 456-457). According to Diamanti (2014, 13) the most important characteristics of the FSM are, in particular, the open criticism of elites and the ruling classes (the true enemies of the people); the central role of the leader (Grillo); a direct relationship between the leader and his people; and the use of a language and style of communication that is explicitly provocative and "anti-political". I will discuss these later in the thesis.

In the general election of February 2013 The FSM became the most voted for political party in Italy. The party gained 25.6 of the total votes (Conti and Memoli 2015, 516-517, Berntzen 2013, 278, Turner 2013) and succeeded in sending a total of 163 representatives to the chamber of deputies and the senate. Its 8 million votes were collected across the whole peninsula and from the whole political spectrum. This result was astonishing, and came as a

real surprise to most political scientists. The FSM progress actually marked the greatest electoral expansion of any party in recent times (Diamanti 2014, 5, Borghetto, De Giorgi, and Lisi 2014, 18)! The extraordinary success of their electoral campaign (The Tsunami Tour) before the election in 2013, becomes very apparent when we consider their electoral progress in numbers. In the first months of 2012, the FSM had an estimated support of 4 percent of the electorate. Between March and April this number doubled. Then, at the Sicilian elections in October 2012, the FSM became the largest party in the region (15 percent). The support decreased a bit at the end of 2012, following Silvio Berlusconi's 'return' to politics. However during their electoral campaign in February 2013, the Movement managed to overcome all obstacles and ended up on a surprising electoral result as the largest single party in the general election of 2013 (Diamanti 2014, 5).

Some things that are interesting to note is for example that the FSM became the political force with the most even distribution of the vote, making it the first genuinely 'national' party. Another aspect about them is their ability to draw voters from across the traditional political spectra. It became a 'catch-all' party, extending its electoral base towards the center-right without losing votes of those oriented to the left (Diamanti 2014, 9).



### 3.3.3 Why are the FSM so special? Why is it interesting to study them?

There is no doubt that The Movement Grillo founded has become the most successful political entity of recent years. As mentioned previously it experienced between 2012 and 2013 the greatest electoral expansion of any party in recent times (Diamanti 2014, 5). The FSM are a political novelty with regard to several aspects. Bordignon and Ceccarini (2015,

455) talks about four basic elements that have helped the FSM to gain interest even on an international scale:

(1) The challenge the party poses to representative democracy. They advocate for a more “pure” form of democracy. A direct and un-mediated democracy developing from the grassroots and the internet. This is something of a novelty, but it has received a lot of criticism for its execution by the party itself. Internal democracy is still lacking. The system of the online voting is not yet optimized and the “leaders” of the party still have a lot of power (Bordignon and Ceccarini 2015:464).

(2) The post-ideological nature of the party. The FSM claims to be categorized as “beyond” the traditional party’s categories - especially the left-right division and the tendency of mainstream parties to form a single “cartel”. They have actually quite succeeded in this tactic by receiving votes from both traditional left and traditional right voters. The FSM thus became a “catch-all” party in the election of 2013 (Diamanti 2014, 9).

(3) The next one regards its organization, which proposes an unusual hybrid between new and old party models. Like that, it combines horizontal elements (the movement) and vertical ones (the strong leadership with a high concentration of power). Historically the FSM had been a promoter of bottom-up democracy. This type of democracy aims at turning citizens into the protagonists of politics, rather than the audience. Initially the movement tried to achieve this by rather “traditional” means of protest. For example, they gathered signatures in support of a proposed referendum. After some time the FSM developed their own idea of democracy, which was much more direct. It implies the submission of every political decision, regarding either specific cases or ideology, to the web. The “utopia” of the party became a digitalized direct democracy where everything is decided by the people (Bordignon and Ceccarini 2015, 456).

(4) The strong anti-system character of its rhetoric and its struggle against what it calls the “two castes” – the elites of parties and the traditional media. This has created a feeling of an us versus them, that many political scientists feels resemble populism. It has also been a part of lifting the peoples distrust towards the established political tradition. Which I will discuss later.

### **3.4 What have we learned?**

What have we learned from In this chapter I have explored some of Italy's interesting history, looked at the political system and the political parties, the current political situation and in the end presented the FSM and its history. I have discussed and presented the Italian history with my case in mind and I have tried to explain how history is always an influence on the present. In the next chapter I will present how I choose to go about studying my chosen case. Which method did I use and why?

## 4. METHOD: HOW AND WHY

In this section I will explain my choices regarding method. What method did I choose to use and why? What implications did it have for my actual results? In the end of the chapter, I will talk about my experiences conducting research and finally evaluate my own efforts. My study is a research exploration into the world of social science. Social sciences are scientific studies of human action focusing on elements of thought and behavior that are in some degree social. The goal of science is to discover new things about the world and to appraise the truth-value of extant propositions about the world (Gerring 2012, 27).

The most important thing when doing research is to have a well thought out plan. I have studied theory extensively and used my findings as a starting point into a qualitative case study with semi-structured interviews in the field, as my main data-gathering method. I have interviewed political commentators, journalists, academics and people who have been involved in the making of The Five Star Movement. How did I conclude that this was the best method for my study?

### 4.1 Qualitative versus Quantitative method

There is a never-ending debate on which method is “the best”. The world of political science can rarely agree on anything and especially not this question. There exist a never-ending cleavage between those who comfortable with statistical analysis and mathematical models, the “quants” and those who prefer time-honored expedients of informal logic and natural language, the “quals”. The two different roads of research have developed different languages and different approaches to their topics. They are normally either arguing or ignoring each other (Gerring 2012, 4). The constant bickering that we find is useless and not conducive for furthering the field. There are evidently many good ways to do social research. Methods may be statistical or non-statistical, large-N or small-N, historical or non-historical, and so forth. Theories may be useful for one project, and useless for another. “*What road you choose must depend on the nature of the evidence available and the nature of the question under investigation*” (Gerring 2012, 5-6). Qualitative and quantitative methods are not simply different ways of doing the same thing. They have different strengths and logics and often address different kinds of questions and goals (Maxwell 2013, 29). Quantitative researchers tend to be interested in whether and to what extent *variance* in  $x$  causes variance in  $y$ . Qualitative researchers, tend to ask *how*  $x$  plays a role in causing  $y$ , what the *process* is that

connects  $x$  and  $y$  (Maxwell 2013, 31). This is exactly why I choose the qualitative path as the right one for my line of inquiry. My research wanted to explore *what main factors can make an anti-establishment social movement transition to become a political party*. I developed from my study of theory four propositions that could have had an influence on the successful emergence from a movement to a party. I wanted to find out how Proposition 1 ( $x$ ) plays a role in causing the transition ( $y$ ), how Proposition 2 plays a role, and so on. The nature of my question suggested that I should use qualitative research. Most researchers agree that we conduct qualitative research when there is a problem or issue that needs to be explored.

The next for me was that I needed to consider the evidence available for me to respond to the research question. I found that the case study method would be the most conducive for my line of inquiry. The reason is that I wanted to do an explanatory in-depth study of a case I considered relevant for my theoretical discussion. I choose the Five Star Movement in Italy. My final research question became: *what main factors paved the way for the Five Star Movement to transition from an anti-establishment social movement to a successful political party?* Because of the newness of the chosen case (the FSM), there was little quantitative or qualitative data available. This again confirmed that it would be something new, and that the case study could lead to furthering of a theoretical field. I decided I wanted to combine existing empirical writings with my own data. Data collected in the field, by semi-structural interview with people I considered elites.

Could I have done a combination of the two methods to improve my validity? To be sure that my study actually measure what it's supposed to measure. Mixed methods in both quantitative and qualitative approaches have become more and more common and needed to contribute to complete and enlightening research (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree 2006, 320). I have considered the possibility of using statistics and other quantitative material in my project, but I concluded they were not developed enough for my case and it would be too time consuming to make myself. However it would rather have been a fine addition to the project at a later stage, or for someone else to do at a later stage. I have illustrated in my discussion part some of my main finding with quantitative data collected from the Eurobarometer, I consider this only like a taste and illustration on how qualitative data can be used, without really using it properly.

## 4.2 Qualitative method

I have chosen to do qualitative research. What does this entail? Most researchers agree that we conduct qualitative research when there is a problem or issue that needs to be explored. Sometimes we conduct qualitative research because we need a complex, detailed understanding of the issue. This detail can only be established by talking directly to people, and allowing them to tell their stories uninfluenced by what we expect to find or what we have read in the literature (Creswell 2013, 48). This is also true when it comes to my own research. I wanted to come to “the bottom” of a phenomenon by questioning the people who have had dealings with, knowledge of or being a part of it.

A good way to start any discussion about a subject is to propose a definition of it. Creswell (2013, 44) has proposed a description of what the qualitative method really is:

*“Qualitative research begins with assumptions and the use of interpretive/theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is both inductive and deductive and establishes patterns or themes. The final written report or presentation includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and its contribution to the literature or a call for change”.*

As is shown above Creswell (2013, 45-47) describes several common characteristics of qualitative research which I agree with and will hereby discuss in relation to my study: The first thing he mentions is the importance of a *natural setting*. I have conducted interviews in the respondent’s environment, by talking and interviewing them directly. The strength of this kind of data, is the fact that I myself have collected it. It is first-hand information. The weakness is the same. We as qualitative researchers often collect data in the field at the place where participants experience the issue or problem the researcher studies. Qualitative researchers gather up-close information by actually talking to the people directly and seeing them behave and act within their context. They do not bring individuals into a lab.

The second aspect of the description is *the researcher as key instrument*. How I behave, my own understanding and my background may influence the respondents behavior and “corrupt” the data material, on the other hand I get to experience everything myself and make my own judgments. The data I collect becomes first-hand information. The important thing is that the

qualitative researcher collects data themselves through examining documents, observing behavior, and interviewing participants. The third aspect of the description is the importance of *Multiple methods*. My own data-gathering does mainly focus on my interviews, but I know the importance of using additional data, therefore I use empirical writings to support my claims. Qualitative researchers typically gather multiple forms of data, such as interviews, observations, and documents, rather than relying on a single data source. This is the very backbone of doing qualitative research. When the data is collected the task that remains is to review all the data and make sense of it (Creswell 2013, 45, 52). The fourth aspect is *Participants' meanings*. The whole point with a doing research is to gather other people's opinions, knowledge and feelings about what you study. As I have done by doing in-depth interviews with my respondents. In the entire qualitative research process, the researchers have to keep a focus on learning the meaning that the participants feel about the problem or issue, not the meanings that the researcher bring or the writers from literature. The fifth aspect *Emergent design*. It is important that the research process is emergent. It was very important for me to be able to be flexible in my research process, and I think this focus has helped me land on the best possible method for my study. The initial plan for research in a qualitative perspective cannot be tightly prescribed. All the phases of the process may change. My own experience supports this. Creswell also talks about (2013, 47) the issue of *reflexivity*. It means that is important to inform the respondents of my background and goal with the research. The last aspect is the *Holistic account*. I will throughout the thesis try to see the bigger picture, try to identify the complex interactions of factors, and generally sketching the larger picture that emerges. A goal for qualitative researchers is to try to develop a complex picture of the problem or issue under study.

In this section I have explored what doing a qualitative study entails. In the next section I will explore the challenges facing a researcher when using different types of method.

#### **4.2.1 Challenges facing the researcher concerning method**

There are many of possible challenges that one has to face when doing research. I will in this section go through the most important ones related to my own study. The first challenge with qualitative studies I consider, has to do with the selection of the respondents, and is called the "key informant bias" (Pelto and G.Pelto 1975, 7). Qualitative researchers sometimes rely on a small number of informants for a major part of their data, even when these informants are purposefully selected and the data themselves seem valid, there is no guarantee that these informants' views are typical (Maxwell 2013, 99-100). This is something I need to take into



consideration. My own pool of informants are seven people, which is not enough people to claim generalizability, but is enough to look at the tendencies of their responses and compare them to each other and existing empirical information. I selected these informants strategically, after my own view on who might hold the information needed. I contacted multiple people, but only about 1/3 of the people I contacted responded to my request. There is no such guarantee that views of my respondents are typical. If the pool of my respondents had been switched out with another 1/3 maybe I would have gotten a different result altogether.

#### **a) Validity**

Another issue to consider regards validity. Validity looks at whether a researcher has measured what the research is supposed to measure (Walcott 1995, 169). This is also relevant for my study. I have taken this into consideration when carefully developing both my research question and my interview questions. Questions on validity are often distinguished according to those that are *Internal* to the sample under study and those that are *external* (Gerring 2007, 43). Internal generalizability is a key issue for qualitative case studies; the validity of the conclusions of a case depends on their internal generalizability to the case as a whole. Internal generalizability refers to the generalizability of a conclusion *within* the case. External generalizability refers to its generalizability *beyond* that case (Maxwell 2013, 137). Case study research suffers problems of representativeness because it includes, by definition, only a small number of cases of some more general phenomenon. Therefore is my research, my case study weak with respect to external validity (Gerring 2007, 43). But not when it comes to internal validity, which is not a problem. My case study is explanatory and internal validity is mainly a concern for explanatory case studies. Explanatory case studies is when an investigator is trying to explain how and why event  $x$  led to event  $y$ . If the researcher incorrectly concludes that there is a causal relationship between  $x$  and  $y$  without knowing that some third factor –  $z$  – may actually have caused  $y$ , the research design has failed. It is as said, not possible to guarantee that I have not missed some important reasons ( $x$ ) on how and why something ( $y$ ) happened. I have tried to minimize this possibility by doing extensive study of theory, then in the discussion I propose a fifth reason that appeared as viable when the research progressed.

Another aspect of internal validity concerns the problem of making inferences. A case study involves an inference every time an event cannot be directly observed. An investigator will “infer” that a particular event resulted from some earlier occurrence, based on interview and

documentary evidence collected as a part of the study. Is the inference correct? Have all the rival explanations and possibilities been considered (Yin 2014, 47)? It has been said that “perhaps the single most serious problem with qualitative research... is the pervasive failure to provide reasonable estimates of the uncertainty of the investigator’s inferences” (King, O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba 1994, 32). This is the tradeoff by doing qualitative work. As Maxwell (2013, 30) puts it “strength of qualitative research derive from a process orientation towards the world, and the inductive approach, focuses on specific situations or people, and emphasis on description rather than numbers”. The focus here is on insight and in-depth knowledge, rather than the ability to make waterproof inferences.

#### **b) Reliability**

The last issue I want to take a closer look at is the question of reliability. This is not a problem for me. Because of my respondents willingness to have their name open I have secured this thesis reliability. Reliability is the ability to be sure that, if a later researcher follows the same procedures as described by myself as a researcher and conducts the same case study over again, the later investigator should arrive at the same findings and conclusions. The goal of reliability is to minimize the errors and biases in a study (Yin 2014, 48-49). My respondents names are out in the open and I quote the articles and books I use for the empirical analysis. The only thing I cannot guarantee is that my own understanding will be the same as the next person, if someone should try and do the same research all over again. To finish of this discussion on the challenges facing researcher. I will say that even though many researchers approach qualitative work, and especially the case study research with extreme caution (Gerring 2007, 6), the world of scientific research (and my own world) would have been lesser without it.

### **4.3 The Case Study Method**

I choose to do a case study because it was most beneficial for my research question. I will explain why in the section below. I will repeat my research question, so it is easier to understand my reasoning. My research question: *what main factors facilitated the FSM’s transition from an anti-establishment social movement to a successful political party?*

It is quite easy to call a work that focuses its attention on a single example of a broader phenomenon as “only” a case study. It is often described as having loosely framed and non-generalizable theories, biased case selection, informal and undisciplined research designs,

weak empirical leverage (too many variables and too few cases), subjective conclusions, non-replicability and causal determinism. However doing case studies would be the preferred method in situations when (1) the main research questions are “how” and “why” questions; (2) a researcher has little or no control over behavioral events; and (3) the focus of study is a contemporary (as opposed to entirely historical) phenomenon (Yin 2014, 2). I argue that I want to find out “how” the FSM managed to transition from an anti-establishment social movement to a political party, by looking at the factors that mostly contributed to it. My focus is contemporary because this phenomenon is something very much connected to aspects of the current Italian political realm. Case studies are generally empirical inquiries that investigate a contemporary phenomenon (the “case”) in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be evident. So you would want to do case studies if you want to understand a real-world case and assume that this understanding is likely to involve important contextual conditions important to your case (Yin 2014, 16). The product of a good case study is insight (Gerring 2007, 7). My goal by doing a case study of the FSM is to gain insight into two theoretical paths, while give my view on how to explain the transition of an anti-establishment social movement to a political party.

Gerring (2007, 19, 2012, 410) defines a case as “a spatially delimited phenomenon observed at a single point in time over some period of time, for example, a political or social group, institution, or event”. My case is both a social group and a political one that has existed over a single point in time. Therefore, we can definitely define it as a case. A typical case is one that exhibits traits that are judged to be highly representative of the phenomenon of interest (Gerring 2012, 52). The archetypical case for students of political science is the nation-state. However, the study of smaller social and political units (regions, cities, social, groups) or specific institutions (interest groups, businesses or *political parties*) is equally common (Gerring 2007, 19)

Hug (2001, 70) is a prominent researcher that speaks very highly of case studies as a preferred method when studying the formation of political parties. Most case studies have a descriptive focus and want to illuminate the particularities of the party that is studied. Hug says that the properties of a methodological case study are very valuable contributions to the research on political parties. The most important advantage of case studies is their ability to pinpoint details that are often neglected by other more general methods of studies (Hug 2001, 71). Case studies are best if you want to know real in depth knowledge of something. Hug is

focusing on formation of political parties, which explains why case studies are the best approach for my own study. A part of the case study's unique strength is its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence – documents, interviews and observations – beyond what might be available in another method (Yin 2014, 12). I have just discussed the strengths of doing a case study. To strengthen a case study's reliability you could do a case study with a perspective where you compare different or similar cases.

### **4.3.1 The Comparative Method**

In this section I want to point out a weakness with my own research, namely that I did not compare my case with other similar cases. I did not do a comparison based on large macrosocial units (two or more political parties in different countries). It is always interesting to do a comparison with another similar case in a similar political environment. Comparison provides a basis for making statements about empirical regularities and for evaluating and interpreting cases (Ragin 1987, 1). An example for a comparison between the FSM and another case could be the *Podemos* party in Spain or *Syriza* in Greece. Spain, Greece and Italy have similar political traditions, history and cultures. A comparison like this would have illustrated my puzzle further and been a research project with more quality and resonance. I think that Podemos has a lot in common with the FSM, especially when it comes to *how* they managed to mobilize (the method used). They both used new media (Elstad 2015). I would also say that all three of them were building their parties on populist thoughts about radical changes in their political systems; out with the corrupted old and in with the new.

If I had the time I would have done a comparison between these three parties. In the end, because of my limited resources and time I choose to focus on the Five Star Movement. I in fact choose to do a within case comparison of a phenomenon across time. I look at the FSM both before, in the transition and after it became a fully-fledged political party. By not doing a more extensive comparison between cases I had the opportunity to be more thorough in regards to my own case. I will test the propositions that grew out of the theory discussion against empirical findings and my own gathered data material, and try to make light inferences about which factors are most influential when an anti-establishment social movement succeeds in the transition to a political party. It is not possible to exclude the relevance of my findings for other similar cases; my study can therefore be used as a starting point for a case driven comparative analysis, at a later stage.

## **4.4 Gathering data: empirical insight and interviews in the field**

I will in this section explain how I gathered the data I use. I will focus on problems, issues, ethical considerations and then evaluate my own efforts.

### **4.4.1. Empirical information (documents)**

The empirical information I use in this thesis originates mostly from articles, news articles and books written about my case. I will use this empirical information to discuss the propositions together with quotes from my interviews.

### **4.4.2 Doing fieldwork**

I have chosen to do fieldwork because it is the only way of the gathering the data I need to answer my research question. I get the in-depth insights of people relevant to my research on the FSM. Data I otherwise would not have gotten, if I did a quantitative study. However, a weakness with this approach is the role of the researcher as key instrument. How I behave, my own understanding and my background may influence the respondent's behavior and "corrupt" the data material. Another issue has to do with the selection of the respondents, the "key informant bias" (Pelto and G.Pelto 1975, 7). Qualitative researchers sometimes rely on a small number of informants for a major part of their data, even when these informants are purposefully selected and the data themselves seem valid, there is no guarantee that these informants' views are typical. Even though there are some weaknesses with this approach I consider it the right one for my study. Now I have talked a bit about why I choose to do fieldwork, but what does it mean?

Walcott (1995, 12) says that fieldwork refers to a form of inquiry in which one immerses oneself personally in the ongoing social activities of some individual or group for the purposes of research. Well, doing a fieldwork where one immerses oneself into it takes a lot of time and resources. I have restricted my own fieldwork to half an hour meetings (interviews) with my respondents. I do not see how I would have managed to do more. I gathered my data in the time I had available. One sure thing is that fieldwork is a time for gathering data, and I did do fieldwork. Walcott (1995, 63) underlines that Fieldwork includes everything one does from the beginning to completion of a field-based study. One of the characteristics of fieldwork is that much field research is dependent on one person's perception of the field situation at a given point in time, that the perception is shaped both by personality and by the nature of the interaction with the researched, and that this makes the

researcher his or her own “research instrument” (Punch 1986, 12, 1994, 84). The reactions of the researcher will tell us something of crucial importance about the nature of the phenomenon that he or she is studying. I discuss the importance of the researcher as his or her own “research instrument” both in the section above and in relation to the definition of qualitative research proposed by Creswell (2013), where I argue that this can both be an advantage and an disadvantage for the result of the study.

Fieldwork is a demanding craft that involves both coping with multiple negotiations and continually dealing with ethical dilemmas (Punch 1994, 85). It is a difficult task for a student to manage. There are on the other hand advantages by being young and “innocent”. A young student, may be perceived as non-threatening and may even elicit considerable amount of sympathy from respondents (Punch 1994, 87). I experienced this myself. Some of my respondents seemed overly eager to impress me, to give me their knowledge or to “teach” me something about the world. In this way they actually said many really interesting things and “gave” up information that they would have been reluctant to give to someone more experienced. Many factors can play a role in the successfulness of the fieldwork. The Interviewer’s personality, appearance and last but not least, luck may play a role in exploiting unexpected avenues or overcoming obstacles in the field (Punch 1994, 88). I think it was a combination of skill and luck that I managed to complete the fieldwork successfully. I had certain connections in the country that could help me. I also planned most of my interviews beforehand, but at the same time, I was lucky that my respondents actually could take time off and in fact wanted to meet me in the exact period I was in Rome.

#### **4.4.3 The qualitative research interview**

I have in my research project done seven semi-structured qualitative interviews in the field. The interview is one of the most common methods for collecting qualitative data. The purpose is to get inside knowledge or insights that may not be revealed with a more superficial method. The quality of the collected data will be highly subjective, but will allow me to get real and close with the people or phenomena I am studying. The goal of the interview can be rather different. Some will want to use it as a method of testing hypothesis (structured interviews) others will use it as a method to explore perceptions and meanings to gain better understanding and possibly generate hypothesis (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree 2006, 314).

Interviews are far from a problem free approach. The challenges are many. For example language can be a barrier in itself. I can state this based on my own experience. I speak and write sufficient Italian to be comfortable, but I may not be able to dissect the little nuances which come naturally to people who have the language as their mother language. It is actually the same with English. I reckon myself to be very good at the language, but not like someone born and raised in an English-speaking country. This can turn out to be very problematic, because it may weaken the credibility of the collected data material, important aspects may be lost in translation. I have, on the other hand, tried to prevent these issues by recording my interviews. I have in the process post-interview used quite some time translating, transcribing and listening myself to the recorded interviews. It is also better to get first-hand information than go through for example an interpreter. If I had used an interpreter, the information would not be first-hand anymore. If this person was from Italy and therefore acquainted with politics, it is only natural that he/she would, at least subconsciously, be affected by their own experiences and views. Therefore I consider my choice of not to get an interpreter the best option.

### **Semi-structured interviews and how to choose respondents**

In my own research I have chosen to do Semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are often the only source of information in a research project. It is the method that is most used when conducting research in social sciences. Characteristics of these interviews are that they often are scheduled in advance at a designated place and a time outside everyday events. They can occur either with individuals or in groups and often contain open-ended questions (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree 2006, 315). I used semi-structured interviews myself. I conducted interviews with people I consider as elites. I consider them elites because of their education, knowledge and social standing in the society. The people I choose to interview were professors, political commentators or people who had been or were involved with the party at the time of the interviews (politicians). Leech (2002, 665,668) think that semi-structured interviews are best when the plan is to conduct interviews with elites. This allows the respondents the chance to be the experts and to inform the researcher. What Leech (2002) says suits my chosen respondents well. I see them all as elites of some kind. The most important question before doing elite-interviews is, "What do I want to learn?" It is also important to ask: What is the purpose of the interview? Interviewing is important if one needs to know what people think, how they interpret events, or what they have done or are planning

to do. One of the biggest issues with interviewing elites is the question of access. It can be quite difficult securing interviews with busy officials, who are widely sought after (Aberbach and Rockman 2002, 673). I had surprisingly little problems with securing respondents. I contribute this to the nature of the study and my respondent's positions as people who are supposed to be experts on this topic. As I mentioned earlier I also consider it was partly because of luck. I chose my respondents in a strategic way. This is typically called purposeful selection or even purposeful sampling (Creswell 2013, 156). When using this strategy, particular settings, persons, or activities are selected deliberately to provide information that is relevant to my questions and goals, and that cannot be gotten as well from other choices (Grønmo 2004, Maxwell 2013, 97). This was very important for my study, because of the limited amount of respondents, I wanted people who had an high probability of providing me with useful information. Generally the respondents in a case study are selected on the basis of what they might know, to help the investigator fill in pieces of a puzzle or confirm the proper alignment of pieces already in place (Aberbach and Rockman 2002, 673).

#### **4.4.4 Interview guide**

In this section I will present and explain the process of making my interview guide.

*“Elites especially – but other highly educated people as well – do not like being put in the straitjacket of close-ended questions. They prefer to articulate their views, explaining why they think what they think”*(Aberbach and Rockman 2002, 674).

This implies that I have to be very careful when I ask my interview questions. I need to prepare properly and make good arguments to why I do what I do. The interview-guide is my main instrument when conducting the interviews. I made one in Italian, one in English and one in Norwegian. The questions I chose to ask are undeniably very important. They must be relevant and formulated in a good way. My previous experiences and knowledge of the topic have an influence and determine which questions I choose to ask and how I asked them (Leech 2002, 665). I used quite some time developing my questions, and how to word them. It is very important to consider the implications of the words I use, because they can influence the understanding and answers I get. In general when formulating the questions they should not be experienced as leading or use words that are misleading, too simple or too complex (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree 2006). Only after intensive study of theory and document analysis did I develop what was to become my interview guide. Other important aspects with the interview guide are for example question order. The interview has to seem coherent for



the respondent to take it seriously (Leech 2002, 666). I tried at first to follow the “script”, or the order I had set up beforehand, to the dot, but I noticed that the conversation gained more resonance and flow by being a bit more “free”. Aberbach and Rockman (2002, 674) underline that the advantages of conversational flow and depth of response outweigh the disadvantages of inconsistent ordering. Another important aspect is good use of follow-up questions. The goal for me as the interviewer is to encourage that as much useful information as possible is shared and recorded.

#### **4.4.5 Presentation of the interview questions**

The ability to pose and ask good questions is a prerequisite for case study investigators (Yin 2014, 73). I will now present my interview questions and talk a bit about why I choose to ask them and how they worked out. I will present the research questions in English, but if you are interested, the Italian version of them will be available in the appendix. Two of the interviews were done in Italian. Before looking at the interview questions, I will repeat my research question, so it is easier to understand my reasoning for asking the question I ask. My research question: *what main factors facilitated the FSM’s transition from an anti-establishment social movement to a successful political party?* I will now start with question one:

(1) Could you please talk a little bit about yourself, like your profession and background?

This is a non-threatening, easy question to start with. It is something to get the conversation going. It is important to make the respondent feel comfortable. Starting with questions about a person’s background is a good way to start. Since people find talking about themselves more fascinating than any subject they know (Aberbach and Rockman 2002, 675).

(2) What do you think are the main characteristics of the Italian political system? What is specific about Italian politics versus other (European) political systems? Like political culture, how the institutions work, collaboration between parties etc.

Here I thought I would be nice to talk a bit broadly about the topic. This a very open ended question, where the respondent can chose what he/she wants to focus on. I experienced that this question was a bit too open-ended, and a bit too general. I had to on more than one occasion specify more, what I wanted the respondents to talk about. Generally open-ended questions can be a way to maximize response validity. Open-ended questions provide a greater opportunity for respondents to organize their answers within their own frameworks. This increases the validity of the responses and is best for the exploratory nature of case studies (Aberbach and Rockman 2002, 674).

(3) What do you think a political party should consist of? What should it be doing, what defines it?

Since political parties and the definition of these are something I discuss in my thesis I thought I would be interesting to hear what my respondent's opinions are about this. The politicians were very happy to receive this question, and especially R1 talked about it with fire.

(4) I want you to state your relationship with the Five Star Movement (How did you come to know them?).

This is important to know because their relationship may influence their thoughts, opinions and feelings when talking about movement. It is impossible for anyone not to be influenced by their previous background and experiences.

(5) What do you know about the Five Star Movement's organization?

I asked this question to gain general knowledge about the FSM. This question could be an opportunity for my respondents to illuminate something essential for my paper?

(6) About the movement, what do you think makes it different compared to other movements or parties in Italy?

This is a question to try and define how the FSM behaves, and why it is different from other movements or parties in Italy. Maybe this is something that contributed to their success?

(7) Considering their rapid rise, from a social movement (located mostly on the social media) to a successful political party, at least when we consider the results of the last election, what do you think was the greatest advantages the movement had when they mobilized? Why?

This relates directly to my puzzle; what main factors paved the way for the Five Star Movement to emerge from an anti-establishment social movement to a successful political party?

(8) How do you think they managed to become a political party?

- Was it the focus on new media?
- Was it focus on "new" issues (environmentalism)?
- Was it the lack of trust in established institutions?
- What about Beppe Grillo?

This is another question that actually asks quite directly about the puzzle. If the respondent was hesitant to answer question 7, this is sort of a follow-up that “forces” the respondent to make a concluding remark.

(9) What do you think of the Five Star Movement’s future? How do you think they will evolve from here? Why?

This is an interesting question when it comes to the discussion about further theory development and further studies.

(10) Do you have any additional comments or anything else you want to add?

This question gives the respondents the opportunity to talk about something they have a passion for, or they feel the need to be added to make the discussion a fruitful one. It is amazing what you can learn from this question. It is important to give the respondents openings to tell you about an event, connection, or insight that you did not think to ask them (Woliver 2002, 678).

(11) Thank you so much for your collaboration in this project!

That was the conclusion of my interview guide. The next thing I will do is to present my respondents.

#### **4.4.6 Presentation of the respondents**

Here I will give a small presentation of the subjects I interviewed for the study. All of them know that I will use their answers in my thesis and have agreed to this. I wanted to do elite-interviews so I ended up with seven interviews with two politicians, one journalist and four political scientists. I tried to choose my respondents as strategic as possible (doing purposeful sampling), while also partly using snowball sampling. Snowball sampling yields a study sample through referrals made among people who share or know of others who possess some characteristics that are of research interest (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981, 141). It is important to be conscious about the fact that the composition of the sample of respondents may influence the answers received. The interviews lasted approximately 20-30 minutes. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed. The transcriptions have been treated with high caution. To further triangulate the information gathered from the informants, news articles, reports, secondary literature sources has been used.

- Respondent 1 (R1): Vito Crimi

Crimi was the first president of the M5S group in parliament. He is a prominent senator representing the FSM. He was new to politics before he became involved in the movement. He is originally from Palermo. The interview was conducted in Italian. He is in this research representing a true believer in the purpose and the idea that the FSM is.

- Respondent 2 (R2): John Hooper

Hooper is an experienced correspondent for *The Economist* (he became a correspondent in 1973) and a contributing editor for *The Guardian*, writer and journalist. He has written several articles and a book for Kindle about Beppe Grillo and the rise of the Five Star Movement.

- Respondent 3 (R3): Luis Alberto Orellana

Orellana was a part of the Five Star Movement before he was excommunicated from the movement. He was close to Beppe Grillo when the movement turned into a political party and has followed the development of the party ever since. He is now quite critical towards the movement, and is in fact acting as an independent candidate in the Senate supporting the incumbent. The interview was conducted in English. Here I mention the language because it had some relevance for the interview. In this interview it might have been better if we had done it in Italian. His English was good, but it was quite noticeable that he was not used to expressing himself with it.

- Respondent 4 (R4): Nicolo Conti

Conti is an Associate Professor of Political science at La Sapienza University in Rome. He has written several articles on the FSM. He is also specialized in political parties, coalition governments, elites and European integration. This interview was influenced by a time constraint. Conti had expressed to me beforehand that we could not use more than twenty minutes. This may have rushed my questioning, however his answers were up to par, so I still got a lot of useful information.

- Respondent 5 (R5): Renato Moro

Moro is a professor of contemporary history at the University of Roma Tre. He has a lot of insight and knowledge about the current Italian political environment. He is specialized in the history of political cultures, especially in Italy. Moro is in fact an old acquaintance of mine. He was my professor when I did an exchange to the University of Roma Tre in 2014. He helped me get respondents. He actually opened a lot of opportunities for me. I got to interview people I would not have gained the access to otherwise, if not for his influence. One of the

most important aspects about doing fieldwork is to gain access to enable the easy collection of data (Creswell 2013, 151). This was good for me to get relevant interview objects. However his choice of people he introduced me for, may have been influenced by their political views and scientific opinions, and as such I may have gotten a biased selection of respondents.

- Respondent 6 (R6): Claudia Mariotti

Mariotti is an adjunct professor of political science at the University of Roma Tre. She is specialized in political systems, Italian political parties and the political culture of Italian political parties. She has written several articles on the movement. Renato Moro recommended her to me as an interesting person to interview.

- Respondent 7 (R7): Prof. Barbara Pisciotta

Pisciotta is an associate professor in political science at the University of Roma Tre. The interview was conducted in Italian. The fact that we spoke Italian may have affected my ability to fully grasp and understand what she talked about, when I was conducting the interview. On the other hand, I got the permission to record our interview, so I had the opportunity to review and translate everything at a later stage. She also was recommended by Renato Moro.

The next thing I will discuss are the ethical issues one have to consider while doing research.

#### **4.4.7 Ethical issues**

A really important aspect of the researcher's job description is to always consider the ethical issues when doing research. Ethical issues can be described as occurring prior to conducting the study, at the beginning of the study, during data collection, in data analysis, in reporting the data, and in publishing a study (Creswell 2013, 57). Punch (1994, 89) describes the most important ethical issues concerning harm, consent, deception, privacy, and confidentiality of data. The first thing to do is to explain the purpose of the study (Creswell 2013, 57). Before conducting my own interviews, I informed my respondents of the purpose and intentions of the research. I informed them that they could withdraw at any chosen time, and that if there were questions they did not want to answer, they were under no obligation to do so. The subjects have the right to be informed that they are being researched (Punch 1994, 90).

The task of the interviewer is to obtain information through asking questions and listening to the answers. The act of listening can in itself turn out to be problematic. As an interviewer I sit there face-to-face with the respondent and he/she sees me and can interpret my facial

expressions and other reactions to what he/she is saying. This can influence their responses. Another issue is if the questions “harm” the respondent and create unnecessary stress or psychological complications. I have to be prepared to address this if it should happen. Another important ethical aspect is anonymity. The respondent must be assured that I as an interviewer will maintain full anonymity in the relation to the information that is shared if they wish so (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree 2006, 319). I specifically asked my interview objects if they wanted to stay anonymous. The last important issue I want to address is the question of giving information the respondents. Both before conducting the interview and in the process after, it is important that we researchers send copies of what we write and publish to people we have interviewed. It is more than a courtesy. It is an acknowledgement on the part of the researcher that without the interviewee, the work would be diminished (Woliver 2002, 678). I have tried throughout the entire process to act professionally. I have been clear about the purpose of the study to gain my respondents confidence and trust. This is important to make sure the respondents feel “obligated” to take me seriously as a researcher.

#### **4.4.8 Evaluation of method**

In this section I intend to evaluate my own efforts. It is easy to say that I am going to conduct interviews, but there are many things to consider. I am no professional interviewer. My limited experience is a factor to consider when I evaluate the credibility of the data gathered. There are some things that could have been done differently. For example I should have been a bit more patient when asking the questions, and sometimes specified them more. The consequence of the way I asked some of the questions was that the respondent could choose what he/she wanted to talk about, instead of they actually giving me specified information. However, because of the nature of my questions, and to some degree the repetitiveness of some of them, I got interesting data from all my interviews.

An entirely different aspect is the importance of the physical surroundings when conducting the interviews. When interviewing my second respondent I felt that the setting made the interview rushed and difficult to comprehend at the analytical stage. We were outside (by a busy road) and there was quite a lot of background noise (in an outdoor café). It would have been more ideal to have been in a calmer and quieter environment.

Another aspect that requires attention is the language barrier I experienced when conducting the interviews. I sometimes used English and other times Italian. There were some cases where I should have chosen another language than what was used. Because of the language barrier, there were times when my understanding of what was said prevented me from picking up the

conversation. It prevented me from being more “aggressive” with my follow-up questions. I felt a bit constrained by my own knowledge. It is also possible that I missed some small but important nuances in the language, like how the respondent chose to express certain things.

I think interviewing is an interesting method to use when gathering data. You never know quite what kind of conversation you are going to get, or what, if any useable material for that matter. But I think this is part of its strength as well. I as an interviewer can be much freer to ask questions that I feel will be appropriate or interesting, that can give more appropriate and interesting answers than what I would have if I took my data from a social survey, documents or quantitative data.

## 5. ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

This chapter begins with an analysis of my propositions. The analysis will contain a comparison of my collected data-material with empirical evidence drawn from existing literature.

### 5.1 Analysis of the suggested propositions

Theory offers many plausible explanations on how both how social movements and on how political parties manage to emerge and become successful. I have chosen to focus my effort on four propositions, that emerged as plausible explanations while studying theory. I will discuss how these four propositions work for explaining the emergence of my chosen case of study; the Five Star Movement in Italy. As mentioned the discussion of the propositions will contain a comparison and analysis of my collected data-material as well as empirical evidence drawn from existing literature. The research question: *what main factors paved the way for the Five Star Movement to transition from an anti-establishment social movement to a successful political party?*

The propositions are: (1) The importance of their use of social media contributed to their successful transition. (2) their leader Beppe Grillo was a contributing reason for their success. (3) Their focus on seemingly neglected topics by the established parties contributed to their success. (4) The general lack of trust in established institutions (including political parties) in Italy work as a mobilizing factor for their success, and lastly I will discuss these four with a combination of existing theory and my own collected data material.

#### 5.1.1 Proposition 1: The importance of social media

This proposition suggest that it was; *social media that facilitated the transition from an anti-establishment social movement to a successful political party*. In this section I will discuss the eventual importance of the FSM's use of social media for their success going from an anti-establishment social movement to a successful political party. The enthusiast of the internet argue that it can be a tool for faster and more cost-effective mobilization. More skeptical observers points out that online forums and Internet-based movements are characterized by inconsistencies and lack of inclusiveness (Turner 2012, 215). According to Enjolras et al.



(2013, 20) social media has the potential to transform the conditions for both civic engagement and political mobilization. By mobilizing and entry of new groups, social media can contribute to a democratization of civic engagement, and the formation of new elites. New mobilization forms may arise, but it can also lead to discredit of real activism, and its replacement with noncommittal “clicks”. There are lot of pros and cons when using social media, but it is a fact that some already have benefitted greatly from its existence.

As mentioned before, the FSM developed around the blog *beppegrillo.it*, which is also the registered office of the party (Bordignon and Ceccarini 2015, 463). The blog developed as a



new web tool of civil societal aggregation and communication (Turner 2013, 183). We can say that the blog provided the initial social capital for the movement (Turner 2013, 197). The FSM have a conception of the web as an instrument of direct democracy that can help make the egalitarian slogans of the movement come true (Mosca 2014, 41).

It all began on the blog, but later the Twitter and the Facebook profiles became very important and helped spread what was posted on Grillo’s blog. This way through social media, Grillo communicates directly with the electoral base, and also with the public opinion and the media (Bordignon and Ceccarini 2015, 463). Bentivegna (2014) describes the FSM’s use of Twitter as a sound box, and constitutes a sort of megaphone for the messages launched by the activists, which Grillo – or his staff – re-tweet in the online public space.

Did the social media aspect of the movement facilitate the FSM’s road from social movement to political party? I have asked the respondents directly if they believe that social media was one of the main reasons for the success the Five Star Movement experienced going from a social movement to a fully-fledged political party. R1 did not especially talk about this as a reason. R2 on the other hand lists the importance of social media as the third most important

for the Five Star Movement's road towards success. "The third factor is that they knew how to exploit social media far better than the conventional parties". R5 agrees but actually thinks it is the most important reason for their success: "I think that that their greatest advantage is that today communication is based on the web. And their use of the web was innovative, it was new and very effective". R7 also supports this view about the FSM use of the web as something innovative. "Un'altra cosa che volevo aggiungere è la novità di M5S (Movimento Cinque Stelle) rispetto al mezzo di comunicazione che decido di adottare". Translated: "Another aspect I wanted to add is the novelty of the FSM's use of communication tools".

The FSM itself has emphasized its intensive use of online sources for mobilizing supporters. However much of the literature takes a more pragmatic approach (Turner 2013, 198): Mosca and Vaccari (2013) say that, beyond the dominant role of the blog ([beppegrillo.it](http://beppegrillo.it)) in the FSM's activities, the lack of charismatic leadership at a peripheral level means that personal websites and blogs of its members only play a marginal level in campaigns. Thus on the supply side, the movement's use of online tools does not differ greatly from that of more established parties. Studies of political parties show that there are few examples of political parties creating activity and discussion with its supporters through social media (Enjolras et al. 2013, 97). It is another story if we look at the demand side. Mosca and Vaccari (2013, 191) show that the FSM candidates enjoy much greater utility from being present on the web compared to other parties because their own supporters are more attentive to what happens on the web compared to supporters of other parties. While the FSM's online activity on the web may not be greater than other parties, it is more fruitful because of the FSM's supporters' responsiveness to online campaigning (Turner 2013, 198). Turner (2013, 199) argues that the success of the FSM has been confirmed by a constituency that is exceptionally sensitive to online media as well as a large network of offline meetings and offline based groups (meetup-system). R5 underline the importance of the FSM's constituency: "Even more than their effectiveness in communication I think that their identification with the web is something that speaks very easily to the young generations". Turner (2013, 199) says that the internet has played a role in the FSM's success, but it has also been aided by a favorable context and an ability to use, at times more conventional and offline based forms of organization.

Not all agree about how the movement uses the web. R3 does not like the way social media and the internet is used by the movement: "Internet. It is not used as you would think, to share ideas and propositions to improve something. No, it is not the case. They use it for propaganda only". When he says this he indirectly implies that it has had an effect on their

success, even if he does not like it. In another statement, he says: “Internet became the only way, using Facebook or Twitter to make propaganda. Only just putting up Youtube films, recorded inside the parliament and also putting up photos hoped photos, changing people and making irony. Insulting people. So it is not a good way to use the internet”. R6 on the other hand says that FSM was actually bad at using social media properly, “In my opinion they didn’t use very well social media”.

To sum up. R1 did not especially talk about social media as a reason for the FSM successful transition to a political party. R2 on the other hand lists the importance of social media as the third most important for the Five Star Movement’s road towards success. R3 does not like the way social media is used by the FSM, but imply that it have had an influence. On the other hand R5 actually thinks it is the most important reason. R7 supports the view that the FSM use of the web as something innovative. Much of the literature take a pragmatic approach. Many underline the importance of the blog in the FSM’s activities, but otherwise feel that the FSM’s use of social media is not that innovative as it would seem, and in fact resemble that of other more traditional parties. However, the FSM’s constituency are more receptive and attentive to what happens on the web. While the FSM’s online activity on the web may not be greater than other parties, it is more fruitful because of the FSM’s supporter’s responsiveness to online campaigning. R5 underline the importance of the FSM’s constituency. I will conclude that the social media aspect has had some influence on the success of the FSM, but maybe to the extent that was first perceived.

### **5.1.2 Proposition 2: Charisma of the leader**

I will now analyse the proposition that states that the FSM’s leader Beppe Grillo was a contributing factor for their successful transition to a political party.

It is quite telling that the blog the movement originated from is called *‘beppegrillo.it’*. Beppe Grillo and Gianroberto Casaleggio founded the movement, so this proposition claims that the leaders have since been large contributors to its success. R1 contributes to this discussion by pointing out the role Beppe Grillo had at the foundation of the FSM: “É un movimento alto organizzato in nanzitutto. Nel senso che ci sono delle regole, che sono dei principi, piu delle regole, che sono alla base che sono stati dati da Beppe Grillo alla sua fondazione.” Translated this means: “It is a top-down organized movement. In the sense that there are rules, which in fact are principles, more than rules, which are at the base and were given by Beppe Grillo at

its foundation". This quote illustrates quite neatly the importance and dependency the movement had towards its leader at its infancy. R2 also points to the importance of Grillo for the movement as a whole. "He founded the movement, and they describe him like a guarantor. It is quite clear that he exerts a huge influence on the movement". An example of this influence is illustrated by R2's following statement: "The surveys shows that most people, in fact an overwhelming majority of the people who are active in the Five Star Movement are pro the euro and pro the EU. Grillo has always maintained a position that there should be a referendum on the euro, but he is clearly euro-sceptic and he has gradually moved the movement around to his way of thinking. And I think that that is a good example as any of the extent to which he influence the movement".

It is not only my respondents that point to the importance of Grillo. Diamanti (2014, 6) describes Grillo as the 'director' of the FSM. He decides almost everything, its choices and initiatives, its image and the road ahead. He is "its spokesman – or, rather, its voice, face and body". R7 actually point to the almost authoritarian tendencies of Grillo's leadership "è un leadership che agisce in un modo autoritario, basta pensare a le numerose espulsione che ha sempre caratterizzato l'attività del movimento". Translated: "It's a leadership style that feels in a way authoritarian. To illustrate this it's sufficient to look at the numerous expulsions that has always characterized the activity of the movement". She also points to Grillo as the one making the decisions. "Le decisioni vengono prese da Grillo", "The decisions are made by Grillo".

The successful opposition to the State bureaucracy and the parties achieved by the FSM, would not have happened without the role of the leader (Diamanti 2014, 6-7). Grillo is able, better than anyone else to capture the public mood and translate it into criticism against the ones in power. He is skillful in his use of language and body and is able to unify and direct contrasting feelings, channeling them toward common targets that change over time (Diamanti 2014, 8). As an experienced comedian he is able to use cultural and linguistic codes that are precluded to established politicians and more conventional media figures. He can engage the audience in carnivalesque and ritualistic vilification and ridicule of established leaders and power structures It's a way to form common identity with the audience (Turner 2013, 193). Most of this movements supporters were fans of the comedian before they became supporters of the movement, and Grillo has been crucial in mobilizing support at the infancy of the movement but also in the movement's transition to a political party (electoral

growth) (Turner 2013, 199). When this can be said about the leader of a political party, it illustrates the party's personalist character.

Mosca (2014, 47) says that the FSM is based on the Grillo's charismatic leadership and hierarchical decision making. He further states that the FSM probably could not survive as a party with mass support without Grillo. Diamanti (2014, 9) agrees with Mosca on this by stating: "There would be no FSM without Grillo – or, at least, the Movement would not have achieved such success without the only public face being acknowledged and recognized". Others agree with them. Bordignon and Ceccarini (2013, 427-428) say that one of the most distinctive features of the FSM is the role of the leader. His role differs from the traditional politicians and from the various figures who have appeared in Italian politics. As mentioned, Grillo comes quite uniquely from the world of show business. He is a comedian with a special background when it comes to his relationship to politics. He is one of the figures that have been the most active in giving voice to the anti-political sentiment that has spread in the Italian society in recent years. He is a political entrepreneur who mobilizes resources, activating the potential 'protest energy' widespread in a large section of the public opinion. Grillo's role in the movement is controversial. He is the inspiration and the mouthpiece of participation from the bottom up, but at the same time, he also exercises total control over the movement's strategies and choices (Bordignon and Ceccarini 2013, 428). R3 underline and criticize the importance of the leaders for the decision-making in the movement: "They are really used to look at the, when they have difficulty, to wait for the decision of the leaders. Of the leaders in general and in Milan. So Grillo and Casaleggio".

According to most empirical writings, Beppe Grillo has played a crucial role in the establishment of the FSM, at first as a social movement located mostly at social media, then to a fully-fledged political party. My respondent's views supports this, all except one mention or clearly states his significance. I conclude therefore the folly of excluding the importance of the leader when we talk about the social movements becoming political parties.

### **5.1.3. Proposition 3: Focus on neglected topics**

Conti and Memoli (Conti and Memoli 2015, 529) describe the FSM as a new party that was able to capitalize on citizens' feelings by giving representation to their most urgent demands in times of crisis, in a context of poor representation of such demands by the conventional parties. The main argument of this proposition is that the FSM were the political actor in the

election of 2013 that managed to politicize popular issues that had been somewhat neglected by other parties, and therefore they succeeded (Conti and Memoli 2015, 517, Bordignon and Ceccarini 2015, 460, Mosca 2014, 48). One explanation on how and why they managed this, is the influence of their leader, Beppe Grillo. He was famous even before founding the FSM. It is a fact that celebrities can bring attention, publicity and support to certain issues and grievances that had previously been ignored or considered secondary or unimportant by most observers and actors (Turner 2013, 194). Grillo used social capital to bring media attention to previously overlooked political issues and mobilize supporters around him (Turner 2013, 196). In the case of the FSM one could argue that especially post-materialist issues, such as environmentalism and renewable energy, poverty issues, battles against the power of big business and the effects of globalization, are examples of issues that were not well represented before the FSM placed them on the political agenda. Turner (2013, 201) discusses the main aspects of the FSM's political platform. He says that the most prominent elements are about environmentalism, anti-corruption and support for reduction of costs of public administration.

When talking to R1 it is quite clear that he supports the notion that the FSM managed to represent "new issues" in Italian politics. He focuses especially on welfare issues, which he thinks has been neglected by other parties and a debate which have been "missing".

"Il nostro programma ha 20 punti. Il primo punto é il reddito di cittadinanza. Ed é una legge per garantire l cittadino italiano un reddito, un salario, un stipendio di dignita di minimo garentito a tutti. Che é pesante economicamente, ma ha un ritorno impressionante; reduce la criminalità, reduce la disvantaggio sociale, reduce il conflitto, reduce la povertá, aumenta i consumi. Il reddito di cittadinanza deve essere universale, di diritto" Translated this will be something like: "Our party program has twenty main points. The first point is a citizenship salary (minimum wage/benefit). It is a law that will guarantee all Italian citizens a salary, a pay, a wage of minimum dignity. This is costly economically, but has a huge return in the long haul; it will reduce crime, reduce social needs, reduce conflicts, reduce poverty and increase spending. R4 supports this: "They also politicized issues that were very much neglected by the agenda, like welfare. You know support for those that have low income, for the "losers" of economic globalization, of the economic crisis". He further underlines his point: "they also had the merit of politicizing something that was strongly perceived as neglected, strongly perceived by citizens". R4 underlines the importance the FSM had on bringing up the issue of corruption: "They managed to politicize political corruption which

was of course an issue. They also managed to mobilize mainly on the issues which are typical of a radical populist platform”.

R2 on the other hand listed this proposition as the least relevant one. “I think that’s a very minor fourth reason. Yes, they have picked up on some subjects that are of interest to a particular kind of constituencies, a sort of Guardian reading constituency”. When I asked him specifically about environment and global change he answered that “They are strong on environment but so are other parties”. R5 talks about the difficulty to really identify a focus of the FSM, and he feel that the issues they front have not been crucial to their success. Just one piece of a larger picture. He states that: “I think its difficult to identify a real focus in the movement, with the exception of being anti-system, anti-party, to be the good part of society, to be the uncorrupt part of a corrupted one. And the single proposals, good or bad, according to my view they may be the environment, coming out of the euro, or not to accept immigrants. But, in the end, they don’t matter that much”. R6 agrees with R5 that the FSM lacks focus when it comes to issues, “Sometimes they decide to support some kind of issues, sometimes they decide not to take a position... It’s not clear how they decide about issues”. R6 is generally skeptical about issues as an important factor for the FSM’s successful transition to a political party. “I am not sure that they vote the FSM because of the effort they put in some specific issues”.

To sum up. According to my analysis I conclude that both the empirical literature and my respondenst are quite devided when it comes to the relevance of this proposition. R1 (he is a part of the movement) and R4 supports the notion that the FSM managed to represent “new issues” in Italian politics. On the other hand I would say that R2, R5 and R6 thought the focus on “neglected” issues played some part, but was not one of the main reason for the FSM success. Turner (2013) agrees with them. He believes that it was Beppe Grillo’s ability to aggregate and articulate the grievances, rather than the grievances themselves that played a role. He further states that, there has been no significant changes that should indicate an increase in the support for environmental issues. The significance of proposition 3 is unclear.

#### **5.1.4 Proposition 4: Lack of trust in established institutions**

In this section I will discuss the eventual importance of the lack of trust in established institutions was for the FSM’s success going from an anti-establishment social movement to a successful political party.

Eurobarometer data collected since 2003 shows that there is a process of disenchantment towards politics and institutions in all of the member states in the European Union (see fig. 1, 2 and 3). But when we compare the average in the EU with the Italian case, the Italian case appears even more dramatic (Mosca 2014, 37). The Italian people are in general extremely skeptical towards their own government (Norris 2011, 72). Trust in national parliament is around 12 percent (- 19 since the start of the observation period), vs. the EU average of 26 percent (- 9 in the last decade), trust in national government is around 11 percent vs. the EU average of 25 percent and trust in political parties is around 7 percent vs. the EU average of 16 percent (Mosca 2014, 37). The erosion of trust is illustrated with the figure 3 below (see also fig. 1 and fig. 2), which shows the evolution of trust in national governments from 2003-2013 (Mosca 2014, 37-39). This is quantitative data, therefore in this section I use a combined method when analyzing the proposition.

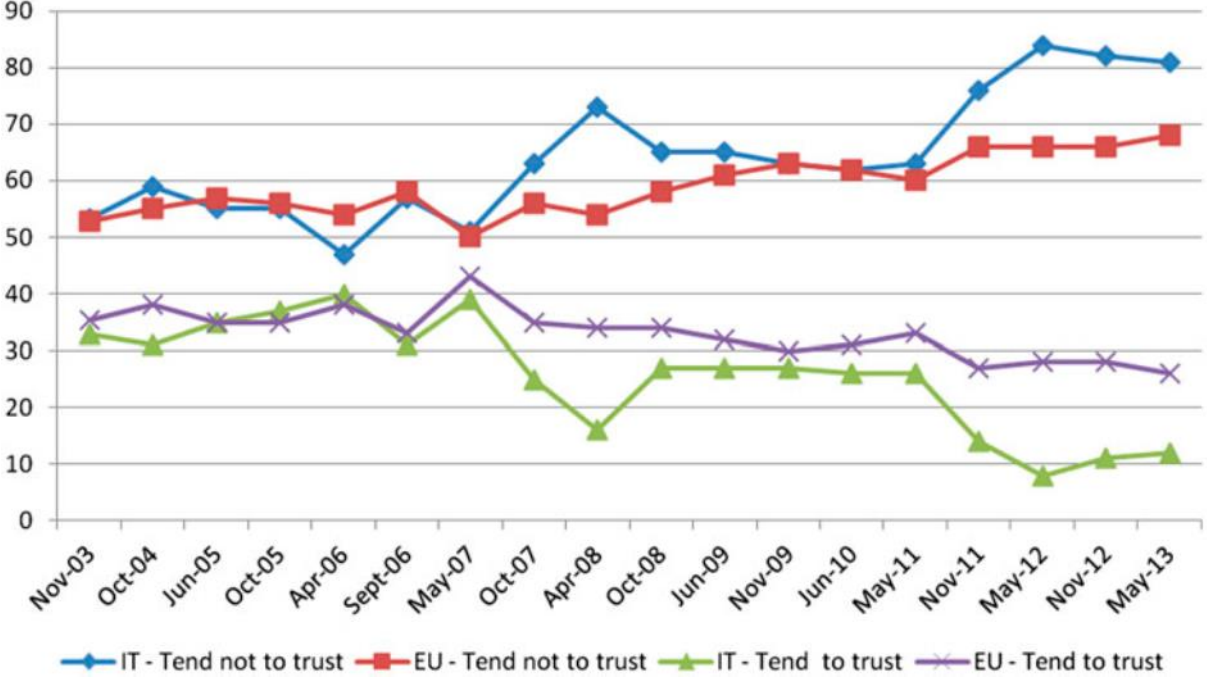


FIGURE 1. Trust in parliaments (percentages; Italy vs. European average). *Source:* Eurobarometer (2003-13), taken from (Mosca 2014, 37).



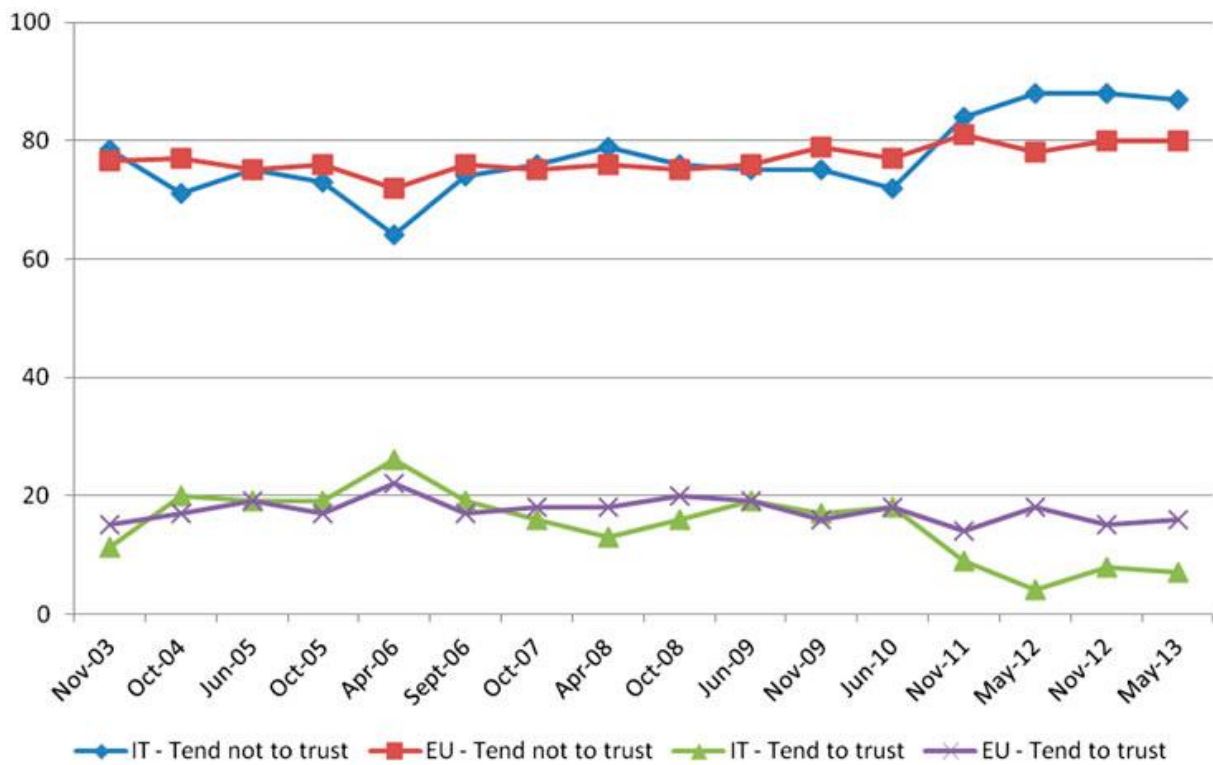


FIGURE 2. Trust in political parties (percentages; Italy vs. European average). *Source:* Eurobarometer (2003-13). Taken from: (Mosca 2014)

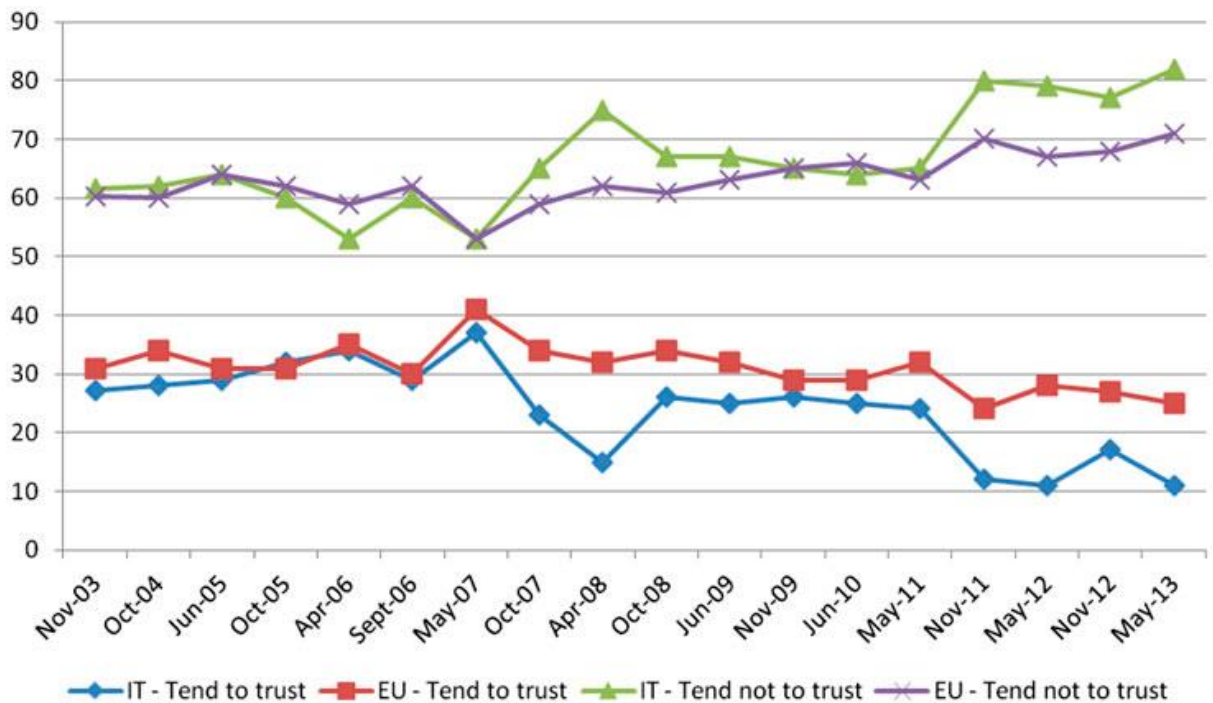


FIGURE 3: Trust in national governments (percentages; Italy vs. European average). *Source:* Eurobarometer (2003-2013). Taken from: (Mosca 2014, 38).

R3 describes the issue like this: “The problem in Italy is that people is leaving politics, they do not trust the politicians. I think it’s a problem worldwide”. Traditionally people show their dissatisfaction with the political elites by voting anti-establishment at elections. This happens especially after corruption scandals are revealed in the media. Politicians accused of breaking the law do not enhance the reputation of the establishment. The public generally has higher expectations of politicians, expectations of higher moral standards which do not combine with accusations of corruption (Hartleb 2015, 43). R2 points out that one of the defining features of the Italian political system is the tradition of widespread corruption. “Italy is what statisticians call outlook, in the respect that it is a developed country with a very high level of corruption. I think that is a part of the explanation for the rise of the Five Star Movement. The traditional parties became very corrupt during the Cold War”. R5 describes Italian political parties as “confused and unable to fulfill their goals”.

When I asked R2 the question on what he thought was the greatest advantage the FSM had when they mobilized he again answered that it had to do with corruption. “I think the disillusion of the Italian people with the mainstream parties. The synzesis of the other parties because of high levels of corruption”. In another part of our conversation, he states that: “The lack of trust the Italian have to the established political parties is the biggest single advantage they had and then austerity (political opportunity), so the two coming together was absolutely perfect for them”.

R1 is a part of the movement today. He practically agrees with R2 and says that in his opinion the greatest advantage the movement had when they mobilized were the others. In his opinion, the other established parties did them a “favor” by being themselves (corrupt). Il vantaggio sicuramente é stati gli altri. Which means “The greatest advantage surly was the others.” The FSM became a vehicle for anti-political protest. There was an increasing impatience with politics, and a general attitude of mistrust towards parties and politicians amplified and dramatized by scandals of recent years (Diamanti 2014, 9). R6 supports this: “A lot of people, in my opinion want to vote the FSM because they are sick of the other politicians”. This feeling is not something that occurred overnight. History shows us this. An example to illustrate the manifestation of the distrust people feel towards their established institutions is the Tangentopoli scandal. Tangentopoli corruption scandal of the 1990s (Mani Pulite), a big crisis in Italian politics. It paved the way for those with an anti-establishment rhetoric an opposing corruption, such as *Lega Nord (LN)*, *Italia dei Valori* and Berlusconi party. They managed to fill the “void” left by the parties involved with the scandal and in fact

further decreased the trust in traditional parties (Mosca 2014, 37). Today the same route is being taken by the FSM. The FSM is channeling a rebellion against the corruption of the “others” into support for themselves. R7 supports this: “Il M5S ha cavalcato un altro momento fondamentale che era quella della corruzione”. Translated: “The FSM has been riding on another fundamental aspect, and that is corruption”.

Difficulties concerning corruption accusations have been encountered mainly by Silvio Berlusconi’s party and the LN – that ‘founded’ the second republic (Diamanti 2014, 7). At the beginning of 2012, the treasures of some of the main Italian parties were put under investigation for illicit use of electoral funds: among them were one of the founding member of the Democratic Party and an important member of the LN. Another example is that the one of the members of the *Italia dei Valori*, was revealed to have used electoral reimbursements for personal gain. Between April and May 2013, dozens of regional counselors in different regional assemblies were brought under investigation for improper use of public funds. Together with these events, parliament’s inability to change the electoral law and to reduce costs of politics have further discredited political parties (Mosca 2014, 37-38).

I will sum-up this section by underlining the overwhelming support it has from both my respondent and from existing literature. Therefore, I have decided it is interesting to explore the proposition more.

### **5.1.5 Proposition 4: Extended analysis and discussion**

Because of the relevance of this proposition, I have decided to explore it to a larger extent than the other three.

#### **What words can do: the “proper” use of rhetoric**

In the time before the election, the rising scandals between 2012 and 2013 in Italy caused a mounting tide of mistrust towards the institutions, and growing protest against parties and the political professionals. The situation opened up opportunities for outsiders in the political arena. The ‘structure of opportunities’ expanded. One unusual political entrepreneur took advantage of the situation. In fact one of the main characteristics of the FSM was their explicit and violently expressed criticism of the political class (Diamanti 2014, 7, Mosca 2014, 38). R5 says that this criticism is one the FSM defining characteristics; “I think its difficult to identify a real focus in the movement, with the exception of being anti-system, anti-party, to be the good part of society, to be the uncorrupt part of a corrupted one”.

R1 confirms this (remember that he is still a part of the movement): *é cambiato il Sistema politico complesso, ma i politici non sono cambiati. Sono sempre quelli che é purtroppo*

corrotti, molto spesso. “The political system has changed, but the politicians have not. They are the same; the same ones we too often find are corrupt”. This statement confirms what we already know; that the FSM is playing up a sentiment of anti-politician, anti-establishment. R3 confirms this by giving example of what the FSM tend to express: “All the institutions, everything is bad, everything is going worse and so on”. “Italy is divided by the good guys and the bad guys. Black and white. They are the only good guys, the others, all are bad guys. All. Even if they are in the government or in the opposition, they don’t even want to join forces against the government using the support of other parties”.

R1 further talks about the FSM’s coherence when it comes to doing what is expected and what they say they are going to do (accountability). This is a rhetorical choice and builds on creating an ‘us’ versus ‘them’ idea (populism). The idea that the FSM are the only “pure” ones left in Italian politics, and therefore the only option for people. He talks enthusiastically about this example to illustrate his point: “Se da noi un consigliere comunale ruba cento euro in un armadietto da una palestra, cosa ha successo. Un momento dopo é fuori dal movimento. Se questa succede nel Partito Democratico e qualcuno ruba 3 milioni di euro, o qualche miliardo magari, é ancora nel Partito Democratico. É una cosa illogica”. Translated: “If, for instance a city councilman from our movement stole a hundred euros from a locker at the local gym (it has in fact occurred). The next thing that happens is that he is not a part of the movement anymore. If the same were to happen in the Democratic Party and someone stole 3 million euro, or even a couple of billions, he/she would still be a part of the Democratic Party”. This is an example that is intended to illustrate their accountability and “purity” in comparison to the traditional political parties. R7 also points to the goal of the FSM to appear as something un-corrupt and pure in comparison to the “others”. “Un'altra delle caratteristiche è questo, certamente a consentito, da il M5S di presentarsi come forza, diciamo così, pura”. Translated: “Another characteristic of the FSM is to present itself as something, let’s say pure.

### **What caused the election result of 2013?**

Borghetto et al. (2014, 6) says that it was mainly the anti-party sentiment that caused the fall of both the center-right and center-left coalition which had alternated in government since the mid-1990s – and which helped the astonishing success of the Five Star Movement. The general election in 2013 expressed a strong demand for a change and renewal in politics and was characterized by deep transformation in electoral behavior (Bordignon and Ceccarini 2015, 456). According to Borghetto et al. (2014, 10) there are two important aspects that

characterized the dynamics that led to the electoral campaigns in Italy in 2013. The first was a decline in the level of government support, while the second is a decreasing trend in public confidence in political parties. Italy has in fact displayed a decrease in the level of confidence over the last decade, especially since the 2006 elections, reaching the lowest score in May 2012 with only 4 percent of positive evaluations. There was a crisis in the political system. The global economic crisis favored the FSM on the expense of the traditional parties. Uncertainty about the future and anti-crisis measures, helped ignite the anti-party sentiment (Bordignon and Ceccarini 2013, 428). I will explore the consequences of the economic crisis later.

The result has been as Diamanti (2014) puts it *“widespread expressions of malaise, which the M5S has drawn together and amplified. It has drawn on citizens’ impatience with the parties – of government and opposition alike – and with professional politicians. It has transformed itself from a civic network into a political actor of protest”*.

To sum up it is not farfetched to say that The FSM taps in on the growing resentment towards an elitist political class and uses this to their own advantage. This corresponds nicely with proposition 4: That lack of trust in established institutions helped the FSM on their way to become a successful political party. I find that this proposition is highly supported as the main cause of the success of the FSM both by existing literature and by my own respondents.

## **5.2 What have we learned from the analysis?**

### **5.2.1 Table 1: Respondent’s thoughts illustrated**

In this table, I will try to simplify the answers I received from my respondents in the interviews. What do they think about the reasons behind the FSM’s successful emergence?

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Propositions developed from SMT And Political Party Theory</b>				<b>Other</b>
	1. Social Media	2. Charismatic leader	3. Neglected topics	4. Lack of Trust in established institutions	5. Other reasons
<i>(1) Respondent</i>	He does not mention it.	<b>Yes.</b> Grillo was important at the beginning.	<b>Yes.</b> Especially focus on welfare issues.	<b>Yes.</b> He thinks that the greatest advantage for the movement, was the failure of the others (political parties).	No
<i>(2) Respondent</i>	Partly	<b>Yes</b>	Partly	<b>Yes</b>	Austerity
<i>(3) Respondent</i>	Partly. It was used for propaganda	Partly	He does not mention it	<b>Yes</b>	Austerity (the Economic crisis) – highly related to trust!
<i>(4) Respondent</i>	He does not mention it.	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	No
<i>(5) Respondent</i>	<b>Yes</b>	He does not mention it	No	<b>Yes</b> (mentioned implicitly, throughout the text)	No
<i>(6) Respondent</i>	Partly	<b>Yes</b>	No	<b>Yes</b>	No
<i>(7) Respondent</i>	Partly	<b>Yes</b>	No	<b>Yes</b>	Austerity (the economic crisis)

### 5.2.2 A Fifth Proposition?

When doing a research project like this it is quite impossible to do it “right” on the first try. There may be other factors that have equally relevance for my research question that I did not initially consider. Does my proposition cover all possible explanations, or are there some I might have overlooked? Have I missed any possible explanation factors?

Until now I have analysed four possible reasons for the FSM’ success going from an anti-establishment social movement to a successful political party. Another reason, which has been mentioned by multiple respondents as significant, is the influence of the economic crisis in 2008 and the austerity measures that followed. Citizens in Italy blame the European Union and governing parties for austerity measures that have led to cuts in social spending, unemployment and higher taxation (Mosca 2014, 36). The economic and financial crisis has taken its toll on all the Southern European countries. Italy was one of the European countries that were hit hardest by the international economic crisis. The costs were not only economic but also political. Austerity measures are unpopular and so naturally is the government who has to implement them. In 2011 the Italian prime minister resigned (Berlusconi), leading to a government crisis and their replacement (Borghetto, De Giorgi, and Lisi 2014, 4-6). Many attributes caused the premature resignation of Berlusconi. It was in fact a combination of the international economic crisis, internal problems in the main governing party (the PDL), personal scandals of the PM, political corruption and maladministration (Borghetto, De Giorgi, and Lisi 2014, 9).

R4 describes it like this: “The economic crisis hit severely in this country, maybe not as much as in Spain or Greece or in Portugal, but it was really harsh in this country. So at the time when the established parties had a constrained agenda, they basically had to manage austerity measures, they introduced other issues in the agenda who were perceived as emergence”. Although the FSM’s success has been mostly unexpected, other European countries have also experienced changes in their party system with the emergence of more or less successful anti-establishment political parties. The economic crisis opened a window of opportunity for political outsiders in many European countries (Mosca 2014, 47). When answering the question of which factor she thinks had the greatest impact on the FSM successful transition, R7 answered that it definitely was the influence of the economic crisis. “è chiaro che sono diverse le ragioni fondamentali, ma secondo me sono legate soprattutto alla crisi economica, ma anche al governo tecnico e alle scelte che il governo tecnico ha fatto soprattutto in relazione alla crisi economica”. Translated: “It’s clear that there are many reasons, but in my

opinion the most important ones are connected to the economic crisis. They are connected to the technical government and the choices this government took as a response to the economic crisis". When saying this she implies that the austerity measures taken by the technical government at the time were not popular. The austerity measures caused mistrust (Proposition 4) and more instability in an already unstable political landscape.

How Berlusconi acted on this period may tell us something on the influence and fear of the austerity measures in Italian politics. Turner (2013, 187) describes it like this; 'With a general election looming in the early summer of 2013, and fearing that support for the austerity measures enacted by the provisional Monti government was making him lose too many votes, Berlusconi withdrew his support for the government in late 2012, prompting the elections to be anticipated to February 2013.

The issue of the influence of the economic crisis and the austerity measures that followed is something that needs more attention, and a good aspect to consider for further studies.

One can argue that the economic crisis and the austerity measures that followed are intimately connected to my proposition 4, that it was a lack of trust in established institutions *caused by* the austerity measures that helped the FSM transition to a political party.



## 6. DISCUSSION – WHAT DO WE NEED TO CONSIDER?

### 6.1 Theoretical Discussion

I started out this paper by looking at two diverse theoretical paths. One was the SMT and the other theory on political parties. Four propositions grew out of the discussion on the theory on how social movements transition to political parties. In the following section I will discuss the viability of the different theoretical paths after having compared them with my own chosen case.

I dismissed Strain theory as a viable alternative quite early in the process. The reason I did, was because of the natural implication this theory have. It says that mobilization happens when there is a strain in normal peoples life that make them mobilize. Well, in the Italian case I argue that there has been a strain on the lives of normal people throughout the Italian state's history. The people are used to hardships and therefore now, what has changed?

The Resource Mobilization Theory states that .... I consider this theory not relevant for my case. The reason I consider the Resource Mobilization Theory not that viable for my case is that the FSM's has had a great utility being on the web (because its constituencies were more responsive than that of other parties) compared to other parties, and used this to their advantage. They did not need to care that much about the traditional "resource-restraints" connected to form a political party. Their form of organization was new and located mostly on the social media. The FSM extensive use of social media consequently lead to use of less resources, too for example campaigning, than other "traditional" parties. Mosca and Vaccari (2013, 191) say it like this; "the internet is crucial in ensuring the FSM's electoral success in spite of its relative poverty of resources compared to other parties". Another fault with the Resource Mobilization theory is that it does not consider the importance of leadership to the success of social movements. I find that leadership was crucial for the successful transition of the FSM to go from a social movement to a political party.

Moving on to the last of the three SMT I have considered. Bordignon and Ceccarini (2013, 428) claim that the political opportunity structure is a good explanation for the progress of the FSM. I think they are right. The time was ripe for something to change in the Italian political landscape. People took the political opportunity when it presented itself, after being "fed-up" with how the situation had been, actually ever since the IIWW. "Italy is a developed country

with a very high level of corruption” (R2). One of the reasons is that if I consider what R2 says about the significance of Berlusconi, I can directly relate it to rising opportunity structures. “Berlusconi was an anti-politician. Then when his old party started to implode in 2009, you had people who felt that they had nowhere to go. In a sense the Five Star Movement filled the gap, stepped in and used that feeling of disillusion”. The failings of Italy’s mainstream politicians and the uncertainty associated with the political crisis in late 2011 and late 2012, led to Berlusconi’s resignation (Turner 2013, 201-202). After Berlusconi’s resignation in late 2011 and Monti’s appointment as PM with the support of most political forces, the FSM found even more opportunity to frame themselves to voters as one of the few oppositional forces in Italian politics. Also in the time between the late 2011 and early 2012, the other main parliamentary parties, which opposed Monti (IDV and Lega Nord), faced investigations into corruption. The condition were ripe for the FSM to capture these voters (Turner 2013, 184-185). The Five Star Movement used their opportunity.

Mosca (2014, 45) says that there are two main explanations for the success of the FSM:

1. The first is contextual and related to the incapacity of domestic politics to enact badly needed reforms (electoral law etc.), but also the scandals exposing corruption (as I mentioned previously) in all political parties.
2. The second is that the FSM had the ability to grasp the opportunity to fill the vacuum in the political arena, presenting itself as pure, distinct from traditional parties and uncompromised.

R3 describes what the FSM did: “I think that they had the concrete opportunity to mobilize people, to give them the real and concrete possibility to act”. According to Mosca (2014, 49) there were several contextual characteristics that generated a window of opportunity for the FSM, namely economic crisis, austerity measures and corruption scandals. All of which caused a down-spiraling curve for the trust of the institutions in Italy. This corresponds well with the Proposition 4, that the lack of trust towards the established political parties and institutions was one of the main reasons for the FSM’s successful emergence as a political party. Generally when the established parties are perceived as failing their mandate, and when the traditional anti-politician and his party disappeared there could be an opening to a new critical voice in the political scene (Hug 2001, 41).

To sum up, I will say that it is the political opportunity structure that can best explain the FSM successful transition. The FSM seized the opportunity, and used the favourable context to

their advantage. The propositions that I concluded mostly explained the success of the FSM's transition to a political party (1, 2 and 4) all derived (a least partly) from the discussion of SMT.

## **6.2 A Social Movement, a Political Party or Both**

*“The FSM, indeed, constitutes a strange case, hard to define. It is a movement, a party, but also simply a ‘vote’ used by citizens in a strategic or else expressive way: to ‘exploit’ specific windows of opportunity; to reach definite objections; to protest, or to achieve concrete results with regard to environmental, ethical and political issues”* (Diamanti 2014, 6).

The citation above express authors take on the phenomenon that the FSM is, how should we define them? It is interesting to look at how the FSM defines themselves. Although they “tick all the boxes” of a definition of a political party; they present candidates for election and actually get them elected. They themselves decline being one. (For more information look to Ceccarini 2015; 470). R4 supports the traditional definition of what a party is: “I think a political party is an organization that participates in the election in order to get mandates”.

The FSM insists on calling themselves a ‘non-party’. The “movement” led by Grillo has defiantly refused to be categorized in a particular European political family. This is clearly a conscious choice. They want to be perceived as something not connected to the “corrupt” and traditional parties of the Italian political system. In the Italian context this represented an added value and contributed to their success (Borghetto, De Giorgi, and Lisi 2014, 18).

Diamanti (2014, 5) problematize this attitude. He says that it is difficult, if not impossible, to define a political actor that competes at elections as anything other than a ‘party’. It can be confusing for the electorate and be a delegitimizing for the political system as a whole. R5 agrees and while describing what makes the FSM different from other movements or political parties he states that: *“Well the difference is that first of all that it wants to be a movement, not a party. You have to consider that I am an historian, and I remember that fascism was born as an anti-party movement. I consider it very dangerous every kind of movement that do not want to be a party. I think democracies and parties are strictly linked together”*.

The FSM not only question if they are themselves a party, they question the very definition of what a party should be. When I asked R1 (remember he is a senator for the FSM) what a political party should be, what it should consist of he answered me in this way:

“Io ci consiglio che non deve essere. Un partito politico non deve essere un ufficio di collegamento. Non deve essere un luogo in cui si va a lavorare, per fare il politico nel partito. Un partito politico dovrebbe essere un luogo di partecipazione di cittadini, di tutti”.

Translated: “In my opinion it should not be. A political party should not be an office of connections. It should not be a place where you go and work, to be a politician in a party. A political party should be a place where all the citizens can participate”.

R2 thinks that the attitude the FSM has when it comes to ideas on what a political party is, or at least should be, is something that makes them interesting. “I think that in a way one of the interesting things about the Five Star Movement is that its questioning that, its asking what a party should be in the future... They have found another way of engaging people. That they involve people, bringing people into the political process, and I think that this is one of the things to their credit”.

### **6.2.1 The Reasons Why - Political impact**

What was the initial reasoning and intentions when the FSM decided to enter the political arena? R1 discusses the reason the FSM wanted to become a political party. He says it was because of the advantages it is to be a part of the institutional system: “Avevamo il obiettivo di formare, ma non riuscendo comunque a portare le nostre instance, le nostre domande, le nostre richieste a poste e critiche all’istituzioni, siamo entrate nelle istituzioni. Questo é stato il passaggio e il motivo é stato questo”. “We had the goal of shaping politics, but we did not manage to get our questions, requests and our critical remarks against the institutions heard, so we entered the institutions. This is what happened and this was the motive”. We can say that this probably was, at a part of their motivation to become a political party. The actual benefits of being a social movement restricted their impact on the political system. Have the FSM actually managed to get their voiced heard, have they had an impact?

If we define a social movement’s impact on the basis of political representation, the FSM scores high. They managed to get an extremely high percentage of the votes in their first national election, with 26 percent of the national votes. On the other hand if we define impact as really having a say in the policies that comes out of the parliament it is monumentally different. The political opportunity structure has shown to be a constraint when it comes to the FSM’s impact when they reached parliament. The election system is a system comprised of block formation, and the largest block gains extra seats in the lower house. Some argue that even though the FSM gained the most votes as a single party, it is block independent, and did not make the biggest block all by themselves and therefore has lost their chance to really

influence the decisions being made. As Kitschelt (1986, 72) puts it; high mobilization does not necessarily lead to profound impacts if the political opportunity structures are not conducive to change. Lower mobilization may have a disproportionate impact because of properties of the political opportunity structure, in this case the properties of some of the Italian institutional qualities.

To achieve impact as a political party in the Italian context, the FSM had to accept some “contamination” of their core principles. This regards the institutionalization the party had to go through to be able to follow the rules of the political game. The attitude that they had to adapt is something that has developed over time. Even from the beginning the party agreed to participate in the distribution of function within the state machinery. In this way, they succeeded in obtaining, much because of their electoral weight, very prestigious positions in the ruling of the senate and the parliament. This is not all. It is possible to assume that some of their success can be related to their attitude towards other Italian political parties. Depicted by Grillo as an indistinct “cartel”: a corrupt caste. This anti-political and anti-party strategy was carried forward, even after the entry into parliament, where the parliamentary majority allowed the FSM to hold the balance of power between the traditional blocks (Bordignon and Ceccarini 2015, 458-459). The FSM refused any propositions of collaboration from the other major parties. R3 regards this as one of their biggest mistakes: “I think it was a big big mistake for the Five Star Movement not to propose to participate actively to supporting the government. The Five Star Movement could have had a better approach and then obtain concrete results for the benefits of the Italians”.

As mentioned an institutional aspect that has greatly influenced their impact on the political system is the disproportionality of the Electoral System. The 2013 elections had a proportional electoral system with a majority premium. In the house the coalition of parties winning the plurality of votes was assigned 340 seats (54 percent of the total number of seats), while the share of actual votes was only 29.5 percent. In comparison was the electoral result of the FSM at 25.6 percent, but they only received 163 seats. The FSM contested the election outside a coalition which is something that cost them dearly in term of electoral impact. The FSM received 17.5 percent of seats in the lower chamber and 17.9 percent in the upper chamber, with a difference of -8.1 percent and -5.9 percent compared to its vote shares. The FSM certainly had a successful electoral emergence, but the asymmetric legislative electoral system has made the FSM less powerful within the Parliament (Conti and Memoli 2015, 530-531).

Another issue that is important is their representative's lack of experience with the political game. When new parties enter the electoral arena, MPs who may have little or no experience (with parliamentary dealings or even politics itself), are suddenly forced to behave in a competent and professional manner. This counts even more when we look at the FSM as a case. One of their main arguments to the public is in fact their member's lack of "containment" with politics. One of the conditions is that their representatives cannot have prior connections to other political parties. The FSM has used this as a rhetoric argument for their benefit, but in practical terms, this very fact can come back and haunt them later. As Hartleb (2015, 45) states: Anti-establishment parties are weakened by their newly elected candidates' lack of experience. It is probable that their candidates have been chosen in fast-moving procedures without the party having the chance to really get to know them. It is a fact that weak performance in office easily undermines party support (Bolleyer 2013, 31). If we take a closer look at the workings of the movement in parliament, like at proposed laws in parliament, then it is evident that the FSM has shown low productivity. The FSM has been proven to be less productive than other opposing forces. By December 2014 every representative from the FSM had had produced an average of 2.7 law proposals. If we compare them to for example a representatives from Lega Nord, they had an average of 12,7 law proposals (Bordignon and Ceccarini 2015, 466).

### **6.3 The FSM: a hybrid political party?**

The FSM can be seen as a hybrid of sorts. It is not a social movement anymore because of its electoral capacities. On the other hand it lack the organization and tradition of regular political parties. What does this imply?

Many have voice their skepticism and criticism towards this new form of organization. They have for example received criticism for their lack of *internal democracy* within the party. Bordignon and Ceccarini (2015, 464) are among those who have expressed this. They say that internal democracy is lacking, because in the end, it is Grillo and Casaleggio, who still control all the key choices. The future development and prospects of the movement will depend on its capacity to address the issue of internal democracy adequately and provide effective responses to the desire for participation expressed by a significant part of its supporters (Mosca 2014, 50). R2 expresses his concern like this: "I think one of the weaknesses of the Five Star Movement is that they have not guaranteed the integrity of their own network. It

need independent auditing. Because they have to be sure that the members, when they vote on something, that that vote really is counted properly”. The lack of a transparent democratic discussion is one of the main challenges that the FSM yet has to face. Mosca (2014, 49) describes the problem like this: “The issue of internal democracy and management of dissent is a particularly delicate one. The online primaries held in December 2012 to select the movement’s candidates for parliament were very problematic in terms of participation, inclusiveness and transparency”

Another thing they have received criticism for is their “*cult-like*” tendencies. This is something that I myself noticed when talking to respondent R1. We were talking about the other respondents that I was going to interview. He got a bit disgruntled when I mentioned that I was going to interview a senator who had earlier been a part of the FSM’s political group. R1 wanted to assure me that this man (R3) was not a part of their organization anymore, ever since he had been “excommunicated” in 2014. It was quite interesting to behold his reaction. One can argue that the movement has a cult-like behavior in this respect; if you disagree with our principles, then you cannot be a part of our organization. This notion that the FSM as similar traits as a cult is also supported by R2, which talks about it quite a lot. R2 underlines this by stating: “A thing that is unusual about the about the Five Star Movement is the amount, the number of expulsions that they have. The people who are their representatives really have to be their representatives. They have to represent what has been voted on in the blog. People who don’t do that, then they have to be expelled. It does give the movement a slightly kind off cult-like air. It’s a slightly sinister side, with the constant expulsions”. “What I find remarkable is that after all these purges and expulsions, these splits that we had in the past. All the mini-parliamentary scandals over peoples leaving or thrown out. They are still getting twenty or twenty-five percent in the pull”.

## **6.4 The future of the FSM**

Unlike the human life cycle, the longer a party is around, the less its death is expected (Bolleyer 2013, 12).

The Five Star Movement has now been a part of the Italian political scene since 2009. There are no signs that it will disappear anytime soon. In fact they are manifesting themselves even at the local political arena. 20<sup>th</sup> of June 2016 marked the day when two candidates from the anti-establishment FSM were elected to lead the cities of Rome and Turin. Virginia Raggi, the

FSM's candidate in the Italian capital won 67 percent of the votes against the Democratic party's candidate. This victory was widely anticipated. A greater shock to the establishment came in Turin, where the heavyweight incumbent, Piero Fassino, was ousted by the FSM's candidate (Scammell 2016). These victories says something about the still lingering discontent people feel with the perceived corrupt, established political class. Which is to great advantage for the anti-establishment FSM. As R2 puts it: "I think that if the party can show itself to be a bit less "nutty", then I think that they have a golden future".

R2 was using the example of the election of the mayor in Rome to underline that the movement are becoming better organized and maybe leaning to be a bit more populist. "I think that they are becoming the more normal party, a bit. They are becoming better organized, but they are still very politically or ideologically flexible, and what we are seeing at the moment (the interview was conducted at the beginning of April) in Rome is that they are trying to lure disenchanted center-right voters". R1 underline the importance that the movement has to change its image from being considered a protest-movement who only says no, to actually be considered as a serious actor in the political landscape.

R2: "I think that it's a very difficult call to make exactly how they are going to evolve. I think that, yes they are going to become more conventional in some ways. I think that they are perhaps going to shift a bit to the right, but the opportunity is still there to be a very big presence in Italian politics. Because the level of disenchantment with the traditional parties remains extremely high and there is a huge gap on the right. I think that Grillo certainly is very tempted to try and fill that gap".

R3: "I think that their success will depend a lot on, in the end the economic crisis. The result of the Five Star Movement will depend on the economic situation. And also of course if there are some bit important scandal, who knows. I hope not but, I hope the Italian people decide for more concrete parties."

R4: "It's an interesting experiment but at the same time they face many difficulties. Citizens do not always get involved themselves, citizens don't always want to get involved into the technicalities, they do not always have time. That's why they ask others to represent."

#### **6.4.1 A Future without Grillo?**

"Even if the basis of the FSM is not to be identified with and reduced to Grillo, without him it would cease to have identity and visibility" (Diamanti 2014, 12). As I have discussed earlier we can call the FSM is a personalized political entity. However it is also to some extent



'personal' because it was created by one person – its leader Grillo – and its difficult to imagine that it could survive without him. He is the owner of its symbol, but also the unifying factor, both externally and internally (Diamanti 2014, 12).

R7 express this sentiment as well “Un partito come il PD sicuramente puo sopravvivere alla leadership di Renzi, come ha fatto precedentemente. Partiti come Forza Italia o Il Movimento Cinque Stelle non è detto che riescano sopravvivere il leader fundatori”. This can be translated as: “a political party like the PD (Partito Democratico) could surely survive without the leadership of Renzi, like they have done before. However, with political parties like Forza Italia or the Five Star Movement without its founding leader, the future of the party is less secure”.

#### **6.4.2 The future of Italy**

R3 describes how he sees the situation in Italy today: “I think we are in a transition, like in other countries. There is a draw of populist movements and parties, in some cases with a clear definition of the right direction...But, in any case generally this populist feeling is growing in Europe”. When asked to describe the main characteristics of the Italian political system R4 describes it as: “Pretty much unstable, pretty much fragmented... In terms of political system I would say it is a transitional system which has tried starting from the 90s to move from a consensual type of democracy to a more majoritarian one without achieving the goal. So it's a sort of hybrid”. So both of them describe that Italy is in a sort of transition. The political sentiments are in a transitional phase as well as the political system. Cotta and Verziagli support this notion that Italy is in transition without quite succeeding to achieve its end goals. This hurts the trust of the political institutions and makes it easier for oppositional forces to gain weight. In this context it is important to remember that the FSM is currently the main voice of the opposition to the current government. Should the sitting incumbent falter in its popularity, the FSM will be more than willing to be a vehicle of popular discontent. Turner (2013, 209) argues that this may be a likely scenario, he says this while talking about the FSM chances to capitalize on the incumbents failure: “its recent history shows a track record of capitalizing on opponents' weaknesses whilst not succumbing to its own. If this pattern keeps repeating itself, it may be unforeseeable that the movement's support grown even bigger”. The reason this may very well happen is mainly because of the unnatural collaboration of the governing coalitions as R5 neatly describe: “There is a very unnatural collaboration inside the government. That has the only justification as opposition to the chaos, that the radical

minorities could bring if they could go to power, should go to power. So it's a sort of an unnatural marriage of interests".

## **6.6 Why study the FSM?**

Here I will discuss the importance of studying the FSM. As R2 puts it "I think people should pay a lot of attention to the Five Star Movement, but it does not necessarily mean that I think it's a good thing altogether. I think that it is innovative, so unusual, and so original that people really should pay a lot of attention to what has happened in Italy because 25 percent of the voting population chose to vote for this movement. Now that has to be telling us something".

The FSM can be compared to a 'laboratory' that can help us to identify and understand the challenges that await the representative democracies of Europe. It is a catalogue of the changes taking place in the party-based systems and in the relationship between citizens and institutions. Such a catalogue useful for practitioners of political science (Diamanti 2014, 14).

R6 argues similarly "In Italy we had Berlusconi before other parties had something similar. And here again in Italy with the Five Star Movement, before the populist political parties spread all over Europe. It's like a lab; you can see the first result of something, of change".

Because of this ability of the The FSM, as a 'laboratory' that can help us to identify and understand the challenges that await the representative democracies of Europe it is crucial to understand them better and to see what has influenced them.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Through using SMT and theory on political parties this paper has explored the phenomenon of social movements transition to become a fully-fledged political parties, with emphasis on anti-establishment social movements. The focus has been on four propositions that emerged as plausible explanations while studying theory. These propositions have been analyzed and discussed with a particular focus on how these four propositions worked explaining the transition of the chosen case of study; the Five Star Movement in Italy. The propositions were analyzed doing a comparison of collected data-material against empirical evidence drawn from existing literature. The method used to collect the data was Semi-structural interviews with political commentators, scholars and people within the movement itself (politicians). In other words, elite-interviews. They were collected at fieldwork in Rome, by the author, in early April 2016.

My research question became: *what main factors paved the way for the Five Star Movement to transition from an anti-establishment social movement to a successful political party?* I concluded that the different propositions had had different kinds of influence and different degree of it. I will now go through my findings of the relevance of the different propositions in the order I analyzed them.

Proposition 1, is the importance of social media for the FSM's transition. I believe that the FSM's use of the internet had an influence on its success, but that it was not as "monumental" as first perceived. It was used as a method for their own convenience, namely for organizational purposes and to lessen their use of resources. By using social media they have managed to reduce the economic costs connected to organization and participation in civic and political actions. Proposition 2 states that the FSM's leader Beppe Grillo was a contributing factor for their successful transition to a political party. According to most empirical evidence, Beppe Grillo has played a crucial role in the establishment of the FSM, at first as a social movement located mostly at social media, then to a fully-fledged political party. My respondent's views supports this, all except one mention or clearly states his significance. I conclude therefore the folly of excluding the importance of the leader when we talk about the social movements becoming political parties. The proposition I consider least influential is Proposition 3, that it was the focus on seemingly neglected issues as a contributing factor to the FSM's successful transition. Both empirical evidence and my own respondents supports this. I found this result a bit surprising. According to much of my

theory, this explanation for a political parties emergence have been viewed as an highly viable explanation. Maybe the fact that my case was a movement before it became a party has something to do about it. That this proposition does not go well with SMT on how social movements emerge. Proposition 4: states that it was lack of trust in established institutions helped the FSM on their way to become a successful political party. I find that this proposition is highly supported as the main cause of the success of the FSM both by existing literature and by my own respondents.

In this thesis, I have conducted an exploration into two different theoretical paths, to explain a phenomenon. I have looked at different causes of social movement and political party formation and combined the efforts of both theoretical paths. The focus has been on one representative case, to gain in-depth knowledge. It has been done in an attempt to understand the general growth of anti-establishment parties and movements worldwide. I will say that it is the theoretical path of political opportunity structure that can best explain the FSM successful transition. The FSM seized the opportunity, and used the favorable context to their advantage. The propositions that I concluded mostly explained the success of the FSM's transition to a political party (1, 2 and 4) all derived (at least partly) from the discussion of SMT. This Research can be used as starting point for further theoretical

There are many reasons for me choosing to do a case study of the FSM. First, I do believe that it is representative for other similar cases, and second because I believe Italy to be an interesting political environment to gain further understanding about and knowledge off. The Italian political system has traditionally been characterized as very unstable, tainted by multiple political scandals and very top-heavy with distinctive political elites. Then in the election of 2013 something surprising happened. An anti-establishment social movement recently turned party gained almost 26 percent of the total votes. The FSM are still a grand actor in the Italian political landscape. With estimated support at twenty percent they have now established themselves as someone not to be taken lightly. However, one can say that the wind of Beppe Grillo has somewhat subsided. The electoral system itself and the organization of the parliament is working against a single party's involvement and influence on policies. Their constant refusal to collaborate with others that initially was a huge part of their success now inhabits their further progress, influence on policies and general development as a regular parliamentary political party. Their lack of transparency in their own cherished digital, direct democracy is also creating rising critical voices from multiple directions. But

they did succeed in doing something remarkable. They managed to successfully transition from an anti-establishment social movement to a political party and still lived to tell the tale.

I want to underline the importance of the FSM's emergence as an example of a much larger phenomenon that needs more research. It is not possible to exclude the relevance of my findings for other similar cases; my study can therefore be used as a starting point for a case driven comparative analysis, at a later stage. An example for a comparison between the FSM and another case could be the *Podemos* party in Spain or *Syriza* in Greece. Spain, Greece and Italy have similar political traditions, history and cultures. A comparison like this would be interesting and may further enlighten the results found in this research paper.

## 8. APPENDIX

In this Appendix i will present some information that concerns the practical aspect of the fieldwork.

### **8.1 General Presentation (Invitation Letter)**

In English:

Dear ...

My name is Albertine and I study comparative politics at the University of Bergen (Norway). I am doing my master project right now and I would like to interview you/some of your group with regard to this.

I am doing a study on critical social movements becoming political parties, and especially what facilitated their emergence. My particular case of study is the Five Star Movement.

The interviews will only be used as data in my master thesis and you will be completely anonymous. The interviews will take between 30 to 60 minutes. I will be in Rome from the 31<sup>st</sup> of March to the 7<sup>th</sup> of April. Which day could suite you? I hope for a positive response.

If you need more information on my project or if you have suggestions to other people I could contact, please do not hesitate to contact me. I can do the interviews both in English and Italian, so please let me know which language you prefer.

Kindest regards

Albertine Eikås Halkjelsvik, [albertine.halkjelsvik@gmail.com](mailto:albertine.halkjelsvik@gmail.com)

In Italian:

Gentile Signore/a...

Mi chiamo Albertine, sono una studentessa norvegese e studio scienze politiche all'università di Bergen (Norvegia). Sto facendo il progetto di laurea magistrale, per la quale mi servono dei dati ammassati. Perciò mi piacerebbe fare una intervista con Lei.

L'oggetto della ricerca è lo studio di movimenti sociali critici che sono diventati partiti politici, specialmente i motivi/le cause che hanno facilitato la loro emergenza. Il mio caso di studio é /La mia ricerca è basata sul MoVimento 5 stelle.

Le interviste saranno usate esclusivamente come dati nel mio progetto di ricerca e sarete tutti anonimi. I dureranno tra i 30 e i 60 minuti. Saró a Roma dal 31 marzo fino al 7 aprile. Quale giorno potrà ricervermi?

Se Le servono piú informazioni sul progetto o se ha ulteriori suggerimenti su delle persone che potrei intervistare, per favore mi faccia sapere. A seconda della sua preferenza le interviste si potranno fare sia in inglese sia in italiano (Sono meglio in inglese).

Cordiali saluti

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## **8.2 Interview Guide (English)**

The interview questions is listed and explained in section 4.4.5 on the pages 56-58 in the paper under the chapter on method.

## **8.3 Interview Guide (Italian)**

- 1) Per iniziare/inanzitutto, mi potrebbe parlare un po' della Sua formazione professionale e delle sue esperienze?
- 2) Quali sarebbero secondo Lei i caratteristici principali del sistema politico italiano? Ad esempio comparandolo ad altri sistemi europei in merito alla collaborazione dei partiti politici, la cultura etc.
- 3) Che cosa dovrebbe consistere un partito politico? Cosa deve fare, cosa incarna?
- 4) Se non Le dispiace, potrebbe esprimere la Sua relazione con il Movimento 5 Stelle? Cosa ne pensa? Com'è venuto a conoscerlo?
  
- 5) Che cosa sa rispetto all'organizzazione del movimento 5 stelle? Cosa lo rende diverso rispetto ad altri partiti o movimenti politici italiani?
- 6) Considerando la rapida crescita del movimento, quali sono stati secondo Lei i più elementari vantaggi e motivi a portarlo da un movimento piuttosto locale e ristretto ai media sociale ad un partito politico di grande influenza (da quanto vediamo dalle ultime elezioni)?

- 7) Lei cosa direbbe, com'è riuscito a svilupparsi ed a trasformarsi in un proprio partito politico?
- 8) Cosa pensa del futuro del MoVimento 5 Stelle? - come si svilupperà? – (perché?)
- 9) Siamo arrivati alla fine dell'intervista. Vorrebbe aggiungere qc? Grazie tante per il Suo tempo e la collaborazione su questo progetto.



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