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**New Party Organizations and Intra-party  
Democracy: A Comparative Analysis of the Five  
Star Movement and Podemos**

*PhD dissertation*

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## Abstract

This dissertation seeks to explore the impact of new participatory opportunities on intra-party democracy in new party organizations through the detailed study of two crucial cases: the Five Star Movement in Italy and Podemos in Spain. This case selection is justified by the fact that both parties have been forerunners in their national party systems in terms of adopting new decision-making mechanisms that rely on the Internet, however, they have implemented such mechanisms based on different conceptions of intra-party democracy (plebiscitary vs. assembly-based). The thesis relies on party statutes, party documents, party websites, and media reports of party events; semi-structured qualitative interviews with party representatives (n=28); and two online membership surveys conducted by the author (n=187 [M5S] + 176 [Podemos]) to reveal *the extent to which new forms of participation within political parties as exemplified in Podemos and the Five Star Movement grant power to ordinary party members and supporters, and the way this affects intra-party democracy (RQ)*. The thesis also uses data from the Political Party Database Project (PPDB) to compare these cases with other parties within the same party systems. Besides exploring the effect of participatory innovations on intra-party democracy, the thesis also addresses the theoretical debate regarding whether more inclusive structures inevitably lead to the hierarchization of political parties, in line with the predictions of Michel's "iron law of oligarchy" (Michels 1911) and the cartel party literature.

The thesis has four main findings. The first is that organizational structure is the chief determinant of intra-party democracy, regardless of the participatory tools that are implemented. The lack of intermediary organs makes it much easier for the party administration to control and manipulate membership ballots, as well as to act as an agenda-setter. Second, the role of the party leader has severe implications on the extent to which the tools that are meant to foster intra-party democracy achieve their stated goals. While charismatic leaders can dominate decisions in almost any organizational setting, not institutionalizing their leadership makes them substantially less accountable and responsive. Members have more influence vis-à-vis charismatic leaders who are replaceable, even if these leaders use sophisticated agenda-setting techniques to constrain their choices. Third, online decision-making tools are more accessible, but not necessarily more conducive to intra-party democracy than their offline counterparts. Moreover, complicated tools and processes might still be subject to the "digital divide". Online policy-making instruments are a promising avenue for fostering citizens' participation but so far have failed to generate meaningful results due to the lack of feedback and mediation. Fourth, party activists display higher levels of commitment to the party when they also have regular offline meetings. This suggests that even if online tools are a promising way to engage a larger number of citizens in party work, these need to be balanced by face-to-face meetings to offer a satisfying social experience. More comparative work is needed to demonstrate whether these findings hold for a broader universe of cases.

## Statements regarding intellectual property and authorship

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Date: November 24, 2018

Signature:



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## Chapter 1 – Theoretical introduction

*“...the evolution of party members’ roles is worth studying precisely because it reveals a great deal about party efforts to adapt to societal understandings of parties’ linkage roles in representative democracies”*

*(Susan Scarrow, 2014a:2)*

Political parties as the core institutions of representative democracy have undergone a series of transformations, challenges, and crises in the past two decades. Not only has a sizeable share of their members abandoned them (Mair and Van Biezen 2001, Van Biezen et al. 2012), but also voters have become increasingly distrustful of their representative capacities (Dalton and Weldon 2005). While broader cultural changes, especially individualization and societal modernization (Inglehart 1990, Norris 2011, Welzel 2013) affected all forms of political participation, there are some reasons that explain why political parties have specifically lost their attractiveness as an arena of participation.

In particular, the incentives for joining, and the availability of alternatives have changed drastically. Due to increasingly generous state subventions on the one hand, and the regulation of their finances on the other, parties no longer have incentives to “establish a more structural relationship with civil society” (Van Biezen 2004:717). Moreover, they also lack the means for providing selective incentives (social security, material benefits, career opportunities) to attract members. In consequence, they shifted toward offering “social incentives” (Young 2013), such as the reinforcement of group identity, and the company of like-minded citizens (Scarrow 2014b). However, as most mainstream parties have failed in reinforcing group identity in increasingly atomized societies (Faucher 2015), these benefits have only had limited appeal. At the same time, as a consequence of individualization, rising education levels, the reduction of working hours and higher disposable income, citizens have a widening array of alternatives for spending their free time (Katz 2013, Van Deth 2000). Even when they are committed to dedicate this time to achieving some political objectives, they might rather choose to be involved in interest groups, social movements or protests than in political parties (Bimber et al. 2012, Stolle and Hooghe 2011).

Under such conditions, one may ask why citizens with an interest in politics would join political parties at all? Parties have responded to this challenge by granting members more rights in intra-party decisions (Scarrow 2014b), i.e. by becoming more inclusive organizations. Moreover, they also implemented changes to make participation easier: first, by making party activities accessible online, and second, by allowing non-members to participate in decision-making procedures. These two factors (online participation and the extension of the party selectorate<sup>1</sup>) are the core organizational changes whose impact is going to be assessed throughout the dissertation through the cases of two recently founded political parties, Podemos and the Five Star Movement, both of which have pioneered such participatory innovations within their respective national party systems. The reasons behind and the implications of this case selection are discussed in detail below.

Based on earlier research on party organizational change, the effects of reducing the costs of participation can be mixed. While in general the “opening” of political parties is expected to have a democratizing effect, the cartel party literature tells us that increased access and inclusiveness of intra-party decision-making can also strengthen the party leadership vis-à-vis the party intermediary elites (Carty 2013, Hopkin 2001, Mair 2002) and thus foster anti-democratic tendencies consistent with Michels’ “iron law of oligarchy” (Michels 1968 [1911], Kitschelt 1989a). Thus, recent literature identifies two grand narratives with regards to the loosening boundaries of political parties, one that considers these changes as conducive to more intra-party democracy (Gibson 2015, Loxbo 2011) and another that regards them as factors which produce more hierarchical and personalized parties (Bennett 2012, Kriesi 2012a). I suggest that none of these narratives can be generalized to new party organizations in which these tendencies coexist and interfere with each other. The central research question of the project (highlighted below) takes the opening of political parties as a starting point and addresses whether it really means more internal democracy or more hierarchy. As a secondary research question, the thesis also addresses the question of what social benefits derive from more inclusive organizational structures, especially with regards to how members perceive the quality of their own participation.

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<sup>1</sup> Selectorate refers to the pool of members or party sympathizers who have a right to participate in selecting the party’s candidates in electoral contests (see Rahat and Hazan 2001).

**Central research question: *To what extent do inclusive party models as exemplified by Podemos and the Five Star Movement grant power to ordinary party members and supporters, and how does this affect intra-party democracy?***

This chapter will first review the current state of the literature on party organization and highlight developments that are most relevant for this project. This will be followed by the introduction of my main concepts, their indicators and the expected relationship between them. Finally, I will describe the data and the methods used throughout the dissertation, as well as the cases I select for analysis. Further implications of my case selection are discussed in *Chapter 2*.

## **1. Literature review – Members’ role across party models**

Parties might not mobilize as many people nowadays as they did in the “golden age” of mass parties (i.e., in the post-WWII period), nevertheless, they seem to have remained autonomous institutions that have an impact on their environment (Enyedi 2014). Despite the growing anti-party sentiment across many European countries (Poguntke and Scarrow 1996), Schattschneider’s famous argument that “the political parties created democracy and that modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of the parties” (as cited in Cross and Katz 2013:1) still seems valid. As Susan Scarrow and Paul Webb argue:

“(…) representative government remains very much a partisan affair. Political parties control ballot access and coordinate legislative behavior, and in many countries organized parties benefit from generous public subsidies. Furthermore, no matter what they say about parties, citizens are still structuring their voting behavior along stable partisan lines” (Scarrow and Webb 2013:4)

The stability of partisan lines may be debatable (Bischoff 2013), but what is even more striking is that despite citizens’ perception of parties as the core institutions of political representation, the role of political parties as participatory arenas has diminished, not only in terms of membership figures (Mair and Van Biezen 2001, Van Biezen et al. 2012), but also regarding party activity (Bolleyer et al. 2015, Gauja 2013, Whiteley 2011). While theories of societal modernization

address the supply side of the membership equation (i.e. individuals' incentives to join), at the same time the demand side has also changed. These changes are reflected in the role of members in different party models.

Before moving on to the discussion of these models, it is useful to inquire about the potential reasons why parties might need members in the first place. According to Susan Scarrow (1994), there are seven ways in which members may contribute to the goals of a political party: 1. by improving membership statistics; 2. by being loyal voters themselves; 3. by multiplying votes through their everyday contacts; 4. by making financial contributions; 5. by volunteering; 6. by providing valuable ideas; and 7. by extending the base of potential candidates. However, they can also be viewed as liabilities because their ideological commitment makes them prone to support vote-losing policies (May 1973)<sup>2</sup> and because they waste organizational resources that could be used for convincing undecided voters instead (Scarrow 1994).<sup>3</sup> A review of the literature on party models reveals which of the above elements dominated parties' conception of membership during different periods in the evolution of party organizations.

For the Duvergerian *mass party*, large membership was essential, as its legitimacy depended on "direct popular involvement in the formulation of the party programme" (Katz and Mair 1995:7). While mass parties were meant to represent one specific social group (from which they also recruited their members and whose loyalty they could count on), this was no longer the case in Kirchheimer's *catch-all parties* (Kirchheimer 1966) and Panebianco's *electoral-professional parties*. These parties competed for the vote of the socially dealigned, isolated median voter relying on mass media-enforced mobilization techniques (Faucher 2015, Panebianco 1988). Although members were still valued for their financial contribution to the organization's budget, their activism was no longer seen as indispensable for electoral success. With the emergence of Katz and Mair's *cartel parties*, the distance between parties and the electorate grew even larger, due to

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<sup>2</sup> May's "law of curvilinear disparity" has been questioned by several empirical studies, which found that it is only applicable under certain very special conditions (Kitschelt 1989b) and that in general, sub-leaders are expected to hold more extreme positions than both members and top-leaders (Norris 1995). Nevertheless, May's original law may still influence parties in how they view their own members.

<sup>3</sup> This list does not necessarily exhaust all possibilities, and thus, it might need to be extended to provide a comprehensive picture on the demand side of party membership. Members' role in sustaining intra-party democracy in order to foster democracy at the state level might be but one necessary addition.

parties' increasing dependence on state subventions (serving as a disincentive to recruit members for financial reasons, see Van Biezen 2004) and the ensuing convergence of their policy positions (Katz and Mair 1995, 2009). Moreover, the *cartel party* is also the first model that highlighted a key feature that most current political parties manifest: the blurring of boundaries between members and supporters (Bolleyer 2007).

More recent models of party organization can be understood as refinements of the models presented above. As such, Hopkin and Paolucci's *business firm parties* take the market-based logic of *electoral-professional parties* to an extreme: dominated by a strong leader who relies on expert knowledge in crafting his/her messages, these parties conceive of policies as "products" that need to be "sold" to the electorate (Hopkin and Paolucci 1999). Likewise, Van Biezen's *parties as public utilities* model owes to Katz and Mair's cartel party thesis in that it emphasizes the role of the state in financing political parties. However, unlike Katz and Mair's rather pessimistic account of this transformation, Van Biezen argues that this process can be attributed to "the increasing recognition of political parties themselves as inevitable and desirable institutions" (Van Biezen 2004:704) which turns them into "a unique type of public utility" (Van Biezen 2004:718).

Carty's *franchise party* tries to fill the void left by the business firm model that only focuses on highly centralized, and thus inevitably volatile structures. In contrast, *franchise parties* are based on a stratarchical organizational structure in which local and central party units both enjoy a significant share of autonomy, whilst they are also interdependent in certain spheres of activity (Carty 2004, 2013, also see Bolleyer 2012). Besides the spread of horizontal structures, the role of the Internet is also emphasized in the notion of *cyber parties* that "use web-based technologies to strengthen the relationship between voters and party" and offer voters and supporters rights traditionally associated with formal membership (Margetts 2006:531, 2001, Hartleb 2013). These two latter models are particularly useful for analyzing parties that combine strong leadership with local autonomy, and traditional membership with more flexible forms of affiliation, including online participation. However, as Nicole Bolleyer's analysis of new left and new right parties demonstrated, the *cartel party model* is still a commonly referred starting point for studying emergent party organizations, some of which might show a striking resemblance to the cartel parties they so adamantly criticize (Bolleyer 2007). Despite significant progress in the study of

party organizations, the question of whether 21<sup>st</sup> century parties organize differently than their predecessors remains relevant (see Poguntke et al. 2016).

## **2. Participation in new political parties**

As the above section has shown, despite some new propositions, the current party literature is still dominated by the *cartel party thesis*, i.e. by the assumption that political parties have shifted from civil society towards the state as a result of increasing public subventions, which has also led to a loss of diversity in terms of the policy positions they represent (Katz and Mair 1995, 2009). Although this is a useful analytical entry point, it is increasingly ill-equipped to capture the recent diversity of party organizations. Whether we are entering a period dominated by a new party model is yet to be decided, but contemporary developments suggest that we could rather “end up with a stable co-existence of equally viable and stable forms of party organization” (Bolleyer 2007:22).

Nevertheless, there are some tendencies that can be observed in most parties but are most pronounced in new parties which experiment with innovative organizational models based on the direct participation of their members in intra-party decision-making processes. These trends point toward more and easier participation in intra-party affairs and more activities conducted online. Both trends make parties more inclusive; however, it is not clear whether this shift also contributes to an increase in internal democracy. Above all, it entails the danger that a powerful party elite can manipulate a large number of atomized individuals at the grassroots at the expense of involving more committed activists and party functionaries at the mid-levels. Thus, more participation might not only be incompatible with representativeness (Rahat, Hazan and Katz 2008), but also with a higher level of internal democracy. In order to construct an analytical framework in which these tensions can be understood, I first introduce the main concepts, then draft some exploratory hypotheses that are going to be refined inductively throughout the thesis.

## 2.1 The diversification of party affiliation

The latest developments in party organizations have challenged traditional understandings of party membership (Scarrow 2014b, Van Haute and Gauja 2015). Recent scholarship reveals two major trends in the ways contemporary political parties relate to their members: 1. the diversification of membership options (Scarrow 2014a, 2014b); and 2. the blurring of organizational boundaries that makes members and non-members more difficult to distinguish from each other (Bolleyer et al. 2015, Gauja 2015, Kosiara-Pedersen et al. 2014). Although often presented as a novel development, the latter point coincides with the predictions of the *cartel party* thesis (Bolleyer 2007, Katz and Mair 1995, 2009). Both developments push modern political parties towards “looser, more individualised and amorphous networks of affiliation” (Gauja 2015:232). They also reflect that even if members might not be as important as donors and activists anymore, most political parties still view them as assets rather than liabilities.

Affiliation today can take on various forms ranging from following a candidate on a social media site, registering online as a “party friend” to full-fledged, formal membership. Modern, individualized options are offered simultaneously with traditional ones, which results in the creation of “multi-speed membership parties”, i.e. “organizations that offer supporters multiple ways to engage with the party” (Scarrow 2014a:9). These include formal membership options (traditional membership<sup>4</sup>, light membership and cyber-membership) as well as looser forms of affiliation for supporters (sustainers, social media followers and friends, news audience).<sup>5</sup> While the previous taxonomy might need to be adapted to specific cases, my project will incorporate Susan Scarrow’s insights that 1. modern political parties tend to offer several affiliation options simultaneously; 2. the resulting membership groups overlap with each other; 3. individuals’ degree of participation in party activities is dynamic over time (see Whiteley 2011); and 4. that new forms of affiliation are mostly exercised online (Scarrow 2014a:10-11). In addition, it is important to emphasize that these new affiliation options not only reduce the financial costs of affiliation

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<sup>4</sup> Traditional membership is understood as a form of affiliation that entails paying dues, the signing of a declaration of support for party principles, the prohibition of joining another political party, and often a probationary period (Scarrow 2014:11).

<sup>5</sup> Another recent paper co-authored by Scarrow makes a distinction between four different membership options: 1. formal direct membership; 2. formal indirect membership; 3. other affiliates; and 4. virtual members (Kosiara-Pedersen et al. 2014:11).

(membership fees), but also the reputational ones, i.e. “the social stigmas that might be associated with partisan affiliation” (Scarrow 2014b:134) which might especially appeal to younger cohorts.

## **2.2 Online participation**

While the appearance of online party activities such as the introduction of electronic voting in internal decision-making is a relatively new phenomenon, political parties had noticed the decline of membership figures (Mair and Van Biezen 2001, Van Biezen et al. 2012) and tried to reverse the trend by offering new affiliation options to sympathizers well before online mobilization became possible (Faucher 2015, Hopkin 2001, Seyd 1999, Seyd and Whiteley 2004). Arguably, the extension of affiliation options as well as the rights associated with them would have affected the distribution of power within political parties even if none of them could have been facilitated by the Internet. If the distribution of power within political parties has started to change regardless of the technological context, it is important to first enquire whether online political participation has indeed had an impact on the process.

Online communication has certain characteristics that could lead one to expect that it does in fact affect the distribution of power within organizations: 1. the reduced cost of information and communication; 2. the increased choice of participatory opportunities; 3. the decentralization of information; and 4. the dominance of horizontal networks instead of hierarchical ones (Bimber et al. 2012). Besides these features, it is assumed that online communication places power and agency in the hands of individuals, as “it breaks down boundaries previously established and maintained by organizations” (Bimber et al. 2012:19).

While some theorists feared that the Internet may “undermine traditional forms of involvement such as party activism, as it diverts political activity to cyberspace” (Whiteley 2011:23), it is also possible to conceive of it as a neutral and flexible environment in the sense that it facilitates

“hierarchical control by permitting the gathering and sense-making of vast amounts of information by the central leadership of globe-spanning organizations, just as it permits decentralized, self-organizing coordination among loose networks of people” (Bimber et al. 2008:83).

In other words, the Internet does not challenge the traditional mediating role of political parties

between citizens and the state (Mair 2002), nor does it necessarily make them more horizontal or decentralized. Contrary to some pessimistic expectations, formal organizations seem to persist, and are currently “doing things that challenge how social scientists have traditionally understood what membership is, why people participate in groups, and what drives collective action inside formal structures” (Bimber et al. 2012:10).

From an individual perspective, the primary appeal of online participation is the reduced procedural cost<sup>6</sup> of participation compared to its offline alternatives (Bimber et al. 2012, Dalton 2015, Hirzalla and Van Zoonen 2011, Scarrow 2014b, Schlozman et al. 2010). Thus, it is expected that parties which are primarily based on online participation can recruit vast numbers of supporters in a relatively short time, however, these supporters might display low levels of commitment over time (Puig-i-Abril and Rojas 2007), and only temporarily take part in activities that require more effort than the act of joining.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, although online participation is easier for tech-savvy individuals, some older citizens may still be affected by the “digital divide”, i.e. the uneven distribution of technological skills across age cohorts (Gibson and Cantijoch 2013, Schlozman et al. 2010). However, the proportion of citizens who find it difficult to engage in political activities online is gradually decreasing, thus the effect of the digital divide should not be overestimated. What is more concerning is that despite the low costs associated to it, online participation has primarily attracted citizens who had already been politically active before (Schlozman et al. 2010). Nevertheless, taking part in intra-party decisions online is a new opportunity where both the procedural as well as the reputational costs of party activism are dramatically reduced, which is expected to trigger the engagement of previously passive citizens with an interest in politics.

### **2.3 Intra-party democracy**

The introduction of measures of intra-party democracy (hereafter also referred to as IPD) is probably the most transformative process that many political parties have undergone during the

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<sup>6</sup> The act of joining either as a member or a supporter of a political party as well as the renewal of membership have been greatly facilitated by online opportunities (Scarrow 2015:131).

<sup>7</sup> On the fluctuation of party membership in inter-election years, see Carty’s (2013) example of the Canadian Liberal Party.

past two decades. Intra-party democracy can be defined as “the involvement of party members in the decisions that are central to a party’s political life, including programme writing, and personnel selection and other intra-organizational decision-making” (Poguntke et al. 2016:10), such as coalition agreements (see *Chapter 6*). Heretofore, the democratization of political parties in general has brought about mixed results: on the one hand, it has failed to reverse the pervasive negative trend in membership figures (Faucher 2015), on the other hand, it has stimulated high levels of participation among existing party members (Scarrow 2014b) who were mostly passive before.<sup>8</sup> As Richard Katz argued,

“it may be unrealistic to assume that parties, no matter how democratic their internal arrangements may be, can continue to occupy their previously assumed places as the central linkage between citizens and government, or as the primary channel for activity by politically engaged citizens” (Katz 2013:149-150).

This pessimism regarding the potential impact of intra-party democracy mostly stems from the practices of established political parties which mostly granted party members a right to participate only indirectly. While the extension of members’ rights was undeniable in cases like the UK Labour and the Conservative Party (Hopkin 2001, Seyd 1999, Seyd and Whiteley 2004), in such forerunners of intra-party democracy, the party elites typically retained significant control over the process of leadership and candidate selection (Cross 2013, Labour Party 2015, Scarrow 2014b). Whether this is also the case in parties established after the global financial crisis is a question this thesis seeks to explore.

As Cross and Katz noted, “IPD can add to the overall democratic experience or it may detract from it depending upon how it is structured” (Cross and Katz 2013:5). In particular, the definition of the party demos has important implications on who is eligible to vote. Variation along these lines can be described using two concepts: inclusion (formal eligibility) and access (the procedural costs of voting), both of which have a crucial impact on who finally has a say in party decisions (Scarrow 2014b:186-187). It also must be noted that as desirable as it may seem, inclusiveness can have a negative effect on system-level democracy as it may lead to outcomes that are less representative

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<sup>8</sup> Based on comparative data on levels of intra-party participation from several previous studies, Gauja estimates that “on average, approximately 9 per cent of party members can be regarded as ‘active’” (Gauja 2013:128).

of the electorate than they would be in a more closed and regulated contest (Rahat, Hazan and Katz 2008).

Nevertheless, new anti-system parties might have different motives for advocating intra-party democracy than their established peers and may choose different means to implement it. While established parties are seeking to return to the “golden age” of mass parties in order to revalidate their “legitimizing myth” (Hopkin 2001, Katz and Mair 1995), new anti-system parties present direct participation precisely as an alternative to established political practices. Highlighting the influence each party member has on regaining “democratic control over our institutions and our fate” and emphasizing the value of individual participation is a recurring theme in the manifestos of such parties (e.g. Podemos 2015a). In such a model, a politician is conceived of as “an agent of citizens’ participation in a continuous process of progressive empowerment” (ibid.), rather than as a representative of a specific social group or constituency. Whether the efforts for involving citizens in decision-making are genuine and sustainable in times when political pressures (just as the necessity to make pre-electoral arrangements or to form coalitions) might push leaders toward circumventing members’ will is a question that the analysis presented in the empirical chapters will shed light on.

### **3. Indicators**

While the above paragraphs have clarified the main variables conceptually, the following section will provide details on their measurement. First of all, it needs to be emphasized that concepts related to intra-party democracy are difficult to quantify due to the fact that differences in such dimensions of party organizations are often more of a qualitative than of a quantitative nature. One can devise indices that quantify some aspects of organizational structure, such as Scarrow’s Multi-Speed Index which scores parties based on the range of affiliation options available through their websites (Scarrow 2014b:154), however, such indices are by definition only crude approximations of the empirical complexity of party organizations, and tend to overlook other relevant factors (such as affiliation options available through other means, e.g. micro-sites set up for single-issue campaigns). Thus, I claim that instead of using universal indicators to grasp organizational complexity, one should rather focus on distinct party activities and assess the breadth of members’

participation based on the rules relevant for each activity. The rationale behind this choice is that the rules of participation tend to vary across activities: not every decision is available to the same set of party affiliates, some entail restrictions regarding the time of joining the party, others require the payment of a one-time fee, some are conducted entirely through the Internet while others mix online and offline elements. For this reason, I argue that it is more appropriate to think of inclusiveness and online accessibility as “general principles” or “background conditions” that are implemented to various degrees in each internal process.

Measuring our outcome of interest, intra-party democracy, raises another set of problems. First, despite efforts to synthesize this emerging strand of literature (Cross and Katz 2013), the absence of a universally approved definition of the term persists. While most authors understand candidate selection, leadership selection and policy development as the core areas of intra-party democracy, others also extend the concept to the selection of internal bodies and coalition behavior (Bäck 2008, Pedersen 2010). A second, related issue is that there is also a lack of consensus on the indicators of intra-party democracy. However, with regards to this second aspect, significant progress has been achieved in the past years, culminating in Rahat and Shapira’s comprehensive IPD index which covers most of the aforementioned aspects (Rahat and Shapira 2017). This index measures intra-party democracy across five analytical dimensions: participation, representation, competition, responsiveness and transparency (see IPD Questionnaire in *Appendix A*). While the items of the questionnaire cover all important areas for intra-party democracy, as I have argued above, I find it analytically more fruitful to evaluate intra-party democracy based on party activities. Thus, I am going to use a slightly modified version of this questionnaire which contains the same items reordered according to the following activities: the selection of internal bodies, candidate selection, leadership selection, policy/program development, coalition agreements, and online accessibility (see the reorganized questionnaire and the corresponding scores in *Appendix B*). This also corresponds to the structure of the dissertation: each party activity is going to be assessed independently, but at the same time, their contribution to intra-party democracy will be scored on the IPD index.

#### 4. Causal model and hypotheses

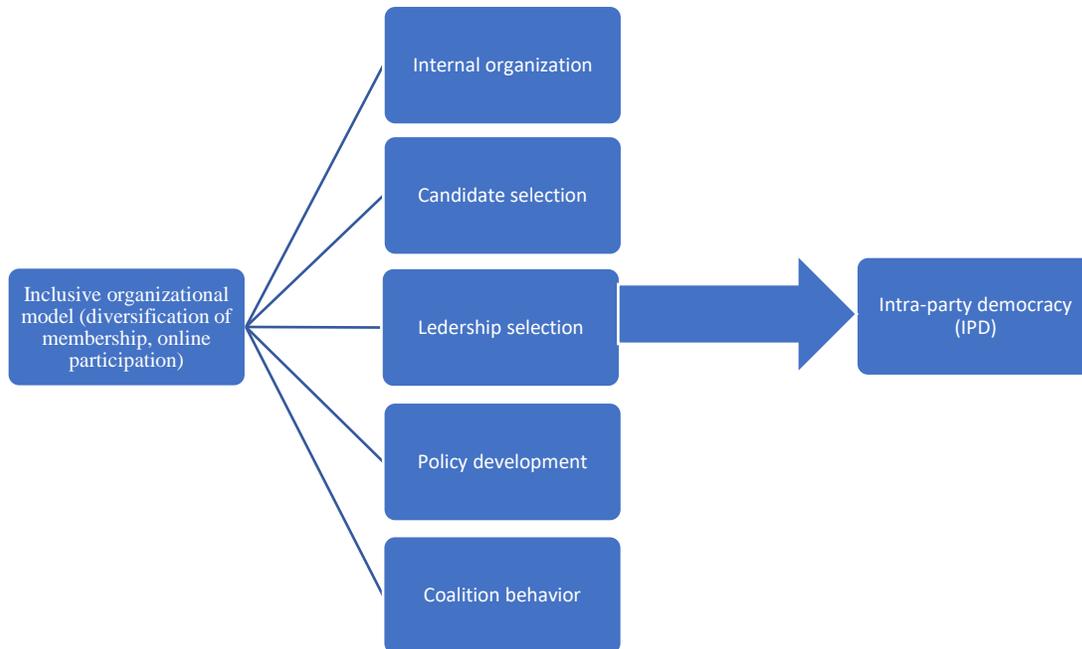
The above sections have introduced the main concepts and provided hints on their measurement, however, the expected relationship between them still needs to be defined. First, I provide a model which explains the causal chain between the different concepts, then I elaborate on the expected direction of relationships. The schematized causal chain is portrayed on *Graph 1*.

As *Graph 1* shows, I expect that the choice of an organizational model based on new participatory opportunities has implications on the execution of a range of intra-party decisions, which in turn affect the overall level of internal democracy within the party. It should be emphasized that rather than a linear causal model which leads to a single outcome (intra-party democracy), the model presented below assumes that level of intra-party democracy is the outcome of different configurations of components (party activities), in other words, it is based on a model of conjunctural causation (Mahoney and Goertz 2006) which presumes equifinality (George and Bennett 2005). The hypothesized sequence is the following: when parties adopt an inclusive organizational model (as a “background condition”) it entails that becoming a party affiliate is easy, free and can be done online. However, this does not automatically imply that affiliates also have a right to participate in each intra-party decision, this is a matter that needs to be addressed in the party’s statutes or specific regulations. The content of these regulations and the informal practices jointly determine the extent to which these activities are inclusive and accessible. However, that still does not provide sufficient information about how democratic these processes are, which needs to be determined by using more fine-grained qualitative information on the actual influence party affiliates have in each process which might be affected by agenda-setting mechanisms, as well as the informal manipulation of internal processes.

With regards to the direction of the relationship, the literature postulates two contradictory, but equally plausible hypotheses. The first claims that more inclusive decision-making processes are by definition more democratic as they allow the participation of a larger pool of the party’s supporters. On the contrary, the alternative hypothesis builds on the cartel party theory and suggests that the opening of a party’s decision-making processes strengthens the party elite through the support of atomized grassroots members and thus makes these procedures less democratic. I argue that instead of taking any of these hypotheses at face value, one should explore which aspects of intra-party decision-making become more, and which become less democratic due to the

introduction of participatory measures. The emerging picture is likely to be mixed and dynamic. Exploring these dynamics is a core theme of this dissertation.

**Graph 1 – The hypothesized causal chain from an inclusive organizational model to intra-party democracy**



## 5. Cases

As already indicated in the title, my cases are two recently founded Southern European, anti-system parties: the Five Star Movement in Italy and Podemos in Spain. The choice of these parties was partly driven by my personal interest in the politics of the region but is far from arbitrary. These two parties have been among the most influential political entrepreneurs in terms of organizational innovation and have had a strong impact both on their national party systems as well as on other European parties. Their influence has also been reflected in the amount of scholarly attention they received, including several monographs (Canestrari and Biondo 2017, Lanzone 2015, Mouffe and Jones 2016, Tronconi 2015), and single case studies (Bordignon and

Ceccarini 2013, Diamanti 2014, Mosca 2014, Rodon and Hierro 2016, Rodríguez-Teruel et al. 2016, among others). However, comparative studies including these two cases have been relatively rare (Della Porta et al. 2017, De Prat 2015, Luengo et al. 2016, Vidal 2015, Vittori 2017), and have mostly been confined to providing a general historical narrative on these parties' evolution, without specifically focusing on the question of intra-party democracy. Thus, the contribution of this thesis is that it presents these widely discussed and influential cases from a new theoretical perspective.

The two cases have often been linked together in the literature as both emerged in the post-financial crisis period when traditional political parties experienced a severe legitimacy crisis (Kriesi 2012b, 2014, Passarelli and Tuorto 2016) and new, neopopulist parties rode the waves of disillusionment with the promise of involving the “ordinary people” in politics, a domain allegedly monopolized by “corrupt elites”. Beyond the populist rhetoric of mobilization, what is relevant is that they have also created innovative organizational forms based on online participation with extremely low barriers to entry and extensive rights associated with membership. Although members of the Pirate Party family have experimented with similar models (Bolleyer et al. 2015, De Petris and Poguntke 2015), they have not reached neither the scale of mobilization, nor the electoral support garnered by their Southern European counterparts.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, although the two parties are often grouped together under the label of *anti-establishment*, *anti-system*, *challenger* or *protest* parties (De Prat 2015, Luengo et al. 2016, Vidal 2015), most accounts also acknowledge their differences (e.g. Vittori 2017).

One of these differences concerns the ideological position of the parties both in terms of policy proposals and regarding the self-placement of their voters. Most notably, Podemos is much closer to extreme left policy positions which are also more homogeneously shared by its supporters (Rodríguez-Teruel et al. 2016, Vidal 2015), while M5S is slightly left-of-center, but highly heterogeneous in its issue positions, and this diversity is also reflected in a higher than average voter-party distance on left-right placement and immigration issues (Passarelli and Tuorto 2016, Van Haute and Gauja 2015). The second crucial difference concerns the role of the party leader and the resulting organizational cultures: while both the Five Star Movement and Podemos have often been characterized as charismatic parties, Beppe Grillo's informal leadership has been much more uncontested than that of Pablo Iglesias who has witnessed the emergence of internal

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<sup>9</sup> This might be related to differences in national party systems which will be further explored in *Chapter 2*.

contenders with a comparable support and is subject to a much clearer set of rules regarding leadership succession. Consequently, while both parties have experienced regular tensions between grassroots participation and elite control, they have resorted to drastically different mechanisms in resolving these conflicts. I expect that this latter aspect will have a crucial impact on how much influence members have on intra-party decisions and how they perceive the quality of their own participation.

A third difference that is crucial for the investigation of intra-party democracy relates precisely to the two different “variants of IPD” exemplified by these two parties. Following Poguntke et al. (2016:11-13), one can make a distinction between assembly-based and plebiscitary variants of intra-party democracy (abbreviated as AIPD and PIPD). The key difference between the two is that while in an assembly model, face-to-face meetings are both a forum for debate and decision-making, the plebiscitary model separates these two stages into a deliberative phase (which is often deficient or completely absent) and a membership ballot. Although the analysis presented in the empirical chapters will show that the two categories are not as neatly delineated as this theory suggests, our initial assumption is that Podemos relies more on assemblies, while the Five Star Movement is the incarnation of the plebiscitary model<sup>10</sup>.

In sum, both parties represent the archetypes of a new organizational form that is designed to promote the direct participation of citizens and to foster intra-party democracy, however, some key organizational differences (AIPD vs. PIPD, charismatic vs. competitive leadership) between the two parties allow for a meaningful comparison<sup>11</sup> to test the implications of different organizational structures on the level of intra-party democracy. Therefore, a comparative study of these two cases might achieve the following theoretical objectives: first, it can evaluate the impact of new participatory forms on intra-party democracy using two crucial cases (Eckstein 1975, George and Bennett 2005, Gerring 2007), second, it can highlight how different leadership styles, as well as different configurations of intra-party democracy (assembly-based vs. plebiscitary) might lead to

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<sup>10</sup> In fact, the Five Star Movement is also referred to as a party that “may come close” to a model exclusively based on plebiscitary decision-making by Poguntke and his colleagues (Poguntke et al. 2016:11).

<sup>11</sup> One could argue that due to the similarities between the two parties, this research design qualifies as a most-similar systems design. However, as there is more than one variable on which the two organizations differ (leadership style, ideology, plebiscitary vs. assembly model), I would find this an overstatement. Nevertheless, the two parties’ commitment to maximize participation and intra-party democracy makes them qualify as crucial cases for studying intra-party decision-making, and thus can undoubtedly contribute to a deeper understanding of contemporary party organizations.

different levels of intra-party democracy under similar organizational models.

## 6. Data and methods

The dissertation relies on a rich variety of data, both archival as well as original data collected by the author. First, documents produced by the parties were collected to provide information on the rules, regulations and discussions related to their internal processes. These include party statutes, specific regulations on certain party activities, electoral manifestos, blog and social media posts as well as information displayed on party websites. Second, the sources listed above were complemented with media reports from selected newspapers that cover party events such as primaries in great detail.<sup>12</sup> Third, the comprehensive party-level data of the Political Party Database (PPDB) (Poguntke et al. 2016, Scarrow and Webb 2013) were used and extended by the author in order to situate both parties within their respective national party systems (see *Chapter 2*).

In terms of original data collection, I have conducted an elite survey with 28 semi-structured interviews in the two parties, which included party representatives, local and regional organizational leaders and party experts from both countries, with the aim of representing not only the geographical distribution, but also the internal factions of these parties (see the list of interviewees in *Appendix F*). This has allowed me to gain more fine-grained information on internal discussions on organizational principles and policies, loyalties, party factions and the intricacies of internal decision-making. Second, I have conducted an online membership survey in the local organizations of both parties which allowed me to tap into members' attitudes and perceptions with regards to the participatory opportunities and the internal functioning of their organizations. While the sample (n=187 [M5S] + 176 [Podemos]) is not representative of the whole organization in any of the cases (due to the reluctance of party central offices to engage in a comprehensive membership survey), it provides a valuable snapshot of the range of perceptions that exist among the members and activists of these parties. The samples were designed to ensure a substantial level of geographical representation through contacting local grassroots organizations

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<sup>12</sup> The two most important sources in this regard were 'Il Fatto Quotidiano' in the case of M5S and 'eldiario.es' in the case of Podemos. Both of these media outlets have close ties to their respective parties, which allow them to cover party events in great detail. At the same time, due to the inherent bias of these newspapers, other media sources have been consulted to triangulate the information reported by the aforementioned outlets.

in all regional and provincial capitals in both countries (see details in *Chapter 7*). Finally, during my fieldwork in both countries, I attended several party events including national rallies and local campaign meetings, which gave me the opportunity to deduce more nuanced contextual information about the organizational culture of these parties as a participant observer. The party events I attended are listed in *Appendix J*.

In terms of methods, most empirical chapters will rely on a detailed qualitative analysis of party rules and relevant party events where such rules were implemented, circumvented, or amended. Through the development of these rules and practices, one may infer how different ideals of intra-party democracy evolved in each party, and to what extent specific decision-making tools lived up to these ideals. Interlocutors' narratives are reconstructed to understand why certain choices had been made and what were the implications of these choices. On the other hand, the data gained from the interviews also allows for the identification of different narratives on a set of organizational themes that were defined using an inductive approach for evaluating interview data (Thomas 2006), relying on categories informed by theory (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006). The resulting categories are displayed in *Appendix G*.

Besides the qualitative data gained through interviews and archival research, I will also use descriptive statistics based on data from the PPDB dataset and from my own membership surveys. These resources will constitute complementary information for the evaluation of my outcome variable, i.e. the level of intra-party democracy across party activities which will be primarily based on party documents and qualitative data. By combining quantitative data from a cross-national dataset and a membership survey with qualitative insights gained from interviews, one can preserve the rich empirical information of small-*N* cross-case comparisons, but at the same time increase the external validity of the findings. I find this an acceptable compromise for a field of study where the number of available cases is severely limited. Moreover, this triangulation of methods also allows for a careful distinction among *formal rules* and *informal practices* in political parties, which dichotomy underlies the whole theoretical framework of this study.

## 7. Outline of the chapters

As argued above, the analysis of intra-party democracy within the two parties is going to be structured along party activities. To remain consistent with this logic, the same principle is applied to the structure of the whole dissertation, which covers the following areas: party organization, candidate selection, policy development, and coalition behavior; i.e the most essential aspects of party life where intra-party democracy may manifest itself. However, before turning to the analysis of party activities, the following chapter will situate these parties within their respective party systems, using data from the Political Parties Database (PPDB) project. *Chapter 2* will also address which of the labels used for these parties are most appropriate and what these labels tell us about their relationship with other parties, both in terms of policy positions and constituencies.

The next four chapters all focus on different organizational aspects which entail some intra-party decisions. *Chapter 3* addresses parties' internal organization and leadership: the foundation of internal party bodies, the selection and competences of their members, the ways they are convened and dissolved, as well as their internal hierarchies. These organizational aspects already determine the distribution of power in several party activities, but at the same time, they can also be subject to internal debates, and occasionally, to votes, as well as to changes over time. *Chapter 3* also discusses rules for the selection of the party leader, the circumstances under which he/she can be replaced, his/her competences, and the opportunities of other party agents to exercise control over his/her power. *Chapter 4* addresses candidate selection: eligibility criteria, voting rights, requirements, the procedures adopted for selecting the candidates and for drafting the final lists. The findings indicate that party elites can substantially control the outcome even under open primaries. *Chapter 5* focuses on how party programs, policy proposals and electoral manifestos are developed through the parties' online platforms and assesses the extent to which bottom-up initiatives are incorporated in each. From a theoretical perspective, the most innovative part of the dissertation is *Chapter 6*, as it addresses the relationship between intra-party power distribution and coalition behavior, which is a relatively novel (albeit not unprecedented) effort in the field. The results show that party leaders may use several techniques to enforce their coalition strategies, but the choice of these techniques depends on leadership roles and the corresponding organizational cultures. *Chapter 7* reports the results of the membership surveys conducted by the

author, thus providing an image of how members perceive their own participation within these processes.

*Chapter 8* wraps up the empirical findings and uses a comprehensive IPD index to evaluate how the parties fare on intra-party democracy when all party activities are considered. The concluding chapter also puts the findings into a broader theoretical perspective and attempts to answer the more general question of whether participatory innovations in party organizations foster intra-party democracy or not.

## Chapter 2 – New party models and their place within national party systems

“Organizations that we consider ‘new’ are likely to contain traces of the past, be they habits, conventions, rules or veterans. On the other hand, organizations we consider ‘old’ are never static; they constantly evolve, develop, incorporate new elements, reform structures and rules, and recruit new members. Distinguishing the ‘old’ from the ‘new’ in a clear-cut manner thus presents a challenge.” (Barnea and Rahat 2011:309)

New parties have experimented with organizational structures that deviate from traditional forms in an attempt to avoid bureaucratization for decades (Kitschelt 1989a), to an extent that in some of the most recent instances they have even refused to refer to themselves as parties, adopting an “anti-party” rhetoric (De Petris and Poguntke 2015). However, the extent to which these innovative forms truly deviate from traditional party models remains in doubt. Are new parties substantially different from traditional political party organizations, or do they increasingly resemble them as they institutionalize (Harmel and Svasand 1993, Levitsky 1998, Randall and Svasand 2002)? Where are Podemos and the M5S located within the broader family of anti-system and anti-elitist parties? Can we categorize them as movement parties (Della Porta et al. 2017, Kitschelt 2006) or anti-parties (De Petris and Poguntke 2015)? The forthcoming chapter will make an attempt to locate our cases in their respective national party systems along the previous dimensions, and to define the extent to which they are distinct from other party organizations within the same institutional context. This will allow us to evaluate whether these parties deviate from their national norms regarding party organization, which is one of their core sources of legitimacy.

In doing so, the chapter will first provide a review of the most relevant strands of literature in order to avoid the conceptual confusion that is typical in classifications of new party organizations, as well as to reveal potential overlaps in the use of terminology. Second, a brief history of the cases addressed in this dissertation will be presented with a focus on these parties’ self-definitions and their claims which underline their distinctiveness from other political parties. This will be followed by a short summary of these parties’ position on the left-right ideological spectrum, as well as a thorough analysis of several organizational variables on which one could expect them to display particular values in case their claims for distinctiveness were to be justified. This latter effort will

be based on data from the Political Party Database Project (PPDB; Poguntke, Scarrow and Webb 2016), a comprehensive database that scores 122 parties from 9 countries across ten analytical dimensions (Scarrow and Webb 2013, Poguntke et al. 2016).

As the first wave of PPDB's data collection did not include neither Podemos nor the Five Star Movement, missing data have been compiled by the author for the years 2014, 2015, and 2016.<sup>13</sup> As PPDB includes an impressively wide range of organizational variables, not all of which are directly relevant for the analysis of organizational distinctiveness, I selected a total of 147 variables to account for dimensions where most deviation can be expected. These variables focus on six areas which correspond to the broader theoretical objectives of this project: party membership; the functioning of internal bodies; candidate selection; leadership selection; program, party platform, and policy development; and online functioning (for a more detailed list of the variables used, see *Appendix C*). By comparing our cases to other parties within their national party systems along the same variables, we can construct a comprehensive image on whether and to what extent these organizations are distinct from traditional parties in their respective countries.

## **1. From anti-parties to movement parties – Sides of the same coin?**

As party scholars became aware of the diminishing membership figures (Mair and Van Biezen 2001, Van Biezen et al. 2012), as well as growing distrust (Dalton and Weldon 2005) in political parties from the early 1990s, a discussion on the intensification of anti-party sentiment emerged (De Petris and Poguntke 2015, Poguntke and Scarrow 1996) along with an interest in non-institutional forms of political participation (Marien et al. 2010, Stolle and Hooghe 2011). Disaffection with political parties has led to the construction of anti-party narratives that typically cluster around three main arguments: the first of these challenges “the principle that good politics requires competitive political parties as intermediaries”; the second claims that although political parties play an indispensable role in representative democracy, their performance is insufficient;

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<sup>13</sup> Although most cases in the PPDB as available by August 10, 2017 only include scores for the 2011-2014 period, I chose to cover the 2014-2016 period for two reasons. First, Podemos as a political party was only founded in 2014, thus it would be inconceivable to score it for preceding years. Second, as PPDB is expected to be updated on a regular basis, I hope to obtain more recent data that would enable a more meaningful comparison by the time the final version of this dissertation is submitted.

while the third “calls to outlaw parties which allegedly threaten democratic stability” (Poguntke and Scarrow 1996:258). While proponents of the first argument might be labelled “anti-system” (as they criticize the entire system of representation), advocates of the second proposition are more adequately referred to as “anti-party” actors. However, the distinction between the two is less clear-cut than it would first appear: some parties tend to present themselves as alternatives to existing party organizations (anti-parties) and institutionalized channels of representation (anti-system) at the same time. What’s more, the same parties can also choose to hold the entire political and business elite responsible for the inadequate representation of the interests of “ordinary citizens”, which claim is a cornerstone of populist rhetoric (Bobba and McDonnell 2016, Kriesi 2012b, 2015, Mair 2002). While empirical cases might display several of these features simultaneously, it is still instrumental to distinguish them conceptually, and define which of the concepts mentioned above are expected to have implications for party organization.

When evaluating these terms from the point of view of party organizations, two of them are expected to have implications on organizational structure and functioning, and thus only these two are relevant for our purposes. First, an “anti-party” is expected to challenge the delegative principles of traditional party organizations and focus on direct participation instead, implementing the one-member-one-vote (OMOV) principle in its most extensive and extreme form. In such a system, the party’s elected representatives should be directly accountable to the members, without the intervention of any intermediary elected or non-elected body. Second, “movement parties” are “coalitions of political activists who emanate from social movements and try to apply the organizational and strategic practices of social movements in the arena of party competition” (Kitschelt 2006:280). This could result in two different organizational models: one that is “led by a *charismatic leader* with a patrimonial staff and personal following over which s/he exercises unconditional and unquestioned control” or, alternatively, one that attempts to “realize a grassroots democratic, participatory coordination among activists” where all important decisions are made at the bottom of the organization (Kitschelt 2006:280-1, italics from the original). Besides that, movement parties are also characterized by a strong simultaneous presence in both institutional as well as extra-institutional arenas, i.e. a parliamentary group combined with regular street demonstrations (ibid.).

It results from the two points mentioned above that the concepts of *anti-system* and *(neo)populist* parties are not relevant for this comparison as they do not have any direct implication on the choice of organizational model. Although one could argue that organizations that implement direct democracy and inclusive decision-making structures would be most congruent with both anti-system and neopopulist parties, this stems from a particular understanding of these terms that is more typical on the ideological left, but in any case it is not a necessary outcome of such ideological and programmatic predispositions (a counterfactual case would be the one-member Freedom Party of Geert Wilders in the Netherlands, see De Lange and Art 2011).

The same claim can be made about *anti-elitist cyber parties* (Hartleb 2013), a particular instance of *cyber parties* (Margetts 2001, 2006) which utilize the Internet as an arena of direct representation and as a source of organizational innovation. However, although online participation does indeed dramatically lower barriers to entry and thus has implications on intra-party democracy, its level of distinctiveness does not stem from its use *per se*, more from the broad range of activities which it enables (discussed in detail in *Chapter 5*).

One way to circumvent the conceptual fuzziness of the terms above would be to introduce intermediary categories such as the “hybrid party” (Chironi and Fittipaldi 2017), i.e. a party organization “where grassroots participation is left to local circles and democratic participation should be ensured by the Citizen’s Assembly, whilst the top bodies ... ensure the centralized coordination” that is needed for electoral as well as institutional representation (*ibid.*, p. 289.). However, despite its empirical fit to certain cases (most notably Podemos), it is difficult to see how a “hybrid party” would be different from a stratarchical party organization (Bolleyer 2012, Carty 2004) which is precisely based on “a division of labour between two mutually dependent yet distinguishable levels (...), none of which is able to fully dominate the other” (Bolleyer 2012:319). This implies that the notion of stratarchy may be applicable to new party organizations, which would undermine their claims for distinctiveness.

In sum, in case we expect our cases to display organizational distinctiveness, this should be manifest in organizational attributes that derive either from the concept of *anti-parties* or from that of *movement parties*, as all other labels refer to ideological-programmatic positions (anti-system, anti-elitist, neopopulist) or overlap with traditional party models (stratarchy/hybrid party). In

particular, we should expect to find two broad patterns to emerge should parties' claims for distinctiveness be justified:

**H1:** Intra-party decision-making processes are based on the one-member-one-vote principle without any intermediary bodies with broad and carefully ascribed competences.

**H2:** Intra-organizational power gravitates toward members and local organizations potentially complemented by a charismatic leader, while the relationship between the two levels is not institutionalized.

The following sections will review the extent to which our cases demonstrate the features hypothesized above, which would make them qualify as anti-parties (H1) or movement parties (H2), respectively. Successive sections will rely on empirical data to assess the presence of the corresponding organizational traits in each case.

## **2. Outside and beyond: How parties define themselves**

While the above discussion clarified the conceptual framework of our analysis, it is also important to understand the narratives our cases use to describe their own organizations, even if they might be heavily influenced by electoral motives. As a starting point, it needs to be laid down that both parties emerged in a post-economic crisis context which severely damaged the legitimacy of political parties (Kriesi 2015). Thus, both opted for a rhetoric and a corresponding mobilization strategy that tried to transcend traditional cleavages, and appeal to a broad electorate consisting of a mix of disaffected, undecided and young voters. This has had two groups of implications: the first affected narratives about the nature of the organizations themselves, while the second relates to discussions about the parties' perceived and self-declared ideological position.

With regards to the first aspect, we see two different trends in the two organizations. The Five Star Movement has refused to call itself a political party from the start, which is not only exemplified by the name of the organization but is also laid down in its "non-statute" which was last updated in 2016 (MoVimento 5 Stelle 2016a). The non-statute declares that M5S "is not a political party and it does not intend to become one in the future" (ibid., Article 4). The same narrative was offered by one of the party's MPs and members of its ex-Directive Committee, Roberto Fico, who

wrote in his answer to my email survey that “M5S is not a party, it's a movement made by citizens who want to dedicate part of their life to the community”. This view is emphasized rather consistently in M5S’ public appearances, along with the claim that the party does not accept public subsidies (although this latter claim has been questioned several times, see e.g. Repubblica 2016a). The lack of a stable party organization also fits the narrative of M5S not being a political party, however, its electoral participation as well as its legislative work are unmistakable traits of a political party. However, if one only took the party’s own definitions into account, then the M5S would be defined as a movement (without the “party” tag) and an anti-party.

These distinctions are less clear-cut in Podemos. Although Podemos borrowed some of its organizational features from the *Indignados* protest movement (Rodríguez-Teruel et al. 2016) and has established strong ties with several social movement organizations (SMOs) at the local level, through its carefully designed statutes (Podemos 2015b) it has come to resemble traditional mass party<sup>14</sup> organizations, most remarkably the Spanish Socialist PSOE and the far-left United Left (IU). However, regardless of the presence of different currents within the party (see Mikola 2017b), the dominant faction led by party leader Pablo Iglesias pushed for a balance between the party’s institutional and “extra-institutional” activities, i.e. active legislative work combined with street activism. Thus, while Podemos can certainly not be characterized as an “anti-party”, it has preserved some of its movement-like traits. However, rather than a pure instance of a movement party (Della Porta et al. 2017), recent literature has also described it as a “hybrid party” (Chironi and Fittipaldi 2017) due to its combination of a centralized party organization with independent local units that often cooperate with social movements. The analysis presented below will help us evaluate whether these labels provide a faithful description of Podemos’ party organization.

Discussions regarding the parties’ ideological profiles have already been addressed in *Chapter 1*, however, a short summary is also due here. As stated in the introduction, while the Five Star Movement represents a heterogenous mix of issue positions which combine ecologism with Euroskepticism and attract a similarly diverse mix of supporters (Passarelli and Tuorto 2016, Van Haute and Gauja 2015), Podemos is largely perceived as a left-wing/extreme left party which can be substantiated both by the internal distribution of ideological streams (from radical left to

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<sup>14</sup> In fact, a desire to return to mass party ideals was explicitly mentioned by several party representatives during the interviews conducted for this project in March 2016.

centrist/pragmatist, see Mikola 2017b), as well as by the voting history and the perceptions of its followers (Rodríguez-Teruel et al. 2016, Vidal 2015). In line with this, while the discourse of M5S is highly coherent in emphasizing the “neither-left-nor-right” narrative, this narrative has been gradually abandoned by Podemos after its entry in the national legislature, and particularly following its coalition with the admittedly far left United Left (IU, see *Chapter 6* on coalitions). The party has increasingly relied on its self-defined cleavage between “old” and “new” politics instead, the ideological implications of which remain unclear.

In sum, while both parties’ rhetoric makes a pledge on transcending traditional parties, this promise is presented by M5S in a much more radical form, while Podemos seeks to preserve its movement ethos at the same time as it openly accepts having become a normalized political subject despite its late foundation (2014) relative to M5S (2009).

### **3. Party organizational distinctiveness based on PPDB data**

#### **3.1 Party membership**

As stipulated in *Chapter 1*, blurring the lines between members and non-members, and offering alternative forms of affiliation (party friend, party supporter etc.) has been one of the most pervasive trends in the evolution of party organizations during the past two decades (Scarrow 2014b, Van Haute and Gauja 2015). As anti-party parties and movement parties both stress the importance of grassroots participation, we would expect them to stand in the forefront of such developments. Specifically, one could expect these parties to offer several affiliation options simultaneously, not to require the payment of a membership fee, and thus to attract a number of supporters that is equal to or higher than that of traditional political parties. To assess whether Podemos and the Five Star Movement achieve these standards, five variables are used from the Political Party Database, all of which are related to membership rules (for a detailed list, see *Appendix C*).

With regards to the first variable, we see no variation at all across parties that are included in the database: all Italian and Spanish parties recognize party membership as a distinct category. Even though Podemos’ first statute (Podemos 2015a) made a distinction between “subscribers” and “affiliates”, the difference between the two categories was only legal: those who gave their consent to be registered as “affiliates” became party members according to Spanish party law, while the

rest of registered “subscribers” remained only informal party supporters, albeit they had the same rights within the party. This distinction had been removed from the updated statutes which now require official registration from all subscribers as party members (Podemos 2015b). With regards to the Five Star Movement, although it also refers to members as “subscribers” (*iscritti*), it has never made an internal distinction within this group. However, as M5S defies to be treated as a political party (MoVimento 5 Stelle 2016a), the lack of a distinction between members and supporters is a logical choice for the organization. The two parties share the linguistic tradition of referring to their members as “subscribers” (*inscritos/iscritti*) which suggests a more informal type of affiliation, however, from a legal perspective the *inscritos* of Podemos are full-fledged party members, unlike the supporters of M5S.

In terms of the existence of an intermediate category of party affiliation with reduced rights and obligations (party friend, party sympathizer), our cases display somewhat counterintuitive features. In fact, such a category exists in most parties included in the sample (with the exception of the Basque Nationalist Party), as shown in *Table 1*, while it is absent in our cases. However, while the coding scheme only allows for dichotomous values, it needs to be stressed that the reason why Podemos and the Five Star Movement do not recognize party friends as a separate type of affiliation is precisely that their regular members play a similar role. That is, from the point of view of an inclusive organization with porous boundaries, it would be inconsistent to create a subset of supporters who are only differentiated by their lack of voting rights. Instead, all party supporters are granted the same rights that are assigned to regular members in traditional party organizations. The futility of separating these two categories is strengthened by the fact that neither Podemos, nor the Five Star Movement collects membership fees, unlike all other parties in the sample.

*Table 1 – The recognition of party friends as a separate form of affiliation*

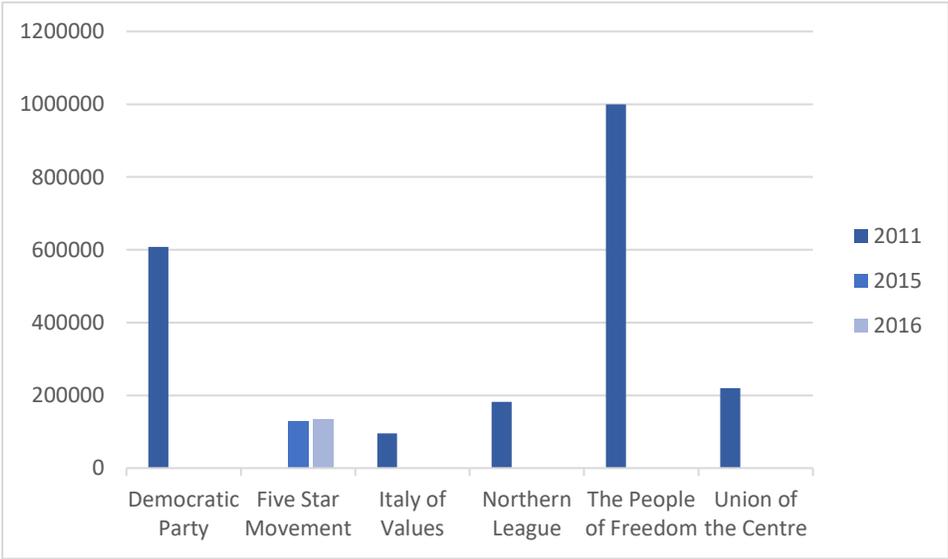
Country	Name of the party	Party friends recognized as a separate level of formal affiliation*
Italy	The People of Freedom	Yes
	Northern League	Yes
	Democratic Party	Yes
	Italy of Values	Yes
	Union of the Centre	Yes

	<b>Five Star Movement</b>	No
<b>Spain</b>	People's Party	Yes
	Socialist Party	Yes
	United Left	Yes
	Basque Nationalist Party	No
	Democratic Convergence of Catalonia	Yes
	<b>Podemos</b>	No

\*As several values are missing, the whole period of investigation has been taken into account. This is a defensible approach as there has been no change over time in any of the cases observed.

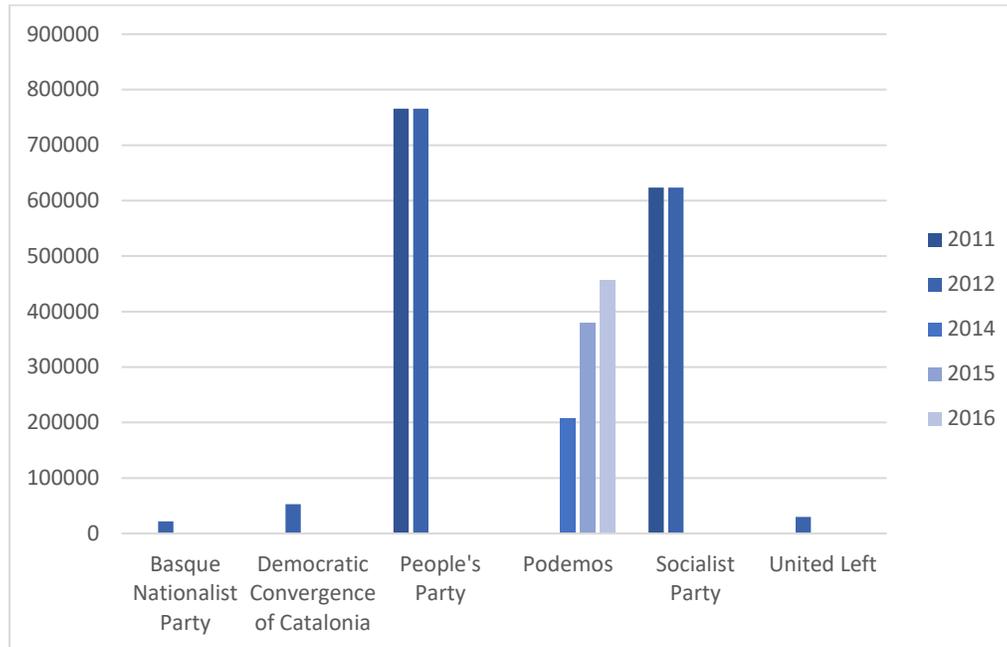
In terms of membership figures, although both of our cases built a significant membership base in a remarkably short period of time, they fall short of expectations in the sense that none of them has the largest membership organizations in their country (see *Figure 1 and 2*).<sup>15</sup> Although in the case of the Five Star Movement this may also be affected by the requirement that membership requests need to be certified (Tronconi 2015), in Podemos there are no such barriers to entry. However, as Spain is known as one of the few cases where absolute party membership as well as the M/E (members/electorate) ratio have grown substantially and consistently since the 1980s (Van Biezen et al. 2012, Van Haute and Gauja 2015), this finding is in line with expectations when one takes country-specific factors into account.

**Figure 1 – Number of individual party members in Italy**



<sup>15</sup> As seen on both graphs, unfortunately PPDB does not contain separate values for each year for every case, which limits the validity of the comparison. These graphs will be updated once data for missing years are made available.

**Figure 2 – Number of individual party members in Spain**



### 3.2 The functioning of internal party institutions

In the evaluation of the functioning of the parties' internal bodies, the variables applied focus on the internal rules that regulate the operation of party congresses and party executive bodies (for a detailed list, see *Appendix C*). With regards to the former, one can expect anti-parties or movement parties to involve all members in the party congress instead of using any delegation mechanism, and to hold party congresses more often than traditional parties do. As for the party executive bodies, the expectations are twofold: our cases should 1. not have any institutional layers between the party assembly and the party executive body; 2. use correction mechanisms to ensure fair representation of all genders and/or minorities of various kinds (ethnic, religious etc.)<sup>16</sup>, 3. not have any members appointed by the party leader.

<sup>16</sup> Although the equal representation of both genders is not related to the broader criticism of the delegation mechanisms of representative democracy, compensating the systematic overrepresentation of male deputies is typically used as an instrument by new parties to distinguish themselves from traditional political parties, and thus is a valid indicator of party distinctiveness. However, it needs to be mentioned that in the Spanish case, Podemos has not been the forerunner in introducing “zipping” during the selection of candidates, which was introduced first by the United Left (IU) in 2011, than by the Socialists (PSOE) in 2013 (Simón and Verge 2017:187).

With regards to the first criterion, data from PPDB shows that in fact there are no layers between the party congress and the party executive committee in any of our cases, although the case of the Directive Committee of the Five Star Movement is somewhat peculiar: this five-member committee is not included in the party statutes (MoVimento 5 Stelle 2016a), and thus it is not directly accountable to any other institution either (Pinto and Pedrazzani 2015). However, one can also conceive of the Assembly as the highest executive body in M5S which includes all deputies and senators and is directly accountable to members. Likewise, whether members constitute a “party congress” is debatable in M5S, as although all certified members have full voting rights, they do not constitute an organ with discrete boundaries and competences. However, if we accept certified members as a proxy for the party congress and the Assembly as the highest executive body, then it follows that there is no intermediary organ between the two<sup>17</sup>. The same applies to the majority of parties in the sample, the only exceptions being the Union of the Centre (UdC) in Italy, and the People’s Party (PP) in Spain. Thus, although our cases meet this criterion, this does not distinguish them from traditional party organizations.

Second, when it comes to the representation of women and minorities in the parties’ executive bodies, both Podemos and the Five Star Movement apply gender quotas. The statutes of Podemos (Podemos 2015b) prescribe that the representation of both genders must be within the 40-60% range in its Citizen Council, while in the Five Star Movement, although there is no such direct mechanism, a 50% gender quota applies for the list of candidates for the parliamentary election, which also affects the composition of the Assembly (as the members of the Assembly are elected MPs and senators). Even though such provisions are also in place in several other Italian parties, they only affect the composition of the highest executive body in cases where all MPs and senators are also members of the highest executive body by definition (as in M5S). On the other hand, in Spain the Socialist Party (PSOE) and the United Left (IU) also apply similar quotas, thus Podemos is not distinct from other left-wing mass parties in this respect.

When it comes to the third criterion, both the Five Star Movement and Podemos meet the requirement that none of the members of the party’s highest executive organ are directly appointed by the party leader, while several parties in the sample (including two major parties, the Socialist

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<sup>17</sup> While this *de facto* division of labour has for long operated in the party without having been codified, the new statutes adopted in 2017 (MoVimento 5 Stelle 2017d) include rules on the composition and the competences of the party congress (paradoxically also called Assembly), as will be detailed in *Chapter 3*.

Party and the People’s Party in Spain) display this feature. However, in the case of the Five Star Movement, this question is subject to the same confusion regarding the definition of party organs: if one accepts the Directive Committee as the highest executive organ, then all five members are appointed by Beppe Grillo (who is not the party’s formal leader). At the same time, one can also conceive of the Assembly as the highest executive body in M5S, whose composition is independent from the party’s informal leader. However, as the formal rules of the party do not provide sufficient detail on the actual distribution of power among these bodies, such details need to be deduced from *informal practices*, as will be done in *Chapter 3*.

Finally, regarding the party congress both the Five Star Movement and Podemos include all members in their assemblies (either online and offline), and the frequency of assembly meetings is higher than in most traditional party organizations thanks to the possibility of online voting. Although unlike Podemos (where the “ordinary” Citizen Assembly is required to meet every 3 years<sup>18</sup>), the Five Star Movement does not have statutory provisions about the minimum frequency of “congress meetings”<sup>19</sup>, online ballots are held every year on several issues (Mosca 2018), while in most parties in the sample the prescribed maximum period between congress meetings ranges between two and four years (with the notable exception of the Italian Democratic Party), as shown in *Table 2*.

**Table 2 – Minimum frequency of party congress meetings**

Country	Name of the party	How frequently must the party congress meet according to the party statutes? (Number of years)*
Italy	The People of Freedom	3
	Northern League	3
	Democratic Party	0.5
	Italy of Values	4
	Union of the Centre	2
	<i>Five Star Movement</i>	No rules.
Spain	People’s Party	3
	Socialist Party	4
	United Left	4

<sup>18</sup> The latest version of the statutes (Podemos 2017a) changed the minimum frequency of Citizen Assembly meetings to 4 years, however, this figure has not been included in the data, as the period of observation ranges from 2014 to 2016.

<sup>19</sup> Along with the codification of the party congress, the latest statutes (MoVimento 5 Stelle 2017d) also prescribed that the new Assembly must meet at least once every year.

	Basque Nationalist Party	4
	Democratic Convergence of Catalonia	4
	<i>Podemos</i>	3

\*Data were obtained from the Political Party Database (PPDB, Poguntke et al. 2016)

### 3.3 Candidate selection

While low barriers to entry and direct member representation are undoubtedly important features of new party organizations, the introduction of open primaries has been one of the features that most notably distinguished them from their rivals. As open primaries are gradually gaining ground in all party organizations (Barberá and Teruel 2012, Cross and Katz 2013, Hopkin 2001, Pasquino 2011) it is questionable whether this still constitutes a distinctive feature, nevertheless, we expect these parties to demonstrate the following traits in their candidate selection: 1. minimize or eliminate all barriers from prospective candidates; 2. involve all members in the selection of the party's candidates (i.e. have an inclusive *selectorate*); 3. ensure that the resulting list of candidates provides a fair representation of the electorate, especially with regards to gender balance.

When it comes to barriers to candidacy, we see no clear pattern emerging from our sample: parties that do not require their prospective candidates to be party members represent a slight majority (7 out of the 12 parties in the sample). However, the Five Star Movement belongs to the group of those parties that do require membership, in addition to several other requirements the party's candidates must meet (for more details, see *Chapter 4* on candidate selection). Thus, not only do our two cases differ in this respect, the rest of the sample fails to confirm the hypothesis that low barriers to candidacy would be a distinctive feature of anti-parties or movement parties.

With respect to the involvement of all members, although both Podemos and the Five Star Movement allow all members to participate in the selection of their candidates, the implications are quite different within the two party systems. After the Democratic Party (PD) introduced open primaries in 2008 (Pasquino 2011), they have become the norm in Italy, which is also reflected in PPDB data: all Italian parties in the sample allow all members as well as party sympathizers to participate in their primaries. From this perspective, the candidate selection of the Five Star Movement is rather restrictive, as it only allows "certified" members to vote (i.e. those whose membership request is approved by the party administration), and members need to register up to

nine months prior to the primaries to have a right to vote (Lanzone and Rombi 2014, Mikola 2017a). However, one must note that the widespread use of “primaries” in Italy results from a “not so innocent terminological manipulation” as it most commonly refers to the election of party secretaries and mayoral candidates instead of encompassing all candidates for elected office (Pasquino 2011:678). Thus, even though the selectorate of Five Star Movement primaries is more restricted than that of other Italian parties, their right to select all candidates for national office is rather exceptional; a crucial difference that PPDB’s indicators fail to highlight. Based on those same indicators, Podemos represents another extreme in Spain: it is the only party in PPDB’s sample where members can vote on candidates directly, while in the rest of the parties their role is limited to proposing candidates through local assemblies. However, it needs to be noted that primaries have been used in Spain extensively since 1998, although in most cases they are also limited to the selection of party leaders and top electoral candidates instead of the selection of all candidates to the lower house of the national legislature (Hopkin 2001, Barberá and Teruel 2012).<sup>20</sup>

Gender balance on the list of candidates is ensured by the statutes of both parties. Podemos’ statutes prescribe that candidates alternate by gender on the list (zipper system), while in M5S, party lists shall have no less than 40% and no more than 60% of either sex. In Italy, this quota is indeed quite exceptional, as the only other party that applies such quotas is the Democratic Party (PD) where only a third of candidates need to be women. Conversely, Podemos shares this policy with two other left-wing parties (PSOE, IU), as well as with the Basque Nationalist Party (BNP).

### 3.4 Leadership selection

With regards to leadership selection processes, the Political Party Database Project applies conceptual distinctions that are only partially applicable in our cases. In particular, PPDB distinguishes between the selection processes for the Party Political Leader, the Party Administrative Leader, and the Party Electoral Leader. Although theoretically useful, these categories are not neatly discernible in our cases, especially in the case of the Five Star Movement whose *de facto* Party Political Leader and Party Administrative Leader (Grillo) has not held any

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<sup>20</sup> In fact, the different relative status of M5S and Podemos vis-à-vis the PPDB sample results from coding differences in the two countries: although “primaries” are widely used in both countries, they only refer to selecting top party executives in most cases, unlike in these two parties.

official title with clear rules for selection and accountability until 2017, when the new statutes (MoVimento 5 Stelle 2017d) introduced a distinction between the role of the “guarantor” (Grillo) and that of the “political leader” (Di Maio). Thus, the following paragraphs will only refer to the selection of the Party Electoral Leader (top candidate in the next legislative election), as the other two categories had been inapplicable in M5S until late 2017, while in Podemos all three positions have been occupied by the same person since the party’s foundation in 2014 (leadership roles are discussed in detail in *Chapter 3*).

While the Five Star Movement did not select a Party Electoral Leader for the 2013 general election, it has introduced an official selection process to select its top candidate for the 2018 general election (Repubblica 2017).<sup>21</sup> This represents an exception to the norm in Italy, where no other parties in the PPDB sample have adopted such mechanisms.<sup>22</sup> This is remarkably different in Spain where party primaries have traditionally included (or in fact were restricted to) the selection of top electoral candidates (Hopkin 2001, Barberá and Teruel 2012). This has been the case in all parties in the PPDB sample with the exception of the People’s Party (PP)<sup>23</sup>. With regards to the role of individual members, Podemos allows all registered members to participate in this ballot as part of its primaries for the selection of all other candidates for the national legislature, which is essentially the same role that the Socialist Party (PSOE) and the United Left (IU) grant their members, while individual members can only participate in local assemblies that propose candidates in the Basque Nationalist Party (BNP), and have no rights whatsoever in the Democratic Convergence of Catalonia (CDC). Thus, it should be noticed that while M5S stands out among Italian parties in this respect, Podemos adopts procedures that have already been used by left-wing mass parties in Spain.

### **3.5 Program, party platform, and policy development**

When it comes to the elaboration of a party’s program, we expect our cases to display the following features: 1. allow members to draft individual policy proposals which the party may adopt in case

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<sup>21</sup> Although there have been debates about the introduction of such a system in the Democratic Party (PD) too, they have led to a consensus by the time of this writing (L’Espresso 2017, Il Fatto Quotidiano 2017).

<sup>22</sup> Although the Democratic Party (PD) selects its Party Secretary through primaries, the Party Secretary is not officially recognized as the party’s candidate for PM.

<sup>23</sup> The People’s Party introduced primaries in 2018, thus it was not included yet in the first round of PPDB.

they are voted by a sufficient proportion of members; 2. involve members in drafting the party's electoral manifesto; 3. hold membership ballots on the final version of the electoral manifesto.

With regards to the first criterion, the Five Star Movement is the only party in Italy which allows its members to vote on policy issues. The regulations<sup>24</sup> of the party prescribe that an online ballot needs to be convened on any issue in case a fifth of the party's members support the initiative. In addition to this, policy proposals drafted by M5S deputies are subject to an online consultation where members can propose modifications for a period of at least two months.<sup>25</sup> In Spain, besides Podemos, policy consultations are also practiced by the United Left (IU), however, they are absent in other parties. The statutes of Podemos prescribe that a proposal needs to be supported by at least 20% of local units (Circles), or 10% of members at the corresponding territorial level (Podemos 2015b, Article 23/1). At the same time, Podemos is the only Spanish party in the PPDB sample that allows members to initiate consultations directly, while in IU the support of local organizations is necessary for a ballot to be called.

With regards to the adoption of party manifestos, several values are missing from PPDB, so it might not provide a comprehensive picture of parties' practices. However, from the limited amount of information that has been coded<sup>26</sup>, it appears that M5S and Podemos are the only parties that invite members' formal input in drafting the party's electoral manifesto (detailed in *Chapter 5*). In the Five Star Movement, the program is composed of a conglomerate of specific policies (education, environment etc.) which had been discussed and approved by the members through online ballots. Although the final version is not subject to a separate vote, its components are voted by members, thus M5S' official webpage boasts about the "first program of the world voted online by citizens". A similar process is in place in Podemos where local and professional Circles (base units) can draft policy proposals which are then subjected to a membership vote in case they are endorsed by a sufficient share of affiliates. The approval of the final program is the competence of the Citizen Assembly, which includes all members (Podemos 2015b, Article 12/3/d). That is, according to PPDB data, M5S and Podemos are the only parties in these two countries that involve

<sup>24</sup> Regolamento: <http://www.movimento5stelle.it/regolamento/index.html>

<sup>25</sup> Regolamento/Note 3: <http://www.movimento5stelle.it/regolamento/3.html>

<sup>26</sup> As a result of these deficiencies, PPDB data will need to be complemented with other data on these variables.

members in drafting their electoral manifesto, which M5S members adopt in thematic packages, while Podemos affiliates are entitled to vote on the whole program.

### **3.6 Online functioning**

While most parties have adopted online features since the mid-2000s (Gibson and Ward 2009, Gibson and McAllister 2015), few have made online participation as pivotal to their operations as parties that advocate for direct democracy. While in the case of M5S the Internet has played a truly indispensable role in the absence of a traditional membership organization, Podemos deployed online discussions, deliberative processes, and membership votes along with building a traditional membership organization. While the variables included in the PPDB database (PPDB Codebook 2016) do not exhaust all options, we would expect these parties to be forerunners in at least two respects: 1. make membership immediately and directly accessible through the party webpage; 2. offer some dedicated space (forum, platform, blog, Meetup etc.) for members to engage in discussions and deliberative processes through the webpage. While PPDB includes donation options as a third set of features, we disregard it as it is not a truly distinctive organizational trait and does not have implications for members' influence in decision-making, which is the main focus of this thesis.

Data on the first criterion meet our expectations: half of the parties in our sample do not allow sympathizers to join directly through the party webpage. However, the Five Star Movement does not belong to the most accessible category in this respect either: although the webpage offers the opportunity to register as a member through filling a form, the request needs to be approved by the administrators of the webpage who also require physical copies of personal identification documents. The process is far more hassle-free in Podemos where membership can be acquired immediately after filling in the membership request form, although full voting rights can only be obtained after presenting personal documents in the latter case too. Interestingly, this level of accessibility is only matched by two Italian center-right parties, Union of the Centre (UdC) and the People of Freedom (PdL), and none in Spain.

When evaluating the presence of dedicated “members only” sections and moderated discussions on party webpages, a counterintuitive finding emerges: although both Podemos and the Five Star

Movement offer such options on their party webpage, this is rather the norm than an exception: in fact, 9 out of the 12 parties in our sample offer “members only” sections, and two thirds of them feature moderated discussion fora. Thus, it appears that rather than the mere presence of these opportunities, it is the breadth of the competences members enjoy on such fora that might distinguish our cases from traditional party organizations. A more detailed scrutiny of the internal decision-making processes in the following chapters (*Chapters 3-6*) will reveal whether empirical observations corroborate these expectations.

## 4. Conclusions

This chapter aimed to clarify conceptual dilemmas regarding the classification of new party organizations and argued that from an organizational point of view “anti-party” and “movement party” are the most informative labels. Moreover, both are also applied in the internal narratives of our cases, although with slightly different meanings. The analysis of party organizational data from the Political Party Database Project (PPDB) extended by the author has shown that the Five Star Movement and Podemos are in fact distinct from other party organizations in their countries in several respects, although with necessary qualifications.

The data on membership requirements have shown that our two cases differ from the rest of the sample in the sense that they do not make a distinction between party supporters and party members and provide all registered “subscribers” with the same set of rights. With regards to their internal bodies, our cases apply more rigorous gender quotas than most parties in the sample and hold assembly meetings more often (thanks to the possibility of online ballots). When it comes to candidate selection processes, both parties are forerunners in applying gender quotas, as well as in selecting all legislative candidates through primaries, instead of only choosing top electoral candidates. However, there are two areas where our cases display the largest deviation from the sample: the elaboration of policies and electoral manifestos, and online functioning. This is thanks to the adoption of deliberative practices where party members can draft or discuss initiatives online, which may then be subjected to a membership vote. Although the indicators used in PPDB do not allow for a meaningful comparison of online participatory opportunities, a more detailed

analysis of online policy consultations (*Chapter 5*) will reveal that all important decisions in these parties can also be made online, which is rather atypical.

From a broader perspective, it appears that while M5S is truly distinctive within the Italian party system, Podemos shares some of its participatory innovations with established left-wing mass parties in Spain (PSOE and IU). This is in line with our expectations which projected that while Podemos is a hybrid of traditional mass parties and movement parties, M5S displays truly distinctive features that make it qualify as an anti-party. The extent to which each of these organizational models foster internal democracy will be discussed throughout the following chapters.

## Chapter 3 – Internal organization and leadership: formal structures and informal practices

“The practical ideal of democracy consists in the self-government of the masses in conformity with the decisions of popular assemblies. But while this system limits the extension of the principle of delegation, it fails to provide any guarantee against the formation of an oligarchical camerilla. Undoubtedly it deprives the natural leaders of their quality as functionaries, for this quality is transferred to the people themselves. The crowd, however, is always subject to suggestion, being readily influenced by the eloquence of great popular orators; moreover, direct government by the people, admitting of no serious discussions or thoughtful deliberations, greatly facilitates *coups de main* of all kinds by men who are exceptionally bold, energetic, and adroit.” (Michels 1911:64)

To address the shortcomings of traditional mass parties and to enable meaningful participation for their activists, party organizations need to adopt certain innovations in their decision-making mechanisms, but also in the way their internal structure is set up. In our cases, one might expect that both processes and internal party institutions would be designed in a way to maximize the participation of party members and sympathizers, and to allow for the implementation of the ideals of direct democracy in which citizens can decide on a broad range of organizational matters without the intermediation of delegate bodies. Thus, the chapter first scrutinizes party documents for the presence of such direct mechanisms in the functioning of intra-party bodies, then evaluates to what extent party organizations based on the principle of direct democracy may achieve their stated goals in terms of empowering their grassroots.

By doing so, the chapter also tests whether modern participatory parties are subject to the same oligarchical tendencies identified in mass parties more than a century ago (Michels 1911). In particular, it will assess whether the assumption that “a gigantic number of persons belonging to a unitary organization cannot do any practical work upon a system of direct discussion” (ibid., p. 65) still holds under a drastically changed communications environment where discussions as well

as votes might be executed instantly over the Internet, and the costs of information access are much lower than in physical meetings. It is hypothesized that although deliberation is also limited under such circumstances, and elites might manipulate outcomes regardless of the organizational setting, such risks are substantially higher in the absence of intermediary bodies.

To evaluate whether variation in organizational structure yields different outcomes with regards to internal democracy, several sources of information need to be assessed. Consulting party rulebooks is essential; however, this chapter builds on the assumption that party statutes “do not tell us everything about how parties distribute decision-making authority between the party leader, the extra-parliamentary organization, and the parliamentary party” (Poguntke et al. 2016:9, also see Bolleyer 2007:11). In other words, a distinction between *formal structures* and *informal practices* needs to be made, as “*formal* power relations are not perfect reflections of *real* power relations” (Pedersen 2010:743, italics from the original). This chapter understands *formal structures* as the official rules laid down in documents published by or on behalf of a political party which regulate the functioning of its internal bodies, their composition, and their competences. On the contrary, *informal practices* are processes through which certain internal or external actors use their power to influence decisions that have implications for the functioning, personnel, or program of a political party.

Information on formal structures can be directly accessed through party documents that are publicly available. On the other hand, informal practices can only be detected indirectly, through identifying patterns in internal decisions that attest to the informal power of certain actors. Such patterns can be categorized as instances of the exercise of informal power under three, non-mutually exclusive conditions: first, when a decision-making process yields an outcome that would have been highly implausible taking into account known preference distributions; second, when the overwhelming majority of actors supports an alternative that furthers the interests of an informal power-holder; and third, when the decision-making process prescribed by the party documents is omitted, manipulated or its results are neglected. Whether such informal practices take place in a party will be deduced from media reports on important party events such as primaries, secondary literature on the overall characterization of the party organizations at hand, and most importantly, a series of qualitative interviews with party representatives conducted by the author (see the List of interviewees in *Appendix F*).

The chapter is structured as follows: the first section describes the intra-party institutions laid down in the statutes<sup>27</sup> of Podemos and the Five Star Movement and evaluates to what extent they correspond to institutions found in most traditional party organizations. The descriptions in each case include the composition of the given body, the rules for the selection of its members, its core competences, and the opportunities provided for members to interact with the specific body in question. The second part of the chapter reviews existing academic literature as well as media reports on the functioning of these parties' intra-party institutions and discussions on their democratic nature, with a special focus on the role of party leaders. The third section presents original data from the interviews conducted by the author, highlighting interlocutors' narratives on the role of members, the functioning of the organization, and evaluations of party leaders and intra-party democracy in general (the coding scheme used for the identification of narratives can be found in *Appendix G*). The chapter ends with a discussion on the implications of discrepancies between formal structures and informal practices in our cases, and the extent to which such discrepancies affect party leaders' capacity to steer or neglect the preferences of their membership.

### **1. Formal structures: What is written in the statutes?**

Although party organizations have always displayed significant variation in their internal make-up which is often due to differences in national party regulations (Van Biezen 2004, Van Biezen and Kopecky 2007), they have typically differentiated between at least three organizational levels: a general assembly (consisting either of all party members or of delegates from local organizations), a party executive committee, and a party leader (in some traditions referred to as the party secretary). These three functions are most often complemented by several layers of territorial organization which might reproduce the same functions at a lower administrative level (depending on the administrative structure of the state and the territorial reach of the party), and an independent judiciary body tasked with overseeing whether decisions made at the lower levels conform to the party's own regulations. The following sections review whether one can find the equivalents of these functions within Podemos and the Five Star Movement which would suggest

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<sup>27</sup> By default, the latest version of the party statutes is referred to in both cases. Significant deviations from previous versions of the statutes are indicated in the text.

that they are more akin to traditional party organizations than they like to admit. As seen in *Chapter 2*, the anti-party nature of the Five Star Movement presumes that some of these intra-party bodies might be lacking or that several functions might be covered by one organ, while Podemos is expected to show a closer resemblance to traditional party organizations, albeit with extended participatory opportunities for members.

### **1.1 Local organizations**

Local (i.e. municipal) organizations are at the heart of both the Five Star Movement and Podemos: while the former started mobilizing for local environmental issues through the Meetup.com platform, and entered the arena of electoral politics through local civic lists (Bordignon and Ceccarini 2013, Tronconi 2015), Podemos drew much of its participatory appeal from adopting the assembly structure of the *Indignados* movement which organized thematic discussions on public squares in small “Circles” (Rodríguez-Teruel et al. 2016).

Surprisingly enough, the centrality of local activism, what’s more, local organizations are not mentioned in the statutes of the Five Star Movement whatsoever (MoVimento 5 Stelle, 2016a, 2017d). Although the so called “Regulation” (a more detailed description of party rules than the proclamation-like “Non-Statute”) and its extensions include rules on the selection and certification of local lists of candidates (MoVimento 5 Stelle, 2016b), no further role is formally attributed to local groups. In consequence, local groups that initially started organizing through the Meetup.com platform often set up their own statutes which establish the functions and competences of the local organization (Lanzone 2015). This has led to a great diversity of organizational forms, often with competing local groups that sought to be “certified” by the central organization, i.e. given the right to use the party logo at elections. This heterogeneity of organizational forms increased even further as many local groups abandoned the prescription fee-based and technologically obsolete Meetup.com platform and transferred their activities to a wide range of online and social media platforms. Contradictorily, while local “Meetups”<sup>28</sup> are often portrayed by party representatives as

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<sup>28</sup> Local organizations are routinely referred to as “Meetups” in the jargon of the Five Star Movement, even if they no longer use the Meetup.com platform.

the “heart” of the organization, the party documents do not pay testimony to their prominent role and adopt a hands-free approach with regards to how they should be organized.

The opposite applies to Podemos, whose statutes include detailed regulations on the functioning of its “Circles”. In contrast to the previous version of the party statutes (Podemos 2015b), the statutes adopted after the “Vistalegre 2” General Assembly meeting held in February 2017 (Podemos 2017a) differentiate between four different types of local units: Territorial Circles, Unified Municipal Spaces<sup>29</sup>, Professional Circles (which aggregate certain economic or social sectors) and Thematic Circles (which mobilize around a set of interrelated policy issues). These local units all have a right to hold open meetings where any citizen can participate, as well as to call for a Citizen Assembly or debates in the Citizen Council (i.e. the executive committee) at their respective territorial level if certain quotas are met.<sup>30</sup> Local Circles are free to decide on their own rules within the confines of the statutes, however, the updated statutes impose additional coordination mechanisms to ensure that their activities do not overlap (an issue that is typical in the Five Star Movement). In particular, the statutes imply the possibility of nominating “coordinators” who aggregate the activity of local Circles as well as non-affiliated supporters in a given territory that cannot surpass the limits of an autonomous community. In light of the experience gained over time, Podemos also adopted a process to differentiate between “active” and “passive” Circles, of which only the former have the right to participate in internal decisions. The “activation” needs to be approved by the corresponding General Secretary after having demonstrated that the Circle has held regular meetings which have been attended by a minimum number of people depending on the size of the municipality (Podemos 2017b).

## **1.2 General Assembly**

The peculiar nature of the Five Star Movement entails that as a “non-association” that only exists on the web, until late 2017 it also lacked what we could formally recognize as a General Assembly. However, taking into account that the party regularly subjected important internal decisions to

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<sup>29</sup> These units function as municipal umbrella organizations in larger cities where each district has its own Circle, while they may function as the only local organization in smaller municipalities.

<sup>30</sup> To call a General Assembly or a Citizen Council meeting, the support of 20% of the active Circles is needed (Podemos 2017a, Articles 16, 21).

online votes in which all certified members could participate, it has always had a *de facto* General Assembly that met several times a year, and voted on certain proposals online (the exact number of party referenda per year depends on the electoral calendar of the specific year and the occurrence of contingent issues such as expulsions; see Mosca 2018). In fact, the rules to call for a membership ballot are rather similar as in the case of Podemos, save that online consultations are not referred to as a “General Assembly”. The regulations of the Five Star Movement specify that certain issues such as the electoral program, the party’s candidates, potential changes in the statutes, the selection of the members of the Party Judiciary (*collegio dei probiviri*), and disciplinary sanctions are by default subject to an online vote by all members. Online consultations on other issues can also be initiated by 500 members in case the initiative is supported by at least a fifth of all members in an online vote (MoVimento 5 Stelle 2016b, Nota 5).

The new statutes of the Five Star Movement adopted in late 2017 brought about drastic changes with the introduction of a *de iure* Assembly, including all registered members except for those who joined less than 6 months ago or who were undergoing a disciplinary process (MoVimento 5 Stelle 2017d, Art. 6). Besides clarifying the rules on how the Assembly can be convened (by the Political Leader or a third of all members), the new statutes also addressed several critical issues regarding the previous malfunctions of online consultations. Among others, the new statutes prescribe that online votes must be announced at least five days ahead of the vote (three in urgent cases), and that they need to be open for at least ten hours. The absence of such provisions in previous versions of the statutes has often triggered criticism and limited levels of participation (Mosca 2018). Moreover, the new statutes also set thresholds for the validity of the membership votes, which in most cases requires a simple majority, however, an absolute majority of all members is needed to amend the party statutes, while the party can only be dissolved with the approval of three-thirds (MoVimento 5 Stelle 2017d, Art. 6).

Unlike in the case of the Five Star Movement, the Citizen Assembly (*Asamblea Ciudadana*) of Podemos has always been highlighted in its statutes as the supreme decision-making body of the party in which all affiliated members can participate (Podemos 2017a, Article 12). The Citizen Assembly is organized in correspondence with the administrative levels of the Spanish state: at the municipal, the regional (autonomous communities), and the national level. The competences of each level are defined by its territorial reach, with the national level acting as an umbrella

organization where the most important organizational decisions are made. At the national level, the statutes distinguish between “ordinary” and “permanent” meetings of the Citizen Assembly. The former need to be convened at least 18 months after the last meeting took place, however, the period between two meetings cannot surpass 4 years. These are physical assembly meetings, of which Podemos has organized only two by far (Vistalegre in October 2014, and Vistalegre 2 in February 2017). However, so called “permanent” meetings can be convened at any time by the Secretary General, a simple majority of the Citizen Council, 10% of all members, or 20% of active Circles, Unified Municipal Spaces and coordinators. Thus, the General Assembly is regulated in much more detail and has a much more central position in Podemos than in the Five Star Movement, which may be central in discussing the *kind* of intra-party democracy each party implements: although both rely on plebiscitary decision-making mechanisms (see e.g. Vittori 2017), the more established presence of territorially grounded and physical assemblies brings Podemos closer to an assembly-based (AIPD) than to a purely plebiscitary (PIPD) version of intra-party democracy (Poguntke et al. 2016).

### 1.3 Executive Committee

While with regards to local organization and assemblies, the two parties adopt structures that show some degree of similarity, this is clearly not the case at the executive level. In a nutshell, an institutionalized executive body is completely absent from the Five Star Movement, while in Podemos it constitutes a crucial element of the party’s leadership and is directly elected by and accountable to party members. However, this simplified image would overlook the fact that in late 2014 Beppe Grillo made an attempt to create a five-strong party “Directorate” nominated by himself and approved by a membership vote which was tasked with overseeing the activity of M5S’ parliamentary group, even if the initiative was short-lived and the Directorate was dissolved in 2016 (Lanzone 2015, Tronconi 2015, Repubblica 2016b, Vittori 2017). Other than that, the Five Star Movement lacks any transparent executive structure, besides the administrative personnel that is most commonly referred to as the “staff” (Canestrari and Biondo 2017), which is a mixture of employees hired by M5S groups of councilors, and representatives of the Casaleggio Associati, the Milan-based IT firm responsible for the development and maintenance of the party’s online platform. However, despite its central role in party management, neither the composition, nor the

functions of the “staff” are defined in party documents, which creates a considerable lack of transparency in the distribution of intra-organizational competences.

As in the previous cases, the composition, role and selection of Podemos’ executive body, the Citizen Council is regulated in detail by the party’s statutes. According to the statutes of Podemos, the Citizen Council is the highest executive organ of the party, composed of the following members: the Secretary General of the party, the Secretary Generals from all autonomous communities, the representatives of the autonomous municipalities of Ceuta and Melilla, a representative of party members living abroad, 62 members elected directly by the Citizen Assembly, and four representatives of the Circles (Podemos 2017a, Article 19). Besides implementing the decisions of the Citizen Assembly, the tasks of the Citizen Council include approving the party budget as well as the campaign budgets for national, and local campaigns, to nominate a Council of Coordination (*Consejo de Coordinación*) from its own members to ensure the execution of daily tasks between meetings, and to nominate administrative staff members such as secretaries, and members of national working groups. The 62 directly elected members, as well as the representative of members living abroad are selected through open primaries, while the *ex officio* members are also selected through online votes for their primary position, i.e. as Secretary Generals at lower administrative levels.

#### **1.4 Party leader**

While the fact of not having a formalized party organization already makes the case of the Five Star Movement an organizational puzzle, it is the complete lack of transparency with regards to the position of the party leader that truly separates it from Podemos. The charismatic founder and widely perceived *de facto* leader of the party, the comedian Giuseppe “Beppe” Grillo has never held any position that could be identified as a “party leader” in the administrative, legal or organizational sense of the term. In fact, one of the main organizational principles of the Five Star Movement is “anti-leaderism”, thus in the party’s internal narrative Grillo has always been referred to using more neutral terms, such as the “founder” and the “guarantor” of the Movement. However, as electoral participation and national party law required some level of institutionalization, the party was legally constrained to register as an association and to name its top electoral candidate. Thus, the party organized primaries for selecting its candidate for PM for the 2018 general election

in September 2017, and Grillo announced that the winning candidate, Luigi di Maio would also replace him as the party's "Political Leader" (*capo politico*). As the interviews below will reveal, Grillo's symbolic and mediatic role has remained uncontested, however, it has also been institutionalized in the meantime with the inclusion of the "guarantor" in the new statutes, as well as the rules for selecting the incumbent for this position (MoVimento 5 Stelle 2017d, Art. 8). Although this move in itself did not question Grillo's symbolic position, it represents a major shift from a purely personal party model to a charismatic one whose leader can nevertheless be replaced. According to the new statutes, the guarantor is "the guardian of the fundamental values of the political action of the association" who remains in office for an indeterminate period and is an unappealable source of interpreting the norms laid out in the statutes. It should also be emphasized that although the new statutes provide opportunity for the eventual replacement of Grillo, he cannot be replaced by any *ordinary* candidate, as candidates are required to be figures who made "a major contribution to the history" of the Five Star Movement and have an unchallengeable moral status (*ibid.*).

The role of the Secretary General is specified in much greater detail in the statutes of Podemos, which assign the party leader the task of representing the party at the institutional level, of convening the meetings of the Citizen Council and the Council of Coordination as well as those of the Citizen Assembly, and of coordinating the tasks of working groups nominated by the Citizen Council. The Secretary General is selected by the Citizen Assembly (i.e. by all members) through an online vote, and he/she can also be revoked by the same process. A vote of confidence can only be initiated at least 18 months after the election of the contested party official, and only once during his/her term in office. Such votes can be proposed by 20% of the members, 25% of the active Circles, Unified Municipal Spaces or coordinators, or the absolute majority of the Citizen Council (Podemos 2017a, Article 16). It is worth noting that despite that the role of the Secretary General is much more closely regulated in Podemos, the length of his/her term is not defined in the statutes (the national Citizen Assembly meetings held so far also involved a vote on the Secretary General, but that does not follow directly from the statutes).

### 1.5 Party judiciary

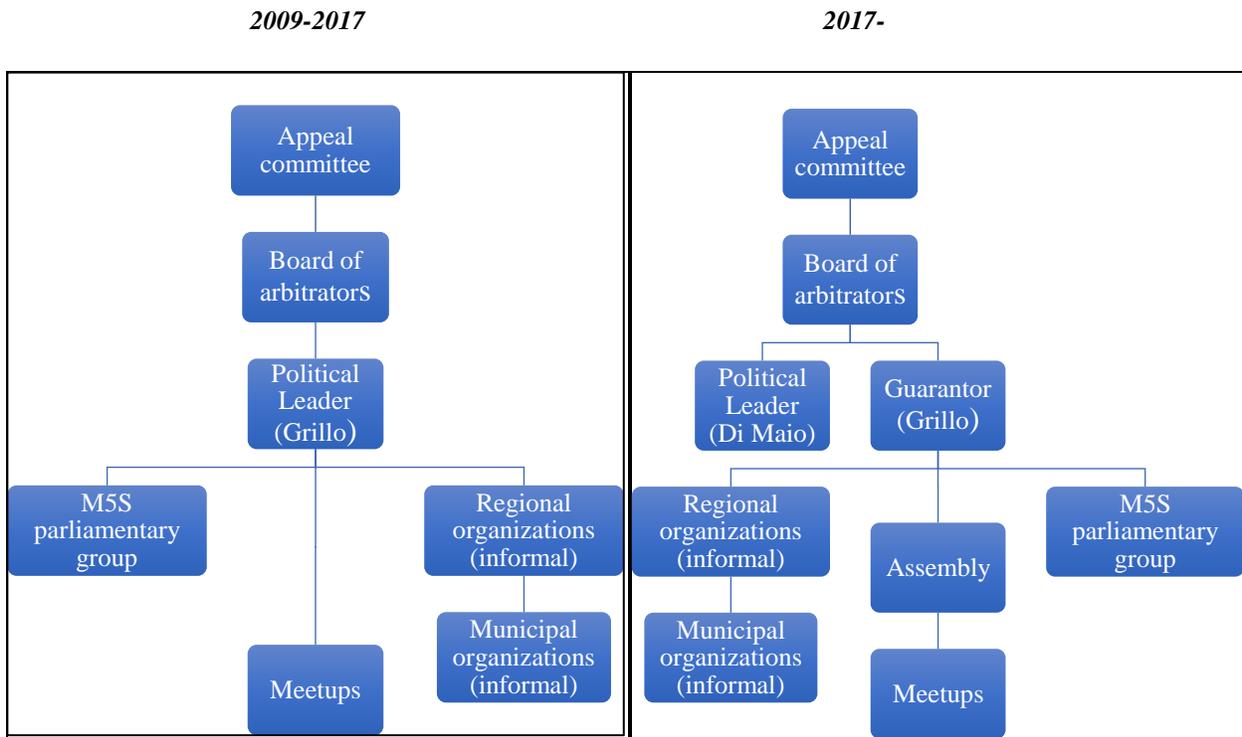
When it comes to arbitration, both parties' statutes define bodies responsible for deciding over contested issues within the party which are also referred to in the literature as "intra-party courts" (Bolleyer and Von Nostitz 2017). The regulations of the Five Star Movement distinguish between two such bodies: the Board of Arbitrators (*collegio dei probiviri*) and the Appeal Committee (*Comitato d'Appello*). The former is composed of three members, who are nominated by the Party Leader from among the members of M5S parliamentary groups and approved by the members in an online vote. Arbitrators have a three-year mandate, and they cannot hold any governmental responsibilities during their service term. The Board of Arbitrators can decide on the expulsion of members and other disciplinary sanctions in case party rules are violated. The Board needs to notify the affected member in email, who can resort to the Appeal Committee. The composition of the Appeal Committee is directly controlled by the Executive Council of the Five Star Movement Association which nominates two from its three members, while the third member of the Appeal Committee is chosen from among the members of the Executive Council itself. If this would not give Grillo enough guarantee that no disciplinary sanction can be imposed without his approval, the regulation also prescribes that the Political Leader can veto the decisions of the Board of Arbitrators or impose a milder sanction than that approved by the Appeal Committee. Alternatively, the Political Leader can also subject the decision to a binding membership vote which is unappealable (MoVimento 5 Stelle 2016b, Articles 4-6).

The board of arbitration of Podemos is called the Commission of Democratic Guarantees, and a whole chapter of the statutes (Podemos 2017a, *Título V.*) is dedicated to its functions. Commissions of Democratic Guarantees are established at two levels: at the national level and at the level of autonomous communities, each with ten members, of which five are substitutes. The members of the Commission are selected by the corresponding Citizen Assembly in an online vote, respecting the requirement that at least 50% of the members must be women, and the share of jurists needs to surpass 70%. Being a member of the Commission of Democratic Guarantees is incompatible with any other party office. The Commission is responsible for guaranteeing that party organs follow the party's Code of Ethics. The statutes also prescribe that the Commission of Democratic Guarantees is the supreme institution of appeal within the party, thus its resolutions cannot be appealed by any other party organ or representative. The President of the Commission is elected

by its members, who also adopt an internal regulation that needs to be approved by the Citizen Council. According to the new statutes, the Commissions cannot launch investigations against any party member without a disciplinary sanction already in place (Podemos 2017a).

Figures 1 and 2 below illustrate the basic organizational map of both parties. One should note that due to the radical changes that the Five Star Movement implemented in its 2017 statutes (MoVimento 5 Stelle 2017d), the organizational chart of M5S is divided into a pre- and a post-2017 phase, while in Podemos there have not been such drastic organizational developments that would justify a similar distinction.

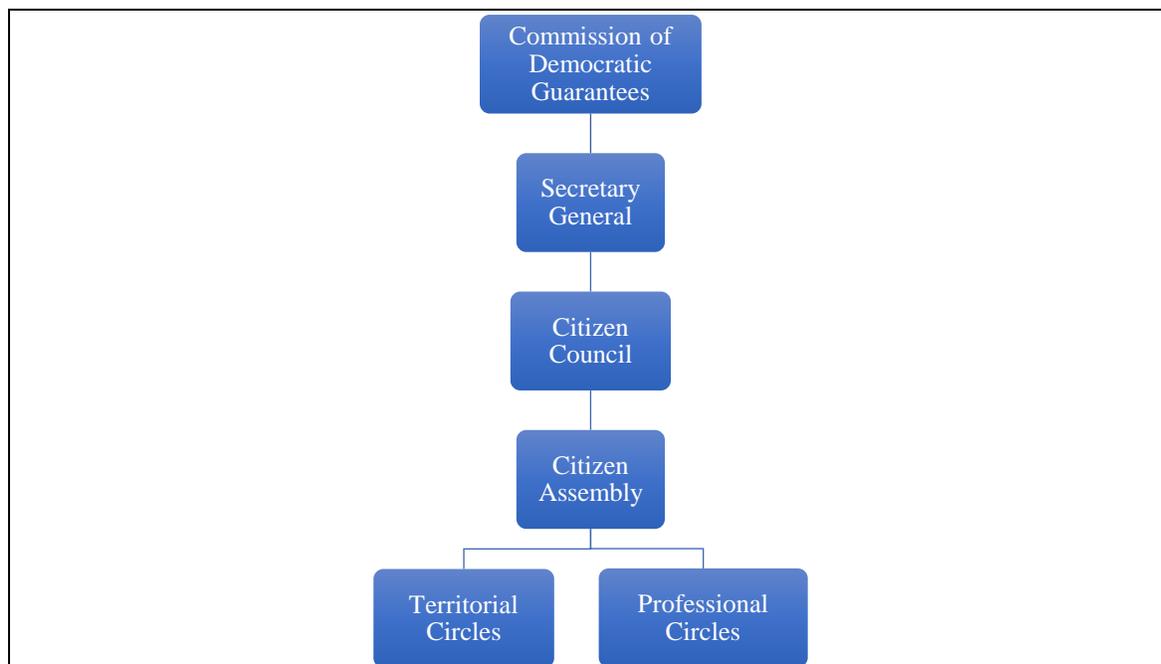
**Figure 1 – Organizational chart of M5S**



As these graphs demonstrate, while the Five Star Movement has a rather chaotic organizational structure in which there are no intermediary actors between local organizations and the party leadership, the extra-parliamentary organization of Podemos is organized in a clear hierarchical fashion with several intermediaries between local groups and the party executive. Moreover, the structure displayed on Figure 2 is not only implemented at the national level in Podemos but is

also replicated at the regional and the municipal levels, creating a nested multi-level structure. It should also be noted that while the extra-parliamentary organization of Podemos is completely independent from the party in public office, in the Five Star Movement there is an overlap between the two faces (Katz and Mair 1993), both of which are dominated by the party executive.

**Figure 2 – Organizational chart of Podemos**



## **2. Informal practices: The functioning of party institutions in real-life settings**

As the above sections demonstrated, there is a striking difference in the extent to which internal organizational principles are regulated in the two parties. One may conclude that these differences derive from the fact that the two parties have followed distinct pathways with regards to their institutionalization, and that while Podemos passed all thresholds of institutionalization (Pedersen 1982) in less than three years, the Five Star Movement's institutionalization process is still underway (Vittori 2017). However, one can also interpret the development of the M5S as a conscious attempt to resist any progress toward institutionalization in order to prevent the

evolution of a party structure with strong intermediary bodies. This strategy serves the myth of M5S being a “non-party”, but also facilitates arbitrary decision-making by the party leader.

As the following paragraphs will reveal, the two organizations have also chosen different strategies to mitigate the influence of members on the composition and functioning of their internal organs. More specifically, even though the statutes of the Five Star Movement already guarantee almost unlimited veto power to the Party Leader, Grillo even managed to surpass these opportunities and make arbitrary decisions in a completely *ad hoc* fashion (Bordignon and Ceccarini 2013). On the other hand, power struggles within Podemos mostly concerned the selection rules of internal bodies, some of which benefitted the current of the party leader through a more majoritarian allocation of seats. However, the intensity and the openness of past discussions on organizational reforms suggests that the party leader of Podemos cannot afford to neglect the decisions of lower organizational levels and even manipulating the rules to benefit his candidates comes at a price.

### **2.1. Grillo: “Trust me!” – Flexible rules in the Five Star Movement**

The most pronounced example of the lack of any intermediaries and efficient appeal fora in M5S is the absence of any strict protocol with regards to expulsions. Although the expulsion of MPs is required to be approved by party members according to the party’s regulations (MoVimento 5 Stelle 2016b), sometimes this process is simply omitted without any justification. In other instances, members’ approval is used to legitimate a decision made unilaterally by Grillo or the “staff”. Since their entry into the national parliament, the party has lost a total of 35 deputies, of whom 8 were expelled and 27 defected (Caruso 2017:601), by which M5S lost more deputies during the electoral cycle than any other party in parliament (Pinto and Pedrazzani 2015:114). Moreover, while expulsions have often triggered intense internal conflicts, the dissolution of local groups and massive waves of defection, this has not contributed to a meaningful and open discussion on how the rules could be modified to guarantee a fair and democratic process with regards to disciplinary sanctions.

While the detailed description of each case of expulsion would surpass the limits of this dissertation, two exemplary cases are introduced here which illustrate how expulsions are used in the M5S as a means to circumvent candidate selection protocols, and that the safeguards provided

by the party's appeal fora are insufficient to protect against arbitrary decisions made by the party leader. The selection of these cases was based on their substantial media salience, as well as the availability of their protagonists for interview.

The first case occurred in preparation for the 2016 municipal elections in Bologna, where Grillo announced the party's mayoral candidate, Massimo Bugani (also interviewed in this project), in a blog post. As this practice stood in stark contrast with the party's rules, a local activist, Lorenzo Andraghetti, presented his own list, and asked for primaries to select the party's mayoral candidate. In response to this request, Andraghetti was informed by the "staff" that he had been expelled, a decision that was justified by Andraghetti's attendance to a political meeting with previously expelled members of the M5S which took place seven months earlier, by which he allegedly "damaged the reputation" of M5S. Andraghetti said in an interview conducted for this project that he was aware of the risk he was taking, and that the purpose of his actions was to raise awareness about the lack of internal democracy in M5S:

"I did it to make some waves, I knew I would be expelled, because I already understood for a long time that there was no democracy in the Five Star Movement." (Expelled mayoral candidate of Bologna)

Despite the fact that the expulsion of a candidate who wanted to contest the nomination of Grillo's favorite was widely covered in Italian media (e.g. *Il Fatto Quotidiano* 2015), it did not trigger any self-reflection in the party beyond the defection of local activists.

This is even more evident taking into account that a very similar episode occurred a year later, at the 2017 municipal election of Genoa, where the results of the local primaries were nullified by Grillo in a blog post in which he justified his move through asking party supporters to "trust him" about the benevolence of this irrevocable decision (Grillo, 2017). Not only were the results of the primaries eliminated, the winning candidate, Marika Cassimatis was denied the right to use the logo of the Five Star Movement for having "damaged the reputation" of the Five Star Movement by sharing posts written by previously expelled members on her social media profile. Cassimatis took this case to court, which ruled against Grillo for having eliminated the results of a binding decision-making process. However, the court sentence did not affect the right to use the party logo, which is a competence of the Executive Council of the Five Star Movement Association, and thus is not subject to any legal or democratic control. In consequence, Cassimatis decided to run with

her own list at the municipal elections, obtaining a negligible result (1.08 % of the votes). According to Cassimatis, the treatment of her case demonstrated the complete lack of internal democracy in the party:

“My story had a lot of resonance, because with nullifying the decision of the base, one of the Movement’s founding principles, democracy from below was eliminated. Instead, Beppe Grillo intervened as the political leader, and this obviously had a huge resonance because it indicated a total change of course in the M5S. Today, the Five Star Movement is a top-down party managed by a private company. I believe that there is no chance that it could return to what it originally was.”  
(Expelled mayoral candidate of Genoa)

These two cases demonstrate that although the Five Star Movement has some written protocols regarding disciplinary sanctions, in practice these cases are often decided unilaterally by Grillo and the “staff” without a membership vote, excluding any controls or opportunities to appeal their decisions.

## **2.2. Podemos: Proportional vote with a majority bonus**

After the foundation of Podemos as a political party, the first Citizen Assembly held in October 2014 opted for an organizational model which favored stability over competition. This was achieved by introducing the opportunity of voting for closed lists of candidates at party primaries (see *Chapter 4*), as well as during the selection of the party’s internal organs, most notably the Citizen Council. Although members could also express individual preferences, the information asymmetry clearly favored votes for cohesive lists, and for the teams endorsed by the party leader in particular. This strategy was a conscious choice one year before the 2015 general elections and was aimed at preventing infiltrations and at transforming Podemos into an efficient “electoral machine”. Although discussions about the lack of pluralism were already present in 2014, Iglesias’ whole list was elected to the 62-strong Citizen Council, as his main contender, Pablo Echenique decided to withdraw his nomination along with his alternative organizational model. However, as the drawbacks of this system in terms of a loss of pluralism soon became manifest, discussions on potential reforms of the organizational model emerged, contributing to the institutionalization of factions within the party (Mikola 2017b). Although these internal factions were primarily organized around ideological differences, they also shared divergent visions on organizational

reform, in particular regarding the selection and composition of the party's executive body, the Citizen Council.

By spring 2016, the party has undergone a series of internal crises which demonstrated the necessity of renegotiating the party's organizational principles. These crises also challenged the leadership of Pablo Iglesias, as Iñigo Errejón, the party's then-Political Secretary and the leader of the party's centrist-pragmatic faction was presented as a credible alternative. The organizational reforms on the table involved all important aspects of the party organization, including a political, an organizational, and an ethical document, as well as one on equality, besides the election of the Secretary General and the Citizen Council. In preparation for the party's second Citizen Assembly meeting, all three major party factions presented comprehensive proposals which included a reform of the internal voting system with the intention of strengthening its proportional elements, albeit to varying degrees, with Iglesias' proposal preserving the highest majority bonus (Riveiro 2016b). After a preliminary vote approved Iglesias' vision regarding the execution of the voting procedure, the final votes at the Citizen Assembly also approved his leadership (with 89 % voting him for Secretary General), fostering the cohesion of the party (Podemos 2017c). However, the distribution of internal factions within the Citizen Council became much more balanced, with Iglesias' list obtaining only a slight majority (50.78 %) as opposed to the unanimous approval it had enjoyed before, while Errejón's current and the anti-capitalist faction won 33.68 and 13.11 %, respectively.

Besides the disputes described above, the functioning of the Commission of Democratic Guarantees elected in 2017 also generated fierce debates over the interpretation of the party's rules, which triggered the intervention of the party leadership. These confrontations started when three members of the Commission of Democratic Guarantees adopted a resolution which nullified some disciplinary sanctions foreseen by the party's new statutes (Podemos 2017a, Articles 71-77). These articles penalized leaking information to the public which could damage the reputation of the party or that of its representatives. According to the Commission, this regulation did not follow from the documents adopted by the Citizen Assembly, at the same time, the Secretary of the Commission itself claimed that the Commission's resolution transcended its sphere of competence and "violated the spirit" of Vistalegre 2 (Gálvez 2017). The conflict was further aggravated by a disciplinary process launched against the President of the Commission of Democratic Guarantees, and the

suspension of her membership (Riveiro 2017), which was finally approved in October 2017 for a period of three years (Marcos 2017). As these episodes demonstrate, although debates about organizational functioning and the eventual lack of internal democracy are much more open in Podemos than in the Five Star Movement, their resolution is often political, and even though several alternatives for organizational reform had been proposed over time, the ones preferred by the faction of Pablo Iglesias have always prevailed, thanks to the majoritarian elements of the voting system and his informal influence within the party.

### **3. Perceptions from within: Interviews with party representatives**

The following sections use interview data collected by the author to illustrate how party representatives perceive the role of party members, the mission and functioning of the organization, and their relationship with the party leadership, respectively. The main narratives offered by the interlocutors are identified for each subject, which are illustrated with quotes from the interviews. Interviewees' names are not mentioned in the text, however, those who agreed on being quoted can be identified through *Appendix F*.

#### **3.1. Interpretations on the role of party members**

##### ***Five Star Movement: “All that we do would be senseless without the citizens”***

Judging from the statutes of the Five Star Movement, one might have the impression that the only role of its members is to participate in online votes and consultations so as to approve the decisions of the party leadership using plebiscitary methods. However, a very different picture emerges from the experiences of local party representatives. The coding of the interviews revealed three recurring patterns in interlocutors' accounts: 1. the importance of personal contact with the local base; 2. the lack of distinction between members and non-members; 3. the conception of members as the *principals* of the party's spokespersons<sup>31</sup> and as the primary sources of policy input. In the

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<sup>31</sup> In the party's own jargon, M5S deputies and councilors are referred to as “spokespersons” (*portavoce*) as a means to emphasize that they are not delegates but ordinary citizens who amplify the voice of their fellow citizens.

following paragraphs, several interview quotes will be used to illustrate how these narratives emerged.

When asked about how the party organization functioned at the local level, and the kind of relationship spokespersons had with activists, the answers uniformly stressed the importance of physical meetings, and personal contact in general. In the words of a Regional Councilor from Sicily:

“The physical connection is important, the fact of having meetings at the territory, of doing banquets, of having assemblies or agoras at the square is fundamental. (...) For those who do not use Internet, very often the channel of communication is to come to our office materially, physically, to chit-chat, or simply the banquets around the city.”

While Sicily has become an M5S stronghold over time and thus the large number of local organizations (see Lanzone 2015) might bias this perception, the intensity and the regularity of personal contact was mentioned as a key experience by representatives across all regions of Italy, although regional differences were also acknowledged. As the leader of M5S’ Group of Councilors in Liguria explained:

“It is diverse in Italy, but there is also a direct contact with the citizenship, we also hold public assemblies to talk directly beyond the Internet. The thing that does not occur enough in the Movement is that we hold at least three public reunions, and also our own meetings every week. We see each other constantly.”

What the interviews also revealed is that regardless of the importance of personal contact, meetings often do not have a fixed agenda, and are convened in an *ad hoc* fashion.

“The relationship with the people who voted for the Movement is often very personal. I have to say that we haven’t done, but I would have liked to have direct meetings with the inhabitants. Very little of this has been done. But in the last year, the mayor organized direct meetings in the neighborhoods. I.e. there have been the so called “walks in the neighborhood” when the mayor met the electoral base directly.” (Municipal Councilor, Livorno, Tuscany)

The same refers to the meetings of local Meetups, whose schedule is defined by the organizers of the groups themselves, who have no formal position in the party:

“On average, they organize a Meetup meeting every 15 days, about 30-40 people. On average, about 50 people, and on average one meeting, one plenary per month. At times two... When there are certain problems, we meet.” (Municipal Councilor, Livorno, Tuscany)

The second recurring argument is that despite the possibility of joining Meetup groups, and of becoming a subscriber to the party's national platform, none of these formalities is required to join the party's meetings and to launch proposals that are eventually transformed into law proposals by the party's spokespersons.

“We are always at the disposal of any citizen, not just our members but also any citizen who can come in any moment, any day to talk to us and make a proposal, and if we believe that it is indeed a proposal that could create welfare not to a single citizen but for a community, we bring it forward. Thus, there is no separation, only a connection with the subscribers.” (Regional Councilor, Umbria)

What's more, party representatives also demonstrated awareness of the social stigmas associated with party membership (Scarrows 2014b), and thus expressed their aim at involving citizens who might be interested in local activism but want to avoid formal party affiliation:

“The challenge is to involve more people each time who probably are not from the Movement, they are not part of the Movement, they are not subscribed to the blog. The challenge is exactly to widen our base to as many people as possible, even to those who do not use Internet, or they do not want to subscribe, but they can make a contribution to the ideas, to the things that are later presented. (...) There is a work at two levels: one is that with the Meetups, i.e. with the activists, with the subscribers to the blog, which is a work of deepening in some themes that refer to the city, or refer to certain sectors. Then there is the relationship with the citizenship which is similar, but different in the sense that the citizen does not subscribe to the local group, or does not subscribe to the Movement. But we do not care whether he/she is an activist or not, the important thing is to have a good idea that can be developed.” (Regional Councilor, Sicily)

The same reliance on the input of non-affiliated supporters was stressed as an important exercise in community building by a Municipal Councilor in Venice:

“As councilors, we obviously need to build relationships in the city, and there are people who are a bit outside of the Movement, people who probably sympathize, but they don't want to sign up to Meetup, they don't want to wear a medal from the M5S, but they give you a hand simply for public interest.”

The same argument was summarized even more succinctly by a regional councilor in Umbria:

“We don't ask the membership card from anyone... or their party affiliation. We want to hear the idea, their plan.”

“Hearing the idea” in the Five Star Movement does not only mean that informal chit-chat is welcome, but grassroots input is also integral to their conception of (non-)representation, in which

spokespersons simply transmit proposals formulated by the citizens to the institutional level. Although the imperative mandate is anti-constitutional by Italian law, M5S spokespersons regularly emphasize that their activity is driven and controlled by their constituency. In the interpretation of M5S' group leader in the Ligurian Regional Council:

“The biggest part of what I do is to follow the indications that arrive to us from citizens, they indicate some problem, we investigate whether there is indeed a problem, then we act. Everything starts from the outside... thus, all that we do would be senseless without the citizens, but also without the subscribers. (...) The activists, and subscribers, have a controlling function, and they come to hold us accountable if we do not respect the line of the program.”

Thus, while the formal regulations of M5S adopt a rather hands-free approach with regards to the functioning of its local units, M5S representatives at the local level seem to harness a close relationship with their base, regardless of their party affiliation, and try to involve them in deliberative processes on local issues.

### ***Podemos: “My life is more complex than politics”***

Fostering grassroots participation is a central organizational principle in Podemos' formal party documents, and this commitment is also reflected in the narratives of party representatives: all interviewees highlighted the participation of members as one of their core ambitions. However, when it comes to evaluating *why* members are important, some interesting divergences emerge within the organization. First of all, there appears to be a lack of consensus regarding whether high membership figures are desirable. As one Deputy in the Assembly of Madrid told me, a large membership base primarily served as a source of legitimacy:

“it is (important to have many members), as the more people are subscribed to Podemos, the more one can say that Podemos has power and social outreach. It is also certain that the real figure of citizen participation in Podemos is measured mostly by the percentage in which subscribers participate in the ballots.” (Deputy in the Assembly of Madrid 3)

At the same time, several interviewees acknowledged that a large majority of members had been passive, and that the official membership figure (slightly below 400,000 at the time of the interviews, 488,538 as of December 2017) was inflated (a problem later addressed by introducing the so called “active census”). When asked about the proportion of active members, several

interviewees estimated a share of 10 %, which is not remarkably different from the average figure (9 %) across party organizations (Gauja 2013:128). As another Deputy in the Assembly of Madrid admitted, the party also lacked resources to verify the identity of its members:

“If we want to verify photocopies of IDs, this would cost thousands and thousands of euros, it would be very, very expensive. I believe that it would be better to have a census that is more honest, even if it is smaller, we have no intention of pretending to be what we aren’t.” (Deputy in the Assembly of Madrid 2)

With regards to the definition of the party demos, and the role of party members, all interviewed representatives shared the idea that Podemos as a party organization aimed at blurring the line between members and non-members (Bolleyer et al. 2015, Gauja 2015, Kosiara-Pedersen et al. 2014); one of the key organizational principles of new parties identified in *Chapter 1*. As a member of the National Citizen Council of Podemos explained, in their conception of membership,

“the most important is that they (members) are not militants. What Podemos tried to do is to abandon the figure of the ‘militant’ as a person with a badge and with a strong identification which is converted into party identity in a way that creates separation between the party and society. By not using the traditional figure of the party militant, Podemos tries to dissolve this frontier between the party and society, to make it a porous boundary so that any person who feels more or less close to Podemos can express their opinion about the internal processes of Podemos, can vote, can decide about the Secretary General, can decide about the people who are part of the executive, can go to an assembly, to a Circle, in a way which breaks down the idea of the professionalization of politics.”

The lack of distinction between “militants” and “subscribers”, and the extension of the rights of the latter was also emphasized by one of Podemos’ Deputies in the Assembly of Madrid:

“Simply as a subscriber you have the rights of a militant, what is a notable difference is that there is no obligatory membership fee. What is important, and what we have learnt from this system, is that there is not always an ‘inside’ and an ‘outside’”. (Deputy in the Assembly of Madrid 2)

A third interpretation by another Deputy in the Assembly of Madrid also stressed similarities between “subscribers” and “affiliates”:

“The figure of the subscriber is what resembles the party affiliates of traditional parties, even if the connection is much weaker in the case of Podemos subscribers. It is more of a connection to enable participation than a connection of belonging and exclusivity, as it usually happens in traditional parties”. (Deputy in the Assembly of Madrid 3)

However, the most interesting discrepancies emerge in how party representatives understand the role of party members, and to what extent they view maximizing participation as a desirable goal. Some representatives view members in terms that are not substantially different from the demand side of the membership equation in traditional mass parties (Scarrow 1994). A Deputy in the Assembly of Madrid highlighted three main “functions” of members that are consistent with these demands (displayed in *italic*):

1. *Multiplying votes through everyday contacts*: “The militants amplify the message and are the primary means to connect with society in general through the Circles.”
2. *Sources of campaign work and financial contributions*: “(members are) the most important resource in electoral campaigns, and they are the ones who maintain this party in the end”
3. *Extending the base of potential candidates*: “Podemos has always said that it is a tool at the service of the people and that the barriers to entry in the participatory processes is much lower than in any other party, anyone can run for an office and be elected.” (Deputy in the Assembly of Madrid 2)

What is interesting is that although participation in internal decision-making processes is encouraged and facilitated to a much higher extent than in most traditional parties, the limitations of such participatory mechanisms are also acknowledged. In particular, interviewees highlighted two such limitations. The first refers to the limited availability and the unequal distribution of participatory resources (Verba et al. 1995):

“We in Podemos do not believe that we have to live in a society where everything has to be decided permanently and all citizens must be converted into a person who besides working 10 hours, has to go home and decide about each of the representatives, study who they are... It would be a society that is self-referentially transparent, profoundly utopian, almost more utopian than a communist scenario”. (Member of the Citizen Council of Podemos)

The second, related limitation is that the voting system in internal processes is also designed in a way which intends to strike a balance between participation and party cohesion, i.e. maximizing participation is only one of the ambitions that the party has pursued:

“(the voting system used in internal ballots) is a way to reconcile these two paths: the path of participation, and the path of ‘I want to participate, but only until some point, and there is a part in which I prefer to delegate my vote, because my life is more complex than politics’. Yes, it is true

that it's not direct, horizontal, and absolute democracy, of course it's not, but it's not a big deal.”  
(Member of the Citizen Council of Podemos)

### 3.2 Views on the mission and the functioning of the organization

#### *Five Star Movement: “We see each other at the garage at 8. So, this is democracy”*

The lack of a formalized party organization is integral to the ethos of the Five Star Movement, however, it entails certain costs that do not remain unnoticed by party representatives. When asked about how they thought the party was organized and how certain aspects could be improved, interlocutors addressed these questions in two different ways: some of them criticized the lack of formal protocols and the uncertainty it created, while others warned against the hierarchization of the party and the risks of becoming like “all the others”. However, most acknowledged that some degree of local organization would be necessary, especially to avoid frictions among overlapping Meetup groups. This issue was brought up most explicitly by a Regional Councilor in Umbria:

“For instance, when there are two Meetups, what happens? We don't know. That is, even we in parliament do not know what to do. The municipal councilors cannot turn to us (regional councilors), because we don't have the possibility to intervene.”

One of the partial solutions to this lack of coordination that several interviewees proposed would be to set up a more rigorous agenda for local and regional meetings, as they were convened very haphazardly. As a Municipal Councilor from Umbria explained, he simply writes a message to activists on Facebook in which he announces the schedule of the meeting, which takes place in a garage as the party has no premises in the municipality:

“I write them 'Tuesday night there is the Meetup of the group. We see each other at the garage at 8.' So, this is democracy.”

Precisely because of the *ad hoc* nature of meetings, some councilors would prefer a tighter control on the agenda:

“We are thinking about setting up a chain of reunions at least once a month. But well organized, otherwise with so many people there is a risk that in the absence of a well-defined agenda of things to discuss, in the end it becomes difficult.” (Regional Councilor, Umbria)

However, even formalizing these meetings would be insufficient to address the overlapping competences of informal local groups which operate within the same territory. As several interlocutors suggested, the latter problem could only be resolved through the institutionalization of local organizations:

“I would set up a bit more of an organization, because with respect to the beginning we have grown, we have many municipalities, and many people to interact with, and thus having an organization means working better. ... I would be in favor of a better organization of the territories, perhaps divided into regions. As we do not have a structure.” (Regional Councilor, Umbria)

At the same time, the threats of institutionalization are also widely discussed in the M5S, which aims to avoid becoming “just another party”. As the Five Star-mayor of Mottola, a small town in the region of Puglia, explained:

“In my opinion, this (a more formalized organization at the local level) could be a positive thing, the fact of organizing better brings you benefits. But it also brings you disadvantages. Which are the disadvantages? The fact of becoming more structured is becoming like all other parties... that have a regional directorate, a provincial directorate, i.e., becoming hierarchical like other parties. Thus, it is true that there is a need for more organization, but this could entail the hierarchization of the Movement.”

Besides institutionalization, professionalization is also a taboo in M5S which limits eligibility to public office for two electoral terms. The limitation of mandates is aimed at avoiding that M5S representatives follow a traditional political career path that stretches over several decades.

“The most important thing was to draw a division between politics and profession. It was fundamental to distinguish the concept of a lifetime profession from politics. Politics is a service. You collect two mandates and then it’s over.” (Municipal Councilor, Livorno, Tuscany)

The lack of professional career paths is also referred to as a feature that distinguishes the Five Star Movement from other political parties:

“It (M5S) is diverse from other parties, primarily because it does not have a hierarchical structure. Thus, it allows everyone to become a candidate, make laws, become mayors, become regional councilors, become deputies. In this we do not follow at all the logic of other parties in which it is necessary to go through all ranks, or to respond to logics of another kind. With us everything is a lot more free and simple.” (Mayor, Mottola, Puglia)

The ease of access mentioned in the above quote is also perceived by M5S deputies as their main contribution to revitalizing public life in Italy:

“The greatest innovation in Italian politics is having introduced common sense which was lacking before, and the awareness of the fact that we are a community. And then certainly we brought back many people who were previously disaffected with politics, unwilling to participate, to put themselves into the game... The hope that not everything is delegated to distant people.” (Regional Councilor, Liguria)

The idea of bringing “ordinary people” into the institutions is integral to the legitimizing myth of the Five Star Movement, which follows directly from their rejection of “professionalized” politics. In this view of politics, elected public office holders are conceived as “irrelevant” actors as their actions follow from their mandate whose terms are constantly negotiated with the activists. In the words of a Regional Councilor in Sicily:

“The most important innovation is that of making the citizens participate in the political life of their own country, i.e. opening the doors of the institutional palace, even to the simple citizens without political experience. They can bring solutions, they can govern with good sense, not so much following the political strategies or strategies that have little to do with the problems of citizens. (...) We should succeed in transmitting better what is it that is being done in the institutions so that we can really be interchangeable, something that unfortunately is not a real thing yet, something that can occur. But we should work to achieve this, because it is not people, but ideas that matter.”

In sum, the view of “politics from below” seems to be deeply embedded in the mission statements of M5S deputies, at the same time, they perceive the lack of organization as a hindrance that must be addressed in a way that does not imply full-fetched institutionalization.

***Podemos: “We clearly have an inclination toward mass parties”***

While the most prevalent fears regarding organizational functioning focus on institutionalization or a lack thereof in M5S, most representatives of Podemos highlighted tensions between participation and representation (Rahat, Hazan and Katz 2008) as their primary concern. This topic has been especially salient at the time of the interviews (December 2015, March 2016) as the party opted for a more efficient organization as opposed to maximizing participation in order to

temporarily function as an “electoral machine”. However, the general expectation within the party was that it would return to its participatory roots once the elections were over. As opting for efficacy generated heated debates within the party, most interviewees took a moderate stance on the issue, and argued for the necessity of finding a balance between participation and representation. As a member of the party’s national executive committee (the Citizen Council) explained:

“There is an important part of society which wants to be represented, and it wants to delegate in the most literal and traditional sense of the word, in which the state and its representatives work for them, and there is another important part of the society which wants to participate more directly. What Podemos has tried to do is to create a tool that permits both things.”

However, not all representatives felt so easy about this “balance”, and several of them argued that the centrality of participation needed to be restored:

“Since the process of construction in Vistalegre, there has been a dichotomy in the party with which I do not agree 100%, which has put efficacy above more horizontal forms of participation. Nevertheless, we will be able to construct a less majoritarian form in which all different groups can be integrated.” (Deputy in the Assembly of Madrid 2)

When confronted with the majoritarian effects of their internal voting system, a member of the National Citizen Council offered a rather cynical interpretation, arguing that the membership vote was an important mobilization tool regardless of its outcome:

“We come from very bourgeois traditions in which ‘democratic’ means mere delegation. In many cases, the vote has as much importance on what is decided as the effect that the decision itself generates, and this effect has to do with the social mobilization around a decision being made.” (Member of the National Citizen Council of Podemos)

It is also interesting to see that some interlocutors did not show any sign of self-reflection on the majoritarian tendencies in the party, and spoke about participation in superlatives:

“With Podemos, a new era has started with regards to the participation of citizens. Our processes are the most participatory and the most participated in the history of Spain.” (Secretary General of Podemos Community of Madrid, Co-founder of Podemos)

More counterintuitively, and in stark contrast with the Five Star Movement, interlocutors from Podemos did not insist on the idea that their party was different from all others, what’s more, one of them even referred to the mass party model as an ideal whose functions they aimed to replicate:

“What we are trying to rebuild is a new organizational form for the role previously fulfilled by the old mass parties, we clearly have an inclination toward mass parties, and one of the ideas that we have tried to implement during this period was to facilitate participation at a large scale, also when making decisions.” (Deputy in the Assembly of Madrid 2)

At the same time, a higher level of institutionalization does not necessarily mean more professionalization to the interviewed representatives of Podemos, who also seem to oppose life-long careers in politics and the bureaucratization of party organizations:

“I am not against professionals who dedicate themselves to politics. But I am against the infighting of political parties to allow party bureaucrats to win office by all means if they are known, which is typical in left-wing parties. And second, I am in favor of that someone should not spend more than 8-10 years in a political party.” (Member of the Citizen Council of Podemos)

Thus, the interviews with Podemos deputies revealed that the institutionalization of the party and the majoritarian tendencies induced by some of its decision-making processes triggered a substantial level of self-reflection in the party, and that most preferred to strike a balance between participation and representation.

### **3.3 Views on party leaders and internal democracy**

#### ***Five Star Movement: “There has never been any intervention”***

Based on the types and the frequency of interventions by the party leadership of M5S described above, one would expect that these are widely acknowledged in the party, and that some sort of legitimizing discourse is applied in which they are viewed as a “necessary evil”. However, not only was that pattern absent from the interviews, most interlocutors outright denied having experienced any intervention from the top. At the same time, it is possible to identify three slightly different narratives on this subject: 1. some interlocutors said they were unaware of any interventions; 2. others stressed that although there have been some cases where Grillo intervened, these were exceptional; 3. a third group of respondents tried to shift the focus from M5S and argued that other parties scored much worse on intra-party democracy.

The first narrative was offered by several interlocutors with almost negligible variation, as the following quotes demonstrate:

“I have never had any intervention from the center. In my mandate, and in my activity, I have never had any kind of interference. (Municipal Councilor, Terni, Umbria)”

“In 5 years, over the activity inside the regional parliament, we have never had any type of intervention from the top.” (Regional Councilor, Sicily)

“We don’t have any interference (with the party leadership). Despite what might be felt from the outside, there has never been an interference from someone who is above us.” (Regional Councilor, Umbria)

When confronted with specific cases where intervention reportedly occurred, most interlocutors tried to stress that these instances had been exceptional:

“Genoa is the only case from 2,000 elected representatives all over Italy which is a case where the “guarantor” intervened. I do not know the reality of Genoa, thus I do not want to judge. I only think that if there was this intervention, there must be a motive, taking into account that this was a very strong intervention. But this intervention confirms that all the other elections were completely free.” (Regional Councilor, Sicily)

Those who acknowledged the occurrence of interventions chose two strategies to justify them. First, as a Regional Councilor from Liguria argued, interventions only occurred in cases that were prescribed by the party’s regulations:

“The intervention arrives when the elected representative does not respect the program.”

An alternative justification was offered by a Regional Councilor in Sicily, who argued that:

“The lack of internal democracy occurs in the other parties where the party secretaries, where the political chiefs decide who should and who shouldn’t run as a candidate.”

The role of Beppe Grillo in the Movement has triggered more controversy, and although some interlocutors tried to justify the necessity of a “guarantor”, their accounts displayed uncertainty about its definition, especially given the fact that by the time the interviews were conducted, Grillo was officially no longer the “Political Leader” of the Movement, a post he handed over to Luigi Di Maio who was formally selected in an online vote without any serious challengers. The following quote is an attempt to conceptually distinguish these roles:

“(The role of Beppe Grillo would be) of guarantee. Because the political leader will be the one who makes proposals on actions, on taking positions, on the other hand, the guarantor needs to monitor that the rules are being respected, that the program is respected. The political leader gives the input, the guarantor needs to control that everything goes fine. Like the division of powers: judiciary, executive, and legislative. The guarantor is the judiciary, the political leader is the executive.”  
(Regional Councilor, Liguria)

Remarkably, it is precisely the lack of separation of powers that was highlighted by another interlocutor, who was expelled from the M5S after an attempt to run as a candidate for the Mayor of Bologna:

“Modern democracies are based on the principle of the separation of powers: legislative, executive, judiciary. Who makes the rules, who applies them, and who punishes the ones that fail to apply them. In the M5S who makes the rules is the same person who executes them, and the same person who punishes. There’s no separation of powers.”

While the previous account might be influenced by the fact that it was offered by a member who had been expelled, even loyal supporters had been critical about this point:

“The candidate for premier, i.e. the candidate for head of government should be distinct from the political leader who is a figure of guarantee. Thus, I think that the two figures should be a bit detached. From this point of view, I would have preferred if Grillo would have continued as the guarantor of the Movement, i.e. the political leader, and then Di Maio as the candidate for premier. From this point of view, I would have kept these roles distinct.” (Mayor of Mottola, Puglia)

At the same time, what might be the most realistic interpretation is that regardless of his official title, Grillo serves an important mediatic function in the party, as he “amplifies” its message:

“He (Grillo) can be useful in the case of elections, in electoral campaigns, in communication. Also because the M5S is in the limelight of the media, of the press, and thus we need to be very cautious about how we communicate. And the role of the guarantor in this case might be useful in case someone “misses the path” and says things that are in contrast with the program, in contrast with what the Five Star Movement is.” (Regional Councilor, Sicily)

When asked about whether the party had any mechanism to replace Grillo, party representatives acknowledged the absence of such rules:

“For the moment, we don’t have one (mechanism to select the guarantor). But the selection mechanism needs to be studied, certainly. But until now this problem has not occurred<sup>32</sup>. The Movement is always in transformation, it is not static or monolithic.” (Regional Councilor, Liguria)

At the same time, it has been suggested that Grillo would gradually surrender even if he was not constrained by any formal rules:

“It is clear that he has arrived to a certain age, seventy years, thus he will not always be able to stay in the frontline, he has always said that sooner or later he would take a step backwards and give space to all the others. Also because he never wanted to make a political career. He has always been a father inside the Movement. Now he’s taking another step backwards, nevertheless, he’s always there, to watch everyone.” (Mayor of Mottola, Puglia)

Thus, the interviews confirm the charismatic and undisputable nature of Beppe Grillo’s leadership, however, they also demonstrate that perceptions regarding intra-party democracy vary within the party, and that the separation of powers within M5S is unclear at best.

### ***Podemos: “Podemos would not have existed without the charismatic leadership of Pablo Iglesias”***

Although Podemos is less commonly referred to as a charismatic party (e.g. March 2015), from the interviews it is apparent that Pablo Iglesias has been a key mobilizing actor throughout the party’s history, to the extent that some claim he is indispensable for Podemos. However, most representatives saw centralization as a temporary trend that will fade over time, giving room for the emergence of alternative leaders. In fact, the party’s second Citizen Assembly meeting in Vistalegre brought about such changes, however, the results of the contest confirmed Iglesias’ leadership (Mikola 2017b). Narratives regarding internal democracy and leadership reveal three major trends in Podemos: a deep commitment toward fostering intra-party democracy, disputes about whether majoritarian selection mechanisms make a difference in leadership dynamics, and the recognition of Pablo Iglesias’ “natural” leadership (Rodríguez-Teruel et al. 2016:4).

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<sup>32</sup> As mentioned above, the Five Star Movement included rules for the selection of the guarantor in its new statutes (MoVimento 5 Stelle 2017d) adopted in December 2017, i.e. two months after these interviews took place.

When asked directly about the importance of fostering intra-party democracy, all interlocutors agreed that this was one of the main ambitions of Podemos as a political project. As a Deputy in the Assembly of Madrid explained:

“I believe that internal democracy and articulating new forms of participation is something that we need to discover, invent in our time, and no one has done it on the scale that Podemos has done it to date; we have an obligation of doing it well.” (Deputy in the Assembly of Madrid 2)

The same conviction is reflected in the words of the former Secretary General of Podemos in the Community of Madrid:

“The statutes establish that all important decisions are taken by the subscribers. It is not possible to find a more democratic organization in the whole history of Spain.”

However, most interviewees acknowledged the existence of challenges with regards to the implementation of internal democracy, and offered various interpretations for why it had not been maximized. The most forgiving interpretation is that tensions between participatory and more majoritarian tendencies were addressed in an optimal manner:

“The construction of Podemos to date has been marked with the tension between democracy and efficacy, and I think that we can say with utmost confidence that we have managed to resolve this tension collectively in the best possible way.” (Podemos Deputy in the Assembly of Madrid 3)

In another interpretation, although centralization was recognized as a problem, it was forecast that it would decrease over time:

“I believe that yes, there has been centralization, but I also believe that the original idea of Podemos was more personalist than what was realistically feasible. In fact, the image of Podemos has evolved along with the elections as we won local, regional, and now national representation; it has become more diverse, more plural, and with many more voices. I believe that, in the medium term, personalism and centralization will decrease. I think this is fundamental.” (Podemos Deputy in the Assembly of Madrid 2)

More counterintuitively, interviewees uniformly agreed that the leadership of Pablo Iglesias was necessary for Podemos’ initial phase of mobilization, and as such, even personalistic tendencies were tolerable.

“It is undoubtable that Podemos would not have existed without the charismatic leadership of Pablo Iglesias. At the same time, Podemos generated a process of repoliticizing the Spanish scene that is

unprecedented. People discuss politics and participate in a way that they have not done before, and this process, without any doubt is key for the construction of a more critical and free citizenship.” (former Secretary General of Podemos in the Community of Madrid)

At the same time, it is also apparent that Iglesias’ leadership was not uncontested:

“In the first phase, Pablo Iglesias has very much polarized Podemos, he has his detractors, and he has fans too. I think the majority also recognizes that he has been the image, the person who was able to reach this point. At the same time, in the second phase, I believe that he has withdrawn a bit, and he has dedicated himself less to internal processes to have an image of the Secretary General of all. And I think that no one has seriously questioned the leadership of Pablo Iglesias.” (Podemos Deputy in the Assembly of Madrid 2)

Even though Iglesias’ leadership seems uniformly accepted, there appears to be a lack of consensus regarding its origins. In particular, interviewees articulated diverse opinions with regards to whether the majoritarian elements of the internal voting system contributed to the solidification of Iglesias’ role. In one interpretation, they undoubtedly did, but that was a logical choice for the organization. When asked about how the majoritarian effects of the voting system could be compensated, a member of the party’s National Citizen Council reversed the question:

“The question I would ask myself is why it (the majoritarian effect of the internal voting system) has to be compensated. That is, we can emerge thanks to that there is a mediatic figure who is Pablo Iglesias who knows a lot of people and allows for an enormous mobilization, different actors are produced who want to lead Podemos, and an election is generated around these figures. And at this moment, should we say that ‘no, all that allowed Podemos to become a very well-known force with a broad capacity of social mobilization, which has to do with the means of communication, has to do with television, all this that has worked for us, now we don’t want it, we all want to be equal?’”

An alternative explanation is that although open primaries combined with block voting might have majoritarian effects, this does not prevent the emergence of alternative leaders:

“In Podemos, the strongest leaderships (those of Pablo Iglesias, Iñigo Errejón, and Juan Carlos Monedero) were already a reality before the system for electing party representatives was selected. There are new leaderships that emerged despite that they had the same position as many others (Irene Montero, who was selected to the National Citizen Council), and there are those which have pertained despite leaving their internal office (Juan Carlos Monedero). The dynamics of leadership and of more or less centralization have little to do with the selection of internal positions. Precisely, the selection of open primaries as a method aimed to avoid or at least reduce and postpone as much

as possible the emergence of dynamics more typical of less democratic structures.” (Podemos Deputy in the Assembly of Madrid 3)

Finally, there is also disagreement about whether Pablo Iglesias could be replaced in the future, or whether Podemos is intrinsically inseparable from him, making it an unmistakable case of a charismatic party (Panebianco 1988). As a Deputy from the Assembly of Madrid explained, although Iglesias’ leadership is important, the evolution of the party could open paths for replacing him:

“Without any doubt, today the figure of Pablo (Iglesias) is an element that increases the cohesion and gives personified mediatic power to the political project of Podemos. But that does not exclude that with the development of this project, with its implantation where we govern and with the development of the organization, new leaderships emerge without any problem, always based on democratic decision, which could substitute Pablo (Iglesias) in the future.” (Deputy in the Assembly of Madrid 3)

Others were more skeptical towards this proposition:

“In fact, I do not believe (that any other person could lead Podemos without losing support). Podemos, and the figure of Pablo Iglesias in concrete have returned the illusion of many people who feel represented by him. This isn’t something that can be easily replaced.” (former Secretary General of Podemos in the Community of Madrid)

Thus, while centralization is viewed as a threat in Podemos, and some express hopes that it would fade over time, it is unclear how the charismatic leadership of Pablo Iglesias could be deconstructed.

## 4. Conclusions

As this chapter has demonstrated, although both Podemos and the Five Star Movement foster direct participation in their internal processes, these are regulated in much more detail in Podemos. Also, while there are different views on organizational functioning in Podemos which are mostly related to the ideal balance between participation and representation, these are discussed openly and transparently, and there are mechanisms for subjecting different organizational proposals to a membership vote. These mechanisms are completely absent from the Five Star Movement, where

due to the party's "anti-party" nature and the lack of intermediary bodies, there is no established channel for discussing organizational principles which arrive in the form of declarations from the party leadership. As seen from the interviews, this does not entail the lack of internal disagreements, however, dissenters might only choose between *exit* and *loyalty*, as *voice* implies expulsion from the party (Hirschman 1970). Moreover, even loyal party representatives lack established mechanisms for articulating their demands for organizational reform, despite a clear demand for a more institutionalized structure at the local level (also shared by activists, see *Chapter 7*).

The chapter has also shown that despite apparent differences in party regulation and structure, the informal influence of party leaders has an impact on internal decisions in both parties, although it takes the form of much more direct interventions in Beppe Grillo's party. Although Pablo Iglesias is recognized by most as a "natural" leader in Podemos, he could never afford to justify his decisions by asking party members to "trust him". Thus, even though charismatic leaders can find ways to influence outcomes regardless of the institutional setting, the lack of intermediary mechanisms and independent controls on their rule makes this substantially easier. Although the leadership of Pablo Iglesias is strong and (mostly) uncontested, it is directly legitimated by the party members and can be revoked, while both of these criteria are missing in the case of Beppe Grillo. The institutionalization of internal factions in Podemos also allows for a more mediated debate, which to some extent mitigates the majoritarian effect of open primaries by presenting several credible alternatives. At the same time, while the intense relationship among local representatives and activists seems to confirm that the Five Star Movement is efficient in generating meaningful local activism, the disconnection between the local and the national level implies a serious threat to internal democracy that no one in the party has the means or the willingness to address.

Thus, the findings confirm the hypothesis drawn from Michels' "iron law of oligarchy" that the direct participation of the masses yields decision-making processes that can be easily manipulated by powerful leaders despite the technical affordances of the Internet which lower barriers to participation substantially. However, the differences among the two parties' level of institutionalization also demonstrate that "the differentiation of organs and of functions" (Michels 1911:71) does not entail less, but rather more efficient control by the rank-and-file, even if the

“direct” nature of this control is impaired. Thus, while adopting a hierarchical organizational structure along with fostering direct participation at all levels creates tensions between participatory and representative ideals of democracy, the experience of local organizations in the Five Star Movement demonstrates that the costs of failing to establish a clear organizational hierarchy are much higher in terms of leaving party leaders’ room to manoeuvre virtually unconstrained, limiting the scale of direct democracy’s applicability to the local level. In short: institutionalization limits the scope of direct democracy, but a lack thereof makes its implementation impossible.

## Chapter 4 – Candidate selection processes in the Five Star Movement and Podemos

This chapter addresses the candidate selection processes of Podemos and the Five Star Movement from two perspectives: first, it describes the rules of candidate selection processes in each party based on party statutes and other party documents, and second, it evaluates candidate selection processes during the elections held between 2013 and 2018 in both countries at all legislative levels (local, regional, national, European Parliament) from an intra-party democracy perspective. Based on these two perspectives, the cases are classified along four dimensions established by Rahat and Hazan (2001): *candidacy*, *selectorate*, *decentralization* and *voting/appointment system*. Furthermore, the corresponding items of a comprehensive IPD-index will be used to evaluate how the candidate selection processes of these parties contribute to their overall level of internal democracy. The findings show that Podemos is slightly more democratic in its candidate selection processes, using both sets of indicators. At the same time, both parties use several informal mechanisms to steer the outcome in directions preferred by the party leadership. These practices make qualitative assessment necessary and suggest avenues to how recently used indicators could be refined.

### 1. Introduction

Candidate selection is universally regarded as one of the party activities that are most decisive for intra-party democracy (Cross and Katz 2013, Detterbeck 2005, Rahat, Hazan and Katz 2008, Scarrow 2015). Variation in the extent to which candidate selection is democratic can be expressed using several rivalling concepts. Susan Scarrow suggests inclusion (formal eligibility) and access (the procedural costs of voting) as key dimensions, both of which have a crucial impact on the competitiveness of the process (Scarrow 2015:186-187). Studies on the impact of the Internet on organizational culture showed that due to the lower cost of participation (Bennett and Segerberg

2013, Bimber et al. 2012), online primaries have the potential of being both more inclusive and more accessible than offline ballots.<sup>33</sup> However, whether they realize this potential depends on how the voting procedure is designed.

Several analytical tools have been proposed for measuring how democratically parties select their candidates. Rahat and Hazan (2001) introduced a comprehensive set of indicators, using four dimensions: candidacy, selectorate, decentralization and voting/appointment systems. These four dimensions reveal answers to the following questions: 1. Who can be selected? (*candidacy*); 2. Who selects candidates? (*selectorate*); 3. Where (at which organizational level) are the candidates selected? (*decentralization*) and 4. How are candidates nominated? (*voting/appointment systems*) (Rahat and Hazan 2001:298-299). The *candidacy* dimension is measured on a scale ranging from inclusiveness to exclusiveness, and in that sense it overlaps with Scarrow's (2015) "inclusiveness" indicator. However, Rahat and Hazan's taxonomy makes a distinction between passive (*candidacy*) and active (*selectorate*) voting rights, both of which can be measured on an inclusiveness scale, which allows for more fine-grained combinations. These combinations are graphically illustrated on *Graph 1*.

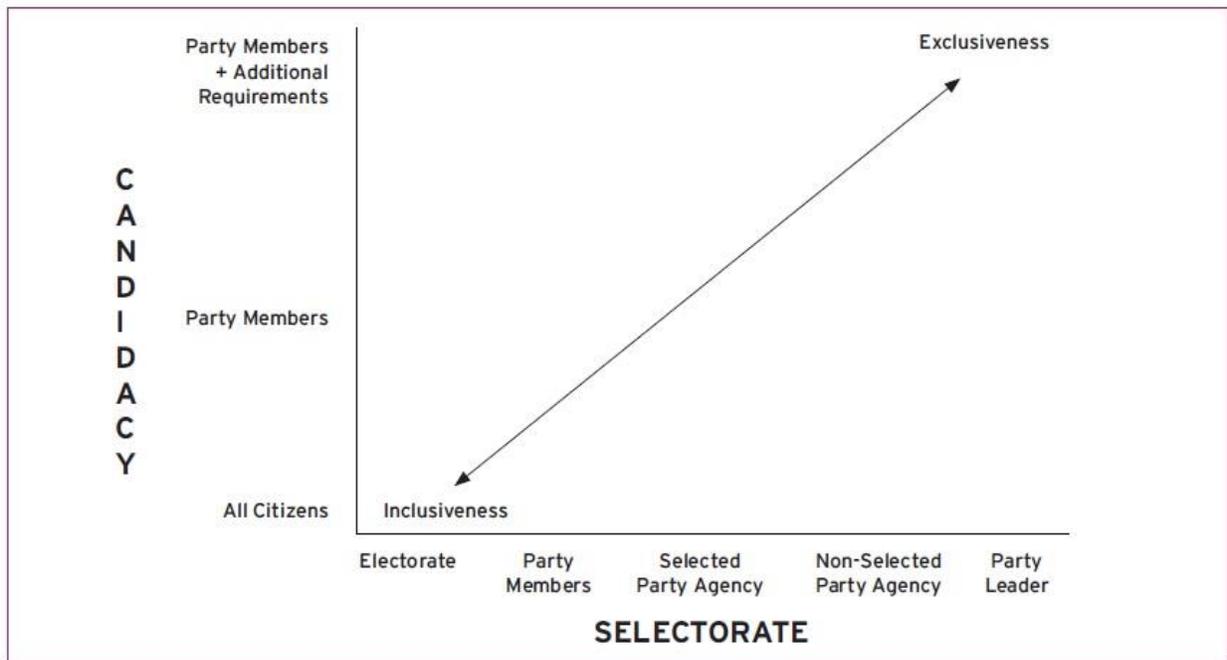
With regards to decentralization, Rahat and Hazan distinguish among functional and territorial decentralization. While this is a theoretically sound proposition, this project can only benefit from the latter, as none of the cases addressed here organize representation based on social/professional/sectorial subunits.<sup>34</sup> In terms of territorial decentralization, cases can be distinguished on the basis of whether candidates are selected at the local, the regional or the national level.

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<sup>33</sup> As Rahat and Hazan (2001:302) note: "Levels of accessibility and inclusiveness are higher if a party adopts such methods as postal ballots, tele-voting or spreading polling stations all over the country". It seems logical to hold the same presumption with regards to online voting, which is yet another technical innovation that facilitates participation.

<sup>34</sup> Although Podemos acknowledges such functional subunits (the so called "Círculos Sectoriales"), they only play a marginal role in the candidate selection process.

*Graph 1 – Inclusiveness/exclusiveness along the dimensions of candidacy and selectorate*



\*Graph adopted from Rahat and Hazan (2001:304). Empirical examples were removed from the original graph as they do not serve the purpose of the current conceptual discussion.

Finally, candidate selection processes can be distinguished on the basis of the voting procedures they apply. In Rahat and Hazan’s (2001) terminology, the procedures applied only constitute a voting system if 1. all candidates are determined by individual votes instead of a majoritarian or unanimous approval of closed lists, and 2. voting results are officially presented in order to provide legitimacy. Procedures at the other extreme can be defined as “appointment”, while in-between cases where for instance *en bloc* voting for pre-established lists is allowed constitute “appointment-voting” systems (Rahat and Hazan 2001:306). I suggest that calling these latter systems “mixed” is more practical (as shown in *Table 4* in *Appendix D*), nevertheless, the use of an intermediate category will be instrumental for our cases. Voting systems can be further differentiated using two parameters. According to the rules for the allocation of positions, we can distinguish between proportional (PR), semi-proportional (semi-PR), semi-majoritarian and majoritarian systems.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, voting procedures can be categorized on the basis of whether they select all of the

<sup>35</sup> As it will be shown in the empirical sections, these categories do not sufficiently cover all the variation in voting systems (see Norris 1997), thus, a more careful examination of voting mechanisms and the use of additional subcategories is necessary.

candidates in one or multiple rounds (for a comprehensive summary of all logically possible combinations of appointment and voting systems, see *Table 4* in *Appendix D*).

At the same time, not all the indicators listed above are relevant for our outcome of interest, i.e. the level of intra-party democracy. First, as Rahat and Shapira (2017) note, there is no consensus on whether decentralization serves democracy, as “decentralised systems can be just as non-democratic as centralised ones” (Rahat and Shapira 2017:89). In other words, decentralization is not a democratic value in itself, rather a means toward the representation of territorial subunits and minorities of different kinds, which can be measured more directly. Furthermore, although Rahat and Hazan’s categorization of voting/appointment systems is a useful descriptive tool, it does not tell us much about how any specific combination contributes to intra-party democracy. For that, I argue, a more qualitative assessment of the voting rules is required with close attention to the methods of drafting lists of candidates, the institutions involved in their approval and the choices available for members and supporters when casting their ballot. In other words, empirical cases demonstrate much more diversity than what can be captured with such a simplistic classification scheme.

Therefore, the analytical part of this chapter will draw on three different toolkits: first, it will provide an in-depth qualitative assessment of procedural details of the parties’ candidate selection methods that are difficult to capture numerically, second, it will characterize the same processes using Rahat and Hazan’s (2001) four dimensions, and third, it will provide intra-party democracy scores for the relevant items from Rahat and Shapira’s IPD index (2017). This index covers five dimensions that can be used as indicators of intra-party democracy: participation, competition, representation, responsiveness and transparency. Each dimension has a separate battery of questions that can be used for scoring parties on each item (see IPD Questionnaire in *Appendix A*). This chapter will only use items that are relevant for candidate selection, in line with the structure of the dissertation that is based on party activities rather than abstract analytical dimensions.

It needs to be emphasized that key democratic values such as participation, representation and competition cannot be maximized at the same time: a highly participatory contest can easily yield results that are not representative of the party’s core constituency or the electorate as a whole, thus, decisions regarding the ideal mix of democratic features in a party organization always involve some trade-offs (Rahat, Hazan and Katz 2008, Rahat and Shapira 2017). Therefore, by focusing

only on items that are relevant for one activity (in this case, candidate selection), we will be able to detect how democratically that particular activity is organized in each party, through all dimensions.

In the following sections, I will first present the rules and procedures each party adopted for the execution of their candidate selection processes, then using empirical data, I will demonstrate to what extent their results favored the party leadership vis-à-vis the party on the ground. Consequently, I will evaluate these procedures as well as their results using the four dimensions presented above, which will be followed by the evaluation of these candidate selection processes from a broader intra-party democracy perspective.

The findings are not only relevant for determining the share of power held by party members, but also because the ways MPs are selected have an impact on their legislative behavior: the more open and democratic the contest is, the more autonomous and competitive MPs are expected to be, whilst strong control of the party leadership over the process entails loyalty with the official party line (Katz 2001, Pinto and Pedrazzani 2015, Rahat and Hazan 2001). However, the primary interest of this chapter lies in deducing to what extent anti-system parties' claims of revitalizing intra-party democracy are substantiated based on their candidate selection practices.

## **2. The regulation of primaries**

### **2.1 Five Star Movement**

Beppe Grillo's M5S was the first party in Italy to introduce online primaries to select its candidates for the 2013 general elections (Tronconi 2015). However, formal regulations of the candidate selection process in party documents have been very succinct, a feature that is in line with the Five Star Movement's self-definition as an anti-/non-political party that defies such regulations. This ethos is reflected in the party's "non-statute", a document that consists of merely five pages divided into seven articles (MoVimento 5 Stelle 2009). Article 7 specifies that:

"On occasions of, and in preparation for, electoral consultations ..., the M5S will constitute the center of collection of candidatures and the vehicle for the selection of those subjects who will be authorized, on each occasion and in writing, to use the name and symbol 'MoVimento 5 Stelle' in

the setting of their participation in each electoral consultation. (...) The identity of candidates for each elective office will be publicized on a dedicated website created within the framework of the blog; discussions regarding such candidatures will likewise be public, transparent and unmediated. The rules concerning the procedure of candidature and designation for national or local electoral consultations may be more precisely determined in accordance with the type of consultation and in the light of the experience that will be gained over time” (MoVimento 5 Stelle 2009, translation from Pinto and Pedrazzani 2015).

This latter point is especially relevant in the sense that M5S primaries have indeed been regulated in an *ad hoc* fashion. The party first contested the regional elections in 2010, however, by this time neither the rules nor the methods of candidate selection have solidified. This led to a plethora of different selection mechanisms used simultaneously, from open to closed primaries, from face-to-face meetings to online deliberations. Although some central regulations had been accepted in the meantime (Lanzone and Rombi 2014), the coexistence of different selection methods persisted until 2014. This diversity was most salient in the case of regional elections, as shown in *Table 1*. More importantly, and in parallel with the development of the party’s online platforms, there has been a gradual evolution from traditional appointment systems to more participatory, but at the same time more centralized online processes with an intermediate phase in which delegates transmitted the preferences of local supporters to regional assemblies. From 2014 onwards, online primaries have become the norm in M5S (Montesanti and Veltri 2015).

**Table 1 – Selection methods of regional candidates\***

Selection method	Type of candidate	
	Regional president	Regional MPs (councilors)
Direct assignment by Beppe Grillo	Emilia Romagna 2009 Campania 2009 Veneto 2009	
Closed face to face meeting	Emilia Romagna 2009 (ratification) Piemonte 2009 Piemonte 2014	
Open face to face meeting	Campania 2009 (ratification) Lombardia 2009 Sicilia 2012	Sicilia 2012 Lazio 2012 Basilicata 2013 Abruzzo 2014
Online selection on a local platform	Lazio 2012 Lombardia 2012 Molise 2012	Lombardia 2012 Molise 2012
Online selection on a national platform	Basilicata 2013 Abruzzo 2014 Calabria 2014	Piemonte 2014 Calabria 2014 Emilia Romagna 2014

	Emilia Romagna 2014 Liguria 2015 Veneto 2015 Toscana 2015 Marche 2015 Umbria 2015 Puglia 2015 Campania 2015	Liguria 2015 Veneto 2015 Toscana 2015 Marche 2015 Umbria 2015 Puglia 2015 Campania 2015
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\*Table adopted from Montesanti and Veltri 2015:3, translated by the author

In case of the primaries for the 2013 general elections dubbed “Parlamentarie”, the rules of the process were published on Grillo’s blog, leaving no room for misinterpretation (MoVimento 5 Stelle 2012). Potential candidates were required to be members of the Five Star Movement, to be at least 25 years old<sup>36</sup>, not to be a member of any other political party, not to have served in public office for two electoral cycles and not to have a criminal record (MoVimento 5 Stelle 2012, Pinto and Pedrazzani 2015:106). Voters were also required to be members of M5S, and only those were eligible to vote who registered to the party’s website before 30 September 2012, i.e. more than two months before the primaries took place (ibid.). Based on these requirements, this candidate selection process can be described as rather exclusive.

The primaries for the 2014 European Parliament elections differed from the “Parlamentarie” in that the candidates were selected in two rounds: first on a regional level, then according to the five constituencies that are applied in the selection of Italian MEPs. Voters could cast three preferences in each round, and the winner of the first round in each region already secured his or her place on the final list of candidates. A fixed number of the top-rated candidates<sup>37</sup> in the second round would appear on the final list of candidates in alphabetical order. Both candidates and voters had to meet strict requirements. Potential candidates were expected to have been enrolled in M5S prior to 31 December 2012 (the primaries took place on 1 April 2014), not to hold elected office, and not to have run or have a pending request to run for local elections in 2014. Voters had to be enrolled in the party by 30 June 2013, and not to have their membership suspended by 20 March 2014 (MoVimento 5 Stelle 2014a).

The party adopted a new set of rules before the primaries for the 2018 general elections (MoVimento 5 Stelle 2018), which took place from 16 to 17 January 2018. The new regulation

<sup>36</sup> This minimum age is a constitutional requirement in order to be eligible to the Italian Chamber of Deputies.

<sup>37</sup> 30 candidates for the North West constituency, 18 for North East, 20 for the Center, 24 for the South and 20 for the Islands of Sardinia and Sicily (MoVimento 5 Stelle 2014a).

significantly increased the number of criteria that prospective candidates were required to meet, specifically, it listed 18 such requirements. While most of the criteria on the list did not imply further restrictions regarding the pool of eligible candidates, two of them deserve special attention as both were aimed at keeping certain candidates off the list, while ensuring that some specific candidates could run. First, the new requirements involved a significant softening of M5S' rules with regards to the criminal record of prospective candidates. Article 6, point "e." of the regulation prescribes that someone who has been convicted for any "serious crime" committed purposefully should be excluded from the primaries, even if only convicted on first instance. However, point "f." adds that prospective candidates who face a criminal investigation or are currently undergoing criminal proceedings should disclose all related documents and a "short illustrative description of facts" which would be published on the candidate's site. The importance of this latter specification is that it did not exclude candidates under trial from the process, such as the political leader of the party, Luigi di Maio, who had been sued by a previously expelled candidate, Marika Cassimatis, under defamation charges (Corriere 2017). Second, the regulation also ruled out potential candidates who previously resigned from any elective office except for health issues and the dissolution of the relevant institution (MoVimento 5 Stelle 2018, Article 6, point "o."). The relevance of this prescription can be appreciated considering that 27 MPs of the Five Star Movement defected during the last electoral cycle (Caruso 2017:601). Thus, the exclusion of such candidates served both as a sanction on disloyalty, and as a deterrent against similar behavior in the future. Another novel feature of the regulation was that it introduced a new mechanism for compensating gender differences in the resulting list of candidates, prescribing that in case the results in certain electoral districts did not provide for equal representation of both genders, candidates who originally ran for a seat in the Senate could replace candidates of the overrepresented gender on the list for the Congress (MoVimento 5 Stelle 2018, Article 3, point "d.").

## 2.2 Podemos

Although for an external observer it might seem that online primaries are the bread and butter of Podemos, its crucial position is not reflected in the party's "organizational document" (Documento organizativo, Podemos 2015a), nor in its official statutes (Podemos 2015b, 2017a). Nevertheless,

the party already engaged in primaries before it even laid down its organizational foundations, as it entered the Spanish political scene during the 2014 European Parliament elections, shortly after its foundation in January 2014. Therefore, the procedures applied had been far less sophisticated and regulated than they were during the 2015 primaries. Candidacies for the EP elections were presented individually, and each candidate had to gain support from one of the *Círculos* (base units). All “Circles” could back three candidates at maximum. Voters were not required to be members of Podemos (which was only registered as a political party 16 days before the launch of the primaries), only to be Spanish citizens older than 16. Voters could cast their ballots for five days, either using a mobile phone application (Agora Voting) or offline. Besides a separate vote for the head of list, each voter could support a maximum of five candidates in a fixed order of preference. The most popular candidates were reordered to ensure gender balance on the final list of candidates (El Diario 2014a).

Following this early phase of institutionalization, the party’s organizational principles were discussed and accepted at the first conference of Vistalegre, held in October 2014. According to the rules adopted there (Podemos 2015a) and later solidified in the party’s statutes (Podemos 2015b), it is the competence of the Citizen Assembly<sup>38</sup> to “elaborate, through a process of open primaries, the electoral lists for public offices (from the first until the last candidate of the list) for the institutions of national representation” (Podemos 2015a, Article 13/a/2). The same corresponds to territorial Citizen Assemblies for institutions at the regional and local level (Podemos 2015a, Article 33/2). Further rules for the elaboration of primaries are not specified in these documents.

To address this hiatus, Podemos adopted a distinct 12-page regulation for the primaries of the 2015 general elections, which established the details of the candidate selection process (Podemos 2015d).<sup>39</sup> In order to vote, citizens needed to be inscribed to Podemos.<sup>40</sup> The deadline of inscription entailing a right to vote was determined by the party’s Electoral Commission, a supervisory organ

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<sup>38</sup> The Citizen Assembly is the supreme decision-making body of Podemos in which all members have a right to participate (Podemos 2015a).

<sup>39</sup> To my knowledge, no such specific regulation was adopted for the primaries that preceded the European Parliamentary elections, save a presentation on Prezi.com.

<sup>40</sup> Initially, Podemos emphasized inscription as a kind of “light membership”. However, the distinction between members and “inscritos” could not be maintained under Spanish party law. Thus, current “inscribers” are notified on Podemos’ webpage that by submitting their application form, they become members of Podemos as a political party.

whose members are ratified by the Citizen Council<sup>41</sup> on the proposal of the Secretary General (i.e. the party leader). Unlike in the case of M5S, this deadline was highly permissive: voters could register until 16 July 2015, 10:00, while the primaries took place from 17 until 22 July. The voting system was differentiated: 1. the party's presidential candidate was selected in a single constituency and voters could only cast one vote; 2. candidates for the lower chamber of the parliament (Congreso de los Diputados) were also selected in a single constituency, using a voting system in which all voters could express from 1 to 350 preferences<sup>42</sup>, the latter being the total number of deputies; and 3. candidates for the Senate were selected based on regional constituencies (autonomous communities), in which all voters could express from one to as many preferences as the number of seats assigned to their region (Podemos 2015d, Article 4).

Unlike voters, candidates were not required to be party members, only to be over 18. Candidates for the post of the Secretary General could simultaneously also run for candidacy to the Congress of Deputies or the Senate. However, simultaneous candidacies for the Congress of Deputies and the Senate were ruled out (Podemos 2015d, Article 5). Individual candidates as well as integrated lists of candidates (ranging from 50 to 350 candidates) could be presented at the primaries. Members of lists were not allowed to also run individually. In case of voting for lists, voters could either select the whole list, as well as one or several of its components. Voters could also combine preferences of individual candidates with preferences of lists within the allocation of their 1 to 350 votes.

All of the candidates needed to be licensed<sup>43</sup> by either one of the Círculos<sup>44</sup> or by one of the elected organs of the party<sup>45</sup> in order to ensure that they conform to the ethical and organizational principles of the party.<sup>46</sup> In light of the results of the primaries, the final list of candidates was assembled based on the number of votes each candidate received, with the caveat that gender

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<sup>41</sup> The Citizen Council is the main executive organ of Podemos, whose 62 members are selected by the Citizen Assembly (Podemos 2015a).

<sup>42</sup> The system used by Podemos was different from single transferable vote (STV) systems in that preferences were not ordered (Podemos 2015d, Article 4).

<sup>43</sup> The regulation (Podemos 2015d, Article 6) uses the Spanish verb “avalara”, whose meaning is closer to “support”. However, the regulation also states explicitly that “avalara” “does not entail support for a candidate”, only acknowledgement that the candidate conforms to the requirements established by Podemos.

<sup>44</sup> The smallest local or professional groups that are the base units of Podemos.

<sup>45</sup> It is important to note that due to this condition, the Citizen Assembly could not license/support candidates, as it is not an elected body.

<sup>46</sup> In practice, this mechanism prevents outsiders who have no previous connection to the party from running, thus protecting the party from being hijacked by extremists.

inequalities were to be compensated in a way that successive candidates alternate by gender (also known as the “zipper system”).

As the primaries were held in one statewide constituency which does not correspond to the 52 provincial constituencies whose lists can be voted for at the Spanish general elections, the resulting list was transformed into provincial lists of candidates as follows: the most voted candidate could select the provincial list on which he/she wanted to run as well as his/her position on that list, a process that was repeated by each successive candidate. The regulation also prescribed that in exceptional cases, pacts made with other political formations by the executive bodies of Podemos can limit the availability of posts (Podemos 2015d, Article 7.2; see *Chapter 6* on coalitions).

### **3. Primaries in practice**

#### **3.1 Five Star Movement**

The first five years of M5S’ existence was not only a period of institutional experimentation, but also of noticeable confusion. Overall, there was an underlying tension between empowering local groups to select their own candidates and ensuring that the final candidates correspond to the ones preferred by Grillo. This has led to several conflicts. On some occasions, Grillo prevented these conflicts by directly appointing his preferred candidates, as he did in the case of candidates for regional presidency in Campania and Emilia Romagna in 2009 (Grillo 2009). In other cases, Grillo put pressure on alternative candidates to withdraw their nomination (in Piemonte 2009), backed candidates who were explicitly opposed by the local party organization (in Veneto 2009), or eliminated the results of local primaries where the emerging candidate did not conform to the official requirements, e.g. to not having a criminal record (in Basilicata 2013) (for more examples, see Montesanti and Veltri 2015). These techniques were more prevalent in local and regional elections, whereas national and European contests were centralized and more closely controlled from the start.

The primaries for the 2013 general elections were organized in correspondence with the regulations published on Grillo’s blog (MoVimento 5 Stelle 2012). Lists were set up in all 27 electoral districts, and each voter could cast three preferences (Pinto and Pedrazzani 2015).

According to Beppe Grillo's official blog (which is the only recognized platform through which the party operates), the "Parlamentarie" involved a total of 1,400 candidates who received 95,000 votes from 32,000 voters (Grillo 2012a). While prominent party representatives widely regarded these participation rates as "historic" (Capasso 2012), these figures were in fact quite modest related to the party's self-declared 255,339 members reported in the same month (Grillo 2012b).

In the 2013 general elections, the Five Star Movement achieved its best electoral results thus far: with 25,5 percent of the votes it won 109 seats in the Chamber of Deputies and 54 in the Senate, becoming the second and the third largest group in the two institutions, respectively. All elected MPs were selected through online primaries, the composition of the resulting lists was not modified afterwards, although the order of the candidates did change in relation to the order based on the number of votes they received.

With regards to the candidate selection process, most concerns were related to the issue of transparency. A former councilor of the party in Bologna, Federica Salsi, who was previously expelled from M5S for criticizing the party for its lack of internal democracy, expressed these concerns in the form of twenty questions which became viral on the Internet (Collevecchio 2012). The questions revealed uncertainty about the way sensitive data related to voting were managed, the lack of publicly available detailed information on the results of the primaries (Grillo published only estimated figures on his blog, see Grillo 2012a), and the lack of regulations referring to how and by which organ of the party disputes over contested results should be resolved (Collevecchio 2012). One of the interviewees for this project also raised similar concerns about the online primaries of the M5S:

"The online vote is a very virtuous practice if it is applied with certain criteria, certificates, and an open code. But it is a great hypocrisy which can turn hyperdemocracy into hyperdictatorship when the code is not open, it is not visible, there is no third party to manage the vote, and there are no external observers. (...) Not even Obama would win an online vote (...) on the blog of Casaleggio."  
(Expelled member, former candidate for Mayor in Bologna)

In case of the primaries or the 2014 European Parliament elections, reported participation figures were very similar to those of the "Parlamentarie": in the first round, a total of 5,091 candidates were presented to whom 35,188 M5S members cast 92,877 votes (MoVimento 5 Stelle 2014b),

whilst in the second round 33,000 voters expressed 91,245 preferences to the 112 candidates that emerged from the first round (MoVimento 5 Stelle 2014c).

In 2015, regional elections were held in seven Italian regions (Campania, Puglia, Toscana, Liguria, Marche, Umbria and Veneto). According to publicly available data, a total of 15,593 activists participated in the primaries, however, participation across regions was highly uneven: the number of participants in Campania (3,765) exceeded more than four times that of Umbria (904) (Repubblica 2015). The 2016 municipal elections brought a major breakthrough to M5S, which won the mayoral seat of 19 municipalities, including Rome and Turin (Corriere della Sera 2016). However, the candidate selection process was rife with tensions which led to the withdrawal of candidates in five municipalities (Il Fatto Quotidiano 2016.). Most of these tensions were triggered by infighting and M5S' problematic relationship with other political parties, which will be discussed in detail in *Chapter 6* on coalition behavior.

The primaries for the 2018 general elections brought about a new set of challenges. Besides tensions arising from modifying the rules (MoVimento 5 Stelle 2018) in a way to allow for the candidacy of Luigi Di Maio who had been facing criminal charges (Corriere 2017), another set of controversies derived from the fact that the new statutes prescribed that

“the Political Leader, after having consulted with the Guarantor, has the right to evaluate the compatibility of the candidate with the values and the political views of the Five Star Movement, eventually expressing a binding negative opinion on the acceptance of candidacy” (MoVimento 5 Stelle 2017d, Article 3, point c., translated by the author).

This provision implied that the party leadership could unilaterally refuse requests for candidacy before the primaries, which generated conflicts in various constituencies and led to the exclusion of some prominent party representatives, often without sufficient justification (Il Fatto Quotidiano 2018a, Huffington Post 2018). The “staff” argued that all such exclusions were in line with the previously published regulations, and that they had been necessary considering the large number of (13 to 15 thousand) individuals who presented their candidacy (Huffington Post 2018, TGC0M24 2018). However, as several former MPs had also been excluded from the process, media speculated that these cases might have been related to internal factions within the party, with the more “orthodox” and “historical” factions suffering greater losses than the “pragmatists” represented by Luigi Di Maio (Corriere 2018). The party officially communicated that

“The rules which everyone who proposed their candidacy accepted were very clear and rigid. They were applied in a severe manner. Some have lamented about their exclusion from the list, it is true. It was done to protect the M5S as much as possible.” (TGCOM24 2018)

While the party defended the move as a necessary precaution against infiltration, excluded activists interpreted it as a breach of internal democracy. As one of the expelled candidates in Puglia, Viviana Guarini explained to the press:

“If the primaries of the Five Star Movement were not to be cancelled, it would be an unprecedented attack on democracy. Clean and competent candidates were expelled after years of activism, who have not worked in any other party. (At the same time), candidates are in who have not even accepted the candidacy. If they do not cancel it, this time a blog post will not suffice.” (Huffington Post 2018)

While the arbitrary exclusion of potentially acceptable candidates is something that the new party statutes enabled, the party deviated from its own regulations concerning the application of the gender quotas. As in several constituencies the number of viable female candidates had been disproportionately low, the party made an exception, and allowed female candidates older than 40 to also run for the lower house of the parliament in the Abruzzo region (Il Fatto Quotidiano 2018b). Unlike the exclusion of unfit candidates, this deviation did not trigger further conflicts in the party. With regards to the number of participants, the 2018 primaries brought about a slight increase: the party website reported that 39,991 members took part in the process, expressing 92,870 votes for the Chamber of Deputies, and 86,175 for the Senate.

### **3.2 Podemos**

Shortly after its inception, the primaries for the 2014 European Parliament elections were the first candidate selection process Podemos engaged in. During the seven days of the primaries approximately 33,000 individuals cast their votes on the party’s 145 candidates. The first 54 places on the list (which corresponds to the number of Spanish MEPs) were reordered in order to ensure gender balance. As Podemos did not have an established party organization at this point in time, the reception of the results mostly focused on their unexpectedly high vote share. With regards to the primaries, it was noted that the number of participants exceeded all other parties that held primaries for the 2014 EP elections (El Diario 2014b).

The voting procedures of the primaries for the 2015 general elections triggered much more controversies both internally and externally, above all because of the adoption of closed lists and the possibility of voting “en plancha” (i.e. to approve a whole list without expressing any individual preferences). Although voters could in principle select only a few candidates from a list and combine it with preferences for individual candidates, the results of this procedure were extremely skewed towards the list supported by the party leader, Pablo Iglesias. As the Secretary General of one of Podemos’ local organizations said when interviewed in March, 2016, “it’s true that it [the voting system] also triggers laziness. I rather do a click than start thinking ‘this one yes, that one no’”. At the same time, party representatives also acknowledged the advantages of this voting system in terms of reducing the effort required from party sympathizers to make an informed decision. As a member of the party’s national Citizen Council argued:

“Someone can reasonably say ‘I have no reason to know who is who in Podemos, I believe in Pablo Iglesias, and if Pablo Iglesias has a group of people with whom he wants to work, I have no reason to read who is who, what they have done, their CV, their trajectory, their party history, and decide about each and every single person spending three days reading CVs. To decide about my vote, I also have the right to feel represented, and I know Pablo Iglesias, so I vote for him and his team.’”

A similar justification was offered by the party’s Secretary General in the Community of Madrid, too, who defended the merits of selecting groups instead of individuals:

“We find it important to present teams and proposals. High participation needs to be reconciled with the possibility of working in cohesive groups. In any case, people can simply select the names they vote for. There is no necessity whatsoever to select complete teams.”

*Table 5 in Appendix D* demonstrates the relationship between the list of Pablo Iglesias and the candidates selected at the primaries. Numerically, only three of the 65 selected candidates (4.6 %) following Pablo Iglesias were not identical to the ones on his list, which underscores criticisms claiming that the candidate selection process was strongly dominated by the party leader and thus was not truly competitive.

However, this anomaly did not remain unnoticed. The majoritarian effect of “listas plancha” triggered constant reflection and intense internal debates within the party<sup>47</sup> that finally led to its

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<sup>47</sup> All of my interlocutors interviewed in late 2015 and early 2016 mentioned this voting mechanism as one of the main sources of internal conflicts and an issue that needed to be renegotiated after the electoral period.

abolishment by the new Secretary of Organization, Pablo Echenique in April 2016. The new system scrapped the opportunity to approve the whole list with one click and urged members to decide on candidates one-by-one. Echenique argued that this would increase the proportionality of the process and trigger higher levels of participation<sup>48</sup>, and acknowledged that the previous system implied that “the winner – even if they won by a small margin – took it all” (El Diario 2016, quote translated by the author). While the aforementioned reform eliminated the most fiercely criticized feature of Podemos’ primaries, a more fundamental redesign of the whole candidate selection process took place at the party’s second statewide assembly meeting (Vistalegre II) in February 2017, where a new, more proportional formula was adopted (Mikola 2017b).

Another practice that raised concerns about the democratic nature of the candidate selection was that of making alliances with other political actors and the nomination of external candidates, the so called “fichajes”. Although this practice was previously authorized by the membership and included in the regulations of the primaries (Podemos 2015d), it has led to drastic changes in the final list of candidates (Rodríguez-Teruel et al. 2016:8). Out of the 75 candidates presented by Podemos at the 2015 general elections, 30 (i. e. 40%) were not selected at the primaries of Podemos but derived from regional alliances in Catalonia (En Comú Podem), Valencia (Compromís-Podemos-És el Moment) and Galicia (En Marea). From a different perspective, out of the 69 mandates won by Podemos and its allies, 27 (39,1 %) were not directly approved by Podemos members at primaries (Manetto 2015a).

Besides general elections, local and regional elections were also held in Spain in 2015, which confronted emerging parties with several organizational dilemmas. One of these concerns relates to the overlap of political cleavages in Spain: statewide parties have historically found it difficult to accommodate the demands of regionalist parties, which is even more challenging for new parties that have not yet solidified their territorial organization. Therefore, Podemos was faced with two options: it could either challenge regional parties or seek alliances with them, which at the same time had implications on its national agenda (Rodríguez-Teruel et al. 2016).

In case of the local elections, Podemos decided not to run independently, instead, it backed independent candidates alongside several minor parties and civil associations. This strategy helped

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<sup>48</sup>59,723 members participated at the primaries for the 2015 general elections, which represents 15.52 % of the total membership, one of the lowest figures in Podemos’ history.

the party to avoid internal conflicts over candidate selection and at the same time gave them credit for the victory in such important municipalities as Madrid, Barcelona, Saragossa and Cadis (Rodríguez-Teruel et al. 2016:7). On the other hand, Podemos followed a twofold strategy at the regional elections: it ran independently in some communities (mostly those that had a bipartisan structure without strong regionalist parties) and allied with regional forces in others (in Catalonia, Galicia and the Basque Country). Despite electoral alliances, the party's candidates for the regional elections in Catalonia and the Basque Country were selected at primaries, however, this process was abandoned in Galicia, where Podemos agreed to play a subordinate role to the leftist-nationalist En Marea alliance (Rodríguez-Teruel 2016). In the 13 autonomous communities that held elections in May 2015, primaries were held in March, in which 48,023 party members participated, i.e. 20.18 % of the census (Riveiro 2015c). Results are detailed in *Table 6* in *Appendix D*.

The 2016 repeat elections were an exception to the rule of selecting all legislative candidates through primaries: after a late coalition agreement with the United Left (Izquierda Unida, IU) had been reached, the party leadership decided not to repeat primaries for the “lack of time”. The electoral coalition Unidos Podemos (“Together We Can”) was approved by a membership vote, however, party executives argued that the 2016 June elections were a mere “second round” of the 2015 contest, and that there was no need to select new candidates. Thus, the final list of candidates emerged from interparty negotiations between Podemos and IU. Likewise, none of the other major parties held new primaries before the 2016 elections (El País 2016).

#### **4. Online primaries considering the four dimensions**

After having described the rules as well as the results of the most important candidate selection processes, I now turn to categorizing these procedures using the four analytical dimensions developed by Rahat and Hazan (2001): *candidacy*, *selectorate*, *decentralization* and *voting/appointment system*.

#### 4.1 Five Star Movement

In terms of candidacy, the processes within the Five Star Movement clearly represent the exclusive end of the spectrum: not only membership is required from prospective candidates, but also the time of enrollment is fixed. Furthermore, would-be candidates who served in elected office for two cycles or more were also ruled out. However, as seen on *Graph 1*, with regards to the selectorate, allowing all members to vote brings M5S closer to the inclusive end of the continuum. Nevertheless, this might be a somewhat misleading interpretation, as voters also need to conform to strict rules regarding the time of enrolment, which severely limits the voting rights of new members (and functions as a *de facto* probationary period).

Decentralization is a delicate matter in M5S: whereas the candidates emanate from and are elected on the basis of regional and provincial constituencies, lists of candidates need to be approved by the party in central office, i.e. Grillo and his staff who have often questioned or invalidated local results. This mechanism is also inherent in the party's non-statute: Beppe Grillo had for long been the sole owner of the name and the symbol of the movement, and thus could unilaterally grant or withdraw permission to use them (Bordignon and Ceccarini 2013). Although according to the updated non-statute of 2016 (MoVimento 5 Stelle 2016a) this right was transferred to the Five Star Movement Association, this Association is also dominated by Grillo as he and his grandson are members of its three-strong executive board (Lanzone 2015). Therefore, while the process is formally decentralized to the regional level, due to the filtering of candidates by the central party administration, the candidate selection of the M5S is *de facto* heavily centralized, a tendency that has even strengthened over time (Montesanti and Veltri 2015). Finally, the voting system applied in the Five Star Movement's online primaries is a semi-proportional, limited vote system in which the number of votes each selector is granted (3) is lower than the number of safe seats contested (Norris 1997:302, Rahat and Hazan 2001:307).

In sum, the online primaries of M5S display some contradictory features: although candidacy is exclusive, the selectorate is relatively wide; regional representation is present but using the party's symbol needs to be approved by the center, and the voting system applied is closer to proportional than to majoritarian systems, but the number of votes per elector is restricted.

## 4.2 Podemos

In terms of *candidacy*, Podemos was and until now has remained extremely inclusive: candidates are not required to be party members as long as they are supported by one of the party organs defined in the corresponding regulations. However, with regards to the inclusiveness of the *selectorate*, it has changed over time: while all citizens above the age of 16 could vote for the candidates for the 2014 EP elections, in 2015 this option was only available for those who were inscribed in Podemos, which technically and according to Spanish party law equals party members only. This is still closer to the inclusive end of the scale, but one could describe the evolution of the selectorate as backsliding towards traditional party models.

Podemos scores even worse on *decentralization*, which is almost completely absent from its candidate selection processes, save the requirement that candidates can also be licensed by local groups (but by other, non-territorial bodies too) and the election of candidates to the Senate which is by definition based on regional constituencies. Even the selection of provincial candidates is based on one statewide constituency, and the way candidates later select the constituencies where they would like to run for office is also not tied to any territorial principle. However, this might be related to the narrow territorial reach of a party in its early phases of organizational development, and thus might be revised in the future.

With regards to the *voting/appointment system* dimension, Podemos' primaries for the 2015 general elections were a textbook example of Rahat and Hazan's (2001) mixed or "Appointment-Voting Systems" category, in which "model lists" are established by some party agency which then are subjected to *en bloc* voting. However, the process used before the EP elections was a pure voting system in which only gender imbalances were compensated for. Based on the position allocation formula, the voting system used in 2014 was a preferential voting system with a fixed number of choices per voter (Fishburn and Brams 1983), while the one applied in 2015 was an instance of approval voting (Brams and Fishburn 1978), both of which were based on one single constituency.<sup>49</sup> In sum, it is not difficult to see a gradual move in Podemos from inclusive towards more exclusive practices, especially regarding the use of closed lists and the extension of the selectorate. At the same time, these undemocratic tendencies have already triggered some self-

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<sup>49</sup> A preferential voting system is similar to the alternative vote as described by Norris (1997:302), however, it differs from it in that it is not aimed at selecting one but several candidates.

reflection in the party which led to the abandonment of closed lists, and the adoption of a more proportional candidate selection system in 2017, which is yet to be put to a test.

*Table 2* summarizes the main empirical findings for both parties using the analytical dimensions of Rahat and Hazan (2001).

**Table 2 – The Five Star Movement (M5S) and Podemos in light of the four dimensions**

Analytical dimension	Five Star Movement	Podemos
<i>Candidacy</i>	Exclusive (membership required, time of enrolment fixed)	Inclusive (membership not required)
<i>Selectorate</i>	Inclusive, with restrictions (membership required, time of enrolment fixed)	Inclusive, with restrictions (membership required, time of enrolment fixed, but highly permissive)
<i>Decentralization</i>	Regional (with the central party administration retaining some control)	National (primaries based on one statewide constituency)
<i>Voting/appointment system</i>	Pure voting system, semi-proportional representation, limited vote system	Appointment-voting (mixed) system, semi-proportional representation, preferential (2014) and approval (2015) voting

## 5. The contribution of candidate selection to IPD

In this section, the comprehensive IPD index of Rahat and Shapira will be applied to demonstrate how candidate selection contributes to the overall level of intra-party democracy within these parties. While the original index measures IPD on five analytical dimensions, here I only use the items that refer to candidate selection, as I argue that focusing on specific party activities is a more fruitful avenue to understanding intra-party democracy than relying on abstract concepts such as responsiveness and transparency. The relevant items of the questionnaire as well as detailed party scores are reported in *Appendix E*, while a summary of party scores is provided in *Table 3* below.

**Table 3 – Parties’ candidate selection processes measured by the IPD index**

<b>Item</b>	<b>M5S (pts/max)</b>	<b>Podemos (pts/max)</b>
Who selects the party’s parliamentary candidates?	9/10	9/10
Women’s representation on the party’s list of candidates	10/10	10/10
Women’s representation in parliamentary party group	4/5	5/5
Representation of minorities on the party list	0/5	1/5
Do party institutions take part in selecting the party’s representatives in the cabinet?	0/4	0/4
<b>SUM</b>	<b>23/34</b>	<b>25/34</b>

As seen from the scores above, both parties are highly inclusive in their candidate selection, as they allow all party members to vote (although not all citizens). The same applies to the inclusion of women on lists of candidates, which in both parties is guaranteed by a correction mechanism as described in *Chapter 2*. The minor difference in the final score results from two differences: first, Podemos was granted one extra point for the representation of territorial minorities on its list of candidates. As it was shown above, 40% of Podemos’ candidates were nominated by its regional partners. This created a strong regional bias in the composition of the parliamentary group, even if it was not fully institutionalized. Second, Podemos also fares better in terms of the representation of women in its parliamentary group (49.25%). At the same time, it needs to be mentioned that at the start of the 2013-2017 parliamentary term, the share of women in M5S’ parliamentary group was also exceptionally high (50.45%), but by 2016 it fell to 35.16% as a result of defections and expulsions.

Thus, the IPD index does not reveal significant differences in the extent to which the two parties are democratic in their candidate selection, although it does show Podemos to be slightly more democratic in this respect. At the same time, the index does not capture the impact of informal pressure from the party leader on the outcome of primaries, which had been prevalent in M5S until 2014, and has not completely vanished since then. Furthermore, the index overemphasizes the importance of women’s representation as opposed to other groups’ representation on the party list, which in this case does not entail significant differences, but is theoretically difficult to justify.

Nevertheless, the IPD index has been useful to demonstrate that the two parties score similar when the formal rules of their primaries are concerned, although their informal practices might differ.

## 6. Conclusions and discussion

As the sections above have demonstrated, the candidate selection processes of both parties are mixed and feature elements that reveal undemocratic tendencies. Two of these elements are common: the restriction of the right to vote to party members only and the high level of control that the party leadership retains over the composition of lists of candidates. The specific methods for exercising control differ: Beppe Grillo retains the right to unilaterally grant or withdraw permission to use the party's symbols in electoral campaigns if he finds that a candidate does not act in line with the party's principles, while in Podemos, the party leader secures his own preferred candidates by compiling lists of candidates backed by himself. The first is a legalistic approach, while the second is based on the resources owned by Pablo Iglesias in terms of popularity, media coverage, rhetoric skills and the undisputable nature of his leadership that the previous resources entail. The abolishment of bloc voting in Podemos might mitigate these dynamics insofar as future primaries are concerned, however, the results of the second Citizen Assembly (Vistalegre 2) seem to have strengthened the leadership of Pablo Iglesias after a bitter period of internal crises (Mikola 2017b).

On the other hand, while few would doubt that online ballots are more accessible than their offline counterparts, the participation rates as well as the absolute number of participants fall short of expectations in both parties. The fact that even the extremely open 2014 primaries of Podemos for the EP elections did not attract more than 33,000 people in a period when the political engagement of Spaniards reached unprecedented heights is intriguing (although participation was still substantially higher than in all other parties that held primaries). Similarly puzzling is the use of rounded figures such as the previous one when publishing the results of some of these primaries, which raises concerns about the reliability of these data, a threat that has been even more pronounced in the M5S which for long lacked mechanisms for the external verification of the results.

This chapter has also shown that candidate selection processes can be fruitfully categorized using Rahat and Hazan's (2001) four analytical dimensions, as well as the more nuanced intra-party

democracy index of Rahat and Shapira (2017). However, while the second index is clearly superior in its numerical precision, it still fails to capture informal practices that can heavily influence the qualitative aspects of intra-party democracy. For this reason, I argue that an in-depth qualitative assessment of parties' internal functioning is indispensable if we are to understand how certain organizational innovations contribute to internal democracy.

## Chapter 5 – Inside the online platforms: Policy development on the Internet

“The veto player who has the power to propose will have a significant advantage in policy making.”  
(Tsebelis 1995:325)

As Anika Gauja noted, contemporary parties’ “concern to ‘open up’ the policy process to greater individual involvement both from within, and outside, the party” has led to an experimentation with tools that allow members and supporters to shape a party’s policies (Gauja 2015b:96). However, the broad “policy consultations” offered by the forerunners of these experiments, such as the UK and Australian Labour Parties studied by Gauja, only allowed for a very imbalanced and superficial interaction between sympathizers and party organizations, whose agenda had been clearly dominated by the latter. A more ambitious implementation of direct policy input would require that the party demos (regardless of its exact boundaries) is not only consulted about generic issues that the party administration deems important, but that any single party affiliate can propose policies that are eventually adopted by the party itself, turned into law proposals presented in the legislative arena, or incorporated in the party’s electoral program. On the other hand, it would also assume that policy proposals formulated by party representatives are subject to an open and meaningful discussion that eventually leads to amendments or a complete reversal of the original proposal.

The vision of turning every single citizen into a potential legislator has been especially central to the ethos of the Five Star Movement which advocates for a particular blend of “direct parliamentarism” (Deseriis 2017a). Although Podemos implements a less radical version of direct democracy in which popular initiative is counterbalanced by a more conventional understanding of representation (as seen in *Chapter 3*), citizens’ initiatives are also encouraged and institutionalized in this party. The following chapter will overview the rules for citizen involvement in the policy development processes of each party, followed by a detailed analysis of the functions and the types of interaction allowed by the parties’ online platforms, with a special emphasis on shaping the parties’ electoral manifesto, an aspect of inclusive policy development that has not been studied extensively by previous research (for an exception, see Däubler 2012).

However, the chapter will also build on previous studies on citizen lawmaking in the Five Star Movement (Deseriis 2017a, Mosca 2018), extending the empirical data to corroborate the validity of their findings.

Through analyzing the technical and deliberative affordances of these online platforms, the chapter seeks to explore two interrelated questions. First: do these platforms allow members to exert a meaningful influence on their party programs, and is there any transparent mechanism to transform their preferences into policies? Second: considering the limitations of such deliberations, do party representatives still perceive them as an appealing way to engage their members and as an important source of policy input? The second question will be answered using data from the interviews conducted by the author, while members' evaluation of the same processes will be presented in *Chapter 7*.

From a broader perspective, answering these questions will allow us to locate agenda-setting capacities (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2009, Scheufele 2000, Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007) and identify veto players (Tsebelis 1995, Tsebelis and Garrett 1996) involved in the policy making processes of these parties. As defined by Tsebelis (1995:293), a veto player is “an individual or collective actor whose agreement is required for a policy decision”. Veto players are also assumed to have the ability to “block the adoption of a policy” (ibid.:305). At the same time, when assessing the intra-party distribution of power with regards to policy-making, one also needs to evaluate where agenda-setting power, i.e. “the ability to make proposals that are difficult to amend” is located (Tsebelis and Garrett 1996:352). Consequently, one can break down the first research question of this chapter as follows: 1. Which party actor makes the final policy proposals that are subjected to a membership vote? 2. To what extent can the party rank-and-file modify and/or veto policy proposals made by other party actors?

In evaluating the influence of party actors on policy proposals and on the electoral manifesto, not only different hierarchical levels, but also factions within the party need to be taken into account. Based on the agenda-setting model of issue competition (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2009), one might expect that non-mainstream party factions (analogous to opposition parties in the original model) might be in a better position to shape the agenda as they are less constrained by exogenous conditions than the dominant faction which “governs” the party. However, this assumption only applies when there are recognizable and institutionalized factions within the

party. In the absence of the former, one may expect a cohesive party executive to have tight control over the agenda vis-à-vis an unorganized and atomized rank-and-file.

The chapter is organized into three sections. The first section introduces regulations included in the party rulebooks regarding the incorporation of members into policy-making. The second analyzes the technical affordances and the decision-making procedures enabled by the parties' online platforms, and determines the location of agenda-setting capacities and the presence of veto players in each. The third part introduces party elite narratives on online participation and identifies to what extent these narratives correspond to the empirical data presented in the preceding section. The last section concludes and suggests avenues for further research on agenda-setting at the intra-party level.

## **1. Party rules for citizen engagement in policy development**

As seen in *Chapter 3*, the professionalization and bureaucratization of party organizations are deemed undesirable by both parties, and both aim at directly involving citizens in drafting their policies to minimize the distance and the number of intermediations between party and society. However, this latter objective is not as central in the rhetoric of Podemos as in the case of the Five Star Movement. In what follows, I review the rules outlined in party documents with regards to citizen involvement in policy making.

### **1.1 Five Star Movement**

Although members' role in policy development is not highlighted in the statutes of the Five Star Movement (Movimento 5 Stelle 2016a), its centrality is evident from the so called "regulation" (Movimento 5 Stelle 2016b) which outlines more detailed rules on the party's functioning. According to this latter document, the subscribers of the Five Star Movement have a right to participate in the "determination of the political program to be followed", which is to be ratified by an online membership vote. During the elaboration of the 2018 electoral manifesto, activists were asked to discuss and to vote on policy proposals in 22 thematic packages through the party's

online platform. The final program was assembled based on the results of these votes, as will be described in the next section.

While the development of the party manifesto is the only policy-making procedure that is explicitly mentioned in party documents, there are two other areas where members' involvement is invited whose rules had been published in blog posts on the party's official website. First, the platform called "Lex Parlamento" gives an opportunity for members to provide feedback on draft bills written by M5S representatives. As the relevant blog post outlines, this application serves as a space for M5S congressmen and Members of the Senate to share all draft bills that they aim to submit to the relevant chamber. Once a proposal is uploaded, members have a two months period at their disposal to "propose modifications, make comments, and give suggestions" on them (Di Stefano and Catalfo 2016). As draft bills are highly technical documents, representatives are required to upload a video and a text summary along with the original proposal to make it more approachable to members. Members are then invited to comment on the proposals, selecting the type of feedback they provide from six categories: 1. Extension, 2. Amendment, 3. Objection, 4. Suggestion, 5. Defect of form, 6. Off-topic comment. The platform also allows users to rate comments (with 1 to 5 stars), however, there is no opportunity to reply to previous comments, which limits discussions among members and renders the application more suitable for hierarchical interactions among representatives and members only (Deseriis 2017a:19-20). Once the two months window has passed, representatives are required to share a report on how they incorporated feedback from party members into the original proposal.<sup>50</sup> If a member has made a "significant contribution" to the final text, they are also to be invited to the presentation of the draft bill in the relevant legislative chamber (Di Stefano and Catalfo 2016).

The third major area where members can contribute to the policy-making of the Five Star Movement is through the so called "Lex Iscritti" application of the Rousseau platform which allows members to draft and upload their own law proposals. The party established certain requirements regarding the format of law proposals: each proposal needs contain a title, a theme, an objective, examples to illustrate its application, information about current legislation on the subject, an indication of the relevant institutional level, an overview of similar legislation in other

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<sup>50</sup> This latter rule is not included in the rules published on the blog, but it was stressed by Danino Toninelli, MP and responsible for Lex Iscritti in an interview conducted by the author (see the List of interviewees in *Appendix F*).

countries, and the relevant professional experience of the promoter. With regards to their content, the law proposals cannot confront neither the norms of the Italian constitution, nor the program of the Five Star Movement, and they cannot contradict resolutions adopted through a membership vote during the past two years either (Movimento 5 Stelle 2016c). Proposals are subjected to a membership vote each month, during which members can select their five preferred proposals. The two most popular proposals that pass the initial vote subsequently enter a tutoring phase during which an M5S representative helps to adapt the proposal to the legal and linguistic requirements of a proper draft bill. Once this form has been reached, the draft bill is submitted by M5S parliamentarians along with the original promoters of the bill to the relevant parliamentary committee which may schedule it for a vote in the chamber (a scenario that was highly unlikely during the 2013-2018 electoral cycle, due to the M5S' opposition status).

## 1.2 Podemos

In the case of Podemos, we can see a gradual change in the centrality of citizen involvement in policy-making: while the first organizational document (Podemos 2015a) and the first statutes (Podemos 2015b) included a dedicated section on “Deliberation, debate and the admission of proposals”, this heading disappeared from the latest version of the statutes (Podemos 2017a), suggesting the degradation of this function within the party. The first document established an online platform called “Plaza Podemos” (Podemos Square), which it defined as a “space of debate and deliberation where, among all, we decide about what matters to us, and where we build ideas, projects, and proposals together which will be a fundamental piece of political change” (Podemos 2015a:6). More specifically, the platform provides space for “citizen initiatives” (ICPs), i.e. legislative or thematic proposals formulated by the subscribers of the party, after they gain the support of 0.2 % of all members. After passing this threshold, proposals appear on Plaza Podemos, an online discussion forum which only registered party affiliates can access.<sup>51</sup> Once a proposal is displayed on the site, there is a three-month period during which it needs to receive support from 10% of members or 20% of Circles to enter the next stage in which a working group drafts the

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<sup>51</sup> The author of this thesis also registered to the portal to have access to online discussions in September 2017. Registration required a Spanish official ID number, which I disposed of after having lived in Spain during previous studies. In order to be entitled to vote, I would have needed to confirm my documents with the party, which I decided not to do for ethical reasons.

final text of the proposal in agreement with its original proponent. If there is no agreement between the parties, both the original and the revised proposal are presented. The final proposals are then subjected to a membership vote through the Agora Voting application where a simple majority decides.<sup>52</sup> Although the possibility to launch such initiatives on Plaza Podemos is still available, it is telling that this is no longer mentioned in the statutes, while mentions of the term “deliberation” have dropped from 12 to 8 to only two in the last version of the party rulebook.

Besides citizen initiatives, Podemos also offered its members a more direct channel to influence the party’s legislative activities, called the “Open Mandate: your voice in parliament” (Escaño Abierto), although this was only implemented at the regional level, in the Assembly of Madrid, and has not been used since April 2016. The idea was to share some questions that were raised during the plenary meetings and commission debates of the Assembly, and let members decide Podemos’ stance on each of these issues (ten per month), as well as to propose other questions to be presented at the same fora. The three questions that received the highest level of support would be presented by the party’s MPs during the plenary debate of the Assembly.

Beyond contributing to the drafting and approval of law proposals and initiatives, the statutes of Podemos (all three versions) also define members’ role in the elaboration of the party’s electoral manifesto. In particular, the statutes declare that the elaboration of the manifesto would “always allow the participation of all affiliated persons who belong to Podemos at the corresponding territorial level” (Podemos 2017a, Article 3/5). After a “participative process of elaboration”, it is the competence of the Citizen Assembly to approve the final version of the electoral program, i.e. all members can vote on the program. However, the statutes fail to specify the detailed rules of how the program is elaborated, which leaves ample room for interpretation. The rules regarding participatory policy-making processes in each party are summarized in *Table 1*.

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<sup>52</sup> The detailed regulations of ICPs are available at this website: <https://participa.podemos.info/es/propuestas/info>

*Table 1 – Party rules on policy development*

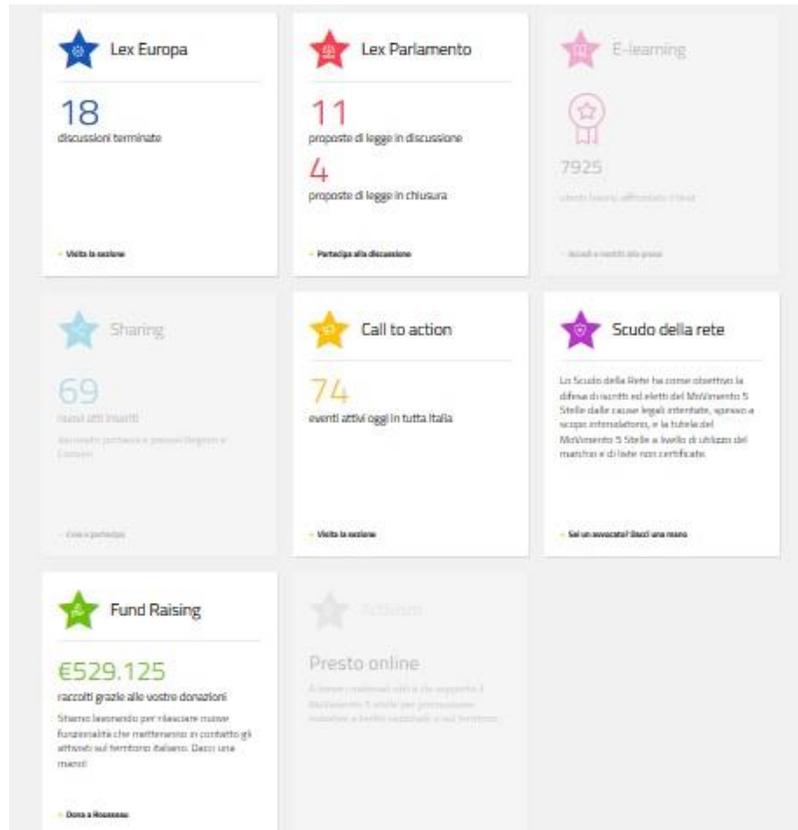
		<b>Five Star Movement</b>	<b>Podemos</b>
<b>Citizen initiatives</b>	<b>Name of relevant tool</b>	Lex Iscritti	Iniciativas Ciudadanas de Podemos (ICPs)
	<b>Support required for presenting proposal for discussion among all members</b>	None	0.2 % of all members
	<b>Support required for placing issue on the party agenda</b>	No quorum, top 2 proposals win	10% of members or 20% of Circles
	<b>Intervention from the party</b>	Tutoring phase – a party representative drafts the legal text	A working group drafts the final text of the proposal
	<b>Rules for approval</b>	None (the preliminary vote already guarantees approval)	Simple majority vote
	<b>Outcome</b>	Proposal presented in the relevant legislative chamber with the participation of the original promoter	Proposal presented in the relevant legislative chamber
<b>Policies proposed by party representatives</b>	<b>Name of relevant tool</b>	Lex Parlamento	Escaño Abierto (open mandate)
	<b>Is discussion/deliberation compulsory?</b>	Yes	No
	<b>Members’ options to contribute</b>	Comment on all draft bills to be presented in the national legislature	Vote on ten issues per month, propose three other questions to be brought to the (regional) Assembly
	<b>Rules for incorporating feedback</b>	Final report after discussion	None
	<b>Rules for approval</b>	None	Simple majority + preference voting
<b>Electoral manifesto</b>	<b>Who can propose policies to be included in the program?</b>	All party members	All party members
	<b>Members’ options to contribute</b>	Discuss expert proposals	Propose policies (required support: 100 members or 70 when proposed by Circles), discuss expert proposals
	<b>Rules for approval</b>	Simple majority + preference voting	Preference voting

## 2. What the online platforms do

### 2.1 Five Star Movement

The Five Star Movement introduced online participatory opportunities in several stages, starting with unmediated blog discussions and evolving toward a complex platform for online decision-making. Although votes on separate issues were already possible before that date, the party introduced its “Operating System” in October 2013, which integrated and extended previous functions. Besides voting for the primaries, the platform also enabled the discussion of draft bills, donations and votes on other issues such as expulsions (Deseeris 2017:16). However, the Operating System represented a temporary stage toward the development of Rousseau, an online platform launched in May 2016 that was meant to implement full-fledged direct democracy. Although the platform was initially available to registered members only, the option of accessing the page in “guest mode” was introduced in the autumn of 2017. The full range of functions available on the platform include discussions on draft bills written by M5S representatives at several administrative levels (*Lex Europe, Lex Parliament, Lex Region*), a space dedicated to the development of law proposals drafted by the subscribers themselves (*Lex Iscritti*), votes on contingent issues such as expulsions, a space for sharing proposals and best practices among M5S representatives at all administrative levels (*Sharing*), an *E-learning* site that explains the functioning of institutions to the party’s prospective candidates, a *Fundraising* site, and a space for recruiting participants for local initiatives (*Call to action*). The landing page of Rousseau in guest mode is displayed on *Figure 1*. Both the previous Operating System and Rousseau were developed by the Casaleggio Associati IT consulting firm, which owns the source code of the platform, thus its operation cannot be monitored or verified externally (Deseriis 2017a).

**Figure 1 – The landing page of the Rousseau platform in guest mode**



With regards to participation at the online platform, one can note a general declining trend in participation, as well as a notable discontinuity in its use. As Mosca (2018) notes, since the introduction of online votes in 2012, there was a peak in 2014 when 23 online ballots were held, however, in subsequent years the number of online consultations dropped to four (2015), and nine (2016), respectively (ibid.). At the same time, this trend reversed in 2017 when 6 votes were held on law proposals made by members (Lex Iscritti), another 20 on the electoral program, besides the primaries for the regional elections in Sicily, the candidate for premier and for all candidates for the general election of 2018 (bringing the total number of votes to 29). Regarding participation rates, the data show a remarkable decline in the number of participants per vote between 2012 and 2016: while an average vote attracted around 45 thousand members in the beginning of this period, the mean dropped below 20 thousand by the end of 2016, which change is even more remarkable considering membership growth during the same period (Mosca 2018:18). At the same time, this negative trend also reversed in 2017, with 37,442 members participating in the selection of the candidate for premier, and 40,977 voting on the party’s program on energy policy. Whether this

reversal would be persistent needs to be reexamined after the 2018 electoral period which has triggered a temporary boom in participation. The following sections will review participatory patterns for each of the three most relevant functions for policy-making: *Lex Iscritti*, *Lex Parlamento*, and votes on the party's electoral program.

### ***Lex Iscritti***

Lex Iscritti was launched on 24 May 2016 as an experiment to allow registered party members to draft law proposals through a multi-stage process (Associazione Rousseau 2016). The party advertised the platform as a “revolution”, a

“change of perspective, a first time in the world: it will be you, dear citizen, to propose and write the laws that the spokespersons of the Five Star Movement will present in the parliament. The laws will no longer be a prerogative of (dis)honorable and lobbyists, but a possibility for all citizens of good faith. The advent of direct democracy starts from here.” (Movimento 5 Stelle 2016c)

As reported by the operator of the online platform, the Rousseau Association, party members have launched 249 law proposals during the first month of the platform, of which 120 were rejected as “they did not respect the formal constraints or because they referred to complex themes for which a different trajectory was foreseen” (Associazione Rousseau 2016). The other 129 proposals were subjected to a membership vote.

To date, 11 such batches of proposals have been launched, each containing on average 107.5 proposals (1,183 in total), of which 12<sup>53</sup> have been brought to parliament by March 2017, and none were adopted as actual legislation (Movimento 5 Stelle 2016d). It is also important to note that based on data on the first four months of the platform's operation, only 15% of the proposals met the formal criteria, the rest were rejected by the party administration (Deseriis 2017a:22).

The operation of the platform triggered not only scholarly (Deseriis 2017a), but also internal criticism from the Meetups. Internal critiques demanded a more detailed explanation from the “staff” in case of rejections, the display of a progress bar on which one can follow how proposals

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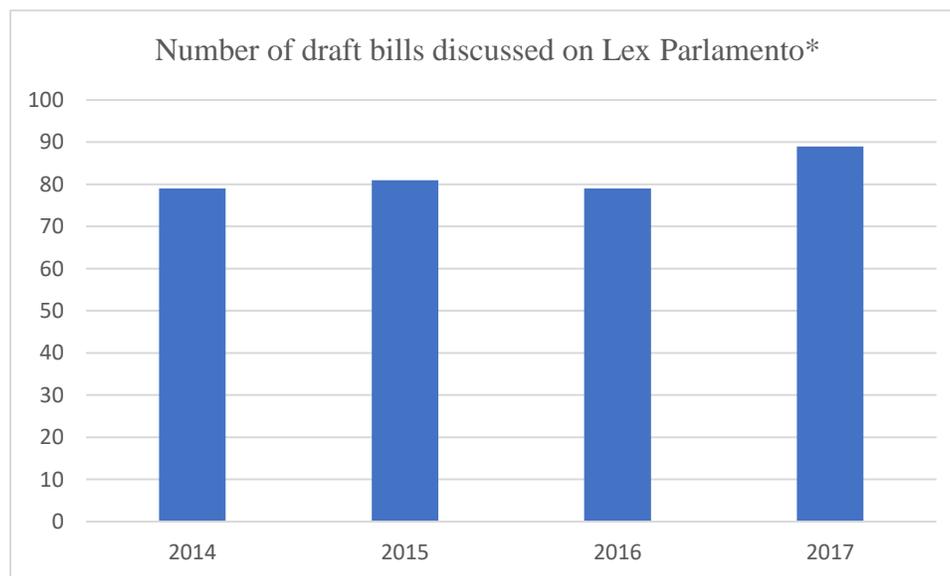
<sup>53</sup> According to data obtained from the MP in charge of Lex Iscritti, Danilo Toninelli, in October 2017, a total of 22 proposals from members had been transformed into proper law proposals since the launch of the platform, of which only 6 had been submitted to the parliament.

advance, and the subdivision of proposals into thematic areas to allow for specialization (Marini 2017).

### ***Lex Parlamento***

The discussion of draft bills presented by M5S representatives is one of the functions that was already enabled by party's previous Operation System "Lex", introduced in 2013, and was later also integrated into Rousseau. Draft bills are discussed on the national, the European and on the regional level too. However, in this section I only focus on the national level as it is the one where most proposals are presented and discussed. At the same time, the regional platform (Lex Region) is only accessible to registered party members, thus data is not available for the purpose of academic scrutiny. With regards to the national level, we can observe no significant change between 2014 and 2016, but a noticeable increase (from 79 to 89) in the number of law proposals discussed in 2017, as displayed on *Figure 2*.

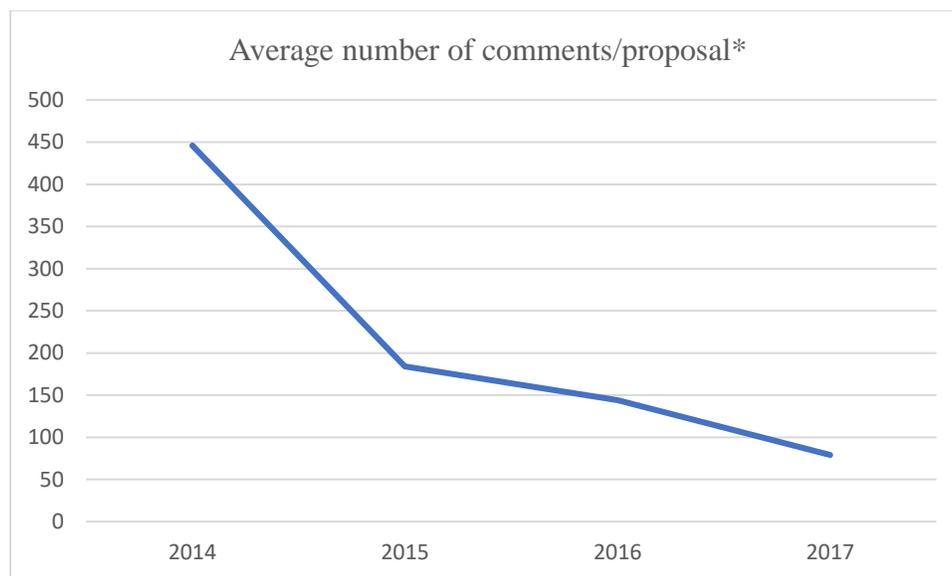
***Figure 2 – Law proposals presented on Lex Parlamento over time***



\*Data from 2014-2016 are shown as reported by Mosca (2018), while data for 2017 were compiled by the author

The opposite applies to the number of comments generated by each proposal: as shown on *Figure 3*, the number of comments per proposal dropped sharply, and even the maximum in 2017 (267) is below the average number of comments in 2014 (446). At this point, it is too early to judge whether such remarkable decrease in participation in 2017 would be persistent, however, it is quite striking given the party’s parallel efforts to popularize the Rousseau platform (advertised by the party at territorial “Open Days” throughout 2017). However, part of the decrease might also be attributed to the disproportionate emphasis on votes on the electoral program (see below) which might have shifted attention away from other issues discussed on Rousseau.

**Figure 3 – Comments on proposals over time**



\*Data from 2014-2016 are shown as reported by Mosca (2018), while data for 2017 were compiled by the author

Despite such temporary shifts, the drop in the engagement of party members in discussions related to law proposals might more generally be associated with the fact that the feedback they receive to their contributions is very haphazard and scarce. As Mosca (2018) found, representatives in charge of the discussions only replied to comments in 40% of the cases, and only in 13.2% of the cases did they submit a final report (“Relazione di chiusura”) on how the comments were integrated into the original proposal, only 45.2% of which implied a modification of the original proposal. This finding suggests that the rules for interpreting feedback from the party membership

are extremely loose and malleable, and that members' capacity to amend law proposals is severely limited, a result that was also confirmed by the interviews.

### *Votes on the electoral program*

While the 2013 electoral program of the Five Star Movement was the virtually unaltered form of the program presented before its foundation in 2009 (Mosca and Tronconi 2018, forthcoming), its 2018 manifesto was boasted on the party webpage as “the first program in the world voted online by the citizens” (Movimento 5 Stelle 2017a). In fact, the program was broken down into 22 policy areas, and the elements of each sub-program were chosen by the members from a pool of proposals pre-defined by policy experts. The proposals were presented both in a video presentation and in written form, and the winning proposals were included in the relevant sub-programs, whose length ranged from 6 to 92 pages (Mosca and Tronconi 2018, forthcoming).

To evaluate the allocation of agenda-setting competences within this process, a closer look at the adoption of the program is due. In the first stage, policy experts (professionals and academics) present a proposal in the form of a video presentation embedded in a blog post. In this phase, members can interact in regular comments, however, there is no mechanism to aggregate or to incorporate their feedback. At the same time, these proposals do not have a format that could easily be translated to specific policy measures, they are rather generic proclamations about an ideal state-of-affairs, and as such it is difficult to provide meaningful feedback on them. In the last stage before the vote, M5S parliamentarians present a re-cap video in which they summarize previous discussions and the most important proposals in each policy field. To provide an example on the elaboration of the program, in what follows, I give examples from M5S' program on economic development, as it is the most extensive one (92 pages), thus it is instructive to see how proposals were transformed into such a complex document.

The first “policy proposal” included in the M5S program on economic development (#ProgrammaSviluppoEconomico) was based on a video presentation on circular economy by a Professor of Political Economy from the University of Siena (Bartolini 2017). The presentation argues in very general terms that in order to provide a better quality of life for its citizens, the state needs to ensure a balance between work and family, reduced working hours, livable cities, more

affordable healthcare services, all with the aim of restoring the social fabric based on interpersonal relations. The video contains only one specific proposal that is directly linked to the concept of circular economy, which is to fight the planned obsolescence of consumer products, but even this proposal comes without any specific policy measure attached to it. The author of the proposal explains that planned obsolescence is “recently justified with the fact that it creates more job posts; yes, it does, but it also creates more people who need jobs because our spending increases” (ibid.).

Despite the rudimentary and generic nature of this proposal, the “program” on circular economy was transformed (without any transparent mechanism) into 7 specific proposals on which party members could express their priorities:

- A better localization of production and of the national supply of goods as opposed to globalized production
- Greater protection of Italian products and services on foreign markets, against counterfeiting and relocations
- The allocation of public economic resources to firms with the sole aim of investing in national territory
- The extension of the expiration date of products (against planned obsolescence)
- Promotion of a culture of responsible consumption
- A push for technological innovation to overcome the innovation gap and the development of new areas and new production sectors
- The direct involvement of the State and of Public Administration in processes of relaunching the Country, through public and participatory companies (Movimento 5 Stelle 2017b).

Two observations are due here: first, even though the proposals listed above are more specific than the ones spelled out in the expert presentation, they are still very far from policy measures that could be directly implemented once in government. Second, and more importantly, through the adoption of a voting system without a quorum, as few as 259 members could also approve a policy (see *Table 2*) which would thus be included in the program. As an MP responsible for Rousseau told me in an interview:

“The binding referendum without quorum is the ‘noble father’ of Rousseau, because Rousseau decides this way, with constant referenda in which a hundred people can participate, but if only twenty do, that majority wins.” (MP, Responsible for Lex Iscritti on Rousseau)

This imposes severe limitations on the popular legitimacy of these proposals, especially when one considers that votes on Rousseau are usually available for only one day, during working hours, and participants are notified in an email on short notice (Mosca 2018). At the same time, the fact that proposals are developed by external experts and further elaborated by the “staff” also questions the extent to which members can influence the elaboration of the program through their participation. Moreover, even though members are entitled to act as “veto players” on a number of votes (the ones that do not imply a simple rank ordering of preferences but a choice among mutually exclusive alternatives), they do not seem to make use of this opportunity. As seen in *Table 2*, the number of “No” votes is negligible as opposed to the number of approvals for each proposal, while the process does not allow for any deliberation or the submission of amendments besides that of an unmediated discussion under the original proposal. At the same time, not all votes on the program had been reduced to a single Yes/No dichotomy: in several cases, members were asked to indicate which one of a set of proposals was their top priority thus creating a ranked order of preferences, while in other cases they could choose from several mutually exclusive alternatives that address the same policy. For the sake of parsimony, these latter cases were also calculated as a negative response in case members voted for an alternative that lost in the ballot. However, even coding these answers as “No”, the highest share of negative responses across all votes was 38.93%, while their average share was as low as 7.47%.

It is important to note that some of the votes do not even qualify as an approval/rejection of certain proposals, rather as an unconditional approval that only differentiates between the number of approvals a proposal receives without the adoption of a lower threshold. As an MP of the Five Star Movement, Manlio di Stefano indicates in the re-cap video of M5S’ program on external relations,

“being interdependent, all 10 proposals will be included in our electoral program for the next elections, but those that are most voted will be our battle horses for the next elections” (Movimento 5 Stelle 2017c).

That is, members could only indicate their priorities on the elements of a pre-defined list of proposals written by experts which were to be included in the program regardless of the number

of votes they received. While this process is more realistic and feasible, it has very little in common with the ideal of a program “written by the citizens”, as advertised in party slogans.

*Table 2 – Votes on the 2018 national electoral program of the Five Star Movement*

Sub-program	Date of vote (yyyy/mm/dd)	Number of policy proposals <sup>54</sup>	Number of participants <sup>55</sup>	Aggregated number of votes	Most voted proposal (Yes)	Least voted proposal (Yes)	“No” votes <sup>56</sup>	Share of “No” (%)
Energy	2017/01/03	7	40977	181419	40516	12517	21279	11.73
External relations	2017/04/05	10	23481	69891	14431	3197	0	0
Employment	2017/04/19	5	24050	210788	23283	2134	767	0.36
Transport	2017/04/27	3	21487	103532	20816	943	6594	6.37
Agriculture	2017/05/03	7	20114	173532	19444	1218	9480	5.46
Defense	2017/05/10	6	19747	98107	19207	16871	6421	6.54
Tourism	2017/05/17	4	18956	146656	18168	1189	1631	1.11
Education	2017/05/24	5	19040	128320	17937	4101	3394	2.64
Security	2017/05/31	5	20239	133910	17272	3867	21076	15.74
Health	2017/06/14	6	19559	183856	19055	1444	6138	3.34
Banks	2017/06/21	6	18674	100208	18358	259	1044	1.04
Environment	2017/06/28	6	18815	164737	18214	1390	3468	2.1
Taxes	2017/07/18	6	18352	105448	11173	457	0	0
Telecommunication	2017/07/19	5	17463	83879	16275	7052	32658	38.93 <sup>57</sup>
Justice	2017/07/25	7	17775	122868	17288	10349	18682	15.2
Migration	2017/07/26	4	20195	80085	19447	13068	9761	12.19
Universities and research	2017/08/02	4	14847	58471	14238	11412	7061	12.08
Constitutional affairs	2017/12/01	3	12976	75595	10513	421	8940	11.83

<sup>54</sup> Some of the proposals include several measures that could be voted separately. However, as the vote in these cases only served to express priorities rather than to approve/reject a proposal, I treat these packages as one unit (participation figures vary across proposals, thus non-voting might be interpreted as a form of dissent for these votes).

<sup>55</sup> When the number of participants varied across votes on distinct proposals, the highest figure was taken into account.

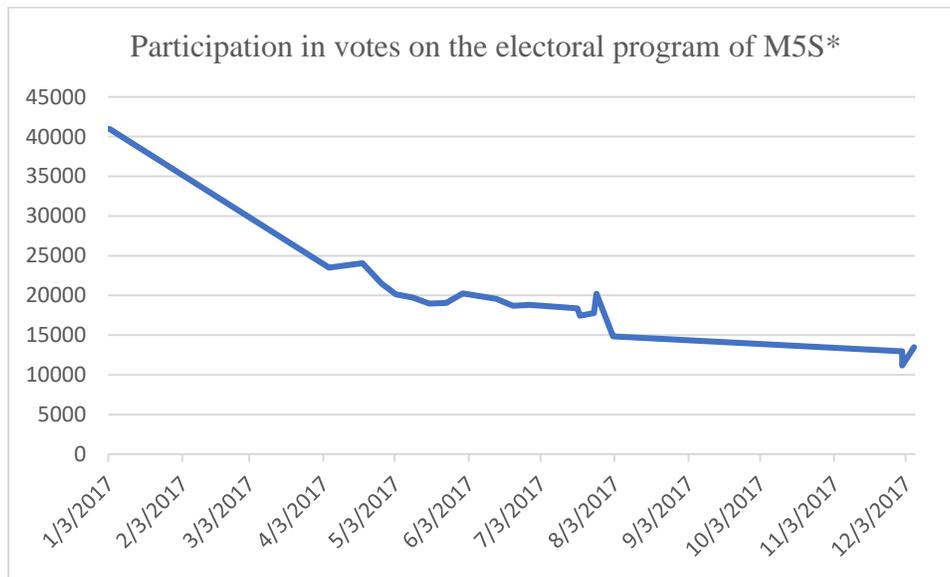
<sup>56</sup> As most votes involved a simple Yes/No question, the number of “No” votes was calculated by subtracting approvals (indicated on the M5S webpage) from the total number of votes. However, when several mutually exclusive alternatives were available, voting for the alternatives that were not approved was counted as a “No” vote.

<sup>57</sup> This exceptionally high proportion was observed due to the fact that 4 of 5 proposals in this package asked respondents to rank preferences that were mutually exclusive. Preferences that lost the vote were counted as a “No” vote.

Cultural goods	2017/12/01	3	11172	34489	6172	484	11206	32.49
Economic development	2017/12/06	6	13490	152006	11734	485	2691	1.77
Animals		-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sport <sup>58</sup>		-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Besides the low share of “No” votes and the low number of approvals needed for a proposal to be included in the electoral program, the data also reveal another remarkable trend: the decline of participation, which is displayed in *Figure 4*. The only notable exception to this trend is the vote on M5S’ program on migration on July 26, which might be explained by the remarkable salience of the issue in the informal communication of M5S and its media network (for an analysis of M5S’ stance on migration, see Mosca and Tronconi 2018, forthcoming).

**Figure 4 – Participation in the votes on M5S’ electoral program**



\* data collected by the author

The data presented above allow us to draw two preliminary conclusions. First, the technological affordances of the M5S online platform (Rousseau) and the design of the voting procedures are more suited to unidirectional exchanges and the approval of pre-defined proposals than to

<sup>58</sup> No membership votes were held on the two last sub-programs.

deliberation and a meaningful choice among collectively defined alternatives. Although in several instances members were offered a chance to choose from several mutually exclusive alternatives, their participation was mostly confined to approving expert proposals and to ranking them without any implications (as all would be included in the program regardless of their ranking). Second, and consistent with previous findings regarding overall participatory trends in the party's online consultations (see Mosca 2018), participation declined consistently across votes except for a ballot on migration policies which have a special prominence in the political culture of M5S. This trend might be attributed to several potential causes, the most plausible being the lack of meaningful deliberation and feedback during these processes. Part of the decline might also be explained by the complexity of certain proposals (especially the ones regarding defense, banks and taxes) whose evaluation requires a level of expertise or familiarity with the policy field which not all members possess. In case the latter explanation is correct, one could argue that the "liquid democracy" model of Pirate Parties would be more efficient in preventing such deficiencies as it also allows party members to delegate their votes on issues that require specialized knowledge (Blum and Zuber 2016, Deseriis 2017b). Regardless of which explanation we accept, the consistence of the declining pattern suggests the presence of a natural life cycle effect of the platform (Faria 2013), and the declining enthusiasm of members. Whether members display such disengagement regarding participatory opportunities will be revealed in *Chapter 7*.

## 2.2 Podemos

Despite the availability of certain deliberative instruments, the online platform of Podemos, "Plaza Podemos" is closer to a traditional discussion forum than to a decision-making tool when it comes to policy-making. A remarkable exception from that is the elaboration of the electoral manifesto, which will be detailed below. However, as demonstrated in *Chapter 3*, Podemos does not aim at turning every citizen into a legislator to the extent that M5S claims to do, it rather attempts to strike a balance between participation and representation. For the same reason, scholarly attention to policy-making as a separate area of participation in Podemos has been relatively scarce (Borge and Santamarina 2015, Fenoll and Castillo 2015, Figueras 2016). However, as deliberation is an integral part of Podemos' political culture (Romanos and Sádaba 2015), it is important to see to what extent it is encouraged by the party's online platforms. The sections below will first review

general patterns in the interactions observed on different subsections of Plaza Podemos, then provide a detailed analysis of the elaboration of the party's 2015 electoral manifesto to see where agenda-setting capacities and veto players were located in the process.

### *Plaza Podemos*

The online platform of Podemos is a multifunctional space that is partly based on the discussion platform of the social media page Reddit. However, besides discussions that can be evaluated by registered users, it offers several other functions to party members, such as drafting and supporting citizen initiatives (ICPs) and proposing issues to be brought to the agenda by Podemos representatives through the Open Mandate. Other than that, members who have verified their profile through submitting their personal identification documents can also access membership votes on the composition of intra-party bodies (*Chapter 3*), the party's candidates (*Chapter 4*), and occasionally also on coalition agreements (*Chapter 6*). However, as this chapter focuses on policy-making, I will heretofore elaborate on the instruments that are relevant from this perspective.

*Figure 5 – The landing page of Plaza Podemos*

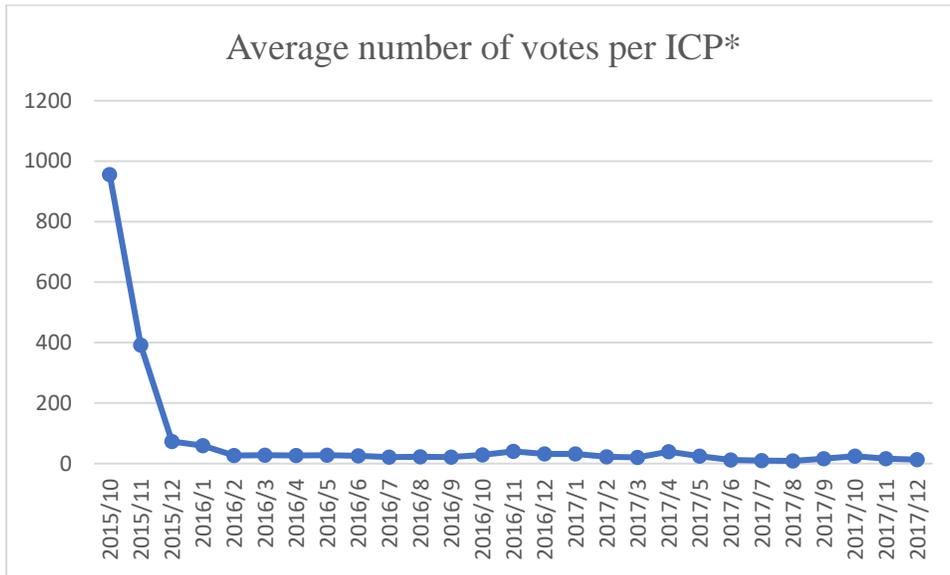


For the same reason, I exclude the “debates and opinion” section of the platform from this analysis, as it is a simple discussion forum with the possibility of evaluating debates that does not yield any decision-making power. A previous analysis of this function revealed that Podemos supporters displayed a clear tendency toward filtering out threads that were critical of the party or its leading figures, regardless of whether such threads violated the norms of the debate, thus contributing to a loss of ideological heterogeneity (Fennoll and Castillo 2015:29).

### *Citizen initiatives (ICPs)*

With regards to citizen initiatives (ICPs), even a cursory look at the platform reveals a highly pervasive and consistent trend: a dramatic decline in participation over time. Even though ICPs need to gain support from 10% of members (i.e. more than 40,000 individuals) or 20% of Circles to be subjected to a binding membership vote, proposals uploaded during the last months of 2017 typically received between 5 and 20 votes, while even the most popular proposal since the launch of ICPs – a proposal on freezing public subventions to the Catholic church and making it liable to pay real-estate taxes – gained the support of only 5,410 members. These figures are especially low taking into account that even non-verified users (such as the author of this thesis) could support these initiatives. However, as evidenced by *Figure 6* (based on the observation of all ICPs from October 2015 until December 2017, i.e. a total of 1994 proposals), the decline in supporting votes has been so steep that it does not seem exaggerate to claim that ICPs failed as an instrument for empowering members to participate in policy-making.

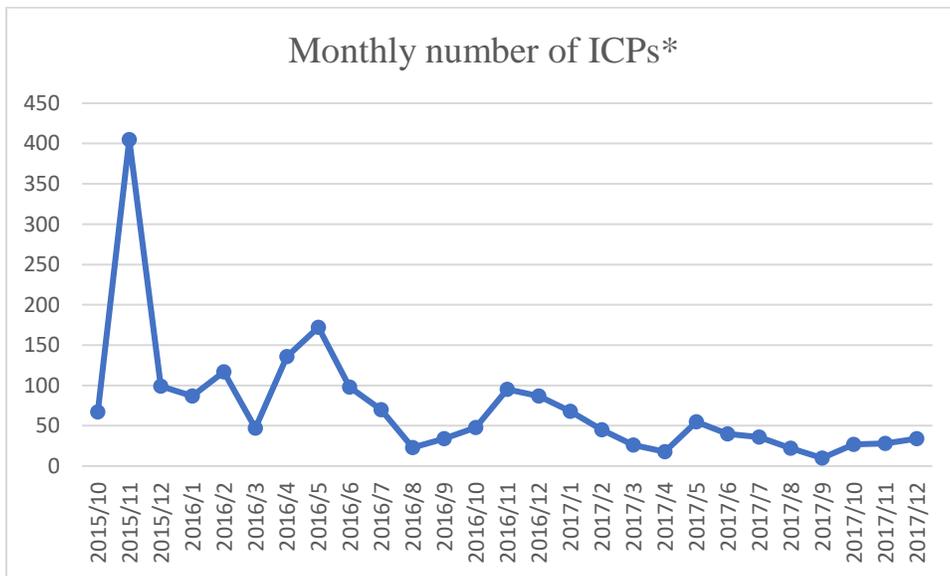
**Figure 6 – The average number of votes received per ICP over time**



\* data collected by the author

More specifically, during the month when the platform was launched, an average proposal received 956 votes, while by December 2017 this figure dropped to 13. The decline in the number of proposals has been less persistent, however, with a notable spike around the government formation talks of spring 2016, as seen on *Figure 7*.

**Figure 7 – Monthly total number of citizen initiatives presented on Plaza Podemos**



\* data collected by the author

Nevertheless, the significant and consistent decline in the level of support of citizen proposals suggests a learning effect: the minimum threshold (10% of all members) was set so high that the function of these “proposals” was soon downgraded to yet another discussion forum without any deliberation or feedback mechanism. The lack of any formal requirements with regards to the content of proposals also made it difficult to rely on them as a meaningful source of policy input, resulting in the formulation of proposals such as the “abolition of money”. Altogether, the design of the ICP platform suggests that Podemos did not wholeheartedly support the idea of allowing members to formulate policy proposals, which has led to the massive abandonment of the function with the exception of a few enthusiasts who continue to support initiatives of marginal interest.

### *Open Mandate*

If ICPs were not overwhelmingly successful as a participatory instrument for generating policy input from party members, this is even more evident in the case of the Open Mandate (Escaño Abierto). Although the aim of the initiative was to select 10 questions each month that Podemos representatives would present in the relevant Assembly, the platform only generated 5 such questions altogether, all of which were posted in April 2016, and even the most popular of which – proposing a lifetime ban from public office on politicians found guilty of corruption – received 1370 supporting votes only. This low level of engagement might be attributed to several potential causes, the most important being that by design, the instrument was only meant to operate in one legislative chamber, the (regional) Assembly of Madrid, and despite several calls from members<sup>59</sup>, it was not extended to the whole country or to other assemblies where Podemos had its own group of representatives. Second, as a result of the party’s reluctance to extend the operation of the Open Mandate over the territory, some local organizations, such as Podemos Castilla La Mancha launched their own “Open Mandate” platform on Reddit. However, as the national webpage represents the organization as a whole, and the rules of the Open Mandate as well as the instrument itself are still available (as of January 2018), it seems that the Open Mandate was silently

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<sup>59</sup> One of these proposals was posted by an individual party member as a discussion (<https://plaza.podemos.info/debates/6232>) which did not receive any comments neither from the party, nor from other members. A similar call was posted on the page of one of Podemos’ internal currents, Podemos15M (<https://podemos15m.org/2017/06/05/escano-abierto-lleva-tu-pregunta-al-pleno/>), but it also failed to generate any discussion within the party.

abandoned as a failed project, and discussions regarding the activity of local representatives were redirected to informal channels not controlled and regulated by the national party organization, such as social media pages, groups on instant messaging applications (WhatsApp and Telegram), and Reddit fora. Other than that, the party also relied on different online discussion tools to discuss proposals, such as Loomio and Appgree (Borge and Santamarina 2015), however, proposals drafted and voted on such platforms have not formally been incorporated into the Open Mandate. Nevertheless, the importance of communication within informal groups was also revealed in the interviews, as I will elaborate in the third section of this chapter.

### ***Elaboration of the electoral program***

As Podemos only contested one general election so far with its own program (its program for the recall election of 2016 was negotiated with its coalition partner, Izquierda Unida), this section focuses on the elaboration of Podemos' electoral manifesto for the 2015 general elections (Podemos 2015f). As the rules for the elaboration of the program laid down in the statutes did not specify any mechanism for the process, such details were shared in media declarations during the campaign period of 2015 (Castro 2015, Muñoz 2015). According to such statements, the party leadership decided to divide the process into two phases: a "participatory", and a "decisive" one, consistent with the assembly-based variant of intra-party democracy (Poguntke et al. 2016). During the first, participatory phase, the party welcomed policy proposals from experts, NGOs, the Circles and territorial organizations of the party, as well as from the subscribers of the party's online platform, Plaza Podemos. Although not coined as such, this phase shows a remarkable degree of similarity to deliberative polling (Fishkin et al. 2000, 2010; List et al. 2013) in that it invites a wide range of participants to provide policy inputs which are then distilled through several stages, albeit the initial sample is not randomly selected. Once the proposals presented on Plaza Podemos reached a hundred votes in support (70 in case they were proposed by a Circle), they were assigned to a correspondent of the relevant policy area to evaluate whether they were economically feasible. Having passed this filter, proposals entered the second, "decisive" phase (Castro 2015).

During the second phase, proposals were reorganized into six thematic sections: economy, democracy, justice and social wellbeing, culture, international relations, and proposals of territorial

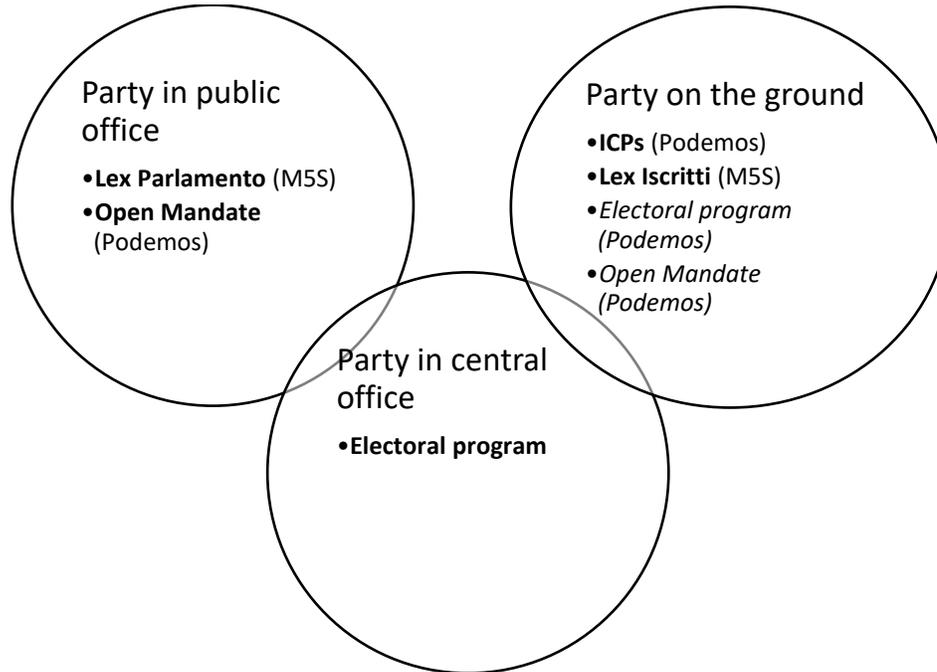
relevance, the latter of which were elaborated by local organizations. These sections were divided into subsections, in each of which policy proposals endorsed by the party leadership were presented along with alternative proposals from the membership or local cells.<sup>60</sup> The final list of proposals subjected to a membership vote included 378 proposals, among which members could indicate their preferences in each block. Notably, the final program (Podemos 2015f) includes 394 policy measures, and does not follow the same structure, thus it would require a detailed textual analysis to determine the share of correspondence between the two. However, four observations are due, which are especially telling about the distribution of agenda-setting capacities and the existence of veto players in this process.

First, although members' proposals were also subjected to a vote, they were not separated from those endorsed by the leadership, except for the last 46 proposals that referred to specific territories and were elaborated locally. Thus, it would have required substantial effort from members to identify whether they supported an "official" proposal, or one submitted by one of their fellows. This could also be conceived of as an advantage, as member proposals were thus given an equal chance of being accepted. Second, the vote was reduced to a mere preference ranking, without the opportunity of explicitly rejecting proposals, thus effectively curtailing the veto power of the membership. Third, there was no threshold or any meaningful criterion (e.g. number of votes per proposal, share of support per proposal, ranking of proposal within the relevant subsection) for the inclusion of a proposal in the final program. Defining such thresholds *a posteriori* would also have been extremely problematic given that an overwhelming majority of proposals received support from between 70 and 80% of participating members with very little variation across proposals (Podemos 2015e). More specifically, on average each proposal was supported by 77.04% of eligible members (the demos was more restricted for questions that had a territorial aspect), while the standard deviation from the mean was only 5.91%. Finally, the legitimacy of the process was also curbed by a remarkably low participation rate (15,264 members; 4% of the total membership), which represented a historical low in the evolution of membership ballots in Podemos (see Manetto 2015c).

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<sup>60</sup> According to the original model, 1 to 3 proposals from the leadership would have been paired with 0 to 3 alternative proposals from the membership (Muñoz 2015), however, the actual number of proposals within each section often exceeded 6, and the exact proportion of leadership-endorsed and member-endorsed proposals cannot be discerned from the official results (Podemos 2015e).

*Figure 8 – The distribution of agenda-setting capacities*

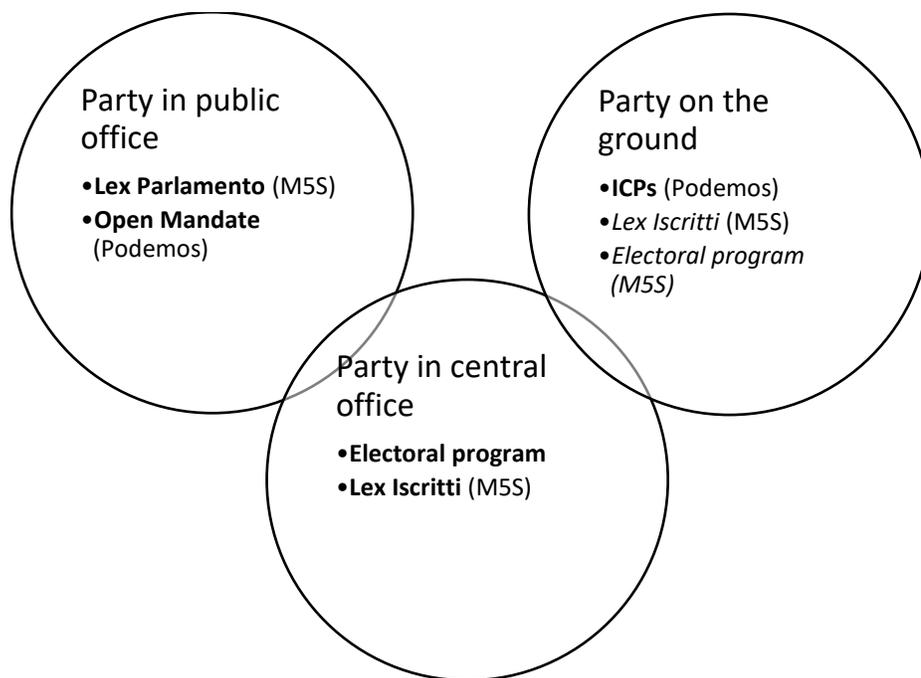


*Figures 8 and 9* summarize the findings of the preceding sections. Primary actors are displayed in bold, while secondary actors are written in cursive on both figures to indicate areas of shared but disproportionate responsibility. *Figure 8* displays the location of agenda-setting capacities in each of the processes discussed above, using the terminology of Katz and Mair’s (1993) “three faces of party organization”. The figure indicates that policy proposals written by members (*Lex Iscritti*, *ICPs*) in fact give the party grassroots agenda-setting power over a set of undefined policies that is atypical in most party organizations. Moreover, the members of Podemos even have efficient means to contribute the drafting of the electoral program and to put issues on the agenda of a regional assembly (although the latter has rarely been used in practice). Nevertheless, processes that refer to lawmaking in the legislative arenas are dominated by the parliamentary party in both cases, while most of their electoral program is written by “experts”.

When it comes to veto players (see *Figure 9* below), we find a symmetrical distribution of agenda-setters and veto players in most cases, i.e. those party actors who may propose the adoption of a policy also have the capacity to block it. However, this balance is upset in two cases: first, although M5S members might block the adoption of a policy proposed by a fellow activist through *Lex*

*Iscritti* by simply not endorsing it, they can only do so once a proposal has passed the filter of the party administration. Thus, in this case the party in central office retains the role of the primary veto player, while members only play a secondary role by having the possibility of vetoing pre-approved proposals. Second, although by defining the items to be potentially included in the electoral program, both party administrations exercise a *de facto* veto power over its content, M5S members have the opportunity of rejecting certain proposals (by voting “No”). Even if few of them do so, this opportunity distinguishes them as secondary veto players when it comes to the elaboration of the program, unlike Podemos affiliates who can only rank proposals which would be included in the program regardless of the outcome of the vote.

**Figure 9 – Veto players**



### **3. How policy input from the members is perceived**

As the previous sections demonstrated, although members’ participation in policy-making is enabled in both parties by complex online platforms, agenda-setting in most such activities is

dominated by the party administration or the parliamentary party, while those instruments that are truly bottom-up and deliberative by design (*Lex Iscritti*, *ICPs*) are largely inefficient in practice due to the lack of meaningful feedback in the first case, and unrealistically high quotas in the second. The following sections will illustrate with interview data collected by the author whether such limitations are acknowledged by party representatives, along with presenting their interpretations regarding the role and importance of online participation within their parties.

As the initial coding scheme (see *Appendix G*) only includes one broad category for “interlocutors’ understanding of online participation within the party”, the present section uses five subcategories that were defined inductively: 1. Internet as a space for deliberation and mobilization/empowerment; 2. Internet as a decision-making platform; 3. Reflections on the strengths/weaknesses of the platform; 4. General/normative comments regarding the use of Internet. While these categories emerged symmetrically in the narratives of both parties, I created two additional subcategories that appeared in only one of them, reflecting upon the different understandings of online participation within the two parties: 5a. Internet as a tool for social inclusion (Podemos); 5b. Internet as a tool for program development (Five Star Movement). These subcategories and the relevant quotes are presented below.

### **3.1 Five Star Movement: “This is a revolution, even if some things might still have certain limits.”**

#### ***Internet as a space for deliberation and mobilization/empowerment***

When asked about how online participation contributed to the mobilization of their grassroots, M5S representatives routinely stressed two aspects, both of which conceive of participation in quantitative terms: the number of participants on Rousseau, and the total number of subscribers. In particular, it was argued that an increase in the number of participants would also improve the quality of the platform:

“Rousseau has the aim of engaging the subscribers in the political life of the Five Star Movement. (The subscribers) are fundamental to make the platform work.” (Municipal councilor/Bologna/Emilia Romagna, responsible for Sharing on Rousseau)

When confronted with the decreasing figures of participation on Rousseau (as demonstrated above, as well as in Mosca 2018), the same representative offered a rationalizing narrative suggesting that (fewer) participants have become more committed over time:

“The figures, including the number of acts divided on ‘Sharing’, the number of people attending e-learning courses, or those making law proposals, are exponentially increasing. Thus, there was a drop in the number of people who only joined for the sake of curiosity, but a huge increase of those who have a specific commitment to participate.” (Municipal councilor/Bologna/Emilia Romagna, responsible for Sharing on Rousseau)<sup>61</sup>

However, as evidenced by another interview, the number of those who joined “for the sake of curiosity” is far from irrelevant for the party:

“Obviously, the objective is to increase the numbers. The fact that today Rousseau is also open to non-subscribing visitors is exactly because we want people to know it, to push people to sign up. The aim of Davide Casaleggio is to obtain a million subscribers in the coming years.” (MP, Responsible for Lex Iscritti on Rousseau)

Thus, although the M5S often emphasizes the value of “ideas” (see *Chapter 3*), these quotes suggest that their online platform is more focused on generating numbers than on triggering meaningful debates, which is also in line with the technical affordances of the platform which preclude discussions among members at the expense of hierarchical exchanges between MPs and activists (Deseriis 2017a:20).

### ***Internet as a decision-making platform***

Although membership ballots undoubtedly fulfil the ideals of plebiscitary democracy, the way in which members can hold their “spokespersons” accountable is much more opaque. For this reason, the relevant section of the interviews with M5S representatives focused on one specific aspect of this relationship: how they incorporated feedback they received from members into their draft bills. As a rule, most interviewees agreed that the proposals generated too many comments for a single legislator to be able to respond to or even to read all of them.

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<sup>61</sup> Data concerning the number of law proposals submitted over time does not support this statement: 129 proposals were submitted during the first month, while only 111 during the eleventh. Lex Iscritti reached its peak so far in the second month, with 193 proposals accepted.

“They (the comments) are almost all of interest, almost all of them are relevant. There is a lot of material to study profoundly, if one goes to Rousseau, maybe he/she will find a law proposal that is in line with his/her competences... but in general there is a curiosity in reading all to see what are the topics and the proposals. (...) Sure, one needs time to read (the comments), because I, for instance, do not have much time.” (Mayor/Mottola)

More succinctly, as one of the MPs responsible for Rousseau put it: “Direct democracy is demanding. It is normal that one has to work twice as much.” For this reason, all interviewees agreed that the comments needed to be filtered, however, the rules of this filtering remained unclear.

“There is a need of “skimming” (the comments) also from the side of the one who makes the proposal or must take it forward, because very often they make you so many proposals, but they need to be contextualized, it needs to be understood whether it corresponds to the regional, national, or to the local level, or simply there are many proposals which perhaps are good proposals, but they do not say effectively how they would achieve their objective.” (Regional Councilor/Sicily)

Some spokespersons offered their own rules for interpreting the comments, although these were not formal protocols approved by the party. The following three quotes include such interpretations:

“(The comments) are managed, the ones that have common traits are singled out and then are evaluated based on how innovative they are in terms of what they add with respect to other comments, and they are systematized by those who propose laws.” (Regional Councilor/Lazio)

“I obviously insert in the text those (comments) that improve the law proposal.” (Municipal Councilor/Terni/Umbria)

“We evaluate (the merit of a comment based on) whether it triggers a discussion or not.” (Anonymous Municipal Councilor/Umbria)

Despite these rather loose and divergent interpretations, there seemed to be a consensus regarding that each representative was individually responsible for answering all the comments they received on their draft bills.

“The single law proposal is the responsibility of the one who proposed it, and it is the same person who needs to make a synthesis (of comments), take those that can be useful, perhaps from different perspectives.” (Regional Councilor/Liguria)

At the same, party representatives also acknowledged that not all comments were answered by the deputies (see Mosca 2018), arguing that they were nevertheless incorporated into the draft bills.

“If there are spokespersons who did not interact (with the comments received from the subscribers), it is their responsibility. But failing to interact does not mean not taking them into consideration. Before submitting the proposal, we create an internal video in which we explain how all the feedback that we had received was implemented. I.e., we do a sort of a report. Thus, the absence of interaction does not mean the lack of interest.” (MP, Responsible for Lex Iscritti on Rousseau)

### ***Reflections on the strengths/weaknesses of the platform***

Although M5S deputies often talk about the party’s online platform in superlatives, they are also prone to acknowledge its weaknesses, especially regarding the system’s propensity to break down during votes, often as a result of hacker attacks. As one interviewee explained:

“The platform has improved recently, but there are still a lot of criticisms. When there are big votes, there are problems with the site collapsing... The IT profile is improving.” (Municipal Councilor/Terni/Umbria)

At the same time, representatives in charge of the platform emphasized that although such episodes reportedly occurred, they did not influence the outcome of membership ballots.

“None of the votes has ever been hacked. We have received many attempts which multiply exponentially during the hours when the vote is open, but no one has ever manipulated any vote. When there are no votes, we do not have all the technicians who are there in every second to verify hacker attempts, we are obviously a bit more vulnerable, but as IT experts improve, so do the hackers too... They hack banks, they hack Trump, they hack everything... Certainly, there is a risk, but I stress that it has never influenced the vote.” (Municipal councilor/Bologna/Emilia Romagna, responsible for Sharing on Rousseau)

Another common criticism refers to the fact that Rousseau does not have an open source code, thus neither its operation, nor the results of the votes can be verified externally (see e.g. Deseriis 2017a). However, representatives of the Rousseau team argued that this could not be otherwise, as the platform is the intellectual property of the M5S:

“Rousseau could not be open to everyone, even to non-subscribers in all its direct functions, because it would disperse the work of those who really study the laws, who put their passion and heart into it. (Rousseau) is an instrument directly linked to M5S. What we hope is that despite all the

defamation and derision, many will copy us. We are here to do a work, to produce better policies, not to bring benefits to other parties with our platform. We will be happy if they have the capacity to copy and improve it.” (Municipal councilor/Bologna/Emilia Romagna, responsible for Sharing on Rousseau)

Despite all the criticism, there is also considerable optimism regarding the evolution of the platform within the party, as well as a strong conviction that it serves the interests of the community. One such conviction is that Rousseau evolves automatically through the experience of user interactions:

“Rousseau already improves by itself through the participation of the subscribers, day after day.”  
(Municipal Councilor/Rome)

On a more general note, several M5S representatives share a techno-optimistic view about the knowledge-sharing capacities of the web, and see Rousseau as a first step toward a more comprehensive change in policy development:

“In the beginning, there was neither Rousseau, nor the sharing of documents. Now they want to implement the system of sharing documents, of the proposals we make, even this is a revolution with respect to the other parties. (...) I present a motion on bikesharing in Verona, she can take it to Venice and do the same; I as a lawyer study public contracts, one from Turin can take the things that I have written and studied and adapt it to the reality of Turin. This is a revolution, even if some things might still have certain limits.” (Municipal Councilor, Venice 2)

### ***General/normative comments regarding the use of Internet***

Although all decision-making processes of the Five Star Movement take place online, the party also has a remarkable offline presence, and places great emphasis on interpersonal relations, as demonstrated in *Chapter 3*. For this reason, some interviewees were skeptical about whether relegating most activities to the Internet was desirable:

“Internet is definitely important, but it is important as an instrument of communication. The M5S was born thanks to the Internet, the Meetups which are the heart of the Movement are always organized on the Internet. However, they often make use of it a bit excessively. Nevertheless, it is fundamental as an instrument.” (Municipal Councilor/Livorno)

Others made a distinction that is also mirrored in the organizational structure of the party: while the national party organization only exists online, its local branches rely on physical meetings extensively.

“Internet, more like the platform, the blog of Beppe Grillo is fundamental for the diffusion of messages about the activity on Facebook. We communicate a lot on Facebook. (...) Internet works more at the national level than at the territorial level.” (Mayor/Mottola)

Despite these doubts, most interlocutors agreed that beyond deliberation and decision-making, Internet also served as a means to educate citizens:

“Internet is very important because it is an instrument for sharing information. It permits in fact everyone to access information, and to access things that then serve to raise awareness of the country, of the city, of the community one lives in. Thus, Internet is very important, we attempt to use it in an innovative way, obviously with some limits, with some problems now and then, but we are convinced that it is the right way. So much that we say that Internet access should be a right acquired through citizenship.” (Regional Councilor/Sicily)

Moreover, the online platform of the party is also framed as the principal source of policy input, although this conviction is not mirrored in the data regarding its practical use. Nevertheless, M5S representatives routinely describe Rousseau in such phrases:

“The subscribers to Rousseau are the brain of the Movement, those who through this platform identify the most important measures and actions for the progress of our society.” (Regional Councilor/Lazio)

“Rousseau is a very important innovation for the Movement, it is a step forward. In every movement, not only political, in all social formations, there must always be an evolution. Rousseau is the evolution of the M5S. It is a platform that allows the citizens to connect, to interconnect even better.” (Mayor/Mottola)

### ***Internet as a tool for program development***

As seen in the sections above, although the elaboration of the national electoral program of the Five Star Movement included participatory elements, the process was more top-down and relied on members' input to a much lower extent than the corresponding party slogans suggested. At the same time, this does not seem to apply to program development at the municipal level, where

several interviewees highlighted how they “wrote” the program together with their activists in a series of online and offline consultations. As a Municipal Councilor from Venice explained:

“The program that we have brought to the City Council was written by the activists. For which we are based on what we have written together. (...) Each working group did its own part of the program. For instance, the tourism group of which I was a member went to talk to various associations of Venice, civil associations, commissions, we worked hard to find all the problems and to understand how various sensibilities can be resolved, always inspired by our principles. Having done this, the program proposed by the working group was brought to the whole group and was voted by the group to be inserted in the program. Thus, first there was a work by few people with external contacts, then it was voted inside the group.” (Municipal Councilor, Venice 1)

Moreover, although regional and local representatives are not formally recognized as stakeholders in drafting the national electoral program which mostly relied on “expert” knowledge, in practice their experience was incorporated in the manifesto in a similar vein as they involved local activists:

“The program until now is being constructed in the kind of working groups that we have done at the municipal level, involving regional councilors, and municipal administrations where we govern. (...) As a group, we are working right now on writing 2 or 3 important things about tourism and saving Venice. Things that only we can write. It would never occur to Di Maio to say ‘let’s write this thing because there are the dynamics between tourism and residents in Venice’. Venice, Florence and to some extent Rome experience different dynamics than the rest of Italy. If in the rest of Italy you can say certain things to facilitate B&Bs, in Venice it’s different. Here we live under pressure from tourism, thus only we can say these things, and only we can write them into the program.” (Municipal Councilor, Venice 2)

Thus, even though the votes on the electoral program only included proposals drafted by external policy experts, the party in public office was *de facto* involved in the process.

### **3.2 Podemos: “where there is no Internet, there’s no Podemos”**

#### ***Internet as a space for deliberation and mobilization/empowerment***

As highlighted by other authors (Borge and Santamarina 2015, Fenoll and Castillo 2015, Figueras 2016), online discussions occupy a central space in the political culture of Podemos and are simultaneously carried out on several different platforms ranging from social media platforms

(above all, Reddit), the built-in applications of the party webpage, as well as external mobile applications (Appgree, Agora Voting). Accordingly, the primary functions also vary across these discussion fora, which was reflected in the interviews. First, some narratives focused on online participation as a means to empower party members, as exemplified by the following quote:

“Those enrolled in Podemos have, through the same participation mechanisms that empower them to intervene in every internal issue of the party, the possibility of influencing the political line taken by the institutional action of the elected representatives of Podemos.” (Deputy in the Assembly of Madrid 3)

On a similar note, interviewees also highlighted the importance of enabling bottom-up initiatives (ICPs):

“Plaza Podemos offers the necessary space for any subscriber of Podemos to gain sufficient support for any proposal as well as to bring it to a higher organ or to trigger a citizen consultation on the issue. The necessary quotas are certainly high, but this provision is not to halt participation, but to ensure that the initiatives that are submitted to a deliberation or a citizen consultation have enough support and relevance.” (Deputy in the Assembly of Madrid 3)

At the same time, beyond the use of particular deliberative instruments, party representatives also highlighted the importance of non-binding informal debates in formulating useful ideas that can later be transformed into policies:

“The intense use of social networks generates certain dynamics, and also allows to receive more feedback, and I think it’s also a way to accelerate certain thoughts that are not so clear, and which can be structured in the area of participation always through exclusively electronic methods.” (Deputy at the Assembly of Madrid 2)

Finally, a third narrative stressed that rather than simply making decisions online, the involvement of party members into the party’s internal processes also served as a mobilization tool:

“The party needs to check with its grassroots to what extent the decision-making process is something that the electorate understands. But it has another important dimension too, which is to give force to a decision. By deciding something and by voting on something people also become spokespersons of the thing that was decided and identify with it. It is also a means of popular empowerment, which is a form that the theory of political representation-as-delegation does not usually understand, i.e. using the decision as a form of mobilization.” (Member of the National Citizen Council of Podemos, responsible for Culture and Education)

### ***Internet as a decision-making platform***

A second set of arguments offered by party representatives defined the Internet as a space where all members can participate in the decision-making processes of the party:

“The intense use of the Internet and of social networks have been crucial parts of the identity of Podemos since its birth. All the decision-making processes open to the citizens (election of internal positions, primaries and referenda) are realized through Internet, with the only requirement for participation being the subscription to the party.” (Deputy in the Assembly of Madrid 3)

At the same time, even narratives that focused on decision-making as a primary function saw it as intertwined with a continuous process of deliberation. Again, as already stressed in *Chapter 3*, this might be associated with the more assembly-based decision-making structure of Podemos (AIPD) as opposed to the purely plebiscitary version (PIPD) endorsed by the Five Star Movement (Poguntke et al. 2016):

“Internet is not only the social networks, there are also groups of Telegram, and the whole internal communication of Podemos. The instant messages among different groups have always structured decisions in different, locally distinct groups or those at different levels. In fact, as a norm, all party organs have a group which reflects the composition of that organ, and this in itself creates a virtual space, if not for decision-making, but at least for deliberation and the exchange of information.” (Deputy at the Assembly of Madrid 2)

### ***Reflections on the strengths/weaknesses of the platform***

When confronted with potential threats or weaknesses of their online platforms such as the unrealistically high quotas for citizen initiatives as well as potential distortions in the outcome of online ballots resulting from the popularity of individual leaders, Podemos representatives acknowledged these problems, but presented them as an acceptable compromise:

“The system that we have is far from being perfect, but if you disregard the disadvantages, it is fairly functional, especially when the vote is on a bigger scale, it is a lot more difficult to change the meaning of the votes.” (Deputy at the Assembly of Madrid 2)

At the same time, they also demonstrated a certain level of flexibility with regards to the revision of the rules, although such revisions failed to materialize despite the apparent malfunctioning of the ICPs:

“The statutes require a very low percentage of the census or of the Circles to launch (an initiative). In any case, Podemos was born only 2 years ago. If in any moment we see that there is an obstacle to participation (for instance that the census contains a very large number of passive subscribers), we will seek ways to resolve it.” (Former Secretary General of Podemos Community of Madrid, Co-founder of Podemos)

### ***General/normative comments regarding the use of Internet***

While the use of Internet is most often related to specific functions within a party, it is also deeply embedded in the political culture of Podemos, which greatly relied on the online networks created by the *Indignados* movement. As a Deputy in the Assembly of Madrid explained:

“When we were in the 15-M, we said that we were probably one of the first digitally conceived social movements, and I think that Podemos is one of the first parties born digitally.” (Deputy at the Assembly of Madrid 2)

The same conviction about the use of the Internet as a distinctive mark was also emphasized by the party’s former Secretary General in the city of Madrid:

“We do not only innovate in terms of concepts, and political culture, but we innovate also through the use of social networks and the intense and extended use of Internet. For the votes, you only need to subscribe.” (Former Secretary General of Podemos Madrid)

Moreover, besides an integral part of its identity, Podemos also realized the presence of a strong correlation between Internet use and propensity to vote for the party, which was also corroborated by academic research (Rodríguez-Teruel et al. 2016:16):

“Social changes are often technological changes, so it’s logical that people who regularly use Internet are closer to Podemos than people who have more traditional attitudes, habits and ways of thinking and acting, where there is no Internet and there’s no Podemos.” (Member of the National Citizen Council of Podemos, responsible for Culture and Education)

### ***Internet as a tool for social inclusion***

Besides the positive effect of Internet use, it has also been demonstrated that a vote for Podemos is negatively associated with an individual’s age (Rodríguez-Teruel et al. 2016:16). This finding

has been reflected in the party's organizational structure, which offers different participatory opportunities across age groups:

“In Podemos, there are two organizations in one. The physical organization, which meets every week in a circle, is an organization of middle-aged and old people, from 40-45 and above that. (...) And then there is the digital organization of those below 35, whose participation is all in social networks, Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, Telegram, and Internet as such. They are two in one. (...) Formally, there is only one organization, and formally this organization only makes decisions electronically. The debates emerge on the one hand in the physical meetings convened by the Circles, on the other, digitally.” (Former Secretary General of Podemos Madrid)

At the same time, Podemos representatives saw the Internet as a tool not only for engaging young voters, but also other segments of the society who previously abstained from any form of political activity.

“Not everyone in the world has the time or availability to participate actively in the Circles, and maybe one can only do it through the Internet.” (Former Secretary General of Podemos Community of Madrid, Co-founder of Podemos)

Most notably, several interviewees highlighted the role of online participation in fostering the inclusion of women in political activism to overcome the gender inequality in political participation (Inglehart and Norris 2000).

“Normally if a couple participates in politics, what happens is that the man goes to the political meeting while the woman takes care of the children. Thus, to surpass this sexual discrimination, if we can all vote online, if we can all see the documents on the Internet, you decrease inequalities. The same goes to people with disabilities who could not enter meetings if there was no dedicated space for them. Thus, (using Internet) is also a means to try to reach a much wider participation and to bridge these gaps.” (Former Secretary General of Podemos Madrid)

A very similar argument was also offered by another interviewee who emphasized the compatibility of online activism with regular work schedules:

“A person who is at home, who doesn't go to the assembly, but reads everything that is being said on Facebook, Twitter, and the press, necessarily needs to have a right to share his/her opinion just like or even more than any other person. Internet allows something that traditional politics doesn't: the participation of many people who work, take care of their children, who are abroad... people who would be left outside of decision-making processes in a traditional party, but thanks to the Internet they are inside; and this breaks a social inequality that is very much related to gender

inequality.” (Member of the National Citizen Council of Podemos, responsible for Culture and Education)

#### 4. Conclusions

The aim of this chapter was to show how online platforms are utilized as policy-development tools in the Five Star Movement and Podemos, and to identify agenda-setters and veto players in each of these processes. The rules regarding members’ participation in policy-making have shown remarkable similarities with a range of tools available to members, including bottom-up initiatives, opportunities to provide feedback on the party’s legislative activities, and participation in drafting the electoral program for national elections.

A detailed analysis of the practical application of these instruments has demonstrated that 1. citizen initiatives are largely inefficient in both parties (although for different reasons); 2. feedback mechanisms on parliamentary activity are very loosely regulated, thus their implications are unclear; 3. program development is mostly controlled by the party administration in both cases. However, the analysis also revealed important differences insofar as Podemos members have more opportunities to insert proposals in the party manifesto, as well as to place issues on the agenda of regional assemblies (although the latter instrument has been abandoned). At the same time, M5S members are in a better position when it comes to blocking certain proposals from the electoral program, as well as keeping unpopular member proposals off the agenda. Thus, as visually demonstrated on *Figures 8 and 9*, the members of Podemos have a more extensive agenda-setting power, while M5S activists are stronger veto players in several activities. This distinction is in line with a broader difference in the political culture of the two parties: the more assemblarian (AIPD) culture of Podemos gives more space to deliberation, while the vote-centric, plebiscitary (PIPD) model of M5S gives disproportionate importance to membership ballots.

Nevertheless, the outcomes are not remarkably different: no citizen initiatives were written into law in any of the cases, the feedback mechanisms have not triggered a dramatic reversal in the position of the party in public office, and the vast majority of leadership-sponsored policy proposals made it into the program regardless of membership votes. However, the lack of unrealistic quotas might still produce an advantage for M5S members which is also evidenced by

relatively higher rates of participation. Whether this advantage is also perceived by members will be revealed in *Chapter 7*.

## Chapter 6 - Members' influence on coalition behavior

The question of whether intra-party power relations affect coalition behavior is not new to the party politics literature (Bäck 2008, Maor 1998, Meyer 2012, Müller and Strom 1999, Pedersen 2010, Strom 1994, Teorell 1999), however, it has not yet been addressed in new parties that encourage the participation of their members in a much wider range of activities than traditional political parties. To address this hiatus, in this chapter I demonstrate that the distribution of power within these parties raises new challenges that derive from tensions between parties' electoral strategy and inclusiveness. To assess the impact of intra-party democracy on coalition building, I analyze the coalition behavior of Podemos and the Five Star Movement since their entry into their respective national political arenas. The general aim of the chapter is to explore how intra-party power relations affect coalition behavior, and whether members have the capacity to make decisions that deviate from the party's official electoral strategy.

Through the analysis of party regulations, manifestos, press releases and party webpages combined with interview data gathered by the author, it will be demonstrated that the timing and the choices presented at party ballots were strategically used by the party leadership of Podemos to ensure scenarios favorable to them from an electoral perspective, thus, the available alternatives were highly constrained and led to predictable outcomes. On the other hand, the Five Star Movement has for long implemented its "no coalition policy" through direct central orders, often against the will of local members. The findings indicate that although coalition behavior might be subject to inclusive decision-making processes, the outcome of the latter can easily be manipulated ensuring that decisions conform to the parties' electoral strategy. As the example of these parties shows, the support of members and activists is not essential for the viability of a certain coalition behavior. Even when members are involved in the decision-making process, their influence remains minimal, just like the contribution these processes make to intra-party democracy.

## 1. Introduction

Parties' internal power dynamics are widely assumed to have an impact on their ability and willingness to enter pre- or post-electoral coalition agreements with other parties (Pedersen 2010, Strom 1994, Teorell 1999). However, there is a lack of scholarly consensus regarding the direction of this relationship. Strom argues that the presence of "ex ante policy constraints", i.e. decentralized decision-making and fixed term negotiation mandates in some parties and the absence of similar constraints in others lead to an asymmetric "chicken game" in coalition talks which "occasionally produces outcomes that are catastrophic for everybody" (Strom 1994:125). Strom's study of the 1987 Norwegian post-electoral negotiations suggests that strong party leaders unconstrained by their extra-parliamentary party organizations can manipulate the outcome of coalition talks in unexpected ways. Implicitly, this also entails that these parties find it easier to enter governing coalitions. In contrast, Maor (1998) argues that as decentralization facilitates the internal management of conflicts, parties with a more decentralized decision-making structure will be less vulnerable to the public in coalition talks, i.e. the risk of being exposed to media scandals is reduced.

A point toward which recent studies seem to converge is that formal coalition theory's treatment of parties as unitary actors had been flawed (Bäck 2008, Laver and Schofield 1990, Meyer 2012, Pedersen 2010) as "parties consist of different actors, and the internal relationship between these actors affects the way in which they choose between different goods and, consequently, how they behave" (Pedersen 2010:751). Traditional coalition theories focused either on the size of the parties needed for a minimal winning coalition (Von Neumann and Morgenstern 1953), or on the policy distance between them (Axelrod 1970, for a comprehensive review of competing explanations see Bäck 2008), while more recent scholarly efforts aimed to categorize different forms of inter-party cooperation (Ibenskas and Bolleyer 2018). However, the intra-party dynamics of these processes are still relatively underresearched.

The emerging strand of literature on intra-party democracy and coalition formation seems to confirm that factionalized and internally democratic parties are less likely to enter governing coalitions (Bäck 2008, Pedersen 2010), although other findings indicate that the lack of internal

unity may be an asset for the bargaining power of political parties (Meyer 2012). However, unlike most previous theories of coalition behavior, this chapter does not focus on the likelihood that parties with a certain organizational makeup enter coalition agreements, rather on whether the strategy they follow is consistent with their members' preferences. The findings indicate that regardless of how inclusive internal decision-making procedures are, party leaders are protected against members' and supporters' influence as long as they can unilaterally determine the agenda of party ballots (including question wording) in line with their electoral strategy or avoid membership votes on coalitions altogether.

The chapter is structured as follows: first, the sources of data and the applied methods are described, followed by the conceptualization and operationalization of the variables used. These variables contribute toward the construction of a dichotomic model of coalition behavior that is presented in *Section 4*. The following sections describe the evolution of the two parties' coalition behavior and evaluate how tensions between inclusive decision-making and fixed electoral strategies were resolved in each and to what extent these solutions were consistent with the parties' genetic models. The chapter ends with a discussion of the main findings and paves the way for future research.

## **2. Data and methods**

The empirical findings presented in this chapter rest on two main sources of data. First, party documents (statutes and other internal party regulations), formal communications from the party websites and other online channels administered by the parties were collected to construct a comprehensive picture of the parties' own rules and stances toward coalition behavior. Second, this was complemented with a thorough review of selected media outlets and semi-structured interviews with representatives of Podemos that were conducted by the author in December 2015

and March 2016<sup>62</sup>, and with representatives of the Five Star Movement in September-November 2017 (see the list of interviewees in *Appendix F*).

The analysis will start with presenting official party rules regarding coalition behavior as laid down in the party statutes and other party documents, as these constitute a standard for evaluation. The following sections will describe the tensions that emerged during coalition talks, using a causal model which will be presented below. This will allow us to assess the extent to which coalition outcomes in each party reflect the preferences of party supporters and whether they are occasionally or regularly being managed or explicitly overruled by party elites.

### **3. Variables and indicators**

The following sections first clarify the main variables conceptually, then provide guidelines for their measurement. Although these variables might seem like constant traits of party organizations, I argue that they evolve dynamically, in response to internal shifts and external pressures (Harmel and Janda 1994). Thus, all these indicators will be measured individually for all potential coalition partners, and the different phases of coalition talks will also be distinguished whenever a theoretically relevant shift occurs.

#### **3.1. The inclusiveness of internal decision-making**

Inclusiveness is a dimension that can be used to characterize all intra-party activities from the selection of candidates to policy development. While constructing a specific indicator for the inclusiveness in decisions related to coalition behavior is a novel effort, previous scholarship on measuring intra-party democracy in general provides some useful hints. Specifically, Rahat and Hazan (2001) apply inclusiveness as an overarching dimension that can be used to classify

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<sup>62</sup> During two short field trips to Madrid and some surrounding municipalities, I had a chance to interview five representatives of Podemos: one from the municipal leadership, two deputies at the community level, a member of the national campaign staff and one of the party's parliamentary candidates. Another two representatives of Podemos answered my questions in email. The questions mainly referred to intra-party democracy and members' participation in general, but the interviews conducted in March also addressed a potential coalition agreement with the socialist PSOE.

candidate selection methods. These authors understand inclusiveness as the extent to which different parts of the entire electorate are incorporated into intra-party procedures. As follows, the most inclusive processes involve the entire electorate, while less inclusive alternatives range from party members only to selected party agencies to non-selected party agencies to the party leader only. However, as recent literature on party membership tells us (Faucher 2015, Gauja 2015, Scarrow 2015, Van Haute and Gauja eds. 2015), this scale is not sensitive to all nuances: in particular, the incorporation of non-member supporters, often with voting rights, has created an intermediate category of inclusiveness (party supporter/party friend/subscriber) that is crucial for many recently established parties and thus needs to be differentiated.

By inclusiveness in coalition-making decisions, I understand the extent to which party members and registered supporters can participate in an open and binding process that determines the coalition behavior of a party when confronted with a particular coalition dilemma. This can be measured on a 0-5 scale, where categories denote answers to the following question: *Who has a right to participate in binding decisions regarding the party's coalition behavior?* The corresponding response categories are the following: 0 – the party leader only, 1 – one or more non-selected party agencies, 2 – selected party agencies, 3 – party members, 4 – party members and registered supporters, 5 – the entire electorate (this latter being the most inclusive end of the scale, with one conceptually imaginable extension that has no precedent to date: voters of other countries). When viewed in isolation, a high level of inclusiveness should make it less likely that a party would enter either electoral or governing coalitions (Bäck 2008, Pedersen 2010), because of the high level of factionalization such parties routinely experience as demonstrated in the cases of the Swedish and the German Pirate Parties (Bolleyer et al. 2015).

### **3.2. Electoral strategy**

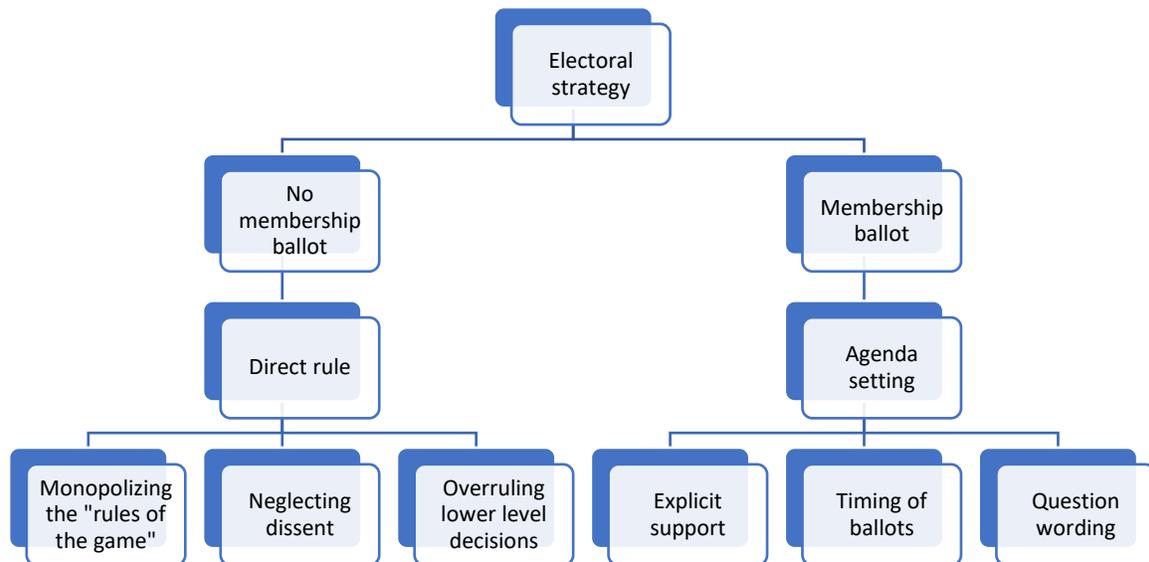
Emerging parties are faced with certain dilemmas when they enter national party systems, and these dilemmas are multiplied when parties use a strong anti-system or even anti-party rhetoric. Presenting a party as the antipode of established political institutions poses severe limitations on its future choices, including the range of potential coalition partners, if any. Even if a challenger party clearly belongs to an existing ideological family, broadly conceived, it may choose to deny the existence of a left-right divide and try to place itself above “old cleavages” for electoral

motives. This may help to preserve the party's independent status as an electoral benchmark, but at the same time it may hinder future coalition agreements.

Moreover, it cannot be taken for granted that the party's supporters are equally committed to independence. After all, the majority of new party voters already have a voting history and might not refrain from a coalition with the party of their second preference, even if they are deeply disillusioned with their past choices. Thus, party elites need to make substantial efforts to convince their members of the merits of independence-by-all-means in case the matter is decided at a party ballot. Nevertheless, they have several techniques at their disposal to set the agenda: besides campaigning for one option explicitly, the timing and the question wording of membership votes can also affect the outcome of internal ballots. Using these techniques, even highly inclusive parties can secure outcomes that are consistent with the electoral strategy defined by the party elite.

On the other hand, even inclusive parties may decide that coalition strategy should not be left to members, and party leaders can also use less subtle mechanisms to exclude alternatives they deem unfavorable. One way to ensure the party's independence is to codify in the party's regulations that coalitions are *a priori* forbidden, thus, there is no need to hold membership ballots on such initiatives. This leads to obvious tensions if at the same time the party claims to be internally democratic. However, these conflicts can be resolved in the same hierarchical manner: by neglecting dissenting voices, overruling contrary decisions made at lower organizational levels and reminding all other members of the "rules of the game". Of course, it is doubtful whether party members will tolerate this encroachment on their participatory rights, but even this can be legitimated if all other important decisions are made more democratically. This strategy is differentiated from the one described above and will be coined *direct rule* as opposed to *agenda-setting*. These two strategies and their respective tools are compared on *Graph 1*.

*Graph 1 – Two different routes of implementing parties' electoral strategy*



As seen above, party elites have three different avenues to set the agenda within the party regarding coalition agreements when there is a membership ballot. First, they can make their stance explicit and mobilize in support of their favored alternative or, conversely, for the rejection of a certain option. This option is closely related to party executives' indispensable role in coalition negotiations: coalition talks typically start at the top organizational levels, without a previously approved mandate, i.e. party leaders *de facto* determine the options, even if they later subject them to members' approval. Furthermore, if a highly legitimate and popular party leader mobilizes for supporting a coalition with a specific party, it will take substantial effort and resources from dissidents to mobilize against this, which will probably lead to internal frictions. Most supporters will readily vote for the alternative endorsed by the party leader, without further considerations. Second, the timing of membership ballots can be crucial in determining whether all options that have emerged during coalition talks are still available to the party. This is especially the case when there is a time constraint involved which motivates actors to switch positions rapidly. Third, question wording can substantially restrict the options available to members by not offering all viable alternatives, not allowing to combine them in all possible ways or using manipulative phrases to steer members toward the official party line.

These techniques have been widely documented in past research. Previous literature on agenda-setting (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2009, Scheufele 2000, Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007, Tsebelis 1995, Tsebelis and Garrett 1996) has defined *agenda-setters* as groups or actors that “by having monopoly power over the proposal placed before the electorate, can confront the voters with a ‘take it or leave it’ choice” (Romer and Rosenthal 1978:27), while more recent literature has also identified *strategic timing* as “an additional source of agenda control” (Meredith 2009:159, see also Panagopoulos 2011). However, while Meredith argues that timing matters because it can bias the subset of the electorate that turns out at elections, this chapter proposes a different logic that is more suited to the rapid evolution of coalition talks: this alternative logic postulates that the timing of ballots matters because shifting alliances might restrict the choices available to voters. More specifically, I hypothesize that the later the ballot is held, the more restricted the choice of alternatives and the stronger the agenda-setting power of the party leadership. The effects of question wording on responses are also widely documented in the survey research literature (Schuman and Presser 1977, 1996).

In terms of indicators, I suggest six dichotomous items to describe the extent to which party elites make use of their agenda-setting power to influence the outcome of membership ballots on coalition agreements. The items are listed in *Table 1*. With regards to the scoring rules, “0” always denotes cases where the party elites did not use their agenda-setting power, and “1” means they used some techniques to influence the outcome. The items can be aggregated into an Agenda-setting Index which runs from 0 to 6, with lower values meaning less and higher values more influence from the party leadership. The index applies to each potential coalition agreement on a case-by-case basis.

**Table 1 – Agenda-setting techniques and their indicators**

Module	Item	Scoring
Explicit support	Is there an official party line that the party leader or members of the party elite are campaigning for?	0 – No 1 – Yes
	At the time of the vote, are all options still available?	0 – Yes, 1 – No
Timing	Have there been any changes in external circumstances that are likely to affect the outcome?	0 – No 1 – Yes

Question wording and choices	Do the questions list all possible options?	0 – Yes 1 – No
	Is there a chance to combine different preferences on different options?	0 – Yes 1 – No
	Is there any bias in the wording of the questions that makes any of the options appear more attractive?	0 – No 1 – Yes

With regards to direct rule, the construction of an additive index based on dichotomous items does not seem practical, as I argue that there are *qualitative* differences between the three different techniques. Monopolizing “the rules of the game” is the mildest form of influence that party leaders can exert to prevent dissidence. This might take the form of a notification or a public reminder of the party’s principles. Neglecting dissent already implies that some actors within the party express their discontent with the official party line, but this is discarded by the party leadership as irrelevant. The most explicit way of monopolizing decisions on coalition making occurs when some lower level organizational unit decides to cooperate with other parties at their corresponding level, but their decision is overruled by the central office. Thus, instead of treating these techniques as equivalent options that can occur simultaneously, I propose that they should be understood as intervals on a scale toward more direct intervention by the leadership. In order to ensure symmetry between the two indices, the Direct Rule Index also runs from 0 to 6, but the scoring rules are different, as indicated in *Table 2*. When two techniques are combined, it yields the maximum score (6).

***Table 2 – Forms of direct rule***

Technique applied by the party leadership	Score
No intervention	0
Monopolizing “the rules of the game”	2
Neglecting dissent	4
Overruling lower level decisions	6

#### 4. The causal model

When internally democratic, inclusive parties are faced with coalition dilemmas, but at the same time they have a clear electoral strategy they plan to follow, they are faced with the two options presented above: they either abandon their participatory ethos and impose direct rule on their members or try to set a clear agenda for a membership ballot to secure the preferred outcome. Nevertheless, what remains unclear is the incentives that motivate each choice. As I will argue below, this choice is seldom free, it is rather determined by what I call *organizational culture*.

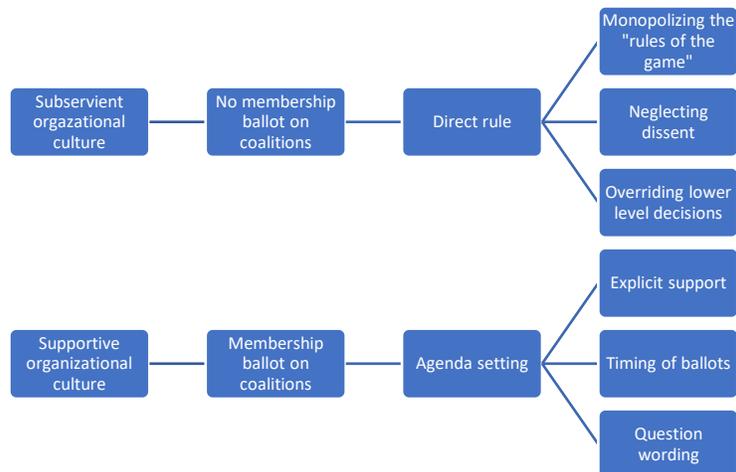
As the previous term derives from organization theory whose most frequent units of analysis are business firms, the corresponding definitions also share this focus. Barney defines organizational culture as “a complex set of values, beliefs, assumptions, and symbols that define the way in which a firm conducts its business” (Barney 1986:657). One could simply change “business firms” to “political parties” to preserve the original definition. However, I claim that the organizational culture of political parties refers to more specific organizational traits that determine the relationship between the different faces of the party (Katz and Mair 1993). In particular, it is the “genetic model” (Panebianco 1988) of the party that already prescribes how conflicts are likely to be managed. According to Panebianco, “every organization bears the mark of its formation, of the crucial political-administrative decisions made by its founders, the decisions which ‘molded’ the organization” and the effects of these decisions can last for decades (Panebianco 1988:50). Following this argument, the role of the party leader is especially important in the party’s future trajectory. Some parties are centered around a charismatic party leader who is not simply a representative of his/her constituency’s perceived interests but is “the undisputed founder, conceiver, and interpreter of a set of political symbols (the party’s original ideological goals) which become inseparable from his person” (Panebianco 1988:52). In such cases of “pure charismatic parties” it is very unlikely that party members will ultimately question the rule of the leader, knowing that they would risk sanctions. Thus, in such parties, a large majority of members accept the strategy of the party leader solely for his/her unquestionable position in the party, and the fact that dissidents are eventually silenced is seen as normal.

This is remarkably different in parties with less leader-centric genetic models. Even in parties that have a charismatic leader but at the same time also hold strong ideological or issue positions that are independent from him/her (just like Harmel and Svasand 1993’s “entrepreneurial-issue

parties”), it is unlikely that members would tolerate such oppression. It is much more plausible to expect that factions would start mobilizing and try to contest the seat of the party leader in such situations. It is in these charismatic, but at the same time more horizontal parties where agenda-setting might have special relevance. In such an organizational culture, members will not surrender voluntarily, but most will be ready to support the official line if they are given a chance.

To make a clear distinction between these two organizational cultures, I will label them “subservient” and “supportive”. In a subservient organization, leaders might do as they wish without any long-term implications in terms of membership support, whilst in a supportive one they need to offer members an opportunity to disagree, but they still have a good chance of securing their goals. In Panebianco’s words, pure charismatic leaders can “*impose* all key decisions upon their parties”, while holders of “situational charisma” (leaders whose legitimacy derives from external circumstances, e.g. economic distress) need to “*bargain* with many other organizational actors” (Panebianco 1988:52, italics from the original). Thus, I argue that the choice of techniques to implement the party’s coalition strategy is not arbitrary but is determined by the party’s organizational culture which in turn derives from its genetic model. In subservient parties, direct rule will be much easier to implement, while supportive parties need to hassle with membership ballots but without seriously risking the party’s coalition strategy. In both cases, the options are defined and defended by the party elites, but there is a clear difference in members’ involvement. The proposed relationship between organizational culture and electoral strategy is illustrated on *Graph 2*.

**Graph 2 – From organizational culture to electoral strategy**



One could argue that it is not organizational culture, but the formal rules within the party that determine whether membership ballots on certain issues are necessary or not. However, as already demonstrated in other chapters, the formal and informal rules of political parties rarely correspond to each other (see Pedersen 2010:743), and according to the genetic model, a party's history is more important in determining its behavior than what is written in its statutes, which might change over time. Without disregarding formal rules, I suggest that they are a constant reflection of how the party would like to portray itself to its supporters, but when it comes to painful decisions with potential electoral costs (Müller and Strom 1999), it is the genetic model that will prescribe the techniques to be implemented.

The following sections will first present the rules related to coalition behavior, inclusiveness, and the coalition strategy of each party, then describe the choices made by the leaders of the Five Star Movement and Podemos in coalition dilemmas and finally evaluate to what extent their choices were consistent with the model presented above.

## **5. Rules and strategy**

### **5.1. Party rules on coalition behavior**

#### ***Five Star Movement***

The Five Star Movement has for long had explicit rules that excluded all agreements with other political parties, and only allowed for case-by-case cooperation in the legislative bodies. Although this had not been regulated by the party's succinct "non-statute" (MoVimento 5 Stelle 2009), a blog post written five years later clarified Beppe Grillo's position on the matter, which was referred to as an official "rule" since then (Grillo 2014). The post details the types of actors M5S cannot coalesce with, as well as the consequences that individual candidates neglecting this prohibition are facing:

"The Five Star Movement does not make electoral alliances with people or lists, thus, by nature it cannot enter in a list with parties heading towards extinction or those camouflaged as civic lists. M5S makes agreements with the citizens who live in the territory day by day, not with local politicians. Those who while occupying a position in the institutions as elected by M5S change their minds and claim that "the

only way” is a “large, transversal civic list” and seek to achieve this objective are free to do so, but they need to take responsibility and leave their position in favor of someone who intends to advance the program of M5S” (Grillo 2014, translated by the author).

This prescription does not leave any room for neither pre-electoral nor governing coalitions and threatens dissidents with expulsion. However, one should note that the party experienced a U-turn regarding this policy in late 2017, when the prohibition of coalitions was dropped from the new statutes (MoVimento 5 Stelle 2017d), which opened the possibility of coalition agreements before the 2018 general elections. The implications of this shift are discussed below.

### *Podemos*

Podemos has included the opportunity of coalition agreements in its regulations ever since its foundation and rendered relevant decisions to be a competence of its superior all-member decision-making body, the Citizen Assembly (Podemos 2015a, 2015b). Article 3 of its statutes lays down that it is the “exclusive and non-transferable competence” of the Citizen Assembly to:

“Approve or reject any type of pact or alliance, either pre- or postelectoral, with other political forces at all levels of public administration (municipal, provincial, insular, regional or national), always given that such pacts may affect the general strategy of Podemos” (Podemos 2015b, translated by the author).

Article 30 determines more specifically the role corresponding to the party’s territorial organs in coalition agreements. According to this article, Territorial Citizen Assemblies can “decide about any type of pact or electoral alliance with other political or social forces at their territorial level”. However, these alliances cannot in any case “contradict general principles approved by Assemblies of a higher order” (ibid., translated by the author). These “general principles” are not specified further in the statute.

## 5.2. Inclusiveness

### *Five Star Movement*

M5S is highly inclusive in most of its activities, and typically grants all members the right to participate in decision making processes, however, coalition behavior had for long been an exception to this rule. Not only local members were excluded from this process, but there was also a lack of transparent and binding negotiations at higher organizational levels (in selected and non-selected party agencies). Thus, the ultimate source of the party's coalition strategy until 2017 was Beppe Grillo himself, the party's *de facto* leader, which translates into a "0" score on inclusiveness. Even though there have been local initiatives and even local ballots on coalition strategy, these were routinely neglected or overruled by Grillo. However, the new statutes adopted in late 2017 (MoVimento 5 Stelle 2017d) brought about remarkable changes in this respect too, which also made decisions about coalition agreements more inclusive. As according to the new rules all party members can vote on the party's coalition behavior, the party's inclusiveness score has changed from "0" to "4" at the end of 2017. Future coalition dilemmas will be the test of whether this shift toward more inclusiveness has been genuine or only an *ad hoc* reaction to external constraints (Harmel and Janda 1994).

### *Podemos*

In terms of the inclusiveness of internal decision-making, Podemos is close to the most inclusive end of the scale: although not all Spanish citizens could cast a vote on their coalition strategies, all party members and registered supporters ("inscritos") had a chance to express their opinion, and the deadlines for registering were rather permissive. Measured on a 0-5 scale of inclusiveness, this translates into a "4" (all members and registered supporters can vote), and it is hard to think of a party that would allow a larger pool of citizens to influence their coalition strategy. This also entails that party elites need to make use of their agenda setting power if they would like to ensure certain outcomes.

### 5.3. Electoral strategy

#### *Five Star Movement*

Since its conception, the M5S has defined itself as an “anti-party” which delineated a clear mobilization strategy. The party has aimed at addressing voters who had been disappointed with the dominant parties of the Italian party system (most notably Berlusconi’s Forza Italia and the center-left Democratic Party) and tried to create an independent pole within the system. Until 2018, the refusal of cooperation with other political parties had been one of the strongest electoral appeals of the party which might have been threatened by any coalition agreement, even at the local level (although M5S initially provided external support to the PD-led regional cabinet in Sicily, it never entered coalition governments before 2018, see Vittori 2017). This explains why the “no coalition policy” was codified and enforced by Beppe Grillo, who also excluded coalitions with civic lists in an effort toward monopolizing the anti-establishment terrain. This has also ensured the maintenance of an extremely diverse group of supporters in terms of ideological self-placement: M5S voters display notable variation in their moral attitudes, but also on traditional left-right issues, as well as voting history (Bordignon and Ceccarini 2013, Van Haute and Gauja 2015).

While the adoption of this strategy at the national level was a logical choice for a party aiming at solidifying an independent parliamentary group, the ban on coalitions has been much more difficult to implement at the municipal level where local groups enjoy some autonomy and have close ties with other political parties. Thus, most tensions related to this strategy emerged at the local level, nevertheless, the “no coalition policy” was enforced in all cases until the 2018 general elections.

#### *Podemos*

Unlike the Five Star Movement, Podemos has never had an explicit coalition strategy, but there are some implicit criteria that the party has followed throughout its past agreements. First, although Podemos has for long tried to avoid labelling itself as a left-wing party, it was obvious from the outset that they would not make coalition agreements with or provide external support to right-wing parties, especially the incumbent Popular Party (PP). Second, the “old vs. new politics” rhetoric pursued by the party also made alliances with traditional social democratic parties (namely

the PSOE) unlikely, as such agreements might have damaged the party's most important source of legitimacy, i.e. their non-affiliation to what they call "old politics". Although several interviewees mentioned that this was a debated issue in the party, they all agreed that Podemos was not going to join a coalition government headed by PSOE (which would have been the only realistic alternative for cooperation in the face of the 2015 general election results).<sup>63</sup> As the former Secretary General of Podemos Madrid explained during an interview for this project:

"The Socialist Party is not a party of change, because the only thing that changed is the Secretary General. In this sense, when Podemos offers the Socialist Party the possibility of forming a government, we are cleaning their records, we are whitewashing them."

The most divisive issue in Podemos was whether the far-left United Left (Izquierda Unida, IU) was a natural ally for them (which could easily be justified by the two parties' ideological proximity and the notable presence of ex-IU militants in Podemos) or another dangerous remnant of the "old politics" that should be avoided and marginalized. In this regard, Podemos changed its criteria from one election to the other: the two parties failed to come to an agreement both before the 2014 European elections (Rodríguez-Teruel et al. 2016:3), and the 2015 general elections because Podemos refused to forge an alliance at the national level, however, Podemos changed its strategy as repeat elections were approaching, and made an electoral pact to present a common list with IU in 2016 under the label "Unidos Podemos" (Together We Can). Thus, the electoral strategy of Podemos has been more flexible, and its only axiom seems to have been the evasion of pre-electoral agreements with PP and PSOE which the party identifies as the chief representatives of "old politics". Nevertheless, due to the ideological proximity of Podemos to the Socialist party (PSOE), they have not refrained from providing external support to the PSOE, as will be discussed more in detail below.

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<sup>63</sup> However, several interviewees described the deadlock in negotiations between Podemos and the PSOE in a way that suggested that the PSOE "had never been serious" about cooperating with them, and consequently offered conditions that were obviously unacceptable to them. From the point of view of an external observer, the same can be said about Podemos: they always seemed more interested in becoming the dominant force on the left than in supporting a PSOE-led government.

## 6. Coalition behavior in practice

### 6.1 Five Star Movement

While most theories of party activism expect members to value or even overemphasize ideology over electoral concerns (May 1973, Pedersen 2010, Scarrow 1994), the opposite seems to have occurred in M5S. Since its foundation, Beppe Grillo's party has witnessed several instances when members would have preferred to enter a coalition but were refused the right to decide by the leadership.

The most decisive of these instances was the political stalemate that followed the 2013 general elections: M5S became the largest group in parliament, and thus its contribution would have been essential to make any governing coalition viable. A poll conducted a few days before the elections showed that among 100 M5S voters, 34 wanted the party to enter a coalition government as a first option, and another 15 found coalition the most preferable option in case the party did not win a majority at the elections. Altogether, entering a coalition was supported by a higher share (49 percent) of M5S supporters than remaining in opposition (41 percent) (Bordignon and Ceccarini 2013).

Nevertheless, after the elections, Beppe Grillo refused to enter a "reparatory coalition" with center-left Partito Democratico (PD) whose then leader, Pier Luigi Bersani previously rejected Silvio Berlusconi's offer to form a grand coalition. M5S leaders "opted for a 'no coalition' alternative" instead where parliamentary affairs were to be decided "on a case-by-case basis" (Vesterbye 2013). This decision was then "codified" by Grillo in a blog post in which he wrote that

"M5S will give no confidence vote to the PD or to anyone else. It will vote in the chamber for laws which chime with its program, whoever proposes them" (Grillo 2013a, translation from Vesterbye 2013).

However, this top-down order did not coincide with M5S supporters' view: an online petition launched by one of the party's supporters (Tesi 2013) asked Grillo to reconsider his view and accept PD's coalition offer. Nearly 30 thousand individuals signed the petition during the first few hours (Davies and Wearden 2013), and around 160 thousand altogether. Pressure from members and supporters did not make Grillo change his mind, which led to the resignation of Pier Luigi

Bersani, and to the formation of a PD-led grand coalition cabinet headed by Enrico Letta after two months of failed negotiations with M5S (Donadio 2013).

An attempt to involve M5S in Ignazio Marino's municipal cabinet of Rome was rejected in a similar vein. In 2013, the freshly elected mayor from the Democratic Party (PD), Ignazio Marino offered M5S a post in his cabinet (Councillor for Security). A local M5S councilor and ex-mayoral candidate, Marcello De Vito launched an online poll in which local M5S members voted for accepting Marino's offer<sup>64</sup>, however, Beppe Grillo wrote a statement in which he disqualified the results of the poll and reminded councilors of M5S' no-coalition principle (Il Fatto Quotidiano 2013, Galanto 2013). The statement read as follows:

“Regarding some of the initiatives of the councilors of Rome, it needs to be reaffirmed that:

- the Five Star Movement does not make neither overt nor camouflaged alliances with any party, but votes on the proposals presented in its program
- the only certified database that coincides with the activists of M5S that has deliberative power is the national one that was expressed during the Parlamentarie and the Quirinarie, and thus the online vote called by De Vito has no value” (Grillo 2013b, translated by the author).

Ultimately, Grillo's rejection was accepted by the Roman councilors, and De Vito kept his seat in the Council, and eventually was nominated as a candidate for the mayor of Rome but was defeated by Virginia Raggi at online primaries (Il Fatto Quotidiano 2016a). Nevertheless, these events have contributed to a solidifying consensus regarding M5S' “no coalition policy”, which has had two major consequences.

First, local M5S representatives who would have found it preferable to contest elections in alliance with other parties started to reject such initiatives offhand. Two episodes of the 2016 municipal elections demonstrate this change of attitude. In Ravenna, various local parties (Ravenna in Comune, La Pigna) have proposed a collaboration with M5S in the form of a joint list for the municipal elections. Although the initiative was supported by local M5S representative Pietro Vandini, and local M5S supporters ran an online petition in support of the initiative, Vandini claimed that “knowing how things work in this movement, the chances of this petition getting heard are close to zero” (Ravenna Notizie 2016, translated by the author). Vandini's fears have

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<sup>64</sup> The exact results of the poll are no longer available, but the fact that a majority has supported entering Marino's cabinet was reported by several newspapers at the time (Il Fatto Quotidiano 2013, Galanto 2013).

proven reasonable: Grillo announced on his blog that the Five Star Movement decided not to contest the Ravenna municipal elections at all (Grillo 2016, *Il Fatto Quotidiano* 2016b). A coalition offer was similarly rejected in Naples, where the non-partisan incumbent mayor, Luigi di Magistris wanted to forge a pre-electoral agreement with M5S ahead of the municipal elections, but their mayoral candidate, Matteo Brambilla refused, saying that it was well known that they did not make electoral agreements with any other party (Chetta 2016).

Second, the “no coalition policy” has also contributed to a search for alternatives, above all, the incorporation of individual candidates from NGOs and civil society. In October 2015, M5S late co-founder and strategist Gianroberto Casaleggio appeared in parliament to announce a new plan to incorporate some members of civil associations into M5S’ list for the municipal elections of Rome to avoid the necessity of coalitions with other parties. According to the proposal, external candidates would also need to conform to the requirements of not being a member of any other party and not having been convicted for criminal offenses (De Carolis 2015). The same opening toward external candidates was advertised by a member of the party directorate, Luigi di Maio in Naples (*Repubblica* 2016c), which also entailed a significant loosening of the criteria for candidacy: neither the time of joining, nor being a member of M5S was required of prospective candidates (for an overview, see *Chapter 4* on candidate selection). It is difficult to assess to what extent this new recruitment strategy has contributed to the results, but M5S was highly successful at the 2016 municipal elections: they finished as close second behind the Democratic Party (PD), winning 19 of the 20 municipalities they contested, including Rome and Turin (BBC News 2016).

The 2018 general elections brought about an unexpected shift in the Five Star Movement’s coalition behavior. Although the party’s “no coalition policy” seems to have been an unappealable rule for years in the M5S, the results of the 2018 general elections confronted the party with a choice between being true to their foundations on the one hand and becoming a governing party on the other. Outperforming the results of the 2013 general elections, the Five Star Movement remained the largest single party group in the parliament with 32.68 % of the vote and 231 mandates. However, as the party already expected before going to the polls that their electoral support would not be sufficient to form a single-party government under the new “Rosatellum” electoral law (Chiaromonte and D’Alimonte 2018), a new statute was announced in late December 2017 (MoVimento 5 Stelle 2017d), which no longer included an explicit prohibition of alliances

with other parties. The abandonment of the party's "no coalition policy" was corroborated by statements from Luigi di Maio who suggested that they would be willing to cooperate with whoever wished to participate in the implementation of their program (Castigliani 2017).

Thus, the party's openness toward coalition agreements was already laid down before the elections, but it remained unclear which parties the M5S could possibly cooperate with. Although a potential coalition with the Lega was clearly numerically feasible, the M5S had a long history of explicitly denying the possibility of an agreement with the nationalist-euroskeptic far right party (L'Espresso 2018), including statements from Beppe Grillo and other high-profile party representatives. In fact, the coalition agreement between Lega and the Five Star Movement only materialized after 70 days of negotiations, during which several different constellations had been proposed, including a coalition between the M5S and the Democratic Party (PD) of Matteo Renzi. Once the details of the agreement with Lega had been finalized, the Five Star Movement subjected the ratification of the "contract" to a membership vote which took place on the 18 May 2018. As reported by the party's official webpage (Il Blog delle Stelle 2018), 44,796 members participated in the ballot, 94% of whom voted in support of the alliance with the Lega. Besides ratifying the governing coalition, the agreement (MoVimento 5 Stelle – Lega 2018) also pledged the implementation of some symbolic measures for the Five Star Movement, including the revision of budgetary constraints imposed by the European Commission, and the reconciliation of vaccination policies with the right to education. Despite the inclusion of these points in the agreement, the overwhelming support of M5S members was still surprising considering that even days before the election, *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, a newspaper with close ties to the Five Star Movement published articles which argued that an alliance between the two parties was "impossible" (Giaracuni 2018), or that it would "bring the Movement onto the edge of extinction" (Benesperi 2018). The coalition also meant the victory of the "pragmatist" faction of the party over "purists" who would have never agreed on such cooperation. However, one needs to note that although the party leadership campaigned in favor of the coalition extensively, they no longer used techniques aimed at directly influencing the outcome. Thus, with the introduction of a membership ballot on coalitions, the M5S shifted from "direct rule" to "agenda-setting" techniques, which might also indicate a shift in the organizational culture of the party.

## 6.2 Electoral alliances in Podemos

As the excerpts from the party statutes detailed above have shown, the official party regulations of Podemos prescribe that all decisions regarding coalition agreements need to be approved by the Citizen Assembly at the corresponding (municipal, regional or state) administrative level. However, seeing the necessity of building electoral alliances, especially in regions where nationalist/secessionist parties prevail (see Rodríguez-Teruel et al. 2016 on the party's multi-level strategy), Podemos' leadership opted for a membership-approved alternative for circumventing their own regulations. At the primaries for the 2015 general elections, besides voting for candidates, registered party supporters (“inscritos”) were also given an opportunity to express their opinion on Podemos' electoral strategy. The question wording was the following:

“Do you accept that the Citizen Council of Podemos, in favor of moving forward in the construction of a popular and civic list of candidates, establish agreements with different political and civil society actors, as long as 1) the agreements are established on a territorial level (never superior to the autonomous communities); 2) they always keep the logo and the name of Podemos in the first place on the ballot sheet even if this implies contesting the general elections in some territories in the form of an alliance (Podemos-X)?” (Podemos 2015c, translated by the author).

A large majority of Podemos' sympathizers supported the proposal (84.63%), although participation was modest (44.792 votes, slightly more than 10 percent of the number of registered supporters). Commentators criticized the party ballot because it left “little margin for those critical about the electoral strategy of the party's hard core, as it does not even raise the possibility of making alliances in the whole territory” (Manetto 2015b). Moreover, it did not specify the parties with which Podemos could build alliances, which left members with little control over the content of actual agreements and the composition of electoral coalitions.

The approval of members has paved the way for alliances for the general elections of 2015, which have indeed been crucial for the electoral strategy of Podemos which rested on respecting the “plurinational” character of Spain, i.e. not concurring left-nationalist parties in their linguistically distinct historic communities (Rodríguez-Teruel et al. 2016). However, local and regional alliances had already been forged before, starting with the municipal elections of 24 May 2015. As Podemos decided not to present its own lists of candidates at the municipal elections (Cortizo 2014), this contest was the laboratory for finding a “winning formula” of cooperation with other political forces, which was at this point limited to social movements, local associations and small (mostly

green) parties. This formula led to the creation of alliances in the two largest cities, Madrid (Ahora Madrid) and Barcelona (Barcelona en Común), which gave Podemos “the main credit for the victories despite not formally running” (Rodríguez-Teruel 2016:7). The Citizen Assembly at the national level decided in October 2014 to contest regional elections with independent party lists<sup>65</sup> (Aroca 2014), a strategy that in the majority of constituencies yielded better results than the municipal alliances within the same constituencies (with the notable exception of Madrid, for an analysis of the results see Piedras de Papel 2015).

Members’ approval also empowered the party’s national leadership to negotiate alliances for the 2015 general elections. These negotiations took place in four different electoral arenas: at the regional level in Catalonia, Galicia and Valencia, and also at the national level with the United Left (Izquierda Unida, IU), an umbrella organization that incorporates several political parties from the far left of the political spectrum. In the pre-electoral phase, negotiations with IU broke down after several attempts, thus there was no need for a membership ballot to be held (which would have only been necessary if the two parties made an agreement at the national level). Podemos proposed the inclusion of some of IU’s candidates (including party leader Alberto Garzón) on its own lists, however, that was not only rejected by Garzón, but it would have also conflicted with the results of Podemos’ own primaries held before (Riveiro 2015a). In any case, a pact would have been possible in case Podemos had been ready to subject this decision to a membership vote. However, it decided to drop this option and opted for regional alliances instead that in two communities (Catalonia and Galicia) also involved IU’s regional branches (Riveiro 2015b).

Instead of a national pact, regional pre-electoral alliances have been formed in three communities (Catalonia, Galicia and Valencia), whose exact composition and objectives are summarized in *Table 3*. In addition to the conditions included in *Table 3*, the agreement in Valencia also fixed the allocation of places on the lists of candidates: the list of Valencia and Castellón for the Congress was to be headed by Compromís, while that of Alicante was led by Podemos. The allocation of

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<sup>65</sup> Although Podemos ran independent party lists for the regional elections, it provided external support to the formation of PSOE-led governments in Extremadura, Castilla-La Mancha, Aragón, Asturias, the Balearic Islands, the Valencian Community and Cantabria (see Vittori 2017:329).

places on the lists for the Senate were just the inverse: Podemos led the lists for Alicante and Valencia, while Compromís obtained the first position for Castellón (El Diario 2015).

**Table 3 – Podemos’ regional alliances before the 2015 general elections**

	<b>Catalonia</b>	<b>Galicia</b>	<b>Valencia</b>
<b>Date pact was made</b>	6 November, 2015	6 November, 2015	6 November, 2015
<b>Name of the alliance</b>	En Comú Podem	En Marea	Compromís-Podemos-És el moment
<b>Members</b>	Barcelona en Comú, ICV (Iniciativa per Catalunya Verds), EUiA (Esquerra Unida i Alternativa), Equo	Podemos, Anova, Esquerda Unida, Mare Atlántica, Compostela Aberta, Ferrol en Común, Marea de Vigo, Ourense en Común, Encontro por unha Marea Galega	el Bloc, Iniciativa del Poble Valencià, Verds Equo del País Valencià, Compromís, Podemos
<b>Objective</b>	Referendum on Catalonia’s independence	Own group in the parliament	Own group in the parliament
<b>Participation of each party</b>	N/A	N/A	50% Podemos, 30% El Bloc, 17,5% Iniciativa del Poble Valencià, 2,5% Equo

Several member organizations of these alliances held their own ballots about whether or not to join the coalition, unlike Podemos, whose members approved all such agreements beforehand at their primaries. Barcelona en Comú made this decision at a plenary meeting where 81% of participants (263 individuals) approved joining En Comú Podem (Font 2015). Compromís subjected the decision to an online vote on two occasions: in September 2015, 75% of the militants (1.133 members, 51% of the census) rejected the alliance with Podemos (Maroto 2015). However, negotiations continued after this result, with El Bloc insisting on forming a group that would represent Valencia in parliament on the one hand and including more parties with a pure Valencian background on the other (in order to avoid that Podemos dilute the image of Compromís). As these conditions were accepted by Podemos, the leader of El Bloc started campaigning for an agreement which yielded just the opposite result in a repeated online vote in early November: at this point in time, 75.6% of the participants supported the alliance, with a participation rate of 42% (Enguix 2015). In Galicia, Podemos presented candidates already selected at its own primaries, while its partners in the alliance were supposed to select their candidates using the same process. However,

in practice, all groups presented closed lists, and places on the final list were distributed based on the electoral agreement: Podemos received the first place in A Coruña, Esquerra Unida the second, and Anova was granted the first place in Pontevedra (Pardo 2015). No party ballots were held about joining the alliance in Galicia.

Following the 2015 December general elections in Spain, a political deadlock occurred: although the incumbent Popular Party (PP) won the elections, its majority in parliament was insufficient for the formation of a new government which was tied to an absolute majority vote in parliament. PP's seat share was also insufficient in combination with its most likely coalition partner, the young center-right Ciudadanos. Thus, incumbent Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy decided not to stand for a vote in parliament at all, which obliged King Felipe VI to hand the right of initiative to the leader of the second most voted Socialist Party (PSOE), Pedro Sánchez. The first four months of 2016 were a period of intense negotiations in Spain in which Podemos played a decisive role: although its support alone would not have been enough for the formation of a PSOE-led government, in conjunction with the United Left (IU) and some of the nationalist parties it could have contributed to an alternative that looked more viable than any other, let alone a PP-PSOE grand coalition that was very unlikely from the outset.

One of the most relevant chains of events for the purposes of this chapter is the one that led Podemos refuse to support the potential government of Pedro Sánchez. More specifically, it is crucial to see when (at which phase of the negotiations) party supporters were given a chance to express their views on the matter, and what alternatives were offered to them, i.e. the extent to which they were able to influence the outcome of the process.

The negotiations between Podemos and PSOE can be divided into three main periods. The first period started in January 2016 with Podemos leader Pablo Iglesias' offer to support a government presided by Pedro Sánchez in case he was given the post of the vice president and IU leader Alberto Garzón would also get a position in his cabinet (Riveiro 2016a). An extended version of this proposal was presented in a hundred-page document in February, with several points that clearly clashed with the program of the socialists, including a referendum on the independence of Catalonia (Podemos 2016). The second period started with PSOE's exclusive pact with Ciudadanos, which already foreshadowed that Podemos would not support Sánchez' appointment in parliament. This rejection materialized during the first week of March, when Sánchez failed to

receive majority support in parliament in two successive rounds of vote<sup>66</sup> (Garea 2016). The third period was characterized by the breakdown of negotiations and the freezing of the stalemate that made recall elections necessary (Simón 2016).

Podemos asked its membership about whether they would support a government led by Pedro Sánchez only in this third phase, when the prospect of a viable coalition government had already faded. The party ballot took place from 14 to 16 April, and the party's supporters who registered before 2 April could express their opinions on the following two questions:

1. Would you like to have a government based on the pact of Rivera [the leader of Ciudadanos – the author] and Sánchez?
2. Do you agree with the proposal of a government of change that Podemos, En Comú and En Marea defend? (webpage archived from [podemos.info](http://podemos.info), translated by the author)

The results mirrored the preferences of the party leadership regarding both issues: 88.23% (131.561 votes) rejected the PSOE-Ciudadanos pact which they mobilized against, and 91.79% (136.291 votes) supported the alternative government of Podemos and its partners. However, as I will argue below, the timing of the ballot as well as question wording had an impact on this outcome. Participation was unexpectedly high, especially if we take Podemos' recalibrated "active census" (204.844)<sup>67</sup> as a point of reference as opposed to its total census (393.538) at the time. Using the previous figure, participation was near 73%, or 38% of the total membership.

After PSOE's government formation initiatives failed and repeat elections became inevitable, Podemos quickly announced its willingness to relaunch coalition talks with IU (Manetto and Blas 2016a). This materialized in a membership ballot on an alliance with IU on 10-11 May. Supporters could express their views on the following question:

"Do you agree that Podemos contest the second round of elections on 26 June in electoral alliance with Izquierda Unida, Equo and other forces that opt for a real change in this historical moment, and that it repeat under the same terms as it did on 20 December last year in the alliances En Comú Podem in Catalonia, En Marea in Galicia and Compromís-Podemos-#ÉsElMoment in Valencia?" (webpage archived from [podemos.info](http://podemos.info), translated by the author)

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<sup>66</sup> In the first round, he received 130 in support, in the second round, 131, while 219 deputies rejected his government offer in both rounds. 176 votes would have been necessary to form a majority.

<sup>67</sup> The "active census" was defined as "individuals who have entered the participatory website at least once during the past year". During my fieldwork, various interviewees mentioned that the census was "inflated" and "unrealistic"; the introduction of an "active census" was a response to that problem.

This ballot yielded even more homogenous results: more than 98% of the 144.540 voters supported the alliance. Again, it is worth noting that the two questions were compiled into one: there was no option of supporting a coalition with IU but not with regional parties, or the other way around. The question was also subjected to membership vote in IU a week before. IU members and sympathizers were asked the following question: “Do you approve an electoral coalition with Podemos and other forces facing the elections of 26 June?” (Izquierda Unida 2016, translated by the author). 87.8% of IU members and sympathizers (23.109 votes) supported the coalition, 10.5% abstained and 1.6% rejected it with a participation rate of approximately 30% (Manetto and Blas 2016b).

The second most relevant series of events for evaluating the coalition behavior of Podemos concerns the motion of no confidence against the cabinet of Mariano Rajoy, and the successive government formation of the Socialist (PSOE) Pedro Sánchez with the external support of Podemos in June 2018. After Podemos presented a no confidence motion against Rajoy which failed in 2017 due to lack of support from the Socialists (Cortizo 2017), the party faced a hard choice regarding whether they should support another attempt from the PSOE a year later. Although media announcements from the party’s leading figures, including Iglesias, already foreshadowed that Podemos would vote in favor of the motion, the party followed its internal rules and subjected the decision to a membership ballot. Party members were invited to answer the following question:

“Do you support that Podemos vote in favor of a no confidence motion to oust PP and Mariano Rajoy from the government?” (Europa Press 2018, translated by the author)

The membership ballot yielded an almost unanimous result: 98.94 % of participants voted in favor of the proposal, with the participation of more than 75 thousand members. However, one should note that as highlighted by several press reports (e.g. RTVE 2018), Iglesias already assured PSOE about the support of his party, however, he added that members had “the last word” on the issue (ibid.). At the same time, the question they were asked failed to emphasize that the decision was in fact about a constructive motion of no confidence, i.e. by voting “Yes”, party members did not only support “ousting PP and Mariano Rajoy” from the government, but the formation of a Socialist cabinet led by Pedro Sánchez as well. It is also worth emphasizing that the overwhelming support of Podemos members and leadership alike was driven by the expectation that the

prominents of the party would get a government portfolio in the new cabinet, which failed to materialize, and led to the reconstruction of their role as a “tough opposition” to the Socialists (El Diario 2018).

## **7. Correspondence to the causal model**

As seen in the historical narrative presented above, the two parties chose radically different paths with regards to coalition behavior, even though they had similar ambitions regarding the place they wished to occupy within their respective national party systems. In this section, I reconstruct these choices based on the causal model presented at the beginning of this chapter to see what extent the techniques implemented by each party were consistent with their genetic model.

As the Five Star Movement is very close to the ideal type of a pure charismatic party in which the founder and “spokesman” of the party, Beppe Grillo dominated all important decisions until the end of 2017, it is easy to see how a subservient organizational culture might have developed. Dissidents were expelled on a regular basis (Lanzone 2015, Tronconi 2015) and defections were also common, thus, those who stayed in the party were expected to be loyal and not to question Grillo’s authority. In such a subservient organizational culture, it seems entirely legitimate to exclude coalition strategy from the range of questions that are to be decided by members, after all, the rejection of all other political parties has also been an integral part of the party’s genetic model. From this point of departure, it follows that membership ballots on coalition agreements were not necessary.

However, local organizations are also an essential building block of M5S which has a stratarchical structure (Carty 2004), thus, it is also predictable that local groups will resent any restriction of their autonomy. At the same time, as their ultimate belonging to the organization derived from Grillo (who was the owner of the name and the logo until late 2017), they were prone to accept sanctions from the center as long as they could enjoy the benefits of the common “brand”. Thus, the relationship between local organizations and the center resembled a mutual show of force in which local groups launched their own initiatives but the results of these were routinely neglected by the center. The party elite used a combination of the techniques mentioned in the beginning: in the case of bottom-up petitions, it opted for neglecting them altogether (as petitions do not have any recognized function within the party), while in the case of local membership ballots, it declared

that the results of these ballots were not binding (as they were not conducted through the party's formally recognized national platform) which was in most cases accompanied by a reminder on the party's "no coalition policy".

Although Podemos also came to being as a result of top-down mobilization by a narrow group of left-wing academics based at the Complutense University of Madrid (Rodon and Hierro 2016), it also adopted some organizational features from the *Indignados* (or 15-M) movement that was based on so called "circles", i.e. small groups which facilitated horizontal discussions among members (Rodríguez-Teruel et al. 2016). This created a certain ambivalence in the party's genetic model: first, from the very beginning, the party had a visible "natural" leader who was widely known as a political commentator from several TV programs, at the same time, the party tried to rely on the participatory ethos of the *Indignados* movement to channel the discontent of young voters who had already been mobilized in grassroots protests. Thus, from the start, the party experienced "a tension between participation (the party's main organisational principle) and centralisation" (Rodríguez-Teruel et al. 2016:12). This has led to the interesting practice of "managed participation" (see Aylott and Bolin 2017): although it was clear that members need to be involved in all important decisions, the party elite laid down some cornerstones and made sure that these were not going to be affected by membership ballots.

With regards to coalition behavior, this cornerstone was the principle of not offering explicit pre-electoral support to and not sharing governmental responsibility with the PSOE and the PP, which were seen as the incarnations of "old politics". However, post-electoral agreements to oust the incumbent PP were reached in five regions, and in four of these, Podemos gave external support to governments that included the PSOE (although it did not join the cabinet in any case) (Rodon and Hierro 2016:348-9). Nevertheless, a national level pre-electoral coalition with the socialists would have been suicidal to Podemos in terms of solidifying its own place within the Spanish party system. Thus, whenever members were given a chance to influence the party's coalition behavior, this chance was either given too late, or the options were defined too broadly or in combination with other options that were not necessarily interrelated. At the same time, even if internal divisions among the party's executive bodies existed, they were not revealed, and the party elite campaigned for one alternative in all cases. Thus, members could easily interpret the "other" option as a clear protest vote against the party leadership, which few of them utilized (most probably

those who were disillusioned with the official party line became passive members and did not participate in these ballots).

Table 4 shows the organizational features that determine parties' coalition behavior, while Table 5 summarizes the coalition dilemmas of the two parties within the observed period and the choices they made with regards to the selection of techniques to implement the party's coalition strategy.

**Table 4 – Organizational features that determine coalition behavior**

	Genetic model	Organizational culture	Electoral strategy	Membership ballots on coalitions
<b>Five Star Movement</b>	Pure charismatic	Subservient	No coalition with any party	No (only local, <sup>68</sup> invalid)
<b>Podemos</b>	Mixed/entrepreneurial-issue	Supportive	No pre-electoral coalition with PP and PSOE	Yes (managed)

**Table 5 – The two parties' coalition strategies and the techniques to implement them**

	Potential coalition partner	Technique implemented	Score (Agenda Setting Index, Direct Rule Index, 0-6)	Outcome
<b>Five Star Movement</b>	Partito Democratico (2013)	Monopolizing “the rules of the game” Neglecting dissent	6	No coalition
	Partito Democratico (Rome, municipal, 2013)	Monopolizing “the rules of the game” Overruling lower level decisions	6	No coalition
	Ravenna in Comune, La Pigna (Ravenna, municipal, 2016)	Neglecting dissent	4	No coalition
	Lega (general elections, 2018)	Explicit support <sup>69</sup>	1	Coalition
<b>Podemos</b>	Regional alliances for the 2015 general elections	Explicit support Not all combinations possible	2	All future coalitions supported (“blank cheque”)
	PSOE (2016)	Explicit support	4	No coalition

<sup>68</sup> As discussed above, an unexpected change in the statutes of the Five Star Movement in late 2017 rendered coalition agreements acceptable, which contributed to a coalition agreement with Lega after the 2018 general elections. Thus, the qualifications indicated in this table only refer to the preceding (2013-2017) period.

<sup>69</sup> The sudden and unexpected shift of the M5S towards accepting the possibility of coalition agreements and the corresponding membership ballots also changed the techniques employed by the party leadership, resulting in a parallel shift from *direct rule* to *agenda-setting* techniques.

		Not all options available Change in external circumstances Biased question wording		
	Izquierda Unida (2016)	Explicit support Change in external circumstances Not all options available No chance to combine options Biased question wording	5	Coalition
	PSOE (no confidence vote, 2018)	Explicit support Biased question wording Not all options available	3	External support to government formation

As seen in the tables above, both parties were successful in implementing their core electoral strategies, and members had little chance to steer coalition talks in the opposite direction. However, in most cases, Podemos still adopted more democratic methods to determine its coalition behavior, even though an overwhelming majority of its members supported the official party line. One potential explanation is that Podemos is much more homogeneous ideologically (Vidal 2015), which already reduces the risks of membership ballots. Another explanation is that although Podemos' started as a top-down project, its statutes ensure that the members of its executive bodies, including the party leader can be replaced by the membership, thus their authority is not externally imposed. None of these conditions hold in M5S which for long had a self-appointed informal leader whose role was unquestionable, and an extremely diverse membership with diametrically opposed ideological views and a common anti-establishment sentiment. In sum, the two parties' recent coalition history shows that the techniques they chose to implement their coalition strategy were consistent with their organizational culture, which was determined by their genetic models. At the same time, the Five Star Movement's unexpected shift toward accepting coalition agreements and making them subject to a membership ballot might also reflect more subtle changes in their organizational culture which suggest that a purely charismatic party model built on a subservient membership base might not be sustainable on the long run (Panebianco 1988).

In terms of coalition behavior's contribution to intra-party democracy, the IPD index (Rahat and Shapira 2017) only contains one item that is relevant from this aspect:

*“4.2 Do the party’s institutions do the following? B, Approve whether the party joins or leaves the coalition (3p)” (Rahat and Shapira 2017:105)*

Using this index, the two parties represent extreme positions: the Five Star Movement scores “0”<sup>70</sup>, while the fact that membership ballots were held in Podemos already entitles it to the maximum score of “3”. However, as the indicators presented above have shown, the differences between the two parties’ coalition behavior are much subtler and are of a qualitative rather than a quantitative nature. Rather than a matter of intensity, the two parties have used completely different techniques to implement their coalition strategy, which amount to the ideal types of “direct rule” vs. “agenda-setting”.

## **8. Conclusion**

This chapter has aimed to make two core contributions. First, it tried to demonstrate that even if political parties have a participatory ethos and emphasize inclusiveness in their decision-making, they can use certain techniques to minimize members’ influence on their coalition behavior, which is a crucial part of their electoral strategy. Second, the chapter proposed a causal model which explains party choices regarding the selected techniques as a function of their organizational culture which derives from their “genetic model” (Panebianco 1988). The empirical data has confirmed that the two party’s choices were consistent with their organizational culture, in other words, it explains why the two parties differ so much in the implementation of their coalition strategy.

Although the observed period is still short, and the number of cases is low, the finding that organizational culture affects the way how parties implement their coalition strategy and the extent to which they allow their members to influence it is expected to hold in other parties too, especially in those that adopt inclusive decision-making processes. As membership ballots on coalitions are not widespread, pairwise or party system-based comparative case studies seem more feasible than cross-national studies to expand our knowledge on the relationship between intra-party dynamics and coalition behavior.

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<sup>70</sup> Taking temporal change into account, the Five Star Movement could be assigned two different scores: “0” for the 2013-2017 period, and “3” for 2018.

# Chapter 7 – A view from within: Members’ evaluation of participatory opportunities

“The political party is constantly plagued by the need to reconcile two divergent goals: group solidarity (conscious selection of members) and social representation (unrestricted entry in the organisation).” (Eldersveld 1964:47)

## 1. Introduction

Despite the reluctance of party elites to disclose sensitive data or to reveal information that might contradict official party narratives, membership surveys have been widely used in research on party organizations, especially in the United Kingdom and Ireland (Gallagher and Marsh 2002, Seyd 1999, Seyd and Whiteley 2004), but also in cross-national research projects (MAPP, Van Haute and Gauja 2015). Although such research is greatly facilitated by having access to a party’s official membership database (as in Seyd 1992, 1999, Whiteley and Seyd 2000), this is a regrettably rare scenario which requires an extremely high level of mutual confidence between researchers and the party administration. As anti-establishment parties are generally hostile toward academia which they often interpret as part of the “caste”, building such confidence with them would require engagement in party activities to an extent which would compromise the neutrality of scientific research.

Thus, I chose not to portray myself as an ideologically committed ally, rather as a neutral observer who is genuinely interested in the functioning of party organizations. This position has allowed me to keep the necessary intellectual distance from the subjects of my study, at the same time, it reduced my chances of getting access to their national census. However, the elite interviews also allowed me to establish a network of potential allies who perceived me as an outsider without any direct political interest in their project, which perception was arguably strengthened by me coming from another region (CEE), not reporting to the media, and not being a native speaker of the

language of my cases. These factors made it substantially easier for me to navigate a field that is generally hostile toward academia.<sup>71</sup>

The following sections will first describe how I gained access to certain organizational branches, the strategy I followed to achieve a representative sample, and what technical difficulties I encountered in the process. However, before discussing the methodological aspects of the membership survey, I elaborate on the theoretical rationale behind conducting a membership survey in the first place, and the findings I expected to derive from it. Two broader theoretical approaches guided the elaboration of the membership survey. First, as part of an established tradition in party organization research, the survey sought to explore how active party members were, and in which party activities they participated the most, i.e. to explore the *quantitative* aspects of party activism, (as e.g. in Van Haute and Gauja 2015, Verba et al. 1995). Although participation rates for membership ballots are generally publicly available, the same does not apply to lower-level organizational meetings, assemblies, canvassing, voluntary work etc., thus participation in these activities can only be measured indirectly through membership and party elite surveys. The second, more innovative aspect that the survey addressed refers to the *qualitative* evaluations of party activism, which can be divided into two parts: 1. perceptions about the personal efficacy of party members understood as their perceived influence over intra-party decisions (*Does my opinion count?*), 2. perceptions about the party as an instrument of social cohesion and as a source of collective identity (*Do I belong here?*).

With regards to the first of these questions, we can formulate some preliminary hypotheses based on the findings presented throughout the previous chapters. Although members are granted an opportunity to participate in most intra-party decisions, their choices are often structured and managed by the party elites, thus their *de facto* influence is much weaker than party slogans suggest. Considering that the members of both parties were mostly recruited from disillusioned voters, we may assume that they should be sensitive toward hierarchization and should attribute negative intra-party democracy scores to their parties (*HI*), even though this should be less pronounced in the Five Star Movement which has a “subservient culture” in which leader-centrism is tolerated to a certain extent. Second, as both parties rely on parallel online and offline structures

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<sup>71</sup> Although this applies to a lesser extent to Podemos whose founders are deeply embedded in academia, the fact of having come from what is considered a “liberal” institution already raised suspicion in an intellectual circle rooted in traditional (post)-Marxist ideology.

that are often disconnected from each other, we should expect that those who view the party primarily as a force of social cohesion should prioritize offline meetings over online plebiscitary practices (*H2*) as the latter are most often associated with individualistic, atomized participation (Faucher 2015), and weak individual engagement (Bolleyer et al. 2015, Gibson and Cantijoch 2013). The following section introduces the design of the membership survey, and choices regarding its distribution.

## 2. Data collection strategy and related challenges

The questionnaire for the membership survey (see the questionnaire in *Appendix H*) was designed to collect information regarding three broad areas.<sup>72</sup> The first block of questions included standard demographic variables such as age, gender, and residence (region), as well as the extent to which respondents were confident in using the Internet. This latter aspect is not only important insofar as the “digital divide” (Schlozman et al. 2010:489-490) is concerned, but also because most participatory activities in these parties take place online. The second group of questions referred to members’ participation in specific activities, the time they devoted to party activism, and an expression of which party activities they found most important. The third block asked respondents about their perceived influence in different aspects of intra-party decision-making, their evaluation of intra-party democracy (IPD), as well as about their relationship with party representatives, focusing on perceptions of accountability and responsiveness. The last question asked members to indicate any aspect of the functioning of the party organization that they would like to reform. The survey was designed and distributed with the use of the Qualtrics online platform, which also allowed for a preliminary analysis of the results. While an online survey certainly excludes some groups of respondents, most notably older citizens, this was an optimal choice for this study both in terms of feasibility, as well as considering that participation in these parties is an essentially online experience.

With regards to the composition of the sample, some hard choices had to be made, along with some technical challenges to overcome. The first of these choices referred to whether I should

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<sup>72</sup> The order of the questions was also based on these thematic blocks, however, some elements were swapped between the second and the third block to avoid too many subsequent questions that use a Likert-scale.

insist on getting access to the parties' own membership census or accept the unfeasibility of this option and reach party activists through informal channels. After multiple failed attempts in both parties, I gave up on the first option, and started building a contact list of local organizations to whom I sent an electronic invitation to distribute the survey among their activists. This choice implied several tradeoffs. First, as membership in a local organization is not a prerequisite of membership in the national party in any of our cases, by focusing on local organizations one excludes party subscribers who do not participate locally, only in national ballots. This entails that those who were included in the sample might display higher levels of engagement than a typical member who only participates online. At the same time, the exclusion of passive or weakly engaged members also entails that those who were included in the sample might have a more firsthand experience of intra-party conflicts emanating from tensions between local and national organizations, and thus their perceptions are more relevant. Second, as mentioned in *Chapter 5*, “offline” activists within the same organization tend to be significantly older than their “online” peers, which according to the vast majority of empirical studies on value change (Dalton and Welzel 2014, Inglehart 1990, Inglehart and Welzel 2010, Norris 2011) would also imply that they are less critical when it comes to evaluating the performance of democratic institutions, in this case their own party. This entails that the activists included in our survey are expected to be older and less critical than the mean as they are also active “offline”.<sup>73</sup> However, these two setbacks are arguably offset by the fact that focusing on local organizations provides a much higher level of control over the composition of our sample in the sense that members in local organizations are by definition party activists, unlike social media followers and other publicly accessible groups that are loosely affiliated with these parties. Thus, our sample is expected to be more committed, older and less critical than the average of all party members in both cases.

Contacting local organizations was a remarkably different venture across the two parties which also required different strategies. While the contact details of all registered local organizations (Círculos) can be accessed through the national party webpage of Podemos, the Five Star Movement does not share such information on their national webpage. Nevertheless, this does not mean that contact details cannot be accessed at all: some regional as well as municipal chapters

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<sup>73</sup> As most party activities in these parties are by definition online, the share of those activists who only participate in offline activities is negligible. It is more realistic to assume that while most activists will only vote online, the more committed and older members will also join local organizations and participate in local activism, thus supporting the “integration hypothesis” of online and offline political activities (Gibson and Cantijoch 2013).

have their own official webpages with contact details (even though they are not recognized as formal party units), and most local groups are still based on the Meetup.com platform (although some started using alternative platforms, such as Airesis in the case of Basilicata). Thus, whereas local units in Podemos could be easily accessed in email, contacting M5S local groups required a twofold strategy of contacting “official” party accounts where available, and writing personal messages to Meetup “organizers”<sup>74</sup> in all other cases. The latter was especially challenging as Meetup.com only allows other members of the Meetup community to contact organizers. Moreover, all messages are filtered, and the ones that are not “unique”, “personal”, or “human” enough are automatically marked as spam.<sup>75</sup> Thus, in order to contact Meetup organizers, I signed up as a member of the Meetup group in the Italian town I resided (Campi Bisenzio) and tried to contact Meetup organizers from this account<sup>76</sup>, using as informal language and personalized messages as possible. Even in this role it was difficult to pass Meetup’s spam filters, nevertheless this strategy along with contacting “formal” local organizations proved to be successful.

With regards to the territorial representativeness of the sample, I aimed to involve all administrative regions in both countries by first contacting local organizations in regional, then in provincial capitals. I started sending invitations on October 31, 2017 in several waves until the end of November to minimize the risk of a hostile reaction from the central party administration or an attempt to block my survey. In fact, I have not received any hostile reactions, however, the share of those who replied to my messages was very low (10%). Nevertheless, the results indicated that a substantially higher proportion of recipients forwarded my invitation, which has allowed me to achieve an acceptable degree of representativeness (see *Figures 2 and 3* below). One month after the initial round of invitations, I sent a reminder to those who did not respond. Two weeks later, I registered the results collected thus far, and assembled a new contact list for the regions that were missing or underrepresented in the sample, also including small municipalities near regional and provincial capitals where local organizations failed to respond. This was followed by another

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<sup>74</sup> In the terminology of the Meetup platform, group administrators are called “organizers” and have special rights such as adding new members and excluding old ones. The role of Meetup organizers in the M5S varies across Meetups, which has caused tensions in several local groups (see Lanzone 2015).

<sup>75</sup> These filters are so strict that my first account was even blocked after having sent five messages with a similar text.

<sup>76</sup> To avoid ethical dilemmas and intellectual dishonesty, I introduced myself from the start as a Doctoral Student who lived and studied in Italy for a short period and was doing research on the Five Star Movement. Thus, I only used the registration as a technical shortcut to be able to send messages to organizers, but I did not pretend to be an M5S activist.

round of reminders which substantially improved the geographical coverage of my sample. I closed the survey on February 12, 2018, after having collected 187 responses from the Five Star Movement, and 176 from Podemos. Although another membership survey of the Five Star Movement generated a higher number (628) of responses (Lanzone 2015), I regard my data collection efforts as a success as the questions included in my survey battery were much more sensitive as they allowed for open criticism toward the party leadership, thus the likelihood of rejection or non-response was much higher. Obviously, these samples are not representative of the whole membership of these two parties, however, they provide a sufficiently diverse snapshot of local activists to identify some general trends and perceptions among the rank-and-file.

### **3. Findings**

The following sections report the findings of the survey divided into five sections. The first section discusses the demographic variables included in the survey, and the extent to which the results are representative of the whole population of M5S and Podemos members. The second part introduces the distribution of participation among different party activities, and the ranking of activities based on their perceived importance. This is followed by presenting the results of items regarding members' perceived influence, intra-party democracy, responsiveness, and accountability, as well as a section that analyzes the contribution of several individual-level variables to evaluations of intra-party democracy. The final section presents patterns in members' demands for organizational reform as expressed in the open-ended question.

#### **3.1 Demographic variables**

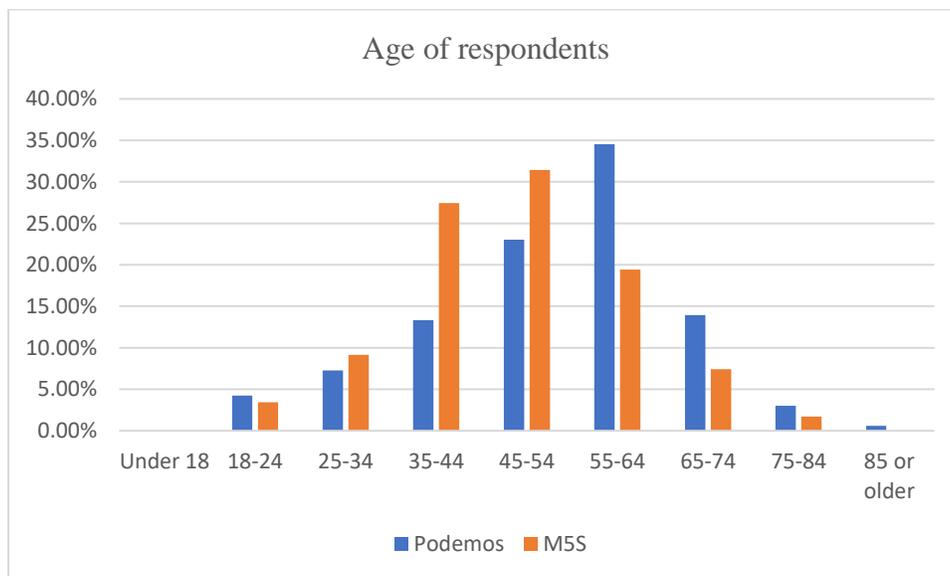
Although it could be expected that party members who are active in a local organization would be older than the average party member, the extent to which middle-aged and older respondents dominate our sample is still surprising. As already mentioned in *Chapter 5*, the distinction between online and offline activists is widely acknowledged in Podemos:

“In Podemos, there are two organizations in one. The physical organization, which meets every week in a circle, is an organization of middle-aged and old people, from 40-45 and above that. (...)

And then there is the digital organization of those below 35, whose participation is all in social networks, Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, Telegram, and Internet as such. They are two in one.”  
(Former Secretary General of Podemos Madrid)

The data displayed on *Figure 1* match this observation closely: more than half (57.6 %) of Podemos respondents were over 45, and respondents between 55 and 64 were the largest single age group (34.55 %) in the sample. Compared to this distribution, our sample of M5S activists was considerably younger by approximately 10 years on average, with middle-aged (35-54) respondents dominating the sample (58.58 %), however, the share of young (below 35) activists was not considerably higher than in Podemos (12.57 vs. 11.51 %). These results seem to clash with general expectations regarding the activist profile of these parties which are most often associated with a young electorate (e.g. Rodríguez-Teruel et al. 2016:16, Vidal 2015). Although the average M5S activist in our sample is slightly younger than in traditional Italian parties<sup>77</sup> (see Van Haute and Gauja 2015:128), this is certainly not the case in Podemos which mirrors conventional party membership patterns (ibid., p. 28).

**Figure 1 – The age of party membership survey respondents\***



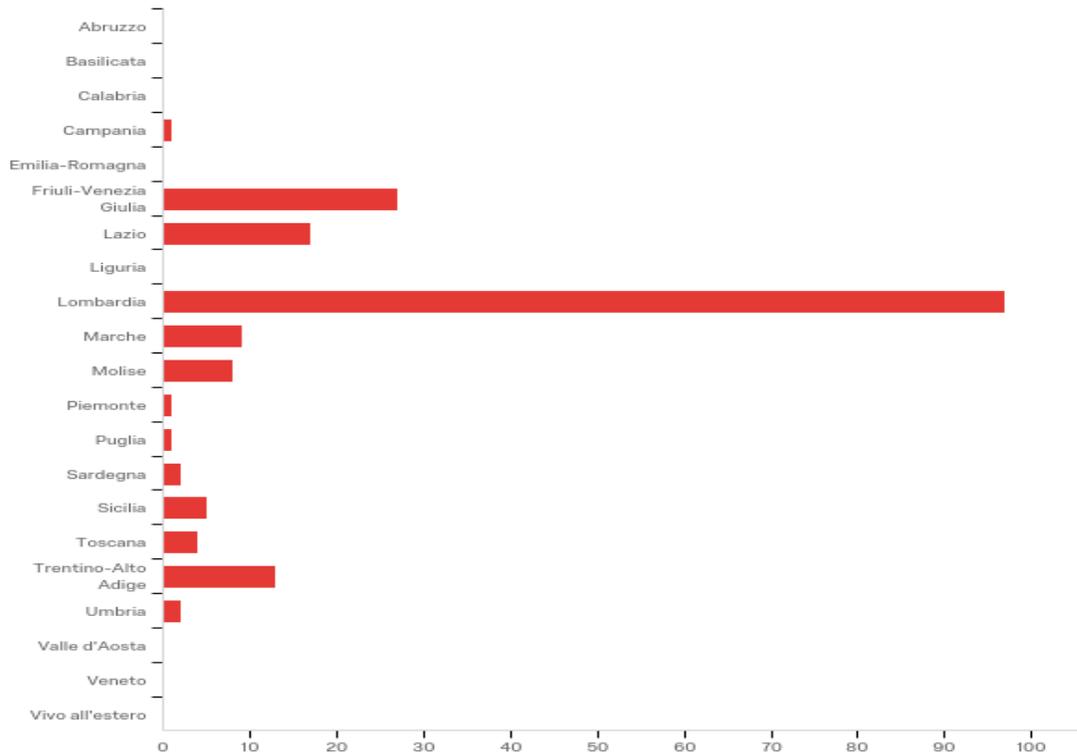
\*Source: Membership survey conducted by the author

<sup>77</sup> According to data from the Members & Activists of Political Parties (MAPP), the average M5S member was 41.4 years old, more than ten years younger than a typical PD member (53.3) (Van Haute and Gauja 2015:128).

The same applies to gender proportions, although in this case M5S fares “worse” in terms of the overrepresentation of men: 70.81% of Five Star respondents were male as opposed to 60.36% in Podemos.

The following two figures display the geographical distribution of our respondents from both parties. Three observations are due here: first, the samples cover 13 of 20 Italian regions, and 15 of 19 Spanish autonomous communities, which provides a sufficient representation of all major regions of both countries. Second, the distribution of respondents across regions is more uneven in the Italian case, with a notable dominance of Northern regions, especially Lombardy, as shown on *Figure 2*.

**Figure 2 – The geographical distribution of M5S respondents\***

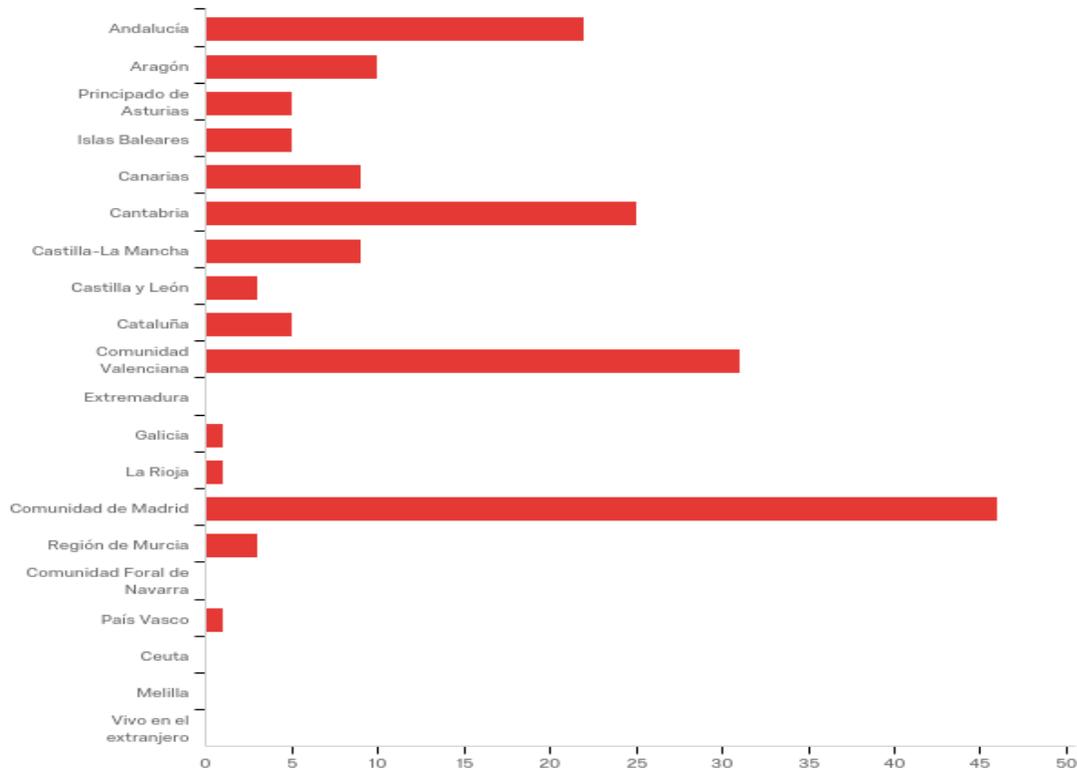


\*Source: Membership survey conducted by the author

One should be cautious about making any theoretical inferences based on this distribution, as it largely results from differences in the willingness of individual Meetup organizers to distribute the survey. However, this particular distribution is interesting in two respects. First, although the Northern regions were an M5S stronghold during the first years of the party’s history, this pattern

has started to change in 2012, since when local cells in the South proliferated while the number of their Northern counterparts has stagnated (Lanzone 2015). Thus, based on the territorial distribution of M5S local groups, the share of respondents from the North and the South should have been more balanced. Second, and as a potential explanation of this imbalance, turnout in referenda has traditionally been higher in the North, whereas Southern voters participate less and are mostly motivated by the “personal advantage” derived from patron-client relations, as noted in the seminal book of Robert Putnam (1993:93-96). Although electoral turnout is only a very crude approximation of propensity to fill out surveys, the lower response rate of Southern regions might plausibly be attributed to a weaker “Civic Community” (ibid.), and thus to the absence of any direct motivation to participate in a survey.

**Figure 3 – The geographical distribution of Podemos respondents\***



\*Source: Membership survey conducted by the author

A third observation refers to the notable dominance of Madrid in the Podemos sample (as shown on *Figure 3*), which is rather unsurprising given that the party originated from the capital city (Rodon and Hierro 2016) and established its local cells through the model of “territorial

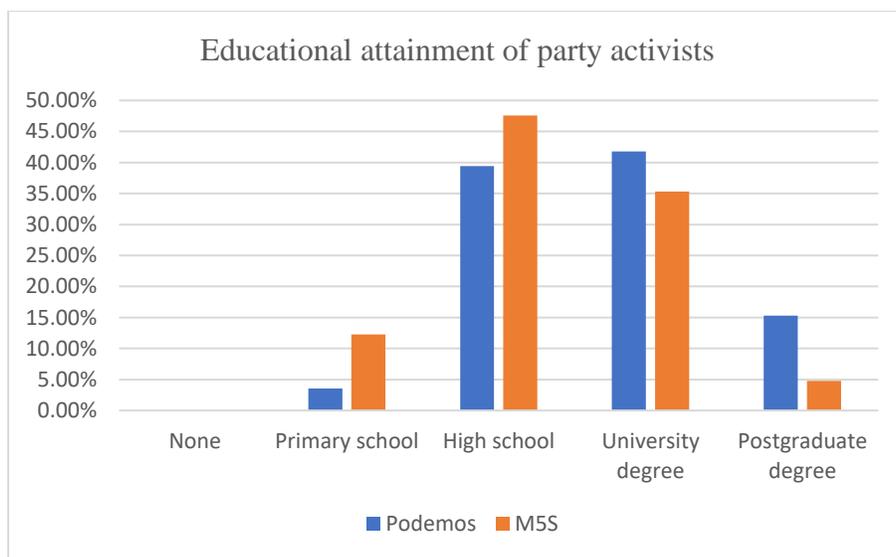
penetration” from the center (Panebianco 1988). As a member of the 2015 campaign staff explained to me in an interview:

“Before the European elections, we mounted an organizing team to establish everything that the party was, the party organs, at the same time we kept the Circles and the Assemblies. (...) In this organizing team there were seven people, and we divided the country into parts. I took the part of Castilla y La Mancha. Well, I’m from there, my father and my grandparents live in Albacete... I went there quite often, but I have lived in Madrid for 8 years now, but once I went there, I tried to take advantage and participate and create the party there.”

Thus, while the geographical distribution of the sample is far from balanced in any of our cases, the distortions of the sample can be justified both theoretically and empirically, and the samples provide a fair representation of the territorial diversity of these organizations.

Respondents were also asked to indicate their highest level of education and their capacities to use the Internet. The results are displayed on *Figures 4* and *5*. The results mirror the findings of previous research (De Prat 2015, Vidal 2015): the share of respondents with university and postgraduate degrees is substantially higher among the members of Podemos (15.29 vs. 4.81 % in the case of postgraduate degrees), while a non-negligible share (12.3 %) of M5S activists finished primary school only. This is important because we might expect that the more educated activists of Podemos would also be more critical about the party leadership and intra-party democracy.

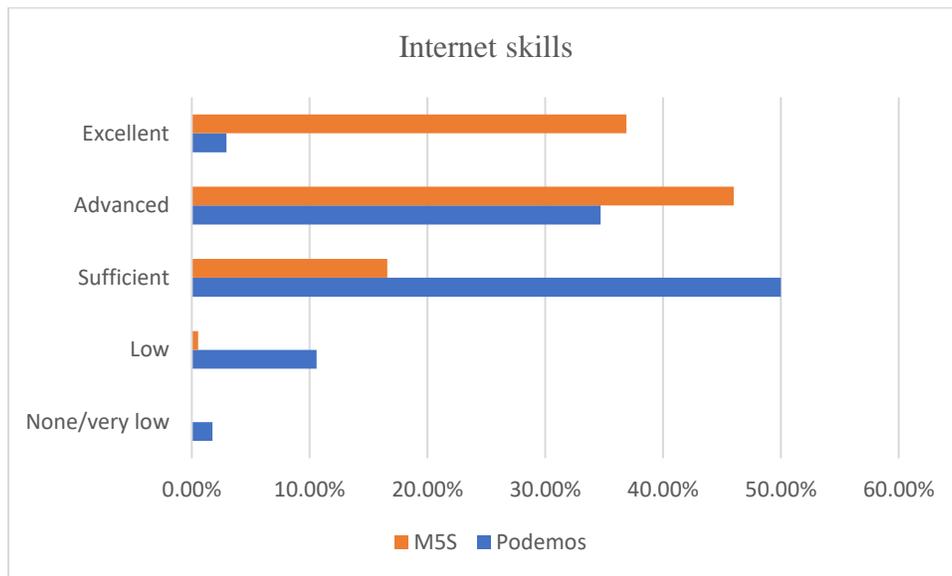
**Figure 4 – Educational attainment of membership survey respondents\***



\*Source: Membership survey conducted by the author

At the same time, Five Star activists are much more confident about their Internet skills, with over a third of respondents (36.9 %) rating their capacities “excellent” as opposed to only 2.94 % in Podemos. At the same time, more than 10 percent of Podemos activists rated their skills “low” or “very low”. Taking into account the aforementioned differences in the age profile of activists, this finding suggests that although older citizens no longer abstain from online participation, the “digital divide” still persists in the sense that they are less confident in using online applications. This also raises doubts regarding how complex these applications can be if their aim is not to elevate entry barriers, which might be a plausible threat in the case of real-time deliberative applications like Appgree which had been used extensively in Podemos (Borge and Santamarina 2015).

**Figure 5 – Internet skills of membership survey respondents\***



\*Source: Membership survey conducted by the author

### 3.2 Party activism

The following survey items describe the *quantitative* aspects of party activism in the Five Star Movement, and Podemos, respectively: what activities members pursue, how much time they devote to these activities, and which ones are most important to them. The expectations regarding these items are twofold. On the one and, the main impetus for designing online participatory

platforms and extending the decision-making rights of ordinary members is to achieve higher levels of participation. As an MP of the Five Star Movement explained to me:

“Obviously, the objective is to increase the numbers. The fact that today Rousseau is also open to non-subscribing visitors is exactly because we want people to know it, to push people to sign up. The aim of Davide Casaleggio is to obtain a million subscribers in the coming years.” (MP, Responsible for Lex Iscritti on Rousseau)

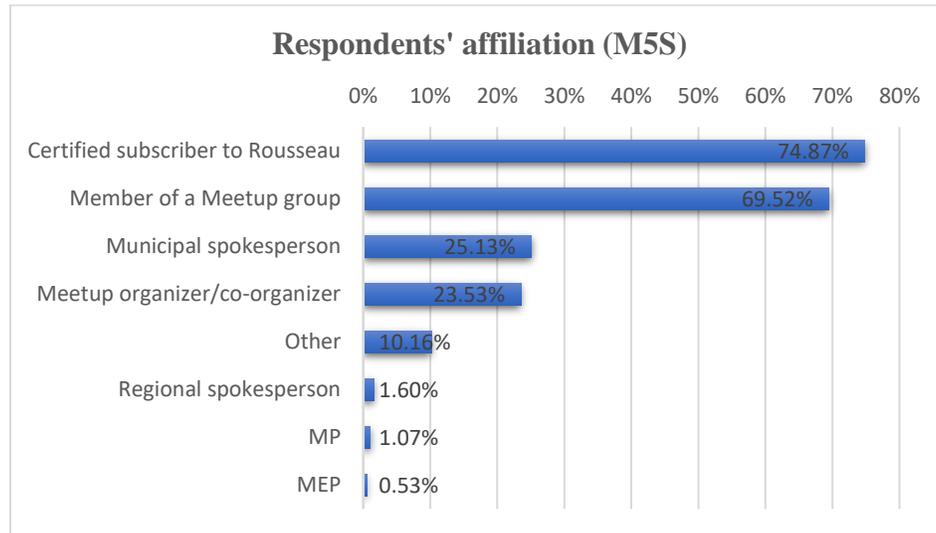
However, the second most important reason behind the introduction of online processes is to decrease the resources (Verba et al. 1995) required for participation, above all, time:

“Not everyone in the world has the time or availability to participate actively in the Circles, and maybe one can only do it through the Internet.” (Former Secretary General of Podemos Community of Madrid, Co-founder of Podemos)

Thus, in case members’ participation is in line with these parties’ ambitions, we should find that they participate in many activities, they evaluate these activities in positive terms, nevertheless, they do not devote more time to party activism than typical across party organizations (see Van Haute and Gauja 2015:32, 131 for party activism figures in Italy, and Spain).

Before embarking on the discussion of these questions, we should first look at two essential features of our respondents: their exact title within the party, and the time for which they have been involved in party activism. The first is important as although we already know that respondents are party members, eventually they might hold other party positions too which would change their perspectives for evaluating organizational performance on items such as intra-party democracy. Moreover, as the Meetup groups of the Five Star Movement do not require formal affiliation with the national party, this question is also a useful means to explore how closely local activism and national membership are correlated.

**Figure 6 – Respondents' affiliation in the Five Star Movement\***

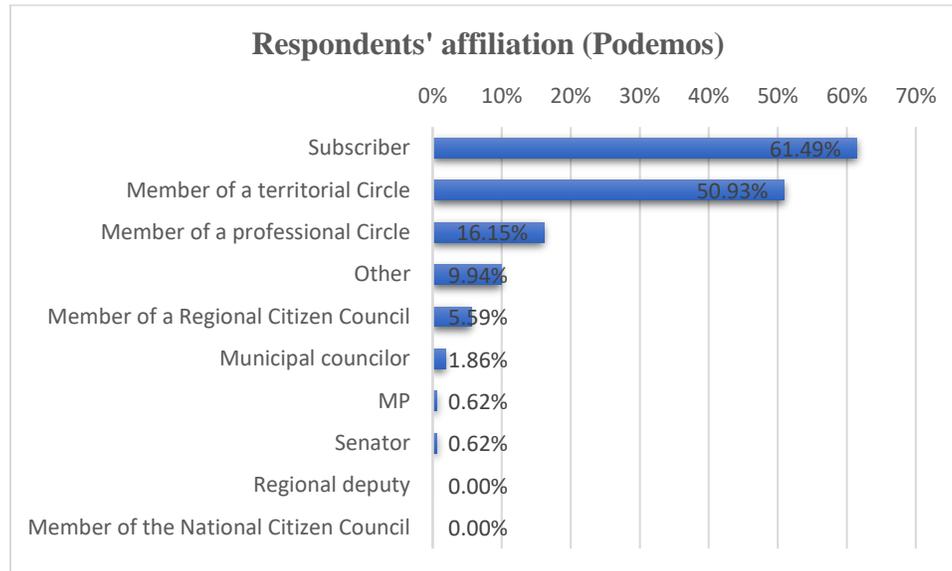


\*Source: Membership survey conducted by the author

As *Figure 6* shows, this strategy was indeed warranted, as respondents chose 2.06 categories on average to describe their function within M5S, and there is a remarkably strong (74.2 %) overlap between subscribers to the national platform and Meetup members.

Although multiple affiliation was less common among Podemos members (1.47 categories/member on average), it is also apparent from the data that most (63.6%) subscribers were also active in either territorial or professional Circles too, thus confirming the “integration hypothesis” between online and offline activities (Gibson and Cantijoch 2013). Moreover, the data also reveal an important difference in the relationship between activists and their representatives in the two parties: while more than a quarter of respondents from the M5S were municipal councilors, this group only made up 1.86 % in Podemos, which indicates a closer, more personal relationship between local representatives and activist groups in the former, as also seen in *Chapter 3*.

**Figure 7 – Respondents’ affiliation in Podemos\***



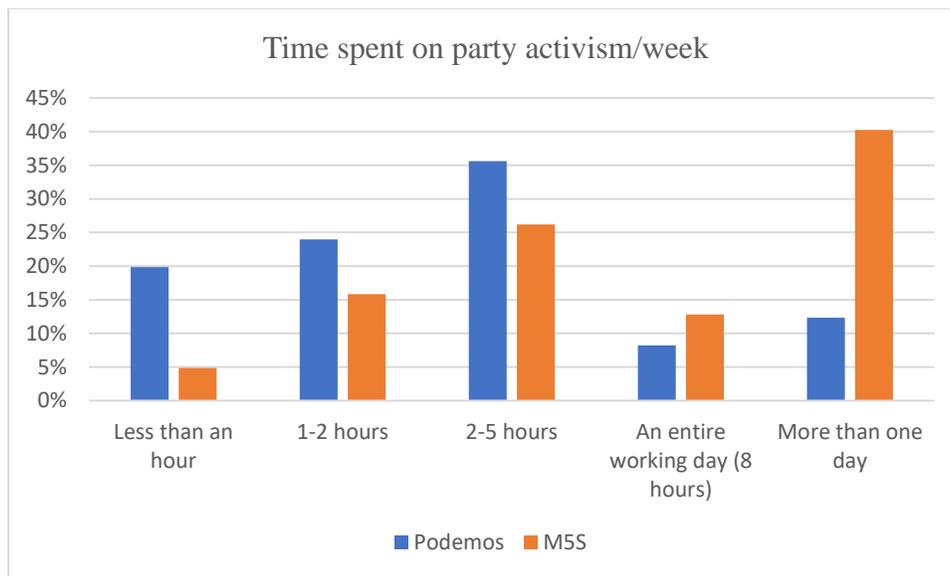
\*Source: Membership survey conducted by the author

When it comes to the time since respondents had been enrolled in the party, the differences are not as pronounced as the five years’ lapse between the two parties’ inception would suggest: although the share of members active for more than two years is almost 10 % higher in the Five Star Movement, it also represents the largest group in Podemos, while the proportion of newcomers is low in both cases. In absolute terms, members who had been enrolled in the party for more than two years represented the largest group of respondents in both parties, with 87.97% of M5S and 78.26% of Podemos respondents belonging to this category.

When it comes to specific party activities, the patterns reported by respondents largely confirm our expectations: members have been involved in a multitude of simultaneous activities among which no single activity stands out as the “dominant” form of party activism. However, there are two important differences between the samples. First, Five Star Movement activists on average report having spent a substantially larger amount of time on party activism than the members of Podemos, as shown on *Figure 8*. On the one hand, this finding is unsurprising in the sense that local activism is much more central in the political culture of the M5S than in Podemos as the former was established through a more organic process of territorial diffusion (Panebianco 1988) as opposed to the more elite-driven foundation of Podemos. At the same time, the fact that more

than 40% of M5S respondents reported having dedicated more than one day per week to party work on average suggests that these figures are heavily inflated, as only a quarter of respondents worked for the party as a primary occupation. These findings also contradict the results of the MAPP project survey which found that even though M5S members devoted more time to party activism than their peers in other parties, only 18.7 % reported having spent more than 10 hours per week on party activism (Van Haute and Gauja 2015:131). Nevertheless, the fact that so many of them chose this option in our survey tells us a lot about the reputation and the social desirability of party work in the Five Star Movement.

**Figure 8 – Time spent on party work\***



\*Source: Membership survey conducted by the author

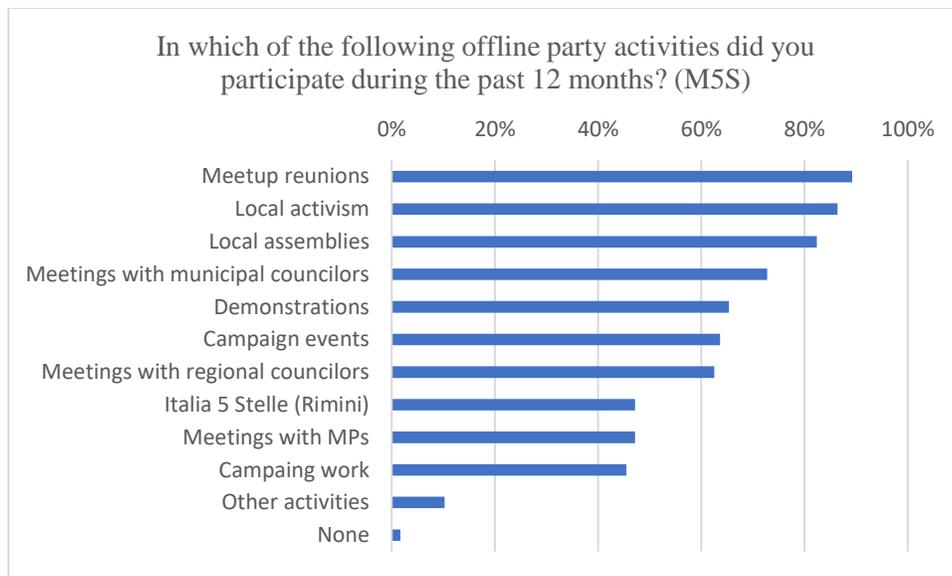
The second important insight that can be drawn from the data on party activism relates to the different prioritization of certain activities across the two parties. While most Podemos respondents attributed roughly equal number of preferences to votes on the manifesto (26.62 %) and national primaries (24.03 %) as the most important party activity, their *pentastellati*<sup>78</sup> peers strongly favored votes on the party’s electoral program (40.91%) above all other activities, the

<sup>78</sup> An Italian colloquial/journalistic expression for people belonging to the Five Star Movement.

second most important to them being the discussion of law proposals submitted by M5S deputies (11.36 %).

However, when we also include offline activities (see *Figures 9 and 11*), it becomes evident that personal group meetings are the single most popular and participated activity among activists, in which more than 80 % of respondents participated in both parties. This share is higher than in case of any online activity (see *Figures 10 and 12*).

**Figure 9 – Members’ participation in offline activities during the past 12 months (M5S)\***

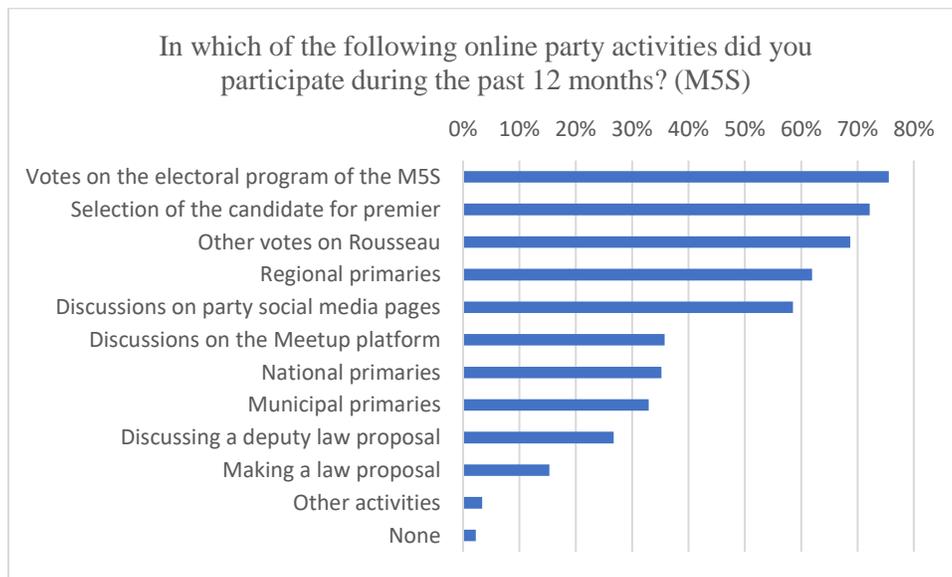


\*Source: Membership survey conducted by the author

Another important finding with regards to offline activities is that the item that ranked second behind local group meetings in Podemos was a national assembly meeting held in Madrid, while in the Five Star Movement the second-to-fourth places were taken by various forms of local meetings. This suggests that the community building efforts of Podemos are more focused on the national level, while in the Five Star Movement less than half of the respondents participated in the party’s national meeting (Italia 5 Stelle) as opposed to local events that were attended by more than 70 %.

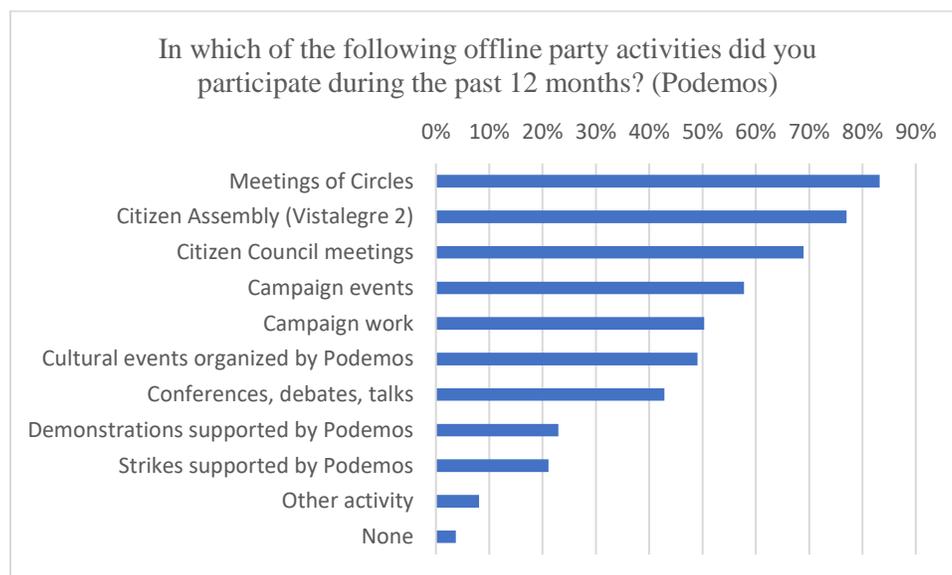
A third, counterintuitive finding is that more respondents in both samples participated in regional than in national primaries. However, this might be explained by the fact that the question referred to activities conducted during the *past year*, while national primaries took place more than one year before the launch of the survey in each case. Moreover, this anomaly is also counterbalanced by the higher perceived importance of national primaries, which respondents ranked as the second (Podemos) and the third (M5S) most important across all online activities, and the most important one among activities that referred to the selection of candidates for elected office. More surprisingly, even though 72.16 % of M5S respondents reported having participated in the selection of the party’s prime ministerial candidate, only 2.84 % considered it the most important activity, which might be explained by the lack of meaningful competition for this position.

**Figure 10 – Members’ participation in online activities during the past 12 months (M5S)\***



\*Source: Membership survey conducted by the author

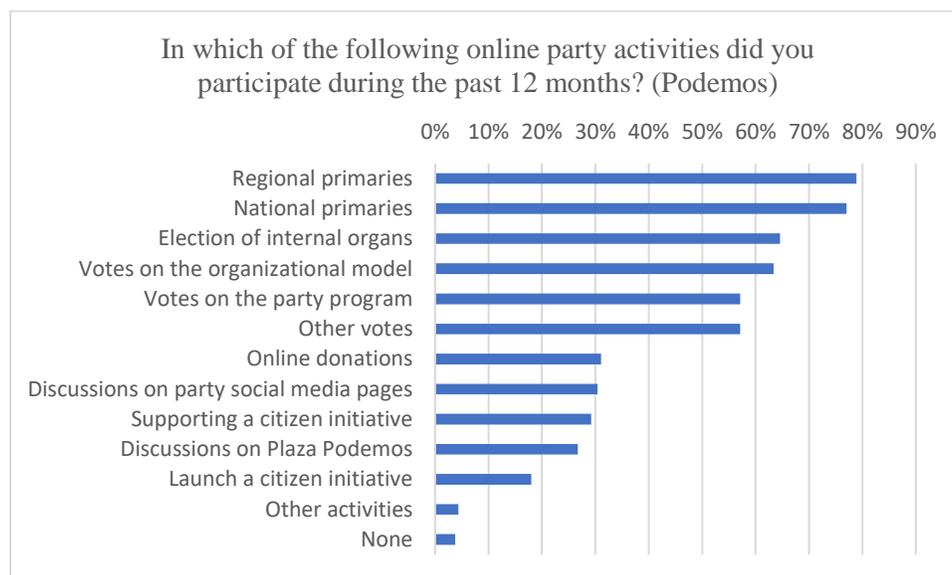
**Figure 11 – Members’ participation in offline activities during the past 12 months (Podemos)\***



\*Source: Membership survey conducted by the author

The fourth implication of these findings relates to the different levels of importance attributed to votes on the party manifesto across the two parties. As noted above, these votes were considered the most important online activity in both parties, suggesting that party narratives on the *collective* construction of their program were also shared by the membership. However, selecting this as the most important item was much more prevalent among M5S (40.91 %) than among Podemos (26.62 %) members. Two equally plausible explanations can be offered. First, as shown in *Chapter 5*, although Podemos members had more agenda-setting power in the elaboration of the manifesto through directly proposing policies to be included in the program, the membership ballot allocated more veto power to M5S members, who could block policies endorsed by the party administration (although they did not use this opportunity). Thus, one could argue that by acting as secondary veto players, M5S activists felt more empowered in the process. Second, the notion of a “program written by the citizens” was much more strongly advocated in the narrative of the Five Star Movement, while Podemos presented program writing as a cooperative effort shared between members and the party leadership. Although the substantive differences between the two processes were much subtler, the more exaggerated discursive practices might have produced a higher level of identification with the party program among M5S activists.

**Figure 12 – Members’ participation in online activities during the past 12 months (Podemos)\***



\*Source: Membership survey conducted by the author

The last point regarding data on party activities refers to the overall volume of online versus offline participation among the two parties. As shown in *Table 1*, M5S respondents were 37.9 % more active offline than online, while in Podemos there is a 11.65 % difference in the opposite direction. At the same time, an average M5S member participated in 13.24 % more activities than her peer in Podemos. This finding suggests that more emphasis on local activism triggers higher levels of member engagement even when complementary online practices are available. Moreover, the fact that M5S members display higher levels of engagement is also reflected in their self-evaluations: on a scale from 0-10, an average M5S activist rated the intensity of their participation at 7.56 (standard deviation: 2.02) as opposed to 5.82 in Podemos (standard deviation: 2.4).

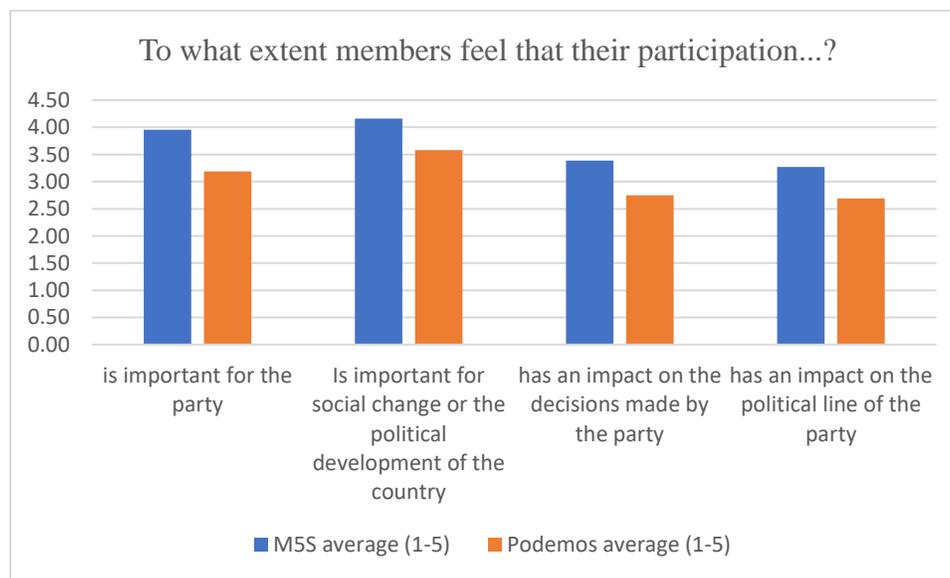
**Table 1 –Online vs. offline participation and party activism**

	All offline acts	Offline act/respondent	All online acts	Online acts/respondent	Self-assessed level of party activism (0-10)
<b>Five Star Movement</b>	1186	6.74	860	4.89	7.56
<b>Podemos</b>	781	4.85	872	5.42	5.82

### 3.3 Intra-party democracy

While the data introduced above described the *quantitative* aspects of members' participation, the following sections will introduce their evaluations regarding both the perceived efficacy of their participation, as well as their evaluations regarding the democratic *qualities* of these processes, such as the responsiveness and accountability of party representatives. The first of these questions referred to differences in the importance members attach to their own activism, in an attempt to explore their *motivations* to participate in the first place (Verba et al. 1995). As seen on *Figure 13*, M5S members feel more reassured about the importance of their participation regarding all aspects, and they are particularly convinced that their activities contribute to the “social change or the political development” of Italy.

**Figure 13 – Perceived importance of participation (combined)\***



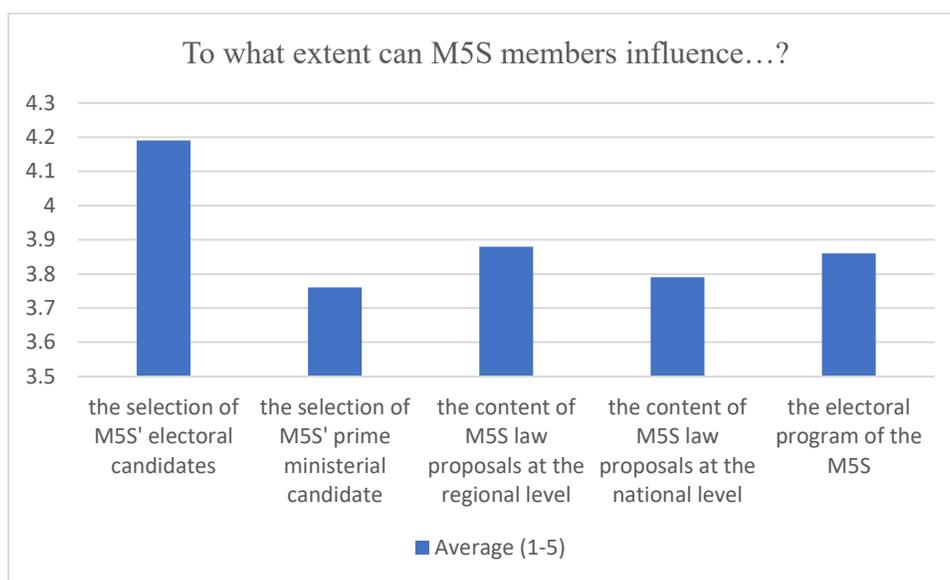
\*Source: Membership survey conducted by the author

In contrast, Podemos activists are much more divided about the impact of their participation and are particularly skeptical about how much they can influence the political line of the party, with almost half of the respondents giving the lowest scores (1 or 2) to this item. At the same time, achieving social and political change also seems to be the primary motivation of Podemos activists,

for which their participation is important (4) or very important (5) according to 56.85 % of the sample. Notably, the activists of both parties are highly divided over the extent to which members can influence party decisions, with a relative majority of neutral (3) evaluations in both cases.

A similar picture emerges when members are asked to reflect on their experience regarding specific online membership ballots on several issues, ranking their influence on a 1-5 Likert scale. Two interesting points emerge from these data. First, the share of M5S respondents who perceived to have a high influence (scores 4 and 5) exceeded 60 percent for all votes and reached nearly 80 percent regarding the selection of the party’s electoral candidates. This finding is somewhat surprising taking into account some of the known malfunctions and misuses of party primaries discussed in *Chapter 4*.

**Figure 14 – Members’ perceived influence (M5S)\***

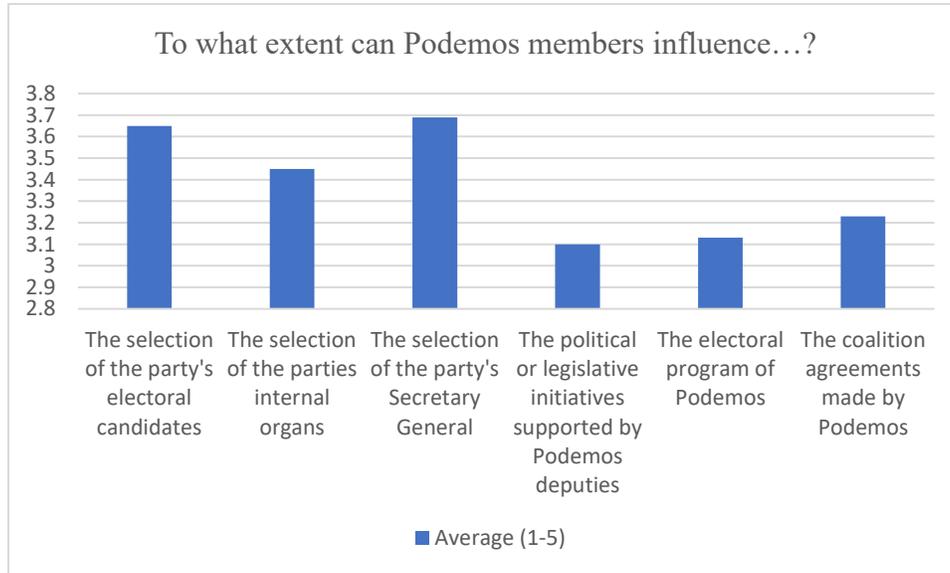


\*Source: Membership survey conducted by the author

As opposed to their M5S peers, Podemos members’ perceptions of their influence are much more divided. No single party decision is perceived as strongly (4) or very strongly (5) influenced by more than 40 % of party members, however, the selection of the party’s electoral candidates and Secretary General are perceived as areas where members have most influence, with slightly above 60 % scoring these items (4) or (5) combined. Also, around a third of respondents gave neutral (3)

evaluations on their capacity of influencing the legislative activity or the electoral program of Podemos, mirroring earlier results which have shown that these activities are not particularly salient among members.

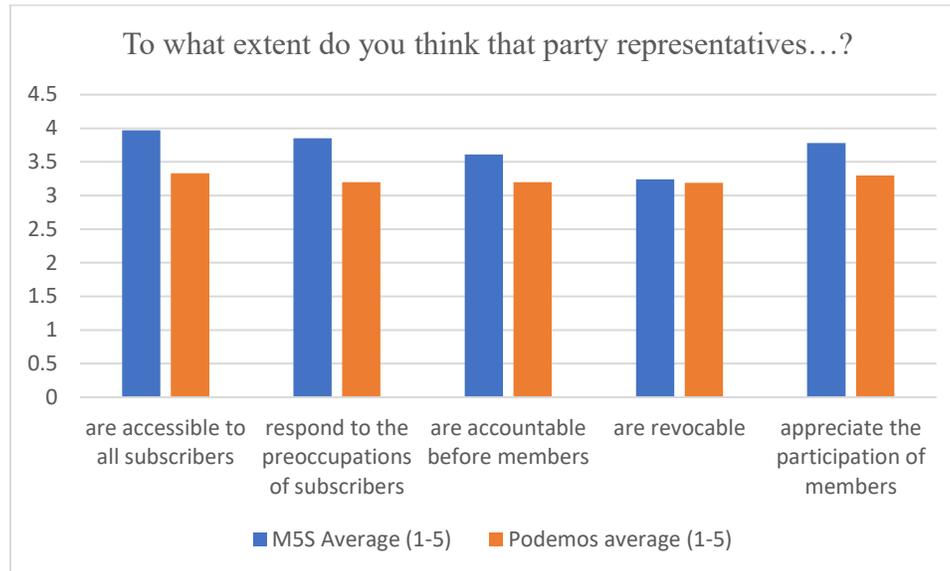
**Figure 15 – Members’ perceived influence (Podemos)\***



\*Source: Membership survey conducted by the author

The following items refer to the responsiveness and accountability of party representatives in general, and party leaders in particular. Two patterns are especially striking from the data. First, deputies in both parties received substantially higher scores than party leaders on all accountability and responsiveness items. This finding is unsurprising in the case of the Five Star Movement where representatives routinely emphasize the importance of personal contact (see *Chapter 3*), however, they are somewhat more counterintuitive in Podemos where the distance between representatives and their constituency is larger. At the same time, this nuance is also reflected in the data: while Five Star deputies received the highest score (5) on all items from more than 20 % of respondents, they only passed this threshold for one item in Podemos, revocability (20.45 %). As *Figure 16* shows, M5S deputies received higher average scores on all responsiveness and accountability items, and on average they fared 0.45 points better on a 1-5 Likert scale.

**Figure 16 – Perceived responsiveness and accountability of party deputies\***

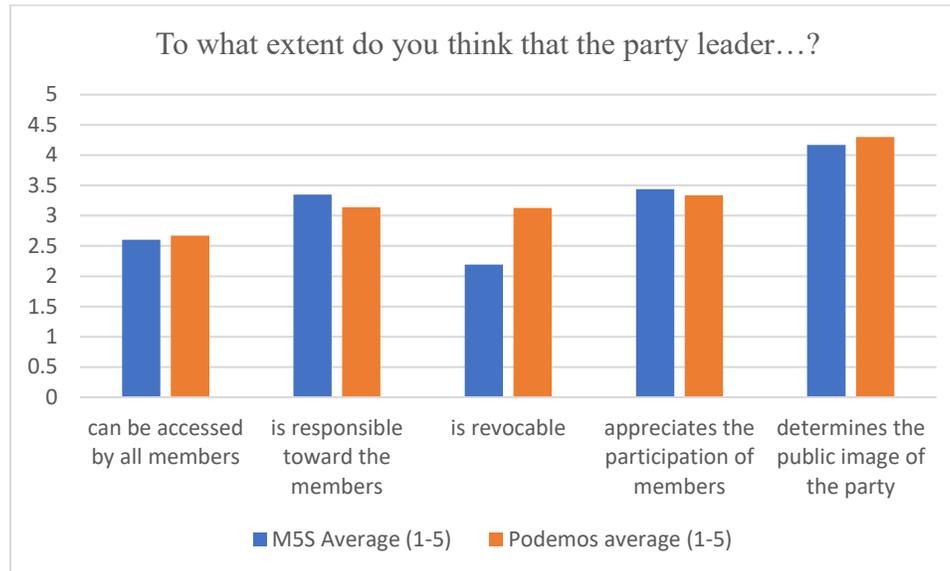


\*Source: Membership survey conducted by the author

The most remarkable difference in the distribution of scores relates precisely to the accessibility of representatives: 42.31 % of respondents from the M5S gave deputies the maximum score on this item as opposed to only 16.67 % in Podemos. This might also result from the aforementioned differences among the two parties’ territorial organization: “territorial penetration” in the case of Podemos vs. “territorial diffusion” in the Five Star Movement results in more locally embedded representatives in the second case against a heavily Madrid-centred organization in Podemos (Panebianco 1988).

Respondents’ evaluations of party leader responsiveness and accountability have been much more critical, especially regarding how accessible party leaders were, and the extent to which they determined the parties’ public image. Beppe Grillo received remarkably low scores on accessibility and revocability, with almost a third (30.13 %) of respondents assigning him the lowest level of accessibility (1), and 42.31 % being very skeptical (1) about whether he can be revoked. At the same time, he was perceived as a major determinant of the Five Star Movement’s public image by 78.84 % of respondents (scores 4 and 5).

**Figure 17 – Perceived responsiveness and accountability of the party leader\***



\*Source: Membership survey conducted by the author

The patterns in Podemos hint on a slightly different relationship between party members and the Secretary General. Although Podemos members are also divided about the extent to which Pablo Iglesias can be accessed, a relative majority of them (29.55 %) gave a neutral (3) evaluation on this item. Activists also seem to be highly divided about whether he can be revoked, however, on average Podemos members were almost one full point more convinced that Pablo Iglesias could be revoked than their M5S peers. Conversely, there seems to be a broad consensus about the extent to which Pablo Iglesias determines Podemos’ public image, which 57.58 % of respondents scored maximum (5). If we include those that rated this item (4), the share of those who thought that Pablo Iglesias determined the party image strongly or very strongly is over 80 % (83.34 %), and the average evaluation of this item is slightly higher than in the case of Beppe Grillo (4.3 vs. 4.17). The finding that on average Podemos respondents thought that their Secretary General had a larger impact on the public image of their party than M5S respondents is counterintuitive as the Five Star Movement has frequently been characterized in the literature as a “personal party” (Diamanti 2014, Lanzone 2014), unlike Podemos.

#### 4. Contribution to evaluations of intra-party democracy

Although the main ambition of this chapter is to provide a descriptive snapshot of different attitudes among the members of these two parties, in this brief section I also aim to assess whether there are any individual-level attributes that contribute to different evaluations of intra-party democracy among party activists. Based on insights from societal modernization theory and earlier research on party activism, we can hypothesize that four of the variables measured in this survey might have a significant impact on the outcome of interest: age, education, level of (self-assessed) party activism, and time spent on party work. The four related hypotheses are described below.

*H1: Older respondents are in general more allegiant (Dalton and Welzel 2014); thus, their evaluations of intra-party democracy will be more lenient (positive).*

*H2: A higher level of educational attainment is positively associated with being more critical about the functioning of democratic institutions (Norris 2011), thus, more educated respondents are expected to be more critical in their evaluations of intra-party democracy.*

*H3: Committed activists tend to be loyal to their party (Scarrow 1994), thus, those who regard themselves as more active are expected to be less critical concerning intra-party democracy.*

*H4: For the same reason, the time spent on party activism is expected to be positively associated with the evaluation of intra-party democracy.*

**Table 2 – Association between individual-level variables and evaluations of intra-party democracy**

	Evaluation of intra-party democracy (0-10)			
	Spearman correlation		Pearson's R	
	M5S	Podemos	M5S	Podemos
<b>Age</b>	.14	-.10**	.12	-.12**
<b>Education</b>	-.09*	-.11	-.12*	-.09
<b>Party activism (0-10)</b>	.32	.08	.24	.12
<b>Time spent on party work</b>	.17**	.03	.12**	.05

\* Statistically significant at the  $p < 0.05$  level

\*\* Statistically significant at the  $p < 0.1$  level

As seen in the table above, there is a weak correlation between the variables hypothesized to be relevant and the outcome of interest, which works in the expected direction with one exception: older Podemos members seem to be even more critical about intra-party democracy than their younger peers. Moreover, this counterintuitive finding seems not to be driven by education (which is weakly but negatively correlated with Podemos respondents' age), thus, it might plausibly be driven by a longer history of party activism and the accumulated experience of disenchantment. Education is only very weakly correlated with evaluations of intra-party democracy, in the expected direction (i.e. negatively). The most relevant finding from a theoretical perspective is that party activism seems to play a much stronger role in the M5S than in Podemos in this respect too, which shows the strongest correlation with the outcome of interest, and much stronger than in the case of Podemos. This corroborates the finding discussed earlier that the stronger focus of the Five Star Movement on local activism and the social recognition of party work produce more satisfied, or at least less critical members. A more detailed overview of the relationship between these variables is offered in the crosstabs in *Appendix K*.<sup>79</sup>

## 5. Demands for organizational reform

The last, open-ended question of the survey asked respondents to indicate whether there were any aspects of the party organization that they would like to change. The scope of this question was purposefully left very broad to trigger any sort of criticism that the previous items failed to capture. The question generated 96 responses from the Five Star Movement, and 80 from Podemos (answering this question was voluntary). As the answers often consist of a few words only and encompass a broad range of subjects, they were manually analyzed and grouped according to thematic areas to reveal the presence of potentially recurring patterns. This kind of analysis was also feasible due to the relatively low number of responses. Irrelevant entries, such as those that referred to contingent political issues (e.g. “we should win the elections”) were excluded from the analysis.

A minor share of respondents indicated that there was nothing they would change about their party (15 in the M5S, 8 in Podemos). Perceived areas for improvement diverged significantly across the

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<sup>79</sup> The relevant crosstabs were not inserted here for constraints regarding space; however, they can be consulted in the Appendix indicated above.

two cases. Respondents from the Five Star Movement mostly referred to one of the following themes: 1. better organization at the local level; 2. reform of the candidate selection process; 3. more participation; 4. more internal democracy; 5. reform of arbitration boards; 6. security of online votes; 7. coalition policies.

While all of the aforementioned themes have been mentioned by various M5S activists, two of them were especially prevalent: comments that asked for a better organization at the municipal level and a higher level of coordination between the local and the national organization on the one hand, and suggestions to install a more meritocratic candidate selection process in which “work in the territory” is taken into account to avoid the selection of incompetent candidates and the “infiltration” of external candidates. Both issues were highlighted in the previous empirical chapters: the lack of a local organization was among the chief preoccupations of municipal and regional councilors interviewed for this project, while the selection of unexperienced candidates has been one of the most serious challenges that M5S faced during the 2013-2018 electoral cycle, which triggered an unusually large number of expulsions and defections from the party group. A third prominent issue was related to the security of the online vote, however, surprisingly, two respondents suggested to make the Rousseau platform even more accessible by removing certain security protocols such as the use of an electronic signature. Even more counterintuitively, internal democracy does not feature among the primary concerns of our respondents, of whom only three raised issues related to “leaderism” and the “arbitrary decisions of the guarantor”. In addition to these general themes, several respondents from the Five Star Movement suggested to abolish the limit of two electoral mandates per representative, at least at the local level.

The top preoccupations of Podemos activists were quite different. The range of subjects raised by activists encompass the following areas: 1. reform/reactivation of local organizations; 2. more participation; 3. internal democracy; 4. sectarianism; 5. transparency; 6. accessibility.

First and foremost, a great number of comments (20) were concerned with several aspects of internal democracy, above all with the insufficient influence of the membership, and the unidirectional (top-down) nature of exchanges between the leadership and the affiliates. The following comment neatly sums up such criticisms:

“The votes should have more weight, they should be based on the debates in the Circles and should be less ‘directed’.”

A second, related concern is the lack of participation in the local groups and the absence of their autonomy and influence. Several comments urged the revitalization of participation in the Circles, an issue that Podemos has faced ever since its temporary transformation into an “electoral machine” which was not successfully reversed. More specifically, many respondents were concerned about the excessive, “suffocating” centralization and the dominance of the Secretary General, to the extent that several of them wished to transform Podemos into “a democratic organization”. Beyond that, several respondents raised the criticism that Podemos was too “sectarian” and too preoccupied with its own internal debates instead of opening toward civil society. Finally, a somewhat surprising finding is that several respondents mentioned the accessibility of online activities as a challenge, which seems to confirm that the “digital divide” (Schlozman et al. 2010) still exists. As one respondent wrote:

“Internet offers many possibilities for participation, but to me it takes a lot, and people of my age or older need help with simple matters like the votes. We cannot even think about participating in debates like this.”

## 6. Conclusion

Although the data introduced in this chapter cover a broad range of perceptions, one overarching pattern seems to emerge from it: even though our sample covered local groups whose members were older and more committed than the average, their evaluations of organizational functioning were rather critical. This is especially apparent in the case of Podemos where a surprisingly high share of respondents mentioned the lack of intra-party democracy as their chief concern in an open-ended question.

The results also highlighted important organizational differences between the two organizations that derive from their different origins: the “territorial diffusion” model (Panebianco 1988) of the Five Star Movement created stronger links between activists and elected office holders, and several items suggest that activists in such a model are more committed and willing to work more for the party. Moreover, the correlational analysis also confirmed that devoted party activists are substantially less critical about (the lack of) intra-party democracy, suggesting the existence of a link between weak engagement and disaffection.

Third, the findings also confirm that members of horizontally organized local groups do not tolerate centralization, hierarchization and leader-centrism, although Podemos members seem to be more concerned about such issues. This difference may result from Podemos activists being more educated and thus more critical, but it may also be understood as a different prioritization of issues: M5S local activists are more concerned about being unorganized due to the lack of institutionalization, nevertheless, they also perceive the distance between local activism and the center as a problem, which is reflected in negative evaluations of Beppe Grillo's accessibility and revocability.

Returning to the two original research questions of this chapter, the general conclusions are twofold. First, the data demonstrate that even loyal party members are sensitive to breaches or deficiencies of intra-party democracy and can differentiate their influence across party activities. This entails that once a party installs horizontal decision-making structures, even occasional deviations from this model will be costly in the sense that they will generate dissatisfaction among the membership, if not defections. Second, the higher importance of local meetings and personal contact coupled with more active members suggests that online participation can only replace offline activities to a limited extent, as the latter have an indispensable role in fostering social cohesion and building organizational identity. The implication of this finding is that providing the technical affordances for cost-free participation *alone* is not enough to transform a political party into a vehicle of social inclusion, *unless* this effort is matched by equally meaningful and efficient avenues for local participation and face-to-face meetings. The latter are clearly insufficient in Podemos, while the Five Star Movement is plagued by a disconnection between the two spheres. The architects of future political organizations can hopefully incorporate these insights and build parties where online and offline participatory channels are both *balanced* and *interconnected*. Unless this occurs, the potential of online participation will remain largely unrealized.

## **Chapter 8 – Conclusions: Participatory innovations and intra-party democracy**

While the previous empirical chapters analyzed the effect of participatory innovations on specific party activities in our cases, the concluding chapter follows a more comprehensive approach, and summarizes the extent to which new party organizations that rely on these innovations produce a higher level of internal democracy in general than political parties based on a more traditional, less participatory organizational structure. This thesis has sought to explore the following research question:

*To what extent do inclusive party models as exemplified by Podemos and the Five Star Movement grant power to ordinary party members and supporters, and how does this affect intra-party democracy?*

Accordingly, the conclusions first address the outcome understood as intra-party democracy with regards to the whole functioning of these party organizations. The following two sections summarize findings on the effects of two explanatory factors whose impact was shown across all party activities: organizational structure and leadership. These findings are in line with the preliminary expectations that shaped the whole research design: differences between the organizational structure of the two parties served as a basis for a *quasi*-most-similar systems design which allowed for the demonstration of how similar participatory tools yield different levels of intra-party democracy in parties with different organizational makeups. Although leadership was not hypothesized to have an independent effect on the outcome, it has emerged from the analysis as a crucial determinant of how certain practices are implemented, in conjunction with organizational structure. The relevant section will discuss the relationship between organizational structure and leadership, and how the two may reinforce or counterbalance each other.

The fourth section of this chapter summarizes findings on members' perceptions of intra-party democracy, and the tradeoffs between online and offline participation in terms of reinforcing party activism, group identity, and social cohesion. This section will also discuss whether there is a

mismatch between the intended use and the practical outcome of participatory processes, and where such divergences derive from.

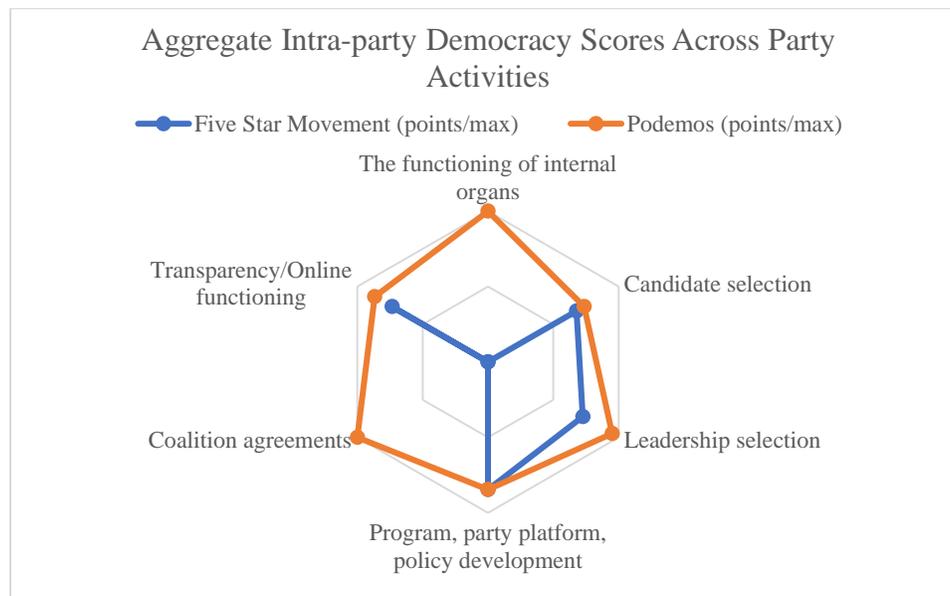
The final section discusses the contribution this dissertation has made to the study of party organizations as well as to the literature on political participation, critically reflecting on the external validity of its findings and its potential limitations. Admitting these limitations also allows for the formulation of meaningful suggestions for future research projects on related subjects.

## **1. Intra-party democracy in new party organizations**

Although IPD scores for specific party activities have already been provided throughout the previous chapters, here I summarize these findings and compare aggregate IPD scores across the two parties. Detailed scores for all items are shown in *Appendix I*, while the aggregate scores for each group of activities standardized to a 0-1 scale are displayed on *Graph 1*. Four main observations are due at this point. First, there is no single group of party activities in which the Five Star Movement achieved a higher IPD score than Podemos. This is also reflected in a 26.5 points difference in their total IPD score in favor of the latter case (59.5 vs 86 points obtained on the 0-100 IPD index). It is interesting to note the stark contrast between this finding, and the perceptions of surveyed party activists, who found M5S to be a more democratic organization (8.05/10 on average) than Podemos (7.4/10 on average).

Second, although differences between the two parties are significant in several categories, most of the aggregate difference is driven by the functioning of intra-party bodies where the M5S obtained “0” points as opposed to “15” for Podemos. This difference is due to the fact that the Five Star Movement does not have a selected representative institution such as an executive committee or a council, unlike Podemos (as seen in *Chapter 3*), thus it was given the minimum score on this dimension. While this may overestimate the importance of the party executive body, the fact that the lack of intermediary bodies yields a substantially lower IPD score underlines that there is a theoretically established link between organizational structure and intra-party democracy.

*Graph 1 – Aggregate intra-party democracy (IPD) scores across party activities*



Third, a similar difference emerges with regards to the selection of the party leader, although in this case the M5S obtained a higher-than-zero score thanks to the election of Luigi Di Maio as the “political leader” of the party through an online membership ballot in late 2017. However, we should not disregard that the party had been led by an informal, non-elected leader for the first eight years of its existence, and that Luigi Di Maio was elected in a competition in which his most serious contenders decided to withdraw their nomination. Thus, the second largest difference in the IPD scores of the two parties results from the more informal and unregulated concept of leadership in the Five Star Movement, underscoring the claim that leadership also has implications for IPD.

Fourth, although the IPD index suggests that there is only a slight, two-point difference between the two parties with regards to their online functions and transparency, I would argue that even though the party webpages nominally offer similar functions, there is a remarkable qualitative difference that the IPD index fails to capture. More specifically, while the Five Star Movement has a very chaotic, outdated, fragmented, non-informative party website with several external references, and party documents cannot be directly accessed from the homepage, Podemos has a much more accessible website with a clear structure, a homogeneous layout, and is much more user-friendly in the sense that all important documents and contact details can be accessed from

the homepage within a few clicks. While a detailed analysis of the functionality of these websites would rather require a user experience (UX) specialist than a political scientist, it suffices to say that the party website of Podemos is much more user-friendly and up-to-date than that of the Five Star Movement, and that information about individual representatives as well as about local units are very difficult to locate on the latter.

These findings alone would leave us with a somewhat disquieting puzzle: why do the members of the Five Star Movement seem more active and in general more satisfied with the way their organization works if it is *de facto* less democratic than Podemos? The following two sections provide answers to this question. However, before addressing this puzzle, we should first evaluate what the findings discussed above tell us about the merits of participatory innovations with regards to intra-party democracy from a more general perspective. In particular, what can we infer from the evidence on these two cases about the inevitability of hierarchization in political organizations (Michels 1968 [1911])? Two broad conclusions can be drawn in this regard. First, as shown by the intra-party democracy scores above, the presence of intermediary actors and institutionalized conflict resolution mechanisms implies a higher level of intra-party democracy, in contrast with Michels' pessimistic account which expects "the differentiation of organs and of functions" (Michels 1911:71) to weaken the influence of the rank-and-file. The higher intra-party democracy score of Podemos demonstrates the opposite. Second, and more counterintuitively, the results of the membership survey suggest that members' perceptions might strongly deviate from the *de facto* level of intra-party democracy in their party, which might be influenced by the social benefits that derive from membership. More specifically, the more active and locally embedded activists of the M5S also seem more tolerant toward interventions from the party executive. Synthesizing these two pieces of evidence, we may conclude that although a multi-tier, institutionalized party structure with several intermediaries between the rank-and-file and the party leadership allows for a higher level of *formal* intra-party democracy, members' perceptions are to a higher extent driven by *informal* practices and personal experience. In short, social benefits are at least as important as formal power arrangements in producing satisfied party members. Some more nuanced explanations are offered below.

## 2. Why organizational structure matters

When evaluating non-democratic decisions in both parties throughout this dissertation, one could notice a systematic difference between the two cases: while Beppe Grillo could afford to make unilateral decisions on a number of highly controversial issues such as expulsions, the withdrawal of candidates who did not conform to the official party line, and the rejection of coalition offers, Podemos always subjected these decisions to a membership vote, even if these ballots were often “managed” (Aylott and Bolin 2017) and did not offer meaningful alternatives to the rank-and-file. As I have argued, this difference is not only a matter of “style” but is a direct implication of the organizational structure of both parties.

The most peculiar feature of the Five Star Movement in terms of organizational structure is that it lacks intermediary organs between the membership base and the party administration. The only means for local cells to communicate with the center are local and regional representatives, however, their influence is also severely limited when it comes to decisions of a national scope, especially as the party does not have organized regional or local branches that could act in unison. An exception from this pattern is the Assembly made up of all M5S MPs and Senators, i.e. the “party in public office” (Katz and Mair 1993), however, the public face of the party is both completely detached from the membership base, and directly controlled by the “party in central office” (ibid.) by means of a private contract with the Casaleggio Associati IT firm. Thus, the party administration can safely rely on the assumption that there are no organized party units that could forcefully resist its unilateral decisions, and that the highest price it needs to pay for its controversial moves is the defection of individual MPs and in the worst case, the dissolution of (some of the rival) local cells.

In stark contrast with this model, Podemos relies on a traditional party organization based on a clear hierarchy between organizational units that are set up at each administrative level. General assemblies and executive bodies operate at each level, and the competences of each are neatly delineated: issues of territorial relevance always belong to the relevant territorial organization, while national issues such as the electoral program and statewide coalitions are the competence of national bodies. This by no means entails the absence of conflicts between these levels, however, it does imply that should such conflicts arise, there is an institutional structure in place which provides mechanisms for their resolution. Thus, the Secretary General of Podemos has no reason

to assume that a unilateral decision about candidacies or coalition agreements would pass without any resistance, for two reasons. First, the party statutes explicitly regulate the competences of each organ, and as an overarching principle, define the General Assembly as the supreme decision-making body of the party. Second, should the Secretary General violate these terms, there are institutional mechanisms in place through which he can be held accountable and even revoked, including an independent party judiciary, the Commission of Democratic Guarantees. As we have seen, this structure does not entail that a strong party leader cannot dominate intra-party decisions, but it restricts the number of tools that are available to them. Most importantly, the party leader of such a well-regulated, hierarchical organization can ensure majority support for his/her decisions by 1. setting up selection mechanisms for the executive bodies that ensure a stable majority of loyal candidates; 2. using his/her popularity or personal legitimacy to set a clear agenda for membership ballots. As the previous chapters demonstrated, a combination of these two strategies yields participatory decision-making processes that effectively minimize risk, with often more than 90% supporting the alternative proposed by the party leader.

However, it needs to be mentioned that neither the direct rule of the Five Star leadership, nor the agenda-setting techniques applied in Podemos can guarantee the desired outcome: Grillo lost two issue-specific membership votes in 2014<sup>80</sup>, while the list of candidates endorsed by Iglesias received “only” 50.78% of the votes in an internal vote held in 2017. Nevertheless, as the vast majority of membership ballots presented in the empirical chapters have shown, the party executives of both parties can safely rely on the the assumption the membership will support their position, unless they subject widely and genuinely contested issues to a membership ballot (such as the case of illegal migration in the Five Star Movement).

### 3. Why leadership matters

A superficial inquiry of these two cases could easily conclude that they have very similar leadership profiles: both Beppe Grillo and Pablo Iglesias are highly popular, charismatic leaders

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<sup>80</sup> One of these membership ballots concerned the depenalization of clandestine migration (voted by 63.53%, against Grillo’s position), while the other forced Grillo to attend a meeting with then-candidate for PM Matteo Renzi that he wished to avoid (Repubblica 2014).

with a committed personal following, both had built an image as media figures and opinion leaders before entering the stage of politics, and both used their personal popularity to garner support around their party. However, there are at least two very important aspects in which the two leaders differ.

First, the fact that Beppe Grillo never openly subscribed to the idea of having founded a “political party”, and that until late 2017 he did not have any official title within his organization strengthened his image as an unquestionable “outsider” who could not be held accountable for his decisions. One may question the extent to which these decisions were in effect made by him or by his advisors (see Canestrari and Biondo 2017), nevertheless, his loosely defined, patriarchic position within the party implied the lack of any mechanisms to contest his declarations. That is why the “basic rules” of the party, such as the rules for candidacy, and the two-term limit for public mandates could not be questioned by anyone in the party: they were simply announced on the blog, and anyone who disliked them was free (or forced) to leave. In contrast, although Pablo Iglesias also relied on his personal popularity as a mobilization resource (especially during the 2014 European Parliament election where his face was used to identify the party on the ballot sheets), he never presented his visions as “unquestionable truths”. In fact, divergent ideological streams have been present in Podemos ever since its foundation, and have contributed to vivid debates about organizational structure, the party’s political program, and coalition behavior (see Mikola 2017b).

A second, related distinction is that these different roles within the party also imply drastically different levels of accountability, replaceability, and revocability of the party leader. It is not coincidental that while the Five Star Movement has often been referred to as “Beppe Grillo’s party” in the literature (e.g. Bordignon and Ceccarini 2013, Diamanti 2014, Mosca 2014), the same paraphrasing of Podemos has been quite uncommon. This is thanks to the fact that while Beppe Grillo registered the symbol of the M5S as a brand (later handed over to an association also dominated by him), and managed the rights pertaining to the brand as a franchise (Carty 2004), Pablo Iglesias never made any claim or legal arrangement to “own” Podemos. In fact, he even subjected himself to an open contest for the position of the Secretary General in 2017, even though his most serious contender, Íñigo Errejón decided to withdraw from the contest. As demonstrated in *Chapter 3*, such a contest would have been unthinkable in the Five Star Movement, as until the

adoption of its latest statutes (MoVimento 5 Stelle 2017d), there had been no mechanism to select the “guarantor”. Even though Beppe Grillo transferred the position of the “political leader” to Luigi Di Maio in late 2017, it is yet to be seen whether Di Maio would also successfully replace him as the mediatic figure who is the core galvanizing force of the Five Star-identity.

The above distinctions bring us back to the question posed at the end of section one: Why are M5S members less concerned about internal democracy considering that the level of intra-party democracy is substantially lower in their party, and that the breaches upon internal democracy are more frequent and apparent? The reason lies specifically in the different organizational structure and leadership style of the two organizations. As we have seen in *Chapters 3 and 7*, activists in M5S local groups have a very close and intense relationship with their local representatives, and place great value on physical meetings. As the party initially started organizing around local, single-issues, following the “territorial diffusion” model (Panebianco 1988), the agenda of these local groups is also geographically limited. Due to the almost total disconnection between the local and the national level, these local groups are understandably much more concerned about organizing better at the municipal level, and their only interference with national politics occurs when they need to select mayoral, regional or national candidates. Although conflicts do reportedly occur during such episodes, the atomized nature of the party precludes the formation of organized internal factions, thus those who disagree are either expelled or defect voluntarily. This implies that those activists who are still affiliated with the party (and thus can potentially be included in a membership survey) either neglect such interventions or are simply more concerned about local issues.

The perceptions of intra-party democracy in Podemos are remarkably different (and more critical) for two reasons. First, due to the “territorial penetration” model (Panebianco 1988) through which the party was established, the links between Madrid and the local branches are much stronger. Although local branches enjoy a certain level of autonomy, they are certainly not disconnected cells that started mobilizing for local issues, but part of a larger political project whose aim is to transform the entire Spanish political landscape. Thus, conflicts regarding candidates, organizational structure, and internal party positions are not perceived by activists as distant, irrelevant issues, but as part of their core business. Second, as the initial recruitment phase of Podemos strongly relied on the *Indignados* movement (Rodríguez-Teruel et al. 2016) and related

social movement organizations, most early party activists had already gained experience as activists in horizontal movements which valued open discussions. This has led to the construction of an organization which is constantly debating even its own basic principles, as well as to the institutionalization of different ideological factions within the party (see Mikola 2017b). The activist past of a large share of party members, the presence of organized factions, and the higher level of educational attainment of party activists jointly contribute to an organizational culture which is much more discursive than the Five Star Movement. In other words, while the M5S prioritizes *exit* or *loyalty* as the primary avenues to express or accommodate dissent, Podemos largely relies on mechanisms of *voice* (Hirschman 1970). This cultural difference leads to a much higher share of activists openly expressing their grievances as opposed to the more subservient, less educated, and less ideologically driven followers of the Five Star Movement.

#### **4. Online but disengaged? Tradeoffs between online and offline participation in terms of the quality of membership**

A large part of the impetus for this project derived from a passionate interest in the effect of digital technologies on political organization. While the initial optimism of the early 2000s regarding the positive participatory effects of the Internet had already faded by the time this project was launched in late 2015, we still knew little about the functioning of political parties that mostly organized online. However, there were already signs that prioritizing online participation could trigger weaker individual engagement from party activists (Bolleyer et al. 2015, Gibson and Cantijoch 2013).

The findings of this project largely confirm these fears, although with some qualifications. The results of the membership surveys (*Chapter 7*) have shown that the party which put more emphasis on offline encounters (M5S) also produced more active members in general, who were willing to devote a substantially larger amount of their time to party activism. This finding seems to confirm that relying on online participation disproportionately produces passive members over the long run, an issue that Podemos has struggled with since 2015, and which has led the party to introduce its so called “active census” to differentiate active from passive members. Second, the findings of the membership survey have also demonstrated that although the “digital divide” might be closing,

it still affects older party members who might feel insecure about their Internet skills and may find deliberative mobile applications too complicated to deal with. This suggests that while online participation might foster social inclusion for some (e.g. women and young people), it might still raise obstacles to older citizens who would otherwise be willing to engage in party work.

Beyond the findings that refer to the overall engagement of party members, the analysis of the online platforms presented in *Chapter 5* also highlighted some more nuanced trends that are nevertheless of crucial importance. First, although both parties devised instruments that allow for direct input from the members in the form of law proposals, these instruments have so far failed to generate any meaningful result, i.e. no legislation was adopted based on any of these proposals. While part of the reason for this in Podemos is that the relevant quotas are set too high, one must also consider whether the procedural entry barriers are by definition too high for such activities. Specifically, it should be taken into account that party members need to dedicate substantial time and effort to collect and synthesize the necessary documents in order to draft a proper law proposal, which might discourage many of them. On the other hand, lowering these entry barriers results in proposals that are irrelevant and useless, such as “let’s abolish money” or “let’s send corrupt politicians into prison”. There is no easily identifiable middle ground between these two extremes, however, a mediated, deliberative phase would certainly help, in which activists could discuss their proposals with experts of the field and could jointly contribute to the text of the final draft bill. Unless some sort of mediation is offered, member proposals will either remain too broad and will not even pass the initial filter of the party administration (as happens with 85% of member proposals in the M5S, see Deseriis 2017a:22), or will fail to generate substantial interest to make it onto the party’s agenda (as is the case in Podemos).

On a more general note, several of the online tools offered by both parties suffer from deficiencies that derive from unmediated discussions: although both Reddit and Rousseau allow users to rate comments, it still remains unclear which comments are taken into account and how exactly they are integrated into the original proposals, let alone that most of the commenters never receive any feedback on their ideas. Appgree, the deliberative application used by Podemos offers a partial solution to this problem by dividing users into several representative micro-samples to generate discussions and reach quick decisions within small groups. However, extending such decision-making mechanisms to an organization that counts hundreds of thousands of members raises

problems not only of representativeness, but also of transparency. Nevertheless, having lengthy discussions about each policy proposal and requiring party representatives to respond to every single comment would not only be unfeasible in terms of staffing, but also in terms of the amount of time required for a decision which would be mostly incompatible with the rapid evolution of party politics. Thus, while in the case of membership ballots party administrations clearly can and have incentives to define both timing and choices in a way to “manage” the results, the deficiencies of the online deliberative tools derive more from inadequate design than from purposeful manipulation, or rather a mismatch between scale and purpose. While most of these instruments would work sufficiently in a small group setting (i.e. a municipal/district level organization with less than a thousand members), they are not suitable for the aggregation of the opinion of 400 thousand individuals. The kind of sampling applied by Appgree could be a viable solution, however, its complexity raises problems emanating from the “digital divide”: the more complicated an application is, the higher will be the (perceived) entry barrier for members with a lower level of IT-literacy.

Summarizing the arguments presented above, the findings of this thesis suggest three broad conclusions regarding the use of online participatory tools in intra-party decision-making. First, online votes can be manipulated by conventional agenda-setting techniques the same way as their offline counterparts. This can be further aggravated if no sufficient security protocols are provided to ensure the transparency of these processes, e.g. by having external monitoring agencies or an open source code. That is, online processes are undoubtedly more accessible, but they are not fairer, more transparent or more conducive toward intra-party democracy than offline votes. Second, relying exclusively or disproportionately on online instruments waters down the participatory experience of members who seem to be more engaged when they also have a chance to meet offline. Face-to-face meetings will also offer a better opportunity to build collective identity, and to provide a sense of social inclusion that goes beyond merely offering voting rights to everyone in internal decisions. Third, although the deliberative processes used in both parties are insufficient in their current form, this is only partly due to the lack of mediation and feedback mechanisms. Realizing their full potential would not even be feasible at the scale of these organizations, thus, the technical features of party platforms need to improve to provide a meaningful experience of collective decision-making.

## 5. Limitations and directions for future research

While this dissertation consciously focused on cases that pioneered the use of online decision-making tools on a large scale and for a large variety of decisions, the study of the challenges new decision-making mechanisms pose for intra-party democracy should not end here. As digital technology improves, it pervades political parties of all kinds (Gauja 2015, Gibson 2015), and forces them to adapt to a “postmaterialist political culture” (Chadwick and Stromer-Galley 2016) in which horizontality and participation are held in high esteem. The main contribution of this thesis is that it highlights the challenges political parties are expected to face once they implement online participatory decision-making processes.

The fact that an increasing number of political parties experiment with online tools also broadens the possibilities for further research: what was once the realm of Pirate Parties (Bolloyer et al. 2015, Demker 2014, Li 2009) and a few anti-establishment forces is gradually becoming part of the mainstream repertoire of political parties. While participatory policy-making practices might never become an industry standard, the use of online candidate selection processes has already reached a level where large cross-national comparative studies would be feasible. Such studies should not only focus on whether such processes yield representative outcomes (Rahat, Hazan and Katz 2008), but also on the impact they might have on the legislative activity of individual MPs (Chiru 2018).

This dissertation also hopes to have contributed to the quest for more meaningful and more democratic participatory tools that can keep activists engaged and committed on the long run. While some of the existing practices described here are promising, their defects often undermine their basic functions and prevent them from producing satisfactory results. This does not apply to purely plebiscitary practices which are much easier to implement, as well as to manipulate. However, if political parties want to provide meaningful participatory experiences to their members, they need to go further, and design tools that allow for real deliberation, informed discussions and regular feedback. The success of these experiments will be crucial in determining whether parties can remain “the central linkage between citizens and government” and “the primary channel for activity by politically engaged citizens” (Katz 2013:149-150). Should these experiments fail, the party as we know it could soon be over.

# Appendix

## Appendix A - IPD Questionnaire<sup>81</sup>

### (1) Participation (30 pts)

- 1.1 Who selects the party leader? (5 pts)  
5 pts A group of selected representatives, all party members or all citizens of voting age  
0 A small inner circle of the party elite or a single leader
- 1.2 Who selects the party leader? (5 pts)  
5 pts All citizens of voting age  
4 All party members  
3 Selected representatives  
1 A small inner circle  
0 A single leader
- 1.3 Who selects the party's candidates to the Knesset?<sup>82</sup> (5 pts)  
5 pts A group of selected representatives, all party members or all citizens of voting age  
0 A small inner circle of the party elite or a single leader
- 1.4 Who selects the party's candidates to the Knesset? (5 pts)  
5 pts All citizens of voting age  
4 All party members  
3 Selected representatives  
1 A small inner circle  
0 A single leader
- 1.5 Who of the following can participate in writing or approving the party platform? (5 pts)  
5 pts All citizens of voting age  
4 All party members  
3 Selected representatives  
2 A small inner circle  
1 A single leader  
0 The party doesn't have a platform
- 1.6 Who of the following could take part in ideological debates conducted by the party in the last four years? (5 pts)  
5 pts All citizens of voting age  
4 All party members  
3 Selected representatives  
0 The party didn't conduct ideological debates

### (2) Representation (20 pts)

- 2.1 What percentage of realistic positions on the party list is filled by women candidates? (5 pts)  
5 pts >45%  
4 35–44%  
3 25–34%  
2 15–24%

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<sup>81</sup> Questionnaire adopted from Rahat and Shapira (2017:103)

<sup>82</sup> The Knesset is replaced by the lower house of the corresponding national parliament in each case.

1 5–14%

0 <5%

2.2 What is the value of the Women Ranking Index<sup>83</sup> on the party list? (5 pts)

5 pts >0.45

4 0.35–0.44

3 0.25–0.34

2 0.15–0.24

1 0.05–0.14

0 <0.05

2.3 What is the percentage of women among the party's current Knesset representatives? (5 pts)

5 pts >45%

4 35–44%

3 25–34%

2 15–24%

1 5–14%

0 <5%

2.4 Does the party employ special mechanisms (such as reserved positions or districts) to guarantee representation for the following social groups or sectors on its Knesset list? (10 pts)<sup>84</sup>

2 pts Ethnic or religious minorities

2 Immigrants

2 Senior citizens

2 Young adults

2 Residents of the geographical periphery

### (3) Competition (20 pts)

3.1 Have there been competitive elections (with two or more candidates) for the position of party leader since the last general elections? (10 pts)

10 pts Yes

0 No

3.2 Have there been competitive elections for the party institutions (convention, council, central committee) during the last four years? (10 pts)

10 pts Yes

0 No

### (4) Responsiveness (15 pts)

4.1 Does the party have a selected representative institution (e.g. a central committee, convention) and has it met at least once in the last two years? (5 pts)

5 pts Yes

0 No

4.2 Do the party's institutions do the following? (10 pts)

4 pts Take part in selecting the party's representatives in the cabinet

3 Approve whether the party joins or leaves the coalition

3 Conduct debates about policy matters

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<sup>83</sup> This index not only calculates the share of women in safe positions, but also takes into account their relative position on the list. For the exact formula, see Rahat et al. 2008:679.

<sup>84</sup> Despite Rahat and Shapira's intention to create a 0-100 IPD index, according to these scoring rules the maximum obtainable score is 105, as the scores under "Representation" add up to 25 instead of 20. For this reason, I suggest that each special mechanism listed under 2.4 should weigh 1 pt instead of 2, thus bringing the potential maximum score to 100. This modification is applied in the calculations presented throughout the dissertation.

## **(5) Transparency (15 pts)**

5.1 How easy is it to obtain a copy of the party constitution or regulations?

(5 pts)

5 pts The updated text is available on the party website or was sent out after the first request was made

3 The text was obtained only after a number of requests

0 The text was not obtained even after repeated requests

5.2 Are the following available on the party's website and/or Facebook page?

(10 pts)

3 pts The party's constitution or regulations

3 The party's platform or document of principles

1 Information about the party's history

1 Biographies of the party's Knesset members and/or candidates

1 A biography of the party leader

1 A list of party officials and their contact details

1 Details about future party events

1 Documentation of party events

1 Articles or transcripts of speeches by party representatives and officials

2 Languages other than the main language of the website or Facebook

page (one other language  $\frac{1}{4}$  1; two or more other languages  $\frac{1}{4}$  2)

1 Details about contributors

1 Forums and multimedia (video clips, links to YouTube, Facebook, etc.)

1 E-mail address or Contact-Us links to the party on the website

1 Chat forums or other interactive options on the website

1 News and updates

1 Information about local party branches

## **Appendix B - IPD questionnaire recoded on the basis of party activities**

### **The functioning of internal organs**

3.2 Have there been competitive elections for the party institutions (convention, council, central committee) during the last four years? (10p)

4.1 Does the party have a selected representative institution (e.g. a central committee, convention) and has it met at least once in the last two years? (5p)

Max: 15 points

### **Candidate selection**

1.3; 1.4 Who selects the party's parliamentary candidates? (5p, 5p)

2.1 What percentage of realistic positions on the party list is filled by women? (5p)

2.2 What is the value of the Women Ranking Index on the party list? (5p) – (see Rahat et al. 2008, pp. 678-679.)

2.3 What is the percentage of women among the party's current parliamentary representatives? (5p)

2.4 Does the party employ special mechanisms (such as reserved positions or districts) to guarantee representation for the following social groups or sectors on its parliamentary list (see options in Rahat and Shapira 2017:105) (5p)

4.2 Do the party's institutions do the following? A, Take part in selecting the party's representatives in the cabinet. (4 p)

Max: 34 points

### **Leadership selection**

1.1, 1.2 Who selects the party leader? (5p, 5p)

3.1 Have there been competitive elections (with two or more candidates) for the position of party leader since the last general elections? (10p)

Max: 20 points

### **Program, party platform, policy development**

1.5 Who of the following can participate in writing or approving the party platform? (5p)

1.6. Who of the following could take part in ideological debates conducted by the party in the last four years? (5p)

4.2 Do the party's institutions do the following? C, Conduct debates about policy matters (3p)

Max: 13 points

### **Coalition agreements**

4.2 Do the party's institutions do the following? B, Approve whether the party joins or leaves the coalition (3p)

Max: 3 points

### **Transparency/Online functioning**

5.1 How easy is it to obtain a copy of the party constitution or regulations? (5p)

5.2 Are the following available on the party's website and/or Facebook page? (10p)

Max: 15 points

**Max altogether: 100 points**

## Appendix C - PPDB variables used

### Party membership

- Party membership: CR6 – CR19 (Resources and events)
  - **CR6MBRRUL** Party statutes recognize party membership as a formal category, distinct from unaffiliated supporters.
  - **CR7FRIEND** Party statutes recognize a separate level of formal affiliation with reduced obligations and reduced rights (for instance, party “friend” or “registered sympathizer”). This does not include members with reduced dues but full rights, such as reduced fees for young people or unemployed.
  - **CR8DUESLVL** National party publishes a minimum annual dues level.
  - **CR12MBRNUM** Number of individual members
  - **CR18FRND** Number of “registered sympathizers” or others who register with the party as “friends” but who do not get full membership rights. (Note: this is different than members who pay reduced dues levels but have full rights, and it is different than probationary members who are trying to become full members.)
- Party membership: A32 – A45 (Structures)

### The functioning of internal organs

- Party structures: A46 – A77
  - **A46LOWLVL** Functional level of the party's smallest units that get representation at higher levels
  - **A47LOWNAME** Party's name for these basic units (in own language)
  - **A48LOWNUM** Number of basic units.
- Party Congresses and Party Executive Body: A78 – A95
  - All variables within this range were included (for a complete list of variables see the PPDB Codebook<sup>85</sup>)

### Candidate selection

- Rules on Candidate Selection: B10 – B33

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<sup>85</sup> Political Party Database Codebook. 2016.  
<https://dataverse.harvard.edu/file.xhtml?sessionid=32a5a0933a09a159b68029b5148f?fileId=2965342&version=RELEASED&version=.0>

- All variables within this range were included (for a complete list of variables see the PPDB Codebook<sup>86</sup>)

### Leadership selection

- Electoral Leader Selection: C60 – C99

### Program, party platform, policy development

- Policy Referendums: Statutes: C1REF1 – C8REF8
- Election Manifesto: C100 – C106
- Policy Referendums: C107 – C112

### Online functioning

- Web Sites: A98 – A106

## Appendix D – Data on candidate selection

*Table 4 – Appointment systems and voting systems\**

Category (Rahat and Hazan 2001)	Sub-category	Category (recoded by author)
Appointment Systems	Pure	Appointment
	With <i>en bloc</i> ratification	
Appointment-voting Systems	With ratification and correction possibilities	Mixed
Voting Systems	One-round Majoritarian	Voting
	Multi-round Majoritarian	
	One-round Semi-majoritarian	
	Multi-round Semi-majoritarian	
	One-round Semi-PR	
	Multi-round Semi-PR	
	One-round PR	
	Multi-round PR	

\*Table adopted from Rahat and Hazan (2001:308), extended by the author

<sup>86</sup> Political Party Database Codebook. 2016.

<https://dataverse.harvard.edu/file.xhtml?sessionid=32a5a0933a09a159b68029b5148f?fileId=2965342&version=RELEASED&version=.0>

**Table 5 – The list of Pablo Iglesias vs. the first 69 candidates selected at Podemos’ primaries for the 2015 general elections**

<b>Position</b>	<b>List of Pablo Iglesias</b>	<b>Candidates selected at primaries</b>
1	Pablo Iglesias	Pablo Iglesias Turrión
2	Íñigo Errejón	Íñigo Errejón Galván
3	Rafael Mayoral	Carolina Bescansa
4	Luis Alegre	Irene Montero
5	Pablo Bustinduy	Rafael Mayoral
6	Raimundo Viejo	Sergio Pascual Peña
7	Oscar Guardingo	Àngela Ballester Muñoz
8	Marc Grau	Luis Alegre Zahonero
9	Toni Carmona	Auxiliadora Honorato Chulián
10	Arnau Mayol	Pablo Bustinduy
11	José Manuel Gómez Benítez	Tania Sánchez Melero
12	Ruben Martínez	David Bravo
13	Alex Rodríguez	Belén Guerra Mansito
14	Pedro Arrojo	Noelia Vera
15	Sergio Pascual	Ione Belarra
16	Antonio Manuel Rodríguez	José Manuel Gómez Benítez
17	Juan Antonio Delgado	Rita Bosaho Gori
18	Alberto Montero	Pedro Arrojo Agudo
19	David Bravo	Juan Antonio Delgado Ramos
20	Segundo González	Ana Belén Terrón Berbel
21	Tone Reino Varela	Maria Pita Cardenes
22	José Manuel Pérez Alfonso	Lola Bañon
23	Javier Sánchez	Raimundo Viejo Viñas
24	Eduardo Maura	Mar García Puig
25	Fernando Iglesias	Nagua Alba
26	Juanma Del Olmo	Alberto Montero Soler
27	Jorge Lago	Juan Manuel Del Olmo
28	Carmelo Romero	Marta Domínguez
29	Braulio Llamero	Isabel Medina Suárez
30	Pedro Palacios	Antón Gómez-Reino Varela
31	Alberto Rodríguez	Javier Sánchez Serna
32	Miguel Vila	Mae (María Asunción Jacoba Pía) De La Concha Y García-Mauriño
33	Carolina Bescansa	Claudia Varella Fernández
34	Irene Montero	Maria José Aguilar Idáñez
35	Belén Guerra	Alejandro Rodríguez
36	Tania Sánchez	Óscar Guardingo Martínez
37	Mar García Puig	Ana Rosa Abejón Calleja

38	Alicia Ramos	Isabel Franco Carmona	
39	Bea Rilova	Esmeralda Gómez Souto	
40	Angela Ballester	Alberto Rodríguez Rodríguez	
41	Lola Bañón	Pedro De Palacio Maguregui	
42	Rita Bosaho	Sofía Fernández Castañón	
43	Claudia Barella	Blanca Calvo	
44	Esmeralda Gómez Souto	Braulio Llamero Crespo	
45	María Galindo	Eduardo Maura	
46	Auxiliadora Honorato	María Romero Infante	
47	Isabel Franco	Jorge Lago Blasco	
48	Marta Domínguez	Segundo González García	
49	Noelia Vera	Beatriz Rilova Barriuso	
50	Ana Terrón	Ana Marcello Sanos	
51	Leticia García	Alicia Ramos Jordan	
52	Isabel Medina	Toni Carmona Martínez	
53	Mae De La Concha	Ángela Rodríguez Martínez	
54	Ana Rosa Abejón	Leticia García Panal	
55	Carmela Docampo	Miguel Vila	
56	Ángela Rodríguez Martínez	María Galindo	
57	María Marín	Marc Grau Solés	
58	Nagua Alba	María Marín Martínez	
59	Ione Belarra	Antonio Manuel Rodríguez Ramos	
60	Ana Marcello	Carmela Docampo Paradelo	
61	María Dolores Martín-Albo	Carmelo Romero Salvador	
62	Meri Pita	M <sup>a</sup> Dolores Marín-Albo Montes	
63	Blanca Calvo	Rubén Martínez Dalmau	
64	María Romero	Manoli Blanco Moreno	
65	María José Aguilar	Jose Manuel Pérez Afonso	
66	María Ramos	Mercedes Dominguez Ramirez	
67		Fernando Iglesias Garcia	
68		Alba Rodríguez Nogales	
69		Arnau Mallol I Baró	

\*Highlighted cells indicate correspondence of the candidate on both lists, white cells in the third column indicate difference.

**Table 6 – 2015 regional elections in Spain/Podemos primaries for top electoral candidates\***

Region	Date	Census	Turnout	Number of candidates	%Winner	Winner
Andalusia	2/2015	59,629	27.4	1	78.6	<b>Teresa Rodríguez</b>
Aragon	3/2015	12,135	28.9	1	71.1	Pablo Echenique
Canary Islands	3/2015	22,661	28.0	2	50.3	<b>Noemi Santana</b>
Cantabria	3/2015	5,081	32.2	4	41.2	José Ramón Blanco
Castile-La Mancha	3/2015	12,284	23.2	2	42.1	José García
Castile-Leon	3/2015	15,659	21.2	2	53.6	Pablo Fernández
Catalonia	5/2015	41,496*	5.9	9	62.7	Alberto Dante
Navarre	3/2015	5,811	29.7	3	57.9	<b>Laura Lucía Pérez</b>
Madrid	3/2015	63,278	22.7	4	67.3	José Manuel López
Valencian C.	3/2015	42,541	17.3	6	55.6	Antonio Montiel
Extremadura	3/2015	6,715	25.3	2	44.2	Álvaro Jaén
Balearic Islands	3/2015	10,235	19.4	1	43.6	Alberto Jarabo
La Rioja	3/2015	3,466	35.3	2	53.1	Raúl Ausejo
Asturias	3/2015	13,794	24.2	4	73.7	Emilio León

Murcia	3/2015	11,111	24.4	3	45.1	Óscar Urralburu
<i>Total (regional)</i>		325,896	24.3	3.1	56.0	

\*Table adopted from Rodríguez-Teruel et al. 2016, Online Appendix: Table A5.

## Appendix E - Parties' IPD scores on candidate selection items

### *Five Star Movement*

1.3 Who selects the party's parliamentary candidates?

- 5 pts – A group of selected representatives, all party members or all citizens of voting age
- 0 pt – A small inner circle of the party elite or a single leader

1.4 Who selects the party's parliamentary candidates?

- 5 pts – All citizens of voting age
- 4 pts – All party members
- 3 pts – Selected representatives
- 1 pt – A small inner circle
- 0 pt – A single leader

2.1 What percentage of realistic positions on the party list is filled by women?

- 5 pts – >45%
- 4 pts – 35-44%
- 3 pts – 25-34%
- 2 pts – 15-24%
- 1 pt – 5-14%
- 0 pt – <5%

The percentage of women in realistic positions for the 2013 general elections was 50.45%.

2.2 What is the value of the Women Ranking Index on the party list?

- 5 pts – >0.45
- 4 pts – 0.35-0.44
- 3 pts – 0.25-0.34
- 2 pts – 0.15-0.24
- 1 pt – 0.05-0.14
- 0 pt – <0.05

2.3 What is the percentage of women among the party's current parliamentary representatives?

- 5 pts – >45%

- 4 pts – 35-44%
- 3 pts – 25-34%
- 2 pts – 15-24%
- 1 pt – 5-14%
- 0 pt – <5%

As of January 4, 2017, 32 representatives out of the 91-member parliamentary group of Movimento 5 Stelle were women (35.16%).

2.4 Does the party employ special mechanisms (such as reserved positions or districts) to guarantee representation for the following social groups or sectors on its parliamentary list?

- 1 pt – Ethnic or religious minorities
- 1 pt – Immigrants
- 1 pt – Senior citizens
- 1 pt – Young adults
- 1 pt – Residents of the geographical periphery                      0/5 pts

4.2 Do the party's institutions do the following?

A, Take part in selecting the party's representatives in the cabinet. – 0/4 pts

**Overall score: 23/34** (maximum score for candidate selection)

***Podemos***

1.3 Who selects the party's parliamentary candidates?

- 5 pts – A group of selected representatives, all party members or all citizens of voting age
- 0 pt – A small inner circle of the party elite or a single leader

1.4 Who selects the party's parliamentary candidates?

- 5 pts – All citizens of voting age
- 4 pts – All party members<sup>87</sup>
- 3 pts – Selected representatives
- 1 pt – A small inner circle
- 0 pt – A single leader

All supporters of the party can vote for candidates if they register before a certain (rather permissive) deadline. Membership is free of charge.

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<sup>87</sup> This is one of the points where the IPD index should be refined. Although it is definitely true that supporters need to join the party within a prescribed period of time to be granted a right to vote, joining is much faster and easier than in most traditional parties. Therefore, the actual practice of these parties is somewhere between allowing all citizens of voting age and only members to select their candidates.

2.1 What percentage of realistic positions on the party list is filled by women?

- 5 pts – >45%
- 4 pts – 35-44%
- 3 pts – 25-34%
- 2 pts – 15-24%
- 1 pt – 5-14%
- 0 pt – <5%

2.2 What is the value of the Women Ranking Index on the party list?

- 5 pts – >0.45
- 4 pts – 0.35-0.44
- 3 pts – 0.25-0.34
- 2 pts – 0.15-0.24
- 1 pt – 0.05-0.14
- 0 pt – <0.05

Podemos uses the so called “zipper system” (“cremallera” in Spanish) to ensure gender balance on all of its lists of candidates, i.e. male and female candidates alternate on the lists. Thus, by definition, the percentage of women in realistic positions is 50%.

2.3 What is the percentage of women among the party’s current parliamentary representatives?

- 5 pts – >45%
- 4 pts – 35-44%
- 3 pts – 25-34%
- 2 pts – 15-24%
- 1 pt – 5-14%
- 0 pt – <5%

As of December 31, 2016, 33 representatives out of the 67-member parliamentary group Unidos Podemos – En Comú Podem – En Marea were women (49.25%).

2.4 Does the party employ special mechanisms (such as reserved positions or districts) to guarantee representation for the following social groups or sectors on its parliamentary list?

- 1 pt – Ethnic or religious minorities
- 1 pt – Immigrants
- 1 pt – Senior citizens
- 1 pt – Young adults
- 1 pt – Residents of the geographical periphery

4.2 Do the party’s institutions do the following?

A, Take part in selecting the party’s representatives in the cabinet. – 0/4 pts

**Overall score: 25/34**

## Appendix F – List of interviewees

### M5S

Date	Name	Position
12/04/2015	Roberto Fico	Member of Parliament
09/22/2017	Thomas de Luca	Municipal councilor/Terni/Umbria
	Gianina Ciancio	Regional councilor/Sicilia
09/23/2017	Maria Grazia Carbonari	Regional councilor/Umbria
	Three anonymous municipal councilors	Umbria
	Paolo Ferrara	Municipal councilor/Rome
	Angelo Sturni	Municipal councilor/Rome
	Gianluca Perilli	Regional councilor/Lazio
	Alice Salvatore	Regional council group leader/Liguria
09/24/2017	Giovanni Piero Barulli	Mayor/Mottola/Puglia
	Corrado La Fauci	Municipal councilor/Livorno
10/11/2017	Marika Cassimatis	Expelled mayoral candidate in Genova
10/12/2017	Sara Visman	Municipal councilor/Venice 1
	Davide Scano	Municipal councilor/Venice 2
10/19/2017	Danilo Toninelli	MP, responsible for Lex Iscritti
	Massimo Bugani	Municipal councilor/Bologna/Emilia Romagna, responsible for Sharing on Rousseau
10/23/2017	Lorenzo Andraghetti	Expelled member, former candidate for Mayor in Bologna
10/28/2017	Vittorio Bertola	“Expelled” member, former Municipal councilor in Turin

### Podemos

Date	Name	Position
12/10/2015	Francisco Casamayor	Member of the campaign staff, Member of the Citizen Council in the Community of Madrid
03/02/2016	Raúl Camargo	Deputy in the Assembly of Madrid 1
03/02/2016	Miguel Ongil	Deputy in the Assembly of Madrid 2
03/03/2016	Anonymous	Political Advisor at a major Spanish think-tank
03/04/2016	Jesús Montero	Former Secretary General of Podemos Madrid
03/04/2016	Jorge Lago	Member of the National Citizen Council of Podemos, responsible for Culture and Education
03/28/2016	Luis Alegre Zahonero	Secretary General of Podemos Community of Madrid, Co-founder of Podemos
03/31/2016	Anonymous	Deputy in the Assembly of Madrid 3

## Appendix G – Interview coding scheme

1. Interlocutors’ relationship with local activists/Interlocutors’ views on the role of members/activists
2. Interlocutors’ relationship with the center
  - A, views on the role of party leader
  - B, opinions/suggestions on intra-party democracy
3. Interlocutors’ understanding of online participation within the party
4. Interlocutors’ normative understanding of their own “mission”
5. Interlocutors’ opinion on coalitions with other parties (Podemos)

## Appendix H – Membership survey questionnaire<sup>88</sup>

### Research about citizen participation in political parties

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Dear Respondent,

This questionnaire is part of a doctoral dissertation from the Central European University (CEU), an international institution located in Budapest, Hungary. The completion of the questionnaire will take about 5-10 minutes. The survey is anonymous, all data will be treated in a confidential manner and no personal information will be made public.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

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<sup>88</sup> The questionnaire displayed here includes wording that is specific to the Five Star Movement. However, the same questions were used in Podemos, with necessary adaptations in the terminology. The original questionnaires were displayed in Spanish (Podemos), and Italian (Five Star Movement); what is provided here is an English translation of the same items.

Q1 In which of these age categories do you belong?

- Less than 18 years old
  - 18-24
  - 25-34
  - 35-44
  - 45-54
  - 55-64
  - 65-74
  - 75-84
  - 85 years or more
- 

Q2 What is your gender?

- Female
  - Male
- 

Q4 In which region do you live? (dropdown list)

---

Q7 What is your highest level of education?

- No title
  - Primary school diploma
  - High-school License
  - Three-year degree
  - Specialized degree or old system
  - Postgraduate degree (PhD or Similar)
- 

Q8 How would you evaluate your ability to use the Internet?

- none
  - poor
  - sufficient
  - good
  - excellent
-

Q10 How would you define your role in the Five Star Movement?  
(You can select several options)

- Certified member of Rousseau
  - Member of a Meetup Group
  - Meetup organizer / co-organizer
  - Deputy at the municipal level
  - Deputy at regional level
  - Deputy at national level
  - Deputy at European level
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
- 

Q7 How long have you been in the 5 Star Movement?

- Less than 6 months
  - 6 to 12 months
  - For 1-2 years
  - For more than 2 years
-

Q23 How long have you been in the 5 Star Movement?

- Less than 6 months
  - 6 to 12 months
  - For 1-2 years
  - For more than 2 years
  - I am not a member of the 5 Star Movement
- 

Q12 In which activities of the 5 Star Movement have you participated during the last year? (You can select several options)

- Meetup meetings
- Local Assemblies
- Italia 5 Stelle national meeting (Rimini)
- Meetings with municipal spokespersons
- Meetings with regional spokespersons
- Meetings with MPs
- Campaign Events
- Campaign work
- Local activism
- Demonstrations
- Other activities \_\_\_\_\_
- No activity

---

Q14 In the Five Star Movement there are several activities that can be performed over the Internet. Which of the following activities did you participate in the last year? (You can select several options)

- Selection of M5S candidates at municipal level
  - Selection of M5S candidates at regional level
  - Selection of M5S candidates at national level
  - Selection of the candidate for PM
  - Votes on the M5S electoral program
  - Other votes run through the Rousseau platform
  - Propose a law
  - Discuss a spokesman's bill
  - Discussions made through the Meetup platform
  - Discussions made through social profiles (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) managed by or linked to the M5S
  - Other activities \_\_\_\_\_
  - No activity
-

Q19 Which of the previous items would you consider most important?

- Selection of M5S candidates at municipal level
- Selection of M5S candidates at regional level
- Selection of M5S candidates at national level
- Selection of the premier candidate
- Votes on the M5S electoral program
- Other votes run through the Rousseau platform
- Propose a law
- Discuss a spokesman's bill
- Discussions made through the Meetup platform
- Discussions made through social profiles (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) managed by or linked to the M5S
- Other activities \_\_\_\_\_

---

Q11 How would you judge the intensity of your participation in M5S? Please answer by using a scale of 0 (meaning Nothing) to 10 (which means Maximum).

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



Q23 To what extent do you believe that your participation in the M5S ...? Please reply using a scale of 1 (meaning Totally disagree) to 5 (which means Totally agree).

	1	2	3	4	5
is important to the Movement	<input type="radio"/>				
is important for social development or political change in the country	<input type="radio"/>				
has an impact on the decisions taken by the 5 Star Movement	<input type="radio"/>				
has an impact on the national program of the 5 Star Movement	<input type="radio"/>				

---

Q13 How much time do you spend on activities related to M5S per week?

- Less than an hour
  - 1-2 hours
  - 2-5 hours
  - One entire working day (8 hours)
  - More than a day
-

Q20 To what extent do you think M5S subscribers can influence ...? Please reply using a scale of 1 (meaning Totally disagree) to 5 (which means Totally agree).

	1	2	3	4	5
Selection of M5S candidates in elections	<input type="radio"/>				
The selection of the M5S premier candidate	<input type="radio"/>				
The content of M5S legislative proposals at the regional level	<input type="radio"/>				
The content of the bills submitted by parliamentarians	<input type="radio"/>				
The M5S national program	<input type="radio"/>				

Q21 To what extent do you think the M5S deputies ...? Please reply using a scale of 1 (meaning Totally disagree) to 5 (which means Totally agree).

	1	2	3	4	5
can be reached by all Meetup members or activists	<input type="radio"/>				
take seriously into account the requests of the members in their formal activities	<input type="radio"/>				
can be controlled by the subscribers	<input type="radio"/>				
are revocable	<input type="radio"/>				
appreciate the participation of the members	<input type="radio"/>				

Q24 How much do you agree with the following statement: "The M5S is a democratic organization"? Please reply by using a 0 scale (which means Do not agree) to 10 (which means Totally agree).

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

The M5S is a democratic organization	
--------------------------------------	--

Q22 To what extent do you think the guarantor of the M5S, Beppe Grillo ...? Please reply using a scale of 1 (meaning Totally disagree) to 5 (which means Totally agree).

	1	2	3	4	5
can be reached by all members	<input type="radio"/>				
is responsible to the members	<input type="radio"/>				
is revocable	<input type="radio"/>				
values the participation of the members	<input type="radio"/>				
determines the public image of the M5S	<input type="radio"/>				



Q25 What are the aspects of M5S that you would like to change?

---

## Appendix I – Party scores in the recoded IPD questionnaire<sup>89</sup>

### The functioning of internal organs

	Five Star Movement	Podemos
3.2 Have there been competitive elections for the party institutions (convention, council, central committee) during the last four years? (10p)	0	10
4.1 Does the party have a selected representative institution (e.g. a central committee, convention) and has it met at least once in the last two years? (5p)	0	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>0/15</b>	<b>15/15</b>

### Candidate selection

	Five Star Movement	Podemos
1.3; 1.4 Who selects the party's parliamentary candidates? (5p, 5p)	5 + 4	5 + 4
2.1 What percentage of realistic positions on the party list is filled by women? (5p)	5	5
2.2 What is the value of the Women Ranking Index on the party list? (5p) – (see Rahat et al. 2008, pp. 678-679.)	5	5
2.3 What is the percentage of women among the party's current parliamentary representatives? (5p)	4	5
2.4 Does the party employ special mechanisms (such as reserved positions or districts) to guarantee representation for the following social groups or sectors on its parliamentary list (see options in Rahat and Shapira 2016:22) (5p)	0	1
4.2 Do the party's institutions do the following? A, Take part in selecting the party's representatives in the cabinet. (4 p)	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>23/34</b>	<b>25/34</b>

<sup>89</sup> Party scores were calculated based on the scoring guide developed by Rahat and Shapira (2017:103-107), also reproduced in *Appendix A*.

### Leadership selection

	Five Star Movement	Podemos
1.1, 1.2 Who selects the party leader? (5p, 5p)	4.5 <sup>90</sup>	9
3.1 Have there been competitive elections (with two or more candidates) for the position of party leader since the last general elections? (10p)	10	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14.5/20</b>	<b>19/20</b>

### Program, party platform, policy development

	Five Star Movement	Podemos
1.5 Who of the following can participate in writing or approving the party platform? (5p)	4	4
1.6. Who of the following could take part in ideological debates conducted by the party in the last four years? (5p)	4	4
4.2 Do the party's institutions do the following? C, Conduct debates about policy matters (3p)	3	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11/13</b>	<b>11/13</b>

### Coalition agreements

	Five Star Movement	Podemos
4.2 Do the party's institutions do the following? B, Approve whether the party joins or leaves the coalition (3p)	0/3	3/3

### Transparency/Online functioning

	Five Star Movement	Podemos
5.1 How easy is it to obtain a copy of the party constitution or regulations? (5p)	5	5
5.2 Are the following available on the party's website and/or Facebook page? (10p)	6	8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11/15</b>	<b>13/15</b>

<sup>90</sup> The Five Star Movement has changed its rules regarding the selection of the party leader since its foundation. Beppe Grillo was never officially selected as the party's leader, however, Luigi Di Maio was selected at online primaries in September 2017. Thus, the party received two scores on each items (0,0; 5,4) which were then averaged, resulting in the final score (4.5).

**Aggregate IPD scores**

	<b>Five Star Movement</b>	<b>Podemos</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>59.5/100</b>	<b>86/100</b>

**Appendix J – Party events attended during fieldwork**

<b>Party</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Five Star Movement</b>	Italia 5 Stelle	Annual national party meeting	Rimini	September 22-24, 2017
	Open Day Rousseau	Internal training for party members and prospective candidates	Pisa	October 19, 2017
	Meetup reunion	Local group meeting	Campi Bisenzio	November 13, 2017
<b>Podemos</b>	Campaign meeting	Presentation of local candidates before the 2015 general elections	Tres Cantos	December 10, 2015
	Campaign meeting	Presentation of local candidates before the 2015 general elections (focus: families)	Madrid	December 11, 2015
	Campaign meeting	Presentation of local candidates before the 2015 general elections	Rivas Vaciamadrid	December 12, 2015
	Campaign meeting	Presentation of local candidates before the 2015 general elections	Mejorada del Campo	December 12, 2015
	Campaign closing event	Reunion with approx. 10,000 party supporters	Caja Mágica, Madrid	December 13, 2015

## Appendix K – Crosstabs describing the relationship between relevant individual-level variables and perceptions of intra-party democracy

### A, Five Star Movement

#### 1. Age group of respondent \* To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "The M5S is a democratic organization" (0-10)

		Crosstab											
		To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "The M5S is a democratic organization" (0-10)											
		.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00	6.00	7.00	8.00	9.00	10.00	Total	
Age group of respondent	18-24	Count	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	1	0	5
		% within Age group of respondent	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	40.0%	20.0%	20.0%	20.0%	0.0%	100.0%
		% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "The M5S is a democratic organization" (0-10)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%	5.9%	3.3%	4.5%	0.0%	3.3%
25-34	Count	0	0	0	0	4	0	1	4	2	1	12	
		% within Age group of respondent	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	8.3%	33.3%	16.7%	8.3%	100.0%
		% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "The M5S is a democratic organization" (0-10)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	5.9%	13.3%	9.1%	1.9%	8.0%
35-44	Count	1	1	1	0	1	3	5	7	6	16	41	
		% within Age group of respondent	2.4%	2.4%	2.4%	0.0%	2.4%	7.3%	12.2%	17.1%	14.6%	39.0%	100.0%
		% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "The M5S is a democratic organization" (0-10)	50.0%	50.0%	25.0%	0.0%	12.5%	30.0%	29.4%	23.3%	27.3%	30.2%	27.3%
45-54	Count	1	1	1	1	2	2	5	11	7	18	49	
		% within Age group of respondent	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%	4.1%	4.1%	10.2%	22.4%	14.3%	36.7%	100.0%
		% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "The M5S is a democratic organization" (0-10)	50.0%	50.0%	25.0%	50.0%	25.0%	20.0%	29.4%	36.7%	31.8%	34.0%	32.7%
55-64	Count	0	0	2	0	1	3	4	3	2	15	30	

	% within Age group of respondent	0.0%	0.0%	6.7%	0.0%	3.3%	10.0%	13.3%	10.0%	6.7%	50.0%	100.0%
	% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "The M5S is a democratic organization" (0-10)	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	12.5%	30.0%	23.5%	10.0%	9.1%	28.3%	20.0%
65-74	Count	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	3	4	1	10
	% within Age group of respondent	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	10.0%	0.0%	0.0%	10.0%	30.0%	40.0%	10.0%	100.0%
	% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "The M5S is a democratic organization" (0-10)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	5.9%	10.0%	18.2%	1.9%	6.7%
75-84	Count	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	3
	% within Age group of respondent	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	66.7%	100.0%
	% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "The M5S is a democratic organization" (0-10)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.3%	0.0%	3.8%	2.0%

#### Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymptotic Standard Error <sup>a</sup>	Approximate T <sup>b</sup>	Approximate Significance
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	.125	.067	1.527	.129 <sup>c</sup>
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	.136	.078	1.666	.098 <sup>c</sup>
N of Valid Cases		150			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

c. Based on normal approximation.

2. Educational attainment \* To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "The M5S is a democratic organization" (0-10)

**Crosstab**

To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "The M5S is a democratic organization" (0-10)

			.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00	6.00	7.00	8.00	9.00	10.00	Total
Educational attainment	Lower secondary school	Count	0	0	0	0	1	0	4	1	5	8	19
		% within Educational attainment	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	5.3%	0.0%	21.1%	5.3%	26.3%	42.1%	100.0%
		% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "The M5S is a democratic organization" (0-10)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%	0.0%	22.2%	3.3%	21.7%	14.5%	12.2%
High school	High school	Count	2	0	1	1	2	8	6	17	11	25	73
		% within Educational attainment	2.7%	0.0%	1.4%	1.4%	2.7%	11.0%	8.2%	23.3%	15.1%	34.2%	100.0%
		% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "The M5S is a democratic organization" (0-10)	100.0%	0.0%	20.0%	50.0%	25.0%	72.7%	33.3%	56.7%	47.8%	45.5%	46.8%
Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree	Count	0	0	1	0	2	1	3	2	2	2	13
		% within Educational attainment	0.0%	0.0%	7.7%	0.0%	15.4%	7.7%	23.1%	15.4%	15.4%	15.4%	100.0%
		% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "The M5S is a democratic organization" (0-10)	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%	25.0%	9.1%	16.7%	6.7%	8.7%	3.6%	8.3%
Master's or traditional university degree	Master's or traditional university degree	Count	0	2	3	0	3	2	3	10	5	20	48
		% within Educational attainment	0.0%	4.2%	6.3%	0.0%	6.3%	4.2%	6.3%	20.8%	10.4%	41.7%	100.0%
		% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "The M5S is a democratic organization" (0-10)	0.0%	100.0%	60.0%	0.0%	37.5%	18.2%	16.7%	33.3%	21.7%	36.4%	30.8%
Post-graduate degree (PhD or similar)	Post-graduate degree (PhD or similar)	Count	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	3
		% within Educational attainment	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	66.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
		% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "The M5S is a democratic organization" (0-10)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	11.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.9%

**Symmetric Measures**

		Value	Asymptotic Standard Error <sup>a</sup>	Approximate T <sup>b</sup>	Approximate Significance
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	-.116	.078	-1.449	.149 <sup>c</sup>
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	-.092	.080	-1.151	.252 <sup>c</sup>
N of Valid Cases		156			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

c. Based on normal approximation.

3. **Self-assessed Internet skills \* To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "The M5S is a democratic organization" (0-10)**

**Crosstab**

To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "The M5S is a democratic organization" (0-10)

		To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "The M5S is a democratic organization" (0-10)										Total	
		.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00	6.00	7.00	8.00	9.00	10.00		
Self-assessed Internet skills	Sufficient	Count	0	0	0	1	0	2	4	4	4	11	26
		% within Self-assessed Internet skills	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.8%	0.0%	7.7%	15.4%	15.4%	15.4%	42.3%	100.0%
		% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "The M5S is a democratic organization" (0-10)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	18.2%	22.2%	13.3%	17.4%	20.0%	16.7%
	Good	Count	0	0	3	0	3	5	7	18	13	24	73
		% within Self-assessed Internet skills	0.0%	0.0%	4.1%	0.0%	4.1%	6.8%	9.6%	24.7%	17.8%	32.9%	100.0%
		% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "The M5S is a democratic organization" (0-10)	0.0%	0.0%	60.0%	0.0%	37.5%	45.5%	38.9%	60.0%	56.5%	43.6%	46.8%
	Excellent	Count	2	2	2	1	5	4	7	8	6	20	57
		% within Self-assessed Internet skills	3.5%	3.5%	3.5%	1.8%	8.8%	7.0%	12.3%	14.0%	10.5%	35.1%	100.0%
		% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "The M5S is a democratic organization" (0-10)	100.0%	100.0%	40.0%	50.0%	62.5%	36.4%	38.9%	26.7%	26.1%	36.4%	36.5%

**Symmetric Measures**

		Value	Asymptotic Standard Error <sup>a</sup>	Approximate T <sup>b</sup>	Approximate Significance
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	-.175	.075	-2.208	.029 <sup>c</sup>
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	-.119	.082	-1.491	.138 <sup>c</sup>
N of Valid Cases		156			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

c. Based on normal approximation.

4. How would you rate the intensity of your participation in M5S (0-10) \* To what extent do you agree with the following statement:  
 "The M5S is a democratic organization" (0-10)

**Crosstab**  
 To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "The M5S is a democratic organization" (0-10)

		.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00	6.00	7.00	8.00	9.00	10.00	Total
How would you rate the intensity of your participation in M5S (0-10)	.00 Count	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
	% within How would you rate the intensity of your participation in M5S (0-10)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "The M5S is a democratic organization" (0-10)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	9.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%
2.00	Count	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
	% within How would you rate the intensity of your participation in M5S (0-10)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "The M5S is a democratic organization" (0-10)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%
3.00	Count	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
	% within How would you rate the intensity of your participation in M5S (0-10)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "The M5S is a democratic organization" (0-10)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.7%	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%
4.00	Count	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	2	1	1	6
	% within How would you rate the intensity of your participation in M5S (0-10)	0.0%	0.0%	16.7%	0.0%	0.0%	16.7%	0.0%	33.3%	16.7%	16.7%	100.0%
	% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "The M5S is a democratic organization" (0-10)	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%	9.1%	0.0%	6.7%	4.3%	1.9%	3.9%
5.00	Count	0	0	1	1	1	1	3	3	1	3	14
	% within How would you rate the intensity of your participation in M5S (0-10)	0.0%	0.0%	7.1%	7.1%	7.1%	7.1%	21.4%	21.4%	7.1%	21.4%	100.0%

	% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "The M5S is a democratic organization" (0-10)	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%	50.0%	12.5%	9.1%	16.7%	10.0%	4.3%	5.6%	9.0%
6.00	Count	0	1	0	0	1	3	3	1	1	3	13
	% within How would you rate the intensity of your participation in M5S (0-10)	0.0%	7.7%	0.0%	0.0%	7.7%	23.1%	23.1%	7.7%	7.7%	23.1%	100.0%
	% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "The M5S is a democratic organization" (0-10)	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%	27.3%	16.7%	3.3%	4.3%	5.6%	8.4%
7.00	Count	1	1	0	1	1	2	5	1	6	7	25
	% within How would you rate the intensity of your participation in M5S (0-10)	4.0%	4.0%	0.0%	4.0%	4.0%	8.0%	20.0%	4.0%	24.0%	28.0%	100.0%
	% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "The M5S is a democratic organization" (0-10)	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	50.0%	12.5%	18.2%	27.8%	3.3%	26.1%	13.0%	16.1%
8.00	Count	0	0	2	0	3	3	5	12	6	15	46
	% within How would you rate the intensity of your participation in M5S (0-10)	0.0%	0.0%	4.3%	0.0%	6.5%	6.5%	10.9%	26.1%	13.0%	32.6%	100.0%
	% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "The M5S is a democratic organization" (0-10)	0.0%	0.0%	40.0%	0.0%	37.5%	27.3%	27.8%	40.0%	26.1%	27.8%	29.7%
9.00	Count	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	4	5	14
	% within How would you rate the intensity of your participation in M5S (0-10)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	7.1%	28.6%	28.6%	35.7%	100.0%
	% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "The M5S is a democratic organization" (0-10)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	5.6%	13.3%	17.4%	9.3%	9.0%
10.00	Count	1	0	1	0	2	0	1	4	4	20	33
	% within How would you rate the intensity of your participation in M5S (0-10)	3.0%	0.0%	3.0%	0.0%	6.1%	0.0%	3.0%	12.1%	12.1%	60.6%	100.0%

% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "The M5S is a democratic organization" (0-10)	50.0%	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%	25.0%	0.0%	5.6%	13.3%	17.4%	37.0%	21.3%
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**Symmetric Measures**

		Value	Asymptotic Standard Error <sup>a</sup>	Approximate T <sup>b</sup>	Approximate Significance
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	.244	.076	3.109	.002 <sup>c</sup>
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	.323	.074	4.221	.000 <sup>c</sup>
N of Valid Cases		155			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

c. Based on normal approximation.

**5. Approximately how much time do you dedicate to party activities per week? \* To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "The M5S is a democratic organization" (0-10)**

**Crosstab**

To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "The M5S is a democratic organization" (0-10)

		To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "The M5S is a democratic organization" (0-10)										Total	
		.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00	6.00	7.00	8.00	9.00	10.00		
Approximately how much time do you dedicate to party activities per week?	Less than one hour	Count	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	5	0	0	8
		% within Approximately how much time do you dedicate to party activities per week?	0.0%	12.5%	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%	12.5%	0.0%	62.5%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	1-2 hours	% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "The M5S is a democratic organization" (0-10)	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%	9.1%	0.0%	16.7%	0.0%	0.0%	5.1%
		Count	0	0	1	1	1	2	5	4	5	6	25
		% within Approximately how much time do you dedicate to party activities per week?	0.0%	0.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	8.0%	20.0%	16.0%	20.0%	24.0%	100.0%
		% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "The M5S is a democratic organization" (0-10)	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%	50.0%	12.5%	18.2%	27.8%	13.3%	21.7%	10.9%	16.0%
2-5 hours	Count	0	0	1	1	3	5	7	5	2	18	42	
	% within Approximately how much time do you dedicate to party activities per week?	0.0%	0.0%	2.4%	2.4%	7.1%	11.9%	16.7%	11.9%	4.8%	42.9%	100.0%	
	% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "The M5S is a democratic organization" (0-10)	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%	50.0%	37.5%	45.5%	38.9%	16.7%	8.7%	32.7%	26.9%	
One	Count	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	6	5	6	20	

entire day (8 hours)	% within	Approximately how much time do you dedicate to party activities per week?	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	5.0%	10.0%	0.0%	30.0%	25.0%	30.0%	100.0%
	% within	To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "The M5S is a democratic organization" (0-10)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%	18.2%	0.0%	20.0%	21.7%	10.9%	12.8%
More than one day	Count		2	1	3	0	2	1	6	10	11	25	61
	% within	Approximately how much time do you dedicate to party activities per week?	3.3%	1.6%	4.9%	0.0%	3.3%	1.6%	9.8%	16.4%	18.0%	41.0%	100.0%
	% within	To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "The M5S is a democratic organization" (0-10)	100.0%	50.0%	60.0%	0.0%	25.0%	9.1%	33.3%	33.3%	47.8%	45.5%	39.1%

#### Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymptotic Standard Error <sup>a</sup>	Approximate T <sup>b</sup>	Approximate Significance
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	.117	.087	1.467	.145 <sup>c</sup>
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	.172	.078	2.168	.032 <sup>c</sup>
N of Valid Cases		156			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

c. Based on normal approximation.

## B, Podemos

### 1. Age group of respondent \* To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Podemos is a democratic organization" (0-10)?

		Crosstab												
		To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Podemos is a democratic organization" (0-10)?												
		.00	1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00	6.00	7.00	8.00	9.00	10.00	Total	
Age group of respondent	18-24	Count	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	0	0	2	6
		% within Age group of respondent	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	16.7%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	33.3%	100.0%
		% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Podemos is a democratic organization" (0-10)?	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	14.3%	0.0%	11.5%	0.0%	0.0%	6.9%	4.7%
25-34		Count	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	1	1	2	8
		% within Age group of respondent	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%	12.5%	25.0%	12.5%	12.5%	25.0%	100.0%
		% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Podemos is a democratic organization" (0-10)?	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	14.3%	6.7%	7.7%	5.3%	5.3%	6.9%	6.3%
35-44		Count	0	0	1	0	0	2	2	1	2	6	4	18
		% within Age group of respondent	0.0%	0.0%	5.6%	0.0%	0.0%	11.1%	11.1%	5.6%	11.1%	33.3%	22.2%	100.0%
		% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Podemos is a democratic organization" (0-10)?	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%	28.6%	13.3%	3.8%	10.5%	31.6%	13.8%	14.1%
45-54		Count	1	1	0	0	0	2	5	5	5	7	5	31
		% within Age group of respondent	3.2%	3.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.5%	16.1%	16.1%	16.1%	22.6%	16.1%	100.0%
		% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Podemos is a democratic organization" (0-10)?	100.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	28.6%	33.3%	19.2%	26.3%	36.8%	17.2%	24.2%
55-64		Count	0	1	1	3	0	0	2	13	9	4	11	44
		% within Age group of respondent	0.0%	2.3%	2.3%	6.8%	0.0%	0.0%	4.5%	29.5%	20.5%	9.1%	25.0%	100.0%
		% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Podemos is a democratic organization" (0-10)?	0.0%	50.0%	20.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	13.3%	50.0%	47.4%	21.1%	37.9%	34.4%
65-74		Count	0	0	3	0	1	1	5	1	2	1	4	18
		% within Age group of respondent	0.0%	0.0%	16.7%	0.0%	5.6%	5.6%	27.8%	5.6%	11.1%	5.6%	22.2%	100.0%

	% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Podemos is a democratic organization" (0-10)?	0.0%	0.0%	60.0%	0.0%	50.0%	14.3%	33.3%	3.8%	10.5%	5.3%	13.8%	14.1%
75-84	Count	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	3
	% within Age group of respondent	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	33.3%	100.0%
	% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Podemos is a democratic organization" (0-10)?	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.8%	0.0%	0.0%	3.4%	2.3%

**Symmetric Measures**

		Value	Asymptotic Standard Error <sup>a</sup>	Approximate T <sup>b</sup>	Approximate Significance
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	-.117	.082	-1.325	.187 <sup>c</sup>
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	-.097	.093	-1.090	.278 <sup>c</sup>
N of Valid Cases		128			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

c. Based on normal approximation.

**2. Educational attainment \* To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Podemos is a democratic organization" (0-10)?**

**Crosstab**

			To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Podemos is a democratic organization" (0-10)?											
			.00	1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00	6.00	7.00	8.00	9.00	10.00	Total
Educational attainment	Elementary school	Count	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	4
		% within Educational attainment	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	0.0%	25.0%	0.0%	25.0%	25.0%	100.0%
		% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Podemos is a democratic organization" (0-10)?	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	14.3%	0.0%	3.8%	0.0%	5.3%	3.2%	3.1%
Lower secondary school	CEU IPD Collection	Count	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	1	2	3	3	13
		% within Educational attainment	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	15.4%	0.0%	0.0%	15.4%	7.7%	15.4%	23.1%	23.1%	100.0%
		% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Podemos is a democratic organization" (0-10)?	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	66.7%	0.0%	0.0%	13.3%	3.8%	10.5%	15.8%	9.7%	10.0%
High school	Count	0	0	1	0	1	2	5	9	2	4	13	37	

(bachillerato)	% within Educational attainment	0.0%	0.0%	2.7%	0.0%	2.7%	5.4%	13.5%	24.3%	5.4%	10.8%	35.1%	100.0%
	% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Podemos is a democratic organization" (0-10)?	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%	50.0%	28.6%	33.3%	34.6%	10.5%	21.1%	41.9%	28.5%
	Count	1	2	3	1	0	2	7	10	12	8	12	58
Bachelor's degree/traditional university degree	% within Educational attainment	1.7%	3.4%	5.2%	1.7%	0.0%	3.4%	12.1%	17.2%	20.7%	13.8%	20.7%	100.0%
	% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Podemos is a democratic organization" (0-10)?	100.0%	100.0%	60.0%	33.3%	0.0%	28.6%	46.7%	38.5%	63.2%	42.1%	38.7%	44.6%
	Count	0	0	1	0	1	2	1	5	3	3	2	18
Postgraduate degree (Master's or PhD)	% within Educational attainment	0.0%	0.0%	5.6%	0.0%	5.6%	11.1%	5.6%	27.8%	16.7%	16.7%	11.1%	100.0%
	% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Podemos is a democratic organization" (0-10)?	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%	50.0%	28.6%	6.7%	19.2%	15.8%	15.8%	6.5%	13.8%
	Count	0	0	1	0	1	2	1	5	3	3	2	18

#### Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymptotic Standard Error <sup>a</sup>	Approximate T <sup>b</sup>	Approximate Significance
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	-.094	.080	-1.071	.286 <sup>c</sup>
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	-.106	.086	-1.202	.232 <sup>c</sup>
N of Valid Cases		130			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

c. Based on normal approximation.

### 3. Self-assessed Internet skills \* To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Podemos is a democratic organization" (0-10)?

		Crosstab											
		To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Podemos is a democratic organization" (0-10)?											
		.00	1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00	6.00	7.00	8.00	9.00	10.00	Total
Self-assessed Internet skills	None	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	2
	Count	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	2
	% within Self-assessed Internet skills	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	100.0%

	% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Podemos is a democratic organization" (0-10)?	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.7%	0.0%	0.0%	5.3%	0.0%	1.5%
Low	Count	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	2	2	0	2	10
	% within Self-assessed Internet skills	0.0%	0.0%	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%	0.0%	10.0%	20.0%	20.0%	0.0%	20.0%	100.0%
	% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Podemos is a democratic organization" (0-10)?	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%	33.3%	50.0%	0.0%	6.7%	7.7%	10.5%	0.0%	6.5%	7.7%
Sufficient	Count	1	1	2	1	1	4	7	16	10	6	18	67
	% within Self-assessed Internet skills	1.5%	1.5%	3.0%	1.5%	1.5%	6.0%	10.4%	23.9%	14.9%	9.0%	26.9%	100.0%
	% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Podemos is a democratic organization" (0-10)?	100.0%	50.0%	40.0%	33.3%	50.0%	57.1%	46.7%	61.5%	52.6%	31.6%	58.1%	51.5%
Good	Count	0	1	1	1	0	3	5	8	7	11	11	48
	% within Self-assessed Internet skills	0.0%	2.1%	2.1%	2.1%	0.0%	6.3%	10.4%	16.7%	14.6%	22.9%	22.9%	100.0%
	% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Podemos is a democratic organization" (0-10)?	0.0%	50.0%	20.0%	33.3%	0.0%	42.9%	33.3%	30.8%	36.8%	57.9%	35.5%	36.9%
Excellent	Count	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	3
	% within Self-assessed Internet skills	0.0%	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	100.0%
	% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Podemos is a democratic organization" (0-10)?	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.7%	0.0%	0.0%	5.3%	0.0%	2.3%

#### Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymptotic Standard Error <sup>a</sup>	Approximate T <sup>b</sup>	Approximate Significance
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	.060	.093	.678	.499 <sup>c</sup>
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	.070	.089	.793	.429 <sup>c</sup>
N of Valid Cases		130			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

c. Based on normal approximation.

**4. How would you rate the intensity of your participation in Podemos (0-10)? \* To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Podemos is a democratic organization" (0-10)?**

**Crosstab**

To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Podemos is a democratic organization" (0-10)?

		.00	1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00	6.00	7.00	8.00	9.00	10.00	Total	
How would you rate the intensity of your participation in Podemos (0-10)?	.00 Count	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	
	% within How would you rate the intensity of your participation in Podemos (0-10)?	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	
	% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Podemos is a democratic organization" (0-10)?	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%	
	1.00 Count	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	5
	% within How would you rate the intensity of your participation in Podemos (0-10)?	0.0%	20.0%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	40.0%	100.0%
	% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Podemos is a democratic organization" (0-10)?	0.0%	33.3%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%	14.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.5%	3.8%
2.00	Count	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	3	2	7	
	% within How would you rate the intensity of your participation in Podemos (0-10)?	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	14.3%	0.0%	14.3%	42.9%	28.6%	100.0%	
	% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Podemos is a democratic organization" (0-10)?	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.7%	0.0%	5.3%	15.8%	6.5%	5.3%	
	3.00 Count	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	3	1	1	1	4	12
	% within How would you rate the intensity of your participation in Podemos (0-10)?	0.0%	0.0%	8.3%	0.0%	8.3%	0.0%	8.3%	25.0%	8.3%	8.3%	8.3%	33.3%	100.0%
	% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Podemos is a democratic organization" (0-10)?	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	6.7%	11.1%	5.3%	5.3%	12.9%	9.1%	
4.00	Count	1	0	1	1	1	0	2	1	5	3	2	17	
	% within How would you rate the intensity of your participation in Podemos (0-10)?	5.9%	0.0%	5.9%	5.9%	5.9%	0.0%	11.8%	5.9%	29.4%	17.6%	11.8%	100.0%	

	% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Podemos is a democratic organization" (0-10)?	100.0%	0.0%	20.0%	33.3%	50.0%	0.0%	13.3%	3.7%	26.3%	15.8%	6.5%	12.9%
5.00	Count	0	0	1	0	0	2	3	5	3	0	2	16
	% within How would you rate the intensity of your participation in Podemos (0-10)?	0.0%	0.0%	6.3%	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%	18.8%	31.3%	18.8%	0.0%	12.5%	100.0%
	% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Podemos is a democratic organization" (0-10)?	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%	28.6%	20.0%	18.5%	15.8%	0.0%	6.5%	12.1%
6.00	Count	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	5	3	1	2	12
	% within How would you rate the intensity of your participation in Podemos (0-10)?	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	8.3%	41.7%	25.0%	8.3%	16.7%	100.0%
	% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Podemos is a democratic organization" (0-10)?	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.7%	18.5%	15.8%	5.3%	6.5%	9.1%
7.00	Count	0	1	1	1	0	3	2	4	3	7	7	29
	% within How would you rate the intensity of your participation in Podemos (0-10)?	0.0%	3.4%	3.4%	3.4%	0.0%	10.3%	6.9%	13.8%	10.3%	24.1%	24.1%	100.0%
	% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Podemos is a democratic organization" (0-10)?	0.0%	33.3%	20.0%	33.3%	0.0%	42.9%	13.3%	14.8%	15.8%	36.8%	22.6%	22.0%
8.00	Count	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	5	1	3	3	15
	% within How would you rate the intensity of your participation in Podemos (0-10)?	0.0%	6.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.7%	6.7%	33.3%	6.7%	20.0%	20.0%	100.0%
	% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Podemos is a democratic organization" (0-10)?	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	14.3%	6.7%	18.5%	5.3%	15.8%	9.7%	11.4%
9.00	Count	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	2	1	2	8
	% within How would you rate the intensity of your participation in Podemos (0-10)?	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%	12.5%	25.0%	12.5%	25.0%	100.0%

	% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Podemos is a democratic organization" (0-10)?	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	6.7%	3.7%	10.5%	5.3%	6.5%	6.1%
10.00	Count	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	0	0	5	10
	% within How would you rate the intensity of your participation in Podemos (0-10)?	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%	30.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	100.0%
	% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Podemos is a democratic organization" (0-10)?	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	13.3%	11.1%	0.0%	0.0%	16.1%	7.6%

**Symmetric Measures**

		Value	Asymptotic Standard Error <sup>a</sup>	Approximate T <sup>b</sup>	Approximate Significance
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	.119	.092	1.367	.174 <sup>c</sup>
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	.082	.093	.943	.348 <sup>c</sup>
N of Valid Cases		132			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

c. Based on normal approximation.

**5. Approximately how much time do you dedicate to party activities per week? \* To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Podemos is a democratic organization" (0-10)?**

		Crosstab												
		To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Podemos is a democratic organization" (0-10)?												
		.00	1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00	6.00	7.00	8.00	9.00	10.00	Total	
Approximately how much time do you dedicate to party activities per week?	Less than one hour	Count	0	1	2	1	1	2	2	3	4	6	5	27
		% within Approximately how much time do you dedicate to party activities per week?	0.0%	3.7%	7.4%	3.7%	3.7%	7.4%	7.4%	11.1%	14.8%	22.2%	18.5%	100.0%
		% within To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Podemos is a democratic organization" (0-10)?	0.0%	33.3%	40.0%	33.3%	50.0%	28.6%	13.3%	11.1%	21.1%	31.6%	16.1%	20.5%
	1-2 hours	Count	0	0	1	0	0	0	6	8	7	3	6	31

	% within	Approximately how much time do you dedicate to party activities per week?	0.0%	0.0%	3.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	19.4%	25.8%	22.6%	9.7%	19.4%	100.0%
	% within	To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Podemos is a democratic organization" (0-10)?	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	40.0%	29.6%	36.8%	15.8%	19.4%	23.5%
2-5 hours	Count		1	2	1	2	1	4	3	8	5	7	13	47
	% within	Approximately how much time do you dedicate to party activities per week?	2.1%	4.3%	2.1%	4.3%	2.1%	8.5%	6.4%	17.0%	10.6%	14.9%	27.7%	100.0%
	% within	To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Podemos is a democratic organization" (0-10)?	100.0%	66.7%	20.0%	66.7%	50.0%	57.1%	20.0%	29.6%	26.3%	36.8%	41.9%	35.6%
An entire day (8 hours)	Count		0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	4	9
	% within	Approximately how much time do you dedicate to party activities per week?	0.0%	0.0%	11.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	11.1%	11.1%	22.2%	44.4%	100.0%
	% within	To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Podemos is a democratic organization" (0-10)?	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.7%	5.3%	10.5%	12.9%	6.8%
More than one day	Count		0	0	0	0	0	1	4	7	2	1	3	18
	% within	Approximately how much time do you dedicate to party activities per week?	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	5.6%	22.2%	38.9%	11.1%	5.6%	16.7%	100.0%
	% within	To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Podemos is a democratic organization" (0-10)?	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	14.3%	26.7%	25.9%	10.5%	5.3%	9.7%	13.6%

#### Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymptotic Standard Error <sup>a</sup>	Approximate T <sup>b</sup>	Approximate Significance
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	.046	.078	.524	.601 <sup>c</sup>
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	.028	.086	.324	.747 <sup>c</sup>
N of Valid Cases		132			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

c. Based on normal approximation.

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