

PARTY-MOVEMENT'S POWER DYNAMICS IN TRANSCULTURAL PERSPECTIVES: THE AAP AND THE M5S BETWEEN PARTICIPATION AND ELECTORAL POLITICS

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Abstract: Political parties are privileged phenomena from which to analyse and understand political power dynamics; this article focuses on a specific type: party-movements. These are considered to be particularly interesting because they have emerged from civil society, carry innovative political ideas based on participation and entail new forms of sharing political power. Looking very closely at the power dynamics within party-movements, this empirical research (based on two cases of ethnographic fieldwork conducted in India and Italy) comparatively investigates the power dynamics between local and national centres of power within the participatory approaches of the *Aam Aadmi Party* (AAP) and the *Movimento 5 Stelle* (M5S). The comparison takes place between two similar political phenomena of two culturally and geographically different political systems and provides further evidence in relation to representative democracy. In both cases, party-movements infuse a new enthusiasm into politics with the promise to redistribute power at the local level through participation. However, in order to compete with the power of other political parties within the electoral arena, party-movements need to be united political entities and *de facto* they relegate political participation under the primacy of party centralism. This resultantly has an impact at the local and national levels. Furthermore, the comparison of party-movements pertaining to diverse political landscapes emphasises the transcultural tendency of the power dynamics in representative systems in which participation is subdued to centralisation.

Keywords: Political power, participation, party-movements, Aam Aadmi Party, Movimento 5 Stelle.

INTRODUCTION

Understanding power in politics as freedom of action and therefore as the capacity of decision-making, one can identify power dynamics between two not only different political entities, people or subjects, but also within the same political entity, as within a political party, for example. The restricted focus of analysis within political parties still includes a wide range of power dynamics. For instance, it concerns the national leadership, the local clusters, the relationships with other (especially allied) parties at national or international levels, or different

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kinds of decision making processes such as those occurring in political choices or concerning internal party structure, and so on.

This article focuses on the dynamic between the local and the national centres of power within a specific type of party that is here called party-movement. This can be briefly described as being a relatively recent political party that originated from civil society and that evolved through a focus on political participation in response to disaffection in representative democratic regimes. Party-movements are extremely interesting phenomena of glocal power, especially for their discursive emphasis on the need to reshape political power through participatory approaches at the local level and even more so when this discourse is prized by electoral success. Party-movements demonstrate that “citizen disengagement applies only to politics as usual, when no change seems available in the face of an intolerable, unjust socioeconomic situation” (Santos 2015). They express the discursive political potential of the initially informal political power that resides in civil society and reach out to the formal political power of state institutions.

In the age of widespread political disaffection of liberal democratic regimes, research on political power must depart from the assumption that the centralised handling of power is in question. Party-movements advance a proposal for political innovation and the redefinition of political power in light of a participatory approach from the bottom-up that aims at going beyond the cartel party system (Katz and Mair 1995; Mair and Katz 2009). They maintain that by expanding participation they encompass common people in new and subverting political power networks. To observe the dialectic between informal and formal power and how it changes with the changes caused by and to party-movements, research must be able to focus power dynamics at two different levels – the local and the global, or national. Then, it is possible to observe the form in which each of them is influenced by, and influences, the other. As a result, research can explore the dynamics of political power emerging with party-movements and so it can examine what are the prospects for political power of the most innovative electoral political responses produced by political disaffection in liberal-democratic regimes.

This analysis provides answers to questions concerning the changing relationship between local and national political power, and also concerning which are the spaces that are oc-

cupied and what is the timing, duration, rhythm and temporal progression entailed by these political innovations. Party-movements may: encompass populist features, be progressive and conservative at the same time, be supposedly post-ideological, and entail a number of contradictions besides being innovative (Gianolla 2017b). This paper, however, is not dedicated to assessing the democratic potential of party-movements, but rather focuses on the power dynamics within them. Party movements may remain in the electoral political spectrum for a long or short period, but, most importantly, they confront the power of traditional political parties in electoral politics and they may endure to either carry out their promise to change the dynamics of political power or they may return to a more traditional handling of it. Regardless of the answers to these questions, their empirical substance allows them to constitute new (transitory?) theoretical categories such as: *participation* with special regard to the selection of candidates, *leadership* and the forms to handle power dynamics and conflicts, and *transcality* identifying intersections of local and global/national power.

This paper analyses the Indian *Aam Aadmi Party* (AAP – Party of the Common Person) and the Italian *Movimento 5 Stelle* (M5S – 5 Star Movement). Being both relatively new, they have emerged from civil society and stress the relevance of local participation and local decision-making in order to reshape political power from below and provide a reinvigorated discourse for democracy (Gianolla 2017a). The comparative approach is an especially rich method to employ when addressing two political regimes that have so much in common and have so many differences, as a country of the global South (India) – and a country of the global North (Italy) have. Comparative cases may be selected for their concordances in order to identify differences or vice versa, and to analyse heterogeneous phenomena in order to identify commonalities (Palano 2012: 66-67). While homogeneity stresses reliability, heterogeneity generates instability (Mahoney 2007: 130), a combination that here fosters critical analysis. This article employs a critical assessment of power dynamics in liberal democratic regimes in transcultural perspectives. The analysis largely, but not exclusively, developed from data that was collected using a qualitative methodology during ethnographic fieldwork conducted in India (January-April 2014) and in Italy (January-July 2015). The names of activists and political leaders were

substituted by pseudonyms when the interviewees did not express the desire to avoid anonymity.

The AAP and the M5S are two privileged political phenomena from which to study the dynamic between local and national power. This is because their fundamental political statements are based on the empowerment of common people within the formal political arena. They both propose themselves as the vehicles of such empowerment by stressing a participatory approach at the local level, although they have done so in different ways as is explored below. The power dynamic that has emerged shows that party-movements can negate the participatory principles that they defended in different relevant cases, especially if the central leadership is puzzled by internal democratic demands or is preoccupied with strengthening party unity. How do party-movements manage the dynamic between power at the local and national level? How do they combine their emphasis on bottom-up participation with the challenges of centralising electoral politics in critical situations? What evidence does the dynamic between local and national power dimensions within party-movements provide compared to the expectation of democratising access to political power? What evidence for the understanding of political power do we draw from the power dynamics of party-movements in transcultural perspectives?

The rest of this article is divided into four parts (with two sub-sections each). The first part explores the background trajectory of the AAP and the M5S with a focus on their origin in civil society and on their local participatory proposals. The second part explores these party-movements' power dynamics at the local level. The third part analyses centralising power dynamics at the national dimension. Lastly, the concluding part draws lessons from the comparison and from the dynamic between bottom-up and top-down power dynamics.

BACKGROUND ON PARTY-MOVEMENTS: THE AAP AND THE M5S

Civil society centralised origins

The history of *India after Gandhi* (Guha 2008), or the history of the world's biggest democracy after having obtained independence from the British empire in 1947, is the trajectory of a "civilisation-state" (Kumar 2002) that is immensely di-

verse and that decided to not follow the core of Gandhi's democratic perspectives. Gandhi advocated a democratic model based on participation, centred on small communities and in which power dynamics would have done away with a weak state and a strong civil society. His main concept was *Swaraj* (developed beginning in 1909 with the book, *Hind Swaraj* Gandhi 1938) meaning self-rule in a wide and radically moral democratic perspective. The constitution of India had weak provisions in terms of local participation until the 73rd and 74th amendments made in 1993 introduced the *panchayati raj*. While this reflects an openness to Gandhi's vision of decentralised politics, it is problematic especially because it is instigated top-down within the political system from the central government (de Souza 2003; Mathur 2013). The political system in India since independence can be analysed in three phases that parallel to the shift of hegemonic rule by the Congress Party (de Souza 2000: 213ss). The third phase, running since the 1990s, has seen the consolidation of the bi-polarity of Congress and the BJP (*Bharatiya Janata Party* – Indian People's Party) acting as the two main parties leading two coalitions at the national level, coupled with smaller regional parties in different states (see also Berloff 2014). Guha points out that in most political parties there is: family rule, politicians are corrupt and have a criminal background, and civil servants are not independent (Guha 2008: 749). The civil society response to this situation has been increasingly organised bottom-up by grassroots movements in actions such as the *Right to Information* (RTI) campaign and the *India Against Corruption* (IAC) campaign that were both able to mobilise the masses and their public demands to the political system.

Arvind Kejriwal, the main AAP founder and current leader, decided to enter into electoral politics in 2012, parting ways with the IAC leader and Gandhian activist Anna Hazare. The AAP became the promoter of an ethical political discourse based on *Swaraj* and honesty in politics. The electoral success was immediate with them gaining a 29.5 per cent share of the vote in the Delhi state election of 2013, something that allowed for the formation of a minority government that lasted only 49 days. In the next state election the AAP conquered 67 of the 70 state assembly seats and has ruled the state's government since February 2015 (see also Torri and Maiorano 2015). Between these two elections the AAP received a sound defeat at the national elections of 2014 where it gained a mere 2.1 per cent share of the vote, as its big step up from the small

state of Delhi to the immense and very rural based Indian political arena failed¹.

The recent history of the Italian political system has provided a special dynamism and a certain type of instability. After the collapse of the bipolar party system that saw opposition between the Christian Democratic and Communist fronts (between the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s), the next twenty years were characterised by the centrality of Silvio Berlusconi, leader of the main centre-right party (*Forza Italia*, FI or Forward Italy). Berlusconi's time was characterised by support and opposition for his politics with the emergence, aggregation and disappearance of several political parties (Morlino 1996; Pasquino 1994; Valbruzzi 2013). This period declined under the influence of internal discontent, neoliberal politics, international pressure and the economic crisis (Morlino and Piana 2014; Morlino and Quaranta 2016), and led to the technocratic government of Mario Monti coming into power in 2011.

Leader centralism has not been a specific characteristic of Berlusconi's party, as it rather defines a way of doing politics (Musella 2014; Pasquino 2013, 2014; Raniolo 2006). It is then no surprise that even the Democratic Party, the biggest party of the centre-left, reinforced its electoral politics through the figure of its national secretary – Matteo Renzi – who was the prime minister for almost three years from 2014 to 2016. After increasingly aggregating electoral support all over the country, the M5S participated for the first time in national elections in February of 2013 and obtained an astonishing result by gaining 25.5 per cent of the national vote. The comedian Beppe Grillo and the IT expert Gianroberto Casaleggio (1954-2016) founded the M5S movement in October of 2009. The trajectory was started in 2005 through the creation of Beppe Grillo's blog "beppegrillo.it", as the comedian was supported by Casaleggio who was able to channel into it the energy of his three decades of art-activism (Biorcio and Natale 2013; Bordinon and Ceccarini 2013; Caracci 2013; Greblo 2011; Santoro 2012, 2014; Scanzi 2012). Grillo and Casaleggio catalysed dissatisfaction for the political system through the blog. Over time it became more and more interactive although always remained critically centralised, and it aggregated the spontaneous formation of local clusters in a political formation that is currently represented from the local level on up to the European Union level.

Both party-movements represent a response to the crises of their respective traditional political systems and they embody a civil society perspective that has emerged from the bottom-up, although it has been centralised around the reputation of two renowned leaders. The power of political mobilisation via leader centralism, coupled with the volunteer engagement of enthusiastic political activists at the grassroots level, has constituted the common characteristic of both party-movements. The different progressions they have followed between their foundation and their first significant electoral victory – only one year for the AAP and over five years for the M5S² – are related to the specific peculiarities of their countries as well as to the two different approaches they possess with respect to participation and party organisation. Since its foundation, the AAP has assumed the symbolism and structure of a political party, while the M5S has rejected any such identification with a structured institution. Instead, the M5S has preferred to identify itself with the informality of a movement, even though it has had to face the creation of internal structures over time.

The focus on participation

The focus the AAP and the M5S possess with respect to participation differ in both discursive terms as well as in the empirical way of structuring the local clusters. They do not differ, however, in the way in which their participatory approaches affect electoral politics, as this at least was the case initially when they touched upon similar measures for the selection of candidates. Before analysing these measures in more detail, a brief outline of the different approaches to participation is presented.

The AAP emphasises the discursive dimension of *swaraj* as a way to devolve political power to local councils, be that in their villages (*gram sabha*) or city neighbourhoods (*mohalla sabha*). With this approach, the AAP innovates Gandhi's democratic proposal and reinvigorates his ideas with the actualisation of its possible impact in urban political organisation. In its first (minority) government (2013-2014), the AAP was preparing the introduction of the "Delhi swaraj act". The sociologist, Gandhian scholar and AAP national leader Varun (interview, Delhi, 25/02/2014), explained that this legislation would go beyond the original idea of the *panchayati raj*. Varun

elucidated further that the *swaraj* act had provisions for the empowerment of the *mohalla sabha* based on gender equality, reservation for minorities, oppressed castes and indigenous peoples, and that it foresaw democratic innovation such as the right to recall and a different interplay between represented and representatives³. The competences of the *mohalla* would embrace the areas of education, health, security, social welfare (including care for the poor, elderly, disabled and other vulnerable people), and would embrace the power to: inquiry, punish and reward government officials and municipal bodies, manage the budget and hire workers, deliberate about the use of land, decide on alcohol shop licences and more. Although the AAP to date has not tabled the act, besides having a full majority in the Delhi State assembly since February 2015, it has started experimenting with establishing *mohalla sabha* around Delhi (HT Correspondent 2016; Kant 2016).

The M5S discursively appeals to “direct democracy”, or the citizens’ direct participation in politics, as opposed to representative democracy that is centralised and managed by traditional parties. The M5S defends that the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) allows for direct participation by citizens, “introducing direct democracy we do not need parties any longer: on an egalitarian basis you decide anything, both at the local and national level” (Fo, Casaleggio, and Grillo 2013: 191). It is a fact that the creation of Grillo’s blog, the adoption of social networks (such as meetup.com) and the increasingly intense use of the M5S’s main ICT instrument for decision-making “Rousseau” (previously known as “Operating System”)⁴, has played an unprecedented – although controversial – role in the rise of the M5S as a political phenomenon. Besides its virtual dimension, participation within the M5S has a very strong local dimension, especially since July 2005 when local groups of sympathisers mushroomed up in different Italian regions and slowly throughout the country, especially using the platform meetup.com⁵. To critics who argue that the use of ICT does not necessarily imply unrestricted freedom or more democratic quality (Cucchi et al. 2015; Etling, Faris, and Palfrey 2010; Morozov 2011) the M5S responds by stating that there is a need for a “cultural revolution” in which ICT facilitates and allows for more participation and that the M5S’ integration of ICT within the movement is a leading unprecedented example of this.

The different participation approaches used by the two party-movements merge into the adoption of similar ap-

proaches when they attempt to bring participation into representative politics. The pre-electoral participatory approaches of the AAP and of the M5S have involved a big number of volunteers and activists on the ground, especially to define who will hold decision-making power in the future, through the selection of candidates. Both the AAP and the M5S open up the selection of candidates to the respective activists, and the AAP extends its invitation to people beyond the group of activists. There are differences between their selection procedures and they can be traced to the role of the local constituency *vis à vis* the national leadership.

For local elections, the M5S generally relies on the decision of the relative constituency. The process was seen initially as the almost unconditioned liberty of the local cluster as decisions could be taken online or during in-person meetings. The more the M5S grows and institutionalises, the more Rousseau is used to: make the final decision, standardise the method of decision-making, and it thereby reduces a local cluster's freedom as well as local conflicts. For national and European elections, the process has ever since been centralised through the ICT infrastructure. However although the selection of candidates is taken with a centralised instrument, only local candidates can run for elections and only local activists can vote for them in each constituency.

The AAP has adopted a more centralised selection process with the party leadership taking a prerogative role in screening candidates and taking final decisions on the candidate lists. However, the AAP engages in an active search of prominent personalities within civil society, especially renowned social activists, and motivates them to run for elections. Meanwhile, the M5S bases its selection process only within the basin of its activist network where individual members decide to step forward. It must be underlined that the M5S is quite close to local conflicts and social movements and many of its activists were already active before joining the movement (Mosca 2014).

The AAP works and is structured as a traditional party and its emergence is led and inspired by the party's national leadership. The M5S has since its beginnings claimed an intended lack of party structure due to its opposition to the traditional structural way of doing politics. In the following two sections, explored in some detail are the challenges faced by the two party-movements in their attempts to share power through participation at the local level. The author then ex-

poses the party-movements to different critical analysis related to their different structures. With respect to the AAP hierarchical party structure, the negative experience of a Dalit applicant candidate at the national elections of 2014 is analysed. In light of the unstructured organisation of M5S local clusters, the power dynamics in two local groups of the same town are analysed.

POWER DYNAMICS FROM THE LOCAL PERSPECTIVE

AAP: Developing local power from the centre

The AAP's discourse focuses on the political necessity to substitute the corrupted elite with honest (common) people and it tries to make this viable through its participatory recruitment process. This was something that had already been laid out in detail in the party's founding vision document (Aam Aadmi Party 2012). The AAP website describes this political difference of the party as follows: "There is no central high command in Aam Aadmi party. The party structure follows a bottom to top approach where the council members elect the Executive Body and also holds the power to recall it" (Aam Aadmi Party n.d.). The party has been structured into five bottom-up organisational levels: primary, block, district, state and national. The structure of each level includes a Council, an Executive and a Political Affairs Committee. The election of a representative and coordinators within the party must occur by consensus. Admitting recourse to voting occurs only as a last resort when consensus fails, as is included at the state and national levels (Aam Aadmi Party 2015a). There are provisions to reduce gender and caste imbalance within the party although they are limited or vague⁶.

Kejriwal maintains that the AAP aims "to hand over the power to the people. If there is concentration of power then there is lot of corruption, there is lot of arrogance, there is lot of wrongdoing that takes place. So we want to hand over the power to the people" (Arvind Kejriwal, interview, New Delhi 27/02/2014). To contest the national elections of 2014 the AAP recruited likely candidates from civil society, the business sector and from other parties with some internal disagreement (PTI 2014). The AAP's Rajasthan leader, Dr Rakesh Parikh, described the intense work carried out to select candidates:

The most important task for us was to screen the best possible candidate among the common people who applied for candidature under the banner of AAP. Additionally we had to search for the deserving people who may not have applied but would be better if they join the political process. Mood of the nation was for change and it appeared right time to send good people to parliament.

[...] Not just common people or journalists, leaders of rival parties too conceded that we had best of the candidates much better than theirs [sic]. This was one of the battles we won. We could convince good people from society who always stayed away from politics to join active politics [sic].

While fielding candidates we didn't [sic] consider cast, religion or financial status of the candidate. Deserving common people with political background getting a chance to contest election irrespective of their cast or religion was a victory in itself⁷.

Kejriwal affirmed that the AAP had selected "only good people, only those people... in extraordinary circumstances only we take people from other parties. We don't normally take people from other parties" (Arvind Kejriwal, interview, New Delhi 27/02/2014), but it remains unclear how the AAP could be able to bring out a new political culture by embracing people from other political parties. Kejriwal was aware that the selection of candidates was a complex task and that the selection process should support the AAP in creating a new elite from those oppressed, something that Dipankar Gupta calls an "elite of calling" (Gupta 2013; interview Dipankar Gupta, Jaipur 19/01/2014). However, since before the first electoral victory of 2013, Kejriwal had highlighted the strengths, weaknesses and challenges raised by the selection process and pointed out that it includes the possibility of raising hostilities amongst those within the party who are not selected (Kejriwal 2013). The candidate selection procedure had sparked criticism since its inception from people external to the party (Anuja 2013; Danish 2013) and was the cause of a major crisis inside the party at the national level (as we shall see below).

A candidate applying for an AAP electoral ticket needs to collect a hundred supporting signatures from the constituency in which they would like to run for in the elections. In national elections, the number of constituencies that elect one Member of Parliament varies and can range to include eight units so that one candidate needs to collect eight hundred signatures. Candidates must also provide a range of information including their own motivation, their own and their family members' previous experiences in social activism and politics, their economic situation and their criminal records. The Party's screening committee makes shortlists of five candidates for each

constituency and these are publicly scrutinised. This scrutiny also occurs through the party website and through social media. The party's volunteers in each constituency rank the five shortlisted candidates in secret ballots. Finally, the AAP Political Affairs Committee (PAC) interviews the candidates in order to make the final decision (also considering the AAP volunteers opinions) on who will run for election in each constituency (Aam Aadmi Party 2012, 2014; Chowdhury 2013).

Amarjeet is the pseudonym of an AAP electoral ticket applicant that participated in the national elections of 2014. He is a *Dalit* former bureaucrat and applied for Bikaner, a reserved seat in Rajasthan. He had to collect more than 800 signatures from a town of which he is not a native nor a resident and to which he would have needed to travel to, thereby investing his free time and incurring in a range of expenses. Such expenses would include the production of materials, transportation, accommodation and food, as these would apply to both himself and to a few volunteers who helped him out, all expenses that the AAP does not cover.

I interviewed Amarjeet twice, the first time (Jaipur 03/02/2014) he was preparing his electoral application and collecting support from the grassroots in the city where he was applying. Amarjeet genuinely trusted the AAP's democratic perspective, held Kejriwal's *Swaraj* (2012) book as a reference and considered the AAP to be the heir of the Gandhian vision of democracy. He was aware of, but acritical of, the AAP's absence of discussion and a programme for the uplift of the *Dalit*, considering that the democratic innovation that the party wants to bring about would tackle the issue. He held a different perspective two months later at the time of the second interview (Jaipur 05/04/2014) when he believed that *swaraj* was impractical and advocated modern urbanism to alleviate caste oppression. He spoke much more of Ambedkar than Gandhi and was disillusioned by the AAP. Amarjeet admitted that he was initially attracted to the AAP by the novelty of the party but was disenchanted after observing the party from within. He believed that the Bikaner ticket was assigned to Gaurishankar Dabi by a non-transparent political decision of the leadership of the party, and he was not informed of the reasons why he was not selected or shortlisted, nor was he notified of the results. He felt he was simply ignored by the party after having worked so hard to apply for the ticket to run in an electoral campaign for the party.

Amarjeet's case may serve as a lesson for the AAP and others, as it testifies to the need to keep transparent records of all stages of a delicate and innovative process such as the selection of candidates. The incipient and volunteer based organisation of the AAP that existed in 2014 could only partially explain this, but they do not justify cases like this. Process transparency is fundamental to avoid any doubts over the proper fluidity and rectitude of the process in order to struggle against corruption and political entanglement. The communication stream needs to be readily available, bidirectional, well structured, open to inquiry and open to facing difficult situations. Nonetheless, it must be prized that such a process exists and while it can be criticised because of what has occurred in the past, it is an innovation with a potential that hopefully the AAP will explore in more detail.

The facts prove that, at the moment, electoral power potential has priority over power sharing through participation. This is confirmed because Kejriwal believes that the capacity of candidates to win their seat in the election is an important component that needs to be considered in their selection (Kejriwal 2013). The dynamic of power between local and national is evident here, as it was confirmed in the Delhi State election of 2015 where the possibility to win a seat (in the first-past-the-post system) was among the most important – if not the most important – criteria for the assignment of the electoral ticket. The local-national power dynamic is an attempt to reconcile representation and participation. While, for the moment, the objective seems to be to achieve representative power to have a mandate to implement participatory political power through a participatory approach, from a participatory perspective, this is a compromise for important horizontal power principles. The discretion of the Political Affairs Committee – with the last word on the selection process – is both a point of electoral strength as well as a democratic weakness in terms of the participatory approach. It is the reaffirmation of the superiority of central power over local power.

M5S: Conflicting local democratic communities

The main objective of the M5S is to assign to common people – who are considered as being synonymous with internet users – the power to direct and govern society (Movimento 5 Stelle 2009, 2016). By affirming the centrality of the

experience of Grillo's blog, the M5S website, the meetup communities and their record of political mobilisations and events, the M5S recognises that a central political force directs this objective. While the M5S' ICT infrastructure is increasingly paramount for their selection of candidates, including at the local level, the in-person activism and group activities at the grassroots play a central role in defining power dynamics, leadership and candidates within the movement. This is the case in the town of Latina where half a dozen meetup groups were created and where two of them have been the most consistent at providing group experiences and allowing for open participation over the last two years. In order to understand local power dynamics it is paramount to understand the dynamics within and between meetup groups. Casaleggio's affirmed: "Our selection [of candidates] is made from the base, the base are members (of the blog), not the meetups" (Casaleggio and Travaglio 2014 Video #2 minute 29)⁸; nonetheless the reputation created at the local level within meetup groups is a fundamental feature in the selection of candidates.

Roberto Biorcio affirms that the M5S' local groups enjoy an elevated political freedom: "A group can make its own blog [website and applications] and can organise its own activities, [... this is a] movement that has a substantially autonomous base, moving freely, making its initiatives" (Biorcio, Interview, Skype 21/07/2015), Latina is no exception. Meetup group 256 named "The crickets and cicadas of Latina" was founded in August of 2006 (chronologically the first in town). Its activists have run for elections since the municipal elections of 2011. Their first success arrived only in 2013 with the election of two senators, a deputy being appointed to the lower chamber and one member to the regional parliament. At this time the M5S enjoyed great support and enthusiasm in Italy as it did in Latina, "people were united on a new horizon, participatory democracy, direct democracy and honesty" (Folco, M5S activist, interview, Latina 22/05/2015).

Already, after a few months in parliament, the three national representatives of Latina started to express an internal critical voice (not in the media) concerning some positions of the M5S' leadership. The activists of the meetup group began to be divided between those accepting and those rejecting the critical approach of the national leadership. A few months later, the internal cohesion of meetup group 256 was cracked by the sudden and nationally centralised form of organising that took place for the selection of candidates in the European

elections of May 2014⁹. A number of activists did not have the chance to debate with the local group and applications were decided on an individual basis. Moreover, the whole procedure gave a sense of lack of transparency and increased the criticism towards Grillo and Casaleggio. The combined discontent of some activists and that of the national representatives was evident from their missed or limited support of the M5S's European electoral campaign. The final split within the meetup group occurred after the decision of the three national representatives to resign from the parliament – an action that *de facto* paved the way for their own expulsion from the M5S. They took this decision independently but on the same day, exactly three weeks after the expulsion of other national representatives – Artini and Pinna – and the creation of the directory, an internal leadership structure (as we will see below) (Redazione Huffington Post 2014; Redazione Latina Today 2014).

Two months of internal conflicts and attempts to clarify followed with the strengthening of two polarised sides – the “critics” and the “faithful” to the national leadership of Grillo and Casaleggio¹⁰. This reversely translated into closeness (critics) and distance (faithful) to the positions of the three representatives. Moreover, those more critical of Grillo and Casaleggio aligned with the group of the meetup organisers and moved closer to the three representatives. The three dividing cleavages of Latina's local group were: *a*) blind affiliation vs. a critical stand towards Grillo and Casaleggio, *b*) interruption vs. maintenance of the relationship with the resigning representatives and *c*) immediate renovation vs. (previously) scheduled renovation of meetup organisers' staff. These cleavages led to a split and entail different views on how to handle the participatory power within the group and by the end of January 2015, a second meetup group was created called “5 Star Latina in Movement” (5SLIM).

The meetup groups were aware that the existing conflict carried the risk that there would be a negated candidature at the local election by the national leadership. In June 2015, right after the fall of the mayor Giovanni Di Giorgi, the two meetup groups tried to find an understanding to cooperate. This experience shows that elections may be both an element of unity and an element of division among the meetup groups and that the need of representation may unite where the different views of participation divide. However, the path of reconciliation was not smooth and during the months of Septem-

ber and October in 2015, the groups were confronted with decisions concerning the rules for the formation of the electoral list and the electoral programme, and as a result, the meetup groups faced a new moment of crisis and division. Both groups appealed for the intervention of the national leadership and the directory, both of which did not intervene. Eventually the two groups applied to represent the M5S at the town level but did so separately and the national leadership, without explaining their decision in detail, negated both groups (meetup 256 and 5SLIM) to have the possibility to run for elections in 2016¹¹. The central leadership would have accepted a joint candidature, something that the contending parties were unable to formulate and the M5S remained unrepresented in Latina in the elections in which it was likely to be successful.

In order to understand the differences between the two local groups and their power dynamics, their regulations and functioning will be analysed. This is particularly interesting because these M5S local groups organise in complete autonomy from the national leadership and give rise to different original democratic responses (as it happens broadly, see Passarelli, Tronconi, and Tuorto 2013: 144). Both groups have claimed to be more democratic than the other and they have a similar meeting frequency (one to three meetings per week) and attendance (from a handful of people to around 70 activists).

Meetup group 256's regulations have been renewed three times between 2010 and 2015¹². They have faced growth of participation requiring them to assign increasing power to the organising staff. In addition, they have restricted the right to vote based on length of time of registered activism in the group, something that is being done in order to provide some stability to the group. However, since the organising staff's power was one of the principal causes of the conflicts of 2014-15, their power was reduced in the last amendment after the split. Decisions are taken in the physical meetings¹³ by means of a majority vote¹⁴.

The meetup 5SLIM has adopted a less prescriptive approach stating its value of "community", "harmony", "consensus" and a strong affiliation to the M5S and Grillo (Meetup 5 Stelle Latina in Movimento 2015). It does not link the right to vote with activism seniority and it believes in adopting a different level of majority for different kinds of decisions besides the fact that most of the time it takes decisions in the physical meetings by consensus. The 5SLIM excludes from its mem-

bership those that have been expelled by the M5S and those who manifest opposite opinions from the ideals of the movement. Regulations of the 5SLIM foresee the renewal of the staff every six months, as opposed to every twelve months in meetup 256, and include a number of procedures to guarantee the respect of the rules entrusting an appellate body for that function.

The groups' dynamics and decision-making processes are significantly different. Meetup 256 nominates a moderator and a secretary at the beginning of each meeting. The secretary then produces a short summary of the meeting and this is then published online. While this method is more transparent, it is also more patronised and out of control especially when discussions become particularly tense. In these cases the role of the moderator is rarely managed with diligence and equity, the debates become unstructured with bidirectional dialogue, mutual interruptions among participants result and constant breaks are needed to restate the moderation rules. Additionally, the language turns increasingly aggressive and polarisation of opinions results, thereby highlighting the cut between inclusion and exclusion because those who have the ability to impose themselves prevail. This dynamic does not hinder the openness of the group to listen to those with strong opinions who often convince others. The voice of the prominent activists or "influencers" may assume control of the communication dynamic and improvise the timings and rules for decision taking, regardless of the presence of the moderator. This dynamic occurs more frequently in the meetup 256 than in the meetup 5SLIM and it happened regularly during the splitting period of December 2014-January 2015, indicating that dividing political decisions are managed with disquiet. In such a context, the influencers intervene more often and with an increased assertiveness. In this way, they may make a (subjective) summary of the discussion and propose two or three options among which the group should choose through a majority vote. The group tends to accept this kind of interaction for the sake of pragmatism identifying (direct) democracy with the rule of the majority.

In general terms, the meetup 5SLIM encourages extended deliberations and adopts decisions by consensus when the whole group is cohesive towards a decision. The role of influencers is more elusive with respect to meetup 256 because they may remain silent or intervene very punctually to direct the discussion back to the values of the group if needed. The

meetings are considered to be auto-moderated and all participants are encouraged to respect others while they are talking. This method results in a calmer and more convivial environment, and the pleasure of participation is identified as an objective of the meeting that terminates with a shared dinner. However, influencers play the role of “soft moderator”, simply directing and prioritizing the floor for those who are less apt to intervene and raise their hands instead of directly entering in the debate. Auto-moderation fails when the debate becomes tense, and then chaotic, resembling the dynamics of meetup 256. In such cases, the role of the influencers switches from soft to hard and achievements are similar to those described above.

In this section the power dynamic between local and national dimensions from a bottom-up perspective have been analysed. In the next paragraph, the power dynamic within a party-movement’s national or central dimension is concentrated on. In order to do this two important dynamics are analysed which again relate to the different structures of concrete cases of party-movements under analysis here. Firstly, the internal split of the national leadership of the AAP is considered and then the structuring of the national leadership of the M5S is described.

POWER DYNAMIC FROM THE CENTRAL PERSPECTIVE

National centralism, AAP’s Bhushan-Yadav

After the most significant electoral victory of the AAP (in Delhi in 2015), the most controversial case of organising and sharing political power within the AAP took place (see also Dipankar Ghose 2015; Marathe 2015; PTI 2015a; Radhakrishna 2015; Singh, Wal, and Singh 2015; S. Visvanathan 2015b). As a result, four of the founding members of the party Prashant Bhushan, Yogendra Yadav, Anand Kumar and Ajit Jha were first removed from all positions of responsibility and then were expelled from the party. The case became famous with the names of Bhushan-Yadav¹⁵ and personal issues between Kejriwal and the expelled leaders seemed to be among the main causes. Yadav explains that the existence of a different vision and an uneasy situation between him and Kejriwal occurred several times with Bhushan helping him to settle the

dispute in various occasions (Yadav and Tripathi 2015). Eventually, the situation became critical during the selection of candidates for the Delhi election of 2015 during which Yadav accused Kejriwal of not following the party provisions. Eagerly seeking electoral success, the two sides agreed that the conflict would be resolved after the elections. The confronting sides saw Bhushan and Yadav formally requesting more horizontality and internal democracy (Sriram and Anand 2015; TNN 2015a, 2015c), while Kejriwal received these demands as a threat to the political stability of the party. Yadav was also criticised for having personal political power ambitions within the party and as a party candidate (Debobrat Ghose 2015). Party expansion was another element of the conflict, as Kejriwal accused Bhushan and Yadav of plotting against the AAP, as they desired to make a national strategic plan for the AAP that included more engagement of the party in other states besides Delhi (Ashraf 2015; Ashutosh 2015a, 2015b). Instead of doing this, Kejriwal wanted to concentrate the AAP's efforts in Delhi after the landslide victory of February 2015. The majority of the National Council's members favoured stability and consistency together with the vision of the charismatic leader.

The procedures followed led to the expulsion of the "disidents" – a demonstration of how power dynamics were conducive of democratically established procedures. For example, their exclusion from the National Executive took place at the National Council meeting of the 28th of March 2015 (Anand and Sriram 2015; Dhawan 2015; Dhawan and Lalchandani 2015; PTI 2015b). The party's internal *lokpal* (or ombudsperson), Admiral L. Ramdas, was not properly consulted on the issue and was asked to not attend the meeting. Admiral L. Ramdas openly expressed his disappointment with such a procedure and was removed from his position a few days later and was substituted by a body of three persons that were close to Kejriwal (Special Correspondent 2015). While the AAP leadership claimed that the post of the internal *lokpal* had expired, the statute also foresaw for the outgoing *lokpal* to nominate his successor, something that did not happen.

Throughout the issue, the charismatic power of Kejriwal to create support for his own position among other members of the party, and to manage internal procedures so as to achieve his wished result (expulsion of the other leaders), came to the surface. In the aforementioned National Council meeting, he delivered a moving speech in which he declared

that he could not work with the two leaders and asked the audience to choose between the duo of Bhushan-Yadav and himself. He then left the meeting while the two “dissidents” were not allowed the possibility to defend their position and the audience then voted for their expulsion. The nature of Kejriwal’s power in the party, as well as the AAP’s principles come into question through these events (Gandhi 2015; PTI 2015c; Tripathi 2015; M. Visvanathan 2015; S. Visvanathan 2015a). This case shows very clearly that the AAP opted for internal consistency and solidity as opposed to horizontal participation when threatened with fragmentation.

Anand Kumar and Ajit Jhawere also expelled from the National Executive as they were negotiating the conflict for Bhushan and Yadav with Kejriwal’s side. Rakesh Sinha, the National Executive leader from Uttar Pradesh was suspended after a few days of expressing disagreement with the expulsion procedure (Sriram 2015) and Medha Patkar, a renown social activist in Maharashtra, quit the party in disagreement with the expulsion (Rashid 2015). A few days later, Christina Samy (TNN 2015b), a women’s rights activist from Tamil Nadu, resigned from the National Executive, being the last women of that body, as since then only men make up the Political Affairs Committee¹⁶. For the editors of one of the most prestigious academic publications in India, *Economic & Political Weekly* (EPW), this case marks the end of the AAP’s dream to renew politics, the same thing that happened to the Jayaprakash Narayan movement at the end of the 1970s (Editorial 2015).

On April 14th of 2015 (Ambedkar’s birthday anniversary), Yadav, Bhushan, Kumar and Jha, organised a meeting entitled “*Swaraj Samvad*” (dialogue on *swaraj*). This event was a democratic consultation in which 4,000 members of the AAP participated in and made a final decision (voted in favour of by 70 per cent of the participants) that they were to remain in the AAP and continue the internal struggle for *swaraj* (Radhakrishna 2015). They opted to form the “*Swaraj Abhiyan*” (*swaraj* campaign) a movement (not a new party) aimed at extending the implementation of *swaraj* within the party (Reporter 2015). A few days later, the four members were definitively expelled from the AAP (Aam Aadmi Party 2015b; Mehrotra and Sanyal 2015). They, however, have kept *Swaraj Abhiyan* running and have formed a new party called “Swaraj India” (Bhatnagar 2016; Iqbal 2016; Special Correspondent 2016).

The power centrality of Kejriwal, as shown by the Bhushan-Yadav case, highlights the contradictions that exist regarding the way internal participation can be combined with the political leadership that is necessary to form a winning electoral force. Different views and approaches had already emerged in 2014 when some of the women leaders (i.e., Madhu Bhaduri and Shazia Ilmi)¹⁷ left the party in disagreement with the central leadership. The Bhushan-Yadav case is even more relevant in analysing the dynamics of power because it exposes the vulnerability of the party's democratic values. It especially highlights the clash that may occur between the party's values and charismatic power centralism when it is combined with the ambition of electoral success. This is something extremely critical for a party that pretends to make participation its central value. While the party may be more amalgamated, that is united and fortified after this case, it subverts the ideas underlying the party's novelty.

Although this case has deluded many sympathisers and has had repercussions that will need to be analysed over time, it can also be interpreted as a concrete response to the challenge of a growing political party in a conflicting neoliberal political arena. On the one side, Kejriwal defended party unity and the pragmatic work that had already been done in the polity of Delhi, especially after the deluding results of the national elections of 2014. On the other side, Yadav and Bhushan advocated the radicalism of the core values of the party, namely that of *swaraj*, and they wanted to work simultaneously with Delhi to expand into other states and contest elections across India when possible. The issue became flagrant because of the sensational victory of the party in 2015 and because attempts to settle divergences of view silently within the party did not achieve satisfactory results. The very concept of *swaraj* implies transparency and openness, and to some extents, this was an obstacle to the silent settlement of tectonic differences of political views within the party. The AAP sorted these out with a questionable application of party procedures and charismatic leadership polarisation ("choose between me and them"). Party cadres decided to keep the AAP united and focused identifying with Kejriwal as opposed to *swaraj*. It is unmistakable to deny that regardless of how much one likes this or not, this is a political compromise and a response that maintains the AAP within the constraints of representative competitions. The Bhushan-Yadav case is a landmark example of the power trade-off between participation and representation within the

AAP, and while it is a weakness in one sense, it is a step forward towards political maturity.

Centralising trust and control within the M5S

The M5S leadership is centralised in Beppe Grillo, even though he shared power with Gianroberto Casaleggio up until his death in April of 2016, and continued to do so with Casaleggio's son Davide after his passing¹⁸. There is evidence that the co-leadership was not rooted in the foundation of the party but rather that it grew over time from an initial business partnership. The Casaleggio Associati, a web marketing society directed by G. Casaleggio up until his death, has supported Grillo's blog since 2005, and from 2006 to 2010 it provided web communication services to the Italy of Values party (IDV). Casaleggio aimed at increasing his political influence in IDV and when his demands were not met by the IDV leader Di Pietro, they interrupted their business cooperation and Casaleggio turned to the M5S (Fusani 2013)¹⁹. Casaleggio confirmed this evidence affirming that the IDV "probably wanted to stand on its own two legs, from a certain point onward, both from the point of view of political addressing and communication" (Casaleggio and Travaglio 2014 video #2 minute 15). Nonetheless, Casaleggio remained behind the scenes for another two years and came out publicly only after the big electoral victory of May 2012 in Parma (Casaleggio 2012). However, for Oscar, a former M5S Senator, "the legitimization of Casaleggio came, in my view, by the time Grillo got him on the stage before the political elections in San Giovanni [square, Rome, 22 February 2013], that was the time when this person who ran the blog became a co-founder" (Oscar, Interview, Latina 03/07/2015).

The business-political transition of Casaleggio (and his company) is paradigmatic of the power management of the M5S. While the M5S defends its leadership-free structure and its rejection of internal structures (such as those that are possessed by other political parties), its "staff", that is, the employees of the Casaleggio Associati – and later the communication departments within the Italian and European parliaments (which were chosen by Casaleggio as per a contract signed by all candidates) –, over time acquired organisational functions (Carbonaro 2013: 93-116). As the relationship between the two co-leaders evolved over time, so too did the role

of the staff. Their role evolved from the provision of information to suggestion of relevant topics, strategic communication plans, and organisation of campaigns – until they began to cover some of the functions that belonged to the executive committee of the movement and others that belonged to the party central committee (Carbonaro 2013: 134-36). The staff, the communication department and the influencers in the various parliaments, orient power dynamics within the M5S. Oscar refers to a conversation with Casaleggio in which the latter elucidated the plan to run the M5S as a business company: “Very calmly, he said sees the movement as a company. He told me that he needed employees and that these five persons [the directory] should be his employees among the parliamentarians. [...] He believes that we will come to have 51 per cent of the vote, however, he needs 40 people because the ‘product movement’ needs to advertise more” (Oscar, interview, Latina 03/07/2015)²⁰.

The more the movement grew and institutionalised, the more centralised became the direction of the movement concerning main political issues to which the local clusters also had to comply²¹. Activists and representatives within the movement were divided over whether or not there was a need to institutionalise²². They were also divided over the decision of Grillo and Casaleggio to create a group of five national coordinators (immediately named a “directory” by the media), a decision that was received with much criticism. This occurred in November of 2014 after a weak result in the regional elections (Redazione Il Fatto Quotidiano 2014b, 2014a); Grillo defended that “[t]he M5S needs a representative structure that is broader than the current one. This is a fact” (Grillo 2014a). Casaleggio also explained that the directory was “an operational tool to tie the elected with the territory, not a ‘political’ structure”, and added “Grillo and I looked for operational support, on some issues, of five people who know well the Movement. [...]. We plan to increase over time the people who can provide operational support” (Casaleggio 2015).

In interviews with M5S senators and deputies, it was often confirmed that the representatives in the directory were people trusted by Grillo and Casaleggio²³, and that they had been already cooperating with the leadership. This outlined that some representatives increasingly received organisational and managerial responsibilities. Interviews also confirmed that the people in the directory were those more visible in the media and those that could be totally trusted for the quality of

their work and for the incarnation of the spirit of the M5S (which equates to being trusted by the two main leaders). The creation of the directory and other bodies²⁴ was a response to the challenge of fragmentation that was emerging within the movement. Leone, a M5S deputy, maintains that the directory facilitated the relationship of the national representatives and the central leadership, as “there is no structure. [...] the directory] is simply a filter with the group to get more feedback and even faster” (Leone, Interview, Rome 25/06/2015). Most of the interviewed representatives and activists were generally perplexed by the way of establishing the directory and accepted it as a transitory measure to the adoption of participatory processes. This was especially true with the improvement of the ICT infrastructure, for example. This is a response to the tension between horizontality and leadership in the advanced phase of institutionalisation.

In a long and rich interview, Jacopo, a former M5S deputy, explains in some detail the origin and development of the system of trust and control within the movement: “At some point emerged a small group in the parliamentary group, who were a bit more ‘influencers’, personalities. [...] There was a group of these people who began to go back and forth [to Milan] to share or to receive instructions from Casaleggio, political instructions” (Jacopo, interview, Rome 17/06/2015). The most significant aspects of the M5S’ power dynamics unveiled by Jacopo includes the method of trust and control adopted by Casaleggio, that is, to lead the group of national representatives and to use them to drive the mechanisms²⁵ he implements to take the main political decisions²⁶. Jacopo highlights that truly participatory procedures or methodologies of decision-making are missing along with the openness of their emergence from the bottom-up (from non-influencer parliamentarians). Directions and decisions are made top-down with the communication department acting as a transmission and control chain and the ICT system as a participatory instrument controlled by the central leadership.

The number of representatives that increasingly cooperated with the central leadership of Grillo and Casaleggio (the staff and communication departments) has changed over time according to the political situation faced by the M5S. Data collected with national representatives and activists reveal that the informal structure and organisation of the M5S is based on bidirectional trust: the bottom-up trust of the M5S membership (and voters) in Grillo (and Casaleggio) and the top-down

trust of Casaleggio (and Grillo) in some (influencer) representatives. Activists trust their leader (Grillo), and since he trusts Casaleggio, then the activists trust Casaleggio as well. With the rise of institutionalisation and centralism, criticism also rises besides the electoral appeal having been raised as well.

COMPARATIVE, SCALAR AND TRANSCULTURAL REFLECTIONS ON POWER

Party-movements are not the glasshouses of the handling of power that they pretend to be. To a large extent, they only partially achieve the participatory distribution of power. For instance, this can be seen in the selection of candidates and in local decision-making. The objectives of refurbishing political power from the bottom-up, and reassigning power on a participatory approach, faces some contradictions in the cases and dynamics explored above (both at the local and the national levels). Party-movements give rise to, and silently accept, this contradiction to comply with the rules of electoral politics in which central cohesion – and centrally directed power – has proven to be a key factor for success. Therefore, the participatory approach is relegated to second priority. This implies that to reshape the distribution of power, party-movements use power in a hierarchical way and thereby raise questions as to whether this contradiction will eventually lead to the redistribution of power horizontally. To be able to respond to this question further research could analyse the way political decision-making processes are implemented by administrations and governments led by party-movements. Meanwhile, there are a number of elements that deserve to be considered from the analysis above (see also table 1: Power Dynamics in Party-Movements [comparing AAP and M5S]).

The difference between structured (AAP) and unstructured (M5S) hierarchical power dynamics is made evident by their candidate selection processes. The realistic capacity of a candidate to win their seat is one of the main criteria in the AAP selection process while it is only partially so in the M5S process where it is considered along with other criteria within local groups and in the national power dynamic. The central leadership of the M5S has privileged the strength in electoral power but not at the expenses of the M5S's union and compactness.

Table 1. *Power Dynamics in Party-Movements (comparing AAP and M5S)*

AAP	<i>Form</i>	M5S
Arvind Kejriwal (Delhi CM)	<i>Leadership</i>	Beppe Grillo (non candidate)
Party structure	<i>Hierarchy</i>	Unstructured: National leadership + e-democracy
Top-Down hierarchy	<i>Central rule</i>	Re-direction of power emerged bottom-up
AAP activists + Social workers + Other politicians	<i>Electoral candidates</i>	M5S Activists
Individualistic	<i>Candidate Selection process</i>	Collectivistic
Elections + Mohalla Sabha (prospective)	<i>Participation</i>	ICT + Local groups
Coordinated by the party	<i>Local groups</i>	Higher level of informal independence
States: Delhi + Panjab and others	<i>Geographical expansion</i>	Italy – Whole country
Fast (1 year)	<i>Temporal expansion</i>	Slow (above 5 years)
Swaraj	<i>Methodological ideology</i>	Direct democracy through e-democracy
AAP effect	<i>Political enthusiasm</i>	Renovation of political class
Acceptance of leadership cen- tralism + Activism drop	<i>Participation negated</i>	Acceptance of leadership centralism + Activism drop
Strengthen central leadership against internal competitors	<i>Consequence of the Electoral Success</i>	Reduction of freedom to local groups + Expulsions

Instead of risking infringement on the M5S' internal strength – and political reputation, with local conflicts – Grillo and Casaleggio decided to exclude the M5S from the electoral competition of Latina (and other places). This showed that long term and wider electoral plans have precedence over local participation, a concern that has been expressed by two meetup groups of Latina that were willing to run for elections.

Central power rules on the party-movements structure top-down. It does so in the case of the AAP hierarchically – thanks to its organisation and procedure – and in the case of the M5S retrospectively, by deviating the power that had been freely developing at the base.

Party-movements create a new enthusiasm for participatory politics that affect the political system. This is what in India has been called the AAP effect and in Italy has facilitated the emergence of the concept of “scrapping” (*rottamazione*) as popularised by Matteo Renzi and that has led to a renovation of the political class. With highly raised expectations, party-movements stretch the political patience of their activists by, at least partially, contradicting the participatory principles. While most activists accept leadership centralism and its contradiction, many others abandoned the movement in disagreement, thereby having a negative impact on further political experiences of this kind.

Dissimilarities between the power dynamic within the AAP and the M5S are partially related to the different political contexts in which they operate. They adopt different participatory methods, have had different temporal and geographical expansions (India, only Delhi – Italy, national) that have allowed for diverse constitutive decision-making processes based on new structures (in the M5S case) or old structures with new faces (in the AAP case). The M5S allows for a greater level of independence of the base compared to the AAP that is structured as a hierarchical party. However, signatories that do not necessarily belong to the party support the AAP's candidates, while the M5S' candidates emerge from within the local groups of the movement (which are open to newcomers). The two party-movements differ in their adoption of individualistic vs. collectivistic approaches, as candidates in the AAP are chosen on an individual basis by the hierarchical leadership, while the M5S use a collective (local) process behind the selection as candidates are voted by the local constituency even if the central leadership can interfere in the process, as it happened in European elections 2014 or at the local level more recently in Genoa (Redazione Il Fatto Quotidiano 2017). Finally, the fact that the selection procedure goes through the national ICT platform implies that only local activists that are registered on it can participate in the vote, meaning this system treats local activists as individuals rather than as a community – the contrary of what happens when local groups get organised to define the procedures to select their candidates.

Despite this, the selection is not unrelated to the physical activity of the local group. The individualist-collectivist dynamic shows that while the central leadership enjoys less power challenges from the bottom-up when the base is fragmented, an individualisation that increases fragmentation and collectivisation of the base plays a great role in devolving power at the local level, but it can be overruled. Therefore, the M5S provides a bigger space of collective politics in their communities before the election and enjoys less central interference²⁷. The AAP puts forward the development of collectiveness outside party activities once *mohallas* are established, therefore after elections.

In both party-movements there is a tendency towards power centralisation. The procedure to select candidates, and therefore political leadership, is paradigmatic of the dynamic between electoral success, institutionalisation and power-centralisation. The participatory sharing of power is increasingly negated with the increase of electoral success. In addition, if local or national internal groups question the centrality of the leadership, their disempowerment soon follows. This is evident in the increasingly codified procedures of candidate selection in the M5S (and the expulsion of dissidents from the movement) and in the Bhushan-Yadav case described above. Party-movement unity is a primary concern for national leadership teams, a concern that cannot be taken up by local power without a central coordination. However, it remains to be seen what the level of participatory openness to the base such coordination can entail.

As seen within the M5S' local groups, agreement or disagreement with the central leadership is a divisive argument. Indeed, the main rupture within the local group of Latina occurred due to the interpretation and criticism of Grillo and Casaleggio – and the power structure that they control. The dividing tendency of the central leadership is present at the national level of both the AAP and the M5S. This is demonstrated again by the Bhushan-Yadav case and the series of expulsions and divergences that resulted from the creation of the directory. These examples prove that power centralisation in both party-movements has coincided with power hegemonisation and being closed to participatory debate about it.

CONCLUSION

The issue of leadership and power is puzzling in all political movements, organisations and parties that advocate for participation and power sharing as their principles. On the one hand, horizontality implies power sharing, while on the other hand, both to unite and to operate with electoral efficacy requires forms of organisation that involve notions of central coordination and leadership. When pushed by the electoral struggle to act as a unitary political entity, participatory approaches pave the way to some sorts of power centralism. This is confirmed by the analysis of the power dynamics of the AAP and the M5S, as they have shown how an initial openness to participatory power handling corresponds to the growth of support and eventually to the electoral affirmation of party-movements. It however must be considered that both party-movements emerged around the reputation of renowned activists, and this entails an initial charismatic centralism. Being the initial catalysing force of party-movements, this centralism tends to become hegemonic power in order to maintain party compactness and electoral success when fighting against competing parties.

Both the AAP and the M5S have faced serious clashes over internal democracy after obtaining their first electoral successes and while preparing to take steps forward in electoral politics. Centralism was also imposed “democratically” via the rule of majorities, pushing forward a vote with limited alternatives in order to shorten debate and force the choice towards the leadership preferred alternative. Centralism has shown that the institutionalising “party” dimension diminishes the participatory “movement” dimension. The possible failure to expand political power through participation opens up to the hypothesis that within representative politics there is a constitutional element of rejection of participatory power sharing and that this is due to the competitive character of electoral politics. While this hypothesis needs to be tested further, party-movements attempt to respond to the glocal challenges of representative power with a trans-scalar perspective, reengineering political power from the bottom-up. In doing so, their embarked enthusiasm and emancipatory forces from civil society, along with their search for political alternatives, shall be interrogated with a sociological perspective that is able “to see in each scale of representation not only what it reveals but also what it conceals or to deal with cognitive maps

that operate simultaneously with different scales, thus allowing for the identification of new local/global articulations” (Santos 2014: 179, see also 2006: 25-27). In other words, the inquiry into political power should recognise that representative democracy creates a transcultural trajectory of power hegemony that has proven to be able to co-opt subversive forces. It remains to be seen how complete the co-optation of party-movements can be, how far this co-optation can go and how much they reinforce concealed glocal emancipatory forces.

The whole debate about the democratisation of democracy is stimulated by the existence of party-movements and by the challenges they pose, by the ideas they defend and by the system in which they function. They are especially interesting if they are to be considered as laboratories where attempted solutions and empirical failures coexist. The two cases compared in this article cut across different social, geographical and political cultures, and they demonstrate that political power within representative democratic regimes generates similar alternatives that are then forced to likely power dynamics where centralisation and homogeneity overrule participatory horizontal power sharing.

NOTES

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¹ For more details about the performance of AAP during the first Delhi 49 days government and at the national elections see (Torri and Maiorano 2014).

² For the M5S it is more accurate to start counting from 2008, when the first civic list “Friends of Beppe Grillo” were created and certified by Grillo, although the movement was formally founded a year later.

³ James, pseudonym of a high ranking European Union diplomat in Delhi, maintains that Kejriwal understood the people’s disaffection and the need of a different political perspective. “I think there is a sense of total disempowerment that people have. Rahul Gandhi is always talking about disempowerment, [...] and in fact the panchayati raj, promoted very much by his father and that he wants to promote, is also – not only about empowerment – is also about disempowerment. It’s about disempowerment of about a deeply corrupt system. And so, Kejriwal understood all of that and understood that there is a constituency for this. There is a deeper desire of people to be able to participate in decision making, as well” (interview, Delhi 21/02/2014). James highlights that mechanisms of representative democracy have disempowered people and participation is a form of re-empowerment.

⁴ Rousseau includes functions to: collectively amend bills at local, regional, national and European Union level, select candidates for elections, make decisions on a specific theme, fund raising, legal support, e-learning and sharing of administrative knowledge among elected representatives and activists (MoVimento 5 Stelle N/A).

⁵ Other ICT platforms have been used to organise political actions and decision-making at the local level, but at the national level the official platform is Rousseau.

⁶ After the party constitution women minimum quota are five out of 25 members of the district and state executive council and seven out of 30 in the national executive.

⁷ Rakesh Parikh Facebook page on 17 of May 2014: <https://www.facebook.com/drrakeshparikh/posts/703605366365159>.

⁸ Casaleggio underlines that the certified membership to the M5S is given only by registering in the blog, not by participation in meetup groups. The meetup groups are officially (but not *de facto*) independent from the movement.

⁹ The timeframe to present candidature of individual candidates was opened and closed abruptly without informing their activists in advance and M5S Activists had just two days to decide to put forward their candidature and prepare it. While this procedure marginalised the possibility of activists' cartel and manipulation, it also carried an indirect negative implication in the democratic dynamics of a local group. The activist Gianluca Bono published a blog post explaining the contradictions with the methodology, his dissatisfaction and unavailability to be a candidate (Bono 2014).

¹⁰ This division has emerged in other cities such as in Genoa, where Sabatini defines them "Movimentisti" – activists oriented to social struggle and already active in social movements – and "Grillini" – activists mainly inspired and faithful to Grillo (Sabatini 2015), as well as a national tendency, between Taliban (faithful to Grillo) and dissidents (holding critical views) (Bordignon and Ceccarini 2015: 459).

¹¹ On the same day of Latina other cities were excluded from elections: Caserta, Ravenna, Rimini e Salerno (Grillo 2016). A similar decision had been previously taken in other cases such as in the neighbouring town of Aprilia (Olanda 2013), Genoa (Sabatini 2015: 80) and in the region of Sardinia (Melis 2014; Redazione Repubblica 2014). In some cases Grillo opted for the use of municipality primaries (*comunarie*) or the choice among different lists in Rousseau (Carboni 2014).

¹² Regulations are published in the meetup.com platform as approved in 2010 and amended in 2013 and, most importantly in 2015 after the meetup group split (Meetup I grilli e le cicala di Latina – MU 256 2010, 2013, 2015).

¹³ Online voting may be allowed in some specific cases if requested by activists that are unable to attend meetings.

¹⁴ Majority vote in a physical meeting is a decision-making process registered in other places including Florence, Lecce and Bari (Biorcio 2015a, 2015b; Capria 2015; De Nardis and Medici 2015).

¹⁵ Bhushan is a legal activist that has been critical and active against different governments and campaigned in a considerable number of civil society's struggle. He was a prominent member of the India Against Corruption (IAC) campaign and a founding and leading member of the AAP. Yadav is a psephologist, affiliated with the Center of the Study of Developing Society (CSDS, Delhi), founding member of AAP and main spokesperson until March 2015. Both were member of the Political Affairs Committee and of the National Council.

¹⁶ The national executive council in March 2016 counted with 16 members all men: seven of these members form the national Political Affairs Committee (PAC). In April 2016 new elections took place electing seven (out of 25) women in the national executive and one (out of 12) in the PAC (PTI 2016b, 2016c, 2016a).

¹⁷ On Bhaduri see (Baweja 2014; Bhaduri 2014; Parsai 2014a, 2014b) and on Ilmi see (Barooh 2015; Ghose 2014).

¹⁸ Formally the founders claim that the movement is organised horizontally and is leaderless (Fo, Casaleggio, and Grillo 2013: 79) and defend the unstructured working relationship with Grillo, as he stated "there is no method, other than that of sharing ideas and make decisions when necessary" (Casaleggio and Russo 2015).

¹⁹ Coincidentally, the M5S in 2010 began to receive notable electoral results, in the regional elections of Piedmont, the M5S obtained a 4.1 per cent share of the vote and was decisive for the victory of the North League candidacy. Roberto Cota (47.3 per cent) won against the PD candidate Mercedes Bresso (46.9 per cent) because

many voters of the movement were left-wing sympathizers. Encouraging results emerged also in Emilia Romagna (7 per cent), Veneto (3.2 per cent) and Lombardy (3 per cent).

²⁰ Alagia (2014) counted 40 deputies and ten senators in the group of those closest to the leadership. A few months after the publication of Alagia's article, most of the names mentioned found places in the directory, the appeals committee and as area managers in Rousseau. Speculations concerning the M5S organisation emerged on the website "Grillo-leaks.com", promptly denounced and obscured by postal police because it published private information of the people involved, Grillo-leaks attempted an organizational chart of the M5S with Grillo and Casaleggio at the top, with Davide Casaleggio and Casaleggio Associati on the same level. Below them the directory then the appeals committee followed by a few national representatives (Cuzzocrea 2015; Rame 2015; Redazione Il Fatto Quotidiano 2015; Salvatori 2015; Serafini 2015).

²¹ As an example, the selection of candidates was organised with great autonomy at the local and even regional level, but the use of central instruments and standard procedure for the selection of candidates increased election after election. Local activists are still those voting to select candidates but they cannot define the procedure for doing that.

²² Generally the elected representatives have assumed a mediating role between the central leadership and the local clusters (Capria 2015; Sabatini 2015; Biorcio, Interview, Skype 21/07/2015).

²³ Alessandro Di Battista, Luigi Di Maio, Roberto Fico, Carla Ruocco and Carlo Sibilgia, all MPs.

²⁴ In order to comply with the internal regulations (Movimento 5 Stelle 2014) of the formal "Association M5S" (established by Grillo under Italian law), Grillo needed to form the appeal committee (Grillo 2014b). He opened a poll for the membership to choose two of the five people he proposed: Roberta Lombardi, Giancarlo Cancelleri, Riccardo Nuti, Davide Bono and David Borrelli. Grillo directly nominated Vito Crimi while Roberta Lombardi and Giancarlo Cancelleri were elected through the poll; the three together have formed the appeal committee for five years. Other coordinating roles have been assigned to 12 trusted representatives who act as area managers and they correspond to the various e-democracy functions implemented with the new platform Rousseau. Massimo Artini, expelled MP, explains that with the launch of Rousseau, Grillo and Casaleggio made an attempt to create a management structure of faithful people (Gangale 2015). The role of the managers in charge of each area of Rousseau goes beyond the mere administration of the platform and includes a political directive role. Therefore, in the measure in which such a structure will be operative it will constitute part of the movement structuring. Fabio Bordignon (interview, Skype 08/09/2015) highlights the dual dimension introduced by the directory; on the one hand, it is a manifestation of the pluralism of internal asset, on the other hand, Grillo and Casaleggio maintain the ultimate control and introduced people they trust into positions of responsibility.

²⁵ Among the 21 M5S representatives that have been nominated in the organisational structure (those in the first attempt to assign national competences in 2011, the directory, the appellate committee, and the area managers within Rousseau), there are 14 deputies and Senators (Bonafede, Catalfo, Crimi, Di Battista, Di Maio, Di Stefano, Fico, Lombardi, Morra, Nuti, Ruocco, Sibilgia, Taverna, Toninelli), two Regional representatives (Bono, Cancelleri), four Municipal Councillors (Bertola, Bugani, Olivieri, Piazza) and one Euro representative (Borrelli, who was the vice-president of the EFDD group of the EU Parliament).

²⁶ Irene (Interview, Latina 11/06/2015), M5S activist and former parliamentary assistant of a M5S senator, argues that political issues with a strong media emphasis are closely controlled by the leadership.

²⁷ Research can compare levels of power interference on M5S local administration compared to pre-electoral inference and comparing the interference of the central leadership in two or more different administrations with dissimilar political challenges and importance, see for instance the cases of Parma, Livorno, Rome and Quarto.

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LIST OF INTERVIEWS

Amarjeet [pseudonym, second interview at her residence, Jaipur 2014-04-05]
AAP activist;

Amarjeet [pseudonym] (Male, AAP member, Lok Sabha ticket applicant 2014, Dalit. Retired employee of the Banking sector) [first interview Jaipur, AAP office 2014-02-03] AAP activist;

Arvind Kejriwal (Male, National Convener of the AAP) [first interview, New Delhi, his residence at Tilak Lane 2014-02-27] – not anonymised because the interview took place in public – AAP leader;

Dipankar Gupta (Male, Distinguished Professor and the Director of Centre of Political Affairs and Critical Theory, Shiv Nadar University) [first interview Jaipur, JaiLitFest 2014-01-19] Scholar;

Folco [pseudonym] (Male, Communication expert) [first interview his office, Latina 2015-05-22] M5S activist;

Jacopo [pseudonym] (ICT expert, Jacopo was expelled from the M5S) [Male, first interview moving from public to his place and public place again, Rome 2015-06-17] Expelled M5S national MP;

Leone [pseudonym] (Male, Civil engineer and business consultant) [first interview public place, Rome 2015-06-25] M5S national MP;

Oscar [pseudonym] (Male, Civil servant, he was expelled from the M5S) [first interview public place, Latina 2015-07-03] Expelled M5S senator and M5S activist;

Roberto Biorcio (Male, Professor at the University of Milan) [first interview Skype 2015-07-21] Scholar;

Varun [pseudonym] (Male, Member of the AAP National Executive, AAP Lok Sabha Candidate 2014, University professor) [first interview New Delhi, his residence 2014-02-25] AAP leader.