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# From the Blogosphere into the Parliament: The Role of Digital Technologies in Organizing Social Movements

**Abstract.** In this paper, we present a process model exploring the roles played by digital technologies (DTs) in the organization of collective action (CA) of social movements (SMs) at different points in their lifecycles. The process model, which is based on an exploratory case study of the Italian Five Star Movement, relates the environmental conditions to the working logic, structure and use of DTs at three different stages of the SMs. We explain how these choices are adopted at each stage to address internal and environmental challenges and how they create further challenges to be addressed to pass to the next stage. We further explore the dynamics between the logic of connective and collective action and reflect on the growing need for structures and control. By so doing, our work addresses the need for a better understanding of the coevolution between DTs and organizational structures and of the ways in which DTs are used to mobilize people to sustain CA along the SM lifecycle.

**Keywords:** Social Movements, Collective Action, Digital Technologies, Social Media, Movimento Cinque Stelle (the Five Star Movement)

## 1. Introduction

The rapid diffusion of digital technologies (DTs) facilitates the engagement of people in social movements (SMs) (Davis & Zald, 2005). SMs are networks of people with a common purpose who engage in sustained collective action (CA) (Stein, 2009). In SMs, DTs are successfully used to reach potential recruits, manage activities and promote goals (Benjamin, Chen, & Zimbra, 2014). Current research has advanced our understanding of how this happens by exploring CA in SMs (Amenta, Caren, Chiarello, & Su, 2010; Gerald F. Davis, McAdam, Richard, Mayer, & Zald, 2005; Morris, 2000; Selander & Jarvenpaa, 2016).

CA is characterized by unstructured actions and interactions among members of a network, often occurring without central control (McLure Wasko & Faraj, 2005; McLure Wasko, Faraj, & Teigland, 2004; Nan & Lu, 2014). Nevertheless, there is a need to organize CA to achieve the intended purpose (Hargrave & Van De Ven, 2006; Shirky, 2008). DTs support the organization of CA in SMs as mechanisms which help members to share ideas and actions (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). However, such digital support can be short-lived, and a more formal organization could be needed to mobilize and maintain long-term support for SMs (Selander & Jarvenpaa, 2016).

While the literature has investigated the evolution of CA in SMs and its organizational implications (Coy & Hedeem, 2005; Mauss, 1975; Tilly, 1978), the consequences and the use of DTs for communication in SMs (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Selander & Jarvenpaa, 2016; Stein, 2009), as well as the role of DTs in the organization of CA in SMs, require further attention. Further research is needed to better understand the role of DTs in organizing SMs and the ways in which DTs are used to mobilize people to sustain CA along the SM lifecycle (Selander & Jarvenpaa, 2016). We address these aspects here by investigating the following research question: *In what ways do digital technologies play a role in how social movements organize themselves for collective action across their lifecycle?*

Our findings are based on an interpretive case study of the Italian Five Star Movement (Movimento Cinque Stelle, M5S), a self-organized and loosely coupled network of online activists which succeeded in having representatives elected to the Italian and European Parliaments, with (almost) all decisions made online through the use of DTs (Federici, Braccini, & Sæbø, 2015). This movement represents an interesting case of an SM for collective support, originating from unintentional and decentralized actions to mobilize protesters against the existing political establishment and acting on the basis of a repertoire of legitimate rules and structures (Selander & Jarvenpaa, 2016). It eventually became an influential political force which uses collaborative knowledge production (Amenta et al., 2010) to make decisions through its online activities.

Through our empirical findings, we contribute to the literature by advancing the understanding of how SMs are organized, how they change to sustain CA over time and how DTs play a part at different stages. While acknowledging the various models describing the lifecycle of SMs (Coy & Hedeem, 2005; Mauss, 1975) and of CA in SMs (Blumer, 1951; Tilly, 1978), we build on Bennett and Segerberg's (2012) discourse on the logic of *connective* versus *collective* action. Our analyses contribute by exemplifying how the organizing of SM for CA changes from a loosely coupled connective action-oriented network to a more advanced organizational structure beyond the formal boundaries of an established social movement organization (SMO).

Our work builds on the literature on CA within SMs and on the role of DTs in SMs. We discuss this literature next, identifying research gaps addressed by our work. We then present our research design and introduce our case, followed by findings, analysis and discussion. Next, our proposed process model is presented, and we conclude with implications for research and practice.

## **2. Theoretical Background**

In this paper, we integrate the literature on SMs and CA to develop a theoretical framework for guiding our investigation on the role of DTs in SMs.

## 2.1. The Organization of Collective Action in Social Movements

SMs are collectives which promote social transformation through the mobilization of citizens for sustained political action (Amenta et al., 2010; Tilly, 1978). SMs offer members a context within which they can share their views on common problems (Benjamin et al., 2014; Hargrave & Van De Ven, 2006) and can act to achieve common objectives (McAdam & Scott, 2005). SMs develop and act in constant relation to their external environment and contextual conditions. The activities of an SM may cross its boundaries and reach individuals, organizations and institutions which are not directly associated with the movement (McAdam & Scott, 2005; Tilly, 1978). The external environment is dynamic and a continuous source of stimuli, resources and challenges for the SM (Hargrave & Van De Ven, 2006; McAdam & Scott, 2005; Vaast & Levina, 2015).

SMs are based on the different underpinning logics of *collective* and *connective action* (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). CA stresses the importance of individuals' contribution to achieve common goals, and SMs are venues for CA to happen (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Selander & Jarvenpaa, 2016). Connective action focuses mainly on the activities performed by members of an SM to attract and mobilize new members (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012).

CA is a way to respond to society's dynamic challenges (Linders, 2012) in domains such as participation in political processes, the management of common goods, philanthropy or action for social purposes (Zheng & Yu, 2016). In CA, people work together to achieve a common goal which is out of reach for them individually (Flanagin, Stohl, & Bimber, 2016). Participants in CA play different roles in continuously creating new institutional arrangements as a synthesis of the confrontations taking place among different actors (Hargrave & Van De Ven, 2006). Participants communicate (Ostrom, 2000) and structure their activities in accordance with their attitudes and basic subjective awareness of specific situations (Weber, 1978), with a shared understanding that their common objective will be more easily achieved if everyone cooperates (Olson, 2002; Shirky, 2008).

The CA in SMs needs to be organized. Organizing for CA is an uncertain and complex undertaking, in which boundaries and internal organizational structures must be established (Ostrom, 1990). The common objective does not always fulfil individual interests, so CA needs to be organized to achieve common purposes (Markus, 2007; Olson, 2002), and individuals must accept the primacy of group decisions even when these decisions may displease them (Shirky, 2008). This organization is challenging for CA; it is necessary to solve problems, coordinate members and establish a good climate for contributors (Markus, 2007) while simultaneously not discouraging members' participation.

In terms of organization, a structure based on three concentric rings is typically observed in SMs (Mauss, 1975). The outermost ring includes the mass of sympathizers, the middle comprises a smaller number of active members committed to the movement's success and the innermost ring consists of formal leaders and coordinators (Mauss, 1975). These three rings influence the success of the SM.

Sympathizers contribute with votes and the political strength of their numbers (Amenta et al., 2010; Morris, 2000), members in the middle run most of the activities and leaders in the core are responsible for coordination and communication.

The CA of SMs may be supported by a social movement organization (SMO). An SMO is a formal organization which operates on the basis of hierarchies, rules, authorities and communication patterns (Selander & Jarvenpaa, 2016 citing Blau & Scott, 1962). Contemporary SMs adopt the logic of the corporate sector for organizing, leveraging economies of scale and efficiencies and targeting the organizational structures to support these aspects (Gerald F. Davis et al., 2005). If present, the SMO is the main organizational entity in charge of mobilizing resources and maintaining support for the effective change within societies, industries and individuals (Amenta et al., 2010; McCarthy & Zald, 1977). The SMO is instrumental in the coordination of the SM and provides support both to individual members of the SM and to the relationships of the SM with partner organizations and authorities (McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Selander & Jarvenpaa, 2016). The SM and the SMO relate to each other through the sharing of common values. This aspect implies that the relationship between the SM and the SMO is not univocal; different SMOs might relate to the same social movement by promoting specific goals, either cooperating or competing with each other (Gerald F. Davis et al., 2005).

## **2.2. The Evolution of SMs for CA**

CA changes as a consequence of environmental changes and shifts in the motivation and commitment of participants (Tilly, 1978). Therefore, the organization of SMs advances over time. To explain how the organizational structure of SMs evolves, the literature proposes models describing stages or ideal types of organizational forms.

Blumer (1951) differentiates between *general* SMs, characterized by vague objectives, uncoordinated efforts, the absence of organizational structures and an indefinite mass of participants, and *specific* SMs, in which groups of active members focus on well-defined objectives with formal leaders and organizational structures, including roles and rules. According to Blumer, SMs evolve; they are born *general* and change to *specific* when objectives become clearer and the movements restructure to address these more specific goals.

Mauss (1975) proposes a five-stage lifecycle of SMs, wherein the first stage is that of *incipiency*, which is similar to Blumer's general SM structure. In this stage, masses of individuals exchange their similar concerns, hold occasional meetings and communicate to the polity, receiving moderately absorptive and inconclusive answers from existing institutions. Consequently, they engage in delineating their shared stances, build an identity and set borders separating themselves from others. In the second stage of *coalescence*, the SM starts adopting organizational structures and developing forms of formal and informal organization. Such organization responds to the repressive or excluding behaviours of established

institutions (government and traditional polity) and is needed to promote the SM's agenda. *Institutionalization* is the third stage, in which the SM presents a society-wide organization, with a large number of members, sufficient resources, a division of labour and well-known spokespersons. The SM is now at the apex of its success; it is acknowledged by existing institutions, and its stances become familiar in society. The fourth stage is that of *fragmentation*, in which the SM enters a divisive stage. People move away from the SM, either because they have been co-opted by other forces or they are pleased with the SM's battles won. The remaining participants may start fighting among themselves to impose new strategies and tactics around new objectives, and leaders start competing for roles. The *demise* is the fifth and last stage. At this point, either the SM has achieved its goals, or all its resources have been acquired by other forces. In this stage, only a small group of 'true believers' continues fighting to keep the SM alive, often adopting excessive behaviours which fragment the SM into smaller groups.

### **2.3. The Role of DTs in SMs**

DTs are used in SMs to overcome social (Benjamin et al., 2014) and geographical barriers (Davis et al., 2005), allowing the SMs to promote their identity and disseminate information among movement members (Benjamin et al., 2014). DTs reinforce SMs' position (Stein, 2009) and give rise to new technology-based organizational structures (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). In those SMs where connective action is the dominant logic, DTs are the main organizational agents (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). By adopting DTs, SMs easily create networks of people with common interests, reinforcing group norms and spreading their influence in the external environment (Benjamin et al., 2014). Compared with traditional SMs, movements mobilizing resources through DTs can become larger, quicker in scaling up and more flexible in changing patterns and issues (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012).

DTs need to be managed to enable interactions and coordinate CA in SMs. Recent studies suggest that engagement in DTs is the combined outcome of both deliberative and emergent patterns of action (Henfridsson & Lind, 2014; Spagnoletti, Resca, & Sæbø, 2015), where planned actions are complemented by emergent practices to engage users and advance organizational goals. DTs allow for the practices of subcommunities, enabling groups of actors who share an interest in a particular domain or activity to deal with local problems and facilitate interactions with the wider organizational community (Henfridsson & Lind, 2014). Therefore, the organization of the related SM is a result of a nexus of pluralistic and loosely coupled practices (Spagnoletti et al., 2015).

### **2.4. Organizing CA in SMs: Our Theoretical Framework**

SMs are dynamic entities which change based on external stimuli, opportunities and challenges and as a consequence of their members' fluctuating levels of commitment and motivation (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Morris, 2000; Selander & Jarvenpaa, 2016). During their lifecycle, SMs proceed through different

stages, each characterized by different organizational structures and environmental conditions (Coy & Hedeon, 2005; Mauss, 1975; Tilly, 1978). Existing studies focus in general on the evolution of the forms of CA promoted by SMs (Coy & Hedeon, 2005; Tilly, 1978), but they do not specifically address the way the organization of SMs evolves over time. Therefore, this aspect requires further research.

Seminal studies focusing on the evolution of how SMs are organized are typically dated some years back (Blumer, 1951; Mauss, 1975) and do not specifically discuss the role of DTs. More recent studies have affirmed the increasing importance of DTs in supporting, shaping or promoting CA in SMs. However, recent studies focus more on the specific capabilities afforded by DTs to CA and to SMs (Tim, Pan, Bahri, & Fauzi, 2018; Vaast, Safadi, Lapointe, & Negoita, 2017; Zheng & Yu, 2016) than on how these technologies contribute to the organization of the SMs themselves. Since DTs are a part of SMs' organizational structures (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012), we argue for the importance of more research with a combined focus on the evolving of SMs through time and the role DTs play in such organizing. This is the baseline for our research reported here.

Figure 1 summarizes our theoretical understanding of the current state of knowledge in the literature. We focus on the need for more knowledge explaining the role of DTs and organizational structures during SM evolution. By reflecting on how DTs take part in the organization of SMs for CA, we address the role played by DTs in the designing of these SMs and the adaptation of the SMs to the dynamically changing contextual conditions. We build on the model of Bennett and Segerberg (2012) to understand the organization of SMs for CA. And considering the rather static nature of their model, we further bring in the idea of the SM lifecycle (Mauss, 1975) to explain the evolution of SMs for CA over time.

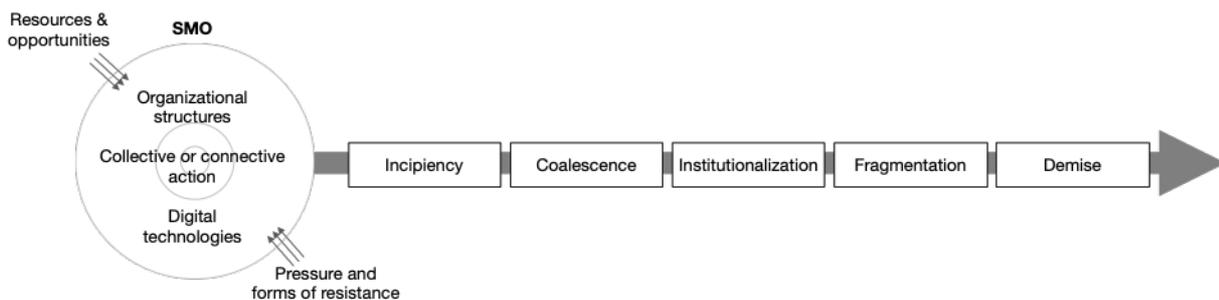


Figure 1. Organization and evolution of social movements.

### 3. Research Design

For this paper, we adopted a qualitative research strategy with an interpretive approach. For five years, we observed the actions of and DTs used by members of M5S, and we analysed them using qualitative data sources, concentrating on the members' objectives, experiences, actions and interactions. M5S has been a subject of interest for several international observers (Bartlett, 2014; Federici et al., 2015; Scherer, 2012) and is a relevant SM to explore, because DTs have been central to its organization since it appeared.

### 3.1. Case Context

M5S is an SM which, in a short time, succeeded in getting many representatives elected to Italian and European institutions. M5S distinguishes itself from traditional Italian parties, claiming to be more open, transparent and participative (Federici et al., 2015). The movement originated from a blog created in 2005 by the prominent comedian Beppe Grillo, with the support of a web marketing company (Casaleggio Associati Ltd., which long served as the technology provider of the movement's DTs). Grillo became popular for his shows arguing against the Italian establishment. After being banned from public TV in 1986 for having mocked the governing party, he continued his activity in theatres and city squares. His reputation grew rapidly after he launched his blog. *Forbes* magazine ranked him seventh in its list of the world's most influential web personalities (Ewalt, 2009).

The blog's followers started to organize local groups, which were soon coordinated through a national network. Some followers formed civic lists to run for local elections in 2008, while in 2009, Grillo and Casaleggio promoted an association named 'Movimento 5 Stelle' as a response to the rapid growth of local groups (consisting of 1,250 groups in 21 countries in 2013).

Initially, M5S claimed to be a 'non-association', with a few rules described in its 'Non-Statute' and its website as its only headquarters. M5S claims not to be a party but a platform for consultation and confrontation, originating from Grillo's blog. M5S maintains the equality of all of its members, adopting as a founding principle that 'one is worth one', resulting in resistance to any kind of hierarchy or delegation. M5S accepts membership applications from any Italian adult not affiliated at the same time with any other political party. Applications are examined by an internal staff; approved applicants are 'certified subscribers' and have full access to the movement, while applicants queuing to be certified cannot access restricted areas of the DTs or participate in online voting. At the time of finalizing this research, there were more than 130,000 certified members, while 800,000 were waiting for approval.

### 3.2. Data Collection and Analysis

We collected and analysed data from the movement, following an iterative enquiry strategy guided by the principles of theoretical saturation and sampling, using the data sources reported in Table 1.

Table 1. List of data sources.

Data source	Detail	Collected in	Period coverage
Interviews	Around 13 hours of recorded materials consisting of 80,000 words from the following individuals: 4 subscriber activists 3 followers 3 national representatives 6 local representatives (1 municipal and 5 regional) 2 local group social media (Twitter) managers	2014	2008–2014

Data source	Detail	Collected in	Period coverage
	1 local group communications coordinator		
Social media	Around 2.5 Gb of social media threads (Twitter and Facebook) of 6 M5S representatives, Beppe Grillo and 5 M5S groups of representatives Around 3 Gb of social media data from Grillo's blog, the M5S blog and the blog of a local municipal group	2016–2017	2005–2017
Observation notes	Observations from the M5S Operating System	2013	2013
	Observations from the regional eParticipation platform	2013	2013
	Observations from the Rousseau platform	2017	2015–2017
Secondary sources	Observations from public phenomena	2013	2013
	Newspaper and daily articles	2012–2017	2012–2017
Documents	M5S regulations	2016	2009–2016
	Non-Statute	2013; 2016	2009–2017
Archival data	Media coverage of the M5S	2013–2017	2013–2017

Data were collected in three phases from 2013 until the second quarter of 2017. We also asked our interviewees to report facts from the past. We downloaded social media data from 2005 and collected data from the web, using services which allowed browsing of the old cache copies of websites. Therefore, the data collected yielded information which spanned the time period from 2005 to 2017, allowing us to track changes along the twelve-year journey of M5S from the blogosphere into the Italian parliament.

In the first phase, we collected data from secondary sources (newspapers and daily magazines) and wrote our field notes using observations of public phenomena (such as election results) and of reactions both of other political parties and of M5S followers. The first phase allowed us to build an initial understanding of the SM and its organization. In the second phase, we conducted 19 interviews of people involved in the SM with different roles (Table 1): followers (non-members following the activities of M5S), certified subscribers (people participating in online activities, including decision-making) and representatives (from the Italian parliament, regions and municipalities). During the second phase, we observed (guided by some of the representatives we interviewed) the use of the digital platforms adopted by M5S. In the third phase, we obtained a more detailed understanding of the different DTs in use, including their features, the rules governing their use and the activities during which they were used by members.

Interviewees were informed about our study's intentions and agreed to participate. We used a semi-structured interview script (slightly adjusted to the different roles of the interviewees in the community) covering the areas listed in Table 2. We further asked interviewees to reflect on their current and past experiences and to report changes happening in the movement (e.g. current and past DTs and their roles, current and possible future activities performed by the interviewee, etc.).

*Table 2. Interview script: key areas.*

Areas of enquiry
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The role of DTs in the movement
The use of DTs in the communication and coordination of members
The activities performed online
The number of people participating online
The roles of people during online discussions
The discussion processes
Rules and roles active in the online and physical channels
Rules and processes to enter the community
Processes to attain different roles in the community
Action capabilities and hindrances of the DTs
Motivations for joining and leaving the M5S

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Data were collected from social media (Facebook and Twitter) using the official application programming interfaces (API). For confidentiality, we analysed the data anonymously, except in the case of Beppe Grillo, whose role in the SM is unique and, hence, cannot be anonymized. Social media data were collected following the principles suggested by McKenna et al. (2017), as illustrated in Table 3. More specifically, we used automatic textual data extraction techniques and descriptive quantitative statistics (keyword extraction, word document matrices, tag-clouds, size of the corpus) to filter social media data and select contents close to the concepts emerging from the qualitative analysis. Selected contents from social media data were eventually analysed qualitatively in NVIVO. One limitation of such coding is that visual data (images) and audiovisual material (short videos) are not included in the analysed material.

None of the three researchers is, or was, involved in M5S activities at any time, and we specifically avoided joining M5S social media channels with our personal accounts.

*Table 3. Application of McKenna et al.'s (2017) principles for social media data collection and analysis.*

<b>Principle</b>	<b>Our application</b>
1. Use a filtering or data mining technique.	Time period: 2009–2016 Automatic textual data extraction
2. Use qualitative data analysis software.	Selected contents were analysed with NVIVO with the rest of the data sources.
3. Images may need to be gathered and analysed.	We have not included images in the analysis.
4. Become familiar with the world of social media platforms.	Researchers are familiar with the world of social media, given their previous personal and research experience.
5. Use mixed methods to triangulate different types of data.	Social media data were triangulated with interview and observation data.
6. Develop research questions where the identity of participants is not important.	Our research question is influenced only by the roles of participants, not by their identities. Data were analysed anonymously. The only person whose data could not be anonymized was Grillo, whose role in the M5S is unique.
7. Obtain permission from gatekeepers (if needed).	Over social media, we only collected data made public by profile owners.
8. If needed, create and use one or more avatars.	We avoided this to maintain impartiality.
9. If needed, supplement social media data with	The social media data complement the data collected

<b>Principle</b>	<b>Our application</b>
traditional data gathering techniques.	through interviews.

During the qualitative analysis, we used a temporary code together with other codes to investigate changes in the SM's organizational structures, environment, commitment and DTs. This procedure allowed us to identify key changes in the SM and ascertain three main stages in the period of observation. At an advanced stage of the analysis, we defined three period codes referring to the three stages, and we used them to analyse the validity of the findings to test whether the observed changes were persistent and whether the status of the SM was consistent with the ideal types defined in the literature (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Mauss, 1975). The structure of the codes is summarized in Table 4.

*Table 4. Code structure.*

<b>Area</b>	<b>Code</b>
Temporality	Year (e.g. 2013, 2014, 2015) Period (referred to the three periods identified by the analysis: period 1, period 2, period 3)
Organizational structures	Rules Regulations: statutes, netiquette, subgroup regulations, codes of conduct Routines Processes Sanctions Roles Forms of coordination
Digital technologies	Types of technology Action capabilities Action hindrances Actual use examples Roles assigned on the DTs Rules in the DTs
Environment	Pressures Challenges Inputs Actions of rival movements/parties Actions of the press
Classification codes	Engagement level in the movement: followers, local group members, subscribers, representatives Engagement level in the environment: citizens, representatives elected (in the municipal government, regional government or national parliament)

Concept codes were identified by investigating the combination of codes within our empirical material, later on becoming themes in our process model. We iteratively added codes and concepts through our data analysis, which was conducted in parallel with interviews, and we also adjusted the interview script to match concepts emerging from the analysis. The conceptualization was stable after 19

interviews, so at that point, we stopped collecting data from interviewees. We then coded the selected social media data with the defined codes and concepts to confirm the validity of the conceptualization.

While grouping the results of our analysis, we focused on three main constructs: i) the DTs used by the SM's members, ii) the organizational structures — which, in this work, refer to the roles played by the movement's various actors, the internal rules adopted at the central and local levels, and the shared practices within the movement and iii) the environment. The latter encompasses all forces external to an SM for CA which feed it with stimuli, resources and challenges (Hargrave & Van De Ven, 2006; McAdam & Scott, 2005; Vaast & Levina, 2015) which may cause changes in the SM (Selander & Jarvenpaa, 2016). As regards shared practices, they are socially recognized forms of activity routinely carried on by competent members of a collective to achieve common accomplishments, where the routine should be intended at the collective rather than the individual level (Barnes, 2005). We classified as shared practices the forms of activity which we observed to be shared and repetitively adopted by different members of M5S to accomplish the same collective goal.

## 4. Case Findings

Throughout its twelve-year existence, the M5S has continuously changed its way of organizing to respond to internal and external pressures and influences, by experimenting with various DTs (see Table 5) and organizational structures. Different technologies have been adopted at the local and national levels, with the aim of helping subscribers and followers share information, set the agenda, discuss and make decisions. The mixture of technologies consists of general-purpose social media (like Facebook, Twitter, blogs and forums) and platforms developed by the movement to integrate tools for specific purposes (such as candidate selection, deliberation, law proposals, fundraising and interaction).



Logo: Rousseau Sistema operativo del Movimento 5 Stelle

**Partecipa al cambiamento.  
Fai sentire la tua voce  
con Rousseau.**

Rousseau è la piattaforma del Movimento 5 Stelle dove puoi esprimere le tue idee e sostenere le sfide in cui credi, proponendo disegni di legge, votando le leggi proposte dagli altri utenti che ritieni più utili o urgenti, e portando tematiche di interesse collettivo all'attenzione dei nostri Portavoce.

Il cambiamento è anche nelle tue mani, a partire da qui.

**Accedi a Rousseau**

Email \*

Password \*

**ENTRA**

**Hal dimenticato la password?**

Possano accedere solo le persone iscritte al portale del Movimento 5 Stelle prima del 1 gennaio 2017 e con documento di identità già verificato.

**Non sei ancora iscritto?**

Premendo il pulsante verrai indirizzato al form ufficiale di registrazione del Movimento 5 Stelle.

**Iscriviti**

Figure 2. Login form of the official platform, specifying that access is granted only to users approved before 1 January 2017

(screenshot captured in October 2017).

The movement, along with its subgroups and representatives, uses social media, which are generally accessible for everyone to read and comment on. In some rare instances, access is restricted either to specific groups or to actions within specific domains (such as waste management or transport). Access to the platforms developed by the movement is restricted to ‘certified’ subscribers and is not immediately granted; only subscribers certified before a given date (see Figure 2) can gain access. ‘Not-yet-certified’ subscribers can only access public channels, like the non-restricted areas of forums, blogs and open pages on social media.

The DTs which have been used by M5S since 2005 are listed in Table 5, which provides a description of each technology, its uses and at what level it is administered. ‘Centrally’ implies that the DT is administered by the M5S central staff, while ‘locally’ implies social media channels chosen and completely self-administered by local groups or individuals.

Table 5. List of digital technologies used by M5S for CA initiatives.

Technology	Administered	Description	Uses
<b>Forum, blogs, portals, websites</b>			
<b>Grillo’s blog</b> www.beppegrillo.it	Centrally	Official blog of Beppe Grillo	Dissemination of official statements from the movement’s founder Comments on blog posts and forwarding posts on social media
<b>M5S portal</b> www.movimento5stelle.it	Centrally	Official website of M5S and national forum	Headquarters of the movement and main entrance for authorized users to the M5S community Forum for open debates on six main domains with 20 subdomains Directory of all recognized local groups
<b>Local group’s old forum</b> www.beppegrillo.it/listeciviche/liste/xxx www.movimento5stelle.it/listeciviche/liste/xxx	Locally	Official local forum in xxx town (discontinued and replaced by www.xxx5stelle.it)	Dissemination of the M5S political line carried out by each local group Comments on posts and forwarding them on social media
<b>Local group’s website and new forum</b> www.xxx5stelle.it	Locally	Official website and forum of the regional or local M5S group in xxx area (replacing www.beppegrillo.it/listeciviche/liste/xxx)	Channel to disseminate activities carried out within the institution and in the territory of the local group and to receive alerts from citizens Comments on posts and forwarding them on social networking platforms
<b>M5S blog</b> www.ilblogdellestelle.it	Centrally	Official blog of the movement (recently introduced to substitute for Grillo’s blog over time)	Dissemination of the M5S political line of the movement Comments on blog posts and forwarding posts on social networking platforms
<b>Social media</b>			

Technology	Administered	Description	Uses
<b>Facebook</b>	Centrally/ locally/by each account owner	Official Facebook page of the M5S	Dissemination of posts from Grillo's blog
		Individual Facebook pages of M5S local groups, representatives and candidates	Dissemination of posts from M5S local groups, representatives and candidates Interactions among people (members and non-members)
<b>Twitter</b>	Centrally/ locally/by each account owner	Official account of the M5S	Dissemination of news from Grillo's blog
		Individual Twitter pages of M5S local groups and representatives	Dissemination of news from M5S groups and representatives Interactions among people (members and non-members)
<b>Meetup</b>	Locally	Official platform for coordinating local groups	Organization of interactions and activities among activists
<b>La Cosa</b> (YouTube channel)	Centrally/ locally/by each account owner	Official channel to share short videos from M5S	Dissemination of videos issued by Grillo with his positions or calls to action or by M5S groups in parliament or regional councils to report on the respective activities in each assembly
		Official channel of the M5S representatives' groups	
<b>Self-developed platforms</b>			
<b>Parelon</b>	Locally	Self-developed platform for cooperation on all decision-making processes	Debate and voting proposals on laws and other initiatives to be presented by the M5S groups in the regional councils (and maybe in parliament in the future)
<b>M5S Operating System</b> (later replaced by Rousseau)	Centrally	<b>Lex:</b> Official platform for cooperation on law proposals	Debate for the promotion of laws to be presented and voted on by the M5S groups in parliament
		<b>Elections:</b> Official platform for selecting candidates	Selection of candidates to run for political elections
		<b>Decisions:</b> Official platform for decision-making	Voting platform for approving common decisions, such as the approval of rules and proposals or member banishment
<b>Rousseau</b> (substituting for the M5S Operating System)	Centrally	<b>Lex:</b> Official platform for cooperation on law proposals, distinguishing among: <b>Lex Parlamento</b> (national laws), <b>Lex Europa</b> (European laws), <b>Lex Region x</b> (regional laws), <b>Lex Iscritti</b> (law proposal by individual members)	Debate platform for the construction of law proposals at any level to be presented and voted on by the M5S groups in the respective parliament Debate platform for the promotion of proposals issued by single members, to be formalized and presented by the M5S representatives if shared by many members
		<b>E-learning:</b> Official platform for interactions and discussions among participants	Tutorials and tests to make members and representatives acquainted with institutional procedures, communication etc.
		<b>Sharing:</b> Common space for shared documents	Space where local representatives share official documents regarding the work of their assembly
		<b>Call to action:</b> Schedule of events promoted all over the country	Information on events promoted by M5S at central or local levels, with requests and collection of supporting activities
		<b>Scudo della Rete:</b> Official shared space for self-defence	Request and provision of support in case of litigation against M5S members
		<b>Fundraising:</b> Official platform for fundraising	Tool to collect both large and small contributions from members

In our analyses, we considered choices made over the years with regard to the DTs and the organization of the M5S, and we related them to major events occurring both within the SM and in the outer environment. During the analysis, we identified three main stages of the SM's evolution and analysed key changes to detect passages from one stage to the next. The initial stage began with the first founding event, the launch of Grillo's blog (2005), after which a first organizational setting was created to attract followers around the opinion leadership of Grillo, with a small number of DTs meant to connect as many followers as possible. The second stage began in 2009 with the formal establishment of the SM as a legal entity, the first formal organizational structure and a registered trademark giving the SM a recognizable identity. The third stage started with the emergence of a more hierarchical organizational structure. Specific forms of coordination were enacted, and roles were formally assigned to key SM members. This level of organization, absent in the previous stages, appeared in 2014 in response to internal criticism and external pressures.

#### **4.1. Stage 1 (2005–2009)**

The M5S originated in 2005 with the launch of Grillo's blog, upon which Grillo made posts which readers could comment on and share. At that time, no other organizational structure was present, and only two roles could be identified: 1) a charismatic frontrunner (Grillo), who, in his posts and on shows in theatres or squares, asserted his critical stance against the behaviours of politicians, banks and large companies and 2) the followers who read, commented on and disseminated the posts, feeding online debates. The blog aimed to provide an alternative source of information to traditional media and to broadcast a critical stance on dominant political and economic debate to build a new shared perspective among citizens. Many joined in the discussion on the blog in a short time, attracted by the new political propositions and the fact that a blog platform is open and easy for everybody to join:

*I suppose you know that the movement was born from the existence of Grillo's blog, and in a few years became the seventh most visited blog in the world. The number of visits on the website is really important, it creates a common – may I use this word? – 'brain' sharing the same view. (National representative 1)*

Due to the rapid increase in the number of followers and the amount of debate taking place, the movement appeared to constitute an important new phenomenon. In 2009, Grillo tried to join the Democratic Party and ran in the primary elections for the national parliament. The programme he adopted was composed of proposals put forth by blog followers as answers to some specific issues experienced by citizens. However, his candidacy was blocked (see also Exhibit 1 in the Appendix):

*We realized that we could do everything on the web, but we needed to bring people directly to the institutions to change what we liked, what we explained on the website. The website collects information. For example, in 2007, we created a lot of proposals and Mister Grillo went to the president of the ministries' council to show our proposals. (National representative 1)*

Followers living in the same neighbourhoods started to organize local groups, all named 'Friends of Beppe Grillo – town name'. Some of them formed civic lists for the 2008 election, gaining a few seats. The number of local associations quickly increased, creating the need for coordination among them, resulting in a national network. Until 2009, this was the only form of organization at the national level, serving as the predecessor to M5S. Back in 2005, Grillo had suggested that the local groups adopt the Meetup platform as a venue for organizing their activities. Indirectly, the platform facilitated the counting of the groups, the number of members and their locations (see Figure 3).

Most groups activated their own Meetup platforms, each one choosing its preferred configuration. Being present in the list of active Meetups on Grillo's blog was a source of credit for a local group:

*When in 2009 the M5S was created, it started directly on the web, merging the website and the people, the Meetups, which was the first social space to share information and to allow people to find themselves. (National representative 1)*

*However, the list of Meetups on Grillo's blog is a sort of window display. (Twitter manager, group 2)*

However, as the emerging movement transitioned from discussions on open venues to more specific objectives, such as running for elections, members of local groups realized that by only acting online in the local dimension, they were missing something, and they felt the need to meet in person and discuss face to face:

*Subsequently, we noticed that we needed to meet face to face, because on the Meetup we were only nicknames ... Then we moved to the next step: 'Why don't we meet and count ourselves?' ... then during the next elections in 2008, it was urgent to close ranks in order to see who and how many we were, and to also identify persons as possible candidates. Then we started to meet. (Twitter manager, group 2)*

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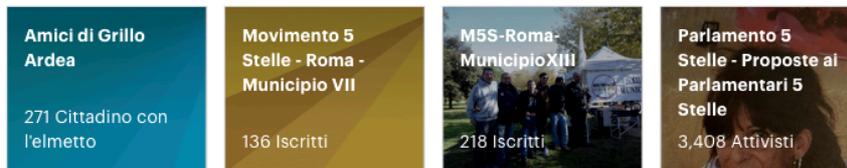


Figure 3. List and map of active M5S Meetups worldwide with the total number of members (from <http://www.meetup.com>, last access: October 2017).

## 4.2. Stage 2 (2009–2014)

In late 2009, the association named ‘Movimento 5 Stelle’ was established as a legal entity by Beppe Grillo and Gianroberto Casaleggio (whose company already informally managed Grillo’s blog), who presented a short list of regulations titled the ‘Non-Statute’. The document consisted of seven brief statements representing the written rules for M5S, which defined itself as a ‘non-association’. An official online portal called ‘movimento5stelle.it’ was also released, hosting the Non-Statute and the M5S programme, an open forum and links to the local groups. The portal also offered the opportunity to subscribe to the movement online and presented an area which only certified subscribers could enter. Consequently, the portal’s design led to the creation of new roles in the SM: certified subscribers (with access to the internal area) and subscribers awaiting certification (waiting to gain access). At the same time, it continued to allow followers to read, rate and comment on posts in the open arena (apparently not moderated).

As M5S founders, Grillo and Casaleggio were inspiring figures, with the former informally acting as a political leader. Grillo owned the registered M5S trademark, while Casaleggio's company hosted and administered the M5S platform:

*The M5S would not exist without Grillo and Casaleggio. Grillo particularly, since he is the communicator par excellence. Casaleggio helped to develop all the information systems on the internet, so he is the one who created the platform. (Subscriber 2, group 2)*

The local groups could organize their web pages as subsections of the M5S portal run by Casaleggio's company, reducing the need for, and hence the use of, the Meetup platform. Local groups also managed other channels of their own preference, including forums, Twitter and Facebook:

*The Meetup platform, the tool that triggered the development of everything, is no longer updated. Now we have moved to another forum ... However, presently Facebook is the most important dissemination tool we have, and Twitter is much used. (Twitter manager, group 2)*

In the channels used at the local level, there were some restricted areas which only recognized local members could enter. Some areas were also reserved for specific topics, admitting only members with a declared interest in the topic being discussed, to make the discussion easier to manage:

*When these people entered, since the movement is too democratic and cannot manage itself, the forum collapsed ... We have now several groups of smaller sizes. (Twitter manager, group 1)*

If a problem occurred on one of the social media channels used by a local group, for example if it were invaded by external provocateurs, the tool in question could be immediately replaced by new channels without any formal action or public announcement:

*Nowadays, there is a local M5S forum that is different from the previous one, but it is really complex, so everyone prefers using Facebook. Even Facebook has several problems, because the information gets lost there. (Local representative, group 1)*

*We abandoned it [our open forum] because it was invaded by trolls. We also attract people who are disturbed or who have relational diseases—the internet attracts such people. Then there are also people who by intention would like to harm us. (Twitter manager, group 1)*

Each local group was free to organize its activities and establish internal rules regulating participation in local activities and decision-making, defining roles within the group and how to manage them. In general, these rules were strictly applied, but there was also room for some flexibility to adapt to circumstances:

*To be an active member of our local group you had to be certified ... also in the local forum ... I had been working for three months with the group, but I was not yet certified in the local forum. So, to be pragmatic, someone said: 'You are [a member] of the group!' (Communication manager, group 1)*

Some local M5S groups participated in the local elections in 2010 and 2012, gaining some seats in local councils and mayoral positions in medium-size towns. Then, in 2013, M5S participated in the national elections for the first time, becoming the second most popular party (close to the most popular one), gaining 162 seats. This result strongly influenced the movement, which was in need of new rules

and tools. A code of conduct for elected representatives was soon issued, while tools and staff were provided to the group of parliamentarians:

*For example, we have tools to share information among parliamentarians. We are going to improve our tools ... but you need to understand this: Having organized more than 100 people within one year, we have done a lot. (National representative 1)*

The role of the representatives in the public council is different in M5S compared to traditional political parties. The representatives act as spokespersons, who report to the council only the will expressed by the majority of subscribers:

*We are spokespersons, as you know, and so we must ask our subscribers for every new law not already included in the electoral programme. (Regional representative 3)*

Close to the presidential election in 2013, approximately 35,000 M5S members selected a candidate to be promoted to parliament by M5S representatives. But no other party later supported the M5S candidate during the election in the parliament, and the candidate eventually lost. M5S blamed the dominant governmental party (the Democratic Party) for not supporting a candidate democratically selected by the people through an online voting process. The prime minister, who was the secretary of the Democratic Party at that time, replied that by receiving one million votes through a traditional electoral process, he had a stronger mandate to propose the candidate on behalf of the people.

In the second half of 2013, the movement released a custom-designed platform named the M5S Operating System. This platform initially included two features: (i) a voting tool for collective decision-making and (ii) a tool (named Lex) for developing law proposals. The latter tool supported a process which started with a first draft of a law uploaded by a representative, who then solicited subscribers through other channels (like Facebook) to enter Lex to comment on the proposal. Subscribers could post comments for the representatives to read, comment on and respond to and/or amend the original proposal. Subscribers would then be called to approve the proposal through online voting. The resulting law proposal was then submitted to parliament:

*The first thing I do is alert subscribers on Facebook that I have posted a law on Lex and ask them to please go and comment on it ... Then on the Lex system, the law is discussed ... When the discussion ends, the proposal is submitted to the parliamentary commission. (National representative 1)*

Within this time period (by the end of 2013), it was proposed through posts made on Grillo's blog that several representatives at the local or national levels should be banned from M5S. Initially, Grillo made the decisions, announcing the banishment by informing the candidate that he or she could no longer use any M5S trademark and removing their M5S Operating System accounts. This way of acting was subject to a lot of criticism, both externally and internally, resulting in a suggested procedure whereby proposals to ban representatives would be put to a vote within the movement.

### 4.3. Stage 3 (2014–2017)

By the end of 2014, the internal organization of the movement had become the main subject of discussion. For the very first time, some subscribers expressed concerns about how the movement was organized and managed by occupying the scene at a large national public event. Some representatives also expressed the need for a more structured organization:

*I'm engaged in organizing or reorganizing duties, assignments, roles and procedures, and digital tools are not the issue here ... I strongly believe that, at the moment, our priorities are different. I believe that we can keep the tools we have in the way they are a bit longer ... but I feel the need to strengthen other aspects of our organization. (National representative 3)*

In response to the behaviour and debate among representatives (who were openly demonstrating conflicting viewpoints), the two founders created a directorate formed by five prominent representatives, with the intention of improving the management of M5S. This action was also strongly criticized, since the directorate members were not selected based on a voting procedure, violating the founding principle of equality among all members. As a result of the way in which the directorate was created, some subscribers did not recognize its decisions (see Exhibit 2 in the Appendix). Then, in 2016, after a year of existence and with a proposal to enlarge it, Grillo disbanded the directorate.

The directorate's short lifecycle is similar to the even shorter lifespan of a local directorate created by Grillo and the national directorate in the Roman local group. This local directorate was formed in order to manage several internal fights. However, even this local directorate was the subject of criticism. It did not fix most issues and was abolished before long.

In 2016, M5S was officially asked to change its statute to comply with laws regulating political parties represented in the parliament. In response to this, a new association was created by Grillo, Casaleggio and two other persons. The new association bore a similar name to M5S and adopted a set of new and more detailed rules, regulating several new aspects not present in the Non-Statute. This also sparked internal criticism, since the new statute was not approved through a voting procedure which included all subscribers.

M5S faced several judicial concerns. Members who were facing banishment or whose candidacy for local elections was being refused sued the movement and Beppe Grillo, claiming that they were being excluded on the basis of the rules of an association of which they were not members, rules decided by Grillo and others but not approved by the subscribers. Judges often agreed with the claimants. To avoid more lawsuits, in 2016 the M5S was forced to issue new rules to integrate the Non-Statute. The new statute had to be approved through a vote by all subscribers, who also had the option of choosing among different solutions on some crucial points. The main changes involved giving every subscriber the opportunity to propose changes to the new rules (if supported by 20% of the subscribers) and a more structured procedure for banishments, which could no longer be decided only through voting but needed

to proceed through three levels of appeal with specific commissions. The M5S trademark remained the property of Grillo's family. The online voting campaign was open for a month, with 87,000 casting votes (out of the 135,000 who were permitted to vote). Of the voters, 90% approved the new rules, and consequently, a new article (8) was added to the Non-Statute to integrate the new regulation.

In April 2016, Casaleggio passed away, and his son, Davide, assumed his role in Casaleggio Associati Ltd. Some weeks later, a new platform named Rousseau was released in place of the former Operating System. Rousseau has a more fashionable layout and new features, but it still retains the Lex platform feature and voting systems as well as the same criterion for accessing the restricted area. At the time of this writing, the features within Rousseau include the following:

- Three versions of Lex, for elaborating law proposals for the local, national and European levels;
- Lex Iscritti, to allow subscribers to submit a law proposal to representatives (a feature long requested by subscribers, unavailable until then);
- E-learning, to support representatives, candidates and subscribers, providing some basic knowledge of how institutions work and how to behave when sitting in a council;
- Scudo della Rete, a space to host requests and support for members sued for their activities in the movement; and
- Fundraising, a feature to collect contributions.

Two other features were also provided to support activities within the local groups:

- Call to action, intended to facilitate discussion and the organization of activities within each group; and
- Sharing, for national and local representatives to share any kind of documents within a space accessible only by subscribers.

During summer 2017, with the next national election approaching, M5S launched for the first time a campaign to select a candidate for the presidency of the ministries' council. It quickly became apparent that only one prominent representative of the movement would run (Di Maio, allegedly supported by Grillo and Davide Casaleggio). The fact that a movement oriented to direct democracy presented only one candidate was a subject of criticism, both from inside and outside the movement (see Exhibit 3 in the Appendix). Another subject of debate, particularly among the subscribers, was the fact that the elected candidate would also be appointed as the movement's leader for the next five years, which was seen by many as a violation of the basic principle of full equality among all members. In the election for the new leader of the movement, 37,500 subscribers cast their votes, a much lower participation rate than during the vote for the new regulation (discussed above). Di Maio was eventually named the candidate and political leader of the movement, even though this role had yet to be clearly defined.

## 5. Discussion of Findings

Before discussing our findings, we should acknowledge the limitation represented by the fact that our work is based on a single case, though it is a highly insightful case for the research question at hand. We also identified three stages, corresponding to the initial three stages of the SMs' lifecycle described by Mauss (1975), and we acknowledge that our contribution is limited to the investigation across the first three stages of the lifecycle of the SM, with no result reflecting the last two stages described by Mauss (1975). Consequently, we limit our discussion and contribution only to the part of the lifecycle we have actually studied.

Through our empirical work, we observed the SM's reactions to challenges and opportunities emerging from changes in the external environment and identified how actions based on the use of DTs influenced the organization of the SM, reflecting the logics of connective and collective action. By so doing, we contribute to the literature discussing the organization of SMs and use of DTs in SMs (Benjamin et al., 2014; Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Mauss, 1975) by identifying the DTs and organizational structures at each stage and by explaining how these represent challenges for the SM which need to be addressed in order to transit to the next stage. Table 6 summarizes the DTs and organizational structures adopted by the movement over the three stages.

*Table 6. Digital technologies and other organizational structures adopted within M5S along three stages of its lifecycle.*

	<b>Stage 1 – Inciency (2005–2009)</b>	<b>Stage 2 – Coalescence (2009–2014)</b>	<b>Stage 3 – Institutionalization (2014–2017)</b>
<b>Digital technologies</b>	Centrally administered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grillo's blog</li> <li>• Local groups' old forum</li> </ul> Locally administered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetup</li> </ul>	Centrally administered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• M5S Operating System</li> <li>• Grillo's blog</li> <li>• M5S website and forum</li> <li>• La Cosa</li> <li>• M5S national profiles on Facebook and Twitter</li> <li>• Local groups' old forum</li> </ul> Locally administered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetup</li> <li>• Local groups' Facebook and Twitter pages</li> <li>• Representatives' individual profiles on Facebook or Twitter</li> </ul>	Centrally administered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rousseau (since 2016)</li> <li>• Grillo's blog; later on, the M5S blog</li> <li>• M5S website and forum</li> <li>• La Cosa</li> <li>• Local groups' website and new forum</li> <li>• M5S national profiles on Facebook and Twitter</li> </ul> Locally administered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local groups' Facebook and Twitter pages</li> <li>• Representatives' individual profiles on Facebook or Twitter</li> <li>• Parelou</li> </ul>

	<b>Stage 1 – Incipiency (2005–2009)</b>	<b>Stage 2 – Coalescence (2009–2014)</b>	<b>Stage 3 – Institutionalization (2014–2017)</b>
<b>Roles</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frontrunner (Grillo)</li> <li>• Followers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Founder and opinion leader (Grillo, Casaleggio)</li> <li>• Trademark owner (Grillo)</li> <li>• Platform owner (Casaleggio Associati)</li> <li>• Certified subscribers</li> <li>• Non-certified subscribers</li> <li>• Spokespersons (Representative) in national and local assemblies</li> <li>• Members in charge of specific tasks in local groups</li> <li>• Followers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Directorate (later dismissed)</li> <li>• Trademark owner (Grillo)</li> <li>• Platform owner (Casaleggio Associati)</li> <li>• Political leader (Di Maio, since 2017)</li> <li>• Guarantor (Grillo)</li> <li>• Certified subscribers</li> <li>• Non-certified subscribers</li> <li>• Representatives in national and local assemblies</li> <li>• Members in charge of specific tasks in local groups</li> <li>• Followers</li> </ul>
<b>Rules</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subscription to M5S</li> <li>• How to apply for candidature</li> <li>• Becoming a member of a local group</li> <li>• Code of conduct for representatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subscription to M5S</li> <li>• Banishment of members</li> <li>• Written rules on how to change rules</li> <li>• Code of conduct for representatives</li> <li>• Submitting a law proposal by a member</li> <li>• Voting for making decisions</li> </ul>
<b>Shared practices</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dissemination of posts by Grillo on his blog, commented on by followers on the same blog and shared through social networks (SNs)</li> <li>• Organization of local activities on Meetup platform</li> <li>• Discussion of topics of local interest on Meetup</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dissemination of M5S official statements on Grillo’s blog and national forum, commented on by followers and shared through SNs</li> <li>• Discussion and organization of local activities on Meetup platform or on local forum</li> <li>• Interaction with representatives on SNs</li> <li>• Voting at national level on M5S Operating System</li> <li>• Discussion and building of national law proposals on M5S Operating System</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dissemination of M5S official statements on Grillo’s blog and national forum, commented on by followers and shared through SNs</li> <li>• Discussion and organization of local activities on local official websites or on Rousseau</li> <li>• Interaction with representatives on SNs</li> <li>• Voting at national level on Rousseau</li> <li>• Discussion and building</li> </ul>

<b>Stage 1 – Inciency (2005–2009)</b>	<b>Stage 2 – Coalescence (2009–2014)</b>	<b>Stage 3 – Institutionalization (2014–2017)</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voting at local level on Facebook</li> <li>• Dissemination of official videos through forums and SN channels</li> <li>• Free discussion among followers on SNs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>of national and local law proposals on Rousseau</li> <li>• Dissemination of official videos through forums and SN channels</li> <li>• Free discussion among followers on SNs</li> </ul>

The analysis shows that across the various stages, in the SM, there is both continuity and the replacement of structures. Some organizational structures survive from one stage to the next, while others are replaced and new ones are added, to help the SM deal with new challenges and enable a move to the next stage. The SMO emerges only during the coalescence stage, and it represents the main locus of the new emerging organizational structures. Social media play an important role in all three stages but are progressively replaced with respect to some features by more specialized DTs, introduced with the explicit intent of exerting stronger control over the most critical CA activities carried out by the SM. The SMO exerts control over the specialized DTs for this purpose. In the next section, we will discuss in more depth the role of DTs in each of the three stages.

### 5.1. Inciency: Initiating the SM

In the incipency stage, SMs exploit opportunities in the external environment or promote previously unspoken stances around which a group of people sharing a common goal band together (Mauss, 1975). To push stances onto the external environment, SMs need to reach a critical mass of supporters (Coy & Hedeen, 2005; Mauss, 1975; Tilly, 1978). An incipient SM is far from reaching this critical mass, and the organizational structures in place are limited. There are few core organizers, and much of the activity is left to the mutual adjustment of members (Mauss, 1975). The aggregatory force was, in our case, a central charismatic leader who used the communication capabilities of social media to evangelize to the external environment, to put forward the stances promoted by the SM and to attract an increasing number of followers.

Mutual adjustment as a coordination mechanism is complemented with the use of a few DTs — mostly social media at this stage — introduced as arenas open to members and all other interested individuals and championed by the charismatic leadership. Other organizational structures are inherited from the structural features of the DTs in use, which regulate the communication practices and the organization of membership access. DTs are used by an SM’s members and sympathizers to express criticism and to discuss and promote the SM’s stances. The known capabilities of social media, such as

the ability to offer a venue for people to receive and disseminate information in a personalized manner (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Halpern & Gibbs, 2013; Zheng & Yu, 2016) and the facilitation of connective action (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012), form the dominant logic. Communication plays a critical role in building common perspectives through discussions. Social media constitute a valuable resource, allowing easy access to the SM's contents to potential members from the external environment, who need to be stimulated to join. Social media are used by the SM as a means of reaching a large mass of people. DTs are the core organizing agents (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). However, the DTs in use also contribute to the set of boundaries of the SM, distinguishing it from the external environment. With its presence on social media platforms, the followers' repertoire (another organizational structure) offers visibility to the number of people following or joining groups belonging to the SM. In this way, the charismatic leader guides people on specific DTs without dispersing them — for instance when Grillo suggested a common platform on which to meet up — which increases the SM's capability to control its evolution in subsequent stages.

Coherent with existing literature (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012), we found that the organizational structures and DTs in place sustain the connective action of an SM, attracting an increased number of followers of the charismatic leader to achieve the critical mass. With the increased number of members, the SM is ready to target its objectives, moving from connective to collective action. By the end of this first phase, the SM needs new DTs in order to do more than post and count the number of followers; it now has a growing need for people to meet, develop the movement's identity, coordinate and organize actions to move the SM forward. However, the organizational structures of the SM are unfit for these purposes, and the SM needs to transition to the next stage.

## **5.2. Coalescence: Consolidating the SM**

During the coalescence stage, the SM concentric ring structure is more recognizable, as a more formal organization emerges (Mauss, 1975). We observed that an SMO is introduced in this stage. The formal identity — which, in the M5S, was promoted through a registered trademark — represents a new organizational structure necessary to demarcate the borders between the SM and the external environment and to defend the SM against external pressures. The organization of the SM is now more complete, with the three concentric rings of core organizers, activists and supporters clearly present. Formal roles are intertwined between the SM and the SMO, with core organizers playing specific roles in both.

The external environment is a source of both opportunities and challenges. While resistance is present through all the stages (Mauss, 1975), the SM has more power to overcome resistance than it previously had. One form of resistance results from the divide between the views of the SM and those of other entities in the polity regarding how to address specific problems in the external world. For

example, the contrasting views between the M5S and the Democratic Party in 2013 regarding the presidential candidates illustrates the different interpretations of the democratic role held by traditional representatives versus M5S representatives. Both sides declared that the action taken by the opposing side (directly voting for each major decision online versus delegating the power to make decisions to an individual for five years through a physical vote) was less democratic.

The connective action is still present in the coalescence stage, and DTs are still relevant in organizing connective action (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). However, new organizational structures now arise. Particularly, when an SM is successful in national elections and sees subsequent increases in size and activities, it becomes urgent to provide it with the organizational structures needed to manage such activities and with specialized venues to perform CA (Federici et al., 2015). Freedom and mutual adjustment are still present, but more formalized roles and rules appear to regulate DTs and members' behaviour within the SM, under the control of the SMO.

We observed the existence of specialized arenas during the coalescence stage. One general purpose arena works with the same logic and level of freedom as in the first stage. Local groups are still free to adopt whatever DT they choose and to change the DTs they use if they find new tools which are more convenient for organizing their activities and providing visibility. Each group is also free to establish its own rules to manage its operation. Individuals choose the DTs they prefer to follow the movement. Such multiplicity of communication channels in the SM produces the known outcome of noise and confusion, resulting from redundant and replicated communication flows (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Federici et al., 2015). Two major benefits were observed as a result of allowing the SM to be free to choose and change its preferred DTs and to alter its own rules. First, the core organizers do not have the care of supporting all groups, hence reducing the coordination overhead of the SMO, and second, members feel highly engaged and empowered when they have to shoulder such large responsibilities.

The other arena is specialized for CA. The DTs in the specialized arena (including both social media and specifically designed DTs) are controlled by the core organizers of the SM through the SMO. The growth of the specialized arena is supported by the charismatic leadership and works under the formalized roles and rules set and managed by the SMO, as agreed on through formal processes (such as online voting) by the members of the SM. The rules are enforced at the core level by DTs, forcing members to act in specific ways. At this stage, specifically designed DTs complement social media, responding to the need for a more formal organization of CA. The specifically designed DTs are there to help produce more focused contents and support the selection of members who will engage in the controlled CA. By guiding members to contribute on controlled DTs, the SM aims to increase the chance that CA will yield positive outcomes, amidst the mass of personalized messages sent by followers nurturing the connective action logic. The member selection process can admit and exclude people from the controlled platform, following the rules set by the SMO and agreed to by the SM. This works both

as an encouragement for followers willing to participate in CA to scale up their role to that of members and as a self-selection mechanism which excludes those who prefer a more limited level of engagement.

The organization of the SM allows CA to happen and addresses pressures from the external environment. The increasing size of the SM results in an increased level of activity. DTs support connective action but no longer play the role of core organizers (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). DTs still embed with and enforce organizational structures, guiding the SM core organizers in retaining control over the actions of subgroups and members. However, the increasing complexity requires a more formalized organizational structure (the SMO).

At this stage, the SM holds an established position in the external environment and acts to implement CA in a context faced with opposition from the polity or from rivals. The increased need for organizational structures is further nurtured by internal forces. The number of core organizers and activists increases, resulting in the need for something beyond a charismatic leadership to coordinate the work. The clear separation between open arenas and custom-designed DTs reduces the possible interference of connective action with CA; however, some resistance and noise also remain in the specialized arena. To address such challenges, the SM once again needs to change its ways of organizing, bringing it to the next stage.

### **5.3. Institutionalization: Stabilising and Controlling the SM**

At the third stage, the SM faces challenges from the external environment as well as from internal tensions among members, requiring that the SM look for new ways to organize. At this stage, the specialized arenas remain, both to nurture the critical mass of people and to support the CA. The division of roles established during the second stage is still present, and the DTs are still used to address targeted audiences. The size of the SM increases, resulting in the full visibility of the entire three-ring structure of the SM (Mauss, 1975)(Figure 4). Now the SM needs stronger organizational structures and more formal leadership and hierarchies, resulting in a more formal delegation of responsibilities (Blumer, 1951).

Major decisions continue to be made by all members through online voting. At the same time, daily decisions (i.e. on managing relationships with other parties) are now made by formal leader(s) entitled to act autonomously to promote the SM. These organizational structures respond to the need to manage more complex relationships with external institutions or rival parties as well as to the tension between various working dynamics within the SM and in its environment. As an example, our analysis showed that the practice of calling on all members for each decision-making process was unfit for the rules governing parliament's activities. While parliament's processes can require a reaction time as short as 15 minutes, activating the SM's decision-making process, on average, takes several days. Hence, the time frames and methods of parliament's processes did not match the M5S rules for activating members to decide.

However, it could be difficult to convey these changes to all SM members, especially to those who still promoted connective action over social media; hence, tensions internal to the SM arose between the core and the other rings of the SM and between the SM and the SMO.

The SM's leadership roles changed (Blumer, 1951), the charismatic leadership giving way to a more formally established leadership elected by the SM's members. The M5S made two attempts to introduce forms of hierarchy and delegation, which were both later removed as a result of internal criticism. Eventually, in spite of internal criticism and low electoral participation, a political head was elected to manage, day by day and autonomously, the political agenda.

The SM has developed a more comprehensive form of control over CA to govern and coordinate frequent interactions from an increased number of members and subgroups, to keep them aligned and to reduce potential tensions. The DTs in use have been redesigned and reinforced to address the flaws and limitations experienced during the second stage. The DTs, several of which now mimic the approach of workflow management systems, possess new features to support an improved representative selection process, share best practices and train members to provide better information. These DTs are still under the control of the SMO. Even though subgroups are still free to use them or keep using the technologies they had previously adopted, there is a clear aim to bring the CA performed at the local level onto one controlled platform. There is a sharp and noticeable distinction between the openness of operations which characterized the initial steps of the SM's lifecycle and the current more structured way of managing CA.

#### **5.4. The Roles of DTs and Organizational Structures in SMs**

Figure 4 summarizes our process model explaining the roles of DTs and organizational structures in SMs. The model summarizes the main logics, the environmental conditions, organizational structures and use of DTs across the first three stages of the SM's lifecycle (Mauss, 1975). At the incipiency stage, the focus is on attracting and connecting people interested in the SM's discourse. Next, during the coalescence stage, the SM promotes CA through different contexts. Later, when the number of members and subgroups increases, coordination and interactions with the external environments become more challenging, increasing the need to improve control and coordination within the SMs to keep CA effective. Therefore, an SMO is appointed in the coalescence stage and is later reinforced in the institutionalization stage.

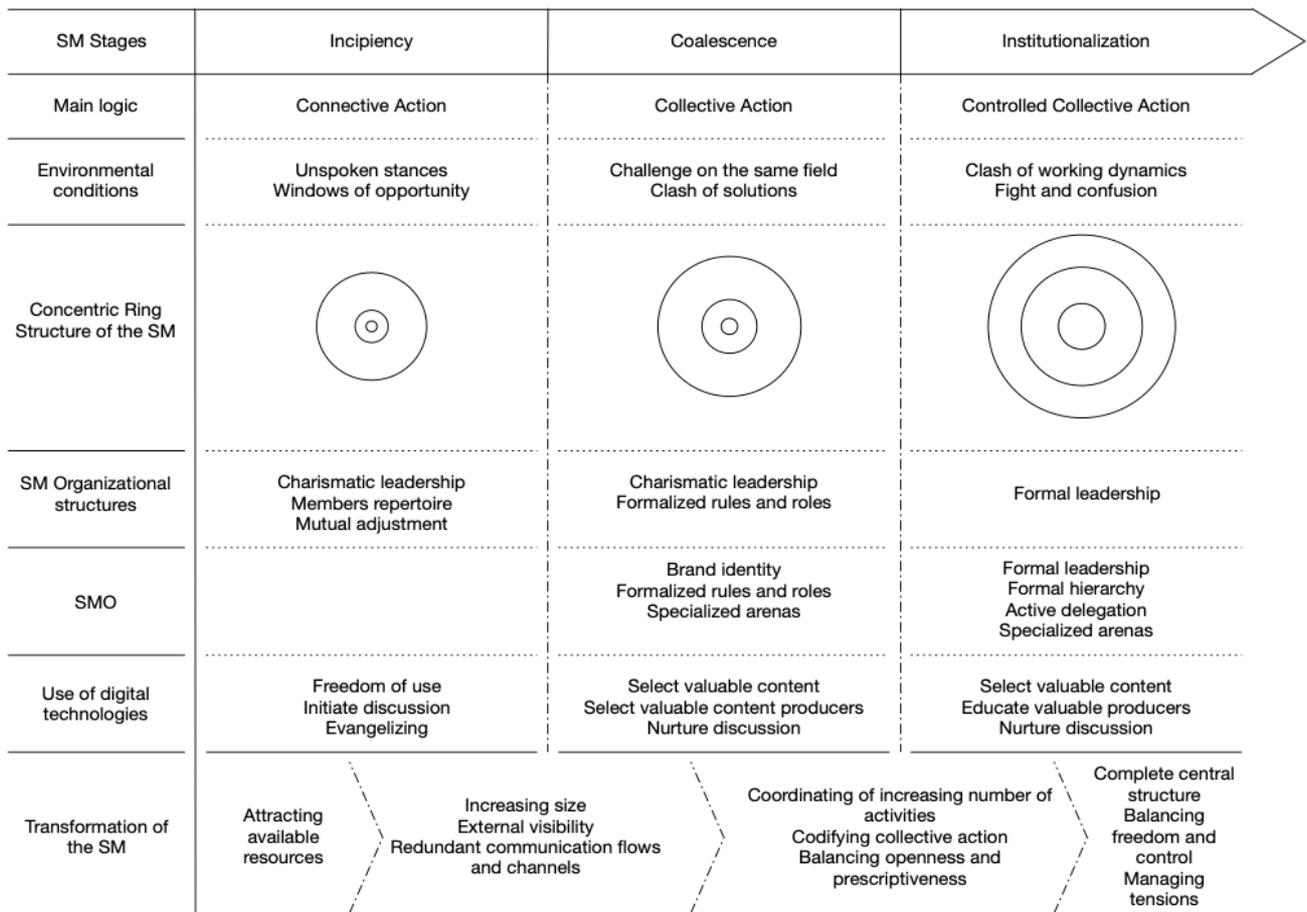


Figure 4. Process model of organization of SMs.

The structure of the SM, based on the three concentric rings introduced by Mauss (Mauss, 1975), was identified through our empirical work. Our analyses also shed light on the relationships between the three rings, the DTs in use and the various structures of the rings at various stages, with the innermost rings of leaders as well as the middle ring of members gaining relevance when moving from one stage to the next. The three-ring structure (Mauss, 1975) also reflects the use of DTs, being more flexible and open in the outer ring, while more strictly managed in the other two rings, which are more controlled by specific rules and roles and are managed by the core organizers through an SMO. The formalization of organizational structures in terms of roles, rules and leadership takes place both in the SM and in the SMO. The organizational choices — for instance the rules — may be different in the SM and SMO and may become sources of tension.

Reflecting on our research question, our process model contributes by showing the organizational structures and use of DTs at each stage of the SM's evolution. We further contribute by reflecting on the consequences of the processes through which this DT usage changes the way an SM is organized, which may help solve challenges at one stage but at the same time poses new challenges which will lead to the transition to the subsequent stage.

## 6. Contributions and Implications

A main contribution from our work is an increased understanding of the use of DTs in SMs through the different stages being introduced. We contribute to a better understanding of how DTs, along with organizational structures in the form of roles, rules and shared practices, play a role in the way SMs organize themselves to sustain CA, and we provide insight into the consequences of this on the transition from one stage to the next (Figure 4).

DTs and organizational structures differ from one stage of the lifecycle of SMs to the next in various ways. In the incipency stage, social media and a very limited number of rules play critical roles in facilitating connective action (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012), providing the growing SM the chance to quickly develop its own identity (Blumer, 1951; Mauss, 1975). A transition to the next stage is then necessary to avoid being trapped in the incipency stage for too long (Mauss, 1975), and this requires that the SM makes specific choices to prevent connective action from interfering with CA. The coalescence stage is accommodated by the use of specialized DTs, which are governed by the SMO through specific rules and are connected to the emerging SM's formal identity.

The next transition, from coalescence to institutionalization, is a result of the success of introducing (in addition to social media) custom-designed platforms in the coalescence stage and the reinforcing of the SMO. The number of participants increases, the SM offers specialized and institutionalized arenas for CA to happen and organizational structures are needed to manage CA (Blumer, 1951; Ostrom, 1990). Nevertheless, the existing organizational structures may fall short in handling the success. The growth in participant numbers is the result of efforts to keep barriers low when involving citizens in political decision-making processes during the first stages. However, this challenges the functioning of the SM and the management of CA as it moves into the institutionalization stage, where SMs become much more structured and purposeful, with a complete organizational structure and a rich set of specialized DTs to manage and further the workflow of CA. The more complex organizational structure of the SMO may increase internal tensions and lower the involvement of individual members, which might be the next big challenge to manage.

A second contribution from our work is the improved understanding of the dynamics between connective and collective action (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). Our analysis suggests that there is a transition from the former to the latter logic, since SMs tend to move from connective action in their infancy to the 'classic' form of CA (as described by Bennett and Segerberg, 2012) in the next stage, adopting DTs and organizational structures to avoid interference between them. Subsequently, to resist the pressures of extended influence from the external environment, the SM shifts to a more controlled form of CA, with a more formal way of organizing. However, recalling Bennett and Segerberg (2012), neither connective nor collective logic work alone; our model simply highlights what prevails at each

stage. To fully understand CA in SMs, attention must be paid to the coexistence of different areas working under different rules and conditions to support different logics at the same time.

The coexistence of the two forms of action, combined with the need for more formal organization and control, bring us to the third contribution of our work: an improved understanding of the necessity of using DTs differently at the various levels within the SM. Our findings suggest a need for a more structured use of DTs within the core of the movement (mainly to support the logic of CA), combined with a more flexible use of DTs, such as social media, at the periphery of the SM (mainly in support of the logic of connective action). Our analysis further indicates that this bifurcation may also raise internal tensions at the institutionalization stage.

### **6.1. Implications for Further Research**

Further research is needed to explore the SM's lifecycle stages which were not observable in our case. Mauss (1975) argues that SMs are at their peak within the institutionalization stage and that inevitably, the stages of fragmentation and demise follow. There is a need to empirically explore the role played by DTs and organizational structures in the possible transition to the last two stages suggested by Mauss (Mauss, 1975). Future research should explore the possibility of accommodating a longer and more successful future in the institutionalization stage, as a result of a well-designed mixture of DTs and organizational structures.

We identified the fact that connective action is present through all three stages and works as a digital arena for the involvement of followers who can eventually ask to be admitted to the more specialized arenas in which CA takes place. Further investigations are necessary to understand the process of transition which takes place as protesters in the public arena are transformed into targeted content producers in the more specialized arena (Blumer, 1951), with further exploration of the interactions between connective and collective action (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012) in both the public and specialized arenas.

Another issue for further investigation is the coexistence of the use of flexible DTs freely adopted by subgroups and the use of specialized DTs for reinforcing CA at a global level, combining the outcome of deliberative and planned patterns of action (Henfridsson & Lind, 2014; Spagnoletti et al., 2015). This coexistence may add value to recently formed SMs, since it offers some level of control while mitigating the effort of managing systems. Or, in contrast, such coexistence might push the SM onto a risky path if it is not able to manage the exponential growth enabled by social media at the early stages or if it creates a fragmentation facilitated by the use of DTs with different, perhaps incompatible, working logic. More research is needed to explore the tensions derived from this coexistence and the effects of such tension on the stability and evolution of the SMs.

In our study, the need to exert better control and coordination of the CA of social movements led to the emergence of an SMO. However, similar organizational structures exist in the SM and in the SMO. As a result, the formalization of roles and rules interests both the SM and the SMO in the coalescence stage, while the formal leadership is appointed both in the SM and in the SMO in the institutionalization phase. These aspects depict a more complex organizational design of SM compared to what was already observed (Gerald F. Davis & Zald, 2005; McAdam & Scott, 2005; Ninguno, 1977), where organizational structures emerge in the SM while being designed in the SMO; this might be a source of tensions which might eventually lead to the fragmentation and demise of the SMO. Further research should explore the interaction patterns and tensions within the different organizational structures in the SM and the SMO.

Further studies are also needed to explore the political consequences of SMs (Amenta et al., 2010; Morris, 2000). While we have not explored this in detail here, we acknowledge the existence of potential clashes between the values and habits proposed by the SM and those existing in political institutions and the external environment. One likely point of contention involves the obligation of M5S parliamentarians to reimburse a percentage of their salaries to the state, which M5S now wants to become law for parliamentarians from other parties. We leave future research to continue studying the M5S case from a more political perspective.

## 6.2. Implications for Practice

Our work provides two managerial recommendations for the organization of SMs for CA. The first concerns the progressive engagement of a movement's followers. Our findings suggest that engagement is an important first step, with connective action encouraging a growing number of people to join. Later, the more valuable and motivated members should be identified to undertake CA activities within specialized arenas. Therefore, organizational structures which limit the freedom of members could be introduced gradually.

The second recommendation suggests that the management of social media is not sufficient for CA to happen within SMs. Social media channels can help enable connective action, but for CA to take place — including collectively built, focused contributions — and for decision-making processes to occur, it is necessary to develop specific processes and rules, supported and enforced by specific, purposefully designed DTs.

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## **Appendix 1: Exhibits from M5S social media data sources**

The present appendix contains exhibits providing exemplifying the kinds of discussions developed through social media channels. When needed, and for aligning the concepts used by Grillo with those we used in our paper or to provide explanations of figurative speech, we indicated our comments within the text of the exhibits between squared brackets. The expression “[...]” is used when we removed some contents which was not adding to the clarity of the message and would only have increased the length of the appendix.

The three exhibits provide sample reactions on the community and on its environment in key moments of the M5S history: from the initial period when the community was forming through an increasing number of members connected (Exhibit 1), and from the third period when the movement started to introduce organizational structures to control CA (Exhibit 2 and 3).

Exhibit 1 contains three posts from Grillo’s blog (original text in English), and four interviews transcript that appeared in newspapers of key representatives of the Democratic Party (translated from Italian). The excerpt concerns the challenges and contrasts between Grillo and the representatives of the Democratic Party when Grillo announced his candidacy for the party primary elections with the program developed by the community of his followers.

Exhibit 2 contains one post from Grillo’s blog announcing the vote (and the results of the online voting) for the creation of a directorate of the M5S composed by five members proposed by Grillo himself. Moreover, the exhibit includes some sample comments from certified subscribers. Grillo’s post is available also in English while comments have been translated by us (the comments to the post are addressed to the Italian version of the post). User’s details (name or account in Grillo’s blog and Facebook page) are anonymized.

Exhibit 3 contains one post on Grillo’s Facebook wall, announcing the online voting for the election of the M5S candidate for prime minister office and next political head of the M5S. Sample comments and replies by other Facebook users are also included. They are all translated from Italian.

<p><b>Post on Grillo’s blog, July 12th 2009, 18.26: “Beppe Grillo candidate for Secretary of the PD”</b></p> <p>On 25 October, there’ll be the Primaries for the PDminusL. Every potential voter will vote. [...] I am going to be a candidate. [...] My programme will be that of the <a href="#">Five Star Towns</a> at a national level, the restoration of dignity to the Republic with the application of the <a href="#">Clean Up Parliament</a> popular laws and freedom of information with the withdrawal of the State TV concessions from every political entity, starting with Silvio Berlusconi. [...] The time has come to not renew the policy ever again. See you on 25 October!</p> <p><b>Post on Grillo’s blog, July 14th 2009, 08.17: “Grillo 168 – The PD at the end of the line”</b></p> <p>So the Democratic Party is completely at the end. You don’t know what it is any more. Fassino says that the Democratic Party is not a taxi. Bersani says that the Democratic Party is not a bus and Ms Melandri says that the Democratic Party is not a tram. The only sure thing that we know about the Democratic Party is that it is not a motorised vehicle. They are truly at the end of the line. I went to sign up at Arzachena. [...] They told me that I could make the application “but we can’t give you the party ticket”. [...] Now [...] they say that my application is not valid because I am not resident in Arzachena. So tomorrow I will go to Nervi, where I reside, and I will try to get the party ticket there where I live. So I hope that Vincenzi who is the mayor, doesn’t take away from me my residence status in Genoa, otherwise to sign up to this crazy party I have to become stateless! [...] We have our programme that you know really well. The programme of the <b>Five Stars</b> and the <a href="#">Charter of Florence</a>. [...]</p> <p><b>Post on Grillo’s blog, July 15th 2009, 17.05: “Hostile Political Movement”</b></p> <p>The Guarantee Commission of the PD has issued a “fatwa” against me: <i>“It is not possible to register Beppe Grillo in the lists of the PD because he inspires and is identified with a political movement that is hostile to the PD. The decision will be published on the web site in the next few days.”</i> In a single sentence they have admitted that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. there is a popular political movement</li> <li>2. that movement is “hostile” to the PD</li> <li>3. whether or not a citizen can sign up to the PD (where the ‘D’ stands for ‘Democratic’) is decided by a mysterious Guarantee Commission, and not the Statute.</li> </ol> <p>The “<i>Hostile Political Movement</i>” is perhaps hostile because its programme is an alternative to that of the PD? While the one of the PD is the same as that of the PDL?</p>	<p><b>Interview to Piero Fassino on Repubblica tv</b></p> <p>I think that of Grillo is a boutade [a joke], I interpret it as one of the many provocations he made us used to as a showman. [...] A party is not a taxi to jump on and off, it is a serious thing. The party with a congress shall make compelling decisions. Things need to be clear, you subscribe to a party and you candidate to lead it when you share its objectives. Grillo instead has publicly manifested his hostility against the PD and his managers. No one is worried about Grillo’s candidacy. But there are rules, there is a congress phase to which only subscribers take part, and the second phase requires primary elections.</p> <p><b>Interview to Pierluigi Bersani candidate to the PD secretary office, on Repubblica.it</b></p> <p>A party is not a bus on which you hop on to have a small ride but it is a serious thing. The congress will also be an occasion to reflect on the rules that we set for ourselves [Grillo’s candidacy] is here to testify that we built a party, which can be an opportunity to develop your own politics. A party shall have its own profile, an identity and specific rules. It cannot be confused as a galaxy in which anybody can participate. It is a problem we need to address.</p> <p><b>Interview with Ignazio Marino, other candidat to the PD secretary office, on Repubblica.it</b></p> <p>I have no prejudices against a possible candidacy of Grillo for the primary elections. [...] Following democratic rules, whoever has the papers and the signatures can make it. I do not judge persona, if Grillo will come with a structured proposal and with precise answers on themes that worries people living in the country, I do not see why he should be excluded.</p> <p><b>Interview with Piero Fassino</b></p> <p>Given that Grillo wants to be a politician, let him fund a party, set up an organization, run for the elections, let see how many votes he will get ... why is not doing it!</p>
<p><b>Note:</b> PD (Democratic Party) and PDL (People of Freedom) are the names of the two major Italian parties at the time the events unfolded (2009). PDminusL is an acronym used by Grillo first and diffused among his followers to mock the democratic party alleging there were almost no differences between the PD and PDL.</p>	

*Exhibit 1. Grillo decides to run as a candidate for secretary office of the PD (Democratic Party) but his application to the party is rejected.*

**Post on Grillo's blog, November 28th 2014, 10.50:**

**“RESULTS – Online consultation – Political statement number fifty-two”**

37,127 certified signed up members took part in today's vote.  
91.7 %, voted YES (34,050 votes).  
8.3 %, voted NO (3,077 votes).  
Many thanks to all those that took part!

When we started off on this thrilling journey with the 5 Star MoVement, I took on the role of guardian of the core values of this community.

Today, if we want this country to become a better country, we have to start off again with more energy and enthusiasm. The M5S needs a representative structure that is broader than the current one. This is a fact. Me, the camper and the blog are no longer enough. I'm pretty tired, as Forrest Gump would say. Thus **while staying in the role of the guardian of the M5S**, I've decided to put forward the names of five people, out of the many, many valid people. Thanks to their diverse backgrounds and qualifications, they will be able to operate on a broader scale for the M5S throughout the country and in parliament. Today I'm giving you the names in alphabetical order and I'm asking the **signed up members [certified subscribers] to vote on this issue:**

- Alessandro Di Battista
- Luigi Di Maio
- Roberto Fico
- Carla Ruocco
- Carlo Sibilìa

These people will meet up with me at regular intervals to have a look at the general situation, share the most urgent decisions and with the help of everyone, create **the future of the 5 Star MoVement**.

Do you agree with this decision? You can express your preference here: <https://sistemaoperativom5s.beppegrillo.it>  
Voting continues until 7:00 pm Italian time.

### Comments

Dear Beppe, I would have preferred to have a list of names with the possibility of checking from 0 up to 5, out of my choice, so that I could consider also other persons not so known (but maybe valid). For sure the results would have not been predictable, maybe the result would have been deprived by your alchemy in composing the “5 Star Team Support”, maybe the largest share of the names would have been the same, but the way of doing it would have been more “direct”.

Dear Beppe, if you want chick to fly, you have to leave their wings free...

Even though, to tell truth, this gold egg still needs to be nursed.

Up with the spirit

Posted by xxx 03.12.14 13:29

What leaves us incapable, both historical and non-subscribers, is the fact that we find ourselves committed to do, to build something that starts from us, from the bottom on which we always asked Grillo&Co support, a signal, a fuck off! But we do not get anything, never! They ignore us, and that's it, in spite of the potential validity of our proposals, and of the engagement that we can generate.

Then, suddenly, you are delivered an excommunication from one of his lawyers if some of us tries to do something concrete to push our ideas (see ANONYMIZED) awaiting the so long dreamt communication platform we have been waiting for years and which at this point I fear we will never see.

Then the purges complete the picture. It is true that they invented the logo and the Movement, but wasn't it for giving a tool to US THE CITIZENS outside the old political establishment?

I think Grillo&Co do not see one important thing: The Movement arrived till here also thanks to the work of, almost always unseen in the shadows, of a lot of fellow subscribers that in these years committed with heart and soul (often with time nicked to family and their own money).

Earing now that we don't count a shit at none level, not even ONE (if ONE counts as ONE) is demotivating, demoralizing, and unsettling. We cannot get to that 51% we need to rule the country this way. If nothing changes the decline started will be relentless and we will never be able to regain.

I truly believed up to now! From this point on I sincerely do not know how to behave.

Posted by yyy 03.12.14 00:36

The M5S is not a political party neither it is meant to become one in the future. It wants to be the witness of the possibility of realizing an efficient and effective exchange of opinions and democratic confrontation outside the bounds of associating to a political party and without the mediation of directorates or representative bodies, recognizing to all users of the Network the role of decision makers.

Posted by zzz 02.12.14 14:26

I am amongst those who voted no to express my strong disappointment for not having respected the code of conduct by the founder of the movement himself. I consider this a serious mistake also for not having chosen a list of people to choose from, but "citizens" already chosen, also with a very low presence of women, 20%! After days of deep bitterness and skepticism if I am still here is because the M5S is the only movement that is still talking of direct democracy. Unfortunately, day by day I realize that people have been talking about it for a long time, but the methods are those of the old political parties. Let just do not hurt ourselves.

Posted by www 02.12.12 13:00

Ok Beppe, if you think this to be the best way to better organize the political action, I welcome this solution. Now to these 5 names you must assign tasks, which presumably would be that of staying closer to the local micro-structures of the Movement, and that of steering fights in the parliament. I would like to avoid, anyhow, that the work of colleagues in the Chamber would be impoverished, because this would stimulate jealousy and envy. I wish you to study the internal relations so that they do not become a problem. ANYHOW WE WILL WIN!

Posted by qqq 01.12.14 19:51

Note: the first rows in a box have been added at the end of the online voting. The post was published by Grillo to announce the online voting.

*Exhibit 2. Call for online voting on the decision to adopt a directorate and some examples of reactions by subscribers*

### Post on Grillo's Facebook profile 20.09.2017

Tomorrow we vote. Here is how to do it and who can do it [the post contains a link to a post in beppegrillo.it blog]

#### Comments

Facebook User xxx: I have read some comments and I wonder: we Italians, are we dorks or did we become so. We complain about everything, we disagree with everyone, do we realize we look shabby [...] it is really true that a full man does not see the full fasting. We are given the chance to change and what do we do? We keep saying a bullshit like the difference if Di Maio or Di Battista or a perfect unknown... the important is that he promotes the program of the movement, remember it is us that do not want to change, we like this shit. (20.09.2017 11:19)

- Reply by Facebook User rxxx: I fully agree. These polemics are just to split the Movement. Let's just do not do like the others that see the finger and not the moon (20.09.17 11:44)
- Reply by Facebook User ryyy: I agree with your analysis, but I would have expected more honesty, journalists and all who are against us are right to mock us today (20.09.17 11:45)
- [...]
- Reply by Facebook User rzzz: the full man does not see the full fasting, but the [stupid Grillo's follower] do not see nothing besides the serial bull shits of the small dux found guilty but honest (20.09.17 11:47)

Facebook User yyy: but all this democracy advocated by those who do not know where it actually lives. Di Maio is the only person fit to be seen, that's it... the other do fake primary elections buying votes... go f... yourselves. (20.09.2017 11:03)

Facebook User www: "A citizen can vote any candidate he likes as long as it is Di Maio" cit. Ford (20.09.2017 10:54)

- Reply by Facebook User rooo: Exactly... you failed big this time... I have respect for Di Maio but if you have been shouting for 5 years that sovereignty is of the people, and you are proud that we chose the web, and then you do this... it is shameful, I do not expect this from you (20.09.2017 11:07)
- Reply by Facebook User rttt: Facebook User rtt, excuse me, what is wrong? According to you, they should have forced those who did not want to be a candidate? (20.09.2017 11:24)
- Reply by Facebook User rqqq: Maybe your memory is short, in Genova the M5S has put its foot in its mouth the same way... no?

*Exhibit 3. Reactions of Grillo's followers on call for voting for the prime minister and head of the movement candidate*