Beppe Grillo and the M5S: A political experiment

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Abstract

This paper studies the political blog of Beppe Grillo and the directly connected political movement of the blog, the Movimento Cinque Stelle (M5S). Beppe Grillo, an Italian comedian and politician, launched 2009 the political movement M5S as an Internet movement with political interests. The movement is based on the blog of Beppe Grillo, which creates the content and the political guidelines of the M5S. The recent political success of the M5S, being elected the first political force in Italy in February 2013, adds to the study case actuality. The aim of this paper is to identify how Beppe Grillo uses the blog and the M5S in order to gain such a large acceptance in the society, and, which role the political aspect plays in comparison to the medial aspect. The theoretical framework is divided in two main areas of theory: the first deals with political communication, and the other focuses on Internet communication. The research is based on a perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis, adapting the research method on the empirical material studied. The context, the language and texts, as the interaction and dialogue of the blog are studied.
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Introduction

In the year 2013, on February 24 and 25 the political elections for the Parliament in Italy took place. The first political force elected, without taking into consideration the coalitions between more parties, was a new entry in the Italian political system, the so called, “Movimento 5 Stelle” ("5-Stars-Movement", in future called with the abbreviation 5-Star-Movement or M5S) with 8 689 458 votes and the 25,55 % of the voters. The M5S reached in total 109 seats in the Chamber of Deputies and 54 seats in the Senate of the Republic. This result was the real surprise of the political elections in 2013 and the “Movimento Cinque Stelle”, which refuses the definition as a political party, was one of the winners of the elections.

The leader of the movement is Beppe Grillo, who himself was not a candidate for the Parliamentary elections. Grillo, born on the 21 June 1948, is an Italian blogger, comedian and political activist, who has reached widespread popularity among the Italian society through his blog www.beppegrillo.it. He is a well-known sharp critic of the Italian politics and their political actors, as well as of the relations of the political world with the mass media and economic system. His blog is one of the most visited worldwide, and was ranked by the Guardian on the 9th place in their list of worldwide most influential blogs\(^1\) in 2008. The merely online-presence of Beppe Grillo and the almost total non-observance of the mainstream media, made him to a phenomenon of public popularity and political activism.

After several experiments on the gathering of people through his weblog, in 2009 Grillo decided to enter politics actively founding the political movement “Cinque Stelle”. The immediate success at the regional and local elections in 2010, 2011 and 2012 led to the exploit of the M5S in the Parliamentary elections 2013. The organization of the movement is strongly connected to the Internet and communication strategies through the web. With their analysis of the protest-rally “V-Day” organized by Beppe Grillo, Corinna Di Gennaro and Alberto Pepe (2009) underline the connection between online politics and the organization of the protest, saying that Grillo’s blog has acted as a lever to transfer online forms of participation and discussion to off-line realms. The use of the blog as a tool for gathering a community online and offline for political activities and for the construction of a political movement, makes it an interesting phenomenon to study.

The following research problematic is underlying the present study: Has the community of Beppe Grillo and the M5S, been created and held together primarily on the

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\(^1\) [http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2008/mar/09/blogs](http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2008/mar/09/blogs)
basis of the specific political ideas of a local/national community or on the basis of an Internet community? In other words, is beppegrillo.it mainly a political phenomenon or is it a new method of politics through the online blogosphere, which could be applied also to other countries and democracies?

To investigate this question attention has to be drawn to how the blog of beppegrillo.it constructs its political content, and how it uses the content for political purposes. One of the main theoretical areas useful to analyze this phenomenon is based on the concept of public sphere developed by Jürgen Habermas and its adaption to new forms of mediated communication. In addition, the idea of the blog as a new public space of online democracy has been developed by Fromkin (2004) and Bohman (2004) to show how democracy can be mediated through the Net. The Internet and the social media are becoming a powerful tool to use for political purposes, as shown for example by Howard et al. (2011), that the Net played an important role in the construction of political discourse anticipating political mass events, as revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt. Furthermore, the use of Twitter was fundamental in the organization of the “Occupy Wall Street” movement as a tool to share and create content, building on online “informed neighbourhood” (Gleason: 2013, 12).

As the ways of political representation are characterised differently in different countries, attention is drawn also to the specific context of the M5S in the Italian political, medial and societal area. The overall aim of this work is to investigate, describe and problematize the work of the blog beppegrillo.it and to discuss it as a possible phenomenon with generalizable character. The analysis focuses on the construction of a political identity using the Internet as a political and discursive space. The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

RQ (1)：“Who are the authors and what are the themes of the blog posts on beppegrillo.it?”

RQ (2): “How does the blog texts evaluate the Italian political system? How is the alternative method of politics constructed linguistically, semantically and discursively in the blog posts of Beppe Grillo?”

RQ (3): “In what ways and to what extent does the reader use the commentary section? Which are the most popular opinions and ideas of the commentary?”
The method approach used is based on an interpretation of Critical Discourse Analysis. The analysis is performed on three levels, each research question corresponds to a specific level.

On the first level the authors and themes present on the blog beppegrillo.it are investigated, in order to describe the macro components of the blog. The second level is based on the language in the texts of the blog and identifies the construction of a political discourse of power and dominance. The third level of analysis concentrates on the dialogical aspects of the blog focusing on the commentary section of the blog and the interaction between commentators and the discourse of the texts. The analysis of the dialogue on the blog relates to the language use of commentators to the content creation of the blog texts. The dialogical aspect of the blog is studied by identifying the level of shared patterns of political attitudes with the blog texts.

The thesis is structured in the following order: in the first chapter a description of the Italian media politics is presented, with the intent to explain and clarify the political and mass-medial situation and history in Italy. A short overview of the blog of Beppe Grillo and of the 5Star-Movement follows. The second chapter presents the theoretical framework and is divided into two main areas. Firstly, the area of political communication is presented, with the discussion of the concepts of political public sphere and of political populism. The second area deals with Internet communication, and its adaptation to the concept of public sphere to the blog as an online public space leading to possible new ways of democratic communication.

In the third chapter the research methods are presented. The mixed method approach uses three levels of Critical Discourse Analysis: on the first level quantitative methods are used to show the distribution of themes and authors. The second level is based on a textual analysis of the language use in order to identify a discourse. On the third level of analysis both, quantitative and qualitative methods are used, analysing the total amount of comments present and the most popular comments and comparing them to the textual characteristics of the blog texts. Chapter 4 presents the analysis divided in the corresponding three levels. In Chapter 5 the discussion and conclusions of the results are presented. The two separated codebooks are attached in the appendices.
2. Background

2.1 Italy – Media and Politics

In this chapter the relation of the mass media to the political system in Italy is presented. The first section includes a short presentation of different theoretical models of media and politics, as the main media actors in Italy. The second section contains a presentation of the relation between media and politics in Italy and the third section presents the recent developments and political scandals. A summary concludes the chapter.

2.1.1 Popular newspapers and television broadcast

To understand the phenomenon of Beppe Grillo a short description of its background is needed. Useful in this regard is the framework of “Three models of Media and Politics” developed by Hallin and May when comparing different media systems. The media characteristics of Italy are explained in the “Mediterranean or Polarized Pluralist Model”, and are similar to models in France, Greece, Spain and Portugal. One characteristic of the Polarized Pluralist Model is the elitism with “a relatively small circulation” (Hallin/Mancini: 2004, 73) of the press and a major diffusion of television and radio. Regarding the press, as mentioned also by Hallin and May, “newspapers tend to represent distinct political tendencies, and this is reflected in the differing political attitudes of their readership” (Hallin/Mancini: 2004, 98). The main newspapers in Italy are: the rightwing, conservative “Corriere della Sera”, the leftwing “La Repubblica”, the right wing Berlusconi friendly “Libero” and “Il Giornale” as the anti-berlusconist “Il Fatto Quotidiano”. Generally speaking, the readership represents the distinct political alignments of the newspapers.

Furthermore the national public broadcasting company, RAI, broadcasts 14 digital terrestrial channels. The most popular and traditional channels are: Rai 1, the family channel, Rai 2, with a focus on juvenile audience, and Rai 3, with a public service remit and a stronger focus on local programmes. The RAI is owned by the Ministry of Economy and Finance and the directive boards of the channels are nominated by the political parties. A large part of the national-wide commercial channels is owned by the Mediaset Group, a company owned by the family of the former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi. The figure of Silvio Berlusconi is continuously present in the medial and political landscape in Italy as one of the most controversial political figures, being accused in the past of making use of his private media
empire for personal political interests, creating a high correlation and dependence of media and politics.

2.1.2 Italy: The Polarized Model of Media and Politics

As explained by Hallin and Mancini, the Polarized Model “is characterized by the existence of significant antisystem political parties” (Hallin/Mancini: 2004, 60). Especially strong is this tendency towards the opposed in Italy. The government of the newly elected Prime Minister Enrico Letta in 2013 is the first coalition of the two main political forces, the leftwing party PD (Partito Democratico) and the moderate-conservative right wing party PDL (Partito della Liberta, with Silvio Berlusconi as leader), after the creation of the Italian Democratic Republic in 1946.

In the Italian political history after the Second World War the clear distinction between right wing parties (with the Christian democratic Democrazia Cristiana as main power holder until the corruption scandal of Tangentopoli in 1992) and left wing parties (with the Socialist and Communist parties as the two main actors) polarized the opposite ideologies of the electorship and alignments. The political parties and their ideologies tend to be more in contrast with each other as in moderate pluralism, where the parties find more easily a consensus. The political polarization led to the consequence of a politically declared mass media system. Following the analysis of Hallin and May this fact leads to a strong dependence of the mass media on the State. Moreover, the strong correlation, lacking a clear and independent distinction, between media and politics, also considering that the press is financially supported by the State, gave to the political parties a powerful role inside the media system. This status quo consolidated the political power by the same actors over decades and created a static immobility of the political class.

2.1.3 Political scandals: Recent developments

In the recent Italian history the political actors were furthermore often involved in political scandals, considering for example the big bribery scandal “Tangentopoli” in 1992, which detected a pervasive corruption system in the Italian political system and led to the collapse of the Democrazia Cristiana. Commonly present in the past were accusations of mafia collusion of the political system. More recent is the involvement of former Prime Minister

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2 During the technical government of Mario Monti from 2011 until 2013, the PD and PDL supported the government, but without forming it.
Silvio Berlusconi in different types of scandals, as for example corruption, bribery, abuse of office and fraud. Considering also that in some cases guilt has not been proven, the pervasive and permanent presence of political scandals led to scepticism and mistrust of the Italian citizens towards the political institutions.

A survey made by the Italian Research Institute Euripes in 2013 showed that the trust of the Italians towards political Institutions decreased constantly in the last 10 years, with a decrease of trust in 2013 of 73% in relation to the previous year. The data show a trend of constant decrease of trust of the Italians in political institutions. Especially regarding political parties, only 1,5 % of the interviewed sample had “absolute trust” in the parties, whereas 69% had “no trust” and 24% “low trust” in political parties. The study concludes, that the mistrust towards the political parties is caused by their self-reference and the inefficiency of the institutions to respond to future expectations of the population as to the inefficient respond to the financial crisis of 2007 – 2008. After the collapse of the government of Berlusconi in 2011 a technical government by the economist Mario Monti led over the Italian debt crisis until new elections in 2013, without the presence of members of political parties in the government.

In sum, in Italy media and politics are strongly correlated. The mass media are dependent on the State as the political institutions exercise power over the media. The electorship is divided into two polarized political areas, which make large use of ideological content to attract their voters. The scandals of bribery and mafia infiltrations of political institutions led to a general trend of mistrust in institutions and especially towards political parties. The parties are also seen as the main responsible of the absence of effective political measurements to stop the consequences of the economic crisis of 2008 leading to a financial debt crisis in 2011.

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3 http://www.economist.com/node/9597362
4 Published online following the link: http://www.eurispes.eu/content/la-fiducia-dei-cittadini-nelle-istituzioni-rapporto-italia-2013
5 In 2012 the trust decreased of 71% related to the year before, and 2011 68%.
6 5,8 % had „enough trust” regarding political parties.
2.2 The 5Star-Movement: A Short Overview

In this section the political movement of Beppe Grillo, the *Movimento Cinque Stelle* is presented. The first part contains a description of the blog and its founder, the second part includes the presentation of the M5S.

2.2.1 The blog (www.beppegrillo.it) and the founder Beppe Grillo

The blog of Beppe Grillo, www.beppegrillo.it, is online since 2005. The main version is in Italian, an English version with a translation of a minor number of blog posts is also present, as a small section in Japanese language. The blog is constructed in the following way: new blog entries are published daily on the Italian version, written by different authors, concerning mostly recent happenings regarding Italian politics. It has interactive features with the reader, as it is possible for registered users to comment on the blog posts and to vote for surveys about different political and medial causes (regarding mostly Italian politics).

The blog is also present on the social media platform facebook with 1.3 Million likes, far more than the other political forces, as the PD with approximately 92.000 likes or Silvio Berlusconi with 510.000 likes (latest update: 10/05/2013). On twitter Beppe Grillo has 1.2 Million followers, the Berlusconi political campaign 2013 reached in comparison 62.500 followers (last update: 10/05/2013). These data demonstrate a higher familiarity of the use of Internet and social media by Beppe Grillo. Facebook and Twitter are mainly used to promote the blog posts as every entry on facebook or tweet of Beppe Grillo is followed by a hyperlink connecting directly to the blog. The social media platforms are an integration of the blog, with the main activity and dialogic content construction situated on the blog.

*The founder.* Beppe Grillo, the founder of the blog is born on the 21st of July 1948 in Genoa in Liguria, a coastal region in the north-western Italy. He started his television career in the early 1990s with several TV-shows like „Te la do io l’America“ and „Te lo do io il Brasile“ on the public television RAI, and reached with his satirical approach a widespread popularity. In 1986, after satirical comments during a TV-show against the Italian Socialist Party and his leader Bettino Craxi, Grillo was banned from the RAI for several years. Through the impossibility of being present on TV, Grillo started an alternative way of public presence opening an Internet-blog in 2005.7

During this period he launched the idea to use the social networking portal “Meetup”8 to organize discussion groups, later called “Amici di Beppe Grillo” (friends of Beppe Grillo). In

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7 Detailed information can be found following the link: http://strugglesinitaly.wordpress.com/info-on-italian-politics/movimento-cinque-stelle/
8 Detailed information can be fund following the link: http://www.beppegrillo.it/2005/07/incontriamoci_m_1.html
2007 the blog of Beppe Grillo organized a protest rally called the V-Day (Vaffanculo-Day, translatable with “fuck off day”), with the intent to stop candidates with criminal records to enter the Italian Parliament. The large success of the protest rally, with a consistent participation ignored by the mass media\(^9\) led to new meetings and projects of a new political movement. As mentioned by Navarria in his article “The Talking Cricket” of 2007 the expulsion of the TV-landscape increased Grillo’s popularity as an oppositional-speaker, discussing political issues and topics, such as political corruption and the affiliation of the press with the political power-holders.

2.2.2 The political movement M5S

The “MoVimento Cinque Stelle” (Five Stars Movement: named after the five main issues of the movement: environmentalism, public water supply, technical development, Internet connectivity, sustainable transport) is a political movement based on the Internet. It was founded in 2009, on October 4 by Beppe Grillo and Gianroberto Casaleggio and has his central political meeting point on the blog of Beppe Grillo. The two main leaders of the 5S-Movement are Beppe Grillo and Gianroberto Casaleggio. The frontman is Beppe Grillo with his blog, uncertain is the role of Gianroberto Casaleggio. Also called the “guru”\(^{10}\), “cyber-guru”\(^{11}\) or “techno-guru”\(^{12}\) of the movement, Casaleggio is often reported by the press as the man behind Grillo, deciding the political strategy on the web.

The blog posts are the political guidelines of the M5S. The movement is organized through the Internet-page www.beppegrillo.it/movimento, where the programme of the movement can be downloaded, the members can register themselves and participate on local elections with the creation of a list of candidates for the M5S. Events of the M5S are also shared on the online page. The rules how to create a list, which prerequisites to have and which steps to follow, are present on the Internet page of the movement. Until May 2013 more than 300 local civic lists of the M5S have been founded\(^{13}\). In their description, the founders of the movement declared that, “the movement is a free association of citizens, the movement is not a political party and does not aim to become one in future, with no ideologies from the left or the right, but with ideas”\(^{14}\). Furthermore,

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\(^{9}\) A detailed study about the Vday is present in the bibliography (Di Gennaro/Pepe: 2009).

\(^{10}\) http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/jan/03/italy-five-star-movement-internet

\(^{11}\) http://www.ilmessaggero.it/primopiano/politica/grillo_casaleggio_il_cyber_guru_che_dice_al_comico_cosa_fare/notizie/218295.shtml


\(^{13}\) Based upon data of: www.beppegrillo.it/movimento

\(^{14}\) http://www.beppegrillo.it/listeciviche/liste/fabriano/chi-siamo.html
(the M5S) “intends to create an efficient exchange of views and ideas and democratic confrontation outside of associative and political ties and without the mediation of a directive or representative organism, acknowledging to the citizens the complete role of government and direction normally attributed to a view”\textsuperscript{15}.

As the movement rejects the definition of political party, it created a “Non-statute” with the following most relevant rules and regulations\textsuperscript{16}: it declares itself as a “Non-association”, with the origin and central meeting point and “main office” on the blog www.beppegrillo.it. For the registration to the movement the major age is needed (18 in Italy) and the certification to not be a member of any present political party or an association in contrast with the aims of the M5S. As explained in the Non-statute the candidates will be selected through the Internet. The main themes of the programme of the M5S, following their official website, are: direct democracy, free access to Internet and condemnation of corruption. Especially the request of direct democracy has in Italy a high debate standard, as the trust in political institutions is decreasing constantly (see above).

Recent developments. As an Internet based movement the M5S and its leader Beppe Grillo claim for themselves the uniqueness of a horizontal-organized communication (as also one of his slogans, “uno vale uno” (“one means one”) says. First organizational problems and attritions emerged in the movement with the expulsion of members in December 2012. The critique of unclear selection of candidates to nominate and the supposed unlimited power of Beppe Grillo has shown organizational problems inside the movement. On this regard to be mentioned is the expulsion of Giovanni Favia of the M5S, because of his declarations regarding democratic participatory inside the movement.

\textbf{Summarizing section two}, the blog of Beppe Grillo was launched in 2005 by the author as a protest against the high correlation of politics and media in the Italian society. The blog is updated daily about the main political happenings in Italy and is seen as an oppositional source of information to the mainstream media. The political movement M5S has been founded by beppegrillo.it and its political agenda is strongly correlated with the blog. The movement works for candidate selection and for the creation of local lists primarily on an online basis. In the recent past critics about the democratic level of participation inside the movement emerged.

\textsuperscript{15} Translated version made by the author. Italian version present on: http://www.beppegrillo.it/listeciviche/liste/fabriano/chi-siamo.html
\textsuperscript{16} For a complete overview of the “Non-statute”, it can be downloaded at: http://www.movimentocinquestelle.it/
3. Theoretical framework

In this chapter the theoretical perspectives are presented. The chapter is divided into two main areas: the first section deals with the area of political communication. This section discusses, firstly, the concept of public sphere, and secondly, the theory of populist movements in Western democracies. In the second section the discussion of the public spheres presented earlier is adapted to the blog as an online mini-public-sphere and as a new space of direct democracy. In conclusion of the chapter the concept of Internet democracy is discussed. The theoretical frameworks chosen are discussed in consideration of the empirical material.

3.1 Political communication

The political communication is a wide area of theory and includes different types of relations between political Institutions and the Public. For this study a delimitation of the theory had to be made. Therefore the theoretical framework of the political communication focuses on the presentation of the concept of political public sphere as well as a theoretical discussion of political populism in Western democracies.

3.1.1 The concept of public sphere

The original concept of public sphere was developed by Jürgen Habermas. In his work “Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere” (firstly published 1962) he developed his first concept of public sphere, as a consequence of the changing structural societal forms from the feudal system to the capitalistic and liberal societies of the 19th and 20th centuries. The blurring between the firstly separated spheres of the State and society created for Habermas new conditions, where the private citizens could come together in a new form of public discourse, and not merely as private owners. In the understanding of Habermas the public sphere was in the beginning a physical place (i.e. coffee houses) where the bourgeois class came together to discuss rationally and critically the social and political issues, having influence on the political authorities through the creation of a public opinion.
The construction of the public sphere could be seen so as counter-balancing the political authorities and power. Habermas was aware of the important role of the mass media in the creation of public opinion and stressed their negative and manipulative influence on the citizens, who relied on the information of the mass media output (Habermas: 1962). In his later writings Habermas argues that the power of the public sphere lays mainly in the possibilities to influence the political decision makers (government and political parties). He mentions, that “the civil society, through resonant and autonomous public spheres, develops impulses with enough vitality to bring conflicts from the periphery into the centre of the political system” (Habermas: 1996, 330). These „opinion-forming associations“ (Habermas: 1996, 355) have as goal not only the mere diffusion of information material, but they „are generally designed to generate public influence“ (Habermas: 1996, 355).

Linking these considerations to the present study of the blog of Beppe Grillo, the public sphere around the blog is created not only “to generate public influence”, but, is constructed, to become a new actor in the political battlefield. A statement on the official page of the M5S, says, that,

(the M5S) “wants to realize an efficient and operative exchange of views and ideas on a democratic basis outside the boundaries and commitments of associations and parties and without the organization of representative and directive boards, acknowledging to the totality of the citizens the role of governance normally attributed to a few”

The construction of the public sphere, as expressed in the blog of Beppe Grillo, defines the influence on politics as a starting point. The citizens, after having assembled and exchanged their ideas and view on politics, exercise political power within “the role of governance”, a role, normally exercised by the political institutions (parties, governments, politicians). The public sphere of the M5S constructs so a new political agent, ready to enter the political battlefield. This is the idea of the public sphere expressed on the official page of the M5S and is not an empirical enquiry, and could be constructed as an ideal concept of public sphere for merely propagandistic purposes of the movement.

The public spheres are driven by the power of communication, which is the form of interaction in the public sphere. The code which holds the audience of different public spheres together is the culture, as mentioned by Sassi, that “a common cultural code and

17 http://www.beppegrillo.it/movimento/elenco_liste.php
common narrative structure would thus allow for intersubjectivity and cross-communication between publics” (Sassi: 2001, 94). For Sassi the public spheres lead to the construction of virtual communities, which through interactions produce new forms of online political discussions. These online platforms could be used to engage a broader public in the political discussions and so to find solutions on a broader level. The only restriction, following Sassi, would be the measurement of the influence on political decisions.

Furthermore, the importance of a common cultural code is essential for the creation of a public sphere. The ideal concept of public sphere would be, “to create a common sense of belonging to a larger community to different cultural groups, but without suppressing cultural diversity” (Sassi: 2001, 101). As this concept of creating a cultural proximity with universalistic values is idealistic and difficult to see applied in reality, the creation of different public spheres, especially in political discourse, is more related to an opposite phenomenon, creating “fragmentation and exclusive forms of segregation” (Sassi: 2001, 100). The public sphere relies in this case on meaning creation and ideology and constructs inclusion or exclusion. The opposition of the construction of a public sphere based on cultural proximity, which includes the other, and cultural diversity, which excludes the other, is a nodal point of the development of the public sphere(s). The concept can be used in both ways: in one way it can create a society of many public spheres included in a general one, or on the other way, in a society of many separated and excluding public spheres generating diversity.

**Summarizing** this section, the concept of public sphere developed by Habermas as a physical space of public opinion with power to influence political decisions has to be adapted and reformulated regarding temporal and societal developments. The concept of public sphere is useful to explain the construction of political virtual communities, how they are build and which interests they follow. Depending on how they are used and interpreted, public spheres can generate inclusion or exclusion. The effectiveness of the public sphere(s) to generate political influence is hard measurable.
3.1.2 Populism

In this section a short discussion of populist movements is present, with a more detailed look to populist movements in Italy. Albertazzi and McDonnell offer a general definition of populism, saying that,

(populism is) “an ideology which puts virtuous and homogeneous people against a set of elites and dangerous “others” who are together depicted as depriving (or attempting to deprive) the sovereign people of their rights, values, prosperity, voice” (Albertazzi/McDonnell: 2008, 3)

Populist movements are, in part, a response to the failure of traditional political parties and to their difficulty to adopt to the new phenomena of globalization. One of the most effective strategies of populist movements is the separation from the traditional politics, seen as a corruptive system, which benefits only an elite. In opposition it follows a “man in the street communication style” (Albertazzi/McDonnell: 2008, 2), with the core message of the citizens as the central power-holders and decision-makers. In their analysis about the Italian Right in the last decades the two scholars Ruzza and Fella underline the importance of the distinction between the “elite” and the “common people”, saying that, “populists typically see society as hierarchically ordered and posit a threat to society in the form of corrupt self-serving ruling elites, who have “betrayed” their people” (Ruzza/Fella: 2009, 53).

A populist movement often uses on its top a charismatic figure, which represents the movement and needs to be a newcomer, distant from the “corrupted” and “self-serving” political class. The ability of the charismatic leader is to “remain one of the people” (Albertazzi/McDonnell: 2008, 5), but also promote himself as the saviour of the people, representing a valid alternative to the political elite. Populist movements emerge more easily during a “crisis of politics”, which can lead to a “fundamental mistrust of politicians and politics has been identified in connection to widespread media-fuelled negative portraits and frequent corruption scandals” (Ruzza/Fella: 2009, 55).

In Italy two political newcomers of the last 20 years can be considered to have used a populist agenda to gain voters and to reach more acceptability: one is the political programme initiated 1994 by Silvio Berlusconi and also the formation of the party Lega Nord. The Lega Nord is especially rooted in the North of Italy, with a right-wing programme and a strong concentration on typical populist topics, as the stop of immigration, the stop of unethical
use of public money and the separation of the “laborious North” to the “parasitic South” of Italy. This two formations had also been studied by Carlo Ruzza and Stefano Fella, and without going much deeper in the discussion, especially the political experiment around Berlusconi made large use of populist frameworks, as he entered politics in 1994, as “the industrialist ‘only temporarily lent to politics’, (who) continued to criticise professional politics and define himself as an alternative” (Ruzza/Fella: 2009, 51).

In the analysis made about populist movements in the European politics from 1990, especially rightwing populist movements emerged and have been studied. In their definition of populism Albertazzi and McDonnell provide four principles, which are connected to populism: (1) the people are one and are inherently ‘good’, (2) the people are sovereign, (3) the people’s culture and way of life are of paramount value and (4) the leader and party/movement are one with the people (Albertazzi/McDonnell: 2007, 6). The fourth principle says, that the leader of the movement represents ideologically ‘his’ people, and “tend(s) to break the conventional linguistic registers and codes employed by the political class, adopting instead a direct and at times even offensive language and style of communication” (Albertazzi/McDonnell: 2008, 7). The strong presence of a leader, as requested by populist movements, is in contraposition with the slogan of the M5S, saying “uno vale uno” (one means one), as also the figure of Beppe Grillo is of central importance in the M5S.

**In summary**, populism is a concept used to explain the success of a discourse based on political misrepresentation by the political elite, not considering the needs of the citizens. Populist movements make large use of the rhetoric of a charismatic leader, which in contrast to the political system, promises to fulfil the requests of the citizens. Mostly populist movements emerge in periods of financial and economic crisis and follow right-wing, national-based discourses. The language characteristics of populism tend to be direct, one sided and aggressive.
3.2 Internet communication

The contemporary society is connected on the basis of interactive relations producing knowledge. The Internet invented new public spaces. It is possible to create an online space on the Web, following user-friendly instructions and communicating politically. One of the most powerful concepts regarding Internet communication is the theoretical framework of the French media scholar Pierre Levy and his concept of “collective intelligence”. In his analysis the actual political institutions are inappropriate to answer the rapid technical and social developments. They are not able to activate the right processes to gain the necessary information to solve the political issues in an appropriate time-period.

The answer of Levy to this social and political malaise is the formation of a collective intelligence based on computer mediated communication and participatory democracy on the “cyberspace” (cp. Levy: 2001, 91-165). In addition, when analysing the “cyber transformation” of the public sphere one of the criteria mentioned by the scholar Peter Dahlgren is the “fluid and virtual character” of the organizations involved. The fluid character of the public sphere(s) connected to the arise of new interactive media channels makes it difficult to analyze in which way the online political presence influences directly the civic society.

3.2.1 The blog: A space for direct democracy?

Are online public spheres, just an expansion of the physical public sphere on an abstract level or are they new public spheres? And how powerful is a merely “online”-public-sphere politically and socially, does it have any effective impact on the ongoing political discussions and decisions? Shane (2004), Bohman (2004) and Perez (2004) present the concept of electronic democracy as a new stage of democracy, with new online forms, revitalizing the democratic understanding of direct political participation.

In order to represent a space for democracy, technological public spheres have to fulfil certain criteria: the communication has to be dialogical and interactive, the speakers have to express their view to others, as the presence of freedom and equality in the communicative interaction has to be assured (cp. Bohman: 2004, 49). For Bohman “the space opened up by the computer-mediated communication supports a new sort of distributive rather than unified public sphere with new forms of interaction” (Bohman: 2004, 51), leading to a multiplicity of spheres of electronic publicness. The electronic publicness challenges the protected and
institutionalized publicness of political communication in the mass media. The institutionalization of electronic publicness in the decision making process would lead to a new form of directly deliberative democracy. Establishing a dialogic form of communication on the Internet requires although for Bohman the institutionalization of democratic agents and intermediaries between the web and the public (cp. Bohmann, 2004: 60). A new electronic publicness could install so, hypothetically, new ways of direct representation.

Following Wallsten (2005) the blogs are generating political content on a participatory basis as a tool for the democratization of society. The political blog can be used for the creation of political content, bloggers tag and link themselves to other bloggers and create so a network of shared content and discussion material. As Froomkin puts it, “blogs represent one of the latest examples of the Internet’s democratization of publishing. They illustrate how ease of publishing can stimulate debate: bloggers often read and react to one another’s work, creating new commons of public, if not necessarily always deeply deliberated, debate” (Froomkin: 2004, 9). Following Rettberg (2008) blogs are democratic, as the Internet allows the distribution and production of content for a large audience with affordable costs. New forms of Internet connectivity produce a larger participation to the political debate and legitimate so a wider democratic representation. The democratic legitimacy of the Internet is questionable, as the Internet itself creates a “digital divide”, which requests the resources of money and time in order to access the debate.

For Di Gennaro and Pepe the “Internet is increasingly becoming an environment of discussion and sharing of political ideas” (Di Gennaro/Pepe: 2009, 26). The study and analysis of political blogs concentrates mostly its focus on the daily news reports about politics. The difference with the blog of Beppe Grillo is the political activation of its readers in a political movement, constructed upon an online basis. Alberto Pepe and Corinna Di Gennaro write, when analysing the effectiveness of blog-communication for the creation of a political protest, that the blog in analysis was able to „transfer online forms of participation to off-line realms: from the blogosphere to the streets“ (Pepe/Di Gennaro: 2009, 6).

The ability of the blog to produce participation offline could be seen as a starting point towards the possibility to create a new way of direct representation with the institutionalization of a new online agent, as understood by Bohmann (cp. the paragraph above). Furthermore, the institutionalization of a new online agent with representative political character could lead to a new way of direct democracy and to possible changes in society. In opposition, the idealized democratic directness of these hypothetical agents could be used as propagandistic tools of online communicators. The online communicator could,
using the concept of direct online democracy and demanding the uniqueness of the direct democratic representations, create an agent with hypothetical direct democratic and representative features, but without the actual presence of them.

3.2.2 The crisis of the political parties

Following Hay, the decline of political parties and voters participation, the disaffection from the voters to the political system and new forms of political communication and activation of citizens through the Internet (cp: Hay: Why we hate politics, 2007) are registered trends of the present period. For Kippen and Jenkins, a greater demand of involvement in internal party processes by citizens and the increasing percentage of non-voters in Western democracies (cp. Kippen/Jenkins: 2004, 254) are consequences of a high degree of discontent over the role of parties as decision makers. The respond of the political parties to changes in society has not been adequate, and the representation of parties as political agents of a larger part of society is questioned. Through the Internet citizens can organize themselves in virtual communities with political interests, in opposition to the traditional political form of representations expressed by parties.

As stated by Castells and Sey, “an active citizenry may find in the Internet a medium of communication to bypass the filters of mass media and party machines, and to network itself, asserting its collective autonomy” (Castells/Sey: 2004, 363). One of the findings mentioned in the meta-study of Boulianne is that “the Internet is becoming integrated with the established system of political communication yet it is also being used to challenge established power structures” (Boulianne: 2009, 152). This challenge caused a problem of legitimate political representation between the “continuation of traditional party politics, enacted through media politics and increasingly delegitimized, and the emergence of networked politics in a process characterized by the production of new actors and new issues against or around the political establishment, thus leading to systematic instability” (Castells/Sey: 2004, 378).

In opposition to this concept of network politics stays the effective measurement of political power through the creation of an online community with political interests. The political parties are still the institutionalized form of power expression in the political field, and, although alternative forms of engagements and organizations can challenge them, they are one of the central actors exercising political power.
3.2.3 Summary: Problems of “Internet democracy”

**Summarizing** section 3.2, the elaboration of the initial concept of public sphere developed by Habermas as a new form of public discourse is not applicable totally on digital communities, but it can be useful for the explanation of the creation of new public spaces on the web. The political blog can be seen as a mini public sphere, producing content and discussions. The blogosphere is seen as a tool for the connection to other blogs and for the generation of User Based Content. The democratic value of the public sphere is based on dialogic and interactive features and on the presence of equality and freedom in the communicative action. The institutionalization of the electronic publicness requests the creation of a democratic intermediary between the web and the public.

The Internet is an innovative and experimental new tool of democracy, but his applicability as a direct representative method of politics can reinforce also oppositional political interests, as for example, populism. Therefore, the concept of “Internet democracy” seems to be related to several problems: (1) the effective possibility of every citizen to be informed and to produce political content is neglected, as not everyone can access the Internet, (2) the direct representation of the citizens on the Internet is not measurable, (3) different actors on the Internet have a different amount of communicative power, (4) the certain identification of the user is not institutionalized (with for example the common use of nicknames) and (5) the ideological perspective of the Internet as a perfect democratic representative tool can be utilized as a delusive communicative strategy (as explained above).

Scholars disagree about the increase of the Internet in political engagement. The effects of the Internet on political communication are hard measurable and difficult to define. In a meta-study carried out on over 38 studies about the effects on political engagement of Internet made by the scholar Shelley Boulianne, the conclusion presented is, that “the effect of Internet use on engagement is positive” and that the “average positive effect is in smalls size” (Boulianne: 2009, 205) with no substantial effects on the engagement of the users. The study has shown a limited increase of political activation based on online forms of political participation.
4. Methods and Materials

In this chapter the research methods used and the materials analysed are presented. Firstly, the overall methodological perspective is explained, presenting its adaption to the empirical material. As the analysis is performed on three different levels, each level is presented below in a distinctive section together with the correspondent material used for the study. The summary includes eventual problems of reliability, validity, and eventual possibilities of generalizability.

4.1 Methods : Methodology and Adaption to the Material

4.1.1 Methodology

The methods used in this work are inspired by the method of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). CDA is a suitable method to study the creation of power dominance in political and social discourse in text production. Critical Discourse Analysis is an interdisciplinary research method applied from the critical theory of language which views language as a form of social practice. It focuses on the way social and political dominance is constructed in language. As mentioned by Van Dijk, “CDA focuses on the ways discourse structures enact, confirm, legitimate, reproduce, or challenge relations of power and dominance in society” (Van Dijk: 2001, 353). The discourse is created dialectically, in a form, that “we cannot take the role of discourse in social practices for granted, it has to be established through analysis” (Fairclough: 2010, 4). Texts generate “shared or collective knowledge” discursively between different social parts. Following Resigl and Wodak an important feature of the meaning creation is the demarcation of us and them, a “discursive construction starts with the labelling of the social actors, proceeds to the ‘generalization’ of negative attributions and then elaborates arguments to justify the exclusion of many and inclusion of some” (Reisigl / Wodak: 2001, 65).

Furthermore important concepts are the creation of power and truth, as explained by Foucault. For Foucault, the “truth”, “is produced and transmitted under the control, dominant if not exclusive, of a few great political and economic apparatuses (university, army, writing, media), finally it is the debate of a whole political and social confrontation” (Foucault: 2000, 131). The constitution and cooperation of the social actors in the negotiation of interpretations are based on the communicative power of the actors. The construction of “truth” gives to the creator power over the discourse. Important actors of power creation,
are political parties, “*which basically accept only those coded generalities that fit into a program, that are coalescing factors for their clienteles, and that can be integrated into their electoral strategy*” (Foucault: 2000, 291). Power is created through the legitimization of the actor and can be challenged by new discourses. Following Fairclough, the discourse creation is depended on the different position that social actors see themselves in and on how they are positioned within the practice.

4.1.2 Adaption
As CDA does not have an unitary theoretical framework, there exist several types of CDA, which use different perspectives and analytical tools, depending on the material and on the discourse studied. Without the presence of a specific and regulated analysis procedure, CDA offers to the researcher the possibility to adapt the method to the case study under investigation. In this paper, the research methods used belong to an adaption of Critical Discourse Analysis to the empirical material.

The analysis is divided in three different levels: on the **first level** the authors and themes present on the blog beppegrillo.it are investigated, in order to contextualize the blog and its use of different actors and content. The **second level** of analysis is based on the language of the blog texts, trying to identify the construction of a political discourse of power and dominance. The **third level** of analysis concentrates on the dialogical aspect of the blog. The analysis is therefore made on the commentary section of the blog, presenting the interaction between the users of the blog and the discourse of the blog texts.

**In sum**, the research methods used are an adaption of Critical Discourse Analysis. The three levels of analysis should give an overall picture of the discourse on the blog: (1) the distribution of authors and themes of the blog, (2) the political power and discourse of the language in the texts and (3) the interaction with the user. The power and dominance of the language constructed in the texts can so be studied in its discursive feature with the content of the comments and its acceptance therefore measured.
4.2 First Level of Analysis

The aim of this analysis is to identify the common authors and themes of the blog of Beppe Grillo and to identify possible trends regarding the distribution of them. As showed in the background chapter, the blog of Beppe Grillo is a way of content creation in opposition to the mainstream media. The assumption is made, that the blog has to make use of neutral sources in order to legitimize its position. A large use of neutrally considered and independent sources would assume a general degree and acceptance of the blog as informative medium. Also, this analysis presents a general overview of authors and themes of the blog. The analysis relies on a quantitative investigation of themes and authors.

4.2.1 Operationalization

In this section the sampling process, the period of analysis and the problematic encountered is presented. In order to make a sample that represents a complete and exhaustive picture of the blog the following decision has been taken: every blog post published on www.beppegrillo.it in the months September 2011, January 2012, May 2012 and September 2012 have been analysed considering the authors and themes present. The period of analysis consists in four months, starting from September 2011 until September 2012. The months are divided into regular intervals. The decision to start in September 2011 has no specific argumentation. The decision to choose one year of monitoring is explainable due to the possible critic and weakness of a short-time-based analysis. A short period of monitoring could reproduce a distorted picture of the blog of Beppe Grillo. In total 382 blog posts have been analysed, 89 blog posts in September 2011, 94 blog posts in January 2012, 100 blog posts in May 2012 and 99 blog posts in September 2012.

Authors

The categorization of authors has been divided in the following order: each blog post with a clear reference or nomination of the author has been categorized in the correspondent section. The authors presented with an epithet (as for example: journalist, writer, M5S activist) have been assigned to the specific category, authors without any appellative, specific role or institutional / public / notorious / renowned position have been put in the category “regular citizen”. These authors were present on the blog without any particular description of working position, academic position or another possible societal status. Every blog post without the nomination of an author, but with the first person singular nominative
pronoun “I” in the text, has been put in the category “Beppe Grillo” (from textual passages in the blog post inferred). The blog posts written in the first person plural nominative pronoun “Us” in the different forms have been assigned to a section if the identification to a group (M5S activist, M5S movement) was possible. If the word could contain different semantic interpretations (Italians, M5S activists, blog writers, M5S supporters, citizens) the section “unclear author” has been chosen, as any other categorization could be objectionable. In the section unclear author/not mentioned have been reported the examples above and every blog post without the presence of the author of the text and without a possible logical appointment from the text. A Codebook is attached (see Appendices), the codebook has been pretested on a sample month. The inclusion of a new category made a complete re–coding of the entire sampling material necessary.

Themes

In order to represent an understandable table and categorization of themes conceptual decisions has been made: the first decision is that every blog post has been assigned to one principal (main) theme and has so been put in only one category. The 382 blog posts analysed generate in consequence 382 examples of themes. If in the content of a blog post two or more themes were present (in the majority of the cases) the main theme has been selected. The selection of the main theme took in consideration the following criteria: the content, the major topic, the main actors present, the reason(s) for publishing and the newsworthiness of the blog post. In this aspect also considered has been the importance that the blog post gave to the criteria itself. If in the blog post one of the abovementioned indicators was pointed out primarily, that was a clear indication of the main theme present in the blog post.

The function of the presentation of themes is not a precise analysis of the text on the different themes present in every blog post, but should give an overview of the general themes present in the blog. The total amount of categories is 20, so that a too overall simplification has been avoided. The research method chosen was based on an inductive creation of the categories. Could a text unit not be assigned to a category, a new category has been created. A first analysis with a preliminary codebook has been made on a sample month, after the preliminary result a definite codebook has been created. Every time the codebook had to be changed, the coding started from the beginning. The categorization of the themes is connected to the author making the codebook and perpetuating the decisions. Different coding possibilities have been tested on a test sample in order to detect the most accurate
coding system. Slight differences regarding the results have to be taken under consideration.

The aim of the first level of analysis is to show the distribution of the main themes and authors of the blog. The results give a general overview of the actors and content on the blog over the period analysed. The analysis relies on a quantitative investigation of the themes and authors present on the blog.

4.3 Second Level of Analysis

The second level of analysis is based on the creation of discourse and the social and political dominance expressed in the text of the blog posts published on beppegrillo.it. In this section the aim is to identify the underlying ideologies present in the blog texts. The analysis focuses on the creation of discursive power of the language and the production of a hegemonic political dominance. Hegemony, as defined by Ang “is mostly used to indicate the cultural leadership of the dominant classes in the production of generalized meanings, of ‘spontaneous’ consent to the prevailing arrangement of social relations” (Ang: 2003, 363). As mentioned by Van Dijk power is expressed through control, “thus, groups have (more or less) power if they are able to (more or less) control the acts and minds of (members of) other groups” (Van Dijk: 2001, 355). The aim is to identify the power dominations represented in the text of the blog posts and how the texts construct a possible political dominance of certain actors.

As explained by Van Dijk (cp. Van Dijk: 2001, 354) the analysis is constituted on micro and macro levels of CDA. The micro level is characterized by the language use in semiotic semantic, and syntactical terms, whereas the concepts of power, dominance and inequality regard to the macro level. The analysis is performed in two parts: the first part investigates on the micro level the use of the terminology made by Beppe Grillo, as it is one of the central aspects of the language use made of the blog. In the second part the analysis investigates how power, in terms of political and social power-relations, is constructed in the blog. The presentation of the main actors in the text, their position in the discourse, the political problems constructed, as the solution offered are the central features of this analysis.

4.3.1 Representativeness of the texts samples

In order to give an exhaustive picture of the language use of the blog of beppegrillo, but also being able to study in detail the textual construction and single use of words an adequate
number of texts had to be selected. The number of texts most adequate to analyze the creation of discourse has been chosen to be four, one text for every month under investigation. The texts have been selected upon the following criteria: the blog posts chosen had to be representative for the blog of Beppe Grillo. In order to choose the most representative blog posts only the blog posts with general themes and authors have been selected. An inductive study, made previously on all the text samples, showed, that a great number of texts with common themes and authors are similar and represent exact the same political discourse of power, so that the same results could have been achieved easily also using other texts. As the identification of one blog post per month was not possible, five blog posts had been primarily selected, and, out of them one has been chosen accidentally.

Every blog post is examined regarding the following aspects: (1) the terminology of the blog posts, and (2) the concept of politics in relation to the discursive construction of political dominance. The terminology (1) is studied in the following way: specific words, which are dominating in the text samples, are identified and used to interpret a certain constructed preferred meaning. The use of a certain terminology leads to a systematic bias in meaning. The meaning is based on dichotomies, constructing inclusion (we) or exclusion (the other). The attributes attached to certain words generalize their labelling and create so a discursive construction of demarcation. These words have been selected and their representation specified. Furthermore the language tone of the texts is studied, examining the presence of words and phrases expressing an attacking or offensive aspect or character. The section regarding terminology and language tone includes examples to clarify and testify the results.

The analysis of (2) the concept of politics is studied on the marco level of CDA. The text samples are analyzed regarding their use of discursive power. The main actors are investigated and how their role in society is represented. Further on is investigated, which actors are represented to possess political power and how they make use of their power. The construction of inclusion and exclusion explains the demarcation, as in the micro level of analysis. The analysis is also based on the possible future political solutions the text offers and how they are discursively produced. Both the analysis of the terminology (1) as the analysis of the concept of politics (2) make use of the same text samples and the analysis is made on the four texts contemporarily, mixing the concepts of the different texts and comparing their discursive construction.

One of the problems encountered is the difference of language. As the texts are in Italian, the main language of the blog, a preliminary analysis has been made first on the Italian texts. The possibility to formulate an almost identical analysis on the English texts made it
possible to perform the analysis on the English version. The text samples in English are present in the additional material attached separately. The translation of the texts has been downloaded from the blog www.beppegrillo.it/en and can therefore be considered the official translation. Only one text sample (text number one) was not present on the blog, and the author made the translation. The translated text has been adapted on the language of the blog and has been controlled and red by two other independent sources.

In sum, the second level of analysis studies the discursive construction of power dominance by the texts of the blog. The analysis is performed on two aspects: (1) the terminology used by the blog texts and (2) the discursive construction of the concept of politics made by the blog through the language use. In total four blog post texts have been chosen as samples: one blog post for every different month. The blog posts are representative for the language use on the blog of beppegrillo.it

4.4 Third Level of Analysis

The third level of analysis concentrates on the commentary section of the blog. Comments can be written at the end of every blog posts from every registered user of the blog. It is possible to vote for a comment. The most voted comments are present immediately after every blog post. The analysis aims to investigate, if the discursive construction of political dominance of beppegrillo.it is challenged or accepted by the commentator. In order to show the attitude of the commentator towards the blog texts, the use of similar patterns of terminology and social construction of politics has to be studied. The investigation of the content of the commentary shows, how the commentator makes use of the discursive power relations present in the blog texts.

The analysis of the commentary is divided in two parts: the first part gives a general overview of the commentary section, the second aspect studies the relation of the commentator to the blog text. The first part is based on a quantitative investigation of the total amount of blog posts present and the distribution in the period of analysis, the second part analyses the most popular comments regarding their use of language and their possible critics towards Beppe Grillo and the M5S. The results of the second level of analysis are used to see the relation of the commentators to the discursive power construction of the blog.
texts. The investigation of the use of language allows to discuss the negotiation of the reader with the discursive power of the language. It shows the presence or absence of a dialogue on the blog.

4.4.1 Operationalization and representativeness

The period of analysis is the same as in the first level of analysis: September 2011, January 2012, May 2012 and September 2012. The results are so comparable. The analysis is divided into two parts. The first part is a quantitative investigation of the total amount of comments in the analysed period. The totality of comments has been counted and divided in the four different time periods, to see the development of the commentary activity. The results show the distribution of blog posts based on the amount of comments they had. In addition, the Median, the Standard Deviation and Mean are calculated in order to give a more detailed view of the distribution of comments in relation to the blog posts and its development in the period of study.

The second part is a qualitative analysis and studies the content of the commentary in relation to the discursive construction of power in the blog of Beppe Grillo. This part is based on the results of the second level analysis (blog texts analysis). After concluding the second level analysis a codebook was constructed, in order to identify different aspects of the language use of the blog texts. The aspects studied are: (1) similarity of language use with the blog texts (use of similar terminology, similar discursive constructions of politicians, parties, democracy, M5S, citizens, Internet), (2) the construction of a discursive demarcation of exclusion and inclusion (us vs. the other), (3) the presence of an aggressive language tone. These three aspects have been firstly studied and analysed on the blog texts (second level of analysis), after its conclusion, it was possible to compare the three aspects to the content of the commentary, as it has been made.

Two other aspects have been included in the codebook (critics towards Beppe Grillo and/or the M5S and references to blog posts), which did not request a previous analysis. The category “Critics towards Beppe Grillo and/or the M5S” has been investigated in the following way: the identification of the presence of critique was depended on the content of the comment. The critical analysis of the discursive constructions of the blog, the presentation of oppositional ideas towards Beppe Grillo and/or the M5S, the questioning of the concepts of the blog/M5S and of the discourses promoted by the blog have been registered as critique towards the M5S or Grillo. A Codebook is attached. The Codebook has been adjusted and...
preliminary tested on a test sample. The recoding of the codebook made a new coding of the totality of the sample necessary.

The sample consists of the following units: in each month the 10 most voted comments of the 10 most commented blogs have been analysed. As the month under investigation are four a total of 40 comments are analysed. To every comment a numerical code has been assigned, the code is divided into three numbers: the first number is the position of the comment in the material of study, the second number is the month of analysis, the third number represents the year of analysis. For example, the numerical code 6.9.12 means: the sixth comment (6) of September (9) 2012 (12). The comments are written in Italian and have been translated in English by the author (as the texts make a frequent use of an offensive language tone, the author tried to translate in the most accurate way). The translation of the comments is attached separately in the additional material.

As on the blog of Beppe Grillo the most voted (most ranked) comment is present directly after the blog post, the decision has been made, to analyze the first (most voted) comment of the ten most commented blog posts of every month. The decision to base the analysis on one comment per blog post regarding the ten most commented blog entries relies on the possibility to study the most popular opinions and attitudes shared by the users. As the comment analyzed is the most voted, it can be deducted, that the registered readers of the blog of Beppe Grillo agree totally more on that comment than on every other comment.

In their analysis on weblogs, Mishne and Glance say, that the blogs with the largest amount of comments are the most popular and that “the posts that are (the) most insightful or controversial get the most comments” (Mishne/Glance: 2003, 4). The results are biased by the sample chosen, as the most voted comments possibly express the most accepted opinions and attitudes of the users and commentators, and do not analyse in depth the discussion and confrontation of the discourse present on the commentary. Although, they give a significant and interesting view on the discursive construction of the political power expressed by the blog posts and show the negotiation by the users.

In sum, the third level analysis investigates the dialogic feature of the blog of Beppe Grillo. The analysis is divided in two parts: the first analysis is made on the totality of comments present in the sampling period, aiming to give an overview of the commentary. The second analysis regards the content of a sample of 40 comments of the most voted comments of the most commented blog posts and their dialogical interaction with the blog texts.
4.5 Summary: Reliability, Validity and Generalizability

**Summarizing** chapter 4, the research methods used in this work are an application of Critical Discourse Analysis to the material under investigation. The research methods aim to investigate (1) the distribution of authors and themes present on the blog, (2) the identification of a political discourse of power and dominance in the text samples and (3) the interaction and negotiation with the users of the blog. The analysis is performed on three levels: on the first level of analysis, the distribution of the main themes and authors on the blog is studied on a quantitative basis. The second level of analysis is made on a sample of four blog posts, and investigates the use of language regarding the creation of social and political dominance. The analysis studies micro and macro components of discourse construction. The third level investigates the dialogical component of the discourse, looking at the general presence of comments and the content production of popular comments. The interaction is studied on the relation of the discourse in the comments with the discourse in the blog texts. The presence or absence of discursive power can so be investigated.

As the methods used aim to generate results with a generalizable character, the reliability and validity of the sampling process and methods selected has to be investigated. The selection of the period under investigation relies on regular intervals, starting with September 2011 and concluding with September 2012. The period is characterized by the actual happenings in Italy and can cause problems of generalizability for the totality of the period. The extent and volume of the material of investigation although should compromise this problem.

On the **first level** of analysis, the reliability of the categorization of the authors and themes depends on the author. The categorization of authors and themes relies on an inductive process of sampling tests. The codebook has been adjusted several times and a final version has been created after the identification of all possible categories. The validity of the results has also been guaranteed by constant reformulation of the coding process, reducing so possible problems of reliability. Minimal differences regarding the results have been tested and have to be taken under consideration. Although, considering the large number of material analysed, specific trends and possible generalizations can be made.

The validity of the **second level** of analysis relies on the identification of the typical blog posts of beppegrillo.it. The identification was made out of a preliminary study of
content of the total amount of texts and led to the consequent elimination of texts with no common authors and themes. The study of the texts of the blog of beppegrillo.it has shown, that a great number of texts with common themes and authors are similar and represent exact the same political discourse of power, so that it can be argued, that the same results could have been achieved easily also using other texts.

On the **third level** of analysis the sample consists of the 10 most voted comments of the 10 most commented blog posts of every month. The identification of a discussion and confrontation in the commentary section is not represented by the sample chosen. As the comments are the most voted ones, they under-represent the conflict and discussion present on the blog. Although, the most voted comments represent the content, on which the users of the blog agreed mostly, and are so interesting to study regarding their opinions and attitudes.

Furthermore, as the case study studies an Italian phenomenon, the generalization process to other environments and political areas can be questioned. The use of typical Italian political phenomena, as explained in the background section, can be the cause of the discourse on the blog and that the results, therefore, only applicable to Italy. In opposition has to be mentioned, that similar characteristics of medial and political representation in different areas could make it possible to find some trends of generalizability of the phenomenon under investigation.

The validity and generalizability of the period of study have been tried to assure with the selection of regular intervals (each interval is one month) of a total of one year of difference (September 2011 to September 2012). The results rely on the actual events in that period and can so differ to other periods of study. Although, the extended period of study and the large amount of empirical material are valid arguments to identify and investigate possible generalizable results of the phenomenon studied.
5. Analysis

5.1 First Level of Analysis: Authors and Themes

The research question this section aims to answer is: RQ(1) "Who are the authors and what are the themes of the blog posts on beppegrillo.it?"

5.1.1 Authors

The following table summarizes the findings regarding the authors present on the blog of Beppe Grillo in the months analyzed.

Table 1: Authors of blog-posts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>September 2011</th>
<th>January 2012</th>
<th>May 2012</th>
<th>September 2012</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Beppe Grillo (explicitly mentioned)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Bepp Grillo (from textual passages in posts inferred)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. M5S activists</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. M5S Movement</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Casaleggio</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Bloggers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. News agencies</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Associations</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Journalists/Writers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Personalities</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Passaparola</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Regular Citizens</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Not mentioned / unclear author</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>89</strong></td>
<td><strong>94</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>99</strong></td>
<td><strong>382</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 presents a detailed and complete categorization of the authors on beppegrillo.it during the period of analysis. The main authors are: Beppe Grillo with 74 blog-posts (6 blog post as mentioned author and 66 blog posts as supposed author), the M5S activists with 40 blog-posts, and the “regular citizens” with 130 blog posts written. The blog posts of Beppe Grillo increased in May 2012 irregularly to the other months of the study period. The data is explainable due to the more frequent report on activities of the M5S, as the movement gained in the period political and medial attention due to the positive results in the administrative elections and the election of the major of Parma (a small but well known city in central Italy). The increase is also connected to the use of the blog made by Grillo to answer personally to statements about his person made from others (visible in the section 5.1.2, table 3, theme 6).

Also the activists of M5S are present as authors especially in September 2012 (28 times), due also to the imminent Regional elections in Sicily in September 2012 and the upcoming political elections in February 2013. May 2012 and September 2012 are a period of political success for the M5S with small representations on communal and regional level, which gave the possibility to the blog holders to introduce the politics of the M5S in its blog-posts (which can be also verified in the next section), as also shown in the analysis of the themes.

Furthermore, the distribution of authors shows the regular and high presence of “regular citizens” as authors. In total 130 out of 382 blog posts are written by “regular citizens”. The “regular citizen” is present as a common author every month under investigation (38/36/25/31). The presence of this category shows, how the blog makes a regular use of the “regular citizen” as an author and informant of political and social issues.

A relevant presence is the section “Passaparola”, which can be described as a guest-preservation of a commonly well-know personality by the blog community: themes can be various and have not direct connection to the political activity of the blog. News - agencies are barely present, as journalists or other bloggers. If the first two categories are not commonly used by political bloggers, as their message traditionally is oppositional to mainstream media, the linkage to other bloggers is rare and not so frequent, which is surprisingly.

The frequent presence of “not mentioned / unclear author” is notable, and is explainable due to the fact, that in several blog posts the authors were not mentioned directly and no logical interpretation from the text could be made. The position of these blog posts in another more specific category could be seen as questionable and subjective. The results can be slightly affected by this fact, but, as no logical deduction was possible, every other categorisation is less reliable.
5.1.2 Themes

This section presents the analysis of the themes in the period of study. Table 2 presents the themes found and their distribution divided per month and totalized.

Table 2: Distribution of main themes in the study period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Theme</th>
<th>September 2011</th>
<th>January 2012</th>
<th>May 2012</th>
<th>September 2012</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Activities and reports about Beppe Grillo</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Activities and reports about the M5S on national scale</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Political guidelines of the M5S</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Protest action against politics</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Promote of politics of the movement/blog</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Answer to a statement about Beppe Grillo/M5S</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Reports about local politics of the M5S</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Critics of the political system of Italy</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Critics of Politicians/Political actors</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Critics of political parties</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Report about organized crime their criminal acts, victims and affiliation with politics</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Critics of the economical situation of Italy</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Report about waste of public money through the parties/Italian political system</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Report about the Euro / European Union Politics / Economical Situation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Report about International affairs and politics</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Critics of the mass media and/or their reporting</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Internet Possibilities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Report of political activity by citizens</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Blog entries depicting difficult living conditions / desperate statements</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Other</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>89</strong></td>
<td><strong>94</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>99</strong></td>
<td><strong>382</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As beforehand mentioned the categorization of the themes is exclusive. The numbers present are indicators of the main theme present and show different trends of the main themes as their distribution over time. What is notable, firstly, is the constant presence and stable distribution of themes regarding the M5S and Beppe Grillo (categories 1 to 8). The blog is the first source of information and of political guidance of the M5S and contains so regularly blog posts with themes regarding the M5S or Beppe Grillo. In May 2012 and in September 2012 the themes "Activities and reports about the M5S on a national scale" and “Report about local politics of the M5S” increased substantially (see table 4), as a consequence of the administrative elections in May 2012 and the Regional elections in Sicily in September 2012, where the M5S participated in both. Also the M5S was in a period of political success and in preparation of the political elections in 2013, which increased the blog posts with the M5S or Beppe Grillo as main theme.

Furthermore, commonly present in the blog were the themes critics of the political system in Italy, as the critics of politicians and political parties. Also constantly criticized is the waste of public money by political parties. The distribution of the themes regarding politics and economy in Italy is regular, which shows a constant in the reporting in the theme. The critics towards political parties increased irregularly in September 2012, which can be explained with the start of the political campaign of the M5S for the elections in February 2013. In September 2011 the theme protest action against politics is higher than in the other months analyzed, in consequence of the organization of a protest day “Cozza Day” (against the politicians) by the blog against the politicians and their power abuse.

An interesting and useful data is the large presence of blog entries “depicting difficult living conditions and desperate statements of citizens” (51 in total). The theme is used as a storyteller of daily life with tragic stories connected to a pessimistic view towards the future. The use of this theme can be considered as constant and regularly present, without necessarily being connected to actual happenings. It decreased in May 2012, possibly, due to the increase of the M5S and the use of the blog as the official voice of the M5S in the different election campaigns, but, although, with a stable presence.

Thanks to the analysis of the distribution of the themes in the different months, it is possible to show the value the blogs gives to recent events. The main events are: for September 2011 the political protest organized by the blog of Beppe Grillo called “Cozza Day” against the politicians and their improper use of political power\(^\text{18}\), in May 2012 the

\[^{18}\text{The theme protest action against politics was present 10 times as a main theme in September 2011}\]
participation of the M5S to the local municipal elections in Parma\textsuperscript{19} and other municipalities and for September 2012 the participation of the M5S to the Regional elections in Sicily as well as the preparation to the national Parliament elections in February 2013\textsuperscript{20}.

5.1.3 Summarized categorization

The following section summarizes the categories of authors and themes in order to give a more general overview. The table below is a simplification of table 1 with two main author groups: the first group contains the first five categories of table 1 (Beppe Grillo, M5S Activists, M5S Movement, Casaleggio), as representatives of the M5S, and the second group contains every other author, beside the category “not mentioned / unclear author”.

Table 3: The percentages of the authors divided in two categories\textsuperscript{21}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Authors</th>
<th>September 2011</th>
<th>January 2012</th>
<th>May 2012</th>
<th>September 2012</th>
<th>Total (authors)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beppe Grillo and M5S</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not mentioned / unclear author</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (month)</td>
<td>100% (N=89)</td>
<td>100% (N=94)</td>
<td>100% (N=100)</td>
<td>100% (N=99)</td>
<td>100% (N=382)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows the frequency of the two groups of authors present on the blog: Beppe Grillo and the M5S are the authors of approximately 31% of the blog posts. 50% of the blog posts is not directly connected to Grillo and the M5S, which can be interpreted as a strategy of the blog holders to create the idea of a blog with oppositional, but neutral comment. The use of authors indirectly connected to the M5S or Grillo adds to the content of the blog post neutral and objective validity. The low presence of news agencies and journalists (table 1) as sources of information and authors also validates this hypothesis, as the blog readers are informed by “regular citizens”, “Beppe Grillo” and the “M5S”, clearly bypassing traditional media agencies.

Similarly, in order to simplify the comparison of the themes to the period of analysis an overview has been made, and more detailed categories has been assigned into a broader category. After this process the themes has been divided in six different categories as in the

\textsuperscript{19} The theme Reporting about local initiatives of the M5S was present 10 times as a main theme in May 2012
\textsuperscript{20} The theme Activities and reports about the M5S on national scale was present 14 times as a main theme in September 2012
\textsuperscript{21} The percentages have been adjusted and can so differ from the actual value of a maximum of half percentage
next table: category one “Beppe Grillo / M5S” represents the categories 1 to 7 of table 3, category two “Politics / Economy in Italy” represents the categories 8 to 13, category three “International / Europe” represents the category 14 and 15, category four “Media” represents the categories 16 and 17, category five “Citizens” represents the categories 18 and 19 and category six “Other” represents the category 20 of table 3.

Table 4: Main themes present on the blog of beppegrillo.it in percentages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Themes</th>
<th>September 2012</th>
<th>January 2012</th>
<th>May 2012</th>
<th>September 2012</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Beppe Grillo / M5S</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Politics / Economy in Italy</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. International / Europe</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Media</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Citizens</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Other</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100 % (N=89)</td>
<td>100 % (N=94)</td>
<td>100% (N=100)</td>
<td>100% (N=99)</td>
<td>100% (N=382)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most frequent theme present on the blog of beppegrillo.it is with 35% the reporting about Beppe Grillo and the M5S, on national and local scale, about political guidelines, and protest actions organized by the blog or the movement. A constant in the reporting is the critics to the political system, political parties and politicians as well as critics to the mass media. With 26% of the total amount of blog posts the Italian politics as theme is a common theme in the blog of Beppe Grillo.

The distribution of the themes show an increase of the category Beppe Grillo / M5S from 30% in September 2011 and 22% in January 2012 to 46% in May 2012 and 40% in September 2012. The increase, as shown previously, is connected to the political success on local and regional basis of the M5S. A decrease from 21% in September 2011 and 24% in January 2012 to 11% in May 2012 and 13% in September 2012 has been registered in the category citizens, possibly due to the increase of the category Beppe Grillo and the M5S. The value although remained high and the theme constantly present in the reporting.

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22 The percentages have been adjusted and can so differ from the actual value of a maximum of half percentage
In summary the analysis of authors and themes show a constant presence of Beppe Grillo and the M5S in the blog, as authors and reported themes. The blog makes large use of neutral considered authors, as only 31% of the authors are Grillo or M5S and 50% are neutral sources. The themes selected represent specific political events, but critique of politicians and political parties, as the politics of the M5S and reports about desperate living conditions of citizens are constant and common themes of the blog.

5.2 Second Level of Analysis: Texts and Language

The research question this section aims to answer is: RQ(2) “How does the blog texts evaluate the Italian political system? How is the alternative method of politics constructed linguistically, semantically and discursively in the blog posts of Beppe Grillo?”

5.2.1 The content of the samples

The blog entries selected for the analysis are the following four: text sample number one was published on January 7, 2012 under the title „Un Vday per la Costituzione“ (commented 839 times), text sample number two was published on September 8, 2011 under the title „Comunicato politico numero quarantasei“ (commented 497 times), text sample number three was published on September 16, 2012 under the title “Democrazia va cercando, ch’è si cara” (commented 945 times) and text sample number four was published on May 23, 2012 under the title “I Dodo” (commented 1401 times). English translations are present in the additional material attached separately.

Text sample number 1 was published as an announcement of a protest day against the Constitution, which in the opinion of the writer, did not allow the participation to political decisions by the citizens, but gave to the parties the control over the public decisions. Text sample number 2 has no particular reason of being published, but can be seen as a strategic political text, which reveals the aims and objectives of Beppe Grillo and his movement. Text sample number 3 is a text, which focuses on the different concepts of democracy and democratic participation and has been written after the accusations of Martin Schulz,

23 http://www.beppegrillo.it/2012/01/un_vday_per_la_costituzione.html (01.04.2012)
25 http://www.beppegrillo.it/2012/09/democrazia_va_cercando_che_si_cara/index.html
26 http://www.beppegrillo.it/2012/05/i_dodo/index.html
President of the European Parliament, of unclear democratic participation inside the M5S and of his leader Beppe Grillo. Text sample 4 criticises the media as responsible to hold alive the politicians. In order to show the textual representation of discourse creation it has been decided to make two distinctive sections: firstly the terminology used by Beppe Grillo on the blog is discussed, going further, secondly, to the analysis of the discursive practices of the texts. The empirical material is present contemporarily in both sections.

5.2.2 Terminology of Beppe Grillo

In this section the use of the language on the micro level of analysis is presented in two different parts: first the explicit interpretation of specific words is explained and the use of semantic dichotomies identified, followed by the discussion of the aggressive and attacking language tone present in the texts. Examples are present to verify the analysis. A summary concludes the section.

Use of dichotomies - Examples

The language present in the blog post has the following characteristics: the language is politicized, to certain words a explicit interpretation is attached. The use of this interpretation is present systematically in the texts and produces so a preferred meaning. The words analysed and present systematically in the texts are: politician, politics, party, citizen(s) and M5S. Considering the text samples the following preferred meanings of the words politician, politics and party has been interpreted (after every interpretation examples from the text are presented):

- **anti democratic/authoritarian** (text1, line 1: *dictatorial partipracy*; text3, 88: *in Italy the will of the people is negated by the parties*; text 3, lines 108 – 109: “. They (the politicians) are shouting about democratic centralism that they are so familiar with. And the platform, the candidates, the policies .... ? There’s a democratic deficit, a principle that is evident in “ducismo”\(^{28}\), an intolerable centralisation”; Text3, lines 76 – 80; text3, lines 89 – 90; text1, line 24: *the secretaries of parties decide*; text2, line 37: *pyramid-shaped hierarchical structures*; text3, lines 108 – 109: “They (the politicians) are shouting about democratic centralism that they are so familiar with. And the platform, the candidates, the policies? There’s a democratic deficit, a principle that is evident in “ducismo”, an intolerable centralisation”; text2, lines 42 -44, text1, lines 1 -4, text2, lines

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27 Integrated in the text if the language economy allows it, otherwise the exact reference is mentioned.
28 Ducismo: from „Duce“ (Mussolini), term meaning fascism
• **power obsessed** (text1, lines 1 – 10)
• **obsolete** (text2, line 42: politics has reached his sunset; text 4, lines 124 – 128, text 4, 131 -132)
• **outside society** (text2, line 37: body separated from society; text4, lines 131 -132)
• **of propagandistic nature** (text4, lines 121 – 122: It's getting more alienating to look at “cicciobombi” and “labbra turgide”, megaphones of the parties on national TV channels, on the TV News, and on the talk shows; Text4, lines 128 – 130; Text1, lines 6 – 8).

Instead the citizen and the M5S are represented with the following interpretations:

• **democratic** (text3, 97 - 100: Really the M5S is subversive, it wants to bring in the referendum propositional without quorum, the direct election of candidates; text2, line 45: In Iceland the Constitution is being rewritten online by the citizens; text 2, 39 -41: the intelligence of the citizens, possible thanks to the Internet; text2, 62 – 65)
• **not represented** (text1, 19 -20: The citizen, who represents the “people’s will”, celebrated so much in the Constitution, cannot propose anything, only cancel; text1, 23 - 25 )
• **not power obsessed** (text2, line 50 – 53: The person elected with the M5S responds only to his conscience and to the application of the programme, not to phantom committees across the territory; text2, 53 -56: The objective of the M5S is for the citizen to deal directly with politics at a local and national level, not that he becomes a politician. M5S’s strength lies in the independence of its elected representatives and of its activists. In the fact that they are people who are carrying out a social function without other ends)

The parties, politics and politicians are represented in a negative way, whereas the citizens and the M5S are represented systematically with positive attributes. The linguistic valuation of the two parts creates a dichotomy: either the world of political parties, anti-democratic, authoritarian, power obsessed, outside society and of propagandistic nature or the world of the M5S, citizen based, democratic, not represented and not power obsessed, as for example text2, line 53 – 54: “The objective of the M5S is for the citizen to deal directly with politics at a local and national level, not that he becomes a politician”. The texts are constructed on
oppositions and contracts: on one side the *citizen*, the *M5S* and on the other side *parties and politicians*.

To remark this dichotomy the texts make also use of the common sense distinction of the concept of *us* and *the other*. The concept of *we* includes linguistically and semantically the active, democratic citizens and creates therefore a direct contact with the reader, which is supposed to identify and refer himself to the positive attributes, whereas it creates a distance and diffidence to the negative preferred readings of politicians and political parties (as for example in text2 line 39 - 41: “*The sum of the intelligence of the citizens, possible thanks to the Internet, has an enormous value, not comparable to any politician.*”). The meaning of *us* is used for the M5S and the citizens in opposition to *the other* of the politics and political parties: text1, line 33 - 34: “*They will never give up. We neither.*” The texts construct so a discursive demarcation of “*us*” (citizens, M5S) versus the “*other*” (politician, political party system).

*Aggressive and attacking language tone – Examples*

The language is aggressive and attacking towards the political parties, politicians and mass media systems. The aggressive and attacking tone can be identified in the following examples:

- “*They provoke a sense of small things that are in really bad taste. They call to mind the perfume of rotten flowers, the sharp stink of boxwood lining the avenues of the cemeteries*” (text 4, line 121 – 125)
- “*At times of difficulty, they have carefully rushed in, as attentive as Red Cross workers, to bring them the intravenous drip*” (Text 4, lines 130 – 132)
- “*There’s a democratic deficit, a principle that is evident in “ducismo”, an intolerable centralisation*”(text 3, lines 108 - 109)
- “*But there are no more kings, only new “Bastille”s that will be occupied one after the other*”. (Text 2, line 72 -73)

**In sum**, the texts make use of a clear distinction of established politicians, political parties versus citizen and the M5S. The politicians and parties are interpreted as: anti-democratic, authoritarian, power obsessed, obsolete, outside society, of propagandistic nature. The citizens and the M5S are interpreted as: democratic, not represented, not power obsessed. The text creates and inclusive “*us*” concept of the citizens and M5S and an exclusive “*other*” of politicians and parties. Furthermore the language tone of the texts can be described as aggressive and attacking towards the political world and his actors.
5.2.3 The discourse of politics

In this section the analysis of the macro level of discourse analysis is discussed. A discourse of politics is identified in the blog texts, which contains ideas of democratic non-representation and the alternative democratic potentials of the M5S. Examples are given as verification of the discourse (for longer examples the mere reference is given). In the additional material attached separately the full texts are present. A summary concludes the section.

In the constitution and construction of society the text samples make large use of clear and explicit representations of the political world and actors in Italy, as explained in section 5.2.2. First of all, a common frame largely used is a delineated and clear representation of political parties in Italy. In text 1, in the introduction lines 1 to 10 the concept of "dittatura partitocatista" (dictatorial particracy), is a consciously exaggeration of the description of the State form in Italy. The first sentence introduces the reader in an ideological framework. The political parties are described as being hold in live thanks to the “electoral refund”, the influence on the media and the legal guarantees in the Constitution.

Also the introduction of text2, lines 35 to 41 gives a representation of the parties as a historical institution, which has been guaranteed by the power relations between the political actors. Text1 also follows the continuation of a historical discourse, where the frame of political domination of the system is textually constructed since the end of the fascism ("Piazzale Loreto", in line 2, is a powerful way to express the end of the fascism, as Benito Mussolini was hanged publicly in the square “Piazzale Loreto” in Milan on the 29. April 1945.) and has constantly continued until nowadays with no substantial change. The writer induces in the reader a sense of mistrust, even disgust of the political, as for example in text 3, 85 - 90. Text sample number 4 shows clearly, that the survival of political actors has been possible only thanks to their presence in the mainstream media (cp. lines 120 – 127).

The political power is constructed to be held by the parties, as shown in text1, 23 - 24: 

*the citizen cannot vote for a candidate, the secretaries of the parties decide;* text2, 42 – 44: 

*It has become a body separated from the society that look at itself in a mirror in its presumed authoritativeness and competence and that exhibits itself in the conferences and on TV like a trained seal,* as other text samples show: text3, 77 – 79; text3, 88 – 90; text4, 135 – 138. The political power of the parties is expressed in the texts as authoritarian and anti democratic, not taking into consideration the “will of the people" (text3, 88 -90: *In Italy the will of the people is negated by the parties. Even the results of the referenda, (...), have been ignored*). The text, expressing the social position of the political actors (parties and citizens) and their
power (parties have political power, citizens are neglected to use it), creates a problem a “legitimate” democratic representation.

The definition of democracy is textually constructed by the blog as a demarcation of a “failed” and “interested-based” democracy by political and medial actors. In the introduction of text3, lines 84 - 90, the difference is clearly stated, as the parties seem to act not for the people, but only for themselves. In the understanding beppegrillo.it the concept of democracy is explained in text3, lines 97 – 101:

“Really the M5S is subversive, it wants to bring in the referendum propositional without quorum, the direct election of candidates, the obligation to have a discussion of the popular laws with non-secret voting in Parliament, the obligation to have confirmation by a referendum inserted into the Constitution, for each change to the electoral laws, the abolition of public financing of parties”.

The concept of democracy is present in terms of the representation of the popular will, the laws made by citizens and the participatory representation are seemingly in opposition to the democracy of the parties. The direct connection of the citizen to the law-making-process seems not request the intermediary role of the political parties. Thus creates clearly a dual system, where the US (citizen) is opposed to the OTHER (political class, parties, media), following a strategy of simplification. This construction of contrast between the parties and the citizen is of an ideological nature and seems to legitimize the fact of discontent with the politics and the search of an accountable agent for the difficult economic conditions of the Italian society. The texts possibly make use of the framework of participatory democracy neglecting the fact of a representative issue of democracy, accusing the Italian political system to be a parasite of democratic expectations of the citizen.

**In summary**, the analysis has shown, how the text samples make use of representations, that plays citizen and political parties as opposed in the political system. The political parties are represented in a seemingly undemocratic self-dedicated class held in power by the mass media: they are the power holders but use it in an anti democratic way, not representing properly the will of the citizens, they do not consider their public duty towards the citizens and so the civic participatory of the citizen to the public and political life is neglected.

*The M5S and the Internet*
The presence of a political problem of non-democratic representation constitutes the basis of the discourse based around the M5S and the Internet. In the conclusion of the blog posts of text1, text2 and text3, following the discourse on democratic deficits, in the texts the following solutions are proposed:

In the blog there will be hold a public debate, how it happens nowadays in Island, to discuss it each and every point. (Text1, lines 24 - 25)

What’s important is that the Internet, as it has managed to do so far, identifies them and shows their dimensions. There are no occult powers behind the M5S, but just people that have dedicated time and resources to a new idea of politics as participation. (Text2, lines 52 – 55)

The M5S cannot draw back from debate. For the forthcoming national elections, the candidates of the M5S will be selected online and the programme will be discussed and completed using the Internet. Transparently. (Text3, lines 94 -99)

The discursive solution, implicit in the blog texts, seems to be a new model of politics, involving the citizen as a primary political actor, taking decisions and interacting on an online platform. The creation of a representation of the citizen in the political system as the primary legitimate political actors makes use of the common sense of the reader. The Internet is constructed to be the most democratic way for political discussions and political decisions. The use of Internet (text1, lines 30 – 35; text3, 110 -115; text2, 39 -41) as a direct democratic tool, which can bypass the pyramid-shaped hierarchical structures (text2, line 35) of political parties, is used to offer to the reader a solution to the political problem constructed in the beginning of the texts. Without the political parties, the citizen, is in the centre of the political power domination, thanks to the Internet (text2, line 50: The M5S has a Programme discussed on the Internet. Nothing else is necessary).

The M5S is constructed as a new model of politics and for using the online platforms as discussion and decision forum of politics. Ultimately, this may lead to the abolition of the political parties system. The construction of the Internet as an optimal space of political decision making, including the citizen and excluding the parties, represented through the M5S, is the core message of the political strategy of the texts.

The Internet is the new direct democratic tool (text2, 39, 41; text 2, 47 – 48; text 3, 110 – 112), which includes everyone, and is represented primary by the blog and by the M5S. The Internet is constructed to have the power to represent everyone. The active participation of
the citizen online, as for example to vote for candidates (cp. text3, 97 – 101), the instauration of a public debate on the blog (cp. text1, 30 -35), the organization of a civic protest (cp. text2, 67 – 75), is represented as the new democratic expression of political power. The citizen is identified as the new holder of political power on the Internet, the M5S is represented as his agent online. The texts are inferring that the only possibility to escape the party hegemony and the non-representation of citizens is the direct democracy on the Internet, expressed through the M5S.

By studying the language characteristics of the blog, the M5S is identified as the only direct democratic representation of the citizens. The primary representation of Internet democracy is expressed through the M5S. The ideological framework constitutes a common sense interpretation of the Internet as an ideal democratic tool of political participation, where the citizen is an as active power holder in the decision-making process.

**Summarizing the second level of analysis** has shown, how the terminology used by the text samples is making a clear distinction between political parties and politicians versus the citizens and M5S. The political parties and politicians are represented as seemingly nondemocratic, authoritarian, outside society and power obsessed, whereas the citizens are expressed as seemingly democratic, not-represented and not-power obsessed. The language tone is aggressive and attacking towards politicians and parties. The non-representation of citizens by the politicians and parties creates an acute problem of democracy in the texts. The solution lies with the idea of the M5S and its use of the Internet to represent the citizen directly and on a democratic basis. The power expressed through this construction shows, how the creation of the M5S as the only direct democratic representation, is dominating. The discursive strategy of the texts follows this hegemonic concept of the M5S as the only direct and democratic power agency. The Internet is interpreted as the representative solution of the direct democracy of the M5S.
5.3 Third Level of Analysis: Interaction and Dialogue

The research question this section aims to answer is: RQ(3) “In what ways and to what extent does the reader use the commentary section?”

In this section the commentary is analysed. At the beginning, in the first part, a general overview over the commentary is given, analysing in the second part, relation of the content of popular comments to the discourses in the blog texts.

5.3.1 General Overview

In the period analysed totally 382 blog posts were published. The total amount of comments to the blog posts is 157,916 comments. In the table 5 the distribution of blog posts regarding the amount of comments they received are shown. The total amount of blog posts is distributed regarding the comments as follow: 38% of the blog posts have received up to until 99 comments, 29% of the blog posts have been commented from 100 to 499 times, 20% of the comments have been commented between 500 and 999 times and 13% of the blog posts received more than 1000 comments. Table 5 explains the total distribution of blog posts divided in months.

Table 5: Distribution of blog posts regarding number of comments²⁹

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blog posts with</th>
<th>Sep-2011</th>
<th>January 2012</th>
<th>May 2012</th>
<th>Sep-2012</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>until 99</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from 100 to 499</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from 500 to 999</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from 1000</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100% (N=89)</td>
<td>100% (N=94)</td>
<td>100% (N=100)</td>
<td>100% (N=99)</td>
<td>100% (N=382)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysing the distribution per month of the commentary, the blog posts with less than 100 comments decreased in the period of analysis from 60% in September 2011 to 25% in May 2012 and 28% in September 2012, as also the blog posts between 500 to 999 comments from

²⁹ The percentages have been adjusted and can so differ from the actual value of a maximum of half percentage
23% in September 2012 and 28% in January 2012 to respectively 10% in May 2012 and 18% in September 2012. In consequence the blog posts with 100 to 499 comments increased from respectively 14% in September and 25% in January 2012 to 39% in May 2012 and 37% in September 2012. Relevant is also the increase of blog posts with over 1000 comments with a very high percentage in May 2012 with 26% and also in September with 17%. In overall, as analysed in the thematic section, the report about the political success of the M5S in May 2012 as an internal controversy on the expulsion of a M5S member in September 2012 can be seen as the main causes of the distribution of data. The report about the political success of the M5S is one of the main reasons of the distribution of the data. With the increase of political success of the M5S the comments of the blog posts increased, these data, testify the correlation of the blog posts to the M5S.

Table 6 is a table of the totality of comments present in the study period distributed per month. To show the distribution also the Mean, the Standard deviation and the Median have been included.

Table 6: Distribution of comments in the period of analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>September 2011</th>
<th>January 2012</th>
<th>May 2012</th>
<th>September 2012</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total amount of blog posts</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total amount of comments</td>
<td>24.132</td>
<td>33.522</td>
<td>57.223</td>
<td>44.744</td>
<td>159.621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>572</td>
<td>452</td>
<td>418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard deviation</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>609</td>
<td>508</td>
<td>490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As expected the strong variation of blog posts with few comments and blog posts with over 1000 comments creates a high value of the standard deviation in every month, with the highest value in May 2012 with 609 as standard deviation, with also the highest mean (572).

The mean shows also that every month is very different regarding the amount of comments, although the lowest value is 271, which stands for a high popularity of the blog, given that every day three blog posts are published regularly. As the high standard deviation is not explainable through a different amount of blog posts (as they are numerical quite stable) it is notable, that the months in May 2012 and in September 2012 respectively show a higher standard deviation, which could be explainable through the frequent presence of blog posts encouraging the readers to interact with the author and the political success of the M5S, which attracts more readers and generates more comments. Also, as shown in the section
prior, the major report about the M5S and his increased popularity with larger coverage of the blog, has led to a larger commentary on the blog posts regarding the reporting and the actions of the movement.

**Generally** can be stated, that the users of the blog of Beppe Grillo make large use of the commentary section. The large number of comments, as shown in the table, is an indicator of a strong popularity of the blog and a high level of discussion. Furthermore, with the increase of report of political activities over the M5S also the commentary increased, as shown by in the analysis.

5.3.2 The analysis of the content
The research question this section aims to answer is: RQ(3) *“Which are the most popular opinions and ideas of the commentary?”*

In this section the analysis of the content of the most popular comments is presented. The impossibility to analyze the totality of comments on the blog posts, the decision has been made to focus on comments of the blog posts with the largest acceptance of the community of the blog of Beppe Grillo. As the blog offers this possibility, the comments with the highest positive votes have been selected. The selection of the sample under-represents the totality of the commentary and can not be used to make general conclusions about the debate and discussion on the blog, but it can give valid insights and interesting data about the most popular comments and how they are constructed in order to gain the largest acceptance in the community.

The qualitative analysis is divided in five aspects, in which ten comments of each month will be analysed regarding their content relation to the blog texts. The five aspects are: (1) critique towards Beppe Grillo and/or M5S, (2) similarities of language use as the blog texts (3) representation of inclusion (we) and exclusion (other), (4) aggressive language tone, (5) explicit references to blog post commented. The categories can be answered with “yes” or “no”. This analysis has been perpetuated after the conclusion of the second level of analysis, which made it possible to make a comparison. A Codebook is attached. The translated comments are attached separately in the additional material.
Table 7: Analysis of the content of the most voted comments on beppegrillo.it

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sep-11</th>
<th>January 2012</th>
<th>May 2012</th>
<th>Sep-12</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Critique towards Beppe Grillo and/or the M5S</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>no</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Similar use of language as by blog texts</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>no</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>not identifiable</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. We vs. Others</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>no</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Aggressive language</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>no</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. References</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>no</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similarities of language use
As the analysis is based on the ten most voted comments on the ten most commented blog posts on beppegrillo.it in the four months analysed. Each category contains 40 unit of analysis. The aspect of category 2 shows that in total 29 comments out of 40 made use of a similar use of language (2) in comparison to the blog texts, nine did not and for two comments it was not identifiable. For example, the problem of democratic representation by the citizens and the mistrust towards politicians: “the politicians, who instead of honouring their political mandate received from the electorship, give completely a damn and look only after their own interests” (1.1.12), “Bersani and his crew of evil doing accomplices as Baffetto, Grissino and Topo Gigio just disappear from the playground” (8.5.12), “I have a charged emotion inside, that if I find a politician, I will bury him only with my look” (1.9.11). In confirmation of this data also other two categories has been analyzed, which are correlated to the first one.

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30 The aspect “similar language use” studied the presence of the discourses analysed in the second level: the presence of similar terminology, similar discursive constructions of the politician(s), parties, M5S, citizen, Internet, democracy.
Furthermore, also the presence of the distinction between US vs. the OTHER (3) has been made in category 3, in order to see if the comments are also using a similar linguistic strategy of inclusion and exclusion. In 32 of the most voted comments in the four months a distinction between us vs. they could be found, in 8 of 40 comments no distinction has been found.

Category 4 studies the use of an aggressive language tone (4), as described in the second level of analysis, and in this case 22 out of 40 made use of an aggressive language tone consisting of insults and verbal attacks, in 18 comments there was no use of an aggressive language. A few examples: “you are really a big, the biggest asshole” (9.9.11), or “let us attack them on their goods” (5.9.11), or “Italians: race of cowards” (8.1.12).

In sum it can be said, that the language patterns used by Beppe Grillo’s blog posts were largely similar to the commentary analysed. Regarding the distribution of each month, the results are quite stable, which allows for a generalized view. The distribution differs only in the section “aggressive language tone” with nine comments out of ten using this aspect in September 2011 and only two out of ten in September 2012. As the main theme of the comments in September 2012 was the expulsion of Favia and internal debates of the M5S, it could be argued, that the language tone was more based on a discussion between the members about the M5S as the condemnation of politicians and parties more present in the other months. This argumentation is also confirmed by the higher presence of popular comments with critics (category 1) towards the blog in September 2012 in comparison to the other months.

In overall it can be stated, that the language use of the most popular comments shows that the discursive power of the blog is not challenged and therefore accepted by the reader. The most popular comments are not challenging the political discourse of the blog, moreover they are included in the same discourse.

Interactive Dialogue – Discussion and Confrontation

Furthermore, interesting is the result of the aspect studied in category 1 (table 7), which analysed the possible critique towards Beppe Grillo and/or the M5S (1). In seven voted out of 40 most voted comments, critics on Beppe Grillo and also the organization of the movement could be found. This is worth noticing, since the most voted comment can also be seen as an indicator of a popular opinion of the readers of the blog. As also positive comments and supportive feedback for the work of Beppe Grillo and the movement could be found (in
example the comments: 5.9.12, 3.9.12, 1.9.11) especially in the month of September 2012 the commentators criticized an interior debate of the M5S. A member of the M5S, Giovanni Favia, made public declarations against the transparency of the movement and the total control of the movement through Casaleggio and Grillo and started so a debate on the blog about his expulsion and on the figures Beppe Grillo and Roberto Casaleggio and their role inside the movement.

Six of the most voted comments on the most commented blog posts in September 2012 mentioned the expulsion of Favia and the possible future of the M5S. The comments 3.9.12, 9.9.12 and 10.9.12 were supportive of Beppe Grillo and the movement, as 2.9.12, 6.9.12 and 7.9.12 showed a critical point of view on the movement and the expulsion of Favia. Interesting in this section, as it focuses on the practice of commenting as a form of online political debate involving the single members, the comments with the most votes asked for a more transparent model of candidate selection and also of a more transparent participation in the decision making process (for political agendas or candidate selection), as the following examples show:

"When do we create the Internet platform with certificated accounts in order to vote for the national programme and for the candidates in the Parliament? When do we start to talk about the national programme? When do we start to know the candidates for the Parliament? When do we start to talk about alliances (with other movements or not)?" (6.9.12)

“Furthermore it is desirable to start to work on a new portal allowing real pools and votes and start to plan how the candidates for the Parliament elections will be selected”. (1.9.12)

These textual passages of the comments relieve an interesting dialogue about democratic representation in the movement. It challenges the institution of the M5S and his democratic basis, asking for direct participatory. They show, how a part of the users pretend a major inclusion in the decisions of the M5S and can be seen as a challenge to the discursive power of the blog. They show, further, the use of the commentary as platform of political discussion. As mentioned, also comments in support of the leaders were present and obtained a large consensus by the subscribers of the blog:
“If there were not Grillo and Casaleggio making follow the rules (as referees)... the M5S (...) would already be dead and concealed under the personal interests of the human beings” (2.9.12)

These examples show how the readers and followers of the blog are divided and analyse critically the happenings about the blog and also that the presence of large discussion and interaction. The fact, that comments criticising Beppe Grillo and the M5S gained a large acceptance in the community of the blog, shows, that the blog is used as a discussion forum and that, the commentators use the spaces on the blog also to criticize and discuss the M5S and Beppe Grillo. The analysis of the critical comments shows some possibilities of contradictions to the general results. The presence of criticism is in opposition to the acceptance of the discourse of politics studied previously.

5.3.3 Summary: Commentary as online dialogue

The results, regarding acceptance and negotiation of content production, are biased by the sample. The sample cannot be seen as representative of all the commentary present, it can reveal the content of a part of the most popular comments. The results, although, produce an interesting analysis.

The **general overview** has shown that the readers make a large use of the commentary section, and that, with the growth of the M5S also the comments increased, which testifies the connection of the blog with the M5S. In the period of analysis the number of comments increased, possibly due to the political success of the movement. The content of the most popular comments shows a similar use of the language as in the blog posts. The language use of the commentary has shown that the discourse construction on the blog is present in the comments.

In contradiction, the concept of the M5S as a direct and open democratic way of representation is partly challenged by a part of the most popular comments. This shows, that the commentary section is also used to criticize the M5S and/or Beppe Grillo. The commentary section gives to the blog an interactive quality, used by the readers, both, to criticize Grillo and/or the M5S and to thank him for his work for the movement.

The readers use the commentary section to suggest new democratic forms and ideas for the movement and to let off steam against the politics and politicians. As the analysis regarded only the most popular comments the amount of critique and debate on the blog is underestimated and probably more frequent in the total amount of commentary.
6. Conclusions and Discussion

This chapter is organized in the following order: first the results are summarized, furthermore conclusions are made and the limitations of the study presented. At the end research possibilities are discussed.

The **first level of analysis** has shown the constant use of the authors Beppe Grillo, the M5S and the “regular citizens”. The presence of a large part of authors not connected primarily to the M5S adds to the blog an objective and neutral value as an informative medium. The main themes present are the reporting about the M5S and Beppe Grillo, the critique towards the Italian politics and political actors (manly their waste of public money) and the regular reporting on the “desperate living conditions” of the citizens. The distribution of authors and themes in the study period demonstrates the central role of the M5S in the reporting. With the increasing of political success of the M5S also the themes and authors connected to the M5S increased on the blog. The constant presence of supposedly neutral authors and the constant presence of a theme “desperate living conditions” can be seen as correlated, so that the supposed objective neutrality of the blog reflects the supposed actual living conditions of the citizens. In that way, the blog is so represented as the voice of the people, and not of the political elite.

The **second level of analysis** shows the construction by the blog texts of a problem of direct democracy caused by the negative use of power by the political elites. Inside the Italian political system, the parties and politicians are represented as the main responsible and accountable for the current political situation and for the neglected possibility of citizens to participate in the political decisions. The citizens are represented in clear opposition to the politicians, the texts create inclusion (we, citizens, M5S) and exclusion (the other, politicians, parties). The only solution presented is the direct democratic representation of the M5S through the use of the Internet as a participatory democratic tool. The Internet is textually constructed to appear the most democratic way of political representation.

The **third level of analysis** demonstrates that the commentary section is largely used in the blog of Beppe Grillo. Furthermore it shows the relation of the comments to the popularity of the M5S: the commentary increased in the period of political success of the M5S. The qualitative analysis on the most popular comments has shown the way commentators relate to the blog texts. The presence of similar language, also regarding the creation of inclusion and exclusion and the presence of attacking language tones, confirms the acceptance of a preferred meaning and a common discourse of blog texts and commentary. In some
contradiction, in the commentary a certain amount of critique towards Beppe Grillo and the M5S could be found, which shows a presence of discussion, confrontation and dialogue in the blog.

On the blog of Beppe Grillo it has been possible to identify the construction of a coherent discourse of political representation and political action. The Italian political situation and the actors involved reinforce the concept present on the blog and make the discourse “credible” and “legitimate”. In addition, in the language of the blog texts elements of populism are largely used. The use of an alternative, new political actor, not “affected” by the present politics, is a common strategy of populist movements. The presentation of the citizens as outside the political decision making process, the political power in the hands of a self dedicated elite is a constant rhetoric of populist actors. The political background of Italy, as explained in the background section, seems to be perfectly adaptable to the discourse of the blog. The consequences of the financial crisis and the continuous involvement of the political class in scandals led to a general mistrust in the political institution. This could be an explanation of the success of the blog.

An explanation of the success of the political success of the blog of Beppe Grillo could be found in the theoretical concept of the polarized Model of media and politics developed by Hallin and Mancini. The low trust in political institutions and in the media in Italy, similar in some characteristics also to other countries as for example Russia and Egypt, made it possible for the blog to create an oppositional form of neutral and credible information creation. The blog of Beppe Grillo relies upon the clear distinction between the political/medial system and the citizen/blog information. In conclusion can be said, that in countries with similar medial and political characteristics the use of alternative media in opposition to the mainstream media and the use of a political discourse of clear separation towards the media/politics could lead to similar political and medial processes. On this regard, returning to the research problematic described in the introduction, can be said, that the political aspect of the phenomenon plays an important and crucial role. The discourse of politics of the blog is at the basis of the communication strategy of the blog, legitimated through the specific situation of media and politics in Italy. In addition, the recent political developments (in particular the consequences of the financial crisis) strengthened the role of populist ideologies with the use of charismatic figures as leaders and the citizen as new political power holder and decision maker.
Furthermore, the comparison of the idea of a blog, as an alternative medium in opposition to the Italian mainstream media and the idea of the Internet, as a tool of direct democracy, shows how the two media are used for political purposes. The “oppositional” information on the blog and the “direct access” and “dialogue” of the Internet contribute to make the two media political instruments. The community of the M5S relies on these two tools, and gathers online to obtain “neutral” information and to “participate” democratically.

The use of the blog as a constructor of content and public discussion and opinion formation has been analysed, and the conclusion can be made, that the construction of political movements on the Internet relies in this case upon a linguistic strategy of dominance and a presence of participatory features. The M5S and Beppe Grillo use particracy and populism as causes to legitimize the use of Internet as a valid and legitimate democratic tool. It could be argued as a hypothesis, that for countries with other political and social characteristics (for example in moderate pluralism states, where media and political Institutions are more trusted), the concepts of populism and participracy could be alternatively defined and adapted, to so legitimize the Internet as a valid democratic tool. As an assumption, in a different environment as in moderate pluralist countries, that could be the continuation of political parties with the integration of the Internet as a new way of testing democratic representation.

At the end, some limitations of the present study have to be noticed. As the study case is present only in Italy, the local and national characteristics are relevant and important, and could be seen as a limitation. One concerns the focus on the online presence of the blog beppegrillo.it and the M5S. The blog and the M5S are present offline, as Beppe Grillo is frequently on political campaigns in the squares of Italy and the M5S has a large local community based organization with meetings and discussion forums. The integration of the offline presence to the online presence could be interesting for future research. From a political point of view, also interesting, would be the effective democratic representation of the M5S in his inside: who are the voters, how can they vote, how are the votes counted and are they representative. This would lead to a study of effective direct democratic representation through the Internet, as propagated by Beppe Grillo and the M5S.
7. Bibliography


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http://www.economist.com/node/9597362 (The Economist)

Other
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8. Appendices

8.1 Codebook: Author and Themes

The months under investigation in this analysis are September 2011, January 2012, May 2012 and September 2012. The section is divided in two main areas: (1) authors and (2) themes, with the respective period of analysis (a) September 2011, (b) January 2012, (c) May 2012 and (d) September 2012.

(1) Authors of blog posts in the analysed period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Beppe Grillo (explicitly mentioned)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.2 from textual passages in posts inferred</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.3 M5S activists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 M5S Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Casaleggio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6 Bloggers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7 News agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8 Associations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.9 Journalists/Writers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.10 Personalities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.11 Passaparola</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.12 Regular citizens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.13 Not mentioned / unclear author</td>
</tr>
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## (2) Themes

<table>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Activities and reports about Beppe Grillo</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Activities and reports about M5S on national scale</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Political guidelines of the M5S</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Protest action against politics</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 Promote of politics of the movement/blog</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6 Answer to a statement about Beppe Grillo/M5S</td>
<td>06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7 Reports about local politics of the M5S</td>
<td>07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8 Critics of the political system of Italy</td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.9 Critics of Politicians/Political actors</td>
<td>09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.10 Critics of political parties</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.11 Report about organized crime their criminal acts, victims and affiliation with politics</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.12 Critics of the economical system of Italy</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.13 Report about wastage of public money through the parties / Italian political system</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.14 Report about the Euro/ European Union / Economical situation in Europe</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.15 Report about International affairs and politics</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.16 Critics of the mass media and/or their reporting</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.17 Internet possibilities</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.18 Report of political activity by citizens</td>
<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.19 Blog entries depicting difficult living conditions / desperate statements</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.20 Other</td>
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3. Reported with

<table>
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<td>3.1 Negative attributes</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.2 Positive attributes</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Neutral attributes</td>
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</table>
8.2 Comments : Codebook

The period of analysis is: (a) September 2011, (b) January 2012, (c) May 2012 and (d) September 2012. Every comment has a numerical code. The translation of the comments is attached in the empirical material.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codebook</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Numerical code of the comment</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1. Critics to the blog of Beppe Grillo and/or the M5S</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the comment criticize Beppe Grillo and/or the M5S?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
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<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not identifiable</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Us / The Other</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not identifiable</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Aggressive language tone</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is an aggressive language tone identifiable in the comments?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not identifiable</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. References to blog post</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the author of the comment refer to the content of the blog post?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>01</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
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