

# Definitions and measures of party institutionalization in new personal politics: The case of the 5 star movement

Fortunato Musella · Michelangelo Vercesi

Published online: 18 June 2019

© Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden GmbH, ein Teil von Springer Nature 2019

**Abstract** The emergence of personalized party organizations has called for a redefinition of the concept of party institutionalization (PI). This article brings different strands of literature together and proposes a new multidimensional index of PI. PI is conceived of as the interplay of objective and internal party features with the external environment. The viability of the index is tested through its application to a prominent case of personal party, the Italian Five Star Movement (5SM). Through a detailed analysis of its history, we show that the 5SM has become more institutionalized over time; however, this has especially affected its external facet, while other specific party traits have been less involved. Findings suggest that the stabilization of internal structures to connect party echelon and rank-and-file remains a challenge.

**Keywords** Party institutionalization · Personal parties · Political personalization · Five Star Movement · Italy · Measurement · Multidimensional index

---

We are grateful to two anonymous reviewers and to the two editors of the special issue for their valuable comments.

---

Prof. F. Musella (✉)

Department of Social Sciences, University of Naples Federico II, Vico Monte di Pietà, 1, 80138 Naples, Italy  
E-Mail: fortunato.musella@unina.it

M. Vercesi

Center for the Study of Democracy, Leuphana University Lüneburg,  
Universitätsallee, 1, 21335 Lüneburg, Germany  
E-Mail: michelangelo.vercesi@leuphana.de

## Definition und Messung von Parteiinstitutionalisierung im Kontext personalisierter Politik: Eine Fallstudie auf Basis der Fünf-Sterne-Bewegung

**Zusammenfassung** Durch die Entstehung personalisierter Parteiorganisationen ist eine Neudefinition des Konzepts der Parteieninstitutionalisierung (PI) nötig. Dieser Artikel bringt verschiedene Literaturstränge zusammen und schlägt einen neuen multidimensionalen Index der PI vor. PI ist als das Zusammenspiel von objektiven und internen Parteimerkmalen mit dem externen Kontext konzipiert. Die Anwendbarkeit des Index wird am Beispiel der italienischen Fünf-Sterne-Bewegung (5SB), einem prominenten Fall einer personalisierten Partei, getestet. Anhand der detaillierten Analyse der Parteigeschichte zeigen wir, dass die 5SB sich im Laufe der Zeit immer stärker institutionalisiert – was sich vor allem auf externe Ausprägungen der Parteieninstitutionalisierung bezieht, während interne Merkmale der Partei weniger involviert wurden. Die Ergebnisse des vorliegenden Beitrags zeigen, dass die Stabilisierung der internen Organisationsstrukturen zur Verbindung von Parteiführung und Parteibasis eine Herausforderung bleibt.

**Schlüsselwörter** Parteiinstitutionalisierung · Personalisierte Parteien · Politische Personalisierung · Fünf-Sterne-Bewegung · Italien · Messung · Multidimensionaler Index

### 1 Introduction

Party institutionalization is a core topic of political science research (Harmel et al. 2018). One cannot avoid tackling it when it comes to understand both the organizational nature of political parties and their development. Moreover, according to the literature, there is an indirect relation between institutionalized parties and stable democracies. Mainwaring and Scully (1995) as well as Kuenzi and Lambright (2001), for instance, argue that party system institutionalization is one of the criteria that a democracy should meet to achieve consolidation, or at least not to break down. Although party system and party institutionalization are distinct concepts and they should be treated as such (Casal Bértoa 2017), their requirements often overlap and reinforce each other (Randall and Svåsand 2002, p. 8; Meleshevich 2007, p. 16; Casal Bértoa 2012).

Given the relevance of the topic, it is not surprising that several scholars of political parties have extensively worked on party institutionalization. However, there is a lack of consensus on what party institutionalization means and which are the main dimensions of the concept. Consequently, the debate on how institutionalization can be empirically evaluated and measured is still open and lively. Especially in recent times, party institutionalization and de-institutionalization have become

crucial phenomena after the development of personal or personalistic parties<sup>1</sup>, that is, parties strongly related to or even dependent on the figure of political leaders (Musella 2018). These political parties often present peculiar modalities of consolidation and decline. Moreover, they show organizational traits that raise questions about their chances to survive after the exit of their leaders from politics (Vercesi 2015). More generally, the spread of personal parties has appeared to present an oxymoron: since institutionalization has been considered at the opposite pole of personalization, how is it possible to have strong and durable political parties centered around their political heads?

In this article, we focus on political parties in Italy, which is considered one of the most active and advanced laboratory of political personalization. Over the last 25 years, this country has been characterized by the crisis of party organizations and the proliferation of both long and short-lived personal parties with thin organizations and powerful leaders (Bordignon and Ceccarini 2014; Pasquino 2014; Musella 2015).<sup>2</sup> In this sense, Italy has been the forerunner of deep changes in the patterns of party competition, which have concerned many other modern democracies (Musella and Webb 2015). In 2013, a new restructuring of the party system occurred: the Five Star Movement (*Movimento 5 Stelle*, M5S) emerged as one of the most important party players in terms of public support and visibility, obtaining a quarter of votes in the first parliamentary election it ran in (Natale 2014). In 2018, it entered a two-party government coalition with the League (*Lega*) (Pedrazzani 2018). However, the path towards its own institutionalization has met so far several challenges.

This article is made up of two main parts. First, it tackles the issue of the conceptualization of party institutionalization. Party institutionalization is conceived of as a multidimensional concept, defined by objective aspects, internal party features, and types of interactions between the party itself and its political environment. The dimensions are operationalized by means of different variables. This approach allows building a normalized additive index of party institutionalization, based on indicators and rank orderings along each variable. The second part of the article provides a descriptive picture of the origins and the main characteristics of the M5S within the broader context of Italian politics. Moreover, it analyzes the M5S in October 2018 in accordance to the conceptual framework presented beforehand. This is particularly relevant because this party is supposed to be under a process of institutionalization since the successful 2013 general election. The organizational fluidity and the uncertainty on future developments of the M5S (Tronconi 2015; Corbetta 2017) make this party a crucial case study to test the viability of the index. The article ends with a short discussion of the findings, making speculations about the party's stabilization.

<sup>1</sup> According to Calise (2015, p. 130) “the personal party marks a sharp departure from the legal-rational, bureaucratic, and collective form of authority, which has been dominant in the development of political parties all through the 20th century, whereas bringing back the role of patrimonial and charismatic resources” (see also Calise 2000). Gunther and Diamond (2003, p. 187) use the notion of personalistic parties to analyze the most recent type of electoral party, which aims to provide “a vehicle for the leader to win an election and exercise power”.

<sup>2</sup> We rely on the minimal Sartori's (1976, p. 64) definition of the political party as “any political group that presents at elections, and is capable of placing through elections, candidates for public office.”.

## 2 The concept of party institutionalization

In this section, we review different conceptualizations of party institutionalization provided by the literature. Scholars have usually linked the concept to several dimensions of analysis. However, the cumulative advancement of knowledge in this field has been undermined by the fact that the increase of the number of studies has witnessed a parallel increase in the number of alternative definitions. While we try to assess systematically what the scholarship has told us so far and to highlight the main theoretical deficits, we also aim to unify different perspectives under an encompassing yet parsimonious framework. A number of dimensions for the construction of an index are put forward.

One of the most cited works on institutionalization is Huntington's (1968) *Political Order in Changing Societies*. Here, the author is interested in the strength of political institutions, including parties. The level of institutionalization is paired with the scope of support to define the strength of a political organization or procedure. Institutionalization, on its turn, is defined as "the process by which organizations and procedures acquire value and stability" (Huntington 1968, p. 12). Huntington proposes four dimensions of institutionalization: adaptability (ability to survive environmental challenges and to last longer); complexity (multiplication and differentiation of internal sub-units); autonomy (from other social groupings and behaviors); coherence (internal unity and consensus). It is worth noting that an institution, to be "institutionalized", is supposed to be able to avoid excessive personalization of procedures and decisions, so to live long after the founding-father leaves the scene (Huntington 1968, p. 12–24). Similarly, Selznick (1957, p. 21) indicates "infusion with value" and "self-maintenance" as requisites for institutionalization. The former criterion makes the latter "more than mere organizational survival; it becomes a struggle to preserve the uniqueness of the group in the face of new problems and altered circumstances". In both conceptualizations, time plays a central role: institutionalized organizations are able to last as independent organizations.

In Selznick, only adaptability and autonomy are dimensions of analysis. In this case, autonomy is considered as autonomy from personalities (the organization is not a mere instrument of specific individuals), more than autonomy from the environment. This approach seems particularly useful for the study of *party* institutionalization. As a matter of fact, a party may have strong ties to interest organizations, still being a stable organization with value *per se* (Harmel et al. 2018). Randall and Svåsand (2002, p. 8) have tackled the issue and proposed to circumscribe the attention to *decisional autonomy*, rather than autonomy *tout court* in Huntington's terms.

With regard to Huntington's adaptability and coherence, one should notice that they are not on the same analytical level of the concept of institutionalization, because they are logical followings. Adaptability is "a likely but not inevitable consequence of institutionalization" (Randall and Svåsand 2002, p. 15), and coherence/cohesion is something obtainable via institutionalized and clear procedures, when consensus cannot be built through other means. Both dimensions are thus (possible) outcomes of the process of institutionalization, not one of its inherent aspects. Finally, complexity does not seem a necessary nor sufficient condition of party

institutionalization. A party can be structured with many sub-units and be not institutionalized as well as have a thin (functioning) organizational apparatus and yet be able to last for a long time.

For the mentioned reasons, Huntington and Selznick's dimensions are not useful for the study of the institutionalization of political parties in democracies, except for the redefined notion of autonomy. However, we do not have to discard their conceptualizations as well. First, an institutionalized party has actually value in itself. This means that it works as an organization on its own, not depending on who leads it at time  $t$  (e.g., Levitsky 1998; Arter and Kestilä-Kekkonen 2014, p. 935; Vercesi 2015), and being able to take fundamental party decisions autonomously. Secondly, it has some record of survival (Harmel and Svåsand 1993). Together with decisional autonomy, the second dimension of party institutionalization is thus *durability*. Durability is different from adaptability. Durability concerns the creation of proper internal structures to keep on pursuing party goals. Adaptability may be favored by durability. However, without particular external shocks, an organization may be durable and perform without being adaptable.

In his classic work on parties, Panebianco (1988, p. 53) defines institutionalization as “the process by which organization incorporates its founders’ values and aims”. His definition of institutionalization embraces the aforementioned idea of decisional autonomy. Moreover, the second dimension Panebianco introduces is systemness, considered as interdependence between internal sectors. Systemness looks similar to what Levitsky (1998) calls *behavioral routinization*, which concerns the formation of entrenched intra-organizational rules and patterns of behaviors (complex or not). These rules may be either formal or informal (Randall and Svåsand 2002; Arter and Kestilä-Kekkonen 2014). This dimension is particularly important, since reducing uncertainty is a core function of institutions (Scharpf 1989; North 1990). Basedau and Stroh (2008, p. 8) take it in consideration indirectly, when they conceptualize party institutionalization as “a process in which individual political parties that participate in elections experience an increase in organizational stability and value”.

This definition introduces a further crucial facet of party life in democracies, which is overlooked in the other definitions: relations with voters and other parties. Focusing on this, Janda (1980, p. 19) defines institutionalization simply as *party reification* “in the public mind”. Reification is taken into account by Harmel and Svåsand (1993) too. Randall and Svåsand (2002, p. 8), on their turn, state that, “[a]s it becomes increasingly a taken-for-granted feature of the political horizon, individuals and institutions, including other parties, will more or less consciously adjust their expectations and aspirations accordingly”. More prosaically, Pedahzur and Brichta (2002) follow in Rosie and Mackie's (1988) steps and focus on electoral stability as the only dimension of party institutionalization. These authors convincingly argue that filling electoral lists and gaining votes are constitutive party's activities that cannot be excluded from the analysis of party institutionalization. However, they propose a too narrow conceptualization, since they neglect the internal dimensions of organizational institutionalization (Harmel and Svåsand 1993; Vercesi 2015).

Arter and Kestilä-Kekkonen (2014, p. 936) propose a further dimension: *social rootedness*. According to them, institutionalized parties “will have a core of regular voters/members who will have an attachment to and identification with the party.”

Somehow, this dimension may be detectable also in Baer (1993, p. 13), for whom party institutionalization is the set “of four inter-related phenomena: organizational vitality, organizational interdependence, stable factions that augment partisan linkage between elites and non-elites, and an integrative community life”.

Overall, Casal Bértoa (2017, p. 405–6) notices that most of the studies on party institutionalization lack fully-fledged conceptualizations. Indeed, they are oriented towards empirical analyses, and, for this reason, they put forward empirically oriented definitions. The author seeks to summarize the debate, by proposing an own conceptualization as “the process by which parties reproduce consistent patterns of mass mobilization and internal organization”. However, a shortcoming is that he focuses on the structural aspects of institutionalization, excluding the attitudinal facet.

Here, we define an institutionalized party as a *durable party organization with value per se, with an easily identifiable public image, and rooted in the society*. Based on our discussion, we link this conceptualization to five dimensions of analysis: (1) decisional autonomy; (2) durability; (3) routinization; (4) reification; (5) rootedness. In Sect. 3, we operationalize our variables in view of the empirical analysis.

### 3 Indicators and measures of party institutionalization

We posit that a party can show different levels of institutionalization, along each dimension. For instance, a party can score high on autonomy and durability, whereas internal procedures are not routinized and the party is not well-rooted in the society (and vice versa). This allows having a more precise assessment of a party’s institutionalization. The five dimensions may be empirically linked, but we are interested in analytical distinctions.

**Decisional Autonomy** Our first dimension concerns either autonomy from internal actors or autonomy from external environment. Thus, decisional autonomy encompasses both internal and external aspects of party institutionalization. Building on Panebianco (1988), we argue that internal autonomy means, basically, autonomy from the own leader. A political party may be more or less dependent on its own leader. When power changes hands from the founding-father to a new leader, the party becomes more institutionalized. Moreover, “if the new leader is not a member of the party’s first generation, the party will move more substantially towards institutionalization” (Vercesi 2015, p. 399). This suggests that a personal party is by definition more (potentially) institutionalized along other dimensions, rather than decisional autonomy. Overall, we can operationalize internal decisional autonomy by means of two different variables. The first is the change of leadership. We give 0 points if no leadership change has occurred; 1 for one change; 2 for two changes; and 3 for three or more changes. Similarly, we take generational change in consideration and we give 0 points if only leaders of the founding generation have led the party; 1 point if the second generation has reached power; 2 for the third generation; and 3 for the fourth or later generation of leaders.

Secondly, we turn to external autonomy. In this case, we have already mentioned that a party may be linked to societal groups via patron-clientelistic connections, yet it can have value *per se* as an autonomously deciding organization (e.g., La Palombara (1964) on Italian parties). Thus, we need to focus only on a very specific case, that is, a party whose very strategic decisions are not taken (only) by internal members. Here, the variable at issue is the autonomy in taking strategic party decisions (i.e., program/policy goals and organization) from external actors. In this case, we assign 0 points if the party is fully dependent on external actors; 1 if it is partly dependent; and 2 if it is fully autonomous.

**Durability** Durability is an objective aspect of party institutionalization. This dimension refers to simple duration as well as other indicators of temporal stability. With regard to chronological age, one can only assess the degree of institutionalization up to the time of analysis. From an operational viewpoint, it is somewhat arbitrary to decide how long a party has to exist to be considered (more or less) institutionalized. Rose and Mackie (1988) and Smith (1989) propose three legislative terms. Considering the duration of a legislative term of at least four/five years, we can reasonably assign 1 point to those parties that have lasted until (about) five years; 2 when the party has been founded between six and ten years back in time; 3 when the duration is between 11 and 15 years; and 4 if the party has been working for more than 15 years. It is worth noting that, according to Janda and Gillies (1980, p. 166–167), once a party reaches 15 years of life, the probability to continue existing nearly doubles.

Other indicators of durability are proposed by Harmel et al. (2018). All are proxies of party's probability to survive, based on experience. Leaving aside leadership changes, these indicators are name changes, organizational discontinuities, and changes of party programs. Name changes, however, seem important only if some adaptation is needed, but they are not necessary conditions in order to reach institutionalization. The Finnish Centre Party was founded in 1906 as Agrarian League, but it can be considered institutionalized because it has been lasting for a long time, not because it has changed its name. At the same time, the German SPD has been keeping its name since 1890 and it is commonly considered a very well-institutionalized party. In other words, chronological duration logically covers this indicator. The same applies to organizational discontinuities. Thus, we remain with changes of party program and core issues. We consider a party that has never changed the basic features of its ideological profile as scoring 0; a party that has changed it once scoring 1; and finally we assign 2 to parties that have changed the ideological profile twice or more.

**Routinization** Routinization is an internal dimension of party institutionalization. Institutionalization as routinization implies that party behaviors become predictable (e.g., North 1990). In this regard, Panebianco (1988, p. 58–60) proposes as indicators of routinization a centralized bureaucratic structure, a correspondence between the actual party functioning and party statutes, and predictable career paths. The first indicator does not seem useful for our analysis. Parties can decide to rely on either centralized thick structures or thin decentralized organizations. In both cases, be-

haviors can be either predictable or uncertain. Moreover, Levitsky (1998, p. 86) has convincingly criticized the second indicator. According to this author, Panebianco's view "leads to ignore or understate the degree to which intra-party politics is structured by stable, regularized patterns of behavior that nevertheless depart from (or are unrelated to) formal rules and procedures".

Regularity has to be connected to stability. Therefore, regular behaviors cannot be dependent on subjective individuals' will. Ignazi et al. (2010, p. 198) suggest assessing party leaders' freedom of choice in two fields: party appointments and control. If these powers are high and free from organizational constraints, then the leader will be able to modify rules and procedures whenever s/he wants. We operationalize routinization as (1) predictable career paths (following Panebianco) and (2) power de-personalization. Power de-personalization implies that party behaviors exist beyond the incumbent leader and are deemed legitimate because they are functional or appropriate for the party as such, not because they are the result of leader's decisions (Harmel et al. 2018).

With regard to predictable career paths, we use the presence of explicit procedures for candidate selection (formal or informal) as an indicator. This indicator is treated as dummy (0 = no; 1 = yes). Power de-personalization is instead observed by means of two proxies. The first is the presence of explicit rules to contest for party leadership. We give 0 if no rules exist; 1 if rules exist but they are ineffective (ultimately depending on the leader's will); 2 if (possible) competition is open and follow the explicit rules. The second is the holding of regular party congresses "in accordance with party statutes—that is, as scheduled and without major irregularities in their conduct" (Basedau and Stroh 2008, p. 13). We look at the previous five years. Zero is given to parties without congresses or with façade congresses;<sup>3</sup> 1 to parties with one congress; 2 to parties that have held more than one congress.

**Reification** Reification is the first of our external dimensions of party institutionalization, being rootedness the second. Reification refers to perceptions of party relevance, both in the electorate and in other parties (Harmel et al. 2018). Vercesi (2015, p. 398) uses party electoral success as a proxy of these perceptions as well as record of survival. Following in his steps, we propose to measure perception of "staying power" (Harmel and Svåsand 1993, p. 74–75) among voters as evidence of voters' attitudinal support at the national level (or regional, for regionalist parties). Conceptually, electoral strength is different than reification. However, we argue that, as long as a party benefits from a high electoral support, it is more likely that political actors "see" it and take it in consideration when it comes to make the own strategic choices. We assign 0 if recent national polls show up to 2% of prospective support; 1 from 3 to 5%; 2 from 6 to 10%; 3 from 11 to 15; 4 from 16 to 20; and 5 for

<sup>3</sup> It is debatable what façade congress means. It seems safe to say that a congress is a façade when the incumbent leader autonomously proposes him or herself or a successor for leadership and others approve by acclamation or unanimous vote. If a multi-candidate contest takes place, a solution could be instead to use the index of competitiveness of Kenig (2008), which divides Laakso-Taagepera index calculated on the electoral strength of candidates by the number of real candidates. This index ranges from 0 (no competitiveness) to 1. A value below 0.33 (i.e., about 1 divided by 3) can be considered as a proxy of a façade congress. See De Luca (2016, p. 29) for a justification of this measurement.



more than 20%. With regard to the perception in other parties, we link it to Sartori's (1976) notion of blackmail potential. We operationalize it as the number of seats in the first parliamentary chamber. We give 0 if the party is not in the parliament; 1 if the party holds up to 5% of the seats; 2 if seats range between 6 and 10%; 3 from 11 to 15%; 4 from 16 to 20%; and 5 if more than 20% of parliamentary seats are held.

**Rootedness** Rootedness can be operationalized by focusing on party electoral achievements (Casal Bértoa 2017, p. 410). Electoral achievements concern the presence of a core of supporters and the stability of support (Arter and Kestilä-Kekkonen 2014, p. 38–39). In our analysis, we measure core support as the percentage of votes over time. We look at national (first parliamentary chamber) and European elections, since these elections are the only that can provide data on the entire national territory (with caveats for regionalist parties) (e.g., Vercesi 2015, p. 397). We consider 5% as the arbitrary threshold for having a core of supporters (considering where the party actually presented lists). If the party has never obtained this amount of votes, we give a value of 0; if the party has reached 5% of votes in one election, we give 1. Moreover, a party scores 2 if it reached the threshold at issue twice; 3 if the party reached it in three elections, 4 in four elections; and 5 for five or more elections.

Finally, we look at the stability of party results in a sequence of national or European elections. For simplicity's sake, we look at the two most recent elections (e.g., Basedau and Stroh 2008). We assign 0 if volatility is more than 20%; 1 if volatility is between 15 and 20%; 2 if the oscillation ranges between 10 to 15%; 3 if variation is between 5 and 10%; 4 if it is below 5%.<sup>4</sup>

Our index of party institutionalization is built by calculating for each dimension a sub-index as the sum of all relevant scores, and then divided by the maximum possible result in the best case (Vercesi 2017). This procedure is conducive to five sub-indices that range from 0 to 1, where 0 means no institutionalization and 1 means high institutionalization.<sup>5</sup> The mean of these five sub-indices provides us the final index of party institutionalization.

<sup>4</sup> It is worth noting that rootedness is analytically distinct from reification. Both dimensions refer to (actual or potential) electoral achievements. However, the former takes in consideration performances over time and the presence of a stable group of supporters. In contrast, the latter points to voters' attitudes at a given point in time.

<sup>5</sup> Given that  $I$  is the Index,  $v$  the score on a  $i^{\text{th}}$  rank ordering and  $n_v$  the highest additive score obtainable, in formal terms each sub-index is  $I = \frac{\sum_i v_i}{n_v}$ . The calculation is based on the assumption that institutionalization is a multidimensional concept and therefore each dimension contributes in a crucial way. For each dimension, we have proposed a couple of indicators, which are theoretically derived and should be taken all into account. The final index weights equally all the components of institutionalization, whose possible differences in terms of relevance are substantially collapsed by normalizing the values of the three dimensions.

#### 4 Personal parties' institutionalization and the rise of the Five Star Movement

The rise of personal leaderships appears as a consolidated trend in contemporary party politics<sup>6</sup>. In several Western democracies, party heads are becoming essential for party identity and organization (Kostadinova and Levitt 2014). On the one hand, new participatory methods for selecting party leaders with access to electoral constituencies facilitate a plebiscitary conception of democracy, where the leader communicates directly with his or her supporters. On the other hand, theories of presidentialization (Poguntke and Webb 2005) suggest that, when party leaders act as chief executives, they become more autonomous *vis-à-vis* their own parties, thus able to shape offices and instruments for independent action in policy-making (Musella 2018).

It has been argued that there exists a trade-off between the strengthening of party leaders as unconstrained figures and party institutionalization. As Mainwaring and Torcal (2005) notice for the third wave of democratization, the main indicator of party institutionalization is “the depersonalization of parties and party competition”. Panebianco (1988, p. 143) distinguishes between political parties based on rules, internal career patterns, and a clear division of labor and parties “founded on exclusively *personal ties*” (italics in the original): charismatic parties. Janda (1980, p. 19) claims that an institutionalized party “is fixed in the public mind, it exists as a social organization distinct from the current leadership and the organization demonstrates recurring patterns of behavior valued by those who identify with it”. Moreover, studies on party organization commonly argue that parties with personalist leaderships and weak organizations are unlikely to remain in power once the leader leaves the position (Panebianco 1988; Chiapponi 2010; Kefford and McDonnell 2018). At first glance, personalistic parties contradict the core notion of any definition of institutionalization, that is, “stability”.

Yet the “institutionalization-personalization oxymoron” has recently moved away from its apparent contradiction. First, on empirical grounds a personal or personalized party may present different levels of organizational complexity (Vercesi 2015). This means that personalization does not equate organizational weakness. For instance, early Berlusconi's *Forza Italia* was one of the most relevant cases of party organized as a business firm. The founding-father (party president) has embodied and centrally directed his own party. He has filled the posts with managers and staff members, based on personal trust and friendship; he has removed those in political disgrace; he has selected the candidates at all levels; and he has defined policy lines in several domains (Hopkin and Paolucci 1999; Calise 2000). Notwithstanding this, the party could establish an articulated organization from time to time

<sup>6</sup> The rise of single leaders in the new democratic landscape may be considered as the result of three interrelated processes: a) the development of a direct—not mediated by parties and often emotional—relationship with citizens, so that the leader assumes the role of a political representative “above the party” and the main channel for collecting the popular vote; b) the trend towards a monocratic principle of political action, so that leaders tend to become the true *domini* of party organizations, while also increasing their control over governmental activities; c) the tendency of political leaders to use their role for private ends, mainly as a springboard for future careers in the business and financial world (see Musella 2018).

(Vercesi 2015, p. 401). Second, the institutionalization of personal parties can witness different development stages. This means that the equilibrium between leader and other party components may be substantially redefined, confirming the initial leader-based structure or leading to the formation of undisciplined factions (Musella 2014). Finally, personal parties have proved to be sometimes able to “resist” even after their leader’s political end. Although the succession of strong leaders is quite problematic, political science literature is exploring the hypothesis that representatives and members may react in different ways when a strong incumbent departs from leadership, although this seems to depend on the level of definition of party platforms and territorial organization. Some recent cases of transformation of comparable populist parties as *Lega Nord* (now *League*) in Italy or *Front National* (now *Rassemblement National*) in France are cases in point (McDonnell 2016; Vercesi 2015; Ivaldi et al. 2017; Albertazzi et al. 2018). These three reasons lead to look for different paths—and degrees—of institutionalization in leader-centered parties; we should be able to find a way to assess whether some personal parties are more institutionalized than others.

The M5S is one of the most evident examples of how a personal party may face the challenge of party institutionalization. In 2013 general election, this party—led by the former comedian Beppe Grillo—obtained an astonishing result: 25.6% of votes for the first chamber (Chamber of Deputies, *Camera dei Deputati*). This happened although that was the first participation in a nationwide election. During the electoral campaign, the party stimulated an anti-establishment sentiment and the final success was strongly boosted by Grillo’s personal image and communication abilities (Diamanti and Natale 2013). Party identity, however, has remained quite problematic because of two main factors. On the one hand, votes came from both center-right and center-left electorates; on the other hand, the electoral manifesto was based on specific policy points on energy, waste management, sustainable mobility, as well as more generic anti-politics issues or generic expectations of a total regeneration and a radical change of the Italian political system. Moreover, a dilemma has also concerned party organization, as M5S, while proclaiming itself as a movement, is a centralized party where militants and supporters are variously controlled by central offices through an intensive use of new technologies. These technologies are “the primary medium of communication, recruitment and organisation” (Bartlett et al. 2013, p. 13; Mosca 2014). Even after the great electoral expansion of 2013, the M5S has remained undermined by contradictions and a magmatic political formation, which is very hard to define. It provides “an unusual mixture in which various elements converge and react with each other, thus producing the explosion observed over the course of the last year” (Diamanti 2014, p. 6).

This uncertainty has affected also the party in parliament. Since their party’s campaign was driven by wave of indignation and protest towards the political class, “the 5 Star parliamentarians have often been considered merely a disturbance to the regular functioning of the representative institutions, concerned only to delegitimise them” (Biorcio 2014, p. 37). Moreover, the refusal of professional politics has led Beppe Grillo, especially in the first phase after the 2013 electoral success, to have only a few direct contacts with deputies and senators in Rome. He has also devaluated their role by launching the statement according to which any individual counts

**Table 1** Theoretical expectations about the institutionalization of the M5S over time

| Dimension of institutionalization | Expected move |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|
| Internal                          | +             |
| Objective                         | ++            |
| External                          | ++            |
| Overall                           | +             |

+ means moderate increasing trend; ++ means more pronounced increasing trend

one (“*uno vale uno*”) within the movement (Bordignon and Ceccarini 2013). Yet more recently, the party had to start a process of adaptation to the parliamentary environment, generating new rules and practices for the *party in public office*. Thus, according to several scholars the party is living a process of “institutionalization of charisma” or “normalization”, also reflected in an expected stability of the electoral base (Bordignon and Ceccarini 2014; Tronconi 2015).

The anti-elitist rhetoric remained a *leitmotiv* of the 2018 electoral campaign. In spite of its presence in parliament, the party was able once more to appeal to citizens’ mistrust towards traditional institutions. From the organizational viewpoint, more power to decide over programs and candidacies was given to the prominent MP Luigi Di Maio, who became a sort of second leader together with Grillo (Corbetta et al. 2018; Salvati and Vercesi 2018; Tronconi 2018).

A definition of an organizational form, where the parliamentary component benefits from larger autonomy and alternative leaderships are conceivable, is underway. According to our theoretical premises, we can thus expect to observe a party that has become more institutionalized over the years; because of its personalistic nature and the young age, the greatest progresses should display on the external dimension. In contrast, we can expect that the internal institutionalization has been a major challenge for the party, which has had to cope with a strong top-down organization. At the same time, we can suppose that the presence in parliament and the likelihood to enter the government before the 2018 election have pushed somehow towards the definition of a more defined way of managing all-day party life. Finally, we presume that the passage of the five-year lifespan threshold to have contributed substantially to the overall party institutionalization. Table 1 summarizes our conjectures.

All these processes call for more calibrated attempts for the evaluation and measurement of party institutionalization, in order to analyze either similarities or differences between new personal parties or different stages of their development.

## 5 The challenge of institutionalization for the Five Star Movement

In this section, we apply the index of institutionalization to the Italian M5S (see Appendix). The first dimension—*decisional autonomy*—refers to one of the most controversial issues in the climbing to power of the M5S. Since its birth, the leadership has been the crucial element for M5S’ electoral success (Chiapponi 2017) so that the party symbol displayed the name of Grillo’s personal website ([www.beppegrillo.it](http://www.beppegrillo.it)). During electoral campaigns, both Grillo’s outspoken language and body have been relevant ingredients to strengthen the party’s political message,

which have provided an alternative view to traditional politics. Even after the 2013 elections, party internal decision-making remained totally anchored to the founder Grillo alongside his web strategist and publisher of his blog Gianroberto Casaleggio (died in April 2016). In spite of the party rhetoric of internal democracy, Grillo and Casaleggio effectively controlled the party organization; several expulsions of party members and elected officers aimed at eliminating possible internal dissent are evidences in this respect (Turner 2013). Yet recently, alternative leadership tried to arise. For example, Luigi Di Maio—former vice speaker of the Chamber of Deputies—has tried to soften the protest side of the party and proposed himself as a candidate for prime ministership (Passarelli et al. 2018), eventually entering a coalition cabinet in 2018 as minister and deputy prime minister. Thus, while the M5S would not exist without Beppe Grillo (Diamanti 2014), the strong and centralized Grillo's leadership has been counterbalanced. According to our indicators of decisional autonomy, Grillo's party is overall making progress. However, the party has not witnessed any fully-fledged leadership or generational change. At most, one could argue that the prominent role acquired by Di Maio has flanked Grillo's in the definition of the party's communication (e.g., Bobba and Roncarolo 2018). In addition, only a partial autonomy may be recognized, due to the role of the Milan-based firm "Casaleggio Associates" (currently led by Gianroberto's son and "heir" Davide Casaleggio) in the determination of party policy lines and strategic choices.

As regards the second dimension of institutionalization—*durability*—the M5S was founded only a few years before the first general election it ran in in 2013. In 2007–2008, some civic lists, described as "friends of Beppe Grillo", were set up, electing some members of theirs in local councils. After being officially established in October 2009, the M5S ran in the 2010 regional election in five regions: the party obtained more than half million votes, with a peak of 6% in Emilia-Romagna. Especially in the first phases, the M5S proposed itself as a party "under permanent construction": "rather than to exist as a stable ideological manifesto, established by the party's leaders and approved by the party's national assembly, the program aims to represent an 'open platform' able to welcome all proposals and suggestions submitted by members and citizens by the time" (De Petris 2015, p. 140). Grillo's party has been the vehicle of several and often contradictory proposals, bounded by anti-politics sentiments. In addition to core issues of interest to grass-root groups (e.g., environment, common goods, civil rights), the M5S has advocated demands and raised social conflicts, bringing into the institutions social movements' behaviors (Mosca 2015). The M5S has not so far clarified its position on the left-right spectrum and the current ideological profile is still in search of a definition (Manucci and Amsler 2018). More recently, the formation of the M5S-League government has also increased such uncertainty by pushing Di Maio's party toward rightist positions.

An uncertain picture is offered by the *routinization* dimension as well. Party procedures are very dependent on leader's will. On the one hand, the party statute has been defined by the party leadership, with no involvement of party members or supporters;<sup>7</sup> on the other hand, apparently more formalized aspects of party life—such as procedures for candidate nomination at different layers of govern-

<sup>7</sup> "Le nuove regole del Movimento 5 Stelle", *Il Post*, 30 December 2017.

ment—have been pointed out in the official party website, which actually belonged to Grillo. In this regard, rules for candidate selection have changed over time, moving from members' selection to a mix system where both members and the leader are involved (Salvati and Vercesi 2018, p. 90). In the name of a more direct and participatory form of democracy, party members are involved only through experiments of online voting. Albeit against political professionalization, however, MPs has had to adapt their behavior to the codes and routines of the institutionalized parliamentary life. This may represent a premise for internal party routinization. Yet so far, nothing testifies the presence of working intermediate bodies between leader and people.

Moreover, it is worth noting that there is a significant lack of structures to connect central office and local territories. Along with the full control of the leader over party's central dynamics, the M5S is structured as a pyramid truncated in the middle (Vignati 2015). In fact, the disconnection with the party on the ground is a common feature of all personalized parties, as these are unable to adopt a federal structure that could include regional or local components (Calossi and Pizzimenti 2015). In the case at issue, grass-root activists have consisted of members dispersed across local communities and connected each other via Grillo's blog, by means of local "Meet-up groups", or the "Rousseau" online platform to discuss bill proposals (Passarelli et al. 2018, p. 187). No local or regional party councils or assemblies contribute to the internal organization of the party; this undermines the potential for a higher organizational strength (Tavits 2012). Scholars have depicted the M5S as an "internet-fuelled party", where the party intermediate level is not involved in the organization, communication, decision-making and identity-building functions (Mosca et al. 2015). Even the online primaries where Di Maio has been elected as the "candidate" for the premiership in view of the 2018 general election showed an extremely low level of competitiveness.<sup>8</sup>

*Reification*—our fourth dimension—refers to the presence of a party in the mind of the electorate and other party leaders. In this regard, the M5S seems more on the road of its own institutionalization. In the 2013 general election, the party succeeded in electing 109 deputies in the first chamber out of 630, according to the electoral system's allocative mechanisms. At the same time, 54 M5S's senators entered the second chamber, where 320 are available. However, during the legislature, party switching and expulsions occurred, and the party seats eventually decreased to 88 and 35 in the first and second chamber, respectively. With the 2018 general election, the M5S gained 222 seats in the Chamber of Deputies and 109 seats in the Senate.

From 2013 "electoral tsunami" onwards, the party has been able to gather a large potential consensus. In 2018, it reached about 33% of votes and polls have assigned about 29% of potential preferences to the M5S, after entering government.<sup>9</sup>

The fifth dimension of institutionalization—*rootedness*—is connected to a stabilization of the M5S' electorate. As we have seen, the party has remained a major actor of Italian politics also after the 2013 election, where it gained about 26% of

<sup>8</sup> According to the aforementioned Kenig's index, about 0.18. Data are drawn from "Di Maio candidato premier M5S. Alle primarie grilline 37mila votanti". *Il Messaggero*, 23 settembre 2017.

<sup>9</sup> See <http://www.termometropolitico.it/sondaggi-politici-elettorali> (accessed on 25 October 2018).

**Table 2** The institutionalization of the M5S by dimension of analysis (25 October 2018)

| Dimension of institutionalization                  | Index of party institutionalization |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| Decisional autonomy (internal/external)            | 0.19 <sup>a</sup>                   |
| Durability (objective)                             | 0.33                                |
| Routinization (internal)                           | 0.40                                |
| Reification (external)                             | 1.00                                |
| Rootedness (external)                              | 0.56                                |
| <i>Overall level of party institutionalization</i> | <i>0.50</i>                         |

<sup>a</sup> Because of the very specific cohabitation between the founding father Grillo and Di Maio at the top of the party organization, we have assigned 0.5 with respect to “leadership change”

Sources: [elezionistorico.interno.gov.it](http://elezionistorico.interno.gov.it)

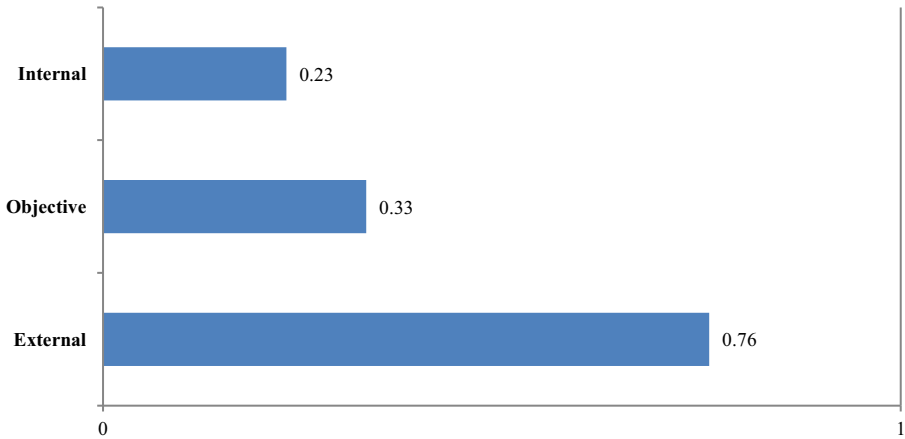
votes. In the 2014 European election, the percentage decreased to 21.7%. Overall, M5S’ voters have shown a limited degree of volatility (at least until the 2019 European elections). So far, support has come from voters with diverse political background and positions along the left-right spectrum (Corbetta et al. 2018). This fact has suggested the idea of a bus conducted by Grillo, which has offered hospitality to those dissatisfied with crises and ready to welcome an anti-political protest (Diamanti 2014). However, empirical analyses have also shown that Grillo’s voters have developed a more convinced and stable attitude toward the M5S over the years, expressing strong affinity with the party (Bordignon and Ceccarini 2014).

Table 2 summarizes our discussion and shows the scores of the M5S on each dimension and the general score of party institutionalization on 25 October 2018. Moreover, Fig. 1 provides information on the level of institutionalization, by distinguishing by internal, objective and external aspects.

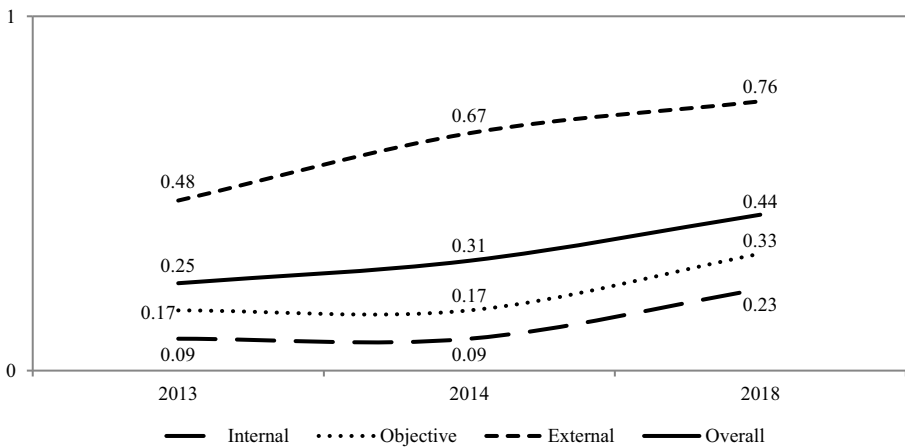
The resulting picture shows us significant variations between dimensions of institutionalization and aspects of institutionalization. In particular, the M5S displays higher levels of institutionalization in terms of reification and rootedness, and more generally with regard to its external institutionalization. On the contrary, the lack of definition of party internal rules and the lower autonomy of the organization *per se* still represent the main obstacles on the route toward party institutionalization.

However, we know that (de-)institutionalization is a process. For this reason, we have also calculated variations over time (Fig. 2). In particular, we have observed the level of institutionalization of the M5S after the 2013 general election (on 31 March 2013) and the 2014 European election (on 31 May 2014). A comparison with the situation in October 2018 provides further insights about overall party trajectory.

Numbers indicate that the M5S has actually gone through a process of institutionalization both in general terms and on single dimensions. The external dimension is constantly interested by the highest values, while the internal dimension depicts the lowest. One can also notice that the highest increase between 2013 and 2018 has concerned objective institutionalization. Overall, these findings move in the direction of our theoretical expectations. Moreover, they fit with our knowledge of personalistic parties, where the leader overwhelms the organization. This leader, however, fulfils the function of the main magnet for voters’ support.



**Fig. 1** The institutionalization of the M5S by aspect of institutionalization (25 October 2018). Note: scores are calculated following the same procedure proposed for the index, but based on the three aspects of institutionalization



**Fig. 2** Variations of the institutionalization of the M5S over time. Note: the percentage of seats is always that in the Italian Chamber of Deputies. For 2013, the electoral poll refers to 28 March 2013 ([https://www.termometropolitico.it/39476\\_sondaggio-ipsos-3.html](https://www.termometropolitico.it/39476_sondaggio-ipsos-3.html), accessed on 25 October 2018); for 2014, it refers to end of May 2014 (<https://it.blastingnews.com/politica/2014/06/sondaggi-politici-elettorali-piepoli-18-giugno-2014-a-confronto-con-il-10-giugno-00103789.html>, accessed on 25 October 2018). Sources: see Table 2; Lanzone and Rombi (2018)

## 6 Conclusions

This article has posited that, above all, political parties are political organizations. Secondly, that the concept of institutionalization is one of the main angles to look at party features and development. These assumptions have unveiled two necessities.

The first has been to integrate a large amount of contributions that have accounted for the topic, though often lacking cumulative spirit. We have looked at the classic



conceptualization of institutionalization operated by Samuel Huntington; at Angelo Panebianco's attempt to adapt it to political parties; and at recent contributions, which have tried to study political organizations in times of crisis. Works we have skimmed through have provided own interpretations of political institutionalization, however without focusing on the use of an additive approach. Our index of party institutionalization is one of the first, and still provisional, experiments to combine different perspectives into a single measurement.

The second need has been to demonstrate the utility of our approach in the age of personalization of political parties. Indeed, while most authors have considered personalization simply as the opposite pole of institutionalization—probably echoing the ancient contraposition between the law of men against the collective law of rules (Bobbio 1984)—we notice that even personalistic parties can show different degrees of institutionalization; a proper conceptualization may be a crucial step to distinguish among them. It is worth stressing also the role of the party leader as a source of party stabilization and his or her impact on the party stamina during the challenging phase of leadership succession (Vercesi 2015). Overall, the investigation of a personalistic party requires the identification of specific routes toward institutionalization.

This applies to the case of the M5S, a party that has been strongly tied to the destiny of its founding-father. This party has faced a tricky process of institutionalization, especially after its rapid and astonishing ascent. The M5S ran at the 2013 general election for the first time with a strong top-down organization; however, its electoral success, enhanced in 2018, has been also a relevant push toward the formation of internal collegial bodies and more certain rules of party functioning. Our analysis has shown that the party has progressed in terms of both organization and electorate's stabilization; however, the definition of internal structures connecting the party apex to the rank-and-file still remains problematic. Probably, the professionalization of the party in public office due to the significant presence of members in parliament is a premise in that direction. This could allow the M5S to enter the club of those parties that have been able to reproduce personal leaderships over time and remain strong players of the political game.

## Appendix

### Operationalization and Party Scores

**Table 3** Dimensions and indicators of party institutionalization and scores of the M5S on 31 March 2013

| Score | Decisional autonomy (Internal/external) |                      | Durability (Objective) |                   | Routinization (Internal) |                     | Reification (External)   |             | Rootedness (External) |              |                      |
|-------|---|----------------------|------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|--------------|----------------------|
|       | Leadership changes                      | Generational changes | External autonomy      | Chronological age | Profile changes          | Candidate selection | Leadership context rules | Polls       | Seats                 | Core support | Electoral volatility |
| 0     | No change                               | No change            | No autonomy            | -                 | No changes               | No rules            | No rules                 | ≤2%         | No seats              | <5%          | >20%                 |
| 1     | 1 change                                | 1 change             | Partial autonomy       | ≤5 years          | 1 change                 | Explicit rules      | Ineffective              | 3–5%        | 1–5%                  | 1 election   | 15–20%               |
| 2     | 2 changes                               | 2 changes            | Full                   | 6–10 years        | 2 changes                | -                   | Explicit rules           | 6–10%       | 6–10%                 | 2 elections  | 10–14%               |
| 3     | ≥3 changes                              | ≥3 changes           | -                      | 11–15 years       | -                        | -                   | -                        | 11–15%      | <b>11–15%</b>         | 3 elections  | 5–9%                 |
| 4     | -                                       | -                    | -                      | ≥16 years         | -                        | -                   | -                        | 16–20%      | 16–20%                | 4 elections  | <5%                  |
| 5     | -                                       | -                    | -                      | -                 | -                        | -                   | -                        | <b>≥21%</b> | ≥21%                  | ≥5 elections | -                    |

Note: position of the M5S in bold

**Table 4** Dimensions and indicators of party institutionalization and M5S' scores on 31 May 2014

| Score | Decisional autonomy (Internal/external) |                      | Durability (Objective) |                   | Routinization (Internal) |                     | Reification (External)   |        | Rootedness (External) |              |                      |
|-------|---|----------------------|------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|--------|-----------------------|--------------|----------------------|
|       | Leadership changes                      | Generational changes | External autonomy      | Chronological age | Profile changes          | Candidate selection | Leadership contest rules | Polls  | Seats                 | Core support | Electoral volatility |
| 0     | No change                               | No change            | No autonomy            | -                 | No changes               | No rules            | No rules                 | ≤2%    | No seats              | <5%          | >20%                 |
| 1     | 1 change                                | 1 change             | Partial                | ≤5 years          | 1 change                 | Explicit rules      | Ineffective              | 3-5%   | 1-5%                  | 1 election   | 15-20%               |
| 2     | 2 changes                               | 2 changes            | Full                   | 6-10 years        | 2 changes                | -                   | Explicit rules           | 6-10%  | 6-10%                 | 2 elections  | 10-14%               |
| 3     | ≥3 changes                              | ≥3 changes           | -                      | 11-15 years       | -                        | -                   | -                        | 11-15% | 11-15%                | 3 elections  | 5-9%                 |
| 4     | -                                       | -                    | -                      | ≥16 years         | -                        | -                   | -                        | 16-20% | 16-20%                | 4 elections  | <5%                  |
| 5     | -                                       | -                    | -                      | -                 | -                        | -                   | -                        | ≥21%   | ≥21%                  | ≥5 elections | -                    |

Note: position of the M5S in bold

**Table 5** Dimensions and indicators of party institutionalization and M5S' scores on 25 October 2018

| Score | Decisional autonomy (Internal/external) |                      | Durability (Objective) |                   | Routinization (Internal) |                     | Reification (External)   |        | Rootedness (External) |              |                      |
|-------|---|----------------------|------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|--------|-----------------------|--------------|----------------------|
|       | Leadership changes                      | Generational changes | External autonomy      | Chronological age | Profile changes          | Candidate selection | Leadership contest rules | Polls  | Seats                 | Core support | Electoral volatility |
| 0     | No change <sup>a</sup>                  | No change            | No autonomy            | -                 | No changes               | No rules            | No rules                 | ≤2%    | No seats              | <5%          | >20%                 |
| 1     | 1 change                                | 1 change             | Partial                | ≤5 years          | 1 change                 | Explicit rules      | Ineffective              | 3–5%   | 1–5%                  | 1 election   | 15–20%               |
| 2     | 2 changes                               | 2 changes            | Full                   | 6–10 years        | 2 changes                | -                   | Explicit rules           | 6–10%  | 6–10%                 | 2 elections  | 10–14%               |
| 3     | ≥3 changes                              | ≥3 changes           | -                      | 11–15 years       | -                        | -                   | -                        | 11–15% | 11–15%                | 3 elections  | 5–9%                 |
| 4     | -                                       | -                    | -                      | ≥16 years         | -                        | -                   | -                        | 16–20% | 16–20%                | 4 elections  | <5%                  |
| 5     | -                                       | -                    | -                      | -                 | -                        | -                   | -                        | ≥21%   | ≥21%                  | ≥5 elections | -                    |

<sup>a</sup> Partial (see Table 2). Note: position of the M5S in bold

## References

- Albertazzi, Daniele, Arianna Giovannini, and Antonella Seddone. 2018. "No regionalism please, we are *Leghisti!*" The transformation of the Italian Lega Nord under the leadership of Matteo Salvini. *Regional & Federal Studies* 28:645–671.
- Arter, David, and Elina Kestilä-Kekkonen. 2014. Measuring the extent of party institutionalisation: The case of a populist entrepreneur party. *West European Politics* 37:932–956.
- Baer, Denise L. 1993. Who has the body? Party institutionalization and theories of party organization. *American Review of Politics* 14:1–38.
- Bartlett, Jamie, Caterina Froio, Mark Littler, and Duncan McDonnell. 2013. *Social media is changing politics across Europe. New political actors in Europe: Beppe Grillo and the MFS*, 1–65. London: Demos. ISBN 978-1-909037-33-5.
- Basedau, Matthias, and Alexander Stroh. 2008. Measuring party institutionalization in developing countries: A new research instrument applied to 28 African political parties. <https://www.giga-hamburg.de/en/publication/measuring-party-institutionalization-in-developing-countries-a-new-research-instrument>. GIGA Working Paper 69.
- Biorcio, Roberto. 2014. The reasons for the success and transformations of the 5 Star Movement. *Contemporary Italian Politics* 6:37–53.
- Bobba, Giuliano, and Franca Roncarolo. 2018. The likeability of populism on social media in the 2018 Italian general election. *Italian Political Science* 13:51–62.
- Bobbio, Norberto. 1984. *Governo degli uomini o governo delle leggi?*, in *Il futuro della democrazia.*, 169–179. Torino: Einaudi.
- Bordignon, Fabio, and Luigi Ceccarini. 2013. The 5 star people and the unconventional parliament. *Studia Politica* 13:675–692.
- Bordignon, Fabio, and Luigi Ceccarini. 2014. Protest and project, leader and party: normalisation of the Five Star Movement. *Contemporary Italian Politics* 6:54–72.
- Calise, Mauro. 2000. *Il partito personale*. Bari-Roma: Laterza.
- Calise, Mauro. 2015. The personal party: an analytical framework. *Italian Political Science Review* 45:301–315.
- Calossi, Enrico, and Eugenio Pizzimenti. 2015. Party organizational change: formal distribution of power between national and regional levels in Italian political parties (1991–2012). *Partecipazione e Conflitto* 8:167–189.
- Casal Bértoa, Fernando. 2012. Parties, regime and cleavages: explaining party system institutionalisation in East Central Europe. *East European Politics* 28:452–472.
- Casal Bértoa, Fernando. 2017. Political parties or party systems? Assessing the "myth" of institutionalisation and democracy. *West European Politics* 40:402–429.
- Chiapponi, Flavio. 2010. Populismo, leadership e carisma. *Trasgressioni* 51:91–120
- Chiapponi, Flavio. 2017. *Democrazia, populismo, leadership: il Movimento 5 Stelle*. Novi Ligure: Epoké edizioni.
- Corbetta, Piergiorgio (ed.). 2017. *M5s. Come cambia il partito di Grillo*. Bologna: Il Mulino.
- Corbetta, Piergiorgio, Pasquale Colloca, Nicoletta Cavazza, and Michele Roccato. 2018. Lega and Five-star Movement voters: exploring the role of cultural, economic and political bewilderment. *Contemporary Italian Politics* 10(3):279–293.
- De Luca, Marino. 2016. Introduzione. In *Selezionare i Presidenti. Le primarie regionali in Italia*, ed. Marino De Luca, Stefano Rombi, 19–31. Novi Ligure: Epoké edizioni.
- De Petris, Andrea. 2015. Programs, strategies and electoral campaigns of the Five Stars Movement in Italy. A brand new party model or an "anti-party" state of mind? In *Anti-party parties in Germany and Italy, protest movements and parliamentary democracy*, ed. Andra De Petris, Thomas Poguntke, 125–148. Rome: Luiss University Press.
- Diamanti, Ilvo. 2014. The 5 Star Movement: a political laboratory. *Contemporary Italian Politics* 6:4–15.
- Diamanti, Ilvo, and Paolo Natale (eds.). 2013. *Grillo e il Movimento 5 Stelle. Analisi di un "fenomeno politico"*. Comunicazione politica, Vol. 1
- Gunther, Richard, and Larry Diamond. 2003. Species of political parties: a new typology. *Party Politics* 9:167–199.
- Harmel, Robert, Lars Svåsand, and Hilmar Mjelde. 2018. *Institutionalisation (and de-Institutionalisation) of Rightwing protest parties. The progress parties in Denmark and Norway*. Colchester: Ecpr Press.
- Harmel, Robert, and Lars Svåsand. 1993. Party leadership and party institutionalisation: Three phases of development. *West European Politics* 16:67–88.

- Hopkin, Jonathan, and Caterina Paolucci. 1999. The business firm model of party organisation: Cases from Spain and Italy. *European Journal of Political Research* 35:307–339.
- Huntington, Samuel P. 1968. *Political order in changing societies*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Ignazi, Piero, Luciano Bardi, and Oreste Massari. 2010. Party organisational change in Italy (1991–2006). *Modern Italy* 15(2):197–216.
- Ivaldi, Gilles, Maria Elisabetta Lanzone, and Dwayne Woods. 2017. Varieties of populism across a left-right spectrum: the case of the Front National, the Northern League, Podemos and Five Star Movement. *Swiss Political Science Review* 23:354–376.
- Janda, Kenneth P. 1980. *Political parties: A cross-national survey*. New York: The Free Press.
- Kefford, Glenn, and Duncan McDonnell. 2018. Inside the personal party: leader-owners, light organizations and limited lifespans. *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 20:379–394.
- Kenig, Ofer. 2008. Democratization of party leadership selection: do wider selectorates produce more competitive contests? *Electoral Studies* 28:240–247.
- Kostadinova, Tatiana, and Barry Levitt. 2014. Toward a theory of personalist parties: Concept formation and theory building. *Politics & Policy* 42:490–512.
- Kuenzi, Michelle, and Gina Lambright. 2001. Party system institutionalization in 30 African countries. *Party Politics* 7:437–468.
- La Palombara, Joseph. 1964. *Interest groups in Italian politics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Lanzone, Maria Elisabetta, and Stefano Rombi. 2018. Selecting candidates online in Europe: a comparison among the cases of M5S, Podemos and European Green Party. In *Democratizing candidate selection. New methods, old Receipts?*, ed. Guillermo Cordero, Xavier Coller, 99–121. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Levitsky, Steven. 1998. Institutionalization and Peronism: the concept, the case and the case for unpacking the concept. *Party Politics* 4:77–92.
- Mainwaring, Scott, and Timothy Scully (eds.). 1995. *Building democratic institutions: Party systems in Latin America*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Mainwaring, Scott, and Mariano Torcal. 2005. Party system institutionalization and party system theory after the third wave of democratization. The Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies. <http://www.scribd.com/doc/192019348/Party-System-Institutionalization-and-Party-System-Theory-After-1>.
- Manucci, Luca, and Michi Amsler. 2018. Where the wind blows: Five Star Movement's populism, direct democracy and ideological flexibility. *Italian Political Science Review* 48:109–132.
- McDonnell, Duncan. 2016. Populist leaders and coterie charisma. *Political Studies* 64:719–733.
- Meleshevich, Andrey. 2007. *Party systems in post-Soviet countries: a comparative study of political institutionalization in the Baltic States, Russia, and Ukraine*. New York: Palgrave.
- Mosca, Lorenzo. 2014. The five star movement: Exception or vanguard in Europe? *The International Spectator* 49:36–52.
- Mosca, Lorenzo. 2015. The Movimento 5 Stelle and social conflicts: between symbiosis and cooptation. In *Beppe Grillo's Five Star Movement: Organisation, communication and ideology*, ed. Filippo Tronconi. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Mosca, Lorenzo, Cristian Vaccari Cristian, and Augusto Valeriani. 2015. An internet-fuelled party? The Movimento Cinque Stelle and the web. In *Beppe Grillo's Five Star Movement: Organisation, communication and ideology*, ed. Filippo Tronconi. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Musella, Fortunato. 2014. How personal parties change: party organisation and (in)discipline in Italy (1994–2013). *Contemporary Italian Politics* 6:222–237.
- Musella, Fortunato. 2015. Personal leaders and party change: Italy in comparative perspective. *Italian Political Science Review* 45:227–247.
- Musella, Fortunato. 2018. *Political leaders beyond party politics*. London: Palgrave.
- Musella, Fortunato, and Paul Webb. 2015. The revolution of personal leaders. *Italian Political Science Review* 45:223–226.
- Natale, Paolo. 2014. The birth, early history and explosive growth of the Five Star Movement. *Contemporary Italian Politics* 6:16–36.
- North, Douglass C. 1990. *Institutions, institutional change and economic performance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Panbianco, Angelo. 1988. *Political Parties: Organization and Power*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pasquino, Gianfranco. 2014. Italy: the triumph of personalist parties. *Politics & Policy* 42:548–566.

- Passarelli, Gianluca, Dario Tuorto, and Filippo Tronconi. 2018. "Chi dice organizzazione dice oligarchia": cambiamento e contraddizioni della forma organizzativa del Movimento. In *M5s.Come cambia il partito di Grillo*, ed. Piergiorgio Corbetta, 163–194. Bologna: Il Mulino.
- Pedahzur, Ami, and Avraham Brichta. 2002. The institutionalization of extreme right-wing charismatic parties: a paradox? *Party Politics* 8:31–49.
- Pedrazzani, Andrea. 2018. "Governo del cambiamento"? Italian politics under the yellow-green government. *Italian Political Science* 13(2).
- Poguntke, T. and P. Webb (eds). 2005. *The Presidentialization of Politics. A Comparative Study of Modern Democracies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Randall, Vicky, and Lars Svåsand. 2002. Party institutionalization in new democracies. *Party politics* 8:5–29.
- Rose, Richard, and Thomas T. Mackie. 1988. Do parties persist or fail? The big trade-off facing organizations. In *When parties fail: emerging alternative organization*, ed. Kay Lawson, Peter H. Merkel, 338–364. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Salvati, Eugenio, and Michelangelo Vercesi. 2018. Party organizations and legislative turnover: signals of an unstable parliamentary class? *Italian Political Science* 13:82–94.
- Sartori, Giovanni. 1976. *Parties and party systems: A framework for analysis*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Scharpf, Fritz W. 1989. Decision rules, decision styles and policy choices. *Journal of theoretical politics* 1:149–176.
- Selznick, Philip. 1957. *Leadership in administration: A sociological interpretation*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Smith, Gordon. 1989. Core persistence: Change and the 'people's party'. *West European Politics* 12(4):157–168
- Tavits, Margit. 2012. Party organizational strength and party unity in post-communist Europe. *European Political Science Review* 4:409–431.
- Tronconi, Filippo (ed.). 2015. *Beppe Grillo's Five Star Movement: Organisation, communication and ideology*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing.
- Tronconi, Filippo. 2018. The Italian Five Star Movement during the crisis: towards Normalisation? *South European Society and Politics* 23:163–180.
- Turner, Eric. 2013. The 5 Star Movement and its discontents: A tale of blogging, comedy, electoral success and tensions. *Interface: A Journal for and About Social Movements* 5:178–212.
- Vercesi, Michelangelo. 2015. Owner parties and party institutionalisation in Italy: is the Northern League exceptional? *Modern Italy* 20:395–410.
- Vercesi, Michelangelo. 2017. What kind of veto player is the Italian Senate? A comparative analysis of European second chambers. *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 22:604–623.
- Vignati, Rinaldo. 2015. The organization of the Movimento 5 Stelle: a contradictory party model. In *Beppe Grillo's Five Star Movement: Organisation, communication and ideology*, ed. Filippo Tronconi. Farnham: Ashgate.