

Who are Beppe Grillo's voters?

An analysis of the impact of the web on political participation.

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1. Introduction.

The *MoVimento a Cinque Stelle* is the first case in Italy in which a pure and sole web presence has been converted into a proper electoral list. Generally, new (successful) political parties emerge to fill a political void and to represent citizens who no longer feel that they are being represented by the existing parties. From this point of view, the *MoVimento a Cinque Stelle* was born with the objective of offering representation to a feeling of disaffection towards politics. In fact, the *MoVimento a Cinque Stelle* is not a proper party (neither in name, internal organization, nor program), and was launched by its main proposer (Beppe Grillo) as a movement beyond the left-right continuum. It is the first political entity in Italy to principally use the Internet and not the television. In this sense also, the *MoVimento a Cinque Stelle* fills a media political void.

The *MoVimento a Cinque Stelle* participated in the last Italian regional elections obtaining half a million votes and four councillors in the Piedmont and Emilia-Romagna regional governments.

2. Theoretical framework.

In most industrialized countries the general trend of electoral participation is downwards (Blais 2000, Franklin 2004, Mair 2002, Watterberg 2002). But as some authors have pointed out, it is incorrect to talk about a general decrease in political participation, because involvement in other kind of activities has increased, such as anti-globalization mobilizations and voluntary associations (Cain *et al.* 2003, Norris 2002, Stolle *et al.* 2005).

It is reasonable to guess that this decrease in electoral and political participation is caused by the distrust and discontent of citizens with regard to the institutions of representative democracy (Dalton 2004, Dalton & Watterberg 2000, Norris 1999). But it is wrong to assume that people who have decided not to vote or be involved in traditional political activities are disinterested in politics by definition. For example, we cannot exclude that the traditional, hierarchical method of participation (i.e. parties) is dissatisfying for people who prefer a more flat kind of organization. These people would be willing to channel their motivation to participate in politics using different means.

In this sense the Internet offers the chance to experiment in a more direct participation through the use of new repertoires, both offline and online (Aduiza *et al.* 2010). In fact, the Internet favours those activities in which individuals and organizations need to get in touch in real time, as, for instance, single issue mobilizations (Aduiza *et al.* 2010, Ward *et al.* 2003). These characteristics do not pander to traditional parties and institutions, but, on the contrary, they favour social movements with a flat organization.

Thus, the Internet can offer disaffected citizens an alternative way of participating in public life. But these new ways of participation, far from consolidating established democracies, may stress discontent towards conventional politics (Frau-Megis 2002).

Still, the positive theories, (as opposed to the negative ones) are far from being fulfilled. According to these positive theories, the Internet, due to its peculiar characteristics, could be the tool for implementing a new kind of direct democracy. In actual fact, it may still be problematic to consider online political participation as fully democratic. The digital divide is still a problem, even in industrialized countries and geographic location plays an important role. Data from the European Commission shows that in 2008, 60% of households in Europe with members aged 16–74 years had access to the Internet at home and almost half (49 %) of households accessed the Internet via broadband. Furthermore, regional differences in Internet access and broadband connections by household are still quite large. If most of the Dutch regions have levels of Internet access and broadband connections for over 70% of all households, the difference between Internet access and broadband connection rates for most regions in Italy is well below the EU average. Focusing on Italy, less than 4 out of 10 Italian households can connect to the Internet with a high-speed connection (European Commission 2009). In other words, only one citizen out of six has a broadband connection (Sartori 2006).

In any event, it is reasonable to guess that over the few next years the Internet will become the principal form of media, replacing the television. So, in the future, the Internet may significantly reduce the cost of political participation. At that point, following the civic voluntarism theory (higher the cost, lower the activity) (Verba *et al.* 1978), we may expect an increase in political participation. But, as demonstrated for television (Prior to 2005) the offer of more political information does not necessarily mean greater consumption of political information.

Thus, politically speaking, online presence *per sé* can help a political movement, but the most important thing for success is still the content.

In this sense, the *MoVimento a CinqueStelle* has several points which have determined its success: the embodiment of political disaffection, a simple program, and a trustworthy source of information, Beppe Grillo's blog.

3. Beppe Grillo's Blog and the *MoVimento a CinqueStelle*: characteristics, proposals, and participation at elections.

Beppe Grillo's blog is the first case in Italy in which an online movement converted the pure web format into a proper electoral list. Before becoming a platform for an electoral movement, Beppe Grillo's blog was a very successful source of free information.

Beppe Grillo's blog is so popular primarily because of its content, but the fact that Beppe Grillo was famous before the blog should not be underestimated. Indeed, Beppe Grillo was a comedian who became very popular in the 1980s. While taking part in a prime time broadcast¹ he wisecracked about the Italian premier, Bettino Craxi, and his party (PSI), making a joke about their political corruption². After this event, he was expelled from television. This expulsion made him a symbol of television censured by politicians. On 25th January 2000 Beppe Grillo started a blog (covering corruption, politics and environment) that became very popular both in Italy and abroad³. Nowadays, Twittorati assigns 519 points to Beppe Grillo's blog⁴ on a 1000 points scale of authority⁵.

The traditional media (television and newspapers) mostly ignored the blog (although *Time*, in 2005, mentioned him among the European heroes of the year for efforts made in support of public information⁶) until Beppe Grillo promoted two off-line events: V-Day⁷ (8 September 2007) and the

¹ The broadcast was *Fantastico 7*, on 15th November 1986 (*Rai Uno*).

² The Premier was Bettino Craxi, the most famous exponent of the Socialist Italian Party (PSI). The joke was: "Once, during the dinner in China, all were socialists. Then Martelli cut a poor figure. He called Craxi saying 'Listen... here the population is a billion... are they all socialists?'" Craxi replied 'Yes. Why are you asking?' 'Well, if they are all socialists I cannot see who they robbed'".

³ According to Technorati (<http://technorati.com/>) the blog is visited by 150-200 thousand users per day which means that Beppe Grillo's blog is the most linked one in Italy. In 2008 The Guardian published a ranking of the first fifty most influential blogs in the world and Beppe Grillo's came ninth (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2008/mar/09/blogs>)

⁴ <http://twittorati.com/blog/beppegrillo>

⁵ Explanation of how authority is calculated: <http://technorati.com/what-is-technorati-authority/>

⁶ <http://www.time.com/time/europe/hero2005/grillo.html>

⁷ The demonstration was organized to ask for a law to force the dismissal of twenty-five parliamentarians with criminal records from the Italian Parliament.

V2-Day⁸ (25 April 2008) (where the name stands for *Vaffanculo Day*, literally *Fuck you Day*). In the first one, fifty thousand people participated⁹, in the second two million¹⁰.

It is important to underline that the V-days were held to protest against the two powers Beppe Grillo is opposing: the first V-Day was principally against political parties and the second one against traditional media (newspapers and television). In particular, Mr. Grillo extols that the best place for politics is the Internet. During an interview by Euronews he said: “*Nowadays, if you publish an article online which contains lies, after twenty-four hours two thousand comments arrive, saying you are a scoundrel, a fool. Do you understand? So you cannot lie, and this is democracy. Of course when you talk on television or in newspapers there is no cross-examination. Since it exists on the Internet, you have a reputation*”¹¹. This sentence synthesizes the results of the research cited above, and explains perfectly why Internet users trust blogs more than traditional media (Johnson and Kaye 2007, Banning and Sweetser 2007).

During V2-Day Beppe Grillo launched the *Liste a cinque stelle* (*Five-star electoral lists*), which had already been announced after the first V-Day¹². The *five stars* allude to the well-known standard of quality, and for this movement every star has a meaning: environment, water, development, connectivity, and transportation¹³. Mr Grillo has always underlined that this is not a proper party, because “*Parties are dead, I do not intend to build a party, an apparatus, a structure to intermediate, but to create a Movement with a program*”¹⁴.

Beyond the political meaning of program, a five point program is functional within an online movement. In fact, it is well documented that the characteristics of the Internet (i.e. access to information and contact between individuals without temporal and spatial limits) favour single-issue mobilizations (Anduiza *et al.* 2010, Ward *et al.* 2003). Of course, it is convenient that a political movement presenting oneself as a candidate in the government of a municipality or a

⁸ The V2-Day was held to ask for the elimination of public funding for publishing, the Italian journalist association, and the Gasparri law for television. All information about the events:

<http://www2.beppegrillo.it/v2day/>

⁹ The participation rate: <http://www.repubblica.it/2007/08/sezioni/cronaca/grillo-v-day/v-piazze/v-piazze.html>

¹⁰ Since the participation was all around Italy it is hard to estimate the exact number of people. The estimates are between 2 and 5 million: http://www.beppegrillo.it/2008/06/il_v2day_e_i_ce.html

¹¹ The integral and original interview is available on: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZRKnPMRHDfk>

¹² <http://www.repubblica.it/2007/08/sezioni/cronaca/grillo-v-day/grillo-liste-civiche/grillo-liste-civiche.html>

¹³ The political program and the description of the lists: <http://www.beppegrillo.it/listeciviche/>

¹⁴ *Comunicato politico numero 25*:

http://www.beppegrillo.it/2009/09/comunicato_politico_numero_venticinque.html

Region puts forward more than just one point. In this sense the movement's program seems to meet both the Internet and the political campaign communication requirements: five clear points which synthesize a vision of concrete policies.

This movement took part in the municipal elections held on 7th June 2009. The mandatory requirements to be accepted as a candidate in Grillo's electoral list were: not to be a member of any other party, to have no criminal record, not to have been elected for that position more than once in the past, and to be a resident of the city for which he/she is candidate. These requirements were introduced to point out the difference between Grillo's movement and the traditional Italian parties¹⁵. The Nobel Prize winner Joe Stiglitz sent an email to Grillo, published on the blog¹⁶, to approve the initiative of the *Liste a cinque stelle*.

The municipal elections of June 2009 were a test to check the electoral strength of Beppe Grillo's movement. It was the first time that a movement originated on the Internet had participated in elections. The *Liste a cinque stelle* were present in sixty-five Italian municipalities gaining seats in thirty-three as city councillors¹⁷ in twenty-three towns. Sixteen of those towns have more than 15.000 residents.

Even if the general electoral result is not impressive *per se*, there are some elements that should be taken into account. This was the first time that a blog had turned itself into an electoral list. Those lists were totally ignored by television news and barely mentioned by the national newspapers. In spite of this, they succeeded in being elected in some major cities, such as Bologna.

Beppe Grillo and his blog readers judged, after due consideration, that the election of the thirty-three city councillors had been a success. As a result, on 4th October 2009 Beppe Grillo officially launched the national *MoVimento a cinque stelle*¹⁸, with a view to participating in the forthcoming regional elections (28th and 29th March 2010), which involved thirteen Regions¹⁹ out of twenty. The *MoVimento a Cinque Stelle* was able to present only in five Regions (Piedmont, Lombardy, Veneto, Emilia-Romagna, and Campania).

¹⁵ http://www.beppegrillo.it/2008/12/liste_civiche_a.html

¹⁶ The whole post: http://www.beppegrillo.it/2009/04/stiglitz_e_le_1.html

¹⁷ The list: <http://www.beppegrillo.it/listeciviche/eletti/>

¹⁸ <http://www.beppegrillo.it/iniziativa/movimentocinquestelle/index.php>

¹⁹ Piedmont, Lombardy, Veneto, Emilia-Romagna, Liguria, Tuscany, Umbria, Marches, Latium, Campania, Apulia, Basilicata, Calabria.

During his first television interview since 1993²⁰, when answering a question about his electoral expectations, Mr. Grillo claimed that since the *MoVimento a 5 stelle* does not behave like a political party, they do not care about the percentage of voters. The objective was to have one elected member in Regional Government, since just having one councillor would mean the establishment in that region of a whole network.

This answer could be controversial. In fact, the *MoVimento a 5 Stelle* is promoting itself as a party, and without a good electoral result, there is no chance of carrying on with their program. In this sense, it seems that the *MoVimento a 5 Stelle* is particularly willing to cover the watchdog function, which is a classic journalistic role in a democratic country. A function, according to Beppe Grillo, that is being fulfilled neither by television news nor by the newspapers.

The *MoVimento* partially accomplished its objective in gaining two councillors in Piedmont and two in Emilia-Romagna, and half a million votes in all five regions. This, despite the fact that the principal broadcast news almost never mentioned it (AGCOM statistics)²¹.

4. Research questions

Our main hypothesis is that the *MoVimento a cinque stelle* is more successful in the center of Italy, both for political and for practical reasons. The political reason is that, even if Beppe Grillo is against all parties both right and left, the issues he cares about appeal more to left-wing voters than to right-wing voters. The technological reason is that broadband is more widespread in the Northern and Central Italian regions: the provision of broadband infrastructure and services in these areas is a key factor in reaching a large part of the population, who can only be contacted through the web.

We are conscious of the fact that the *MoVimento a cinque stelle* is composed of both a political and a technological side, both of which are dependent on the other and which grant new characteristics to a political movement. But in order to analyze this new phenomenon it is essential to separate the political from the technological aspect.

The research questions we will try to answer are:

RQ1: Was the *MoVimento a cinque stelle* attracting more voters from left-wing parties than from right-wing parties?

²⁰ <http://www.annozero.rai.it/dl/RaiTV/programmi/media/ContentItem-8fb49efa-15f3-43b7-a15f-d157f0098c71-annozero.html?p=1>

²¹ http://www.beppegrillo.it/2010/03/i_soldi_trasfor/index.html

RQ2: Was the *MoVimento a CinqueStelle* attracting non-voters?

RQ3: Was the *MoVimento a Cinque Stelle* more successful where broadband is more widespread?

5. Methods and data.

In order to answer the research questions RQ1 and RQ2 we will analyze the electoral result of the candidates of the *MoVimento a Cinque Stelle*, by checking how many candidates were elected and in which region (data available on the web site of the Italian Ministry of Interior). We will pay particular attention to the geographical distribution of the elected candidates, since Italy is traditionally divided into four geo-political areas. Indeed, the Centre of Italy is traditionally left wing, and the South is traditionally conservative. The North is not as strongly biased towards any particular political wing, but in the last election it was more attracted to parties of the right (Diamanti 2003).

The next step will be to estimate the flows-of-votes among the parties participating in the 2005 and 2010 Regional Elections in the capitals of the the five regions in which the *MoVimento a cinque stelle* put forward candidates (Piedmont, Lombardy, Veneto, Emilia-Romagna and Campania). The method for the electoral flows estimates is the Goodman Model.

In 1953 L.A Goodman developed a statistical model to make ecological inference. Arguing against Robinson (1950), who affirmed that the ecological inference was always wrong, L. A. Goodman (1953) wrote an article in which he demonstrated that, under some conditions, ecological inference was possible. After some years, the Goodman model was employed for estimating the flows of votes among parties starting with aggregate data.

A series of linear regressions are applied to the aggregate electoral data from two consecutive elections.

The regression coefficients can be estimated using standard regression procedures. The procedure most often used is the OLS (Ordinary Least Squares), but other scholars suggest utilizing stronger estimators²²

In the Goodman Model, the independent and dependent variables represent fractions of the population and the regression coefficients correspond to these fractions. This is why it is impossible for the coefficients to have more than 1 or a negative value.

If they do appear, it is necessary to re-adjust them in order to obtain the values of the regression coefficients that are between 0 and 1, as the Goodman model requires.

²² Ricolfi (1990) suggests the twins method.

Of course, the re-adjustment of the value of the coefficients has to be as small as possible. The VR (Re-distributed Value) coefficients allow us to measure the re-adjustment (Schadee and Corbetta, 1984). The VR coefficients are taken as the fraction of the population eliminated from the total to allow for the positive values which the model requires. Experts suggest that the values of the VR coefficients have to be smaller than 0,15 (Schadee and Corbetta, 1984)..

An important aspect when applying the Goodman Model is the aggregation level. In order to obtain accurate estimates, it is crucial to employ data at the lowest level of aggregation. Broaden the area analyzed, less reliable are the estimates (Schadee and Corbetta, 1984). In this paper we will use the electoral results of five cities (Turin, Milan, Venice, Bologna and Naples). All the data collected is at *sezione elettorale* level.

It is important to underline that the estimates obtained by the application of the model have to be read as an indication, and not as a perfect description of what happened. Indeed, in the electoral field it is almost impossible to apply the Goodman model without violations. In fact, this model implies that in order to apply the procedure properly the comparison should be ideally made between the same group of voters. Only in this way is it possible to correctly establish the number who have changed their political preference and which party has gained or lost their votes, but this is impossible. In fact, in every election, a portion of voters is replaced by another. The reasons for this are:

- a. generational turnover (the deceased and the new voters);
- b. voters' change of residency;
- c. a big or total change in the distribution of a town or city's electoral divisions .

Of course, if there is a complete or substantial shift in the electoral divisions of a city, it becomes impossible to apply the Goodman Model. If there is a small adjustment, it is possible to eliminate the electoral divisions that have been changed by controlling addresses.

It is also important to take into account that the more distant the elections, the less reliable are the flows estimates, because all the aforementioned changes have more time to occur.

In order to analyze the no-vote in the flows, we have to consider the voters who decide not to vote as a party. Since the number of individuals who have to vote in each given *sezione elettorale* is known, it is possible to obtain the abstention quota by subtracting the valid votes from the number of the expected voters in the electoral divisions.

The estimates obtained with the Goodman Model have to be interpreted as a general picture and not as an exact exchange of votes.

In order to answer our third research question (RQ3) we used the Multi-purpose Family Survey (MFS)²³, “Aspects of Daily Life” produced by the Italian National Census Bureau (ISTAT) in February 2007. Our aim is to describe and discover if there is a relationship between the diffusion of the web and the results of the elections.

To further investigate the relationship between the use of the web and political attitude, we will use a survey carried out in 2008 by ITANES - *Italian National Elections Studies*²⁴ on voting behavior and the political opinions of Italians. Using this data we will verify the relationship between the use of the web as a source of political information and political preferences, we will cross-examine the answers of the questions with a logistic regression (controlling for gender, age, education, and Region). Data used is related to the five regions in which there were *MoVimento a Cinque Stelle*'s candidates.

6. Results.

First of all, it is interesting to check how many candidates were elected (table 1) and how many votes were gained (table 2):

Table 1. Results of Grillo's list

Region	Candidates	Elected
Piedmont	12	2
Lombardy	16	0
Veneto	12	0
Emilia Romagna	10	2
Campania	43	0

²³ This survey focuses on an extremely wide range of themes: family relationships, housing conditions and the area where one lives, health and lifestyles, behaviors related to leisure and culture, relationship with old and new technologies, the relationship between citizens and public utilities. The survey involved over 19.000 families, a total of almost 49.000 individuals.

²⁴ The aim of ITANES is to study changes in the Italian political system and to analyze the determinants of voting, the role and structure of public opinion, the performance of governments and parties and campaign strategies.

Table 2. General electoral results:

Party	Piemonte		Lombardia		Veneto		Emilia Romagna		Campania	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
MoVimento5 Stelle	69448	3,5	99390	2,4	57848	2,6	126619	6,0	36792	1,3
PD	439663	22,3	976215	23,9	456309	20,3	857613	40,6	590592	21,4
IdV	130649	6,6	267954	6,6	119396	5,3	136040	6,4	178283	6,5
Comunisti	77389	3,9	27578	0,7	62606	2,8	96641	4,6	140173	5,1
Otherleft	252836	12,8	54515	1,3	19487	0,9	5310	0,3	195197	7,1
UdC	74412	3,8	164078	4,0	110417	4,9	79244	3,8	259204	9,4
PDL	474431	24,1	1355133	33,2	555006	24,7	518108	24,6	872628	31,7
Lega	317065	16,1	1117227	27,4	788581	35,2	288601	13,7	159768	5,8
Other right	132590	6,7	18115	0,4	73393	3,3	1695	0,1	323518	11,7

To answer the research questions RQ1 and RQ2 we had to perform an analysis of the electoral results of the five regions where the *MoVimento a Cinque Stelle* put forward candidates.

Our initial attempt was to contact the Minister of the Interior asking for the data (at the polling station level) of the five regions we were interested in. Unfortunately, the Minister of Interior only collect data at town level, which is the aggregation level sent by the *Prefetture*²⁵. Therefore, we contacted the *Prefetture* of the capitals of the regions (Turin, Milan, Venice, Bologna and Naples), but their response was that that they too only collect data at town level.

At this point, the only solution to having a complete picture of the flows-of votes in each region was to contact the single towns. This solution was totally unfeasible because it would have involved contacting 4225 towns²⁶ one by one. The selection criteria we took into consideration were 1) to select a sample of cities in each region or 2) to contact some cities which could be considered useful in order to understand the dynamic of the vote (i.e. the capitals of the five regions).

We decided to opt for the second criterion and to ask for the data from the five capitals of the regions we were interested in. This is because small towns in Italy often have difficulties getting broadband (Sartori 2006), and as the *MoVimento a Cinque Stelle* had a preminent online component, we were concerned that using the sampling selection we would obtain biased estimates which would invalidate the sampling procedure .

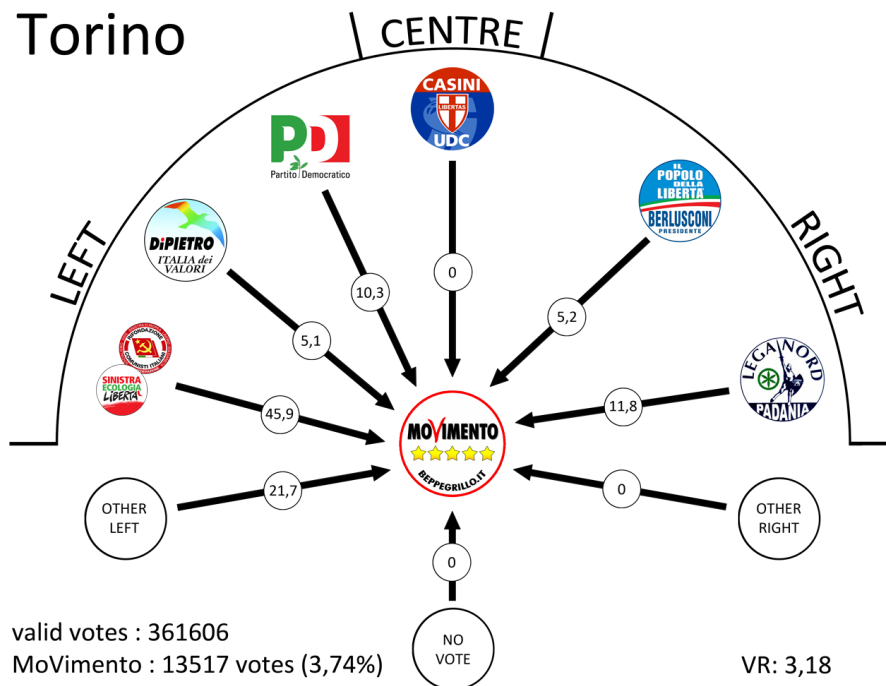
It is important to emphasise that this is a purely exploratory analysis which aims to offer a general picture of the *MoVimento a Cinque Stelle* phenomenon.

²⁵ The *Prefetture* are the offices which represent the Government in a given area, generally a city.

²⁶ 1026 Piedmont 1546 Lombardy, 581 Veneto, 341 Emilia-Romagna, 551 Campania

In the following figures can be seen the results of the estimates of the flows-of-vote in each city. The estimates are expressed in percentages (calculated on the total gained by the *MoVimento a Cinque Stelle*)²⁷:

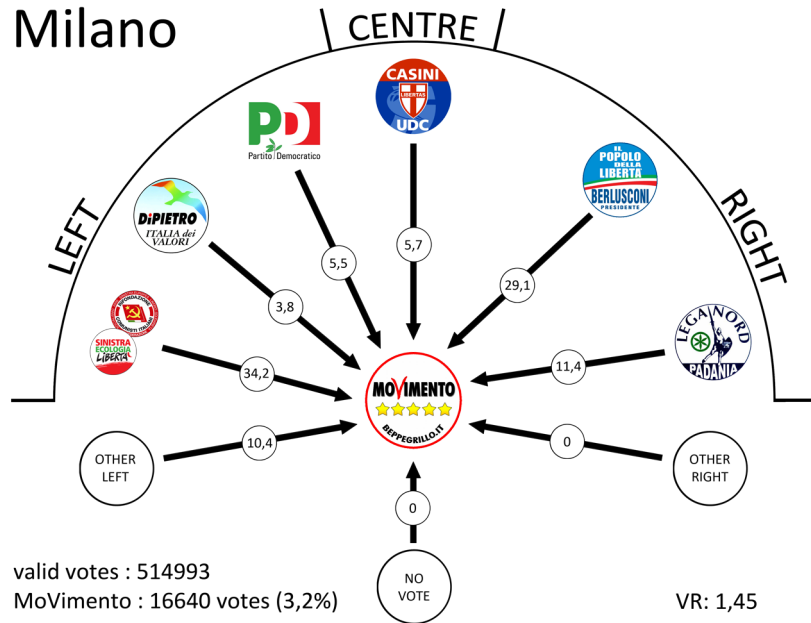
FIG 1: Turin



In this case the communist parties and generally the left-wing parties (particularly the small ones) are the principal source of votes. No votes came from the non-voters.

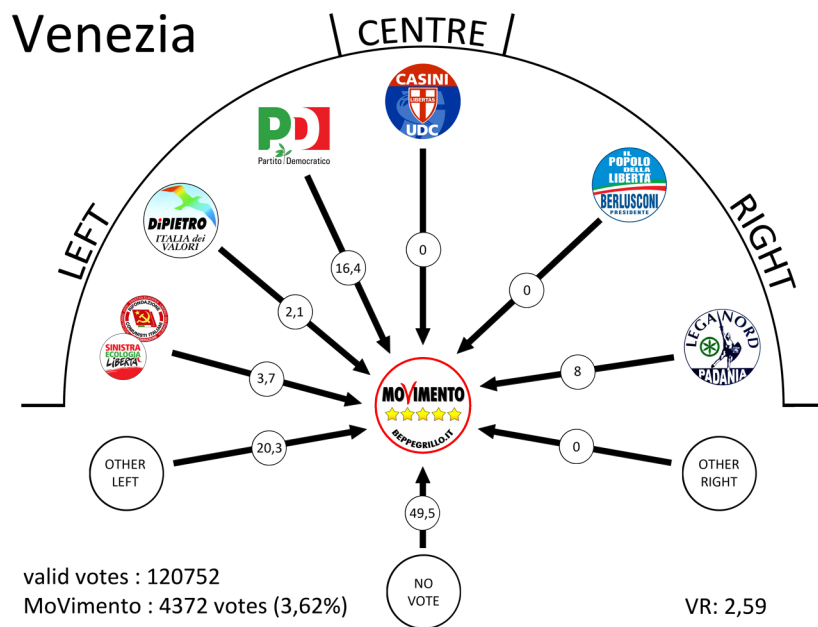
²⁷ To consult the tables in their entirety see the Appendix (section: *Row Percentages*). To have a general picture of the flows-of-vote in each city see the section *Flows-of-vote*.

FIG 2: Milan



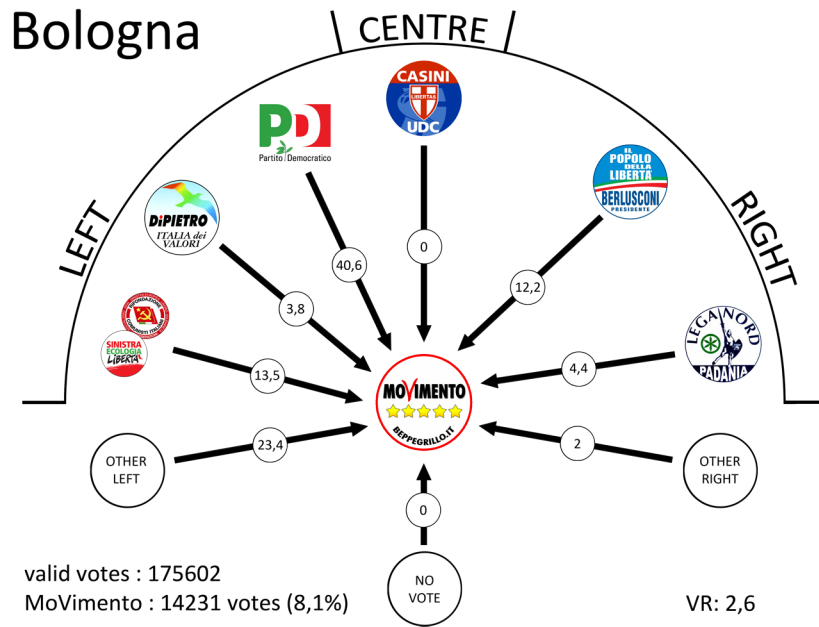
In Milan too, the communists parties are the ones yielding more to the *MoVimento a Cinque Stelle*, but the second source is from the principal centre-right parties. The vote losses are still worse for the left-wing, but the general situation is a little more balanced.

FIG 3: Venice



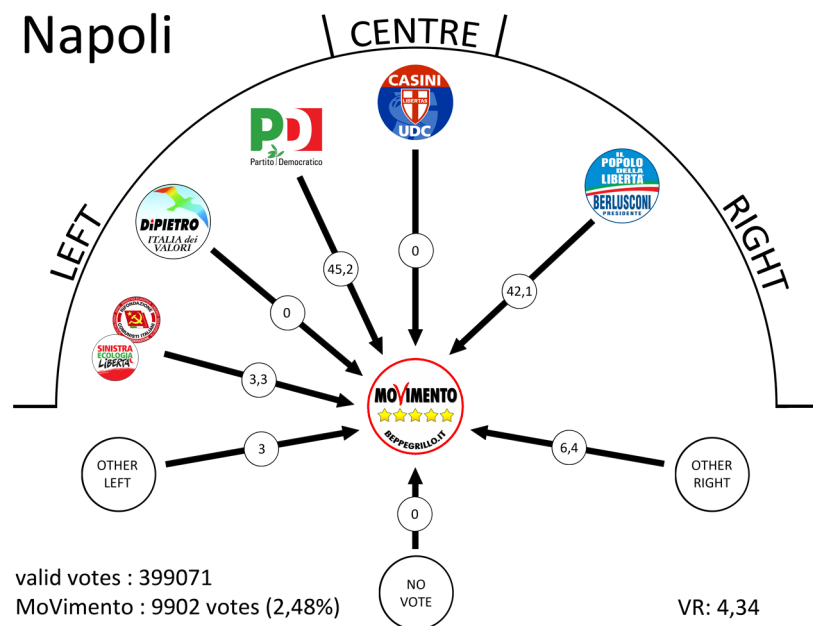
This is the only city in which the *MoVimento a Cinque Stelle* succeeded in mobilizing the non voters. Actually, half of the *MoVimento a Cinque Stelle* votes came from previous non-voters. With regard to the parties, the left-wing ones suffered most losses.

FIG 4: Bologna



Here the principal source of votes is from the main centre-left party, followed by the small left wing parties. The right-wing had some losses too, but the *MoVimento a Cinque Stelle* was not able to persuade the non-voters to cast the ballots.

FIG 5: Naples



In Naples, both the main centre-left and centre-right parties supplied more than the 40% of the *MoVimento a Cinque Stelle* votes each. In this case too, the non voters were not convinced by the *MoVimento a Cinque Stelle*.

We can now answer research questions RQ1 and RQ2.

With regard to RQ1 (if the *MoVimento a cinque stelle* was attracting more voters from left-wing parties rather than from right-wing parties), the answer is yes. As can be seen in the following table which summarizes the percentages of votes the *MoVimento a Cinque Stelle* gained from the left-wing and the right-wing, it is clear that left wing voters were more likely to vote for the *MoVimento a Cinque Stelle* :

Table 3: sources of *MoVimento a Cinque Stelle* votes by coalition:

Cities	Left	Right	Notes
Turin	83	17.0	
Milan	53.9	40.5	(5.7 from UdC)
Venice	42.5	8.0	(49.5 from novote)
Bologna	81.3	18.6	
Naples	51.5	48.5	

It is interesting to note that the left-wing is the principal source of votes (over 80%) in Turin and Bologna, which are historically the most left wing cities among the ones analyzed (Diamanti 2003).

With regard to RQ2 (if the *MoVimento a cinque stelle* was able to attract more non-voters than others parties), the answer is no. The exception is Venice, where, as we saw, half of the votes came from the previous non-voters.

Since the *MoVimento a Cinque Stelle* is only accessible on the web, we wanted to check if the opportunity of access and use of the web had an effect on the electoral result, and in particular on the results of the *MoVimento a Cinque Stelle* (RQ3).

In order to achieve this objective, we attempted to see if there was a difference between access and use of the web and the results obtained by *MoVimento a Cinque Stelle* in the regional elections.

To measure Internet penetration and use, we used some indicators constructed from the results of the Multi-purpose Family Survey (MFS), “Aspects of Daily Life” conducted by the Italian National Census Bureau (ISTAT) – 2007. In detail:

1. Web access : percentage of people who have Internet access at home (adults 18 years old or more)

2. Broadband : percentage of people who have a broadband connection
3. Web in the last 3 months: proportion of people who connected to the web in the last 3 months
4. Never web : proportion of people who have never used the Internet
5. Web everyday: proportion of people who access the Internet every day.

The main goal was to try to link the electoral results (see table 2) with the use of the web.

In table 4 we report the indicators of web access and use.

Table 4. Access and use of the web – 2007 (%)

	Web access	Broadband	Web 3 months	Every day web	Never web
Piedmont	45	31	37	47	59
Lombardy	53	45	42	54	54
Veneto	51	34	38	47	58
Emilia	47	39	39	55	58
Campania	41	33	26	46	70
<i>Italy</i>	<i>46</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>62</i>

Unfortunately, it was not possible to link the two different sources of data: it was only possible to try to establish some connection by looking at the distribution of the web indicators and the electoral results.

It is known that web access rates are higher in Northern and Central Regions, while the highest rate for people who have never accessed the web is in the Southern regions (Sartori 2006). One of the most interesting facts is that in a region like Campania, where the *MoVimento a Cinque Stelle* put forward forty-three candidates not one won the elections, we have the highest rate of people who never use the web (the rate is the highest out of all Italian regions). On the other hand, Emilia-Romagna has the highest (at national level) rate of people who use the web every day and has two elected people out of 10 candidates. The Piedmont region is the only one in which there does not seem to be any direct relationship between Internet use and the success of the *MoVimento a Cinque Stelle*. In actual fact, there is quite a good level of Internet use in Piedmont, but the key point to explain is that the success of the *MoVimento a Cinque Stelle* is more related to the political campaign in the territory, which supported the groups opposing the “high speed trains”. The description of the political campaign in each region is beyond the aim of this paper.

Analysing the second data source (ITANES), a logistic regression has been performed on the 5 regions in which MoVimento a Cinque Stelle had at least one candidate.

The model is:

Use of web=Gender + Age class + Level of education + region + Political preference.

The variables are:

1. Use of web: Yes
No
2. Gender: Male
Female
3. Age class: 18-34
35-64
65 or more
4. Level of education: Compulsory/Low education
High school
University or higher
5. Region: Piedmont
Lombardy
Veneto
Emilia Romagna
Campania
6. Political preference 1 Left
2
...
9
10 Right

With the model (dependent variable “use of web”=“Yes”) we tried to see if the political collocation, together with some socio-demographic variables, could explain the use of the web as a source of political information. In the next table the results of the model can be found.

Table 5. Logistic regression: dependent variable “Use of web”

Parameter		DF	Estimation	Pr > χ^2
Intercept		1	-1.2429	<.0001
Interest in politics	A little	1	-0.4545	0.0080
	A lot	1	1.4126	<.0001
	Enough	1	0.7157	<.0001
Gender	F	1	-0.1300	0.1328
Age class	18-34	1	1.2248	<.0001
	35-64	1	0.0741	0.5785
Level of education	Compulsory/low education	1	-0.5049	<.0001
	High school	1	-0.1198	0.3318
Political preference		1	-0.0827	0.0179

Test BETA=0			
Test	χ^2	DF	Pr > χ^2
Likelihood	267.62	9	<.0001
Score	246.59	9	<.0001
Wald	177.93	9	<.0001

Association of Predicted Probabilities and Observed Responses			
Percentage Concordant	81.7	Somers D	0.638
Percentage Discordant	17.9	Gamma	0.640
Percentage Tied	0.4	Tau-a	0.198
Pairs	225225	c	0.819

The model is extremely significant from a statistical perspective, and all the variables seem to be related to the use of the web. The relationship between the use of the web as source of political information and political preference is very interesting: the closer the preference to left wing parties, the greater the probability of using the web. As expected, the younger are more willing to use the Internet to search for political news, although less probable in females. The level of education is also an important explanatory variable: the less educated have a lower probability of using the web to search for political information. There is no regional effect so the variable was excluded in the calculation of the model.

7. Conclusion and suggestions for future studies.

The *MoVimento a Cinque Stelle* is a completely pioneering political subject (the existing *Partido de Internet*²⁸ in Spain and *Senator Online*²⁹ in Australia are different from several points of view), not least because it is the first party born from a blog. The dual purpose of offering free and alternative information (watchdog function) while carrying on a party's program from inside the political institutions is a new form of political activism.

Despite the existence of several Italian studies which analyze both the relationships between the Internet and politics, and the Internet and information (ITANES 2001, 2006, 2008, ISTAT 2007), we think that the *MoVimento a Cinque Stelle*'s employment of the Internet represents a different way of using the web, which deserves a specific survey. The principal limitation in studying this phenomenon is the lack of data. We do not know who the *MoVimento a Cinque Stelle* voters are demographically speaking. Moreover, data related to the possible links between the Internet and voting is not yet collected in Italy. This is a relatively new topic, and Italy has only recently been facing up to this new phenomenon. The Internet in Italy is not yet seen as a proper source of political information. On the one hand, this may mean that Italy is now facing up to this idea, but on the other hand, it could also mean that data on this subject is not yet available. Given these limitations, we tried using different sources, to highlight the key factors that may explain the results of Beppe Grillo's list but of course the results obtained are partial and cannot be considered exhaustive.

Due to the analysis of flows of votes in the capitals of the regions in with the *MoVimento a Cinque Stelle* took part in the elections, we can assume that the *MoVimento* voters had a propensity to vote for the left more than the right. And from the Internet studies, we can only assume that the voters

²⁸ <http://partidodeInternet.es/>

²⁹ <http://senatoronline.org.au/>

tended to be young, (Calenda & Meijer 2009, Della Porta & Mosca 2005, Norris 2002) well-educated and interested in politics (Pew Research Center 2010³⁰, Borgida and Stark 2004, Nie & Erbring 2000). But these are only hypotheses, which require to be verified with a specific survey and with a more widespread flows of votes analysis (using all the *sezioni elettorali* of the regions or at least all the forty-one capitals of the provinces). It is particularly interesting that the *MoVimento* was unable to mobilize the non-voters (with the one exception of Venice). It seems that the new political space opened up on the web is not attracting disaffected citizens. If this is going to be examined in future studies, maybe the Prior (2005) analysis of television could be applied to the Internet too.

In conclusion, studying the *MoVimento a Cinque Stelle* means facing up to a new phenomenon, which needs to be considered from several different aspects: demographical, political, technological, and not least the peculiar framework of the Italian context.

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³⁰ <http://www.pewInternet.org/Static-Pages/Trend-Data/Whos-Online.aspx>

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Appendix

1. Flows-of votes:

Table A1. Turin

	Ulivo	IdV	Comm.	other L	UdC	Fi+An	Lega	other R	no vote
Mov5stelle	0.190	0.100	0.850	0.400	0.000	0.100	0.220	0.000	0.000
PD	9.840	0.100	0.820	0.620	0.000	1.120	0.000	0.000	0.000
IdV	2.220	0.330	0.920	0.540	0.000	0.000	0.210	0.420	0.000
Communists	0.000	0.000	1.480	0.720	0.030	0.240	0.080	0.000	0.380
Other left	2.630	0.330	0.000	2.230	0.000	1.380	0.160	0.000	0.000
UdC	0.440	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.040	0.170	0.010	0.000	0.000
PdL	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.240	0.930	8.410	0.000	0.150	1.450
Lega Nord	0.440	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.010	1.680	1.370	0.860	0.850
Other right	0.620	0.020	0.100	0.000	0.130	0.000	0.020	0.940	1.970
No vote	0.000	0.000	0.870	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	35.810

Table A2. Milan

	Ulivo	IdV	Comm.	other L	UdC	Fi+An	Lega	other R	no vote
Mov5stelle	0.090	0.060	0.570	0.170	0.090	0.480	0.190	0.000	0.000
PD	7.840	0.100	0.200	0.880	0.190	1.890	0.750	0.000	1.770
IdV	1.370	0.330	0.740	0.380	0.020	0.310	0.280	0.140	0.360
Communists	0.000	0.030	1.460	0.590	0.020	0.430	0.180	0.000	0.210
Other left	0.730	0.050	0.180	0.040	0.050	0.000	0.180	0.030	0.200
UdC	0.400	0.000	0.000	0.050	0.000	0.610	0.000	0.030	0.360
PdL	0.490	0.270	0.000	0.000	0.330	12.350	0.010	0.110	4.980
Lega Nord	0.430	0.000	0.090	0.000	0.000	3.230	2.140	0.280	1.330
Other right	0.000	0.000	0.080	0.010	0.030	0.120	0.030	0.040	0.110
No vote	1.900	0.000	1.990	0.010	0.800	1.210	0.000	2.350	40.210

Table A3. Venice

	Ulivo	IdV	Comm.	other L	UdC	Fi+An	Lega	other R	no vote
Mov5stelle	0.330	0.040	0.070	0.410	0.000	0.000	0.160	0.000	0.990
PD	8.310	0.000	1.620	1.820	0.140	0.580	0.030	0.460	4.330
IdV	1.280	0.910	0.510	0.940	0.000	0.000	0.170	0.040	0.540
Communists	0.000	0.110	1.930	0.000	0.020	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.150
Other left	0.000	0.000	0.010	0.810	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.470
UdC	0.280	0.000	0.000	0.110	0.260	0.440	0.000	0.070	0.910
PdL	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.770	8.850	0.080	0.470	4.130
Lega Nord	0.590	0.090	0.000	0.930	0.450	3.420	2.320	1.830	1.400
Other right	0.080	0.010	0.060	0.000	0.010	0.010	0.000	0.090	0.090
No vote	1.460	0.040	2.380	1.710	0.180	2.130	0.000	0.540	35.030

Table A7. Milan (row %)

	Ulivo	IdV	Comm.	other L	UdC	Fi+An	Lega	other R	no vote
Mov5stelle	0.055	0.038	0.342	0.104	0.057	0.291	0.114	0.000	0.000
PD	0.575	0.008	0.014	0.064	0.014	0.139	0.055	0.000	0.130
IdV	0.348	0.085	0.189	0.096	0.005	0.078	0.072	0.036	0.091
Communists	0.000	0.010	0.500	0.203	0.005	0.148	0.060	0.000	0.073
Other left	0.501	0.032	0.121	0.029	0.035	0.000	0.122	0.021	0.139
UdC	0.278	0.000	0.000	0.033	0.000	0.421	0.000	0.018	0.250
PdL	0.026	0.015	0.000	0.000	0.018	0.666	0.001	0.006	0.268
Lega Nord	0.058	0.000	0.012	0.000	0.000	0.430	0.285	0.038	0.177
Other right	0.000	0.004	0.181	0.018	0.072	0.286	0.074	0.102	0.264
No vote	0.039	0.000	0.041	0.000	0.017	0.025	0.000	0.048	0.830

Table A8. Venice (row %)

	Ulivo	IdV	Comm.	other L	UdC	Fi+An	Lega	other R	no vote
Mov5stelle	0.164	0.021	0.037	0.203	0.000	0.000	0.080	0.000	0.495
PD	0.481	0.000	0.094	0.105	0.008	0.034	0.002	0.026	0.251
IdV	0.292	0.208	0.116	0.215	0.000	0.000	0.038	0.008	0.122
Communists	0.000	0.035	0.600	0.000	0.007	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.358
Other left	0.000	0.000	0.005	0.629	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.366
UdC	0.134	0.000	0.000	0.053	0.125	0.213	0.000	0.032	0.442
PdL	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.054	0.618	0.006	0.033	0.289
Lega Nord	0.053	0.008	0.000	0.084	0.041	0.310	0.211	0.166	0.127
Other right	0.236	0.017	0.169	0.000	0.040	0.031	0.000	0.254	0.253
No vote	0.034	0.001	0.055	0.039	0.004	0.049	0.000	0.012	0.806

Table A9. Bologna (row %)

	Ulivo	IdV	Comm.	other L	UdC	Fi+An	Lega	other R	no vote
Mov5stelle	0.406	0.038	0.135	0.234	0.000	0.122	0.044	0.020	0.000
PD	0.983	0.012	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.003	0.002	0.000
IdV	0.487	0.038	0.148	0.165	0.000	0.075	0.030	0.011	0.045
Communists	0.000	0.020	0.387	0.319	0.029	0.025	0.003	0.000	0.217
UdC	0.418	0.010	0.000	0.000	0.399	0.129	0.012	0.032	0.000
PdL	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.146	0.784	0.012	0.031	0.027
Lega Nord	0.146	0.018	0.006	0.000	0.129	0.490	0.109	0.036	0.066
No vote	0.057	0.006	0.076	0.026	0.000	0.064	0.003	0.012	0.756

Table A10. Naples (row %)

	Ulivo	IdV	Comm.	other L	UdC	Fi+An	other R	no vote
Mov5stelle	0.452	0.000	0.033	0.030	0.000	0.421	0.064	0.000
PD	0.869	0.000	0.043	0.083	0.005	0.000	0.000	0.000
IdV	0.430	0.021	0.065	0.260	0.000	0.165	0.059	0.000
Communists	0.508	0.017	0.302	0.000	0.000	0.047	0.050	0.075
Other left	0.000	0.031	0.068	0.356	0.000	0.221	0.033	0.291
UdC	0.000	0.059	0.004	0.536	0.119	0.095	0.000	0.187
PdL	0.056	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.025	0.605	0.072	0.242
MpA	0.000	0.113	0.000	0.635	0.005	0.174	0.073	0.000
Other right	0.000	0.105	0.126	0.307	0.140	0.000	0.144	0.178
No vote	0.043	0.006	0.048	0.037	0.009	0.000	0.017	0.840