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RECLAIMING POPULAR SOVEREIGNTY: THE VISION OF THE STATE IN THE DISCOURSE OF PODEMOS AND THE MOVIMENTO 5 STELLE

Paolo Gerbaudo and Francesco Screti

This article explores how the Movimento 5 Stelle (M5S) in Italy and Podemos in Spain thematise the role of the State. We draw from a qualitative analysis of speeches of party leaders and party manifestoes in recent national elections. We argue that Podemos and the M5S coincide in reasserting the principle of popular sovereignty to overcome the present "post-democratic" condition and the distance between citizens and the State. However, they differ in their understanding of the State's intervention on the economy and society. Podemos proposes a new interventionist state reminiscent of post-war social democracy. M5S has a more liberal view, conceiving of the State as a neutral arbiter of the free market. Furthermore, the two parties have different conceptions of the relationship between the State and the Nation. While adopting a patriotic discourse, Podemos has catered for demands of local autonomy, framing Spain as a "nation of nations" and has been adamant in defending migrants and refugees. The M5S has instead proposed a more nationalist discourse, as seen in tirades by party leaders against migrants and refugees. These divergences reflect the different positioning of these formations along the Left/Right axis and how this results in a more inclusive/exclusive view of the State.

KEYWORDS populism; nationalism; Podemos; Movimento 5 Stelle; sovereignty

Introduction

Podemos and the Movimento 5 Stelle (M5S) provide an interesting case to understand the nature of contemporary populism and its new vision of the State at a time marked by economic and geopolitical crises. These two parties display clear differences in their political orientation. While it avoids presenting itself explicitly as part of the Left, Podemos reflects a strong left-wing influence. The M5S to the contrary has more explicitly defied all attempts to be pigeon-holed in classical Left/Right divisions.¹ Furthermore, while Podemos has abided by a Left universalism, the M5S, which can possibly be best described as a radical centrist party, has often not shied away from adopting right-wing and sometimes clearly xenophobic motives such as attacks against migrants and minorities. However, they also share important similarities that appear to revolve around their much discussed "populism". But what is actually the populism shared by these two parties? How does it relate to the understanding of the State and the nation?

To explore the populist vision of the State in Podemos and the M5S, in this article we undertake a discourse analysis of a selection of speeches by party leaders and party manifestos in recent elections. Data collected for the present study comprise party manifestoes

and electoral programmes, alongside public speeches delivered by key party leaders including Pablo Iglesias and Íñigo Errejón for Podemos, and Beppe Grillo, Alessandro Di Battista and Luigi Di Maio for the M5S. The political visions of Podemos and the M5S contain some striking elements of similarity. This is particularly visible in their vision of the State, and in their understanding of the relationship between citizens and institutions. Both the M5S and Podemos see the central political problem in terms of a crisis of popular sovereignty due to the exclusion of the citizens from the State; they are perceived to have been usurped by an illegitimate political class (elite). They propose to solve democratic deficit by reintegrating citizens in the State and reasserting citizen participation in all of the decisions affecting them, also through the creation of new forms of direct and digital democracy. Yet the perspectives of these two parties strongly diverge when it comes to their understanding of the role of the State vis-à-vis the economy and society, with Podemos proposing a more inclusive and interventionist view than the M5S. While both parties agree on the need for a certain degree of intervention of the State in the economy, they disagree on the latitude thereof. Podemos purports the need for state interventionism, drawing inspiration from Scandinavian social democracy and demanding strong regulation on banks and utility companies. The M5S is more cautious, and its economic view is ultimately more liberal. These formations' understanding of the nation/State nexus is also different. Where the M5S has often been explicitly nationalist and exclusionary, parading the Italian flag and other nationalist symbols in its communication, Podemos has adopted a more inclusive conception of homeland, making clear that Spain was not just one nation but rather a more complex "nation of nations" and maintaining an adamantly pro-migrant stance.

Populism and the State

If Podemos and the M5S have often been described as political cousins in news media reports it is because, despite their differences, they appear to have something in common. This is evident in their history as maverick movements, taking the political system by storm; in the way in which they mobilise sectors that were previously marginalised in the political arena; and in the manner in which they have developed an anti-establishment platform, seen in repeated attacks against political elites often represented as a self-serving "caste" opposed to the People (for example, Errejón 2011). All of these elements make up what is deemed to be a common populist orientation. Yet it is necessary to move beyond the rather superficial characterisation of these movements as populist, based merely on issues of political style and rhetoric. Rather, we need to approach their populism as something that also involves a common political vision enlisting a number of concrete policies. The vision of the State, that is the understanding of the relationship between the State and citizens, and the room of intervention for the State on economy and society, arguably constitute one of the places where we can most easily explore this element.

To begin this discussion it is imperative to provide a brief account of the history of these formations and of the political and social context in which they emerged to situate the ensuing analysis. Podemos was formed in January 2014 to contest the European elections of the following May. Its initiators comprised a group of political scientists based at the Complutense University in Madrid: Carlos Monedero, Pablo Iglesias and Íñigo Errejón. The rise of Podemos is related to the 2008 great recession (Ramiro and Gomez 2016) and has its origins in the 15M or Indignados² movements (Hughes 2011; Pastor Verdú 2011;

Castañeda 2012; Tormey and Feenstra 2015; Antentas 2015; Nez 2017). It is motivated by the crisis of trust in politics produced by economic turmoil and the widespread political corruption (Gomez Fortes and Urquizu 2015; Pavía, Bodoque, and Martín 2016; Díaz-Parra, Roca, and Romano 2015).

Podemos has upset the traditional Spanish political landscape long dominated by two parties, Partido Popular and Partido Socialista Obrero Español (Orriols and Cordero 2016). In the European elections of 25 May 2014, Podemos obtained eight per cent of the vote. It grew in the following months, obtaining 12.7 per cent in the national elections of 20 December 2015 in which it came at a knife-edge from the Socialist party. It maintained the overall position in the ensuing elections of 26 June 2016, in which Podemos ran together with the Izquierda Unida Left party, obtaining 13.4 per cent.³ Podemos' ideology has been often described as left-wing populism, although it comprises a number of other elements coming from the tradition of social democracy and of Eurocommunism as well as a patriotic discourse (Bassets 2015). The most forthcoming in presenting the party as populist has been its second-in-charge Íñigo Errejón, a student of the work of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (Errejón 2011; Ferraresi 2016; Kipfer 2016). This populist element of Podemos was overtly discussed in a number of debates conducted on the online television programmes *La Tuerka* and *Fort Apache*.

The origins of the M5S hark back to the "Amici di Beppe Grillo" (Beppe Grillo's friends) local electoral lists launched in 2005, and the V Day of 2007, the foundational event of the party, from which the party derives its middle capitalised V in the word "MoVimento". The V stands both for the comic and movie *V for Vendetta* and for the Italian insult "*vaffanculo*" (fuck off) directed at the political class (Diamanti 2014; Segatti and Capuzzi 2016, 50). The movement initially began fielding candidates in local and regional elections. In the national elections of 2013, it won 25.55 per cent of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies, and secured a strategic position in the Senate. The movement has made ample use of Grillo's blog, one of the most popular blogs in the world, of MeetUp groups, Facebook pages and Twitter channels, and has experimented with digital democracy to decide on various issues and select candidates (Natale and Ballatore 2014). This practice is an aspect it shares with Podemos, whose political precursors—Indignados activists—made extensive usage of new/social media (Anduiza, Cristancho, and Sabucedo 2014; Micó and Casero-Ripollés 2014; Theocharis et al. 2015). The M5S has frequently been described as a populist party because of its appeals to the People, and its attacks the political class (Mosca 2014; Ferraresi 2016), a term which was inspired by Rizzo and Stella's (2007) book, and which Podemos has then borrowed from the M5S. Grillo and other movement leaders have sometimes actively laid claim to the signifier of populism.

But what constitutes the populism that Podemos and the M5S share in common? A first response to this question comes from the work of Ernesto Laclau and other theorists following his line of analysis (Laclau 2005; Stavrakakis and Katsambekis 2014; Panizza 2005). For Laclau, contrarily to well-established theorists of populism such as Canovan (1981, 2005) and Taggart (2000), populism is not a specific ideology, but a transversal political logic, which revolves around the cross-sectional appeal to the "people" as the totality of the political community, and which can be utilised by both the Right and the Left. Populism is thereby understood not as a pathology of democracy, but rather as an orientation present to varying degrees in most forms of politics, because all political formations are bound to appeal to the universal subject of the People. This theory provides a way to understand the unifying appeals launched by formations as the M5S and Podemos and how they

respond to a phase of extreme class fragmentation. Yet it is arguably necessary to accompany this discursive and formalist understanding of populism with a more substantive one. Populism, in other words, should be seen not just as a form of doing politics—a certain style, rhetoric or form of presentation—but also as an actual political content that accompanies this rhetoric.

The central content to many populist movements is the demand for restoring popular sovereignty—namely the principle according to which citizens have the right to govern themselves—especially at times in which sovereignty appears to have been hollowed out as a consequence of globalisation (Gerbaudo 2017). Popular sovereignty lies at the heart of modern national-popular states. This notion was coined in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *The Social Contract* ([1762] 1971), where Jean-Jacques Rousseau went on to inspire the American and French revolutions, and has informed many republican constitutions. Yet it is also precisely the notion that appears most endangered at times of neoliberal globalisation, with its weakening of the nation-states and the increasing disconnect between ordinary citizens and institutions. Colin Crouch defines the present situation as “post-democracy”: the formal democratic institutions, such as elections and a free press, are maintained, yet the substance of democracy is betrayed, given that “politics and government are increasingly slipping back into the control of privileged elites in the manner characteristic of pre-democratic times” (Crouch 2004, 4). In a similar vein, Wolfgang Streeck (2014) suggests that the rise of neoliberal globalisation has determined a crisis of “democratic capitalism”: an international financial market rather than citizens become the real sovereign power.

Populism appeals to the People in opposition to the institutions of the State seen as irresponsive to their demands (Laclau, 2005). Therefore the people of populism often appear to be constituted in a negative relationship to a state, which populist movements accuse of overlooking the true desire of its citizens. Thus, populism expresses what in Gramsci's terms could be described as a:

conflict between the represented and the representatives [which] reverberate[s] out from the terrain of the parties [...] throughout the State organism, reinforcing the relative power of the bureaucracy [...], of high finance [...] and generally of all bodies relatively independent of the fluctuations of public opinion. (1971, 210)

This is the condition that Poulantzas refers to as a “breaking of the representational ties” (1978, 74), which goes hand in hand with a feeling of alienation of citizens from institutions. This trend is especially strong in southern European countries as Italy and Spain, due to high levels of political corruption and impunity, clientelism, youth unemployment and inefficient public services. This perception of detachment between citizens and the State therefore provides the background against which we can understand the typical demand made by populist movements to reintegrate citizens in the State.

The question of the reintegration of the citizens in the State and the restoration of popular sovereignty as the typical mission of populist parties carries the connected question of the conception of the State's intervention in the economy and society. With regard to the question of economic intervention, we know that in history different state types have emerged pursuing different forms of economic intervention. The social-democratic interventionist state, which dominated western politics from the end of the Second World War until the 1970s, proposed an intense intervention on the economy, both directly through state ownership of key industries and indirectly through tight regulation and heavy taxation. The neoliberal state that came after the

social-democratic state (Harvey 2007; Wacquant, 2010) was concerned mostly with fostering a free market, by favouring large companies and banks, and repressing those falling out of the ranks of the employed and law-abiding citizens. What role do Podemos and the M5S envisage for the State in economic intervention in the present post-crash era? Is the State they propose an interventionist (social-democratic) or a non-interventionist (liberal) state?

A further question regards the relationship of the populist state with the nation. This is a particularly irksome question, given the degree to which many populist movements on the Right are marked by a chauvinist nationalism. By its nature, modern states are nation-states or national-popular states: states that govern over a people and a territory defined in national terms. The principle of nationality is crucial in their definition. According to Poulantzas:

[t]he state [...] exhibits the *historical tendency* to encompass a single, constant nation (in the modern sense of the term); and while it actually pursues the establishment of national unity, modern nations themselves exhibit the historical tendency to form their own States. (1978, 95; original emphasis)

However, this unifying function of the State and its tendency to coincide with a nation raises problems in the context of contemporary societies marked by intense migration flows and multiculturalism. As argued by Cas Mudde and Cristobal Rovira Kaltwasser (2013), at this level one can see the main element of difference between populist parties in Europe and Latin America. While the former have adopted an “exclusionary populism”, the People being a culturally and ethnically homogeneous entity, open only to the “natives”, the latter have pursued an “inclusionary populism” that conceives of the People more as a socio-economic entity, which includes people of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. How do Podemos and the M5S conceive of the relationship between the State and the nation and how do they deal with (intranational) diversity? How do they conceive of migrants and cultural minorities? What does this tell us about the inclusive or exclusive character of their vision of the State?

Methodology

For the purpose of this article we conducted a thematic analysis, a method whose flexibility is particularly suitable to inductive approaches (Braun and Clarke 2006; see Attride-Stirling 2001; Ryan and Bernard 2003). Our main aim was to identify the central patterns of the discourse of Podemos and the M5S with specific reference to their conception of the State. A theme can be defined as an abstract idea expressed in a text (Ryan and Bernard 2003, 87), which “captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (Braun and Clarke 2006, 82). Basically it is the main topic of a discourse (van Dijk 2003, 68), or “the general meaning of an utterance” (Voloshinov [1929] 1973, 99). Our analysis comprised two steps. The first was purely inductive and data driven, with preliminary work on what themes emerged on a first scrutiny of the data. Then we moved to a second phase, mainly deductive or theory driven (Braun and Clarke, 2006). We focused only on some aspects of our data, and in particular references to the State, the people, the elites and sovereignty, in order to explore commonalities and differences in their view of the State, and its relationship to the economy and the nation. Our dataset comprises some of the most significant speeches by politicians of these two parties as well as their electoral

manifestos. In gathering this corpus we did not aim at exhaustiveness but rather hoped to attain a longitudinal understanding of the discourse of Podemos. For these reasons, our texts span from 2007 to 2016 for the M5S. For Podemos they are less numerous and much more recent, and span from 2014 to 2016, due to the shorter history of the party. The materials used in this investigation are summarised in [Table 1](#).

Rebuilding a National-popular State

The discourse of Podemos and the M5S centres on the common aspiration of reconstructing a popular state that responds to its citizens, and not just to corrupted elites. This project needs to be understood against the negative background of the economic and political crisis of neoliberalism, which, as we have seen, has dismantled many state functions, and has hollowed out the principle of popular sovereignty which was at the heart of modern national-popular states. Both of these parties also assert the principle of popular sovereignty as the solution to the present exclusion of citizens from the institutions, although they partly differ in their language as well as in the ways of achieving the reassertion of sovereignty. These two formations also differ in the view of the relationship of the State with the economy and with national identity. While Podemos takes a more interventionist approach to the role of the State, the M5S view is more liberal and non-interventionist in character. Furthermore, while Podemos has an inclusive view of nationality, and is committed to hospitality towards migrants and refugees, the M5S has indulged in an exclusionary and xenophobic rhetoric that comes close to that of right-wing populist formations such as Lega Nord and Front National.

Popular Sovereignty from Below

What Podemos and the M5S have in common is a view that the State that has been delinked from ordinary citizens. This diagnosis provides a rationale to understand the way in

TABLE 1
Outline of data collected on the M5S and Podemos

The M5S			PODEMOS		
Manifiesto/speech	Code	Date	Manifiesto/speech	Code	Date
Manifiesto	MM5S	2010	Manifiesto	MPOD	2015
<i>Vday</i> (Grillo)	BG1	8 September 2007	<i>Discurso puerta del Sol</i> (Iglesias)	PI1	31 January 2015
<i>Discorso fine anno</i> (Grillo)	BG2	31 December 2012	<i>Debate investidura Sánchez</i> (Iglesias)	PI2	2 March 2016
<i>Discorso fine anno</i> (Grillo)	BG3	31 December 2013	<i>Por una nueva socialdemocracia</i> (Iglesias)	PI3	26 May 2016
<i>L'Europa che vogliamo</i> (Grillo)	BG4	1 July 2014	<i>Debate investidura Rajoy</i> (Iglesias)	PI4	31 August 2016
<i>Riprendiamoci la Sovranità</i> (Di Battista)	ADB1	27 November 2015	Meeting in Granada (Errejón)	IE1	16 May 2014
<i>La sovranità appartiene al popolo</i> (Di Battista)	ADB2	27 June 2016			

which these parties conceive of the recuperation of popular sovereignty they campaign for. Faced with a closed-off and distant state, the recuperation of sovereignty is seen as revolving around an opening up of the State to the intervention of its citizens, kicking out the elites of the institutions they have unduly taken away from ordinary people (*gente*) and allowing citizens new forms of intervention and control over collective decision-making. This principle is reclaimed at the level of nation-state and therefore involves an understanding of the nation as the primary space in which political control can be exercised by ordinary people over decisions affecting them. As we shall see, this carries important consequences when it comes to the question of the relationship between the State and the nation, raising the question of who is considered to be part of the political community the State purports to represent.

The M5S has frequently referred to the need to recuperate popular sovereignty. Indicative is the programmatic “Let’s Take Back Sovereignty”⁴ delivered by M5S leader Di Battista in a debate organised by the journal *Micromega* (ADB1). The hollowing out of sovereignty is hereby understood as deriving from the rise of a political elite often attacked by the M5S with the notion of “caste”. This elite stands accused of having turned politics from a vocation into a career, in so doing losing connection with the citizenry it is supposed to represent. Politicians are also accused to be in cahoots with various lobbyists (BG3; BG4), including multinational corporations working in the food industry (accused of depriving citizens of “food sovereignty”), polluting industries, such as the steel factory ILVA, and the banks (responsible for the loss of monetary sovereignty) (ADB1). Di Battista further refers to this question of economic and monetary sovereignty by discussing the power acquired by the European Central Bank, a supranational body made up of unelected technocratic elite (BG4; ADB1).

The elite capture of the State apparatus is seen as having created a yawning gap between represented and representatives. Di Battista goes on to state that Montecitorio (the Italian low Chamber) is not “real life” (ADB1). During the aforementioned V Day, Beppe Grillo represented the parliament as a rehabilitation centre (BG1), a rhetoric that is reminiscent of both fascist and communist tirades against parliamentary cretinism. In a 2016 speech titled “Sovereignty Belongs to the People”,⁵ Di Battista goes back to this theme of the distance between represented and representatives. He argues that politicians hate the People because they do not know them and are totally disconnected from reality. He denounces that the politicians constantly seek protection behind their armed bodyguard, the armoured car or in their offices because they are afraid of the anger of ordinary people (ADB2).⁶ This picture of the distance between politicians and representatives returns in many speeches by other M5S leaders, taking the form of a palaces versus squares and politicians versus citizens political topology. Politicians are portrayed as being fortified in the palaces of State power, with ordinary citizens standing in the squares in protest against them (BG1; ADB1; ADB2).

A very similar diagnosis of de-linking between represented and representatives is painted in Podemos’ discourse. Also in this case, the discourse centres on the notion of sovereignty. This term has often been explicitly used by party leader Pablo Iglesias, who claimed that none is more “soberanista” than Podemos (EFE, 2014), and by Inigo Errejón, the party’s number 2 until the Congress of Vistalegre II in February 2017, who back in 2014 referred to the need for recovering sovereignty (Telecinco 2014) or, more recently, has claimed that “we are the People and we are going to reclaim sovereignty” (Telemadrid 2016). The loss of sovereignty is hereby similarly seen as a result of the elite capture of the

State apparatus and of the rise of technocratic power at the European level, typified by the Troika and the European Central Bank. In a famous speech, Pablo Iglesias' has argued:⁷

[...] European sovereignty is not in Davos, not in the Bundesbank, not in the Troika, it is not Merkel's. European sovereignty belongs to citizens. Stop hi-jacking sovereignty. Enough is enough with coward governments that do not defend their people. (P11)

Furthermore, Podemos leaders have often accused the Spanish government of being under the control of various oligarchs, including financial lobbies, large (multinational) companies listed in IBEX35 (the Spanish Stock exchange), bankers and economists, as well as powerful, rich and privileged people (P11; P12; P13; P14). As a consequence of this elite and technocratic "hi-jacking" of political power, ordinary citizens are seen as having been alienated from politics. Politicians are depicted as standing miles away from the interests of the people, citizens and workers (*gente, pueblo, ciudadanos, trabajadores*), who constitute the majority, or the "social majority" (*mayoría social*), to refer to a frequent Podemos' trope. In so doing Podemos projects a realignment of social antagonism that does not run along the traditional Left/Right axis, but rather along the Top/Down one, pitting the Citizenry below, against the Oligarchy oppressing it from above.

To reverse this hollowing out of popular sovereignty, Podemos and the M5S have called for a process of active reintegration of the citizenry in the political process, and the pursuit of a more authentic connection between represented and representatives, meant to ensure that the voices of ordinary people are once again heard and have an impact on political decisions. The discourse of the M5S has often underlined the need for citizens to take back their institutions and political power as seen in the expression "let's take back the institutions", which is a sort of motto that appears very often in Grillo's blog, or "let's take back the sovereignty" (BG1; BG2; ADB1).⁸ To achieve this goal, party leaders have emphasised the need for ordinary citizens to become once again engaged in politics, after a long period of political apathy which has ended up engendering the disempowerment of the citizenry, thus ultimately favouring the elites' grip on power.

Take for example the intervention of Beppe Grillo in the aforementioned V Day, where the satirical comedian argued that "we need to bring the politics back to citizens", an expression that has since often been used by M5S politicians (BG1). The M5S has often criticised the professionalisation of politicians and has called for a limit of two mandates for its representatives, as a means to prevent that detachment between citizens and "real life" it considers responsible for the growing political corruption (BG1; ADB1). As argued by Alessandro Di Battista:⁹ "the first thing we Italian citizens must do to get back our sovereignty is to accept a simple idea, that anyone, as far as honest and hard-worker, can [...] become an MP; all of us, everyone" (ADB1). M5S leaders have argued that the electors and not the lobbies are the true politicians' employer (ADB1) and almost obsessively referred to the importance of honesty in politics. This striving for a reconnection between represented and representatives is also reflected in the way in which political representatives of M5S have vocally refused the honorific titles attributed in Italy to Mps, such as "*onorevole deputato*", an equivalent to the Right Honourable style applied to members of collective bodies in Britain and other Commonwealth countries. They have instead preferred to call themselves "*onorevoli cittadini*" (honourable citizens [ADB1]). A similar urge has been reflected in the choice of M5S politicians to use a casual clothing style (something common to Podemos), because of the perception that formal clothing separates politicians from common people. Podemos has called in very similar forms for a reintegration of citizens

in the political process and in state institutions. This can be seen in Iglesias' references to the "assault on the institution", a phrase that expresses the need to recuperate their hold on political power and dislodge the elites that are controlling them.¹⁰

An important component in this project of grassroots reclaiming of popular sovereignty has been the development of digital democracy initiatives. These parties have been characteristic in their construction of online consultation and decision-making platforms, such as Podemos' Participa platform in which party members can discuss and vote on key issues (e.g. party roles and policies) and the Rousseau platform used by the M5S. However, this pursuit of new forms of democracy is not just a matter of internal organisation. Both parties have proposed a series of institutional reforms aimed at achieving more direct democracy. These include popular initiative (in proposing laws); restoration of legality (allowing people with no criminal record to run for elections); limitations of eligibility (MPs cannot be elected for more than two legislatures); and restoration of electoral preferences (citizens directly choose the candidates from a list) (BG1; ADB1). Similar proposals have been made in Podemos' manifestos for the 2015 and 2016 national elections in Spain, including the introduction of a recall referendum in the case of a breaching of the electoral contract. The 2015 manifesto, for example, stated that "electoral programmes have to be understood as contracts with citizens. Therefore Podemos will set minimum contractual commitments, which, if breached, will raise a call for new elections" (Podemos 2015, 10).

These different proposals highlight the attempt to construct a participatory and responsive state, a state in which popular sovereignty is not purely a transcendental principle to be then mediated through the filters of representative democracy, but rather the actual possibility for citizens to directly decide on a number of issues of concern, in a way that is reminiscent of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's project of popular democracy. This emphasis on direct democracy, which is in fact to be found in many previous historical examples of populist movements (Meny and Surel 2002), constitutes an important element of commonality between the M5S and Podemos. The antidote to an oligarchic society, in which the elites exploit people's apathy, is seen as involving a reactivation of the citizenry, and the construction of participatory institutions overcoming the passivity of the citizenry engendered by representative democracy. But what is this new participatory state, controlled by its citizens rather than the elites, actually supposed to do? What degree of intervention on the society and economy is it assigned in the vision of these parties?

An Inclusive or Exclusive State?

The second step in our analysis regards instead the conception of the State's relationship to the economy and to national identity, and the degree to which these parties' view of the State is inclusionary or exclusionary (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2013).

Both parties propose to some extent a greater intervention of the State in the economy, although they differ in the degree of this intervention. Podemos frames the State as a supportive and protective institution. The main slogan of the 2015 national electoral campaign was "a country with you" (*un país contigo*). This expression served to condense the promise of a state helping citizens, through a number of measures including: a basic income for all citizens; an expansion of employment also through the creation of public jobs; the defence and strengthening of public services allowing citizens a better quality of life than previously experienced; investment programmes helping youth find

employment or establish new companies; and support for self-employed and small and medium entrepreneurs (MPOD). These various measures fleshed out a programme that as asserted by Pablo Iglesias himself was strongly social-democratic in character (PI3). Its aim was to go beyond a situation in which the State was absent and visible only as a means of repression, for example through house evictions increasing steeply since the 2008 financial crisis. Significantly, it was called *plan de rescate ciudadano* (economic bailout for citizens), in a reversal of the policies implemented since the 2008 crash to rescue banks with public funds (MPOD).

The discourse of the M5S is quite similar to that of Podemos. It too proposes an interventionist state providing citizens with a basic safety net and guarding against corruption and illegal practices. Among the measures that the M5S has proposed feature: Universal Basic Income for all citizens (ADB1; ADB2; BG3; MM5S¹¹), a measure also proposed by Podemos (PI3; MPOD); the nationalisation of banks rescued with public funds (ADB1), a measure also proposed by Podemos (PI3); a national investment bank to support strategic economic activity; and measures to defend the local industry (MM5S), including abandoning the Euro and a reclamation of economic power by the national central bank (ADB2). Yet in respects the M5S position is more liberal than that of Podemos. In fact, the party's discourse often portrays the market and especially small enterprises as being more efficient of a state constantly accused of corruption. The State is seen as having to act as a watchman, a neutral arbiter responsible for maintaining a regime of fair competition, in which small and medium enterprises may thrive, and big companies, including banks, may be kept at bay, in a way that is not too dissimilar from the neoliberal view of the State as responsible for fostering a free market. Among M5S policies feature clearly anti-statist measures such as a reduction of public television broadcasters from three to one and a broad shareholder base for all private television broadcasts and the abolition of all de-facto monopolies (Telecom, Autostrade, ENI, ENEL, Ferrovie dello Stato) (MM5S).¹² Furthermore, in contrast to Podemos, the M5S is clearly suspicious towards an expansion of the public sector. It wants to defend public services, but it does not seem committed to extending the staffing dedicated to providing these services. This is because, like neoliberals, it continues to see in the State as a risk of distortion. This attitude is exacerbated by the inordinate emphasis on the question of corruption that lies at the core of this party's discourse and ends up facilitating a negative view of the State.

The differences between the M5S and Podemos are far greater when it comes to the question of migration. This is a particularly thorny question for populist movements, given the way in which, as we have discussed previously, their pursuit of popular sovereignty often goes hand in hand with the principle of national sovereignty, thus seeing the State as a bounded space, whose borders need to be actively policed. Podemos has been adamant about the fact that migrants and refugees be welcomed and defended, in the name of Left universalism and internationalism. Podemos' discourse operates with a universalist idea of the State whose role is not seen as limited to serving and protecting the interests of one nation, but also involves the pursuit of more universal human rights. Beginning with their leader Pablo Iglesias, Podemos has expressed its commitment to hospitality for migrants and refugees and calls for the closure of centres of detention for unregistered migrants. In so doing it has maintained a strong connection with the struggle against racism of social movements. Furthermore, Podemos has adopted an inclusive and federative view of the nation-state trying to respond to the complexity of national identity in the Spanish state. It has articulated a vision of national sovereignty in which the nation is seen as

comprising a plurality of nations, in a federation, as in Iglesias' description of Spain as a "country of countries" (*pais de paisés*) (Manetto 2014b; Reyero 2015).

The M5S has instead adopted a more nationalist position that comes close to right-wing populist movements. In a number of occasions, key personalities of the party beginning with Beppe Grillo have used xenophobic and racist language to present the State as open only to Italians. For example, in October 2013 Beppe Grillo and his number two Gianroberto Casaleggio attacked two MPs of the M5S who had voted in favour of cancelling the crime of illegal immigration. In a joint blogpost, the two argued that:

the message people will receive is that illegal immigration is not a crime anymore. Lampedusa is on the brink of collapse and Italy is not well. How many clandestine migrants can we host when 1 Italian in 8 has not enough money to eat? (Grillo and Casaleggio 2013).¹³

This xenophobic rhetoric was also on show in a famous tweet sent by Beppe Grillo on 17 June 2011, in which he asked the current mayor of Rome Ignazio Marino to resign because the city was becoming infested by "rats, garbage and clandestine migrants", a tweet that was later deleted because of the public outrage it provoked. In this discourse, immigrants are represented as criminals, taking advantage of our resources and threatening people's safety and property. This tendency comes close to that statolatry typical of the petty-bourgeoisie that supported fascist movements (Poulantzas 1979, 241 and 243). It reflects how the M5S, differently from Podemos, has absorbed typical right-wing populist demands, with the ultimately opportunistic aim of competing on this terrain with the Lega Nord in Italy.

Thus, it can be argued that Podemos proposes a far more socially minded and inclusive view of the role of the State than the one proposed by the M5S. If for Podemos the State is seen as having a moral duty to regulate the economy, to respect cultural diversity and to guarantee hospitality to migrants, for the M5S the State is instead seen more as a policeman that needs to ensure the maintenance of the rule of law, stamp out corruption, break up large monopolies to facilitate the operations of small and medium enterprises, punish crime and set strict limits of migration. While the two parties agree on the need for a strengthening of popular sovereignty, and a more direct participation of the citizenry in policy-making, they disagree on the actual policies the State should pursue, once the people are in power, with the two taking relatively more progressive/regressive views on this question. The two parties are differently positioned with respect to the cleavage between exclusionary and inclusionary populism identified by Mudde and Kaltwasser (2013), with the M5S proving to adopt an exclusionary stance, and Podemos an inclusionary one.

Conclusion

Podemos and the M5S epitomise the peculiar twenty-first-century populism that has emerged in southern European countries in the aftermath of the 2008 Great Recession in southern European countries. While northern European countries have been characterised by the growth of movements that are adamantly right-wing and xenophobic, such as Geert Wilders in the Netherlands and UKIP in Great Britain, Podemos and the M5S propose a relatively more progressive model of populism, concerned first and foremost with the question of democracy. Their response to the hollowing out of nation-state power during the era of neoliberal globalisation is a reassertion of popular sovereignty; that is, collective control of

citizens (the majority) over the important decisions affecting their life. They both propose a more interventionist stance for the State, through the defence and extension of public services such as health and education, and through the creation of new social welfare programmes such as Universal Basic Income, providing all citizens with the means for survival. However, ultimately the M5S still approaches the State within a neoliberal framework, seeing the State as being merely responsible for maintaining the rule of law and an efficient market, and maintaining basic forms of protection rather than as constituting the central engine of economic and social progress. Podemos and the M5S also differ in their understanding of the relationship between the State and the nation. The M5S has adopted a nationalist position, which takes aim at migrants and minorities. Podemos has instead opted for a more open inclusive and complex understanding of the State, to capture the diversity of national cultures of the Spanish state and with a more hospitable attitude towards migrants. The difference between the populism of the M5S and of Podemos thus revolves to a great extent around their different understanding of sovereignty, with the M5S understanding sovereignty chiefly as national sovereignty and an exclusionary view of the State, and Podemos instead approaching it mostly as popular sovereignty and adopting an inclusionary view of the State. Further studies are needed in order to dig deeper in the analogies and differences of populist parties in relationship to the vision of the State, which, as we hope to have shown in this article, constitutes a central question for populist parties, and an important spot where to evaluate their regressive or progressive character.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

NOTES

1. See, for instance, Di Battista's 2015 speech (ADB1—see Table 1 for speech codes).
2. The name of this movement seems to have been inspired by the title of Hessel's ([2010] 2011) book *Indignez-vous!*, originally published in France in 2010.
3. All data come from the website of the Spanish Ministry of Interior (<http://www.infoelectoral.mir.es>), accessed 12 December 2016.
4. "Riprendiamoci la sovranità. La rivolta del cittadino contro il partito unico del privilegio e del conformismo".
5. "La sovranità appartiene al popolo".
6. "[...] il popolo voi lo odiate, lo detestate [...] perché non lo conoscete [...] siete totalmente distaccati dalla realtà [...] vi rinchiudete nei vostri teatri protetti dalle vostre scorte".
7. "[...] la soberanía europea no está en Davos, no está en el Bundesbank, no está en la Troika, no es de Merkel. La soberanía europea es de los ciudadanos. Basta ya de secuestrar la soberanía, basta ya de Gobiernos cobardes que no defienden a sus pueblos".
8. "Riprendiamoci le istituzioni" or "riprendiamoci la sovranità".
9. "La prima cosa che dobbiamo fare noi come cittadini italiani per ritornare ad essere sovrani è entrare nell'ottica di un'idea semplice, che chiunque, purché onesto, che abbia voglia di impegnarsi, che abbia voglia di lavorare, può [...] entrare in parlamento. Tutti, chiunque".

10. "Asalto a las instituciones" in Iglesias' declarations at the first foundational assembly of Podemos on 18–19 October 2014 in Vistalegre, Madrid (Mateo Regueiro 2015; Manetto 2014a).
11. Although in the latter document it is defined *sussidio di disoccupazione garantito* instead of *reddito di cittadinanza*.
12. Nevertheless, note that M5S also wishes to incentivise public healthcare system and education system (MM5S).
13. "Il messaggio che riceveranno sarà da loro interpretato nel modo più semplice "La clandestinità non è più un reato". Lampedusa è al collasso e l'Italia non sta tanto bene. Quanti clandestini siamo in grado di accogliere se un italiano su otto non ha i soldi per mangiare?".

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