

# *TECHNO-POPULISM REVISITED: A COMPARISON BETWEEN THE ITALIAN FIVE STARS MOVEMENT (MOVIMENTO 5 STELLE) AND THE CHILEAN PEOPLE'S PARTY (PARTIDO DE LA GENTE)*

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This paper compares the ideological and organizational trajectory of the Italian M5S (Movimento Cinque Stelle) with the ideological and organizational foundations and characteristics of a recently born party, the Chilean Partido de la Gente (PdG). This paper aims not only at putting the early trajectory of the PdG in comparative perspective and to start focusing on an under-researched party. This paper also aims at debating over the analytical strengths and weaknesses of adopting the conceptual lens of 'technopopulism' to classify and understand both the M5S and the PdG. This paper argues that these two parties share (more exactly, shared, because of the evolution of the Italian party) not only several genetic discursive and (to a minor extent) organizational characteristics, but also some (albeit not all) contextual (historical, social, political) conditions favoring their successful emergence and electoral consolidation. At the same time, a closer analysis sheds some lights on important ideological (and, consequently, socio-political, i.e. in terms of class appeals) differences that may contribute to understand their seemingly diverging evolutions. These differences suggest that the concept of 'techno-populism', while analytically useful and even attractive, may also obscure strongly different ideological foundations of parties sharing the same techno-populist logic. Contra defenders of the 'techno-populist' concept, the traditional left-right dimensions (in our case, mostly declined through the pro-state/pro-market divide) are destined to reappear, sooner or later, in the surface.

**Keywords:** *Populism, Technopopulism, Varieties of Populism, Political Ideologies, Comparative Politics*

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## Techno-Populism Revisitado. Una comparación entre el Movimiento 5 Estrellas (Italia) y el Partido de la Gente (Chile)

Este artículo compara la trayectoria ideológica y organizativa del M5S italiano (Movimento Cinque Stelle) con las bases y características ideológicas y organizativas de un partido de reciente creación, el Partido de la Gente (PdG) chileno. El objetivo de este artículo no es sólo situar la trayectoria inicial del PdG en una perspectiva comparativa y empezar a centrarse en un partido poco estudiado. También pretende debatir las ventajas y desventajas analíticas de adoptar la lente conceptual del “tecnopopulismo” para clasificar y comprender tanto al M5S como al PdG. En este trabajo se argumenta que estos dos partidos comparten (más exactamente, compartieron, debido a la evolución del partido italiano) no sólo varias características genéticas discursivas y (en menor medida) organizativas, sino también algunas (aunque no todas) condiciones contextuales (históricas, sociales, políticas) que favorecieron sus exitosos surgimientos y consolidaciones electorales. Al mismo tiempo, un análisis más detallado arroja algunas luces sobre importantes diferencias ideológicas (y, en consecuencia, sociopolíticas, es decir, en términos de clases sociales de referencia) que pueden contribuir a entender sus evoluciones aparentemente divergentes. Estas diferencias sugieren que el concepto de “tecnopopulismo”, aunque analíticamente útil e incluso atractivo, también puede ocultar fundamentos ideológicos muy diferentes de partidos que comparten la misma lógica tecno-populista. Contra los defensores del concepto de “tecnopopulista”, las dimensiones tradicionales izquierda-derecha (en nuestro caso, mayoritariamente declinadas a través de la división pro-estado/pro-mercado) parecen destinadas a reaparecer, tarde o temprano, en la superficie.

**Palabras claves:** *Populismo, Tecnopopulismo, Variedades de Populismos, Ideologías Políticas, Política Comparada*

## Introduction

Political scientists Chris Bickerton and Carlo Invernizzi, the authors who coined the concepts of “techno-populism” (2021) and of “techno-populist parties” (TPPs), explicitly mentioned as a ‘pure example’ of TPP the Italian party Five Stars Movement (Movimento 5 Stelle, M5S). Officially founded in 2009 by a famous TV and theatre comedian, Beppe Grillo, and by a web strategist, Gianroberto Casaleggio (passed away in 2016 and since then substituted by his son, Davide), the M5S rapidly acquired huge popularity at the national level, by achieving the 27 percent of the votes in the 2013 parliamentary elections and the 32 percent of the votes in the 2018 parliamentary elections. Currently, the party has roughly 190,000 members registered in its website. From 2018 to 2022, the M5S has been in the coalition government as a major partner and, from 2018 to 2021, it expressed the prime minister – Giuseppe Conte, currently the leader of the party. Particularly until 2021 – when Giuseppe Conte assumed the leadership of the party, definitively sidelining Casaleggio and, up to a certain extent, downplaying the role of Beppe Grillo – the M5S kept most of its ‘genetic’ (Panebianco, 1988) characteristics that justified the inclusion in the TPP party family.

This paper compares the ideological and organizational trajectory of the M5S with the ideological and organizational foundations and characteristics of a recently born party, the Chilean Partido de la Gente (PdG, which we can, imperfectly, translate as ‘People’s Party’), founded by Franco Parisi – a former independent presidential candidate) – and by Gino Lorenzini – himself the founder of Felices y Forrados (FyF, ‘Happy and Rich Peoples’, a financial advisor company) – in December, 2019, fully legalized as a political party according to the Chilean law in 2021. The PdG has obtained relevant results in its first elections in 2021, either at the regional and parliamentary levels (when it obtained 7–8 percent of the votes and elected six MPs in the Lower Chamber) or in presidential elections, when its candidate Parisi ranked third with 13 percent of the votes, with particularly good results in Northern Chile – in contrast, recent 2023 elections for the Constitutional Councilors were disappointing for the PdG, which only achieved 5.5 percent of the votes and failed to elect any councilor.

This paper aims not only at putting the early trajectory of the PdG in comparative perspective and to start filling a gap in the literature – since, at the best of my knowledge, only one work has focused on this party (Mascareño et al., 2022). This paper also aims at debating over the analytical strengths and weaknesses of adopting the conceptual lens of ‘technopopulism’ to classify and understand both the M5S and the PdG. This paper argues that these two parties share (more exactly, shared, because of the evolution of the Italian party) not only several genetic discursive and (to a minor extent) organizational characteristics, but also some (albeit not all) contextual (historical, social, political) conditions favoring their successful emergen-

ce and electoral consolidation. At the same time, a closer analysis sheds some lights on important ideological (and, consequently, socio-political, i.e. in terms of class appeals) differences that may contribute to understand their seemingly diverging evolutions. These differences suggest that the concept of 'techno-populism', while analytically useful and even attractive, may also obscure strongly different ideological foundations of parties sharing the same techno-populist logic. Contra defenders of the 'techno-populist' concept, the traditional left-right dimensions (in our case, mostly declined through the pro-state/pro-market divide) are destined to reappear, sooner or later, in the surface.

As for the methods adopted by this research: the analysis of the M5S relies on the vast amount of secondary literature available on the party – this paper's author has himself conducted extensive research, through primary data, on the M5S and on its ideological and organizational trajectories; the analysis of the PdG relies on the very scarce secondary literature available and on content analysis conducted on available official party documents (the 2021 Statute, Declaration of Principles and Manifesto in view of the Chilean parliamentary elections), as well as on the official website's sections relevant for the purpose of tracing the main ideological and organizational features of the party.

## **1. The concept of techno-populism and of techno-populist parties**

Bickerton and Invernizzi primarily defined techno-populist parties (TPPs) as sharing five different attributes, merging, in a syncretic way, characteristics from apparently opposite discourses, the populist and the technocratic ones. These five attributes are the following (Bickerton and Invernizzi, 2018): a) low coalition potential (as 'anti-system parties': Sartori, 1976; Zulianello, 2017); b) a binary distinction between a 'virtuous' people and a 'corrupt political class' (as 'anti-establishment parties': Barr, 2009); c) anti-pluralist ideology as well as anti-elitist discourse (Mudde, 2004; Muller, 2016); d) a technocratic conception of politics as 'problem-solving'; e) the 'political competence' required for solving political problems lies either in some 'collective intelligence' or in 'common sense'.

According to Bickerton and Invernizzi (2021: 88), techno-populism is a "new logic of democratic politics [...] the main structuring logic of contemporary democratic politics": in contrast to technocratic logic aiming at de-politicizing governing institutions (by isolating them from electoral scrutiny), techno-populism is about the politicization of expertise (see the points d) and e) above). This logic has emerged because of the crisis of the "the ideological political logic, [when] society and politics were closely connected to one another by the mediating action of political parties [other organized interests] and ideologies" (Bickerton and Invernizzi, 2021: 89). Because of sociological, structural transformations (in the sense of a progressive

social atomization) and of the post-cold war, ‘end of history’ scenario of neoliberal hegemony, both factors favoring party systems’ cartelization process (Katz and Mair, 1995), this mediation waned and, consequently, the legitimacy of political parties declined. The new logic of techno-populism built upon the end of the “era of organized interests” (Bickerton and Invernizzi, 2021: 143) and on the necessity of filling the gap between society and politics (between voters and parties) through new forms of unmediated relationship (here is the ‘populist’ component: see Weyland, 2001) putting in contrast some “good public policy” against “special interests” (here the ‘technocratic’ component: Bickerton and Invernizzi, 2021: 34) instead of putting in contrast (and eventually trying to mediate) some social interests or values against other ones, as occurred in the ideological-political era.

## 2. Movimento 5 Stelle as techno-populist?

The literature on the M5S, differently from the PdG, is already vast and covers many aspects of the party, also in diachronic and comparative perspective. Some books (e.g., Biorcio and Natale, 2013; Corbetta and Gualmini, 2013; Tronconi, 2015; Corbetta, 2017; Vittori, 2020; Padoan, 2022) provide comprehensive analyses of the party, sometimes in a comparative perspective (Della Porta et al., 2017; Padoan, 2020, 2022). Other works pay attention to specific features, such as: its organisational and ideological evolution (Ceri and Veltri, 2017; Deseriis and Vittori, 2019; Borriello and Mazzolini, 2020), its policy proposals and its positioning on EU issues (Conti and Memoli, 2015; Pirro, 2018; Marangoni and Verzichelli, 2019; Bressanelli and Natali, 2019; Fabbrini and Zgaga, 2019; Baldini and Giglioli, 2021), its relationship with the movements (Mosca, 2014), its candidate selection process (Caiani et al., 2021) and the sociological and ideological characteristics of its grassroots (Biorcio, 2016; Bock, 2021).

After some local level electoral experiences under the Amici di Beppe Grillo (‘Beppe Grillo’s friends’) umbrella, the M5S was officially founded on October 4, 2009, when its statute was also circulated. The title of the first M5S’ statute was... Non Statuto (‘Non-Statute’), to highlight the ‘non-partisan’ character of the ‘Movement’ – which excluded any party charge apart from the leader (Beppe Grillo, also the legal owner of the party’s brand) and celebrated direct and digital democracy as the only mechanisms to avoid any bureaucratization and the full adherence of the party in the public office (Katz and Mair, 1995) to the willingness of the digital membership in its entirety, through specific online referendum and elections (for candidate selections) convoked by the leader and, since 2016, through the platform Rousseau – owned by Gianroberto and then Davide Casaleggio. Overall, since 2009 to 2018, the M5S had a dual and cohesive leadership, with Beppe Grillo as the political, charismatic and mediatic leader, and with Gianroberto (then Davide) Casaleggio in charge of the internal organization, of the platform Rousseau and of the party’s communication: the party in the central office (in few words: Grillo & Casa-

leggio) acted, thus, as a whip imposing strong discipline on the party in the public office, with the party on the ground (organized in informal offline local circles, with some autonomy for local issues but completely prevented from creating any intermediate bodies) mostly reduced to ratify predetermined political decisions through the platform Rousseau. The concept of 'hyper-leadership' (Gerbaudo, 2018) fully captures the relationship between the leader(s) and the digital activists in the early M5S: even if some important decisions (e.g., the candidate selection process) were entirely delegated to the members, the strong control imposed by the party in the central office over the party in the public office – as well as the political-mediatic capital at the disposal of Grillo – de facto made of the M5S a very hierarchical – plebiscitarian, indeed – party.

As for its core ideological attributes, the M5S could be indeed understood as a sort of archetype of the TPPs. In the M5S, since its origins until the beginning of its governmental phase (in 2018), we can easily trace all the five attributes that, according to Bickerton and Invernizzi, are definitional characteristics of the TPPs.

First, its 'anti-system' features, operationalized in its 'low coalitional potential'. The M5S refused any pre-electoral pact at both national and subnational level (until 2019) and any coalition agreement (until 2018). Beppe Grillo famously blocked the possibility of forming a government coalition with the center-left Democratic Party in both 2013 and 2014. Even in 2018, the so-called 'Government of Change' formed with the radical right-wing party League followed a formal 'Contract of Government', signed by the two parties and enumerating the policy proposals which both parties agreed on. Since 2019, the M5S has begun to participate in ad hoc electoral pacts at the subnational level with left-of-center parties (but not in view of the 2022 parliamentary elections); in the past legislature (2018–2022), the M5S has much relaxed its 'no alliance' strategy (e.g., Grillo, 2017) by participating in three different governments (Conte I, Conte II and Draghi) with nearly all the political parties represented in the Italian parliament.

Second, its binary distinction between a 'virtuous' people and a 'corrupt political class'. This has been the core of the original political discourse of the M5S, representing the 'Citizens', against the 'Caste' – La Casta, quoted by a popular book by two journalists denouncing the privileges enjoyed by Italian politicians (Rizzo and Stella, 2007). The very first public demonstrations convoked by Grillo, in 2007 and 2008, were called 'V-Days'<sup>2</sup>, against the 'Caste of politicians' and the 'Caste of journalists'. The struggle against the politicians' 'privileges' has been put forward through bill proposals and through performative politics practices (such as internal rules setting a maximum of two mandates for any public offices, as well as the self-cut of parliamentary wages – an amount of them was destined to a self-managed fund to finance small and medium enterprises [SMEs] and to charity initiatives – and the

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2 V stands for *Vaffanc\*\*\*o* (literally, 'f\*ck up')

refusal of receiving public funding). Overall, the struggle against ‘corruption’ has been the first, and strongest, flagship of the party – Zulianello (2020) defined the M5S as a perfect example of “valence issue [in this case, anti-corruption] populism”.

Third, the M5S’ anti-pluralist ideology and anti-elitist discourse. As for its anti-pluralist ideology, it is closely connected to the fourth and fifth attribute of the concept of techno-populism (see below). As for its anti-elitism, it is partly overlapping with the previous paragraph on the M5S’ anti-establishment character, but there are some further observations to do, though. The elites targeted by the M5S in its original discourse are variegated. It is not just the political class or the media system. For sure, there have been several public positions of the party targeting some ‘cultural elites’ – positions that justified conservative stances on migratory or civil right issues (e.g. Pirro, 2018; Caiani and Padoan, 2023), and that do not form the core discourse of the party (Caiani and Padoan, 2020). However, it is noticeable that one of the most famous Grillo’s books (*Tutte le battaglie di Beppe Grillo*, “All Beppe Grillo’s battles”) was divided into six sections: “Clean Parliament – No to High-Speed Trains – Unipol – Telecom – Incinerators – Stock Exchange”. The first section referred to politicians and their crimes; the second section referred to Grillo’s support towards the struggle of a local community against a mega-project in its valley; the fifth section focused on environmental issues, which was (and is) a key issue for the M5S – the own ‘five stars’ at the beginning symbolized “public water, environment, sustainable mobility, development and connectivity”.

Interestingly, the remaining sections focused on financial scandals, typically involving some mingling between political and economic interests and denouncing privatization and financialization of the economy. One of the most spectacular Beppe Grillo’s public actions occurred when he delivered a speech, as a delegate of small stock-owners, to the stock-owners’ assembly of Telecom (a privatized telecommunication company). Denounces against financial economy represented an issue that is potentially able to be framed in different ideological ways – from the Left, but also from the populist Right championing ‘concrete, real producers’ against financial elites (indeed, “producerism” – has been identified as a key ideology of the populist radical right: Ivaldi and Mazzoleni, 2019). The ‘statist’ discourse of the M5S (Padoan, 2022), praising effective regulatory tasks for the state (to avoid any ‘conflicts of interest’ and any state capture by financial powers), as well as its strong intervention to deal with poverty (exemplified by one of party’s flagship, the “Citizens’ income” [Reddito di Cittadinanza, RdC], a conditional cash transfer which became law in 2018) and precariousness in the labor market, is quite different from frames and proposals from the Partido de la Gente, as we will see below.

Fourth and fifth, the M5S’ technocratic conception of politics as ‘problem-solving’, in which the ‘political competence’ required for solving political problems lies, mostly, in some ‘collective intelligence’ (less central are the references to ‘common sense’). This is, as anticipated above, strictly connected with the anti-pluralist ideol-

ogy of the early M5S. According to article 4 of the 'Non-Statute', the M5S "intends to demonstrate the possibility of achieving an efficient and efficacious exchange of opinions and democratic debate outside any associational and partisan networks". The M5S had the ambition of building a *volonté generale* (very much in line with Mudde's [2004: 543] definition of populism, stating that "politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people") emerging from individuals connected through the 'Web'. The name of the digital platform adopted by the party (Rousseau) is quite revealing. The M5S famously argued against "political parties" – which exploited "old, outdated categories" such as "Left and Right" to establish a sort of fake competition (Grillo, 2017) – but also against, for instance, unions, which were often the targets of Grillo's provocations and dubbed as "shambles: a privileged interlocutor of governments devastating the workers' dignity" (Grillo, 2013a). Overall, the M5S' rhetoric not only was built around a people-vs-elite antagonism conducive to put, so to say, in the same box social categories, all equally exploited and deprived of dignity (from SMEs to workers and pensioners)<sup>3</sup>.

The M5S was, more profoundly, against any form of social intermediation (Florida and Vignati, 2013), because invariably and necessarily conducive to bureaucratization and separation between organizations' leaders and the citizens, in detriment of the direct democratic utopia promoted by the party. In the Rousseau's rhetoric, 'One counts as one' (*Uno vale uno*), despite the huge organizational and informational asymmetries of power making of Rousseau little more than a form of ratifying political decisions taken from the dual leadership – at least until the beginning of the governing phase, when, as we will see, new leaderships from the party in the public office emerged. Not only social, but also internal political pluralism was strongly (and coherently) condemned: even today, party's factions are explicitly prohibited. According to the original discourse of the M5S, public representatives of the party had to act as mere 'spokepersons' (*portavoce*) of 'the Citizens' (or of 'the Web'), with no space for personal opinions potentially betraying the popular mandate.

Here lies the trait d'union between anti-pluralism and technocratic inspiration in the M5S. Grillo and Casaleggio's party imposed a view of the Web as a spontaneous and a-conflictual aggregator of interests. The M5S' vocabulary speaks about 'issues' and 'ideas', not categorized as 'left-wing' or 'right-wing', but rather as either 'good' or 'bad'. As a famous slogan coined by Beppe Grillo said, "we are neither left-wing neither right-wing: we are beyond left and right". There is certainly an approach inspired by 'problem solving': such approach would represent the real

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3 "There are two social blocs in Italy. The first one consists of millions of young people without future, with a precarious work or unemployed . . . small entrepreneurs living in a tax regime [*regime di polizia fiscale*]. The second bloc is made . . . by those who were not damaged by the crisis, by most of the civil servants, by those earning a pension higher than 5,000 euros per month, by tax-evaders, by those people living thanks to politics, through the public companies. The first bloc wants to change; the second one prefers continuity" (Grillo, 2013b).



‘revolution’ brought by the Movement, made up of small-big steps through ‘best practices’ (Bickerton and Invernizzi, 2018), in contrast to the old totalizing ideologies of the past – nowadays, artificial oppositions to better defend a status quo. The Web provided, in the M5S vision, an opportunity for free exchange of ideas on equal positions, from which the best solution would emerge, through consensus building. This consensus, it should be noted, is based more on the persuasive force of the arguments than on numbers, that is, on voting, which takes over only at a later stage, as a form of ratification. The Rousseau platform itself, in its various sections designed to allow members to advance bill proposals and amendments and to draft party manifestos, was constructed to supposedly reward the active citizen (the one who ‘does not stay on the couch’, the one who seizes the opportunities offered by a tool apparently available to everyone) but also the competent citizen, the one who, on the basis of his knowledge and expertise, is able to have a bigger influence in the discussion. The Rousseau platform soon developed an online teaching section with political, juridical and economic contents available for party’s members. However, the ‘spokespersons’, i.e. the party in the public office (under Grillo’s and Casaleggio’s control), had the final word in the discussions, because of their expertise developed during their political activity<sup>4</sup>.

From these considerations, it appears well-founded to say that the political project of the 5 Star Movement has had a profound managerial inspiration. ‘Managerial’ in the sense proposed by De Blasio and Sorice (2018), that is, a conception of e-government in which the interactivity between activists and elected officials is extremely reduced, and in which the top-down dimension in decision-making is absolutely prevalent. ‘Managerial’ also, and especially, in the mode of legitimation of the concrete decisions taken, as well as in the way responsibilities are assigned within the party: once the apparently collective elaboration of the guidelines for political action, there is a selection – always and in any case from the top – of the “persons in charge” of the various functions, be they party or government functions. Here then is the ‘government team’ (squadra di governo) composed of experts and ‘high professionals’; here is the compulsory requirement, for any M5S’ candidate, to publish one’s curriculum vitae in view of the party primaries.

However, the importance of such a technocratic inspiration should not be over-emphasized. The platform Rousseau was less an instrument to build a ‘collective intelligence’ than: i. a key source of identity for M5S’ members, inspired by the techno-utopistic ideology developed by Casaleggio; ii. a form of legitimization of the decisions taken from above; and iii. a way to appoint an inner circle of loyal cadres (for instance, by assigning them some role in the management of the platform) to be put into visible positions in view of the governing phase – when, moreover, those

4 According to the procedure for approving the party manifesto in view of the 2018 parliamentary elections, indeed, the ‘spokespersons’ had the task (and the right) of drafting the final proposals to be voted by the membership through item-by-item referenda.

cadres began enjoying more autonomy, up to overly challenge the dual leadership, and particularly Davide Casaleggio (Padoan, 2022). The relationship between politics and technocracy was generally solved, by the M5S, in a very populist way, very much skewed towards the affirmation of the primacy of politics. The anti-establishment dimension was far more central than the 'technocratic-managerial' narrative, also because the former has been electorally more effective (Caiani and Padoan, 2020). This has been also declined as the recovering of popular sovereignty through the re-occupation of public institutions.

The 'technocratic-managerial' narrative, the use of 'experts' and the exploitation of party figures' specific expertise, served to demonstrate how it is possible and necessary to use certain professional figures to serve a politics made by non-professionals: the opposite holds for 'traditional parties', instead accused by the M5S of being composed of 'professional politicians' who, on the one hand, select executives of low professional profile through shameless patronage mechanisms and, on the other, accept or promote the imposition of technocrats at the highest political spheres, for the benefit of powerful elites. Popular sovereignty and the primacy of politics are, at the end, well present in the deepest M5S' narratives, openly backing the first pole of the 'responsiveness vs responsibility' dilemma (Mair, 2014) and, thus, clearly positioning against neoliberal forms of governance (Padoan, 2020).

### **3. Partido de la Gente as techno-populist?**

According to SERVEL (the Chilean public electoral agency), the PdG was founded on December 13, 2019 and fully legalized as a political party according to the Chilean law on July 26, 2021<sup>5</sup>. In February 2023, the party declares to have more than 45,000 members<sup>6</sup>, the second biggest Chilean party in terms of membership, very close to the Communist Party.

As the M5S, the PdG initially had a dual leadership, composed by Franco Parisi and Gino Lorenzini. Parisi is an economist and engineer who worked as an economic advisor for different (left-wing and right-wing) governments and held several academic charges in both Chile and the United States, where he had his PhD and he regularly lives. Parisi's public figure began incrementing his relevance in the aftermath of the La Polar's scandal (involving a Chilean retailer charging illegitimate costs to the customers) in 2011. At that time, Parisi started giving public speeches – mostly consisting in political and economic analyses and explanations about how financial system works – through social media in Chilean colloquial language. He was rapidly dubbed *el economista del pueblo* (González et al., 2017) and launched

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5 : <https://www.servel.cl/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/PARTIDO-DE-LA-GENTE-157.pdf>

6 <https://www.servel.cl/centro-de-datos/estadisticas-de-datos-abiertos-4zg/estadisticas-de-partidos-politicos/total-de-afiliados-a-partidos-politicos/>

his independent, anti-party candidature in view of the 2013 presidential elections, when he ranked fourth with 10 percent of the votes.

According to Parisi, the political situation in Chile was comparable to the economic one, in the sense that both were affected by an oligopolistic, cartelized condition: “Only us will be able to put an end to the monopoly of the political parties, because the controllers, like the companies, have taken over the controllers, just like the companies, have taken over politics” (quoted from Avendaño and Escudero, 2022). Parisi attempted to also run for 2017 presidential elections, supported by little Chilean regionalist movements, but failed to meet the legal threshold of signatures required. Then, in the aftermath of the *estallido social* – or 18-O (October 18, 2019) – he started thinking about the possibility of presenting his presidential candidature in view of the 2021 presidential elections. The initial organizational nucleus came from the former presidential command (“The Power of the People”, *El Poder de la Gente*) set up for the 2013 presidential campaign, including who later became the first president of the PdG, Luís Moreno. Soon, Parisi joined Gino Lorenzini, who appeared as one of the founders of the PdG, in December 2019.

Lorenzini has been the founder and president of *Felices y Forrados*, an advisor company recommending to his customers, for a very limited fee (roughly 3 US\$ per month), financial strategies to better invest their savings in the Chilean private pension system. *FyF* and Lorenzini soon became very famous for their aggressive strategies recommending numerous investment’s switches between the different private funds (AFPs, “Administrative Companies of Pension Funds”, *Administradoras de Fondos de Pensiones*). Although the financial performances of the strategies suggested by *FyF* were questionable (Cristi, 2017), and despite (perhaps: because of) the critiques from academic and governmental experts against the reliability and the consequences of the *FyF*’s advices – sometimes dubbed as “financial populism” (*populismo financiero*)<sup>7</sup>, Lorenzini rapidly acquired a sort of guru status amongst his hundreds of thousands of followers in the social media. Thus, similarly to Beppe Grillo, but even more central in their discourse and public activity, Parisi and Lorenzini built on their critiques and expertise on financial sector to develop their public figures as challengers of ‘the system’.

According to the party statute, the PdG’s internal organization is instead quite different, much more detailed and structured, than the M5S’ one. Despite the ‘digital rhetoric’ characterizing the PdG, the party’s statute, specifically in the articles from 12 to 34, detail the PdG’s organizational structure: this is much ‘thicker’ than the liquid and informal peculiar organization of the early M5S, based on the coexistence of local circles and of a strong, dual and *de facto* unchallengeable leadership, and on the absence of intermediate bodies elected from below. In the PdG, instead, both at

7 La Segunda, 27 November 2020. “*El populismo financiero de Gino Lorenzini*”.

the regional and at the national levels there are a *consejo* (Council, a sort of General Assembly) and a *directiva* (Directorate, a sort of Central Committee). Interestingly, the regional level is mentioned before the national one – arguably to highlight the “regionalist” inspiration of the party (see below). Both at the regional and national levels, the *directivas* (as well as the *consejos* at the regional levels) are elected<sup>8</sup> by party members and competition between rival slates is allowed – in stark contrast with the prohibition of internal factions which we saw in the M5S’ case.

The President and the Vicepresident, as well as the General Secretary of the party, are elected by the *directiva* central. The two most prominent founders, Parisi and Lorenzini, never occupied any formal office in the party: Parisi has been merely elected as presidential candidate in view of the 2021 elections by the members – although the current leadership of the party seems aligned with him – while Lorenzini abandoned the project as early as in 2021, following cross accusations of party funding mismanagement between Parisi’s and Lorenzini’s factions<sup>9</sup>. Even in recent times, the PdG’s party in the public office has been repeatedly plagued by internal tensions and even scissions and/or expulsions, thus testifying a difficult process of autonomous organizational consolidation in the absence of a strong party in the central office – being Parisi still formally lacking any role in the party organization.

The PdG, as the M5S, can be categorized as a TPP, according to the five attributes of the concept as identified by Bickerton and Invernizzi. In the opening section of its website<sup>10</sup>, the PdG firstly defined itself as “independent”, “self-financed”, “without any political ideology” and “regionalist”. The PdG is “independent” in that it is composed by “common citizens tired of the [political] duopoly” (between left and right). The PdG admittedly refuses any funding from firms, because “we don’t want to relying on, and to be debtors towards, anyone”. The members of the PdG are “neither militants, nor comrades, neither partners... we are just a Family”. Finally, the PdG aims at owning the regionalist flagship, which, in a traditionally strong unitary state, evidently reinforce the image of the PdG as an anti-system challenger, as well as a party aiming at filling the gap between society and politics, through the celebration of small-scale communities, where representatives and represented are structurally closer.

As the PdG’s manifesto in view of the 2021 parliamentary elections stated: “Democracy at the level of small communities is simple and direct, like the one practiced at the level of parents in the classes to which their pupils belong. It is there where it is best appreciated that the group of parents of each course determines its guidelines;

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8 The *Consejo General* (i.e. at the national level) is instead composed by members appointed by regional *consejos*.

9 <https://www.elmostrador.cl/noticias/pais/2021/09/06/peor-que-la-lista-del-pueblo-partido-de-la-gente-se-desgrana-con-acusaciones-cruzadas-de-fraude-entre-seguidores-de-parisi-y-lorenzini/>

10 <https://partidodelagente.cl/>

it agrees on fees and other monetary charges, defines activities to be carried out during the year, sets strategies and positions of the course and elects from among its members its delegates to the General Parents' Center, among other functions. [...] At the level of our country, democracy today should be just as simple despite the greater number of members that compose it" (PdG Manifesto, 2021: 10). The PdG does not question representative democracy per se: instead, it denounces its errors: "the spirit of the system is correct: there must be Deputies and Senators fulfilling the functions for which they are hired, is this the reality that is perceived? Clearly not" (PdG Manifesto, 2021: 11). The reason of this "expectation vs reality" (sic) contrast lies in the following: "representation was distorted by the entry of a factor that until now I (sic)<sup>11</sup> had not included in this analysis: traditional political ideologies and their respective political parties" (PdG Manifesto, 2021: 11).

Going more in depth to analyze how the PdG can be included in the TPP party family: the first attribute identified by Bickerton and Invernizzi, i.e. the 'low coalitional potential', can be easily flagged. The PdG has insofar refused to join any electoral alliance; even in view of the runoff in the 2021 presidential elections, the party did not endorse any candidate – neither the left-wing candidate Boric, neither the right-wing candidate Kast – although the vast majority of the party members, in an internal online referendum, opted for supporting Kast (61 percent vs 6 percent supporting Boric)<sup>12</sup>.

As for the second attribute of TPPs, i.e. the binary separation between a 'virtuous' people and a 'corrupted political class', it already emerged by the aforementioned denounces against 'political parties'. When looking at the seven 'utopias' that the PdG aims at achieving (PdG Statute, 2021: 16-17), the party manifesto is definitely emphatic on a non-positional issue such as 'corruption', thus being potentially characterized as an instance of "valence issue populist party" (Zulianello, 2020). Most of these points are, furthermore, strikingly similar to the early M5S' mots d'ordre: i. "Never again will young people have to take to the streets to demonstrate in order to be 'heard' [the reference, here, is to the *estallido social*]"; ii. "Never again should anyone kneel before a public official to be served"; iii. "Never again should anyone knock on doors to ask favors from a corrupt politician in order to move a process forward"; iv. "Never again in Congress 'closed door negotiations' between different benches to reach 'agreements' of dubious transparency" [the M5S, on its part, famously opted for streaming the consultative meetings between parliamentary groups in view of government formation in 2013 and 2014]; v. "No more political parties exercising any kind of power"; vi. "No more unscrupulous businessmen buying the votes of Congressmen willing to sell their will to pass laws for the exclusive bene-

11 Although the manifesto is formally a product of the party as organization, it is mostly drafted in first person singular.

12 <https://www.emol.com/noticias/Nacional/2021/12/18/1041540/pdg-kast-segunda-vuelta-boric.html>

fit of their benefactor”; vii. “No more public agencies or institutions carrying out actions at odds with the regulations in force”. It is noticeable, however, that at least points ii. and vii. seem as much targeted to corruption practice as to a liberal-inspired protection of the citizen vis à vis the state, something that has been never at the core of the M5S’ discourse.

The third attribute of TPPs is, according to Bickerton and Invernizzi, anti-pluralist ideology and anti-elitist discourse. As emerging from official party’s statements in its website, the PdG seems to be more anti-elitist than anti-pluralist, and its anti-elitism nearly exclusively targets political elites. Some recurrent claims against “big economic powers” have been detected in the analysis of Mascareño et al. (2022) of PdG’s online communication: however, such ‘big economic powers’ have been accused of capturing political parties – which remain, at the end, the real target. The PdG repeatedly argue (similarly to the M5S) for drastically reducing parliamentary salaries and immunities. In contrast, in the PdG’s electoral manifesto, words such as ‘oligopoly’ or ‘oligarchy’ are absent, and no claims about penalizing ‘big firms’ are present – instead, economic incentives for SMEs are recurrent. Even the AFP’s system, in contrast to the popular No + AFP’s movement (‘No more AFPs’: Solá-Morales, 2020; Rozas Bugueño and Maillet, 2019), is not criticized (“AFP’s are not a bad option per se”: PdG Manifesto, 2021: 98): instead, PdG’s proposals on the topic are entirely addressed to guarantee that AFP’s investments should benefit ‘real economy’, much in line with producerist arguments. It is interesting to recall here the parliamentary proposals advanced by the PdG’s bench on allowing investors (i.e., workers) to retire part of their funds for self-entrepreneurial activities (Mascareño et al., 2022), but also the own rhetoric of Lorenzini’s Felices y Forrados advisor company, much less focused on ‘changing the system’ than on ‘winning to the system’ (ganarle al sistema), through savvy, individual strategies to optimize investments of savings.

As for PdG’s anti-pluralism, it can be perhaps traced in the apparently rigid party discipline imposed by the 2021 statute on the party in the public office (article 15). However, in the previous article, it is specified that the principle of party discipline cannot prevent the “free circulation of ideas within the party”. Even most importantly, article 4 states that “the party cannot give orders to [members who act as] President of the Republic [the office which Parisi was candidate for], ministers of state, undersecretaries, ambassadors, mayors and public officials”. If pluralism is understood, as Mudde does (2004: 543), as a position considering “society as a heterogeneous collection of groups and individuals with often fundamentally different views and wishes”, it is impossible to overlook the fundamentally individualistic foundations of PdG’s ideology – which, at the same time, contrasts “dividing ideologies” (ideologías divisionistas) and undue pressures from organized groups: as the ninth principle of PdG’s Declaration of Principles states, “The PdG believes in a society where people [personas] are free and should never under any circumstances feel obliged to sacrifice their principles, values or beliefs by imposition of any per-

son, group of people or institution that, assuming any type of citizen representation, pretends to usurp the power of decision that by right we believe corresponds to the people [personas]” (PdG Declaration of Principles, 2021). Thus, while ‘dividing ideologies’ pit individuals (and, more crucially, group of individuals) against each other, the PdG implicitly rejects class conflicts, refers to the *gente* (the ‘common people’, a non-differentiated mass composed by individuals) instead of the *pueblo* (‘the people’, with a clear socioeconomic and even political<sup>13</sup> connotation) and clearly identifies in “group of people or institutions”, and often in the “Chilean state”, the potential threat: e.g., “the Chilean state failed to correct a lot of variables that had to do with the human person, the individual, the people [*gente*]” (italics ours).

As for the fourth and fifth attributes of the TPP family, Bickerton and Invernizzi pointed to the technocratic conception of politics as ‘problem-solving’, where political competence required for solving political problems lies either in some ‘collective intelligence’ or in ‘common sense’. Overall, elements of technological utopia in the PdG’s discourse are much rarer than in the early M5S’ one. According to the party’s Declaration of Principle, the PdG calls for a “representative, participative and [ranked third] digital democracy [...] We will promote digital technology as a mechanism for universal participation in the decision-making process”. No other references to “digitals” or to “telematic processes” can be traced in the 2021 electoral manifesto or in the party statute – except for the need of ‘digitalizing the Chilean state’, as repeatedly highlighted in the manifesto for 2021 parliamentary and presidential elections. In fact, recurring to online consultations on specific topics (such as the selection of the party’s candidate for the 2021 presidential elections, or the militants’ preferred position on the runoff between Boric and Kast) – when the leadership intends to do so, in the way the leadership intends to set – is the only, concrete ‘digital’ element incorporated in the PdG’s organizational procedures. This is by far less relevant than the (organizational, but also identitarian) role played within the M5S by Rousseau, which gave militants much more numerous tools to ‘participate’, with all the limitations mentioned in the previous section.

On the one side, the PdG vastly appeal, specifically in its online communication, to *gente común y corriente* (‘common, ordinary people’) and to common-sensical tropes, in line with the Parisi’s persona as developed throughout the past ten years. On the other side, in its official documents, the party emphasizes the need for assuring *profesionalización* or *capacitación* (‘professionalization’ or ‘training’) to the Chilean civil service, workers and entrepreneurs – again, coherently with Parisi’s highly mediatized profile. Such as the M5S, the PdG has launched its own school of political formation (Academia PdG). However, in contrast with the early M5S, al-

13 This has become even clearer, in the Chilean context, after the electoral breakthrough in the 2020 elections for the Constituent Assembly, of the *Lista del Pueblo*, an aggregate of local political groups with leftist inspiration. The idea of *pueblo* is also associated to a certain level of organization, not only to a specific class in socioeconomic terms.

most completely focused on anti-corruption and anti-political themes, on its techno-utopian discourse, on environmentalism, on anti-poverty schemes and on claims for stronger state intervention in the economy, the PdG, on the one side, supports a more 'professionalized' state – not a 'bigger' one; on the other side, it demonstrates – in comparison to the M5S – to have much better defined, fine-grained policy proposals (at least in the 2021 manifesto), exclusively elaborated by the party in the central office in a very top-down manner.

Amongst the core proposals of the PdG, as presented in its website<sup>14</sup>, we find (at April 15, 2023) forty-seven proposals. The first six proposals – those immediately appearing to visitors – concern: cut of parliamentary wages; auditing on governmental subsidies; loan mortgages only in Chilean pesos (in order to obtain lower rates); a public bank for SMEs and for female entrepreneurs – the PdG also backs generous gender quotas reserving 80 percent of top-level management in public-owned companies for women; possibility of borrowing savings invested in the AFPs; strong cut to VAT. Seventeen proposals are about economy – mostly put at the top of the list; five on education, culture/leisure, and health; three on anti-political measures, on anti-corruption, on environment and on law and order issues; two on immigration; one on the media system (proposing to reduce the subsidies to national media and to strongly support regional broadcasting systems and newspapers). Economic proposals mostly deal with the environmental challenge and tend to be non-politically divisive proposals, such as the incentivization of solar modules and electric vehicles (anything is said about sustainable mobility through public transportation), support to SMEs, tax reduction on fuels and higher taxation on on-line betting, improving connectivity in Chilean economy. No proposals on education aims at strengthening the public system: instead, the focus is on reducing the length of degree programs (to reduce costs and anticipate the entry in the labor market), on assuring to families a stronger voice in the management of primary and high-school institutions, and on favoring on-line teaching. The PdG also argues for army deployment in both remote/vulnerable areas and at the borders, to control illegal immigration. The PdG seems to have anything to propose nor on labor rights, nor on social policies – with a partial exception: housing, which is a quite developed item in the 2021 PdG's manifesto. However, proposals on social housing typically aim at easing house owning through subsidized mortgages.

In general, and to conclude, the PdG ideological platform seems going towards the following four directions (the first and the second one justified by technocratic reasoning, the third and the fourth one by appeals to 'common-sense'): i. modernization (through 'digitalization' and higher investments in human capital – as opposed to 'politicization') of the Chilean state and economy; ii. incentives for self-entrepreneurial activities as the nearly exclusive way to deal with social exclusion (including

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14 <https://partidodelagente.cl/propuestas/>



quite evident endorsement of “neoliberal feminism” [Rottenberg, 2018], defined as a feminism “producing a new form of neoliberal governmentality for middle-class women, one based on careful planning and smart self-investments in the present to ensure enhanced returns in the future”); iii. tough anti-migratory policies; iv. the adoption of ‘common-sensical’ (and less than ambitious) proposals in valence issues that are not ‘owned’ by the party, such as environment, health and education. Overall, in terms of sociological appeals, points i. and ii. seem more resonant amongst the so-called “emerging middle class” (clase media emergente: Mascareño et al., 2022), while points iii. and iv. may more easily match with conservative lower classes looking for a stable and predictable future as a reaction to the phase of sociopolitical convulsions inaugurated by the Chilean 18-O.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

As the previous sections show, and Table 1 summarizes, the Italian M5S (at least in its origins) and the Chilean PdG share several characteristics, most of them can be easily associated to the TPP family: their ‘low coalitional potential’; the antagonism between a virtuous ‘people’ (albeit nor the M5S in its early phase nor the PdG recurs to the *popolo/pueblo* signifier, while preferring *cittadini* and *gente*) and a corrupt elite; anti-elitism and (to a much minor extent, in the case of the PdG) anti-pluralism; politics framed as a matter of problem-solving by recurring to technocratic or common-sense rhetoric and solutions.

Table 1.

The Movimento 5 Stelle and the Partido de la Gente as techno-populist parties.

Attributes of Techno-Populism	Movimento 5 Stelle	Partido de la Gente
Low coalition potential	Yes, until 2018 (governing phase)	Yes
Binary distinction between a ‘virtuous’ people and a ‘corrupt political class’	Yes	Yes
Anti-pluralist ideology, anti-elitist discourse	Yes. Anti-elitism mostly targeting economic and political (more than cultural) elites; anti-pluralism was visible in early party organization, early refusal of social intermediation ...	Partially yes. Anti-elitism nearly exclusively targeting political elites; anti-pluralism is absent

A technocratic conception of politics as 'problem-solving' to be achieved through 'collective intelligence' or 'common sense'	Yes. Appeals to 'collective intelligence'. Appeals to go beyond ideologies, who artificially divide 'the People'. Techno-utopian elements incorporated into party organization (plebiscitarian effects)	Yes. Appeals to 'common sense'. Party claims to be situated 'at the centre', against 'extremisms'. Techno-utopian appeals only in party communication (negligible for party organization)
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**Source:** *Author's Elaboration.*

The two parties share other contextual similarities. Both parties relied on a dual leadership, although sooner (in the case of the PdG) or later (in the case of the M5S) this dualism got broken. In the M5S, a gradual rupture between the party in the central office (i.e., Grillo and Casaleggio) and the party in the public office (first, Luigi Di Maio [elected as 'political chief' of the party in view of the successful 2018 elections] and then, decisively, Giuseppe Conte, now the undisputable leader of the party. In the PdG, neither Lorenzini had formal roles in the organization, nor Parisi has: his de facto leadership is based on a strong mediatic capital (which the party in the central office or in the public office does not own), and the relationship between Parisi and the representatives may be a source of tension in the future. In both parties, such organizational weaknesses have soon provoked multiple splits and internal divides. Finally, both parties have masterfully exploited digitals not only (nor mostly, particularly in the case of the PdG) for organizational purposes, but also (and crucially) for political communication, by relying on colloquial, sometimes vulgar, registers targeting at the respective enemies and championing 'common-sense' – while, at the same time, adopting a newish, even utopistic (in the case of the M5S) discourse (Bracciale e Cepernich, 2019; Mascareño et al., 2022).

While all these common features may justify their categorization as TPP or as “digital parties” (Gerbaudo, 2018), this paper argues that differences are even more important to interpret their rise and the space they occupied in the respective party system. These differences, summarized by Table 2, can be quite evidently detected in key elements of both parties' discourses.

Table 2.

Key Differences in Public Discourses of Movimento 5 Stelle and Partido de la Gente.

	<b>Movimento 5 Stelle</b>	<b>Partido de la Gente</b>
<b>Signifier Adopted to Define 'the People'</b>	Early phase: Citizens (the active citizen). Late phase: the People (popolo), in socioeconomic terms	La Gente (indifferentiated mass composed by individuals)

<b>Ideological Self-Description</b>	'Beyond Left and Right': ideologically syncretic, not centrist	Centrist
<b>Positioning vis à vis Mainstream (Traditional) Parties</b>	Mainstream parties accused of being the same	Mainstream parties are accused of being extremist
<b>State vs Market Dimension</b>	Economic interventionism; Anti-neoliberalism	Promise to make the Chilean neoliberal model working better; Liberal conception of State-society relations

**Source:** *Author's Elaboration.*

While the M5S claims to be “beyond left and right”, the PdG portrays itself as put “in the center” of Chilean party system. The M5S achieved his spectacular electoral rise and consolidation in the context of the Great Recession, by denouncing the centripetal features of Italian mainstream parties, their ‘fake competition’ and the imposition of austerity measures in a post-democratic context (Crouch, 2004). Crucially, the M5S has championed the discontent towards the Italian left and more specifically the centre-left Democratic Party, accused of having betrayed its popular roots and of having too little opposed to ‘Berlusconism’ – to be sure, the anti-PD rhetoric, along with blurred positions on migratory issues and with anti-political tones, has also been functional to attract important segments of conservative voters (Padoan, 2022). However, the M5S has quite strong leftist roots, well-visible in its relatively advanced positions on social policy, in its environmental discourse, in its somewhat anti-US and pro-China foreign policy, and in its statist economic inspiration. Its recent move towards a clear ‘progressive’ (i.e. leftist) position in the party system – in line with its previous record in terms of parliamentary behavior, quite similar to the Radical Left in the European Parliament (Carlotti, 2021) – can more easily be understood while considering all the above.

In contrast, the PdG’s rise and consolidation occurred in the aftermath of the *estallido social*. While the PdG accuses the entire political system of patronage conducts, ‘oligopolistic’ practices, poor management and detachment from *la gente*, it does not argue that the Chilean Left and Right are ‘the same’, as the M5S did. Nor the PdG claims, as the M5S instead used to do, that ‘old ideologies’ and old identitarian linkages are used to ‘artificially divide’ the people and to *mettre en scene* a fake competition to reproduce a centripetal party system. This would have been, indeed, quite similar to the rhetoric adopted by the Chilean Broad Front (*Frente Amplio*) in its infancy. Instead, the PdG argues that ‘old ideologies’ are wrong, and that Chilean Left and Right are, as put in the official website, “rooted in the extreme poles” of the Left-Right spectrum.

The PdG, in this paper's interpretation, represents discontent people who are, at the same time, 'tired', perhaps 'fed up' with 'the system', and/or people who fear too drastic departures from the Chilean model. The PdG's discourse perfectly fits with people that do not vote for the entry referendum for the new Constitution and then voted for Rechazo in the exit referendum: people who perhaps feel that 'the system doesn't work' and who, at the same time, mostly or exclusively targets the political class for the existing grievances. To put it plainly: if the estallido social was a Laclausian moment of anti-institutionalism, which connected around the empty signifier 'Dignity' an enormous amount of unsatisfied demands (Laclau, 2004; Ostiguy, 2022; Luna, 2021), and if the conservative reaction – after an urgent retreat – was to denounce “the two lost years: two years of suffering, insecurity, and uncertainty for all the Chileans”<sup>15</sup> (as put by José Antonio Kast commenting the Rechazo's triumph)... the PdG aims at representing a sort of 'third way': to unify the calls for a better Chile and for the need of 'going back to work'. Democratic regeneration through unmediated forms of representation, technocratic/meritocratic appeals, and producerism, with a taste of anti-migratory stance: this is, indeed, a sort of mix between 'neopopulism' (neoliberal populism: Weyland, 1996), typical of the Latin American nineties; centrist techno-populism, whose prime examples may be traced in South European political figures such as Matteo Renzi, Albert Rivera and Emmanuel Macron; and the contemporary right-wing populism endemic in Europe and beyond, albeit in a more moderate (less overtly nativist) version. Indeed, according to the first analysis of the voting record in the Chilean Congress, the PdG is basically situated between the Christian Democrats and Renovación Nacional, i.e. as centre-right party in the Chilean multiparty system.

In sum, the M5S and the PdG, despite all their (numerous) common techno-populist features, seem quite distant in terms of ideological foundations (and ideological future directions). In this sense, their categorization of TPPs may excessively obscure their differences and, crucially, their function in the respective party system. Perhaps, more than a 'political logic', techno-populism is a (sometimes successful) rhetoric tool that is functional to challenge established parties and to somewhat disclose ideological directions that, sooner or later, are likely to emerge in a much clearer way. Such deep ideological foundations in any case are likely to have an influence on the directions that these parties – as highly personalized ones – may take in the future. If we understand techno-populism, as populism, as a “thin ideology” (Mudde, 2004), then we should, as researchers, detect to which extent 'host-ideologies' are thick: as the literature has already emphasized (Heinisch and Wegscheider, 2020; Castanho Silva et al. 2022), such 'host-ideologies' are often much more important to understand which kind of political-ideological projects different populisms have ultimately in mind.

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15 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Ahx-JwZX2E>

Put otherwise: if old systems of interests' aggregation and representation, based on mass parties and ancillary social organizations, have indeed disappeared, as diagnosed by Bickerton and Invernizzi, ideologies instead seem to be well alive – albeit disguised by techno-populist appeals to be more efficacious. Techno-populism seems less a totalizing 'political logic' or a party family, and more a cultural-discursive legacy of the neoliberal hegemony of the past thirty years, as also identified by Bickerton and Invernizzi. This legacy consists in the disqualification of any 'old' ideological references and in the celebration of appeals to pragmatism, common-sense and/or scientific evidences to solve (and delegitimize) social conflicts. All of this is far from been neutral, and arguably acts as a dispositive of reproduction of cultural hegemony. And yet, sooner or later, during the process of party's institutionalization and also because of party system's dynamics (which imply the necessity of 'positioning' within it), TPPs' ideological foundations – as well as their classes gardées – inexorably come to the fore.

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