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RESEARCH ARTICLE

MOVEMENTS IN PARTIES: OCCUPYPD

Donatella della Porta

European University Institute and Scuola Normale Superiore, Florence

Daniela Chironi

European University Institute, Florence, Italy

ABSTRACT: When the United States activists called for people to Occupy#everywhere, it is unlikely they were thinking of the headquarters of the Italian centre-left party. Parties and movements are often considered to be worlds apart. In reality, parties have been relevant players in movement politics, and movements have influenced parties, often through the double militancy of many of their members. OccupyPD testifies to a continuous fluidity at the movement-party border, but also to a blockage in the party's interactions with society that started long before the economic crisis but drastically accelerated with it. In this paper we present the OccupyPD Movement as a case of *interaction between party politics and social movement politics*, and in particular between the base membership of a centre-left party and the broader anti-austerity movement that diffused from the US to Europe adopting similar forms of actions and claims. Second, by locating it within the context of the economic and democratic crisis that erupted in 2007, we understand its emergence as a reaction towards *politics in times of crisis of responsibility*, by which we mean a drastic drop in the capacity of the government to respond to citizens' requests. To fulfil this double aim, we bridge social movement studies with research on party change, institutional trust and democratic theory, looking at some political effects of the economic crisis in terms of a specific form of legitimacy crisis, as well as citizens' responses to it, with a particular focus on the political meaning of recent anti-austerity protests. In this analysis, we refer to both quantitative and qualitative data from secondary literature and original in-depth interviews carried out with a sample of OccupyPD activists.

KEYWORDS: Social Movements, Political Parties, Italy, Partito Democratico, OccupyPD

CORRESPONDING AUTHORS: Donatella della Porta, email: donatella.dellaporta@eui.eu;
Daniela Chironi, email: daniela.chironi@eui.eu.

1. Movements in Parties: an Introduction

Italy. Spring 2013. Activists of the centre-left party, the Partito Democratico (PD), symbolically take over several local party headquarters. Converging on a platform significantly called OccupyPD, they upload pictures of themselves holding posters that strongly criticize their party's recent choices to the Web (which are quickly broadcast by traditional mass media). In particular, the OccupyPD activists are indignant about the party leadership's management of the parliamentary election of the President of the Republic. First, they are angry about the refusal to vote for the previous President of the Partito Democratico della Sinistra (Democratic Party of the Left, PDS), a predecessor of the PD, the reputed scholar Stefano Rodotà – the candidate of the new Movimento 5 Stelle (Five Star Movement, M5S), movement party that entered Parliament with about one quarter of the electorate's support in 2013. They are also strongly critical of their leaders' plan to elect a compromise candidate agreed with Berlusconi's Popolo della Libertà (People of Freedom, PdL), and of the subsequent boycott of former PD premier Romano Prodi, put forward by the party but not voted for by at least 101 of its MPs in the secret ballots. Finally, many militants are outraged at the bipartisan re-election of Giorgio Napolitano, who had sponsored the so-called technical government led by Mario Monti and supported by the PD and PdL, and who had acted against a possible governmental alliance between PD and M5S, instead supporting a PD-PdL agreement. The OccupyPD activists object to this unholy alliance, but also to what they see as a total lack of transparency and internal democracy in their party. They present their protest as a response to 'those who built a party that is made up (as it has proved in recent days) only of currents and power agreements' while 'we need an open discussion in order to build policies' (interview n. 4). They stigmatize the 'loss of identity' produced by 'an ignorant leadership' (interview n. 2). After being called on to elect a centre-left coalition candidate for the premiership, they lament having been totally forgotten by their leaders. Faced with the electoral defeat of the PD – which was expected to win the elections and instead ended up losing 3 million voters and failing to form the promised 'government for an alternative' – they see the failure of the leaders as a result of their detachment from grassroots.

OccupyPD is not the only movement that has formed within the party: in the same period, hundreds of critical militants in Turin organized a 'Pallacorda' (resonant with the name of the famous Tennis Court Oath during the French revolution) assembly, while the marshal body, traditionally renowned for its loyalty, refused to protect the party's leadership during the Labour Day march. Many activists demand that leaders "ResetPD", and party circles give money collected to NGOs such as Emergency rather than

forwarding them to the party. Once loyal volunteers at the Feste dell'Unità (the traditional fund-raising fairs of the Communist Party) refuse to cook tortellini until their leaders stop colluding with Berlusconi. In particular, the activists ask for democracy in the party, with space to discuss alternatives and channels to communicate within the party itself.

When United States activists called for people to Occupy#everywhere, they were not thinking of the headquarters of the Italian centre-left party. Parties and movements are indeed often considered as worlds apart. In reality, parties have been relevant players in movement politics, and movements have influenced parties, often through the double militancy of many of their members. OccupyPD testifies to a continuous fluidity at the movement-party border, but also of a blockage in parties' interactions with society, which started long before the economic crisis, but drastically accelerated with it.

In this paper we first present the OccupyPD Movement as a case of *interaction between party politics and social movement politics*, and in particular between the base membership of a centre-left party and the broader anti-austerity movement that from US diffused to Europe (della Porta and Andretta 2013). Second, by locating it within the context of the economic and democratic crisis that erupted in 2007, we understand its emergence as a case of reaction towards *politics in times of crisis of responsibility*, by which we mean a drastic drop in the capacity of the government to respond to citizens' requests (what Mair, 2009, called responsiveness). To fulfil this double aim, we bridge social movement studies with research on party change, institutional trust and democratic theory, looking at some political effects of the economic crisis in terms of a specific form of legitimacy crisis, as well as citizens' responses to it, with a particular focus on the political meaning of recent anti-austerity protests. In this analysis, we refer to both quantitative and qualitative data coming from secondary literature, and original in-depth interviews we carried out with a sample of OccupyPD activists.

1.1 OccupyPD as a Case of Interaction between Party Politics and Social Movement Politics

Although studies on social movements and political parties have usually treated the two separately, some empirical analyses have shown that they are deeply intertwined. Party scholars often analyse the emergence of new political parties from waves of grassroots activities, focusing on how the labour, libertarian-left and green movements contributed to shape Western European party systems (Poguntke 2006). Generally, parties born from movements put forward an agenda of the unrepresented, giving voice to

weak social groups, and promoting a more participatory way of doing politics with significant consequences for the quality of democracy (Kitschelt 1989).

The presence of social movements has not only stimulated the formation of new party families in the past, but has also triggered some processes of change within existing parties. Movements have indeed imposed a number of challenges on established parties: a) programmatic challenges, raising innovative issues; b) organizational challenges, calling for a participatory style of politics; c) electoral challenges, mobilizing traditionally under-represented social segments such as women and students (Rohrschneider 1993). Some empirical research has shown that in the 1970s and 1980s (Piccio 2011), and again after the rise of the Global Justice Movement at the turn of the millennium (della Porta 2007a), parties addressed some of these challenges. Although they did not meet all the movements' claims, leftist parties adopted deeper changes than others. Indeed, their programmes and membership have been altered by interaction with movements (see Maguire 1995; Duyvendak 1995; Koopmans 1995; Koelble 1991). This finding is in line with evidence from social movement literature, which underlines that the supporting role played by leftist parties proved decisive for movements' birth and evolution, both in terms of levels of mobilization and outcomes (Kriesi 1989; Kriesi et al. 1995; Tarrow 1998). Explaining why patterns of movement development and their impact on the public policy agenda differ in time and space, movement scholars understood that social movements need institutional allies to strengthen their capacity for mobilization and influence political outcomes (see Cress and Snow 2000). For these reasons different movements have developed special links with trade unions and a certain party or party family (e.g. ethnic movements tend to support regional parties, whilst ecology movement activists often vote for Green parties).

The traditional allies of social movements have been mainly leftist parties (Kriesi 1989; Kriesi et al. 1995; della Porta 1996), which addressed the same constituencies and shared a common universe of values (Kriesi 1993; Müller-Rommel 1990). Notwithstanding the fundamental differences in organizational structures and forms of action adopted, leftist parties and movements interacted through mechanisms such as: overlapping membership, i.e. double militancy in both movements and parties; the participation of parties in the movements' main initiatives and campaigns and vice versa; the efforts of parties to conquer the new electoral niches opened by movement mobilization through the adaptation of their programs; the positioning on some relevant issues raised by the movements; and the adoption of some less conventional political actions. As a consequence of these efforts, the activists of specific movements often showed a propensity to vote for a certain party, to convince others to vote for it, or to participate in its activities (della Porta 2007b; della Porta and Diani 2006, 213-218). However, simi-

lar forms of interaction between mainstream centre-left parties and movements are more and more rare: from the 1990s onwards, the transformation of the big social-democratic parties into catch-all organisations (Kirchheimer 1966) “reduced the room for mutual understanding” with movements (della Porta 2007a, p. 243). Indeed, these parties have gradually shifted towards the centre (Budge et al. 2001), offloading their ideological baggage and embracing a “light party” model. When in government, they have often supported a neoliberal agenda and post-democratic forms of governance (a growing set of policies tend to be formulated and implemented through contractual devices, Bobbio 2000). These changes have become yet more visible since the spread of the global financial and economic crisis that began in 2007. Neither at the national nor at the European level have social democratic parties proposed (or, where in government, implemented) alternatives to neoliberal solutions, thereby contributing to the translation of the economic crisis into a crisis of democracy.

During the crisis social movements have interacted with other, less influential and powerful, party families. In Greece, while Pasok (the Panhellenic Socialist Movement) dissolved, Syriza (the Radical Left Coalition) has grown from a small party of intellectuals (earning 4.6% of the vote in 2009) to become the country’s second party of (securing 27% of the vote in June 2012). Its electoral growth is linked to its capacity to engage in a dialogue with the anti-austerity movements. By borrowing instances of horizontality and participation “from below” from the Movement of the squares, and by giving voice to its claims, Syriza extended its electoral base well beyond the traditional niche of the radical-left. Similarly, the roots of the electoral success of the new Spanish party Podemos (We Can, 8% of the vote in the last European elections) can be found in “the crisis and the social response to the crisis in the form of the Indignados/15-M movements” (Flesher Fominaya 2014). Not only have “these movements prepared the terrain for Podemos, through a sustained critique of the existing parties and party system”, the founders of the party are all long term movement activists. In Italy, the rise of the M5S cannot be explained purely with reference to the electoral punishment of the major parties for their parliamentary support of the technical Monti government. Other factors in its rise include the emphasis it places on the horizontal participation of its sympathisers through the web and its openness towards movements’ issues.

1.2 OccupyPD as a Case of Politics in a Time of Crisis of Responsibility

OccupyPD follows some of the dynamics typical of interaction between parties and movements. Cases of double militancy are very frequent: many of the OccupyPD activ-

ists are young people who became involved in politics through an experience in social movements, often in the Social Forums and the student movement. With particular reference to the Occupy Movement, although it did not reach Italy to the same extent as other countries (Zamponi 2012), not only did these activists adopt the same name, similar tactics (occupations) and means of mobilization (intense use of social media), above all they share concerns related to the crisis of political representation.

The recent wave of international mobilization has indeed denounced the degeneration of the functioning of representative democracy, one also highlighted by influential scholars. Retracing a long academic debate among different disciplines, it has recently been observed that since the 1960s liberal democracy, characterised by the capacity of states to regulate the market, the presence of strong mass parties, and independence of the national states, has been challenged by three processes:

- a passage of power from the state to the market;
- a passage of power from representative institutions to the executive;
- a passage of power from the national state to international governmental organisations (della Porta 2011; 33, 34).

Crouch (2003) synthesises the combined effect of these processes in the convincing expression “postdemocracy”, which he defines as an oligarchic political regime in which politics, led prevalently by privileged elites who espouse a neoliberal vision with strongly anti-egalitarian traits, renounces the regulation of the free market. A minimalist version of a liberal vision of democracy, postdemocracy leaves large amounts of power to businesses, which lobby governments and decision makers, while limiting political interventions by the citizens to electoral politics. It is thus an elitist model which reduces the competence of the state over the market, giving political power to the economic interests of the few (*ibid.*). The political effects of the weakening of industrial labour are thus accompanied by a conception of politics that denies influence to the demos and the value of equality. Indeed, politics and governments fall into the hands of privileged elites, as before the advent of the democratic state, and the welfare state retrenches.

The transformation of the mass parties can be seen as one of the linchpins of this progressive contraction of democracy. Studies of party change have highlighted that the party types prevalent since the 1980s are characterised by a) progressively lighter organizational structure and ideological baggage; b) progressive estrangement from social classes of reference (classes which parties had attempted to organise and protect the interests of in the past); c) a growing permeability to lobbies representing particular interests; d) the reduction of participatory spaces and of membership influence on party lines (for a review, see della Porta 2009). As Mair underlines (1997), a top down and electoral conception of democracy spreads as parties transform themselves into cartels.

These transformations, together with frequent political scandals, have caused the interactions between political parties and civil society to short-circuit. Recent research has noted a rapid decline in the capacity of parties to act as mediators between public institutions and civil society, specular to their progressive approach to the state (della Porta 2008, 2011; Katz and Mair 1994). Primarily, they no longer are able to fully perform their identifying function which “consists in the production of symbols that serve to the members of a given collectivity to recognize themselves as such, to communicate their solidarity to each other, to organize the collective action” (Pizzorno 1996, 175). By performing this function, parties had historically acted as the main spaces of construction and expression of *collective identity* for masses of citizens who shared similar interests, thereby integrating them into the political system (Pizzorno 1983).

When Kirchheimer wrote *The Transformation of the Western European Party System* in 1966 this mechanism was already blocked, as the “catch-all party” had abandoned “attempts of intellectual and moral formation of the masses”. This loss of the power of identification was accompanied by a crisis which is both organizational, with a constant decline in membership (van Biezen, Mair and Poguntke 2012), and electoral, with a slow process erosion of the so-called electorate of belonging, i.e. linked to a party by long lasting identification. Although this process has happened at different times in different countries (taking place in the UK earlier than in Italy, for instance), it erupted in the 1980s (Dalton 1996) in parallel with the growth of the opinion electorate, which votes on the basis of the positioning of parties on specific issues and can easily change party or decide not to vote from one election to another, as proven by increases in electoral volatility.

Finally, statistical data indicate that since the 1990s trust in the ability of parties to channel emerging demands within the political system is in constant decline in a context of widespread mistrust towards representative institutions (della Porta 2009; Eurobarometer 2013). With the crisis, the level of trust in political parties fell to a historical low all over Europe: in 2013, an overwhelming 82% of citizens polled in the member states of the European Union stated that they did not trust political parties. In the countries worst hit by the crisis, this figure was around or above 90%. However, mistrust is high also in healthier economies, like Germany (73%) and France (89%), suggesting that the problem is rooted not only in the economic situation, but also in a widespread dissatisfaction with democracy (Table 1).

Table 1 - Trust in political parties within European Union

Year	2000			2008			2013		
	Trust	No trust	D.K.	Trust	No trust	D.K.	Trust	No trust	D.K.
EU (15)(27)(28)*	18	74	8	20	75	5	14	82	4
France	15	80	5	13	84	3	7	89	4
Germany	17	72	11	22	73	5	21	73	6
Greece	19	78	3	14	86	0	4	94	2
Ireland	22	68	10	23	69	8	11	84	5
Italy	13	81	6	16	76	8	7	87	6
Portugal	18	77	5	17	77	6	12	86	2
Spain	28	65	7	30	64	6	6	93	1

Source: Eurobarometer

* member states

Reasoning in terms of a crisis of political responsibility allows us to better understand some characteristics of recent social movements as well as the OccupyPD protests.

2. The PD in the Crisis

When the OccupyPD mobilization occurred in spring 2013, the Italian Democratic Party was a typical example of a centre-left party facing a deep electoral, strategic, and organizational crisis. This crisis was located within a broader process of party system restructuring (Chiaromonte and Emanuele 2013), as the February 2013 parliamentary elections resulted in electoral col-lapse for the two major parties, PD and PdL, and in the impressive success of the recently formed M5S (25.6%) at its first participation in a national election. The combined vote of PD and PdL fell from 70.6% of valid votes in the House of Deputies in 2008 to 46.9% in 2013. The centre-left coalition collected 29.6% of the vote share and the PD ended up with just 25.4% of votes, almost eight percentage points (3.5 million votes) short of its 2008 result.

This electoral outcome had important systemic consequences: “three parties scoring more than 20% of the votes each had never happened in republican Italy, thus transforming the bipolarism typical of the Second Republic into real tripolarism” (Chiaromonte and Emanuele 2013). Together with the crisis of bipolarism, the 2013 election marked the “drastic decrease of the index of bipolar-titism”, which passed from 70.6% in

the 2008 election to 51%, unveiling the crisis of the mainstream parties since half of the electorate did not vote for either them. In addition, small parties reappeared, with the number of lists obtaining parliamentary seats increasing from six (2008) to ten. Finally, in 2013, total volatility (39.1) was four times higher than in 2008 and the highest in Italian history, confirming that the party system had been deconstructed (ibid.).

2.1 The PD's Electoral Crisis

Born in 2007 from the merger of the two most important parties of the centre-left coalition that had been in government since 2006 – the Democratici di Sinistra (Democrats of the Left, DS) and La Margherita/Democrazia è Libertà (The Daisy/Democracy Is Freedom, DL) – the PD is a unique attempt to combine the post-communist and Christian democratic traditions. At its birth, indeed, almost all the leading exponents of the new PD came from the two major parties of the First Republic – Democrazia Cristiana (Christian Democratic Party, DC) and the Partito Comunista Italiano (Italian Communist Party, PCI) – and its members “continue to nourish strong ties with the identities of the past” (Bordandini, Di Virgilio, and Raniolo 2008, 304). The new party had its roots in a “double failure” (ibid.): the failure of the Partito Popolare Italiano (Italian Popular Party, PPI), and that of the Partito Democratico della Sinistra (Party of the Democrats of the Left, PDS), in building, respectively, a centrist and a leftist coalition able to compete with the strong centre-right coalition that had coalesced around the figure of Berlusconi and his party Forza Italia (FI).

Conceived as a “light party” centred on its leader and created to overcome the fragmentation of the centre-left, simplify the political system and promote bipartisan competition, the PD did not perform as expected by its founders from the outset: the early elections of 2008 marked the return to government of Berlusconi after only two years of opposition and the defeat of the coalition formed between the PD and Di Pietro's Italia dei Valori (Italy of Values, IdV). The PD obtained 33.2% of the votes, that is only 1.9 percentage points more than the score of the centre-left alliance (L'Ulivo-The Olive Tree) in the previous national election (2006). Since then, the PD's electoral history, although short, has been marked by a constant loss of votes (at least until the recent Renzi leadership). The first PD secretary, Walter Veltroni, resigned in 2009 after the party candidate's defeat in the Sardinian regional elections. In the European elections of the same year, the party collected 26.1%, losing about 6% with respect to the result obtained by the centre-left coalition “United in the Olive Tree” in 2004 (31.9%), and again conceding victory to the centre-right PdL with 35.3% (Source: Ministry of the Interior).

After signs of a recovery in the 2011 municipal elections, the PD suffered a new haemorrhage of votes in the administrative round of May 2012, particularly evident in the so-called “red regions” (Revelli 2013). The PdL fell, punished by its electorate especially in its strongholds in Northern Italy and a new ‘challenger’, the M5S, imposed itself in the political system: a scenario anticipating the earthquake of 2013 (Revelli 2013; Verney and Bosco 2013). Within the PD electorate older and retired people have been over represented, with younger cohorts seriously underrepresented (Diamanti 2013; Fava and Girometti 2013). According to a Cattaneo Institute analysis of the 2012 administrative election results, about 45% of the M5S electorate was composed of ex-voters of IdV, the Lega Nord (Northern League, LN) and PD, and only a small part of ex-voters of PdL. In 2013 the M5S was able to draw support throughout both the country and the political spectrum, and became the party of choice among many younger voters (Diamanti 2013; Bordignon and Ceccarini 2013). The PD now lost 19% of its 2008 electorate to M5S (Diamanti, Bordignon and Ceccarini 2013, p. 214).

2.2 The PD’s Strategic Crisis

For the PD, the 2013 electoral results also meant the failure of the strategy followed by the party since its participation in the parliamentary “super-majority” that supported the self-defined “technical government” led by the economist Mario Monti. Formed in 2011 after the resignation of Silvio Berlusconi, this government represented an unusual governing solution both because of the process of its formation – an initiative by the President of the Republic with the blessing of the European Union – and for its composition, as it did not include any party representatives. The two main parties, indeed, decided they could not take part in the same government as their adversaries, but supported it in parliament (together with the centrist *Unione di centro-UdC*, Centrist Union). This attempt to withdraw from governmental responsibility in a country considered “party parliamentarist”, has been seen as an additional factor discrediting the main parties, as for two years their leaders “had to limit themselves to accept a posteriori the “tears and blood” policies of the technocrats in government” (Revelli 2013, 16). Despite the unpopularity of these severe austerity policies, the PD did not distance itself from the Monti government experience during the 2013 electoral campaign. On the one hand, the leadership of the PD decided to re-open the party to an alliance with the left (a move that had already proved successful in the 2011 administrative election, when the centre-left won in important cities such as Milan and Cagliari). On the other hand, it ran a non-aggressive campaign, aimed at maintaining the ini-

tial advantage polls attributed to the centre-left (Bordignon 2014). This type of campaign proved ineffective, as it did not secure a clear parliamentary majority. In the difficult post-electoral period, although called on to seek a government alliance, the Secretary of the party, Pier-luigi Bersani, failed both to form a government and to favour the election of two of the PD's founding fathers to the Presidency of the Republic, and resigned.

The strategic crisis of the PD reached its apex when a grand coalition government headed by the prominent PD figure Enrico Letta was finally sworn in on 28 April 2013, marking not only a historical governmental innovation for the country, but a betrayal of the party's electoral promise not to repeat any "experiment" of cooperation with Berlusconi's PdL.

2.3 The PD's Organisational Crisis

The frequent changes in the party's strategy are symptomatic of the PD's organizational weakness, highlighting a low level of internal coherence typical of stratachic parties (Carty 2004) in which the adoption and implementation of shared decisions is made difficult by the coexistence of internal sectors provided with their own power and generating a centrifugal tendency. The events of April 2013 showed that the PD was suffering a lack of integration and coordination in two aspects: the "party in public office" and the "party in central office" (Katz and Mair 1995). During the elections of the President of the Republic, the refusal of a large proportion of the PD's MPs to vote for two of the founding fathers of their party, despite the decision agreed in a collective assembly, first testifies that, in line with the centrality assumed by the elected representatives in contemporary parties, elected PD members had great autonomy, making it difficult to implement a unitary party line within the public institutions. Second, the apex of the crisis revealed the lack of cohesion within the central organisation, showing the great political weight the internal factions had assumed at that point and their distance even with regards to major political goals.

OccupyPD stigmatised both these aspects – the prominence of the elected representatives and the incapacity of the factions to find a common ground – as they are seen to be at the basis of a top-down model of decision making that undermines the possibility that members may influence the party line. This slow process of marginalization of members is a long-standing trend within contemporary parties, more intense in Italy than in other countries (della Porta 2009, 75-81). It marks a worsening in the quality of internal participation coupled with the quantitative decrease of membership

which the PD does not escape, with a drop from 791.517 members in 2009 to 469.086 in 2012 (Damiani and Dominici 2013). The formation of the great coalition government triggered further losses and a reduction in rank-and-file activism (Interviews n. 1, 2, 6, 7, 9, 10), and it seems that the current leadership, which rose with the new secretary Matteo Renzi, will not encourage the growth of the membership as it supports a “‘light’, ‘open’ and ‘leader-centred’ party” (Bordignon 2014, 9).

3. Occupy PD as a Movement?

OccupyPD was initiated by party members out of deep discontent. In the narrative of its activists, the “shock over the failure to elect Romano Prodi as President of the Republic”, and more generally “the effect of the electoral result” lie at the origin of the movement, as it was “precisely the missed victory to determine a difficult equilibrium that then broke with the non-election of Prodi to the Presidency of the Republic” (Interview n. 9). The reaction to these shocks was a “spontaneous” mobilization: “in the days of the election of the President of the Republic, together with other friends, young people, and militants we decided to react in the moment of the maximum crisis of the party, to testify that within the party there was still something vital and positive. We have done it in the days of the attempted election of Marini and Prodi imagining what would happen after-wards, led by the idea that the way to carry on that negotiation would have resulted in a defeat – as happened afterwards! – this is why we have started a series of occupations in the whole of Italy” (Interview n. 6).

At first glance, OccupyPD could thus be seen as a phenomenon internal to an organisation and closed within its boundaries, a sort of different mode of internal party participation, similar to a fraction. However, OccupyPD is characterised by the use of movement-like forms of action, as well as an attempt to build a collective identity around opposition to the party leadership. From recent social movements, OccupyPD also imported a loosely networked organisational structure, with local roots and limited attempts at coordination. While lacking the requisites of continuity that denote social movements proper, it resembles phenomena that have been labelled as “movements within organizations” (Morrill and Chiarello 2013, Davis et al. 2008, Davis et al. 2005, Morrill et al. 2003). This strand of literature, born out of the encounter between movement studies and organisational studies, first called for a broadening of the concept of the social movement itself beyond the traditional state-centred vision of contentious politics. Movement scholars had indeed traditionally considered only those collective actors engaged in contentious conflicts against the state in order to promote

(or constrain) social change as social movements. Borrowing the idea that organisations themselves are polities in which different types of conflicts can occur from organisational research, some movement scholars have applied the concepts of movement literature to explain the non-bureaucratic, non-elitist, conflictual social processes that often develop within organisations to challenge the internal system of authority and change official policies. Drawing on this literature, in the following we thus explain OccupyPD as a movement-like social process, showing how some of the concepts used to analyse movements acting in state arenas apply to collective change efforts in other fields.

3.1 OccupyPD as a Conflictual Movement

“Social movement actors are engaged in political and/or cultural conflicts meant to promote or oppose social change” (ibid., 21). In the case of OccupyPD, activists conceive of the party precisely as an instrument for social change, and direct their action against their leadership that has used it instead as a conservative instrument: “our action has been a response to those who have built a party that was made only of factions and power agreements [...] we have occupied the local branches of the party because we care about the PD and we think that it has to be the place of social change and not of the power for power” (Interview n. 4). The conflict is not simply between the base of the party against its leadership, as the activists locate themselves within the broader context of Italian society, suffering the effects the crisis and calling for change in public policies. Conversely, by choosing a catch-all strategy the leaders are implicitly protecting the interests of the elites: “we [the party] did not clarify our concrete programmatic points to change people’s lives, we limited ourselves to saying: ‘we represent everybody a bit for an Italy that’s a bit more equal’” (Interview n. 2).

This main conflictual opposition influences the composition of the movement that, in the account of the interviewees, is run by rank-and-file activists, rather than party functionaries: “by a very large majority OccupyPD is done by simple members, very few people have formal roles” (Interview n. 2). Consequently, the movement is presented as a grassroots campaign that started inside the party and reached out to other social sectors: “the movement was initiated by young members, then, in the following days, other people also joined the mobilization. They were not members, but for sure sympathizers of the PD or in any case leftists. For sure it is a movement that started from below [...] its network was mainly of an immaterial type: it has travelled on social media and mailing-lists, also because new committees and occupations were born day by

day” (Interview n. 10). Being grassroots, the campaign does not mobilize any party funds or structures, with the exception of the local headquarters that are in any case perceived as belonging to members, not the bureaucracy: “we do not have any access to party funds, nor do we ask the party for economic support. We use the local headquarters of the party for our meetings, often without asking permission from anybody. We only use our channels and connections for gaining access to mass media, that is local newspapers and television” (Interview n. 10).

The vertical cleavage between an enlarged leftist base and its delegitimised leaders is echoed in a secondary vertical cleavage between the periphery of the party and its centre, between the local level of the organisation and the national one. An activist from San Giovanni, a small town in Emilia Romagna, so explains: “in those days and those troubled hours, at the local level, the PD took a stance of sharp distance from and condemnation of what had happened at the national level. Clearly, thanks to this position, all those people that were critical of the choices of the party in reality did not contest the local PD. So, let's say that, when OccupyPD occurred, some party members of San Giovanni went to Bologna, and promoted also a lot of initiatives in those days and those weeks, but a real OccupyPD in San Giovanni was not created [...] the fracture is with the national PD [...] we had some members, especially volunteers in the local “Circolo”, who did not want to organise the Festa dell'Unità any more because of what happened [...] the local PD spread through all the possible channels a letter in which it took distance and condemned the recent choices of the party. Immediately after came another public statement, even more critical, from the Young Democrats of San Giovanni. Moreover, from a more pragmatic point of view, we decided not to give all the profits from the Feste dell'Unità to Rome: we will pay a quota to the provincial level [...] but beyond this, we will not give money to Rome this year” (Interview n. 7). This account illustrates that the clash developed within the PD in the spring of 2013 cannot be ascribed to the typical conflicts between different territorial levels that sometimes occur within stratarchic parties (Berta 2007), usually involving local notables (often related to a fraction) struggling for power against national leaders (often belonging to opposing fractions). In this case, again, the local units, which still function as organisational reference points for members and sympathisers, have mobilised “from below” with a movement dynamic of protest.

3.2. OccupyPD as an Informal Network

With regards to organisational form, OccupyPD has adopted an informal network model, involving both individual and (more or less) organised actors (Melucci 1989). In

the case of OccupyPD, the network links together simple members and sympathisers (trade unionists included), the Youth branch of the party (the Young Democrats), and some other organisations, such as “20 Maggio-flessibilità sicura” (20th May-Secure Flexibility), an association with around 10.000 members that deals with labour issues and precarious work (Interview n. 3). The local headquarters of the party all over Italy serve as material hubs for the network, thus giving the movement a national dimension: “OccupyPD has interacted with local headquarters all over Italy. I count about fifty cities and provinces where there is a small nucleus of young people who took part in this mobilization, many of which were present at the national meetings in Prato and Bologna and again in the subsequent events” (Interview n. 6).

The networked structure is praised for the possibilities it offers to open spaces of dialogue within and outside the party, adopting a horizontal mode of interaction that does not entail interventions from the top level and the bureaucracy. The activists, indeed, point out that some leaders “immediately labelled us “grillini del PD” and so end of communications!” (Interview n. 9). In general, none of the party’s top bodies supported the movement: “no one, with the exception of the young MPs under 35. Really no one! Not the National Secretariat, or the Deputies (not even the closer ones)”. In this context, the networked structure facilitated horizontal processes of interaction within and outside the party boundaries: “we are an informal network. We also managed to set a dialogue with other internal party groups, because there was no will to close the movement: we did not nominate an official spokesperson and an official coordination committee, we kept the thing as a network, we did not structure it [...] Occupy echoed in all the party components, but in particular among the militants (who are not interested in belonging to a fraction rather than another) and in a certain part of the country, among voters of the centre-left that culturally are suspicious of parties, but felt they could participate in our movement (although it was started by party militants). So, there has been a coalescence of a world at the borders between the political world and associationism, between politics and social commitment” (Interview n. 6). The openness of the movement towards civil society is confirmed by an activist from the South: “here in Bari we do not have formal relations with other associations, but for example it is known that the Association x is in a relation with OccupyPD to carry out a certain type of struggle. We talk with all the civil society associations” (Interview n. 10).

Although keeping a low level of structuration, OccupyPD could count on some material (the local headquarters) and communication resources in the form of both old and new media and face to face channels of recruitment. The movement is certainly mediated, as the mass media devoted high levels of attention to this unexpected form of

protest. The activists speak in fact of an “enormous access to mass media, well beyond our expectation, and it was also annoying that in the past many of us talked of important issues and no one came, on the contrary when you criticise your party, that is legitimate, everyone comes to listen” (Interview n. 2). The impact of the media is complex, bridging old and new medias together. In one activist’s account, “the occupation of the local headquarters has already obtained the attention of the national media. After the first period, several national television channels asked for interviews from many of us, from Rai1 to La7, from local television stations to the national news-casts (I remember the Tg2, Tg3, SkyTG) [...] this attention came along with a debate on the web” (Interview n. 9).

The movement is also mediated through its wide use of new media, in particular social media. In line with evolutions in modes of participation that started with the Arab Spring (see for instance, Juris 2012), the OccupyPD activists used Facebook and Twitter intensively to publicly debate and spread their grievances, and also to recruit new individuals for non-virtual movement actions. The campaign expanded through social media, as “everything was born especially through the web, with endless discussions and sort of permanent assemblies” (Interview n. 9). However, social media do not substitute the importance of personal networks for recruitment processes (Snow et al. 1980; Diani and Lodi 1988), as activists recall that they also “exploited some contacts that maybe initially had nothing to do with OccupyPD, because they came in part from party activities and in part from activities within the Young Democrats” (Interview n. 9). Moreover, the activists themselves stress the insufficiency of mediated appeals and the need to use more traditional, face to face forms of both recruitment and decision making instead. In fact, media are considered as relevant in spreading information, but less in mobilizing as “a full Facebook event does not mean a lot. So we also went into the party headquarters, using the party phone to call the people and tell them “come, come, come!” and people replied: “I’ll come, I’ll come, I’ll come”, they did not say: “you have to convince me”. While often, for the official initiatives of the party we need to implore the people, in jargon we say “cammellare le truppe” [“rally the troops”, i.e. to manipulate participation], to convince them to fill the room. This time it was not like that. And we could not have done it only with the web” (Interview n. 1). Off-line and online communication “alternated in the first month of activity. In Turin, we have held at least three meetings, three real traditional assemblies, but at the same time, the people who were more active within OccupyPD listen to each other constantly and daily, maybe more than once per day, in order to discuss, agree and create the proposals that came about without any type of priority, hierarchy or predefined authority” (Interview n. 9).

3.3. Identity Building in OccupyPD

The choice of an open networked structure resulted in a plural composition of the movement that is appreciated as opening up possibility for broad support and preventing the movement from becoming merely another internal party fraction. As activists often repeat, OccupyPD is “a very heterogeneous movement [...] there are many different souls. There are people who have occupied because of an emotional and immediate rancour towards this leadership; there are people who, in a more reflexive manner, try to use this movement to build something; and there is also a branch of the movement that tries to instrumentally capitalise on what is going on [...] OccupyPD links together very different things, so it is really impossible for it to become a fraction” (Interview n. 1). This pluralism is at the basis of the broad political identity that developed during the mobilization.

In line with this plurality, in the accounts of the activists, OccupyPD cannot be restricted to a generational niche or to a specific area of the party, although both the high level of presence of young people and leftists is considered important in shaping the movement’s identity. The involvement of young people is seen as an innovation within the party. In one activist’s view “OccupyPD is maybe one of the first (or the first) action, within the PD, in which a great majority of participants and animators are young people” (Interview n. 9). However, most activists refuse to talk of a generational movement, stressing its transversality: “the Young Democrats have been the skeleton (also numerically) of this mobilization. Then, there has also been a diffused portion of older people” (Interview n. 1). So, “it is a transgenerational movement because it is not at all limited to the youth organisation of the PD” (Interview n. 2). In particular, there is the perception that at the ground level “the old militants have looked at OccupyPD with curiosity, maybe without totally agreeing, but anyway understanding that there was a call for renovation that came from the younger side of this political area, then wondering about the reasons for this stance” (Interview n. 9).

As mentioned above, the positioning on the left of the ideological spectrum is also significant in defining the movement’s identity. According to an older activist, the generational dimension intersects here with an ideological one: “here we see mainly young people, especially Young Democrats [...] but also those people that care more about leftist issues: labour, precarious work, social justice. Also here [at the National Assembly of OccupyPD] the few issues we dealt with, beyond the change of the party, were of this type” (Interview n. 3).

As already noted for the more recent wave of protest, the plural identity of OccupyPD requires the adoption of horizontal mobilising strategies, with structures – like

social media – that give voice to individuals rather than groups (Roggenband and Duyvendak 2013), and promote participatory internal decision-making (della Porta 2014). Thus, mobilization happens “in a horizontal and transversal form, also thanks to the simplification of communications allowed by the Internet and social media. Being a movement born spontaneously, obviously, we did not want or feel the need to structure it following a traditional vertical model. So, in reality, the dialogue developed through the tools linked to social media. This certainly helped to promote participation and a sense of belonging to a path and [...] gave people that were more engaged with this common cause the space and the capacity to elaborate a synthesis» (Interview n. 9).

From a strategic point of view, the heterogeneous nature of the movement is perceived as able to aggregate a large oppositional front, while also speaking to the large number of potential electors that had deserted the party. In this narrative, “the movement is very heterogeneous, like all movements that are born in opposition to something. It is a movement that includes many different realities, many different approaches to politics” (Interview n. 4). This allows the movement to deal with a complex of political issues, from ecology to universities, “to demonstrate that there were people who were occupying places not simply to carry on an internal battle, but also to express their thoughts on some issues” (Interview n. 10). The deeper meaning of OccupyPD lies however with the re-claiming of the party by its members. As an activist stresses, “while many people, in those days, also in front of Montecitorio, tore up and burned their membership cards, we launched OccupyPD to say that the worst thing that one could do at that moment was to abandon the party. We – its base – are the Democratic Party, the thousands of people that make it live every day. So, everything can be done in this moment, but not abandoning the PD, because even if we did that, the PD would not die: it would fall into the hands of those who are slowly killing it” (Interview n. 10).

The reaction to the shock is to take responsibility for “another party”. As an activist remembers, “the day after the political murder of Romano Prodi, with those 101 who did not vote for him in the ballots at the Chamber of Deputies [...] when we saw that all over Italy there were young people that were self-organising and occupying the local headquarters, we thought that it was right to do it here too, to launch a signal [...] we decided to send a message outside the party rather than inside of it, because we “put ourselves on the line” everyday and we did not want to be associated with a way of doing politics that is not ours” (Interview n. 10). In a similar vein, another activist presents OccupyPD as an expression of the willingness to keep the party open, opposing those who want to “close it”: “we felt so angry that we decided to open the local headquar-

ters, also as a response to those who were closing the party. Our action was a response to those who have built a party that was made (and this was proven in those days) purely of fractions and power agreements” (Interview n. 4).

4. Diagnostic Frames: Critiques of the PD as an Organisation

The reaction to the shock builds upon a critique of the inadequacy of the party stemming above all from its perceived organisational weaknesses. In the vision of the activists that emerges from the interviews, the lack of internal democracy is transforming the party into an ever more vertical organisation, led by an illegitimate leadership that is no more than the product of an agreement among personalised fractions. Such a party is seen not only as unable to interpret the needs of its members, but is also accused of having lost its leftist identity and coherent strategy. In this light, an activist stresses that OccupyPD “was born the day the PD proposed Franco Marini as President of the Republic, following the opinion of the base of the party, especially the young members, that he was completely unable to interpret those needs for change that not only the PD, but especially the Italian citizens want. So, we said: “no, this leadership, that acts in an irresponsible and suicidal manner, cannot continue to be our leadership! From Bersani to all the others, they are failing at their task and must leave their posts!” But, in our opinion, the problems had been there for a long time” (Interview n. 1).

The conflict between the militant base of a party and its leadership is not new. In general, parties have always tried to adapt to their environments, often sacrificing parts of their original identity and sometimes provoking the disappointment of militants, which usually represent the most intransigent sector of the organisation (Panebianco 1982). Since the diffusion of the catch-all model, this type of internal conflict has grown more frequent until militant sectors are marginalised, and considered an obstacle to the choices of the leadership. In recent times, these type of parties have instead emphasised the involvement of a broader public of sympathisers in aspects of the internal life of the organisation, introducing procedures for the direct selection of secretaries and candidates meant to produce a symbolic re-legitimation (Ignazi 2004). Following this path, “the PD positioned itself as an ‘American’ party: a party of voters (and no longer of enlisted members), oriented towards the electoral campaign within the context of an adversarial, two-party presidential race. For this reason, the choice of the leader was placed directly in the hands of the voters, through the method of primaries” (Bordignon 2014, 4). In a first moment, the PD adopted primary elections open

to non-members for the selection of the party Secretary, then, in 2012, extended this method to the selection of ninety percent of its parliamentary candidates.

As already noted by research on the effects of primaries (Hazan and Rahat 2006), the introduction of primaries in the PD did not bring a substantial increase in member influence: on the contrary it appears to have contributed to the demotivation of the militants mentioned above. The primary elections, often presented as an attempt to link the party to its base of sympathisers and activists, are seen by the OccupyPD activists in a complex way, with light and shadows. In their perception, the primary elections are an element of innovation but towards an external (rather than internal) democracy: “we agree with the primaries to decide who will be the candidate as premier or the head of the coalition who, in case of victory, will be the premier. I even prefer the primaries to choose the candidate as mayor and president of the region: I like them a lot, because they are fair and open the party. But as for the primaries to choose the candidate as secretary of the party we need to understand if they are primaries “*da cammellamento di truppe*” [“troop rallying” primaries], in which the one who controls many votes, without great quality ideas, wins just by mobilizing these votes. By doing this maybe he will have great personal gain, while the party will be destroyed” (Interview n. 1).

The primaries are indeed perceived as highly prone to manipulation. So, an activist states: “I think that the primaries are a fundamental tool, but also that they are not the solution to everything because some internal areas are perfectly able to “*cammellarsele*” [manipulate them]! I think that those people [the fractions] stopped fearing the primaries when they realised that they won them, because unfortunately the problem is also in the base, not only in the leadership [...] and given that the base suffers a lack of courage in breaking with the leadership, the primaries are not used as a tool for change” (Interview n. 2).

The organisational weakness is located in a long term change characterised by the party leadership’s increasing lack of interest in its members. In this account, “a real exodus of members started a long time ago, when we stopped giving continuity and importance to our territorial encroachment, which is when you think only of appearing in the media and do not give any role to the single member. In Turin, for example, there are only 3.000 members, and I remember that the DS had about 5.000 members in only one neighbourhood of the city, less than ten years ago: there is a great problem!” (Interview n. 1). Similarly, dis-regard for the rank-and file is frequently stigmatized. For instance, in Apulia, the complaint is that “the base of the party has difficulty influencing its choices. We are the first party at the regional level, the party with the biggest number of regional councillors, but we, the base of the Democratic Party, have rarely been

able to express our opinion on the policies to be implemented at the regional level. This demonstrates that [...] for a long time, there was a base that pressed in order to obtain more weight in internal decision-making processes" (Interview n. 10).

The crisis is first and foremost perceived as reflecting a cleavage between the base – which still exists – and a leadership, that does not listen to it. As one activist remarked, "when we heard the news about the re-election of Napolitano, we cried [...] The same evening, we saw in the TV broadcast "Porta a Porta" an interview with the secretary of the Young Democrats, with his small group from Bologna, who said "stop" with this leadership. So we realised that the crisis of the PD had started. This crisis could be used by those people who have always conformed, for their whole lives, to the disastrous positions of the Secretariat, just to recycle themselves and we understood that the simple members should take the situation in their hands!" (Interview n. 2).

The resulting lack of internal democracy is strongly denounced: for a lack of interest in consulting the rank-and-file, but also for disrespect for internal official organs, with elitist and opaque decision making the outcome. Thus an activist describes what he calls the "fireplaces" around which a few leaders meet and decide: "I have never seen internal democracy within the PD! There has never been a consultation of the base and what the National Direction and the National Assembly decided has never been taken into serious account [...] Within the PD the decisions have been always taken around a fireplace by five or six "capi bastone" [i.e. the leaders of the fractions], decisions that were then ratified by the party organs" (Interview n. 2). The activists share a deep distaste for personalised fractions and their management. In the words of an interviewee, "the fractions would be acceptable if they were divided because of a different vision on specific issues, like "I want to make an alliance with SEL, whilst I want to make an alliance with PdL", that is "I think in one way, you think in another way, so let's discuss issues and values". But our fractions have ridiculous names, that they take from the "capi bastone": Fioronians, Dalemians, Renzians, Bersanians. This is not acceptable!" (Interview n. 7).

While diversity within the party is seen as a positive aspect, hidden compromises among leaders are perceived as jeopardising any possibility for a dialogue oriented to mutual understanding. So, an activist observes:

What happened with the election of the President of the Republic was an epiphany: this was not the crisis, but the phenomenon that unveiled it. The crisis of the party lies in its incapacity to discuss, in the evidence that we put together power groups linked by ambition for power rather than a shared broad idea of the world. Hiding dissent behind

some agreements and a false unanimity has led to this moment [...] it is difficult to explain that for a party [Fiat manager] Marchionne and his workers have the same legitimacy and the same need to be represented! [...] The point is that the idea that there are different ways of thinking from which to start in order to build mediation was never accepted inside the party. We started from the mediation, without even debating with each other. For example, when we voted on civil rights this summer, they did not propose different documents, but built a “facade” of unanimity. This incapacity to accept that there are conflicts and different ideas to discuss is the basic reason for the crisis (Interview n. 4).

The internal divisions are perceived as thwarting the party’s capacity to implement common decisions, as emerged dramatically during the presidential election. As an activist states: “I believe that within a party many different views can exist, but when a party assembly, in which all the internal areas are represented, takes a decision, then this decision has to be respected by all the components and the party representatives within public institutions. It is unthinkable that each fraction has to re-discuss a decision taken by one of the top bodies of the organisation, because a party cannot work like that! And this is precisely what happened during the election of the President of the Republic! [...] Some-one wanted to reach the goal – that was then concretely realised – to form a government with the centre-right [...] These people achieved this goal by violating an important rule of the PD” (Interview n. 6).

Linked to the dearth of internal democracy, conflicts also emerge between the local “Circoli” (party associations) and the National Management, and the base of the party and its elected representatives. In this narrative,

surely there is the problem, that many militants highlight, in the difficulty of interaction between the ground level of the party and the various top levels [...] the militants who meet in the “Circoli” might discuss for entire evenings, for hours, and what comes out from that discussion – that may be nothing special, or may be a brilliant idea or suggestion – rarely reaches the higher levels until a discussion within the national bodies is opened. This relational problem, for sure, is a historic problem for the PD. Then, there is the problem of relations between the elected representatives and the militants, i.e. in the relationship between the administration-institution and the political community. This is an atavistic problem: the old militants say that it was also like that within the Communist Party and the Christian Democracy of thirty or forty years ago. But anyway, it is also the result of degeneration over the last two decades, obviously produced by the type of politics generated by the “Second Republic” and its most famous figure, Berlusconi. Substantially, those who are elected, especially when they are elected with methods that have little to do with the voters and militants’ direct choices, can feel free

to do whatever they want and maybe have difficulty recognising that their institutional role is only held thanks to the people that compose the base of this party, and that it is to those people that they have to respond about their administrative choices (Interview n. 9).

Deeper problems are also singled out however, such as the lack of capacity for internal renewal, as “the leadership of a party should be able to form the future leadership, the designated successors. On the contrary, the old leadership has not prepared the next leadership. I do not know why, maybe out of fear, maybe because they are incapable, but they did not do it!” (Interview n. 6).

The result of this complex of grievances is widespread frustration and even outrage at the leadership’s lack of capacity. An activist notes indeed that, “at the local level today there is a feeling of instability, because there is great disheartenment. It is difficult for me to identify with some national policies [...] immediately after what happened, there was great anger and frustration among the volunteers. But I noticed that something was already going wrong during the electoral campaign, which was pathetic!” (Interview n. 8).

To conclude, the deepest conflict addresses the very value of politics, faced with a national leadership perceived not only to be inefficient but also corrupt: “The cleavage is about previous values and identity [...] at the local level the PD works well, but then, when national level scandals like the Monte dei Paschi [bank] arise, it is difficult to provide explanations to a twenty year old boy. It is really hard! It is difficult to explain to those who stop you in the street and want to know what’s happening in Rome” (Interview n. 8).

5. Diagnostic Frames: Strategic Limits

Organisational failures are not just technical however. Rather, they are located within strategic difficulties. The party is seen as promoting a catch-all programme that cannot appeal to its classic electoral base as well as to new potential voter. This is clearly expressed by one of our interviewees who states:

“

we [the party] limited ourselves to saying: ‘we represent everybody a bit for an Italy that’s a bit more equal’. This discourse is wrong [...] we should have said: “I want to worsen the life conditions of those who have many houses and are really rich because that wealth, in this moment, is a privilege, not a simple well-being. Given that it is a privi-

lege, I want to tax them because this is my idea of a fairer Italy". However, this dis-course must be built through concrete proposals. If our life conditions are a bit more similar, then we all will live better. But we did not say this [...] we entered the Parliament and Bersani launches, late, the eight points for change: ok, good, but why so late? (Interview n. 1).

The party is in fact perceived as preoccupied in addressing "temi loro" ("their issues"), i.e. the issues posed by right-wing forces, thus losing its political and cultural identity. Especially since its support for the Monti Government, party activists have perceived the risks in following right-wing politics, with the symbolic peak the acceptance of the budgetary balance in the Constitution. In this sense, the alliance with Berlusconi and his party is seen as a dramatic critical juncture, planned in secret then brutally executed by some of the party leaders. In the words of one activist,

I see older and recent reasons for the crisis. I see a party that has entered an identity and cultural crisis after the fall of the last Prodi government. When in opposition under the last Berlusconi government we ran after their issues. Then, we ran after Grillo's issues, like the high cost of politics, and the Italian media apparatus, that led the people to think that that the high costs of politics were the real emergency and the real problem of the country, leaving aside a long series of social issues. We already lacked a strong cultural and political identity, but because of a leadership formed of ignorant people (and this thing has to be clear), we lost also that pale identity, because our top and mid-level leaders do not have the cultural tools to elaborate a political line [...] there was the support of the Monti government, during which we did not implement the principle of political and cultural autonomy: we voted for the budgetary balance, without promoting any type of debate within the party and society [...] this was the first clear signal of a deep cultural crisis because we accepted the idea that the budgetary balance was elevated to the rank of a constitutional principle. The Constitution is a charter of the principles and ends that an organised society must pursue, and we accepted that among these fundamental principles was the narrow accountancy based view that a State cannot spend one euro more than the money that enters. At that moment we lost all sense of what it means to be progressive (Interview n. 2).

Electoral defeat is seen as linked to this lack of identity. So, "the crisis starts when the centre-left electorate does not vote for us. The 25 and 26 February, when I saw the electoral results, I understood that our electoral campaign did not work [...] the crisis appeared when the people did not want to vote for us and we continued to run a low profile electoral campaign [...] the primaries were the apex, they worked, they expressed the right communication strategy. On the contrary, the electoral campaign was

not effective, I also found it difficult to understand! The main problem is the PD itself: until it has a clear identity... how can we ally with others if we do not know what we think about things?" (Inter-view n. 5). Identifying the main reason for the electoral defeat in the loss of a leftist identity, another activist criticises the party's electoral campaign: "we underlined continuity with the Monti government and we ran a low profile campaign without focusing on the issues on our programme – although they were there – because we did not want to scare the electorate. The ballots proved this strategy meaningless, because Monti had no electoral weight - on the contrary, Italian people strongly punished his policies" (Interview n. 2).

The lack of content is reflected, according to the activists, in the absence of determination to promote party values. One occupier speaks in fact of a lack of radicality: "the element that the PD missed was radicality, in the sense that many values and contents have not been expressed with the clarity and the de-termination that, I believe, are necessary in this historical period. I'm not talking about being moderate. I assign this lack of radicality not only to Bersani's electoral campaign, but to all the positions of the PD since its birth. There has always been hesitation, a well-known "maybe yes, but maybe no" that brought the party to a sort of stalemate without ever taking clear positions or firm actions, without being able to mobilize the passion for values that is needed and necessary [...] the brakes were applied when the party said "we ally with the Pdl" notwithstanding electoral promises that said something else" (Interview n. 7).

The absence of values is perceived as particularly painful among both young and old militants. This is explained by an interviewee as follows:

we had the older and the younger members outraged, whilst the generation aged between forty and fifty have accepted the situation more quietly [...] There have been older members who really suffered from this situation. I am talking about the generation that were card-carrying members of the Communist Party in the 1950s. They lived through a long series of turns, changes, twists, and so on. One of them, for example, told me: "they gave me the banners about Stalin and I went to the square and I shouted 'long live Stalin!', because I believed in that party and in its values". Now this reasoning makes us laugh, but we are talking about people that delegated their trust, and in some cases devoted their life, to a party they grew up with. They have seen so many names, secretaries and defeats, that this moment upset them, but also gave them the strength to say: "I'll stay in this party, because I believe in these values". Among young people, obviously, the approach is not so dogmatic. We had a haemorrhage of volunteers at the Festa dell'Unità. There are people who said "I do not participate anymore, because I have nothing to do with this party! (Interview n. 7).

6. Prognostic Frames: Organizational Solutions

The solutions proposed at the organisational and strategic levels are to some extent coherent with the diagnostic frames we have just singled out. At the organisational level, the activists first stress the need for fundamental changes that would give a voice to the grassroots. One activist thus declaims, “what do we want? We want someone to call us and ask: “could you tell us what the problem, the point, the main issue is in your opinion?” (Interview n. 1), and indeed “the thing that scares this leadership most is a party base that is active, critical and numerous” (Interview n. 10).

This basic claim derives from the very identity of OccupyPD, which represents a participatory experiment to give voice to those who really make politics within the party. This emerges well in the words of this activist, who stated: “I want – and I have wanted this, in reality, since I became a card-carrying member of the PD – the party to really listen to active militants, who care about the PD. In reality, we occupy the local headquarters a bit everyday! [...] We, the base militants, meet in the local “Federazione” and in the “Circoli” not only every time that the party asks for our presence, but also spontaneously, to promote territorial initiatives and carry out local work. So, in reality, it wasn’t much effort to spend more time there during the occupation! [...] This is a pro-test movement, but it wants to become a proposal movement, composed of militants, of people that spend time together everyday [...] in the party there has been good levels of support because we say reasonable things, like: let’s re-start from the grassroots, from those who care about this party, let’s start from the “Circoli” and not from the election of the Secretary following a top-down mechanism!” (Interview n. 5).

The immediate aim of the movement is therefore a party congress focused on ideas, because “if we talk about content now, these people from the old leadership cannot stay together and so they will lose. I can name some names: Epifani, Franceschini, Letta and Bersani do not agree on content. If we do not talk about content and just say: “you are bad, whilst we are good” they will ally with their regional councillors, the leaders that control membership cards, etc. and win the Congress with a power agreement independently of the ideas they propose” (Interview n. 1). So the discussion of ideas is in itself a step towards the “renewal of the method, i.e. I do not want them to stay together just for power, I want them to divide because they think different things” (Interview n. 1). The congress should “start from below and completely renew the ruling class, in particular to avoid the resentments of the past, the old struggles between the organised groups in our party prevent any real renewal of the leadership and the party from really working” (Interview n. 6).

The call for a renewal of internal decision-making methods to give more weight to the grassroots is linked to the refusal of the light party and the suggestion for a structured party, well rooted at the territorial level. Citing the German SPD as a model to follow, an activist states: “I do not believe in light parties, like the PdL and the M5S, they do not work because they are not able to survive after the fall of their leaders, and I do not think that Italy needs an umpteenth personal party. There is rather a need for a structured party as the results of the administrative election demonstrated, when we won almost everywhere because, unlike other parties, we have a territorial rootedness» (Interview n. 6).

If the right of the party members to speak up should be recognised, their party must also learn to listen as “it should clearly recognise its mistakes, open the organisation, listen a lot and return with humility to meet the other organised structures, like associations, trade unions and other parties with which we have always engaged in dialogue” (Interview n. 7). This dialogue was interrupted after the alliance with the centre-right at the ground level, since it is difficult to provide a valid explanation for this unusual governing coalition: “this thing has not been accepted and we encounter great difficulties in dealing with it. Personally, I have taken it badly. For me it is difficult to justify the actions of this government. And when the volunteers ask for explanations, it is really hard!” (Interview n. 8).

To sum up, the organisational model proposed by the OccupyPD activists is that of a structured party, in which the members explicitly come first, at the same time able to interact with society and other collective actors. Indeed, this model is not seen as closed or detached from society, as it allows for a constant relational effort realised through concrete political activities in the territories rather than the personal appeal of a leader or media communication. From this point of view, the election of Matteo Renzi as secretary of the PD seems to represent a defeat of the movement’s claims, as his idea of the party is that of a leader-centred organisation that interacts with its voters mainly through the mass media and open primary elections (Bordignon 2014).

7. Prognostic Frames: Strategic Alternatives

Besides giving a voice to the party base and listening to (disgruntled) voters, the OccupyPD activists see a need to give more weight to some traditional values of the Left, as well as to emerging social problems, such as precarity. They attempt to advance the claims of social sectors suffering from a lack of representation and the absence of social protection. As one activist explains, “here today [at the national assembly of Occu-

pyPD] there are representatives of the precariat, of the associations that try to organise those worlds: the VAT people, the small innovative enterprises, the precarious workers, the sustainable economy. There are people that try to give voice to and represent a part of the country that is too often unheard. There must be the will to organise these worlds and a political interlocutor to listen to their claims. We are trying to say to the party that it has to be this political interlocutor" (Interview n. 1).

In order to pursue this goal of broadening the electoral base of the party, OccupyPD also proposes a renewal of language. It stigmatises the communication strategy of the old leadership, as during the electoral campaign "Bersani [...] did not talk about the issues and when he did, he used barely comprehensible language" (Interview n. 8). The activists push instead for "a renewal of the language and the tools. We do not have to accept that the electoral base of the PD can only be composed of middle age or old public employees, completely abandoning a portion of electorate that, on the contrary, needs a correct interpretation of its generational needs. Today, we do not talk at all to the young strata of the electorate" (Interview n. 9).

Classic left-wing claims, such as for social protection for the so-called weak workers, often re-emerge in the accounts of the activists: "we do not believe the story they told us, that young people are suffering because old people are too privileged. This is a story that triggered a war among the poor, and so it is also a Renzian solution. We think that, yes, we have been left without social protection, and the trade unions also abandoned the young precarious workers" (Interview n. 2). The party is also considered as partially responsible for the in-stability felt by some social sectors, as its old and new leaders have embraced neoliberalism: "Renzi is good for winning the election, but he embodies precisely that idea of the left that is difficult to define as "left", because he proposes to re-produce Blair's New Labour in Italy, twenty years later, when Labour, in the meanwhile, with Milliband, is moving in the opposite direction. It has remunicipalised the railways after their privatization under Blair, whilst in Italy Renzi complains because the left has not been able to embrace neoliberalism. But, in reality, what have the leftist governments of Amato and Ciampi done? They have liberalised and privatised!" (Interview n. 2). The leftist values of the PD-occupiers influence their vision of the strategic alliances the party should promote: Sel is considered as "our natural ally" but, in contrast with the path followed by the PD leadership, "we should try to discuss with M5S, because it does not make any sense that we can govern with Berlusconi, whilst we are afraid of Grillo! It is a nonsense" (Interview n. 4).

Along with the call for more consistent strategic alliances the activists stress the need for a clear programme, one that should emerge from genuine internal debate (not from a fight among leaders) and must focus on some main issues. An activist, for

example, criticises “two choices: having run an electoral campaign substantially without a programme, and having interpreted the primary elections as a fight among leaders and not as a battle for a political project, and it is about that political project that I want to talk. So, I support the idea of a Congress organised for discussing political theses, where everyone clearly states what he thinks about labour issues and then we fight, maybe we even di-vide, but because of a disagreement on content, not for personal reasons. And the same should happen on fiscal issues, social policies, and Europe. I want to discuss the issues, not only about who will represent me. It is nothing new: once upon a time politics worked like that!” (Interview n. 3).

The final aim of the action of renewal that started “from below” is therefore “to make it, the PD! We do not want a party in which one identifies with his past political experience or directs his loyalty towards an internal “fan club”, but a party that has real meaning. And to achieve this aim, the party must clarify what its project is. Today, we are in the national government only to solve an emergency (and we have been elected for this reason alone for years). We have not built our idea of the world, Europe, and society that allows us to stand for election as a governing force. So, the basic aim is this: to build a society that is radically different to the present one and to try to provide ourselves with the tools necessary to realise this society. Today the PD has no clear knowledge of where it wants to go, and so it is unlikely that we go there!” (Interview n. 4).

8. The Activists: Overlapping Membership?

As emerges from their proposals for “another party”, the OccupyPD activists bring a vision of politics that differs from that embodied in the organisational model and strategic choices of the Democratic Party. This vision seems influenced by some of the criticisms levelled at neoliberalism and the minimal version of democracy it brought in its wake (Crouch 2003, della Porta 2013), as articulated by the main social movements that have appeared since 2000. Their own past experiences in previous movements is indeed often recalled by the OccupyPD activists –in the student movement in particular, as well as the peace and global justice movements, but also the labour movement (Interviews n. 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 10). Mostly up young, these activists grew in a political climate where “the weakening of the identity-building functions of political parties has instead increased the autonomous role of social movements as arenas of public debate on political issues and construction of collective identities” (della Porta and Diani 2006, 217). Thus, through double militancy in movements and parties, these activists bring

identities developed mainly outside its boundaries inside the party. With respect to modes of party-movement interaction in contemporary society, the evidence presented in this article reinforces the findings of recent movement research, according to which movements can no longer be seen simply as “challengers” to the political system (Tilly 1978) that try to influence the decisions of institutional actors, such as parties, from the “outside”. Nowadays they instead permeate institutionalised political actors not only during extraordinary periods but on an ongoing basis (Goldstone 2003).

In the case of the OccupyPD activists, participation in social movements is mentioned as a real source of basic values. For example, an activist recalls his political roots in “movements that fought for social mobility and equality among the students: if my parents cannot pay for my studies, I want the State to help me. I come from a movement that reclaimed scholarships and open universities because everyone must have access to knowledge. I come from demonstrations organised with the trade unions and the labour movement to defend the rights of the workers: these are the traditional issues of the left, in the world and in Italy” (Interview n.1). Similarly, an older activist states: “I work for the CGIL [the General Confederation of Labour], so I have always been part of the labour movement. Moreover, when I was young I participated in student movements” (Interview n. 3). Another activist stresses the fluidity of the movement environment, especially in times of high mobilization and effervescence, as experienced at the beginning of the last decade: “I had my first experience in the year of the “Riforma Moratti” and, afterwards, at the beginning of the centre-left government, when Fioroni became Minister of Education. It was a quite “hot” period because it was the final phase of the mobilizations against the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and very soon the right-wing Moratti was about to replace Fioroni” (Interview n. 6).

The Global Justice Movement, with its large international events, also had an influence on the political formation of the OccupyPD activists, not only in terms of content and organisational methods, but also as far as unconventional tactics – like occupations – are concerned. As one activist reminded us: «first I participated in the European Social Forums in Florence, London, Paris, and I occupied, together with other people, schools and universities [...] during the student movement we participated in the occupations of the schools, when young people went up on the roofs! I was there, both as a Young Democrat and as an occupier” (Interview n. 4). Beyond its repertoire of action, the Global Justice Movement is also appreciated for its plural and inclusive identity, whilst the more recent anti-austerity movements are seen as more hostile towards organised political actors: “I came to the party through social movements [...] but the last movements, Occupy and Indignados, engaged me a bit less, not only because I am a party member, but because between 2001 and 2006, the movements were home to all

people and respected the identities of those who participated. So, if I was a member of an association I could participate: I remember, for example, that the leaflets for our demonstrations were one third the text with the content and two thirds signatures of associations, parties, and trade unions that supported the initiative. In recent years, with the rhetorical discourse of “politics is bad”, “signatures are bad”, the movements have hidden their diversity behind some homogeneous labels that have often diminished their role. I prefer the sum of many things with a common identity rather than one single thing that has a rather confused identity” (Interview n. 1).

If the OccupyPD activists derive some fundamental aspects of the identity they wish to impress on the PD from this type of nationwide movements, they are also open to territorial movements such as No Tav, again taking a stance in open contrast with their party’s line, which officially supports the construction of a high-speed train line in the North of Italy: “the movement to discuss the implementation of public works, like the TAV, in a participatory way, is sacrosanct. I am against the implementation of this work, in that way and following that plan, but it is not a linchpin of the Italian and international left” (Interview n. 1).

In any case, movements are perceived as fleeting phenomena, which is why after their experiences in grassroots mobilizations many activists decided to join a long-lasting organisation: “l’Onda” (the Wave) was the biggest student mobilization of recent times, but it was a thing born and dead in one month. Unfortunately these movements, here in Italy, die down quickly” (Interview n. 2). The big parties are instead considered as better means for promoting social change: “I have always thought that politics not only means expressing ideas, but also taking part in really changing things. So, as far as change in the country is concerned, I joined a party that had the ambition to govern” (Interview n. 6).

9. Conclusions

In recent years, several social movement scholars have lamented the decline in interaction between social movement studies and studies on parties and elections (McAdam and Tarrow 2010; Kriesi 2014; Hutter 2014; Tarrow 2014). Departing from the assumption that social movement research can no longer treat institutionalised politics (elections, parties, lobbies etc.) as “primary” and the non-institutionalised actions of social movements as mere efforts to influence the former’s decisions from the “outside”, we have tried to bridge this gap by addressing a specific aspect of these relations: social movements inside institutions. After describing the specific context in

which OccupyPD developed, characterised by a general crisis of political responsibility, and by the particular electoral, strategic, organisational and identity crisis of the PD, we presented OccupyPD as a case of a social movement that emerged from a conflict internal to an organisation, then spread to the outside by adopting a networked structure, a heterogeneous and horizontal identity, and an unconventional repertoire of action, largely inspired by the most recent wave of international protest. We have shown indeed that OccupyPD originated in a conflict with the leadership of the Democratic Party, defined as distant and unfit, then expressed this conflict through contentious forms of action, particularly occupations, but also open pro-tests and large national gatherings, inspired in these by existing movements against austerity. In order to extend the mobilization, the occupiers chose a fluid organisational structure, combining online and off-line forms of communication. They also attempted to build a collective identity that, while emphasising plurality, presented them as those taking responsibility for the regeneration of the PD “from below”, reintroducing left-wing themes to remedy its identity crisis.

If OccupyPD is considered a movement-like, protest-oriented mobilization within an organisation, some social movement concepts could be useful in order to understand it. First, social movement studies insist on the need for a combination of grievances and resources. In OccupyPD various networks both inside and outside the party were mobilized to oppose the shock of the electoral defeat and the party’s inability to develop a strategy to form a government and elect the President of the Republic. Despite the dearth of material resources, many of the OccupyPD activists could count on previous personal networks built through double militancy in the party and in social movements. In the case of OccupyPD, the processes of overlapping membership proved particularly relevant not only to enlarge the mobilization, but also to forge the identity of the movement, as well as its repertoire of action. Second, social movement studies point to the attribution of opportunities and threats as a relevant step in collective mobilization. The OccupyPD activists appear to have seen unstable conditions after the election as a potential opening during which to make their voice heard when faced with a very threatening situation for the party, fast losing members and trust.

Finally, social movement studies stress the relevance of framing as a mobilising device. The activists were indeed able, at least for some time, to bridge their frames with other resonant ones in order to amplify their protest. In particular, starting from the choice of the movement’s name, they linked their claims to those of the recent broader movements fighting not only austerity policies, but also for more democracy (with a wide range of requests from more transparency to the introduction of participatory practices). Moreover, the OccupyPD activists, being generally young, tended to identify

with the social strata suffering the consequences of the neoliberal turn most acutely, and advocated social rights for precarious workers and redistributive policies. As a social movement within an institution, OccupyPD activists mobilised in order to change official policies by challenging institutional authority. We have shown in fact that “because power is grounded in the relational dynamics of organizational systems, the same structures that reproduce power provide resources for resistance” (Morrill and Chiarello 2013, p. 789; see also Zald and Berger 1978).

Our case study also addresses some relevant elements in party studies, confirming trends recently highlighted in the literature and providing insights for future research. First, it confirms the separation of the party on the ground from the party in public office, showing that this trend did not strengthen party leaders. This is especially true in parties divided into powerful internal fractions, where elected representatives often respond to their respective fractions rather than act to realise a unitary political project previously agreed within the party as a whole. Second, the PD as it emerges from our interviews seems to exemplify the current organisational weakness of other big catch-all parties, as they appear jeopardised by centrifugal tendencies expressed in the personal factions (the Bersanians, the Dalemians, the Fioronians, the Renziianians, etc.) the activists stigmatized. Third, the investment in the primary elections showed the perceived need for a party suffering from the constant loss of members and activists to mobilise an enlarged constituency (of members and beyond), but also the short-circuit produced by the frustration of hopes for change this type of election had spread among the rank and file. To conclude, the image of the PD that emerges from our analysis is that of a top-down structure with a weak connection with its base, and more generally with significant sectors of society, such as young people and precarious workers. In this organisational context, OccupyPD appears as a movement that seeks spaces of democracy within and outside the party. The attempt to bridge two cognate literatures thus proves fruitful, as the reconstruction of spaces of interaction between institutions (such as political parties) and rank and file activism, between representative democracy and “participation from below” is one of the most pressing themes to be studied today.

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AUTHORS INFORMATION:

Donatella della Porta is Professor of Sociology at the European University Institute and Professor of Political Science (on leave) at the Scuola Normale Superiore. She directs COSMOS (Center on Social Movement Studies). She is working at a major ERC project Mobilizing for Democracy, on civil society participation in democratization processes in Europe, the Middle East, Asia and Latin America. In 2011, she was the recipient of the Mattei Dogan Prize for distinguished achievements in the field of political sociology. Her main fields of research are social movements, the policing of public order, participatory democracy, and political corruption.

Daniela Chironi is a PHD researcher at the European University Institute. Her main research interest concerns the relation between social movements and party change. Indeed, her thesis is about the role of social movements in setting off significant organizational changes within the more innovative left-wing parties in Western Europe.