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Crisis and search for political alternatives in Southern Europe: *SYRIZA*, *Indignados* and *Five Stars Movement*

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Abstract

The main purpose of this article is to examine and discuss political strategies of three different political organizations -*SYRIZA* in Greece, *15M Movement/Indignados* in Spain, and *M5S/Five Stars Movement* in Italy- which gained prominence during the debt crisis management processes in Southern Europe in the late 2000s and early 2010s. It particularly focuses upon alternative strategies framed or implied by them regarding the way out of the debt and legitimacy crises. It is argued that their emergence as important political actors have been indicative of the growing popular discontent against and search for alternatives to the framework drawn by the austerity agenda. Although a similar context has paved the ground for their rise, these three political actors have represented different political paths that can respectively be regarded as 'radical reformism', 'positive/creative negation' and 'anti-politics'. The article also explains these strategies on the basis of how they have politicised the three broad sources of popular discontent: austerity policies (policy contents), parliamentary/ representative democracy (policy-making processes) and the representatives (policy-makers).

Keywords: Politics of anti-austerity, debt and legitimacy crisis, Southern Europe, radical reformism, positive/creative negation, anti-politics

1. Introduction

Recent debt crisis management strategies and associated policies pursued in the Southern European countries have been confronted with a considerable popular discontent and protests claiming their illegitimacy. What lay behind the widely referred 'crisis of parliamentary democracy' or 'legitimacy crisis' in the region

have been an increasing exclusion of parliamentary mechanisms and public deliberation from political decision-making processes that has accompanied the emphasis on the need for urgency and expertise for austerity and associated reform. Popular discontents gained a considerable momentum as responses to the austerity measures as well as the 'politics of necessity' that has been pursued as a strategy to 'legitimise' and 'depoliticise' austerity policies. Articulation of popular discontent have taken different organisational forms and brought about the rise of new political actors in different Southern European countries.

This paper aims to map alternative economic and political strategies envisaged by three rising political organizations in relation to the way out of the debt and legitimacy crises unfolding in three Southern European countries: Greece, Spain and Italy. The three political actors to be examined have opposed the prevailing decision-making processes and the policy contents throughout the crisis management processes and claimed to constitute alternatives in distinct manners. They have pursued different political strategies that have had different political implications. These strategies, which have constituted the prominent components of the anti-austerity political spectrum in Southern Europe are conceptualised in this article as 'radical reform', 'positive/creative negation' and 'anti-politics'. The bearers of these strategies respectively have gained prominence in three national contexts: *SYRIZA* in Greece, *15M Movement* or –as it is widely known- *Indignados* (Indignants) in Spain and the *Five Stars Movement* in Italy. [1]

For a better understanding of alternatives proposed, this article attempts to provide an examination of these three different political organisations in a manner that takes into account both the political-economic contexts during which they have become prominent as alternative political actors, their organizational structuring and the ways in which they frame their strategies. It is argued that they have attempted to politicise the crisis management processes through three axes by targeting them in changing degrees and forms: austerity (content), parliamentary/representative democracy (policy-making processes) and politicians (policy-makers). Understanding the ways in which they frame the sources of the problem and prioritise different sources as their primary targets are important to come to terms with the differences in these three strategies and their political implications.

[1] Although the debt and legitimacy crisis in Southern Europe have also constituted a ground for the rise in popularity of far-right sentiments, far-right parties have not emerged as prominent beneficiaries of the political and economic stalemates in these three cases at least at the time of writing. One exception can be regarded as the Golden Dawn in Greece, the neo-Nazi Party that has been characterized by its engagement in violent actions as different from many other far right parties around Europe. The Party gained 6.97% and 6.92% of votes in May 2012 and June 2012 general elections respectively and won parliamentary representation for the first time since its establishment in 1985 (Toloudis, 2014: 39).

A thorough examination of why these countries witnessed the ascendance of different forms of political organisations that implied different strategies would require a comprehensive historical analysis on how past political struggles impacted upon the previous ones, i.e., how legacies of struggle have played distinctive roles in particular national contexts. Such an analysis should also include an examination of differential impacts of the crises upon labouring classes and in which ways crises have been managed in particular national contexts. As it is well documented by Cox and Nilsen (2014: 136; 162), more recent movements such as the European *Indignados, Arab Spring* and Anglo-American *Occupy* are rooted in the longer history of 'movements from below' throughout the history of neoliberalism that can be conceptualized according to the authors as a social movement from above. Legacies of the movements that predate the financial crisis, such as *Zapatismo*, the '*pink tide*' in Latin America, summit protests and anti-war movements have had important impacts upon more recent movements' strategies and practices (Cox and Nilsen, 2014: 162-71). For a better understanding of national differences in the emergence and strength of social movements from below it is also necessary to take into account the trajectories of parliamentary and extra-parliamentary organizations and struggles at the particular national levels. And finally a thorough examination of political strategies proposed by different political organisations would require a detailed analysis of differences in crisis management processes. This article does not attempt to address these possible dynamics underlying the question of why these countries witnessed the ascendance of different forms of political organisations that implied different strategies. Rather with the aim of constituting an initial step for such a scrutiny, it attempts to map the differences between these prominent strategies. The second section will portray the context that paved the ground for their rise and present the conceptual framework to be used throughout the article. Under the third section, respectively, SYRIZA and its 'radical reform' strategy; 15M Movement/*Indignados* and its strategy of 'positive/creative negation'; and *Five Stars Movement* and its 'anti-politics' will be discussed. Finally, the conclusion will sum up the general inferences derived from the study.

2. The Eurozone crisis and the changing meaning of politics in the Southern Europe

The integration of the Southern periphery to the European project and especially to the Monetary Union, and its increasing creditworthiness stemming from this process, have rendered it a pole of attraction for the financial capital which have overshadowed in a temporary manner the historically established contradictions and sensitivities growing out of debt-led growth (cf. Michael-Matsas, 2010: 496-497; cf. Becker and Jäger, 2011: 11). This overshadow led one

of the prominent observers of the reform trajectories in these countries to argue a short time before the post-2009 sovereign debt crises that the Southern European countries '[were] now fully part of the group of rich and stable democracies' (Ferrera, 2005: 4). In his words (2005: 4-5):

> "At the beginning of the new millennium Southern Europe has lost much of its "peripheral" character: indeed, some areas and some aspects of South European societies can today offer "models" and "benchmarks" to other societies - in Europe as well as in other regions of the world".

The picture has dramatically changed during and in the wake of the Eurozone crisis, which had started in Greece and then emerged in other peripheral European countries in various degrees. In all of the three countries, economic crises have coincided with important political impasses and crises of parliamentary decision-making processes. Two interrelated developments should particularly be taken into consideration for a better understanding of the legitimacy crisis and emergence of new political actors in the region as different responses to it.

First, crises have had devastating impacts upon labouring classes. The accompanying stabilisation programmes have also brought along the introduction of austerity measures and strengthening of various neoliberal reforms, which further have deteriorated their living conditions. This has led to widespread dissatisfactions with the prevailing crisis management strategies and their outcomes. Second, dissatisfactions rooted in these developments could not find their ways into the political agendas of established political organizations. Thus, during crisis management processes differences among leftist (social democratic/socialist) and rightist/conservative parties have become even more negligible as they have attempted to follow the similar path of austerity and market-friendly reform. More markedly parliaments have ceased to be sites for alternative demands. The roles of supranational and international bodies have been critical in that respect as they served as triggers of reform through conditionalities tied to bailout packages and arrangements such as the Fiscal Pact, that pave the ground for more systematic avoidance of parliamentary mechanisms in policy-making processes. European integration itself since its inception has been a product of an intention to replace political discretion with supranational, depoliticised policy-making (Macartney, 2013: 3; cf. Taylor and Mathers, 2002: 9), and emergency situations such as debt crises in the Eurozone have rendered this role more prominent. Italy and Greece witnessed technocratic interventions in such a context (both in November 2011), as parliamentary decision-making processes were violated and demands of oppositional voices outside the parliament (more vibrant in the case of Greece) were bypassed by 'the rule of expertise' in the name of implementation of austerity measures and structural reforms (see Bozkurt, 2013). Although Spain has not had such an experience of technocratic rule, during

the crisis management process the 'socialist' Zapatero government abandoned its more expansionary policies in favour of the austerity path following the pressures of pro-austerity forces (Bosco and Verney, 2012: 135).

Policy-making processes, which have become increasingly detached from alternative political contents, have not been immune from discontent. Attempts towards narrowing the content of policy-making thus have been confronted with different forms of popular reactions. One of the prominent reactions have been the punishment of incumbents (Bosco and Verney, 2012) in the elections held during the crisis management processes in the three countries examined in this paper. In all of the three cases, ruling parties suffered significant losses in vote share in the recent elections. Collective reactions have included strikes, protests and occupations in changing extensiveness and intensity in different national contexts. These 'from below' oppositional actions in parliamentary and extra-parliamentary domains were also accompanied by the emergence or rise in prominence of different political organisations that have attempted to politicise and delegitimize the policy contents, the decision-making processes and policy-makers in changing manners. Thus, as indicated by Burnham (2011: 501; 506-7) the strategy of 'depoliticisation' has become more problematic to pursue for the policy-makers during the recent financial crisis as the cuts in public expenditure in particular and austerity agenda in general has been confronted with a considerable degree of 'politicisation' and organised resistance in different forms.

The three political organisations that have gained prominence in Greece, Spain and Italy have attempted to formulate their strategies on the basis of three broad sources of popular discontent in changing weights and manners and seek to further politicise and delegitimise them. These three broad targets have been austerity policies, parliamentary/representative democracy and the representatives, which can also be read respectively as the policy contents, policy-making processes and policy-makers. Their weights in the three strategies identified in this paper, i.e., radical reform, positive/creative negation and anti-politics, have implied differences. As it will be discussed in the following section, while the former have more eminently targeted austerity policies and the political representatives responsible for the crisis management process (policy contents + policy-makers); the second primarily problematised the austerity policies and the representative democracy (policy contents + policy-making processes); and the last strategy have concentrated more on representative democracy and the representatives (policy-making processes + policy-makers).

3. Three political answers to the debt and legitimacy crisis

3.1. SYRIZA and the path of radical reform

Post-2009 sovereign debt crisis management process in Greece has been confronted with a widespread popular discontent and claims on the illegitimacy of austerity measures tied to the consecutive bail-out packages. Thus the persuasiveness of the framework drawn by the pro-austerity forces on the basis of urgency, necessity and the need for sacrifices have increasingly been questioned. Economic turbulence has coincided with political stalemates as the PASOK government had difficulties in ensuring the acceptance of drastic cuts in public expenditure and 'unpopular reforms' amidst protests and discontent. Technocratic intervention had come to the agenda following the then Prime Minister George Papandreou's decision to hold a referendum on the second bailout package. An interim coalition government led by Lucas Papademos, a former vice president of the European Central Bank, was formed in November 2011 after the forced resignation of George Papandreou following his referendum decision. The cabinet led by Papademos was composed of elected politicians from PASOK, New Democracy and LAOS. Its main mission was to secure the second bailout package that had been attempted to be brought to referendum by the former Papandreou government. The package that was envisaged to be released in stages was stipulated by a variety of further austerity measures including drastic spending cuts, labour market reform and budget revenue increases *via* instruments such as privatisations and tax increases. For the accomplishment of this mission, in February 2012, a new austerity package was approved by the parliament. The political uncertainty followed the termination of the 'interim government' led by Papademos as a coalition government could not be formed after the May 2012 parliamentary elections. A month later following a second election in June 2012 a coalition government led by the leader of the New Democracy, Antonis Samaras, could be established with the participation of PASOK and Democratic Left Party as two other coalition partners. Despite the two-day national strike and street battles among protesters and police forces, the Greek parliament passed another austerity package in November 2012 with an approval rate barely above 50 % in order to ensure the release of the latest bailout money and the envisaged debt restructuring. SYRIZA started to rise as a political alternative during these policy-making processes impervious to extensive and intensive extra-parliamentary struggles[2]. As it will be elaborated below, the party's radical reform strategy has

[2] The party could attract the votes in the two consecutive general elections not only of voters who had voted for the traditional radical leftist and social democratic parties (including KKE and PASOK) before, but also of those who had had no party affiliation. Its votes increased from 4.6% in the 2009 elections to 16.9% in the May 2012 elections. It won the second largest number of votes and refused

tended to prioritise and address mainly two sources of discontent among the three mentioned above: austerity policies (policy contents); and the 'Troika' -IMF, European Central Bank and European Commission- and pro-bailout parties (policy-makers). Although the party has not posed a radical critique of parliamentary/representative democracy (policy-making processes) its rise has had much to do with the intensification of extra-parliamentary struggles in Greece during the debt and legitimacy crisis management processes, especially with the rise of *Aganaktismenoi* ('The Movement of the Squares'), and the way in which Party has taken place in them. Many observers stress that SYRIZA's active involvement in A*ganaktismenoi* without attempting to patronise it has constituted an important factor underlying its success (see for instance Baltas, 2012; Kellogg, 2012; Spourdalakis 2012: 109). Yet, party's radical reform strategy, which is based on the claim that there is still hope for transformation through parliamentary mechanisms provided that its existing composition and policy content change, has remained in a great deal of tension with the more foundational critique posed by *Aganaktismenoi* against the representative democracy (cf. Theodossopoulos, 2014: 495).

The rise in prominence of SYRIZA in Greece has coincided with a political quest for alternatives to the framework drawn by pro-austerity forces, the national-political bearers of which have been the leading political parties in the parliament. Within this context, SYRIZA's claim has been to initiate 'radical change' through parliamentary means by realizing 'radical reforms' (see SYRIZA, 2012: 2). The main promise of the party that has constituted the scope for its radical reform programme has been the disallowance and removal of the austerity measures conditioned by the bailout packages. The formation of the party and how it has located itself as different from other main currents of radical left is important to understand its strategy of radical reform and proposals about the way out of the unfolding debt crisis in Greece.

SYRIZA is the Coalition of Radical Left organized as a 'united front' in 2004. Its main constituent's (*Synaspismos*, SYN) roots date back to the split of the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) in 1968 into two currents, orthodox communists (KKE) and the KKE-Interior (referred to as Eurocommunists) that had opposed to the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia (Kellogg, 2012; Moschonas, 2013: 35). *Synaspismos* was established as a left coalition in 1992 mainly between Eurocommunists and another split from the KKE (Moschonas, 2013: 35) and in time different groups and parties joined its ranks. Within the context of the rising

forming a coalition with pro-bailout parties. May 2012 elections were not followed by the establishment of a government and a new election was held in June, in which SYRIZA won the 26.8% of total votes and became the main opposition and the second party after the centre right New Democracy (29.6%).

'anti-globalization movement' and during a wave of protests and strikes in Greece, SYRIZA was formed in 2004 as a wider coalition the core of which was *Synaspismos* and which included eleven other parties and organizations[3]. Observers indicate that its active presence in the anti-globalization and anti-war movements in the early 2000s led to a left turn of *Synaspismos*/SYRIZA current (see for instance Kellogg, 2012). This shift to a more leftist stance, it is argued, was also strengthened by the split of the 'moderate', 'right' wing of *Synaspismos* from the party, which established the Democratic Left in 2010 (Baltas, 2012: 124).

SYRIZA has been located as distinct from other major currents within the broader radical left in Greece in terms of its opposition to austerity and its stance with regards to parliamentary politics. One of these currents is the KKE which adheres to orthodox communism, regards 'socialist revolution' as the main goal to be pursued and which has remained ideologically and practically distant to the 'Movement of Squares' (Mavroudeas, 2013:11). The other one is the 'extra-parliamentary' left, the main constituent of which is ANTARSYA, another radical left coalition that describes itself as the 'front of the anti-capitalist, revolutionary, communist left and radical ecology' and that has actively taken part in anti-austerity protests during the debt crisis management processes with an anti-EU position (Mavroudeas, 2013:12,16).

Different from these two currents, SYRIZA have adopted a pro-EU and pro-Eurozone stance while criticizing the Memorandum processes marked by extensive austerity measures. It is stated in the party's 'Economic Programme' that: "It is not our choice to exit the Euro, but neither can we consent to the continuation of policies that offer no guarantee for the survival of our society and our country" (SYRIZA, 2012: 2). Immediately after the May 2012 elections, the head of the SYRIZA parliamentary group, Alexis Tsipras[4] stated in his letter addressed to Jose Manuel Barroso, the President of the European Commission, that the election results politically delegitimises the Memorandum and the reversal of austerity and recession is necessary for the social stability and cohesion in Greece and the stability of the whole Eurozone[5]. In the Political Resolution released after its first Congress on July 2013, it is stated that SYRIZA have taken on "the historic responsibility to deliver the Greek people from the catastrophic neoliberal memoranda policies that have turned ... [Greece] ... into a debt colony and led its creative, social, and productive forces to marginalization" (SYRIZA,

[3] For a narrative of the emergence of SYRIZA written by a member of one of the parties, Internationalist Workers Left (DEA), that formed the coalition see Davanellos (2008).

[4] Alexis Tsipras had been the leader of the Synaspismos since 2008 and became the leader of the parliamentary group of Syriza in 2009. He was elected as the leader of the unified Syriza in the Party's first and founding Congress held in 2013.

[5] For the full letter see https://www.greenleft.org.au/node/51028 (retrieved on 10.01.2014)

2013). The main components of Party's proposals in relation to the way out of the crisis have been set as 'cancelling the memoranda, erasing most of the debt and implementing a program of social and productive reconstruction' (SYRIZA, 2013). SYRIZA's combination of anti-austerity with a pro-Eurozone stance has constituted one of the two most disputed aspects of its political strategy. The other one has been its 'radical reform' agenda which has envisaged a path of transition through parliamentary mechanisms that would first include a recovery and then proceed with a reconstruction of a new model of development. Thus, Party's 'economic programme' proposed a set of reforms aiming at the reversal of austerity measures and alleviation of the pain of those who suffered from the crisis management processes by improving social welfare and living standards of the citizens, establishing a more equal distribution of taxation, recovering investments, and initiating 'a just and sustainable fiscal stabilization' (SYRIZA, 2012). It is also indicated that (SYRIZA, 2012: 15):

> "[I]t is of vital importance to redefine the role and contribution of all economic forms, public enterprises, small private enterprises, large private enterprises, cooperatives and solidarity based economic initiatives, within the framework of a mixed economy, for a planned and targeted transition to a new, socially just and environmentally sustainable productive system".

SYRIZA's stance in relation to the EU and Eurozone as well as the political alternative it has proposed has been subject to an intense debate within the organization itself. Debates and disagreements on these issues became more apparent during the party's first and founding congress held on July 2013, in which the coalition constituting SYRIZA merged into a single, unified party. Members of the 'Left Platform'[6] within SYRIZA declared their dissatisfaction with the 'realistic approach' that they argued the leadership of the party have adopted, and its refrain from a break with the European framework (Kouvelakis, 2013, Petrou, 2013). Rejection of the amendments proposed by the Left Platform, including the exit from Eurozone and declaration of moratorium rather than erasing most of the debt, have met with strong criticism from its members (Petrou, 2013). Party's transition from a coalition to a unified party have also weakened its potential to politicise the established form of party organisation and has led SYRIZA to restrict itself with a critique of the incumbent political parties and the policies initiated by them.

Unlike the other two political oganisations emerged as a response to the economic and political crisis in Southern Europe (*Indignados* and Five Stars), SYRIZA had been organized as a left coalition composed of different political

[6] A group of SYRIZA delegates from a left-wing current within Synaspismos and three other revolutionary groups have identified themselves as the 'Left Platform' *vis-à-vis* what they refer to as 'the moderate majority camp' represented by Party's leadership (Petrou, 2013).

parties most of which were the bearers of older and more rooted political traditions. As such and as a party that set its main objective as 'socialism of the 21st century in Greece and in Europe' (SYRIZA, 2013), its trajectory has been and would be endowed with the older and controversial questions posed in the socialist tradition, above all with the question of whether or not, or to what extent a socialist transformation could be achieved through parliamentary channels. Furthermore, much more than the two organisations that will be focused on below, SYRIZA's agenda have been covered with the question of European integration in general and Monetary Union in particular. In that respect its anti-austerity position combined with a pro-EU and pro-Eurozone stance on the basis of the notion of 'social Europe' have led to questions about the possibility of radical transformation of the integration project through radical reforms (Mavroudeas, 2013: 17). In fact, as its support base has widened and it has become closer to win the elections, the Party has had to face more with these questions and to find a way that would allow it to keep its promise to initiate radical change through mechanisms of parliamentary democracy, increasing unresponsiveness of which has constituted another source of popular discontent that have more radically been politicised and targeted by the political strategy of 'positive/creative negation' discussed below.

3.2. Indignados/ 15M movement: "Revolution" and positive/creative negation

The economic and political conditions that gave rise to popular uprisings in Spain have had important similarities with the Greek case. Although Spain's crisis experience has differed in many respects from that of Greece that faced the severest of the European debt crises, it has nevertheless had devastating implications such as a considerable rise in public deficit, fall in GDP and a dramatic increase in the rate of unemployment. In May 2010, a year before the regional and municipal elections and during the first Greek bailout, the incumbent Zapatero government made a policy turn from more expansionary policies to an agenda of austerity and labour market reform, which led many observers to call the shift as a 'U-turn' (Bosco and Verney, 2012: 135, Meardi, 2012: 13). The regional and municipal elections held on 22 May 2011 amid protests, occupations and public assemblies organized by *Indignados*, resulted in decline in electrol support for the ruling party, Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE)[7]. As the electoral support for the Party considerably declined and popular uprisings were unfolding, in April 2011 the then Prime Minister Zapatero declared that he would not run for the elections and would move the date of general elections. The outcome of the

[7] Party's vote declined from 35% in the previous local elections held in 2007 to 28% in 2011.

early general elections held in November 2011, which has initially been scheduled for March 2012, was a considerable defeat for the ruling party (a decline from 43.9% in 2008 to 28.7% in 2011). The winner was the conservative People's Party (PP), which increased its votes from 39.9% in 2008 to 44.6% in 2011. Unlike the Greek experience, where the intensification of extra-parliamentary struggles in general and the rise of *Aganaktismenoi* - known as the Greek version of *Indignados* - in particular have been accompanied by the rise of a radical reformist political project, in Spain a political party seeking to initiate radical change through parliamentary means had not gained prominence in 2010-2012, the time period in which the Eurozone crisis severely affected Spain [8]. Until the recent emergence of a brand new party established in January 2014, *Podemos* (We Can)[9], the prominent political actor that organised the discontent against political and economic crisis management processes has been the 15M/*Indignados* movement. The political strategy pursued by the movement, which is referred to here as 'positive/creative negation' and will be discussed below, has targeted the economic and political crisis management processes particularly on two grounds: austerity policies (policy contents) and parliamentary/representative democracy (policy-making processes). Although, as one of its slogans ['*They don't represent us*' ('*No nos representan*')] symbolises, the movement has channelled popular discontent against the policy-makers as well, this has been framed with reference to an overarching critique of representation.

15M Movement emerged roughly a year after the Zapatero government's policy turn and on the eve of the regional and municipal elections held on 22 May 2011. It is regarded as belonging to a broader 'cycle of contention' (Hughes, 2011: 412-413; Tejerina *et al.*, 2013: 378; 382), a 'movement of the squares' (Albo, 2012: 19), which first emerged in the Middle East (labelled as the 'Arab Spring') then in Europe (Indignants) and United States (Occupy Movement), and is characterized with the reclamation of public spaces and a critique of representative democracy. It took its name from the mass demonstrations across Spain organized on 15 May 2011 via the internet-based platform called *Democracia real Ya!* (Real Democracy Now!). Police attempts to remove the protestors from the central square they occupied (*Puerta del Sol)* two days after the occupation was accompanied by a greater reaction, solidarity and involvement (Hughes, 2011:

[8] United Left Coalition in Spain (UI), which is regarded by some as the Spanish counterpart of Syriza (Nichols, 2013), increased its vote share from 3% in 2008 to 6.9% in 2011.

[9] Three months after its establishment in January 2014, *Podemos* won almost 8% of the Spanish vote in the European Parliament Elections. Although it emerged from the *Indignados* movement at a time when the latter was losing momentum, it would be fallacious to argue that *Indignados* was transformed into *Podemos.* The latter rather signifies a departure and it embodies the contradictions arising from combining the strategy of radical reform with the aspiration for direct democracy. The relations and tensions between the two are yet to be seen at the time of writing.

408). The movement grew from then on with further demonstrations against austerity policies and the political decision-making processes (Charnock *et al.*, 2012: 4; Hughes, 2011: 411).

Its social base has been characterised with the segments of the Spanish society who have suffered from the devastating impacts of the neoliberal policies in general and the crisis in the Eurozone in particular, including precarious white and blue collar workers and the young unemployed (Peterson *et al.*, 2013: 378). Observers indicate that while organised and unorganised activists have coexisted in the demonstrations and public assemblies (Tejerina *et al.*, 2013: 384), most of the participants of the 15M movement have distanced themselves from political parties and organizations and taken an anti-partisan stance (see Peterson *et al.*, 2013: 6; Hughes, 2011: 411). Avoidance of direct affiliation to political parties, associations and trade unions was also underlined as a priority by the Movement itself (Guide, 2011a).

It has widely been referred to as the 'movement of indignants', on the grounds that dissatisfaction and outrage have been the main underlying motivations of the people mobilized. It is indicated in Movement's manifesto that the unifying factor behind the coexistence of different political tendencies has been the shared anger[10]:

> "Some of us have clearly defined ideologies, others are apolitical, but we are all concerned and angry about the political, economic, and social outlook which we see around us: corruption among politicians, businessmen, bankers, leaving us helpless, without a voice".

As a social movement composed of many different voices with distinct demands, it has mainly characterised itself with general principles, such as 'equality, progress, solidarity, freedom of culture, sustainability and development, welfare and people's happiness'[11] and a criticism of the political and economic developments on the basis of such principles, rather than programmatic claims and projects. Alongside the lack of 'mechanisms for direct participation in the decision-making processes', the crisis management framework has also lied at the heart of their frustration and criticism. It is stated in a pamphlet that: "We fail to understand why we should have to pay the costs of the crisis, while its instigators continue to post record profits. We're sick and tired of one injustice after another. We want human dignity back again" (Guide, 2011a).

[10] See the link for the full manifesto http://www.democraciarealya.es/manifiesto-comun/manifesto-english/ (retrieved on 03.01.2014).

[11] See Movement's manifesto http://www.democraciarealya.es/manifiesto-comun/manifesto-english/ (retrieved on 03.01.2014).

The Movement's reaction against the unfolding crisis of political institutions (especially the political parties in the parliament) has taken the form of 'negation'. Put differently, the way out of the political impasse driven by the ever increasing lack of access of alternative interests and demands to decision-making processes has been implicitly proposed as playing outside of the parliamentary domain. This has included both a framework of negation and hope (cf. Castells, 2012) in abstract, as well as concrete attempts at forming alternative public spaces. The latter have taken the forms of 'protest camps' (*Acampadas*) and 'public assemblies' that imply an applied emphasis on solidarity, direct democracy and distribution on the basis of needs (cf. Hughes, 2011: 412). Transmission of experience to other similar movements around the globe has been considered as vital for this practice. Thus a guide including recommendations about how to set camps and organize an operational assembly system that was titled *How to Cook a Peaceful Revolution* was prepared 'to help all those with the same dream ... [to] change the world together' (Guide, 2011b). It also became a source of inspiration to other uprisings and movements such as *Aganaktismenoi* in Greece, *Occupy* Movement in the United States and *Gezi* Movement in Turkey that adopted similar organisational patterns and alongside holding demonstrations carried out similar actions such as occupation of and camping in the squares/parks and formation of popular assemblies and working groups (Sergi and Vogiatzoglou, 2013: 224-5; cf. Shihade *et al.*, 2012: 7).

The term rEvolution was used to refer to a non-violent, open strategy of change that rely on an 'assembly method' and based on a horizontal organization without leaders and ruling bodies (Guide, 2011b). The main mission of this strategy is regarded as the construction of new economic and organizational models, and new forms of social, cultural and spiritual relations (Guide, 2011b).

As it is argued above, since it is a social movement consisting of different voices and given the fact that it refuses to have pre-defined programmes and agendas, *Indignados* have politicised and delegitimised both austerity and representative democracy on the basis of principles, ideals and direct action. This has led it to pose a more foundational critique on these two grounds. As such, different from the case of SYRIZA it has clearly reflected a quest for a solution outside of the parliament and different from the anti-politics of the Five Stars Movement/M5S in Italy its strategy has implied an emphasis on positive/creative negation.

As the Movement has lost momentum at the time of writing and a brand new party on the radical left, *Podemos*, has recently been formed (in January 2014), the interplay between the strategies of 'positive/creative negation' and 'radical reform' will occupy a noteworthy place in Spanish radical politics in the near future.

3.3. Five Stars Movement: Anti-politics and negation for the sake of negation

Since the mid-2000s Italian politics has witnessed the becoming of a comedian (Beppe Grillo) having a popular internet blog based on political satire into a major political actor leading the Five Stars Movement (*Movimento Cinque Stelle*, or M5S). M5S was formally founded on October 2009 as a movement/party of unprecedented kind based on its leader's blog, public meetings and campaigns organised by him and his supporters which has been mainly marked by a criticism of established parties and their representatives in Italian politics. The leader Beppe Grillo is over-identified with the Movement so that the name M5S is his registered trademark[12]. The Movement's support rose considerably during the regional elections in 2010 and the local elections held in the following year (Bosco and Verney, 2012: 131). Its real success however came in the February 2013 general elections that followed the termination of the technocratic government led by Mario Monti - established in November 2011 immediately after the resignation of Silvio Berlusconi following an unsuccessful budget vote.

M5S became the third party by getting a quarter of the votes (25.6%) in the Italian General Elections held on February 2013. As the first two parties, the Democratic Party (PD) led by Pier Luigi Bersani and The People of Freedom (PDL) led by Silvio Berlusconi, entered the elections by establishing electoral coalitions respectively of centre left and centre right, M5S in fact received the highest percentage of votes as a single party. Votes won by the two coalitions were slightly higher than the votes of M5S, respectively 29.5% and 29.1%. Following the elections M5S refused being a coalition partner and led to a political deadlock for 2 months. It preferred staying in opposition *vis-à-vis* the grand coalition government formed by PD, PDL and the Civic Choice (SC)[13].

As it was the case for Greece, in Italy a technocratic government was formed in November 2011 under the premiership of an economist and former European Commissioner Mario Monti. As a response to the economic crisis and with the mission of salvaging the country, Monti was appointed as the prime minister until the elections in February 2013 and formed the cabinet as being composed of unelected professionals. This new government took further the austerity agenda introduced by its predecessor to reduce the public deficit as a

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[12] See Movement's "non-statute" http://www.movimentocinquestelle.eu/documenti/non-statuto-en.pdf (retrieved on 25.12.2013).

[13] The technocratic prime minister who had been running the country as being responsible for the introduction and implementation of various austerity measures also run in the general elections with his newly established party, Civic Choice (SC) and under the electoral coalition called 'With Monti for Italy' composed of SC and several other small parties. The coalition could get 10.5% of the votes.

austerity agenda introduced by its predecessor to reduce the public deficit as a response to the crisis. From the beginning of the establishment of the government on, numerous amendments have been enacted in line with the recommendations of IFIs and European institutions, rendering 2012 the 'long reform year' in the country (see Cencig, 2012: 32-41). Thus, throughout the term of office of the technocratic government the austerity program and related reform initiatives gained a considerable momentum as the related laws could rapidly be enacted in a manner immune from retarding parliamentary mechanisms and electoral accountability. As pointed out by Bordignon and Ceccarini (2013:5):

> "More than any other political player, the M5S managed to capitalise on the window of opportunity offered by the economic crisis and the social discontent about the new government's austerity measures, in addition to the climate of increasing hostility towards the traditional parties, at the centre of investigations into corruption charges".

In terms of the political manifestations of popular discontent against the crisis management processes, the Italian case has differed markedly from the experiences in Greece and Spain. While in Greece the popular discontent has found its political manifestation in protests, strikes, occupations and a political party aiming at 'radical reforms', and in the Spanish case the similar discontent have mainly taken the form of a social movement and uprisings, occupations, assemblies organized by it, none of them has gained prominence in Italy[14] (see Zamponi, 2012). This aspect has served as an important dynamic that provided a basis for the rise of M5S (see Phillips, 2013: 19).

Although the strengthening of the Movement has been closely related to the increasing discontent against the austerity framework, austerity policies have remained less pronounced as a point of criticism in its agenda than Grillo's critique of 'political mismanagement'. Thus, the main target of M5S's criticism has been the existing political parties, particularly the 'political elite' or to use Grillo's terminology, the 'political class' or the 'caste'[15]. Parties and politicians

[14] In Italy, unlike the situation in Spain and Greece, a movement akin to *Indignados and Aganaktismenoi* has been almost absent, leading to accounts that "*Indignados* movement which, when spreading from Spain to Greece, almost bypassed Italy" (della Porta and Andretta, 2013: 24; see also Zamponi, 2012). The main reference point for the popular discontent and protests was the Berlusconi government and various scandals Berlusconi himself was involved in (cf. della Porta and Andretta, 2013: 34). This strong anti-Berlusconi orientation of the popular discontent might have played a role in more widespread appreciation of Monti's technocratic government as a 'saviour'. Following observation by Lorenzo Zamponi illustrates the situation well: "On 17 November, when the traditional demonstrations for the International Students' Day coincided with the inauguration speech of premier Monti in the Senate, people were asking of activists: 'Who are you protesting against?' (Zamponi, 2012: 422).

[15] These two terms have been frequently used in Beppe Grillo's blog: http://www.beppegrillo.it/

have been criticised as being illegitimate, self-seeking, unlawful, corrupt and non-transparent, etc. (see Bordignon and Ceccarini, 2013: 7).

The five stars symbolises five priorities of the movement: environment, public water, development, (internet) connectivity, and public transportation (De Rosa, 2013: 90). However, issues raised by Grillo have not been restricted to those about the quality and provision of services and environmental sustainability, but also have included components such as praise of small and medium enterprises and criticism of big industrial groups, the organization of media, corruption, temporary employment and excessive consumption[16] (see Bordignon and Ceccarini, 2013: 6-7). The movement has had an issue-based agenda which has included many conflicting elements. For instance, while showing his opposition to citizenship rights for the children of immigrants born in Italy and claiming that trade unions are outdated and not necessary (Phillips, 2013: 18), Beppe Grillo at the same time has raised issues such as the threat of rising nationalism/fascism in Europe as an outcome of the crisis[17] and deterioration of the 'social state'[18]. M5S's issue-based agenda has been full of such mixed signals and ambiguities framed with an 'anti-politics' agenda based on opposition to political elites (policy-makers) (cf. Bordignon and Ceccarini, 2013: 2,7; Bosco and Verney, 2012: 131; Phillips, 2013) and to parliamentary/representative democracy (policy-making processes). As it will be shown below, the critique of the latter by M5S however implied important differences from the one posed by *Indignados.*

M5S's opposition to policy-makers has been based on a dichotomy established between the ordinary/undifferentiated Italian citizens, i.e., the people *versus* the corrupt elites/power holders, mostly national and European politicians in person. This 'anti-elitist' approach has led many observers to identify the Movement as 'populist' (Bordignon and Ceccarini, 2013: 9; Fella and Ruzza, 2013). Beppe Grillo also characterized the M5S as a movement of 'raging populists'. In his words[19]:

> "Sure, we are populists and we recognise true democracy in the will [of] people. Sure, we are raging against these parties that have plundered the country and are now making themselves out to be the saviours. Sure, we

[16] See for the full programme http://www.movimentocinquestelle.eu/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/programma-en.pdf (retrieved on 25.12.2013).

[17] "Heil Europe", http://www.beppegrillo.it/en/2011/04/heil_europa.html (retrieved on 25.12.2013); "Europe towards Fascism", http://www.beppegrillo.it/en/2013/11/europe_towards_fascism.html (retrieved on 25.12.2013).

[18] "Today at the Quirinale Palace", http://www.beppegrillo.it/en/2013/07/today_at_the_quirinale_palace.html (retrieved on 25.12.2013)

[19] "Raging Populists", http://www.beppegrillo.it/en/2013/11/raging_populists.html (retrieved on 25.12.2013).

are raging populists and when we have the majority, we will delete this political class out of history. Raging populists? I like that!".

In the 'non-statute' of the movement, it is stated that rather than having the goal to become a party in the future, M5S seeks to be 'an avenue for achieving an effective exchange of ideas and democratic debate using the Internet as the means of communications normally assigned to political representatives'[20]. It is defined as above and beyond ideologies and it is indicated that it "talks to the Italian people, not to the PD-folk nor to the Berlusconi-folk"[21]. The remedy for all of the economic and political problems have been proposed as the abolishment of political mediation between decision-making bodies and the ordinary citizens and establishment of a new understanding of democracy based on direct participation rather than delegation (cf. Fella and Ruzza, 2013: 50; Bordignon and Ceccarini, 2013: 8). Movements' critique of the European institutions within the context of the crisis has also been marked by this distinction between people and power holders reduced to institutions such as the European Central Bank, their representatives and more prominently their national 'puppets'[22]. Unlike SYRIZA and *Indignados*, it is difficult to identify M5S with an outright anti-austerity stance. The Movement's discourse has been full of mixed signals in that respect, too. Accordingly, in an open letter to the President of Republic, Grillo complained about the lower social expenditures, investment and research and mentions the need for a debt restructuring and 'citizens income', while at the same time he indicated that he was convinced of the importance of "urgent and extraordinary measures, equal to those of a war economy"[23]. Thus both the fiscal crisis and the crisis of political decision-making processes have been addressed less in terms of content than of the politicians/caste who have been conceived as being responsible for them. As such, the M5S's political stance can best be identified as 'negation for the sake of negation'.

4. Concluding remarks

Three political organizations discussed in this paper represent different political answers to the increasing popular discontent with the debt and legitimacy

[20] See for the 'non-statute' of the Movement http://www.movimentocinquestelle.eu/documenti/non-statuto-en.pdf (retrieved on 25.12.2013).

[21] "The M5S is not Left-wing (and neither is it Right-wing)", http://www.beppegrillo.it/en/2013/05/the_m5s_is_not_left_wing_and_n.html) (retrieved on 25.12.2013).

[22] For a blog post identifying the Italian Prime Minister as "Captain Findus Letta, the tin soldier of Brussels" see "The M5S and the European Elections", http://www.beppegrillo.it/en/2013/10/the_m5s_and_the_european_elect.html (retrieved on 25.12.2013).

[23] "Todat at the Quirinale Palace", http://www.beppegrillo.it/en/2013/07/today_at_the_quirinale_palace.html (retrieved on 25.12.2013).

crisis in Southern Europe. Their rise to prominence have been indicative of the growing search for alternatives to the framework drawn by the austerity agenda on the basis of urgency, necessity and the need for sacrifices and to the unfolding attempts towards narrowing the content of policy-making processes along these lines. Their emergence as political alternatives in Southern Europe also indicates that indignation with austerity has had different organisational articulations that imply different political strategies. These strategies have been conceptualised in this study as radical reform, positive/creative negation and anti-politics. It is argued that they have been formulated respectively by SYRIZA, *Indignados* and Five Stars Movement on the basis of three broad sources of popular discontent in changing weights and manners: austerity policies (policy contents), parliamentary/ representative democracy (policy-making processes) and the representatives (policy-makers). These differences have had distinct political implications.

Critique of austerity policies (policy contents) has been very central to the 'radical reform' strategy. SYRIZA has problematised and politicised austerity policies as an urgent issue to be handled with and to be removed *via* radical counter reforms. Critique of policy contents has taken place within the 'positive/creative negation' strategy on the basis of ideals and principles such as human dignity. Construction of new economic and organizational models has been prioritised by *Indignados* as the main means of combating austerity. Austerity policies have remained less pronounced as a point of criticism for the 'anti-political' strategy pursued by the Five Stars Movement as its issue-based agenda has been full of mixed signals and ambiguities in this regard.

The second vein of opposition, i.e. opposition to the parliamentary/ representative democracy (policy-making processes) have taken a more prominent place within the strategies of 'positive/creative negation' and 'anti-politics', as the 'radical reform' strategy have been based on a call for radical transformation through these mechanisms. Yet it is possible to talk about the existence of important differences between the first two strategies in terms of their problematisation of representative mechanisms. The strategy of positive/creative negation has posed an overarching critique of representation and representative bodies such as political parties, associations and trade unions and called for a 'participatory democracy' to be materialised *via* the 'assembly method'. Unlike the former, the 'anti-politics' strategy embodied by the Five Stars Movement has proposed a direct citizen participation to be realised on a more individualistic manner by abolishing political mediation between decision-making bodies and the ordinary citizens *via* tools like Internet.

The last source of popular discontent, i.e. representatives (policy-makers), has also been targeted differently by the bearers of the three strategies. While for *Indignados* the target has been the faults of representative democracy rather than

policy-makers *per se*, SYRIZA has provided a critique of the incumbents on the basis of their handling of the debt crisis in Greece. The strategy of 'anti-politics' adopted by the Five Stars Movement on the other hand addressed the crisis less in terms of content than of the politicians/caste who have been conceived as being responsible for them.

It seems that these three political answers to the economic and legitimacy crisis in Southern Europe would play important roles in the formation of a new political architecture in Southern Europe. However it remains to be seen which of these paths, radical reformism offered by SYRIZA, constructive/creative negation of parliamentary politics proposed by *Indignados* or anti-politics represented by Five Stars, will prevail in terms of defining the characteristics of radical opposition in the region. Anti-politics on the basis of the critique of political actors is the least likely strategy that can form a basis for a radical transcendence of economic and political crisis. It is unsustainable and it implies a tendency of absorbing popular discontent without posing alternatives. The two other strategies have the claim and potential for initiating radical change. It seems that their success will be contingent upon their ability to overcome two potential risks: the risk of moderation (in the case of radical reformism) and the risk of being absorbed or repressed by the capitalist relations (in the case of constructive/creative negation). Since the austerity within EU and the pressures for neoliberal reform in Southern European countries will be main determinants in the political scene for years to come, radical critique of established political channels and popular opposition to austerity politics may yield hybrid offsprings.

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Özet

Güney Avrupa'da kriz ve siyasal alternatif arayışları: SYRIZA, 15 Mayıs Hareketi/Öfkeliler ve Beş Yıldız Hareketi

Bu makalenin temel amacı Güney Avrupa'da 2000'lerin sonları ve 2010'ların başlarında gerçekleşen borç krizi yönetim süreçlerinde ön plana çıkmış olan üç farklı siyasal örgütlenmenin - Yunanistan'da SYRIZA, İspanya'da 15 Mayıs Hareketi/Öfkeliler ve İtalya'da Beş Yıldız Hareketi'nin - siyasal stratejilerini incelemek ve tartışmaktır. Özel olarak makale bu siyasal aktörler tarafından çerçevelenen ve işaret edilen, borç ve meşruiyet krizinden çıkışa ilişkin alternatif stratejilere odaklanmaktadır. Önemli siyasal aktörler olarak ortaya çıkmalarının, kemer sıkma gündemince çizilen çerçeveye karşı artan genel hoşnutsuzluğun ve alternatif arayışlarının bir göstergesi olduğu iddia edilmektedir. Benzer bir bağlam yükselişlerine zemin hazırlamış olsa da bu üç siyasal aktör, sırasıyla, 'radikal reformizm', 'yapıcı/yaratıcı reddiye' ve 'anti-siyaset' olarak nitelendirilebilecek farklı siyasal izlekleri temsil etmektedirler. Makale ayrıca bu stratejileri, üç temel kaynağa yönelen toplumsal hoşnutsuzlukları ne şekilde siyasallaştırdıklarına odaklanarak açıklamaktadır. Bu kaynaklar kemer sıkma politikaları (politika içerikleri), parlamenter/temsili demokrasi (karar alma süreçleri) ve temsilciler (politika yapıcılar) olarak belirlenmektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Kemer sıkma-karşıtı siyaset, borç ve meşruiyet krizi, Güney Avrupa, radikal reformizm, yapıcı/yaratıcı reddiye, anti-siyaset.