# Hybrid spaces of politics.

# The 2013 general elections in Italy, between talk shows and Twitter

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## Abstract

This article analyses the relationship between mediated politics and participation, adopting a hybrid approach that stresses the connections between older and newer media. The study adopts a practice-based approach, considering the ways TV audiences, politicians, and journalists used Twitter in order to participate in the discourses activated around Italian political talk shows, during the 'permanent' campaign for the 2013 general elections (from September 2012 to June 2013; 11 shows; 1,076 episodes). We analysed these communication practices referring, at first, to the complete collection of tweets, including the official hashtags of Italian political talk shows (2,489,669 tweets). The analysis pointed out that a narrow audience had access to these practices, and that the potential for media and politicians to interact with audiences/citizens and to manage their 'interpretive engagement' in the construction of agendas has not

been actualised. Furthermore, focusing on a sample of tweets produced around the three main parties (15,737) and the relative TV scene (23), the analysis showed that connected audiences were engaged especially in two forms of participation 'through' Twitter during talk shows (opinions/comments and requests for interaction with the TV hosts and guests). The article suggests a newer way to work on big data in order to gather a first-hand narrative of participation, left online by networked publics, without forgetting the contribution older techniques could make to the understanding of hybrid practices of political communication and participation.

## 1. Media practices, political communication, and participation: A hybrid approach

The relationship between mediated politics and participation has always appeared to be a central theme on the academic agenda. In media spaces, power and counter-power are in fact constantly interacting in order to frame issues, shape public opinions, construct collective identities, and activate political actions, thus significantly influencing both everyday social life and institutionalised politics.

For more than fifty years, scholars focused on the power relationships between broadcast media and political systems, considering audiences as 'third actors' of mediated public spaces (Swanson, 1999). However, in the late 20th century, the 'interpretive turn' in humanities scholarship showed that audiences were 'active', even though they were influenced by text structures, diverse social conditions, and contexts of viewing (Hall, 1980; Morley, 1980). Furthermore, before the diffusion of Facebook and Twitter, audiences have already been described as 'performative' and 'participatory', perceiving themselves as 'publics' (Livingstone & Lunt, 1994; Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998). Audiences 'became the media', even before

YouTube, by gaining access to the production of news contents in different forms of 'mediactivism', such as street-TV, developed during the end of the last century (Downing, Ford, Gil, & Stein, 2001).

In the last decade, with the diffusion of the social web, a substantial body of literature has been produced on the forms of political power and counter-power enabled by new media. Terms such as 'user-generated content' (Bruns, 2008) reconfigured the debate on political participation and communication, focusing on alternative online information and journalism (Atton & Hamilton, 2008). Processes such as 'mass-self communication' (Castells, 2009) defined the potential relational empowerment offered by social media: the possibility for individuals to directly manage their own communicative relations in order to reach out to larger networks. Audiences became 'networked publics' (Ito, 2008).

During the last decade, while some accounts abstracted 'new' social media to an independent variable – a space that would mitigate the democratic deficits of the mass-mediated and offline politics – others began[1] to reflect on the intersections, overlapping, interdependence, and adaptation between older and newer media.

Blumler and Coleman (2013, pp. 180–3), in their article about civic communication, included among the 'new research priorities' more attention to the 'ecology of diverse media': the research has to understand how 'several different kinds of political communication meet and several different kinds of communicators take account of (or ignore) one another'. Enli and Moe (2013) demanded an increasingly significant research commitment on the 'inter-media dynamics' produced during elections, between user-generated contents and mass media agendas. Chadwick (2013) focused on the construction of political information, which also involves 'non-élite actors' in multiple spaces of communication, producing a 'hybrid cycle', less linear than

in the past. Castells (2012) analysed the 'hybrid spaces' of contemporary social movements that move along the space of places and the space of flows.

Despite differences between perspectives and arguments, these scholars stress the profound relations between older and newer mediated politics, proposing hybrid approaches that look at the connections between technological platforms, formats, logic, contents, and actors.

This article analyses contemporary mediated politics, adopting a hybrid approach and focusing on the relations between TV and social media. In particular, it adopts a 'practice-based approach' (Couldry, 2012), considering the ways TV audiences, politicians, and journalists made use of Twitter in order to participate in the discourses activated around Italian political talk shows, during the campaign for the 2013 general elections.

There are many ways to approach 'social TV', a vast label used to indicate the transformation in the access and distribution of television content, increasingly based on multi-devices and multi-platforms (Google, 2012). In our approach, the technological convergence between TV and social media is considered an 'enabling premise' (Marinelli, 2004; Iannelli, 2011) to the hybrid communication practices which we explore. From connected media to connected actors (audience, politicians, journalists), our study focuses on the 'second-screen' practices of TV consumption activated on Twitter.

Twitter is a generalist social network site, increasingly interconnected with different formats of TV politics, such as breaking news, Q&A, question time, talk shows, and electoral debates (Doughty, Rowland, & Lawson, 2011; Lochrie & Coulton, 2012; Shamma, Kennedy, & Churchill, 2009; Anstead & O'Loughlin, 2011; Wohn & Na, 2011; Bennett, 2012). These practices arise from the online 'participatory culture'

(Jenkins, 2006) and transform isolated TV consumption into a shared experience, lived in private homes during the late 20th century by performative audiences and, now, experienced also in the 'public' space of Twitter, in keeping with the most general process of 'individualized networking' (Wellman, 2001).

Considering Italy, where the technological TV market is less hybrid than in the USA or the UK, and older media are still not able to offer structured solutions to audience engagement (such as catch up TV, online video aggregators, etc.) (Smith & Boyles, 2012; Marinelli & Celata, 2012), second-screen practices based on a generalist SNS represent 'spontaneous' practices that arise from connected audiences themselves. Such spontaneous practices of audience engagement open different scenarios, and research is called to explore if and how the TV market is transforming these 'emergent cultures' into 'dominant' ones (Williams, 1977).

The hybrid practices we focused on are therefore a research field useful to explore the ability of older media to 'renew', adapting themselves to 'a world of participatory circulation' (Jenkins, Ford, & Green, 2013). At the same time, the possible adoption of these practices by politicians themselves can be considered an interesting attempt to build hybrid models of political communication, where older effects related to 'mediatization of politics' (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999) can either survive or not.

Moreover, research on these second-screen practices offers evidence about the different forms of participation in mediated politics that citizens can activate, potentially balancing the relationships between power and counter-power, because they are – at the same time – TV audiences and networked publics, consumers of TV-controlled content, and producers of online content about TV.

More precisely, hybrid spaces of politics can enable forms of participation that evoke the two different types of media participation theorised by Wasko and Mosco

(1992), and recalled by Carpentier, Dahlgren, and Pasquali (2013). These scholars distinguish between democratisation/participation 'in' and 'through' the media, considering the first as a content-related and structural participation in media output and organisation, while the second deals with the voice and the interaction with other voices through mediated public debates. These theoretical frames can be adopted in contemporary research on the participatory practices enabled by hybrid spaces of politics. With some adjustments, required by the contemporary media hybridisation, research on second-screen practices can offer evidence about both the forms of participation 'through' Twitter during political talk shows (where the SNS is used to voice opinions and experiences, and to interact with other actors who are on Twitter and on TV), and the forms of participation 'in' political talk shows via Twitter (where the SNS is used to influence the production of TV content, suggesting different issues or different angles about the issues discussed in talk shows, and introducing new information sources for these issues/angles).

At a less abstract level, adapting the typology elaborated by Wohn and Na (2011), the observed hybrid media spaces can afford practices such as the expression of opinions/comments concerning the TV hosts and guests, the quotation of sentences pronounced on TV, the description of the TV scenes, and the request for interactions with the TV actors. All these practices (opinion/comment, information/streaming/report, request for interaction) can be considered forms of participation 'through' Twitter during political talk shows.

Moreover, the observed hybrid media spaces enable connected audiences to intervene, via Twitter, 'in' the production of the content discussed by political talk shows, introducing different angles (problems, causes, and solutions) about the issues proposed by television, and also suggesting alternative information sources (e.g. online

journals, blogs, and Facebook Notes) to challenge or strengthen the arguments used by TV hosts and guests. Although previous research (e.g. Anstead & O'Loughlin, 2011; Chadwick, 2013) showed that Twitter's role in reframing the television texts is still oriented by TV logic, and that the process of agenda building via Twitter is very demanding for connected audiences, the interventions on this SNS during political talk shows can be oriented to influence TV agenda beyond the 'first level of information' (Benton & Frazier, 1976). In other words, although tweets are likely to deal with the different types of political issues (Patterson, 1980) defined by the shows – given the permanent central role of TV in the process of 'spot-lighting' (McCombs, 1976) – it remains interesting to explore if and how connected audiences introduce different angles and information sources about the general issues defined by the TV hosts and guests, facing the more complex levels of agenda building, related to the problems, causes, solutions, and arguments.

## 2. The 2013 general elections in Italy, between talk shows and Twitter: A case study

The context of our study is the campaign for the 2013 general elections in Italy – a 'permanent campaign' (Blumenthal, 1980), 'stretched' beyond the official campaign and the election-days (24 and 25 February 2013) throughout many significant political events. During the season, three main political actors attracted the most attention: 'Italia Common Good', the Left Coalition, organised around the Democratic Party (PD) and guided by Pierluigi Bersani; 'People of Freedom' (PDL), the Right Coalition, guided by Silvio Berlusconi; and the 'Five Stars Movement' (M5S), a movement of citizens without institutional experience, guided by the former comedian Beppe Grillo.

The result of this general election was inconclusive. None of the main political actors won a tidy victory. The M5S gained an unexpected good result in the Lower House, but Bersani, leader of the voted coalition, did not succeed in convincing the movement for a government alliance with the left-wing parties. A multi-party government was designated, unifying right- and left-wing actors under the premiership of Enrico Letta (PD). In May, with the elections for the Mayor of Rome, Italians voted (indirectly) for these choices in national politics.

This permanent campaign has been characterised by cultural and political processes that Italy shares with other Western societies (Crouch, 2004), even if maintaining some local peculiarities. Indeed, the M5S followed an anti-party narrative, in line with the trends of distrust recorded in other countries, but fostered by continuous scandals in Italian politics (Mosca, 2014). Moreover, historically, Italian public television has been characterised by a process of 'division into lots' among the political parties, which is emblematic of a more general, strong, interdependence between the Italian political and media systems (Forgacs, 1990). In this context, the anti-party narrative proposed by Grillo (dismissed from television in the '80s) had come to coincide with an anti-old-media narrative, developed on his blog but 'covered' by old media themselves (Scaglioni & Sfardini, 2013). After the Monti Cabinet, and during a worldwide economic deficit, the right-wing coalition faced a crisis of trust, but it was still a 'personal party', guided by Berlusconi, while the left-wing coalition tried to connect inner divergences and the absence of a strong leadership.

To analyse the hybrid models of mediated politics adopted in this permanent campaign, we focused on the relations between TV and Twitter. In particular, we chose to look at the communication practices activated on Twitter by citizens, politicians, and journalists, in order to participate in the discussions around Italian political talk shows.

We analysed these communication practices referring to both those tweets that included the official hashtags of political talk shows (produced during the airtime) and the content of Italian talk shows[2] broadcast during the permanent campaign (11 shows, from September 2012 to June 2013; 1,076 episodes).

Aggregating conversations via hashtags is, in fact, a popular way to aggregate contents on social network sites: it allows social network users to visualise and insert content in an organised communication flux, produced around a certain issue (a TV show in this case). The idea of focusing on political talk shows was based on two reflections. First, the available literature showed how different TV genres reach different levels and forms of online audience engagement (see, among others, Geerts, Cesar, & Bulterman, 2008), and these differences are supposed to be related also to the characteristics of Twitter users in different socio-technological contexts. In Italy, during the observed campaign, the Twitter population was around 4 million (PeerReach, 2013; Cosenza, 2013), and these narrow and 'expert' audiences seemed particularly engaged while watching some of the political talk shows we included in the analysis (Andò, 2013). The second reflection that moved our research towards political talk shows is the mix of entertainment and information that characterises these formats (in Italy), and that has often been studied as a strategy to engage TV audiences (van Zoonen, 2005).

The analysis was first directed at obtaining information about the overall volume of tweets generated around this genre of TV politics during the electoral (and TV) season, and to discuss Italian audiences' access to these second-screen practices. Second, we aimed to understand if talk shows and politicians participated in the construction of these practices and in which forms. Third, given the literature we discussed above, our analysis intended to understand which forms of participation connected audiences activated while quoting the three main political forces of the

permanent Campaign and their representatives. We considered four possible forms of participation 'in' and 'through' the observed media practices, oriented towards both the talk shows and the hosted politicians: a pure information/streaming/report of what was happening or was going to happen; the expression of opinions/comments; the request for interaction, clarifications, or changes; and the introduction of new issues/angles/sources.

## 3. Methodology

In order to fully describe the methodology used to answer the research questions, we organised this section into the following four parts: 3.1) dataset and data gathering; 3.2) detection of peaks of activity around the three main political parties; 3.3) sampling; and 3.4) procedure for the hybrid content analysis (tweets and respective scene aired) and code-set.

### 3.1 Dataset and data gathering

From 30 August 2012 to 30 June 2013, we collected 2,489,669 tweets by querying the Twitter *firehose* for posts containing at least one of the official hashtags (e.g. advertised on the official Twitter channel of the program or during the TV show) or the most frequently used hashtag related to one of the eleven political talk shows aired by the Italian free-to-air broadcasters during the 2012/2013 season. Due to the limits of traditional means of collecting data from Twitter (from both Streaming and Search API) and the unreliability of the resulting sample if compared to the so-called *firehose* (Morstatter, Pfeffer, Liu, & Carley, 2013), the dataset was acquired via DiscoverText GNIP importer. GNIP is a former Twitter partner (recently acquired by Twitter itself), which provides 'complete Twitter Data Access'. In other words, this dataset is a complete – as much as current technology allows – collection of all the tweets related to

the TV genre of political talk shows during the entire 2012/2013 season in Italy.[3]

By filtering the dataset for tweets created during the airtime of the shows, we selected 1,889,281 tweets (76%) created by 187,031 unique users. On this subset, we calculated, for each minute, the following metrics (Bruns & Stieglitz, 2013): replies, retweets, unique contributors, reach (total sum of followers for each non-unique contributor), and original tweets (defined as tweets that are neither replies nor retweets). In addition to these metrics, we also estimated the amount of conversation per minute dealing with the three main political actors (PD, PDL, and M5S). In order to do so, we compiled three lists of keywords related to each political actor. Each set contains the name and abbreviation of the party, the name of the party's leaders and, where available, the official Twitter account of both parties and leaders. Tweets containing at last one keyword from one of the three lists were considered part of the conversation around the respective party. The resulting dataset consists of 439,204 observations (minutes). Each minute was further assigned to one of the twelve political periods identified during the observed permanent campaign.

Figure 1. Twitter activity around PD, PDL, and M5S during the permanent campaign
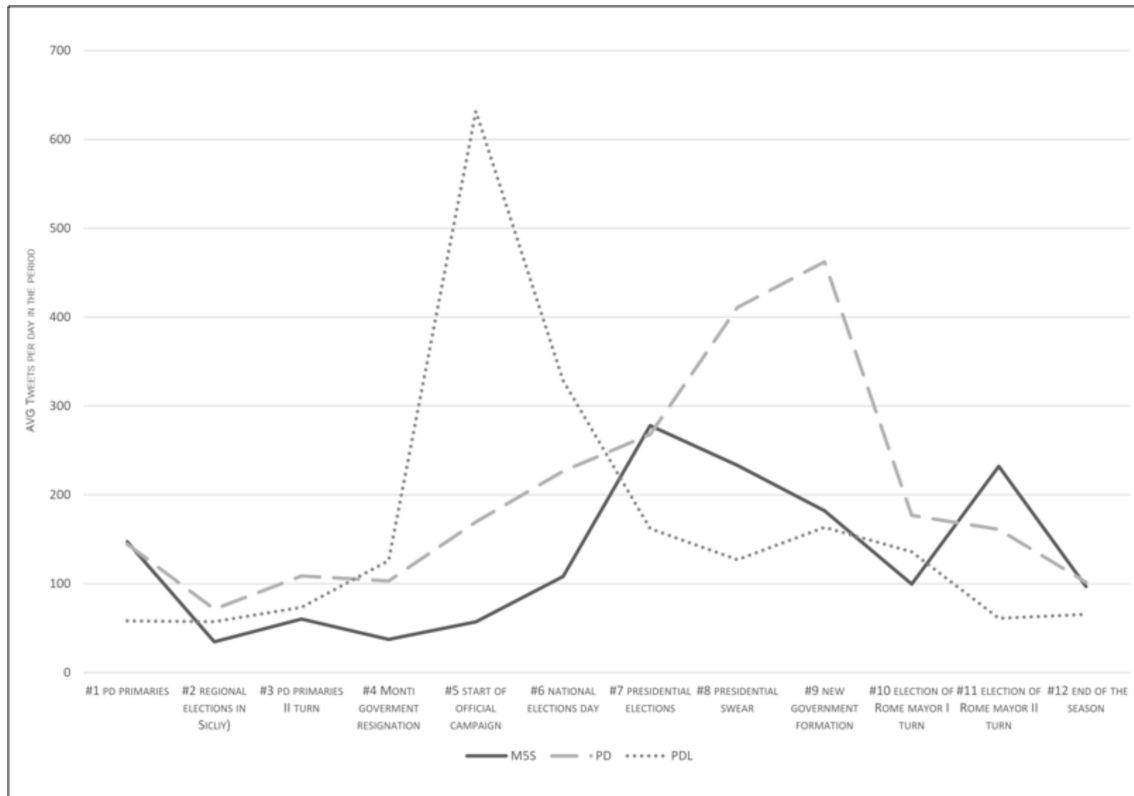
### 3.2 Detection of peaks of activity around the three main political parties

Algorithms for peak detection applied to streams of tweets already proved their usefulness in effectively segmenting a TV programme (Nakazawa, Erdmann, Hoashi, & Ono, 2012; Shamma, Kennedy, & Churchill, 2009, 2010, 2011; Giglietto & Selva, 2014). On this basis, we applied the peaks detection algorithm described by Marcus et al. (2011) to the three party-related streams of original tweets in our dataset, ending up with 530 detected peaks with their respective windows (span of n minutes around the peak).

Table 1. Peaks detected per party

| Party | n peaks detected | average span (minutes) | Average Tweets per window | n Tweets in the peaks |
|-------|------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| PD    | 152              | 3.03                   | 690.5                     | 104,956               |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| PDL | 200 | 2.65 | 1,247.6 | 249,520 |
| M5S | 180 | 2.78 | 387.64 | 65,397 |
| | 530 | | | 419,873 |

We chose Marcus's algorithm over other options because the source code was available, because it features two parameters aimed at customising what the algorithm recognises as a significant increase and at balancing local and global peaks detection, and finally because it returns a list of peak windows and not simply the peak itself.

When a significant increase is detected (the value at minute n is more than 3 mean deviations from a regularly updated local mean), a peak window is opened and the algorithm starts a hill-climbing procedure in order to find the peak. The top of the hill is reached when the value at minute n is smaller than the one detected at the previous minute. The window is closed either when the minute counts are back at the level where they started or another significant increase is found.

*3.3 Sampling*

The peaks detected for each of the three parties were further assigned to one of the twelve political periods. As expected, the distribution of peaks per period varies considerably for the three parties. On the one hand, its measure is heavily influenced by the topics chosen by the producer of the shows and cannot therefore be taken as an absolute measure of interest towards a party. On the other hand, the capability of a party and their leaders to dictate agenda is also a variable influencing this measure.

While the detection of peaks drastically reduced the content and helped us to identify the most active moments for each party during the season, a further selection was necessary in order to make the content analysis feasible. For each party, we

therefore randomly selected, when available, one peak per period, ending up with 23

peaks containing 15,737 tweets (8,031 original; 2,345 M5S; 1,831 PD; 3,855 PDL).

Table 2. Number of peaks detected (steps 1) and sampled (step 2) per party and period

| | | | Step 1 | | | Step 2 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Political Period | Start | End | PD | PDL | M5S | PD | PDL | M5S |
| 1 | Start of the TV season | Democratic Party Primaries (I turn) | 1 | 0 | 6 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 2 | Democratic Party Primaries (I turn) | Regional Elections in Sicily | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 3 | Regional Elections in Sicily | Democratic Party Primaries (II ballot) | 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 4 | Democratic Party Primaries (II ballot) | Monti's resignation | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 5 | Monti's resignation | Start of the electoral campaign | 32 | 133 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 6 | Start of the electoral campaign | General Elections | 30 | 53 | 11 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 7 | General Elections | Elections of the President of the Republic | 31 | 13 | 107 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 8 | Elections of the President of the Republic | Swearing of the President of the Republic | 7 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 9 | Swearing of the President of the Republic | Confidence vote for Letta's Government | 19 | 0 | 6 | 1 | 0 | 1 |

| 10 | Confidence vote for Letta's Government | Elections for Rome Mayor (I turn) | 15 | 0 | 8 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 11 | Elections for Rome Mayor (I turn) | Elections for Rome Mayor (II ballot) | 8 | 0 | 33 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 12 | Elections for Rome Mayor (II ballot) | End of the season | 6 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| | | | 152 | 200 | 180 | 10 | 4 | 9 |

### 3.4 Hybrid content analysis and code-set

It is almost impossible to fully grasp the meaning of Twitter conversations without analysing the context of the TV scene contemporarily aired. For this reason, we developed a coding protocol that took into account the inextricable hybrid nature of the phenomenon. In order to do so, we identified the on-air scene corresponding to each of the 23 sampled peaks. While the archive of each episode of talk shows is available either on the official YouTube channels or on the website of the show, the identification of the precise scene proved to be trickier than expected. The archived episodes, in fact, lack the advertising breaks. On the contrary, the publishing date associated with each tweet refers to the airtime of the episode with breaks. This activity required a careful analysis of tweets and on-air scene content aimed at correctly mapping the online conversation over the corresponding section of the aired episode. Tweets containing quoted citations of sentences pronounced by guests (or the hosts) during the episode proved to be extremely helpful in this phase. The coding protocol explicitly required each coder to watch the scene before starting the content analysis of tweets.

We excluded retweets from the content analysis and we coded as missing most of the replies. For retweets, we wanted to avoid the potential bias caused by repeated

messages. For replies, it was often impossible to reconstruct the meaning of the message; however, we included replies addressed to politicians, the host, or other guests. Most of the time, these types of replies are not really part of a conversation, but rather invocations that do not necessarily require a response from the person called upon. Finally, we also coded as missing tweets containing links to materials no longer available. Over the 8,031 tweets in the dataset, 367 (4.5%) were coded as missing.

The code-set was organised into three areas: orientation to media or politics, form, and content. Categories were not mutually exclusive.

Table 3. Code-set

| Orientation | |
|---|---|
| | Tweets oriented at politics |
| | Tweets oriented at media |
| Form | |
| | Opinion/Comment |
| | Information/streaming/report |
| | Introduction of new issues/angles/sources |
| | Request for interaction |
| | Emotion |
| | Irony |
| | Violence |
| Content | |
| Tweets oriented at politics | Political Issue |
| | Policy Issue |
| | Campaign Issue |
| | Personal Issue |
| Tweets oriented at media | Show |
| | Host |
| | Non-political guests |

For the form, we adapted typologies already present in the literature (as discussed above). We coded as 'opinion/comment' tweets containing expression of opinions concerning politics and/or media. Opinions are sometimes expressed by using a hashtag such as #tvb (which stands for 'Ti voglio bene' or 'I love you'). Tweets containing quoted or unquoted citations of sentences pronounced by politicians, the host, or other guests, or describing the scene as a running commentary were coded as

'information/streaming/report'. Questions addressed to the guests or hosts were coded as 'requests for interaction' (e.g. requests for clarification about what politicians or journalists say; tweets that ask for a change in how interviews are conducted by the hosts; and questions about the criteria used to select the guests). We coded as 'introduction of new issues/angles/sources' messages discussing new topics in the conversation (e.g. tweets about breaking news ignored by talk shows); personal analysis about the topics discussed on TV that move away from the television frame, in terms of problems, causes, solutions, arguments (e.g. with a link to a Facebook Note); and tweets that introduce different information sources to challenge or strengthen the on-going TV discussion (e.g. links to past article/videos/pictures that show the contradictory declarations of politicians and links that invite the audience to tune in to another channel to discuss different topics).

'Emotion' was used for tweets containing expressions such as love, hate, or sadness, using uppercase letters or multiple exclamation marks. Tweets containing jokes or rhetorical questions were marked as 'irony'. Finally, messages containing vulgar language, insults, and/or provocations were coded as 'violence'.

For the content of politics-oriented tweets, we used a modified version of the four types of political issues identified by Patterson (1980): political, policy, campaign, and personal issues. Messages were coded as 'political issues' when containing references to results of previous governments, laws, political choices, ideological visions associated with right or left, anti-politics, values, and electoral programs. Politics-oriented tweets dealing with concrete issues touching the everyday life of citizens were coded as 'policy issues'. We coded as 'campaign issues' the messages containing references to polls, slogans, scandals, and backstage. Finally, we marked

tweets as 'personal issues' when they contained references to politicians' private lives, communicative performances, and physical appearance.

Tweets oriented at media were further divided into three areas depending on the target of their message. We therefore coded as 'show' messages dealing with the structure of the show itself, the show staff (not including the host), tones, rhythm, and the choice of invited guests. The 'host' category was used for tweets explicitly addressed or referring to the hosts and containing comments on the typology of questions the hosts posed, their style, tones, rhythm, and biases. Finally, comments addressed to or dealing with guests such as journalists and entrepreneurs were coded as 'non-political guests'.

The content analysis involved the two authors and a post-graduate student who independently coded two peaks not included in the sample. After extensive discussion and comparison, the authors refined the coding protocol in order to better define the codes.

Following this improved coding procedure, the coders independently coded two additional peaks not included in the sample in order to reach an acceptable level of reliability (Krippendorff's $\alpha < 0.7$). After this training phase, we coded the sampled peaks (n = 8,031). In order to account for coder drift, we double coded the first 10% of tweets (n = 803) in each peak. Based on this 10%, we calculated the mean Krippendorff's Alpha for all codes ($\alpha < 0.81$). Each discrepancy in the reliability sample was consensus coded and included in the analysis.

## 4. Findings

During the permanent campaign for the 2013 Italian general elections, an overall volume of 1,889,281 tweets was generated during the airtime of political talk shows, by

using their official hashtags. Despite this significant volume of tweets, talk shows did not activate particularly broad access to this second-screen practice. Unique contributors were in fact 187,031, a number which is far from the average measures in TV audience, and which represents a minimal percentage even if compared to the estimated Italian Twitter population in the same period (around 4 million).

The narrow access to this hybrid media practice is related to what we described above as the spontaneous nature of the Italian TV audience engagement via Twitter, little encouraged by the older media industry: in the observed season, all talk shows had an official Twitter account, and their hosts were more or less active (two of them were not on Twitter), but only 3 out of the 11 talk shows used selected tweets, reporting some of them in the 'first-screen' during airtime.

Even the three main political actors of the Campaign were absent in this hybrid media practice. The official accounts of parties, leaders, and institutional representatives produced only 969 tweets. In particular, it is interesting to underline the almost total absence of Beppe Grillo and M5S as authors of tweets produced around political talk shows. Unlike the leaders of the 'third parties' in other bipolarised political systems, who use a sort of 'hashtag jumping' (Christensen, 2013) to introduce their voices into the debates, Grillo (who was already popular) didn't use the potential to critique, via Twitter, talk shows agendas and hosted politicians. During the observed campaign, his communication strategy was based on anti-establishment narratives, against both the political and the old-media system, oriented to celebrate the democratic power of the Internet, and to denounce the complicity between old media and old politics. Despite his having the highest number of followers (compared to the other leaders; see Vaccari & Valeriani, 2013), during the campaign, Grillo did not attend talk shows, not even via Twitter.

Looking at tweets that connected audiences wrote on the three main political forces of the permanent Campaign, we did not register significant differences in terms of volume: tweets generated around the PDL were 11% of the total, and those generated around the PD and the M5S were 10% and 8% respectively.

Conversations on the three political forces varied during the different periods of the permanent Campaign, following its political and media events. As shown in Figure 1, Twitter conversations on the M5S peaked during the days after the elections. The unexpected electoral success led to an increase in media attention. Connected audiences engaged in producing tweets around the PD during the Democratic Primary Elections (at the end of 2012) and during the troubled formation of a multi-party Government led by Letta (the former vice-secretary of the PD). Conversations about the PDL are mainly concentrated during the official campaign for general elections, in particular during the participation of Berlusconi in a popular talk show known for its constant criticism of Berlusconi himself.

Referring to tweets generated by connected audiences on the M5S, the PD, and the PDL, we focused on the 23 selected peaks (8,031 tweets, see section 3.3), analysing in-depth the four different forms of participation and the contents connected to these media practices.

Connected audiences produced overall 77.3% of politically oriented tweets. Tweets oriented towards media – referring to the hosts, the shows in general, and the non-political guests – were 27.6%. In 12% of the cases, tweets were oriented towards both politics and media. In only 3.2% of the cases, it was not possible to identify one of these two orientations.

The most common form of participation activated around the three parties by connected audiences was the expression of opinions (79.8%), followed by the requests

for interaction (28.6%), that is to say, questions of clarifications or changes, and tweets directly addressed to media and politics (often containing @mentions). The information/streaming/report of what was happening or was going to happen appeared in 18.6% of tweets. The introduction of new issues/angles/sources is residual (2.4%).

Besides looking at the frequency of codes, we also looked at their combination. The most common combination was between opinions and requests for interaction (23.4% of total tweets): connected audiences expressed opinions and comments via Twitter by accompanying them with requests for direct interaction with politics and media. In the requests for interaction, the use of irony, double entendre, and jokes was significant (35% vs. an average 27%). In addition, recourse to vulgar language, insults, and violent provocations was frequent in the requests for interaction (11%), while remaining under the average 8% in the other forms of participation. In their ironic and violent registers, the requests for interactions were often a way that connected audiences expressed opinions and comments at the same time on talk shows and politics.

The second significant combination was between opinion and information (10.2%) produced around the three parties: in these cases, the opinion was linked to a specific statement made or an event that happened during the show.

Table 4 shows a synthetic view of tweets generated around the three main parties competing during the 2013 campaign, considering form, orientation, and content (and the statistical relations between these three dimensions of the analysis).

Table 4. Typologies of Tweets per party

| Forms of participation | Percent of All Tweets (N=8,031) | M5S (N=2,345) | PD (N=1,831) | PDL (N=3,855) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Media-oriented | *27,6* | *23,9* | *19,6* | ***33,7*** |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Politics-oriented | *77,3* | *76,7* | ***84,2*** | *74,3* |
| Opinion/comment | | | | |
| Media-oriented | 22,4 | 14,8 | 14,1 | **30,9** |
| Opinion on shows | 14,3 | 5,2 | 7,9 | **22,8** |
| Opinion on hosts | 3,9 | 2,0 | 2,5 | 5,8 |
| Opinion on non-political guests | 3,2 | 7,3 | 3,8 | 0,4 |
| Politics-oriented | 65,3 | 62,2 | 63,9 | 67,8 |
| Opinion on political issues | 25,1 | 38,3 | 27,5 | 16 |
| Opinion on policy issues | 1,2 | 2,6 | 1,5 | 0,3 |
| Opinion on campaign issues | 11,8 | 0,2 | 1 | 23,9 |
| Opinion on personal issues | 18,5 | 16 | 14,3 | 22,0 |
| Information/streaming/report | | | | |
| Media-oriented | 3,1 | 2,5 | 6,4 | 1,9 |
| Information on shows | 1,4 | 0,6 | 2,9 | 1,1 |
| Information on hosts | 0,5 | 0,5 | 0,9 | 0,3 |
| Information on non-political guests | 1,0 | 1,4 | 2,6 | 0,0 |
| Politics-oriented | 17,8 | 15,4 | **32,2** | 12,4 |
| Information on political issues | 8,9 | 9,9 | **20,1** | 3,1 |
| Information on policy issues | 0,6 | 1,2 | 1,1 | 0,0 |
| Information on campaign issues | 5,9 | 0,6 | 8,2 | 8,0 |
| Information on personal issues | 3,0 | 3,5 | 4,9 | 1,7 |
| Request for interaction | | | | |
| Media-oriented | 10,2 | 13,8 | 5,8 | 10,0 |
| Interaction with shows | 5,5 | 5,0 | 2,6 | 7,1 |
| Interaction with hosts | 1,8 | 2,4 | 1,6 | 1,6 |
| Interaction with non-political guests | 2,0 | 5,5 | 1,5 | 0,1 |
| Politics-oriented | 22,4 | **38,5** | 16,7 | 15,4 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Interaction on political issues | 13,4 | **29,0** | 10,2 | 5,5 |
| Interaction on policy issues | 1,2 | 2,9 | 1,4 | 0,1 |
| Interaction on campaign issues | 3,2 | 0,1 | 0,9 | 6,3 |
| Interaction on personal issues | 5,4 | 8,2 | 4,4 | 4,2 |

Tweets generated around the Right Party (PDL) were significantly characterised by the expression of opinions and comments directed at the media actors (30.9% vs. the average 22.4%), and at the show in general (22.8% vs. 14.3%). These data refer in particular to the episode of 'Public Service' that hosted Silvio Berlusconi during the official electoral campaign (period 5). During a public conference ten years earlier, Berlusconi, as Premier, had denounced the 'criminal use' of public television, referring directly to certain journalists, who later were excluded by public networks: among them, the presenter of 'Servizio Pubblico'. This direct debate with Berlusconi, in a show that harshly criticised him, was a 'media event' (Dayan & Katz, 1992). But the content analysis of tweets showed that, in contrast to their high expectations, connected audiences were disappointed: their tweets expressed opinions and comments about the 'too-friendly' relations between the journalists and the guests, about the 'too-simple' questions addressed to Berlusconi, and about the studio audience who had been selected just to make catcalls.

Tweets generated around the Left Party (PD) were significantly characterised by the practice of politics-oriented streaming (32.2% vs. 17.8%), that is, posting information on the issues discussed and/or on what politicians said or did during the talk shows. In this case, the content analysis of tweets showed that connected audiences streamed, in particular, information about political issues (20.1% vs. 8.9%). These data refer to two episodes broadcast in the difficult post-electoral period, when the PD had problems with both its inner cohesion and its alliances with other parties, trying to

arrange the multi-party government, and to elect the President of the Republic. The first TV scene refers to an interview with Renzi, the current Italian Premier who, at that time, was still the Mayor of Florence, and the defeated candidate in the primary elections, after a campaign whose central message was to do away with the old politics. In relation to this scene, tweets acted like 'relays' of the political issues Renzi faced in his interview, such as his relationship with Bersani, his agenda, and his 'new' ideology. In the second TV scene, the peak of streaming on political issues was generated by a discussion on the troubled election of the President of the Republic: the 'broken' PD was not able to agree on a new name, and finally, for the first time in Italian history, the outgoing president (Napolitano) was re-elected.

Tweets generated around the M5S were significantly characterised by requests for interactions on politics (38.5% vs. 22.4%), and in particular on political issues (29% vs. 13.4%). These data refer to two episodes broadcast after the election, when M5S representatives (unknown citizens who are now members of Parliament) started attending talk shows. Requests for clarification and change are activated, during the first TV scene, in the discussion with the M5S coordinator in the Lower House. The main issue is again the election of the President of the Republic, and the movement had voted online for a popular Italian jurist; however, Lombardo (the M5S coordinator) declared her support for the former left coalition President (Prodi): tweets started to ask her for clarification and her 'candidate' to retire from politics. The second TV scene significantly connected to requests for interaction by audiences was broadcast at the end of the observed season. Three months after the elections, Grillo's leadership was contested by some M5S parliamentarians, and one of the dissidents was a guest on a talk show: tweets asked why she was still in the movement, how M5S selected its candidates for Parliament, and what remained of the changes promised by M5S, which

was becoming increasingly 'similar' to the old parties with its increasing number of conflicts and protagonists.

**5. Discussion and conclusions**

The access of Italian TV audiences to the observed second-screen practices was limited, if compared both to the measures of People Meters and to the statistics on Twitter users in Italy. The low participation of talk shows and political actors in the construction of these hybrid practices explains partly the limited access of the audiences. Trying to answer the questions raised by Blumler and Coleman (2013), in our research, politicians and media did not take account of connected audiences. This does not mean that Italian TV and politics have no interest in expanding connected audiences: on the contrary, statistics about the online engagement are expected to give real-time insights on their success in terms of publics and electors (Andò, 2013). The absence of the key political and media actors, in the observed second-screen practices, pointed out that the potential to interact with audiences and to manage their 'interpretive engagement' in the construction of political and media agendas have not been actualised.

Another significant evidence came from the content analysis: it showed that the (limited) connected audiences of TV politics engaged especially in two forms of participation (opinions/comments and requests for interaction), both aimed at giving voice to their experiences and to interact with other voices (participation 'through' Twitter during political talk shows). Despite the missing feedback by politicians or talk shows, connected audiences expressed via Twitter a significant percentage of opinions/comments, and almost one third of the tweets demanded direct interaction with media and politics, through irony, criticism, and a widespread scepticism around how

presenters were cosying up to political élites (the Servizio Pubblico debate with Berlusconi is emblematic in this sense).

More residual was the 'simple' information/streaming/report of what was happening in talk shows, even if this was the first 'social destination' of Twitter, which introduced the media practice of microblogging during events. In the observed hybrid media practices, the combination of the undemanding activity of streaming and the expression of opinions/comments about what happened is one of the most frequent.

In line with previous research discussed above, our study showed the tweet contents' significant dependence on the issues discussed on television, still influenced by media events and spectacularization of inner struggles. In fact, the overall volume of tweets quoting the three main parties followed the main political events, and consequently the media agenda: both talk shows and tweets focused their attention on the M5S after its unexpected electoral success; on the PD during the troubled post-electoral period; and on the PDL for the media events related to its leader. Furthermore, the joint analysis of peaks and relative TV scenes showed that tweets referring to the three parties were published significantly when talk shows had politicians as guests or discussions of issues referring to the three parties. In this context, we observed that only a residual percentage of tweets were generated to introduce into the discussion new issues, angles, or information sources: participation 'in' the hybrid spaces of politics is in fact a 'gladiatorial' activity (Milbrath, 1965) which requires different kinds of resources, a demanding effort for the TV audiences, even if they are 'empowered' on the communication level.

Additional research is necessary to understand if and how the opinions, requests, information about TV shared online by audiences themselves are able to influence (and balance) the relationship between power and counter-power in order to frame issues,

shape public opinions, construct collective identities, and activate political actions. And a mixed-method approach is necessary to explore these types of influences. Our research analysed big data and then focused on a sample of TV scenes and tweets generated by second-screen audiences. It was one of the possible (and newer) ways to gather the first-hand narrative of participation, left online – in the 'permanent' networked publics (Boyd, 2014) – by connected audiences. Additional – and older – techniques (such as in-depth interviews and observant participation) could provide more insight on perceived meanings, motivations, and imagined targets of connected audiences of TV politics.

Notes

1. In the 1990s, concepts such as 'communicative/media ecologies' (Altheide, 1994), 'centrifugal diversification' (Blumler & Kavanagh, 1999), and 'remediation' (Bolter & Grusin, 1999) already started to stress the interconnection between newer and older media.

2. The observed political talk shows were broadcast by public and private channels. They hosted different sub-genres, reached different audiences, with different timing (early morning, prime-access, prime time, and late night) and schedule (daily, bi-weekly, or weekly).

3. The dataset of episodes with relative metrics is available at http://figshare.com/articles/new_fileset/809555

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