

# Media, participation and the state of democracy: the Italian case

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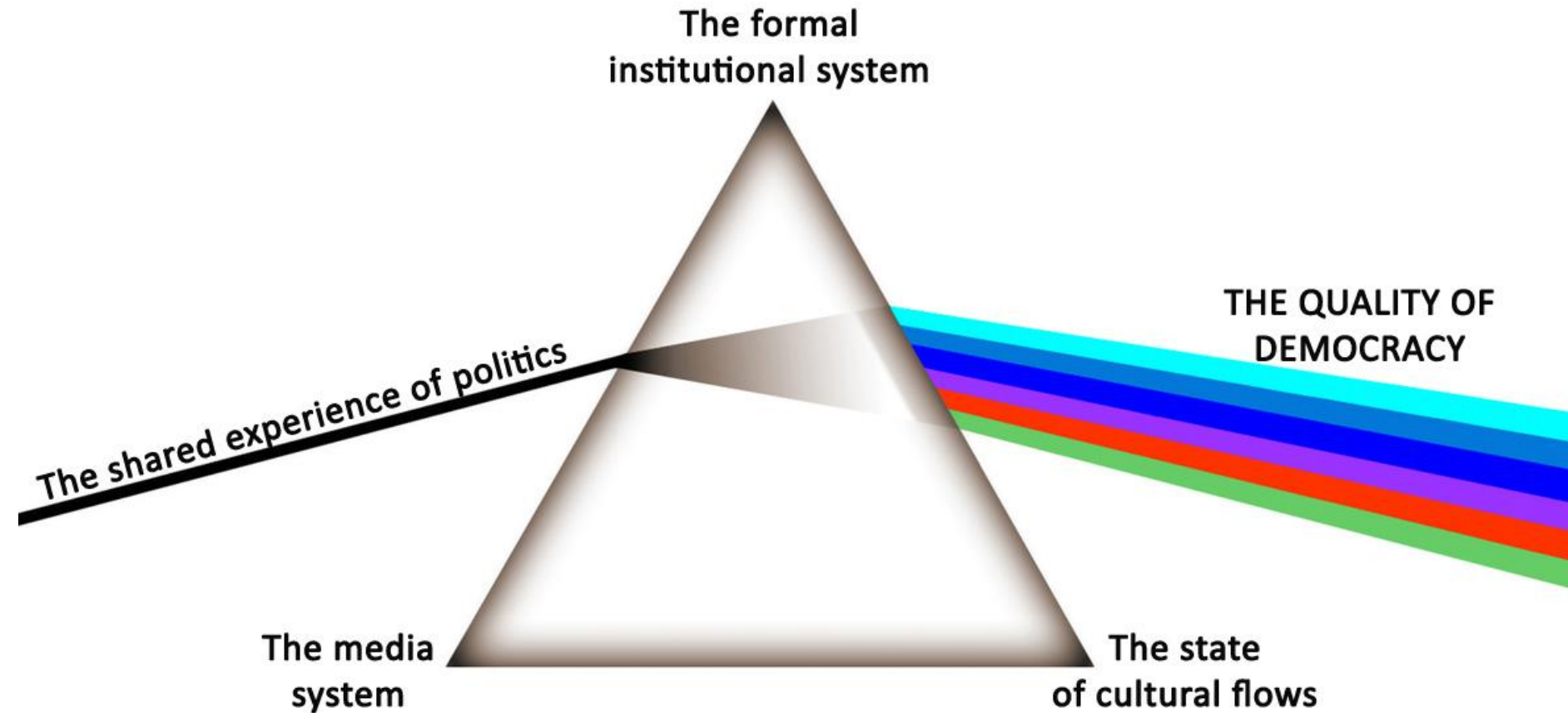
# Starting hypothesis

- The debate on the crisis of western democracies needs to redefine the role of civic culture and political movements
- This definition depends on a complex set of factors...
- ... both influencing and influenced by the forms of political participation

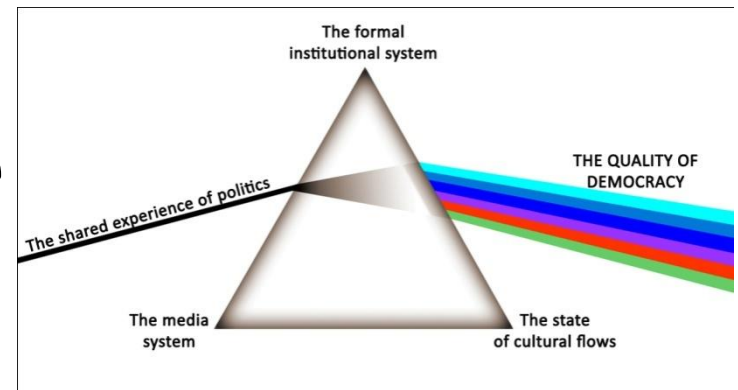
# The fieldwork

- 40 in depth interviews to activists of Italian Democratic Party.
- PD: a good example:
  - New vs old forms of participation;
  - Recent vs traditional ideas of party organization and role in the society;
  - Younger vs elder members (and political traditions)

# The quality of democracy: a multidimensional model



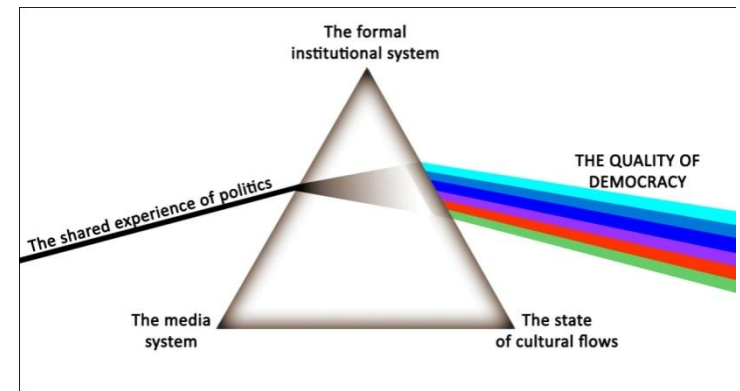
# Attitudes towards the institutional system



Variables	Italian average citizen	PD activists
Trust in institutional system	LOW	HIGH
Trust in political elites	LOW	HIGH
Trust and knowledge of the traditions of democratic institutions	LOW	HIGH

Critical point: GENERATION – elder / younger people (constitution, 2G)

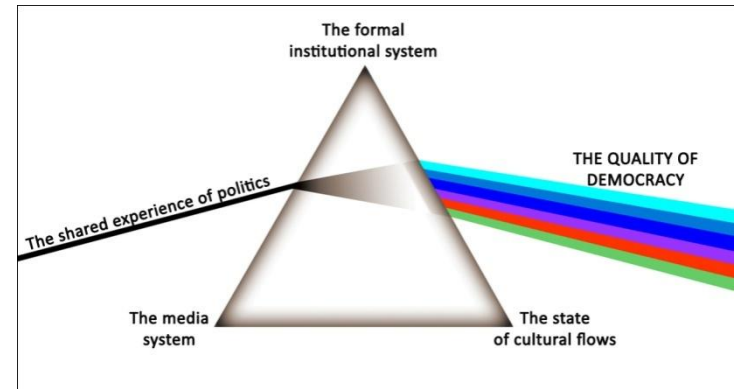
# Attitudes towards the media system



Variables	Italian average citizen	PD activists
Variety of media diet	LOW	HIGH
Spaces of discussion and communicative interaction	LOW	HIGH
Communicative digital skills	LOW	HIGH

Critical point: TERRITORIES – North /South (digital-traditional)

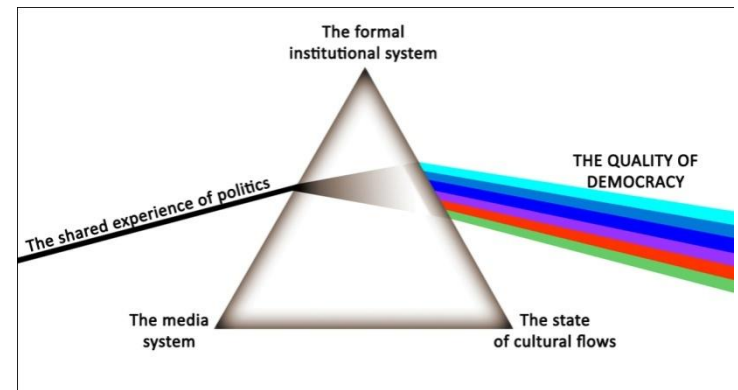
# Attitudes towards the cultural flows



Variables	Italian average citizen	PD activists
Civic Knowledge	LOW	HIGH
Participation culture	LOW	HIGH
Production and distribution of culture	LOW	HIGH

Critical point: **POLITICAL CULTURES**  
(Traditional party culture / New civic engagement culture)

# The shared experience of politics



Features	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
Con-fusion (Identity)	Synthesis of differences	Fragmented belonging
Multiplicity (Association)	Based on ideal and civic engagement (not ideologies)	Multiple participation / low intensity
Style of practices 1 (Institutional / Local administration)	More effective	Conservative
Style of practices 2 (Movimental – Oppositional)	Dynamic, innovative	Less effective



# Conclusions

- Italy is experiencing in her typical way the more general crisis of western democracies
- This crisis is also related to the people perception
- Political activism is a nice entry-point to understand links between systemic crisis and its social perception, and viceversa.

# Conclusion (2)

- Like always every crisis is both
  - (1) Risk of regression: participation can become frustration and abandonment
  - (2) Chance of progression: some features of the Democratic Party activism can be found in other kind of activism (non partisan movements, right or ultra-left new movements)
- Despite of overstimulation of the role of monitorizing citizenship, the political role of activism is still crucial in western democracies.