FLOATING (ON) PLATFORMS?
EUROPEAN LEFT PARTIES AND THE DIGITAL REVOLUTION.
A GRAMSCIAN ANALYSIS

By

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines how European Left Parties reacted to the digital revolution in the 2010s, a decade that recent literature theorised as one of 'crisis' for the Left. Meanwhile, critical theorists claimed that platform societies provide new routes for transformative Left-wing politics. However, there is a lack of research on how Left Parties tapped into these dynamics. This gap set the rationale for developing a Gramscian framework through which I explored the core attributes of the hegemony in platform societies. On this ground, I conducted empirical research on how six left-wing parties in Italy, France and Spain sought to navigate or transform 'digital' hegemony. By looking at how parties conceived platform capitalism and platform politics, I theorised the emergence of three left-wing 'digital' ideologies: the neoliberal Techno-Third Way, Post-Social Democracy, and Platform Socialism. I analysed parties' official discourses and original evidence from 37 elites' interviews to advance understandings of how Left parties 'fit' into the confrontations for hegemony in platform societies. The empirical findings develop the thesis's central argument, namely that the politics of the digital revolution provided Left parties with potential essential resources to exit their ideological crises, but in opposite directions that (re-)polarised the Left. Indeed, while parties embracing Techno-Third Way could elaborate ideas and strategies to organically represent the ruling classes of platform capitalism, Platform Socialists found new ways to empower resistance around the field of the 'digital commons'. Conversely, the thesis argues that Post-Social Democracy demonstrates the ongoing crisis of the 'arbitrary' attempts to revive Social Democracy under impossible structural conditions.

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Should I have the power, I would change UoB motto 'per ardua at alta' (through arduousness to the top) with 'through passion for those at the bottom'. Obviously, a PhD thesis does not change the world. Yet, this experience nurtured my passion for politics and refreshed me with new ideas and projects for the future.

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INTRODUCTION

2011, May 15th. Thousands of protesters gathered in Madrid Plaza del Sol following a call on social media by the collective movement 'Democracia Real Ya' (Real Democracy Now). The square occupation, lasting three months before the final police repression, marked a shift in protest techniques based on the use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter to connect, mobilise and generate counter-information (Casero-Ripollés and Feenstra, 2012, p. 62). A few months later, similar techniques of protest informed 'Occupy Wall Street', in New York, infamously aiming at achieving real democracy for the 99% against the 1%, symbolically patrolling the speculative financial economy deemed responsible for the 'Global Financial Crisis' (GFC) since 2008 (Conover *et al.*, 2013).

2018, April 10th. Mark Zuckerberg, co-founder and chief executive officer (CEO) of Facebook, is audited by the United States' (US) Senate Committees on the Cambridge Analytica scandal (Houser and Voss, 2018), the data analytics company that inappropriately harvested data from 87 million Facebook users allegedly facilitating the election of Donald Trump in 2016 (Hinds *et al.*, 2020). The point of contention was whether Facebook was responsible for the breach or instead 'innocent' as a 'neutral' enabler of users' contents and therefore unaccountable for third parties' inappropriate conduct (US.Senate, 2018).

2020, July 21st. European Union (EU) Council approves 'Next Generation EU', also known as 'Recovery Plan', allocating 723.8 billion € to tackle the economic consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic crisis. Two key pillars defined the plan: the green and digital transitions, with

Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, promise to make the 'EU fit for the digital age' (EU.Commission, 2021, p. 2). The goals of the EU policies were meant to couple the seemingly unstoppable growth of big tech companies, as

> 'the combined market capitalisation of just four companies, Alphabet-Google, Amazon, Apple, and Facebook exceeded $5.7tn in December 2020, an amount greater than the total market capitalisation of the entire Euronext stock exchange and a third of the value of the whole Standard & Poor's 100 index' (Gawer and Srnicek, 2021, p. 4).

These defining events, radical anti-system social movements, nativist election campaigning, policies plans for public investment, and new actors leading financialised capitals' markets, were underlined by a common trend. The emergence of a socio-technical landscape, the 'digital revolution', that substantially shaped the global economy and its hegemonic regimes of accumulation, labour relations, styles of consumption, means of communication, and channels of political mobilisation. The digital revolution marked the decade alongside two crises. The neoliberal GFC burst in 2008 (Crouch, 2011; Sum and Jessop, 2014). And the 'crisis within a crisis' (Galli, 2013, p. 7) of the political Left, particularly in Europe, and more specifically by its most common institutional form, the mass Social Democratic Party (SDP) (Keating and McCrone, 2013; Manwaring and Kennedy, 2018). A crisis that Radical Left Parties (RLPs) seemed incapable of exploiting up to the point of replacing SDPs as main left-wing political actors (March and Keith, 2016; Damiani, 2016). This thesis sits at the conjunction of these two trends, by theorising the ideological responses of European Left-wing Parties (ELPs) to the 'politics' of the digital revolution.

To reach this goal, the thesis develops a Gramscian framework understanding parties as 'intellectual' and 'strategical-relational' actors operating at the junctures between the constraints (and possibilities) emerging from the economic structures and the political agency

seeking to secure or transform 'hegemony' (Gramsci, 2014; Jessop, 2005a; Williams, 2019). The Gramscian framework inspired a comparative empirical research seeking key variations in parties' ideologies involving six ELPs, three SDPs and three RLPs, in France, Italy and Spain (George and Bennett, 2005; Ragin, 2014). The empirical research is developed in two stages. The first maps how ELPs' systems of beliefs signified the 'digital revolution' in relation to their claims about the reproduction or transformation of capitalism and liberal democracy through analysing twelve parties' manifestos. The second stage examines data from thirty-seven elites' interviews (see Appendix 1) alongside twenty-six sources of textual data to analyse how parties' elites orientated their strategic projects for hegemony or counter-hegemony in platform societies.

In the Introduction, I will first specify the essential propositions underlying the thesis by defining the crisis of the Left and explaining why the digital revolution matters for ELPs. Next, I will locate the thesis within (critical) political studies. I will identify the research puzzle and related research questions by specifying these propositions. Finally, I will specify the thesis argument and how the empirical study is designed to find answers to the research questions.

.1 The Crisis of the Left. Actors in search of new visions

> 'Why should the toiling masses under capitalism ever commit themselves to an alternative which offers them less than they can currently get?" (Hall, 2017, p. 235)

In line with Stuart Hall, the thesis starts from the proposition that the recent crisis of the Left is, above everything, a crisis at elaborating visions to organise and mobilise popular masses for progressive ends.

The 2010s have been turbulent years for ELPs. SDPs, overall, were incapable of taking advantage of GFC, a neoliberal crisis, or directly responsible for GFC premises and then for the implementation of neoliberal austerity agendas to tackle its social consequences. Further, traditional RLPs struggled at re-defining unitary projects to fill the 'void' of representation of popular classes opened by SDPs. (i.e. Keman, 2017; Bailey, 2017). Meanwhile, the emergence of a new Radical Left, in some cases generating new parties (as with Syriza in Greece and Podemos in Spain) or 'occupying' established SDPs (as with the ascendance to the leadership of the British Labour Party by Jeremy Corbyn) went through steady successes and abrupt declines, and recent research mostly theorised their emergence as the sign of a 'left-populist' wave (Panitch and Gindin, 2020; Katsambekis and Kioupkiolis, 2019).

Recent literature on the crisis of the Left mostly focused on ELPs' electoral losses (March and Rommerskirchen, 2015; Polacko, 2022) as linked to limited ideological changes between Keynesian-Neoliberal and libertarian-conservatives views (Bailey *et al.*, 2014; Ricolfi, 2017). However, I contend that by only looking at parties' electoral results, their position in office, and narrow ideological indicators (Strom, 1990), we can only make sense of conjunctural crises, not structural ones. Instead, I argue that the main location of the ELPs crisis resided in their (lack of) 'visions' about contemporaneity (i.e. De Waele *et al.*, 2013; Chiocchetti, 2016). Further, the thesis considers 'crisis' only half of the tale. Indeed, every crisis contains varied and contrasting ways out and new opportunities for ELPs.

The first reason to focus on the crisis as one of vision requires putting in a more nuanced perspective on the thesis of the electoral 'decline' of the Left. Table .1 summarises SDPs' and RLPs' electoral results in nine major Western EU countries between 2002 and 2019. The last

two columns calculate the variations in shares of votes between the elections in the two decades and the losses and/or gains in relation to the first decade (my elaboration on Political-Data-Yearbook, 2022). An overview of the results suggests two trends. First, whilst SDPs experienced losses in each country except Denmark, the degree and nature of this decline are extremely varied. In three countries, France, Greece and the Netherlands, SDPs experienced 'Pasokification', namely the severe and ongoing marginalisation of a previously powerful mainstream left-wing party. In the remaining five countries, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Sweden, SDPs' losses ranged between -19.3% (Germany) and -40.5% (Spain). However, SPDs kept sufficient weight as the main left-wing party. Second, although a general trend of increasing shares of votes by RLPs is observable, a closer look at national variations unveils relevant differences. Indeed, in three cases, France, Greece and Spain, the most voted RLPs achieved stark increases in the 2010s compared to the 2000s, whereas in five countries, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Netherlands and Sweden, RLPs' shares of votes tended to decrease. Therefore, the data seem to suggest that, overall, the 2000s have been a phase of electoral redistribution among the Left rather than a stage of irredeemable decline.

Second, I summarised in Table .2 ELPs' participation in national governments in the same countries (my elaboration on Political-Data-Yearbook, 2022). An overview of these data suggests that there was no stark change regarding ELPs positions across the two decades. Apart from Greece, whereby PASOK went out of the scene as a major political actor, in all the other countries, SDPs held key governmental positions, although with relevant differences concerning their leading role or junior partnership, without substantial differences between the two decades. Overall, on the contrary, except for Greece with the Syriza government between 2015 and 2019, RLPs across the two decades were mostly in opposition.

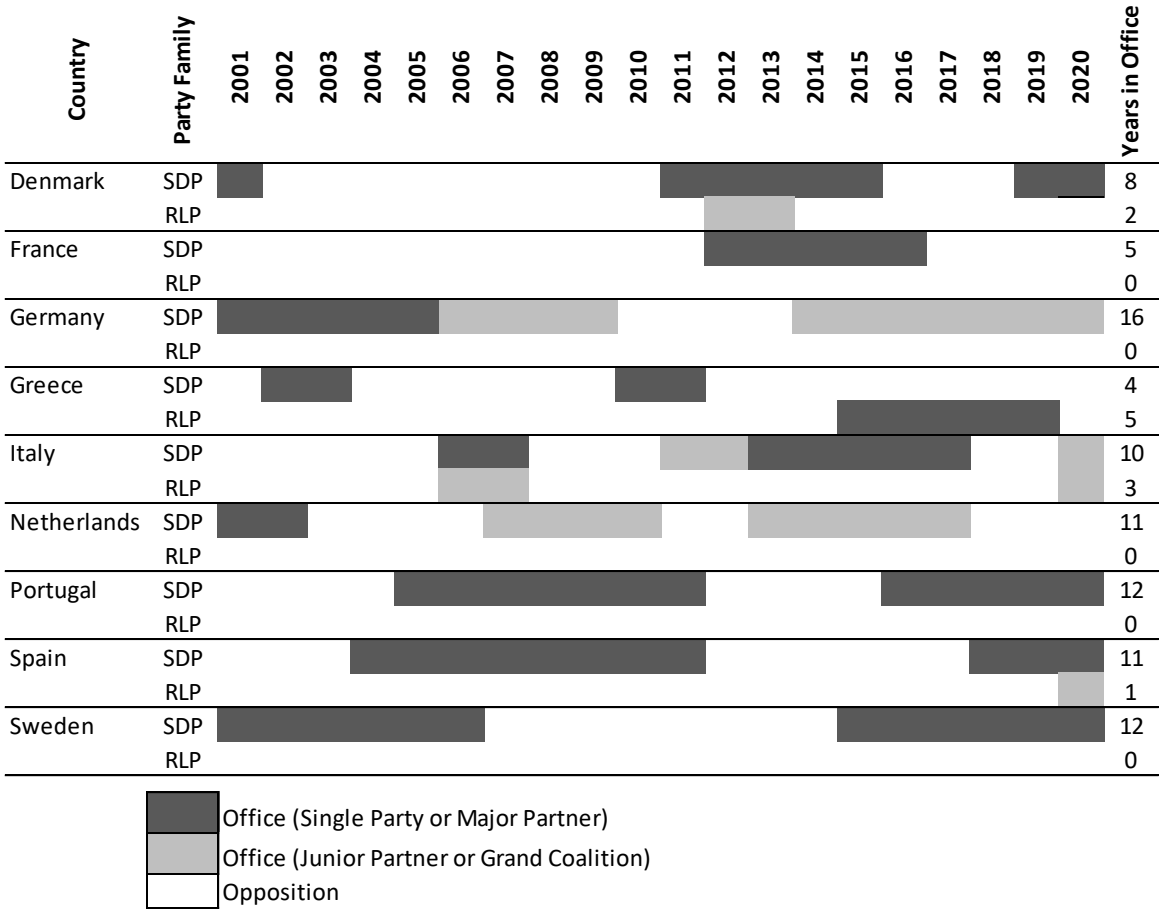
Table .1 ELPs shares of votes at general elections in nine Western EU countries 2002-2019

Country	Party Family	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Δ 2000s/2010s	Δ %
Denmark	SDP				25.8		25.5								26.3				26	0.5	1.9
	RLP				6		13								7.8				7.7	-1.8	-18.4
France	SDP	23.8					24.7					29.3					7.4			-5.9	-24.3
	RLP	4.9					4.3					6.9					11			4.4	94.9
Germany	SDP				34.3				23				25.7				20.5			-5.5	-19.3
	RLP				8.7				11.9				8.6				9.2			-1.4	-13.6
Greece	SDP			40.6					43.9						4.7				8.1	-35.9	-84.9
	RLP			9					12.1						36.3				31.5	23.4	221.3
Italy	SDP					30.4		33.1					25.3					18.4		-9.9	-31.2
	RLP					5.7		3.1					3.3					3.3		-1.1	-25.0
Netherlands	SDP		27.2			21.2						24.8					5.7			-9.0	-37.0
	RLP		5.9			16.6						9.7					9.1			-1.9	-16.4
Portugal	SDP				46.4				37.7						33.6				36.3	-7.1	-16.9
	RLP				6.5				10.1						10.6				9.5	1.8	21.1
Spain	SDP				42.6			43.9			28.7				22.8				28.7	-17.5	-40.5
	RLP				5			3.8			6.9				21.4				15	13.8	313.6
Sweden	SDP	39.9				35								31				28.3		-7.8	-20.8
	RLP	8.4				5.9								5.7				8		-0.3	-4.2

Average Δ SDPs -30.3

Average Δ RLPs 63.7

Table .2 ELPs in office and opposition in nine Western-EU countries 2001-2020



These puzzling observations suggest looking at ELPs 'visions' as the perspective through which to define their 'crisis'. Talkin of 'the Left' in the singular would be historically inaccurate and analytically flawed. Nonetheless, I agree with Stephanie L. Mudge when arguing that almost any 'meaning' associated with the left has

> 'a shared origin in claims to the representation of the underrepresented in service of equality. For this historical reason, left parties bear a unique responsibility to speak for poor, disadvantaged and disenfranchised groups – and are, by extension, important barriers to the descent of democracy into plutocracy' (2018, p. XV).

I argue that its long-term crisis resides precisely within the general understanding of the Left as 'representative of the under-represented in service of equality'. Indeed, by developing a neoliberal index to measure parties' ideologies from the 1950s to the early 2000s, Mudge assessed how SDPs shifted from criticism and resistance to accepting neoliberal paradigms (2011, pp. 359-365). The climax of this process was the 'Third Way' phase of SDPs since the 1990s, characterised by the active role of Third Way parties in promoting neoliberal agendas and challenging traditional leftist forms of engagement with working classes through prioritising equality of opportunities within global 'knowledge-based' economies (Giddens, 1998; Huo, 2009; Andersson, 2009; Jessop, 2010). 'Third Way' projects, first associated with a cycle of electoral victories and led in Europe by Tony Blair and Gerhard Schröder, turned into a crisis of neo-liberalised SDPs as they found themselves without any consistent vision to address the changing circumstances of the global economy, especially after 2008 GFC (Ryner, 2010; Arndt, 2013).

Since GFC, on the one hand, SDPs hesitantly oscillated between ways back to Keynesian agendas and ongoing linkages to neoliberal projects. On the other hand, RLPs reacted to these changes by trying to occupy the 'vacuum' of representation left by SDPs, hence moderating

their transformative claims by adopting Keynesian agendas (Olsen *et al.*, 2010). However, this turn to Keynesianism resulted in what Paolo Chiocchetti defined as a 'negative' core of current RLPs' ideologies, as they will be reduced to actors unified by the critique of neoliberalism without envisioning any radical alternative transformative project (2016, p. 358).

All in all, these trends seem to suggest that the 2010s were characterised by a process of ideological convergence among ELPs with (failed) SDPs' attempts to re-social democratise themselves and RLPs' (troubling) turns toward some form of radical Keynesianism. However, these interpretations only capture the first immediate responses to the GFC at the peak of the 'austerity age' in 2010-2012 and do not shed light on subsequent evolutions. Overall, therefore, literature on ELPs' 'crises' during the 2010s has been mostly focused on the consequences of the crisis of the 'Third Way' cycle, without proper examination of new emerging trends through which ELPs may have reshaped their 'visions'. This gap in the literature set a crucial rationale for the present research project. Indeed, by looking at how ELPs understood and reacted to the digital revolution, I will seek to identify whether new visions have been emerging during the 2010s and in which directions they provided ways out of the crisis for the European Left.

.2 (Critiques of) The Digital Revolution. New visions in search of actors

> 'Through popular political control of new technologies, we could collectively transform our world for the better. (…) The technological infrastructure of the twenty-first century is producing the resources by which a very different political and economic system could be achieved' (2016, p. 1)

This quote, by Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams' book 'Inventing the Future, post-capitalism and a world without work', is representative of an emerging intellectual field envisioning the

digital revolution as a horizon of radical transformation of neoliberal capitalism and democracy. The main strands of these critical theories can be clustered as 'post-capitalist/post-workerist' (i.e. Hardt and Negri, 2009), 'techno-Keynesian' (i.e. Mazzucato, 2015) and 'platform socialist' (Dean, 2018; Morozov, 2019) and share two common features. First, these authors understand the digital revolution as shaping specific forms of politics that, at the same time, extend exploitation and enable liberation (Jordan, 2015, p. 198). Second, contrasting analyses regarding the nature, depth, and direction of the digital revolution, always interpellate the subjectification of 'leftist' or 'radical' politics to carry on the transformation of capitalism. These subjectivities are abstractly located among the autonomist 'multitude' of knowledge workers (Hardt and Negri, 2006), the 'Occupy' alike social movements (Fuchs, 2014), or left-wing populist networks (Srnicek and Williams, 2016). However, how these subjects may contribute to radical change, which ideologies may articulate and organise them or how 'digital' left-wing agents may strategically conceive paths forward for counter-hegemony are 'floating' questions without answers. Most importantly, as will be detailed in Chapter 1, the calls for 'digital' radical left-wing politics ignore how left-wing parties operate within these confrontations between new forms of exploitation and liberation. This is the second research gap to which this thesis aims to contribute. Throughout this section, by specifying what is meant by digital revolution I will explain why it matters to research left-wing parties' most recent evolutions.

.2.1 Platform capitalism

With 'digital revolution', I mean, with Carlota Perez, 'a "techno-economic paradigm shift", which leads to a profound transformation in ways of working and consuming, changing lifestyles and aspirations across society' (Ch 11 in Jacobs and Mazzucato, 2016, p. 207). More

specifically, as every paradigmatic shift spread across decades, the digital revolution, originating in the 1990s with the diffusion of the commercial Internet (Srnicek, 2016, p. 15), reached its stage of maturity in the last decade, when the diffusion of digital infrastructures enabled 'individuals to connect with other individuals and organisations with minimal friction' (Gawer and Srnicek, 2021, p. 12; see also Isaacson, 2014; Xu *et al.*, 2018). Crucially, the digital revolution informed the governing principle of the latest stage of capitalism (Harvey, 2017), prompting its restructuration after the GFC. Indeed, since the early 2010s, relevant shares of 'fresh' financial capitals exploited expansive monetary policies (i.e. European Central Bank quantitative easing) in a context of low interests rates to invest in tech companies under the expectation of higher returns for their investments (Srnicek, 2016, p. 18). As a result, a new structural configuration emerged, which critical theorists conceptualised as 'communicative-' (Dean, 2005), 'surveillance-' (Zuboff, 2019), 'digital-' (Fuchs, 2021), and 'platform-' (Srnicek, 2016) capitalism.

The thesis adopts the latter definition, by Srnicek, that understands platform capitalism as an emergent 'universal' business model that increasingly shapes almost the whole of the relations of production and not only 'digital' companies as social media. Two key features define how platform capitalists 'dominate' and exploit natural resources and workers to maximise private profits. First, digital data are 'commodified' and their property, control, and management, both in terms of the physical infrastructures among which they are exchanged and as a 'raw' material to be extracted for value creation,

> 'have come to serve a number of key capitalist functions: they educate and give a competitive advantage to algorithms; they enable the coordination and outsourcing of workers; they allow for the optimisation and flexibility of productive processes; they make

> possible the transformation of low-margin goods into high-margin services; and data analysis is itself generative of data, in a virtuous cycle' (Srnicek, 2016, p. 23).

Second, platforms, defined as 'digital infrastructures that enable two or more groups to interact' (ibid., p. 24), became the business model governing the directionality of capitalism, as the management of information is crucial not only to producing digital goods and services but also for traditional industry (i.e. connected vehicles in automotive or smart grids in the energy industry). Two broad implications derive from platform capitalism for progressive politics. First, the regimes of property and accumulation of digital infrastructures result in a specific dialectic between data as commodities and data as commons, namely non-proprietary, shared, and accessible sources of data for the co-generation of wealth (Jordan, 2020). Second, platform capitalism infringes on capital-labour relations in multiple directions (Fuchs, 2014).

The nature and extension of what is 'labour' in platform capitalism have raised several debates among critical theorists. More specifically, some authors claim that data-creation through navigating search engines and social media or playing videogames is (unpaid) labour by 'hybrid' individuals conceptualised as 'prosumers', 'playbourers', 'produsers' (Jordan, 2020, pp. 123-124). Platform capitalists, crucially, extract surplus value from these 'users' experiences' (i.e. Fuchs, 2014). Therefore, the 'liberation' that should inform new left-wing visions should prioritise the remuneration of exploited use value by 'digital' labourers. On the contrary, other authors argued that platform capitalists make their profits from renting the traffic of data (Huws, 2014; Srnicek, 2016). Therefore, the Left should abandon 'labourism' and embrace post-workerism as the most effective antagonism to platform capitalists' exploitative practices. Apart from these relevant disputes, however, there is a broad

consensus on identifying a second crucial source through which platform capitalists' domination impacts the relations of production. Indeed, platform capitalism elevates to a new stage of labour casualisation, falsely promoting a culture of 'the entrepreneurial self' (Bröckling, 2015) whilst over-exploiting workers. This exploitation affects both 'on-demand workers', commonly offline labourers whose tasks are managed through algorithms (i.e. Deliveroo riders or Uber drivers), and 'crowd-workers', for instance the creative self-employees providing services through platforms (i.e. Amazon Mechanical Turk's graphic designers, translators etc.). Relatedly, casualisation is prompted by the expulsion from labour markets of low-skilled workers substituted by 'intelligent' robots through processes of automation. Although, as with every technological paradigmatic shift, the scale and pace of labourers' substitution by machines is a matter of contestation and debates, there are evidences that the rate of substitution in the Global North is sustained and may starkly increase in the next decades (Acemoglu and Restrepo, 2017; Daugareilh *et al.*, 2019).

However, new forms of exploitation by platform capitalists correspond to new mobilisations for resistance by platform workers that may represent one of the major sources for the advance of new left-wing visions. Accordingly, one of the goals of the thesis is to analyse how ELPs understand these processes and where they sit in the new dialectical relations counterposing platform capitalists and platform workers. The range of practices of resistance by platform workers has been classified by Julieta Haidar and Maarten Keune as follows: (1) reformist moderate protests seeking to achieve limited rights while accepting 'arbitrary algorithmic practices' of management (2021, p. 20); (2) claims for 'standardisation', as those mobilisations by platform workers to obtain the status of employees under standard national frameworks (such as collective contracts); and (3) the 'disruption', with workers' organisations

taking over platform companies by replacing them with alternative models of organisation - mainly cooperative platforms - (2021, p. 22; see also Scholz, 2016).

To sum up, platform capitalism is conceived as the latest configuration of capitalist relations of production, subsuming previous stages -as financial capitalism- and representing the most advanced governing principle of the directionality of capitalist social relations. On the one hand, the property and control of material and immaterial infrastructures for commodified data is the defining characteristic of platform capitalist exploitation. On the other hand, exploitation also generates new struggles by the platform labourers whose 'real' interest is the promotion of digital platform as a 'common' domain, managed through cooperative forms of economic organisation. These 'poles' of confrontations, promoting digital platforms as commodities or as 'commons', also shape new dialectical class relations between platform capitalists and platform labourers. However, critical theorists are divided between those claiming that platform capitalists are 'rentiers' and that, therefore, the Left should confront them by embracing post-workerism, and other authors advocating the need for the Left to re-focus on the liberation of (platform) labourers. These trends set the first scene within which emerging left-wing ideologies and strategic projects will be analysed throughout the thesis.

.2.2 Platform (party) politics

The digital revolution has also been theorised as the bearer of strong impacts on the organisation of politics itself. More specifically, the emergence of continuous flows of digital communication governed by big-tech platforms shaped 'platform politics', which can be conceptualised as an emerging structure of mediation of political relations characterised by: (1) the compression of the speed and spaces of interaction among political organisations; (2)

the increased connectivity of dispersed individuals on digital platforms; and (3) the expanded diversification of political organisation, ongoingly re-combining horizontal integration with hierarchical leadership (Fenton, 2016a; Nunes, 2021). The same attributes define the processes (and strategies) of digitalisation of parties' organisations, to which I will refer throughout the thesis as 'platform party politics'.

As with 'platform capitalism', 'platform politics', conceived as a stage of structuration of liberal democratic polities, is a space of new confrontations between hegemonic domination by political elites and new movements for liberation (Jordan, 2015). Unsurprisingly, the nature of these changes and the directionality of this 're-structuration' of politics is a matter of contestation. Mirroring the debates on platform capitalism, the thesis is critical of those 'techno-deterministic' views arguing that digital technologies bring about, on their own, entirely new logics of political mobilisation. For instance, Manuel Castells (2010); (2015) theorised the rise of 'network' societies, shifting the centres of power and resistance from the collective agency of traditional political organisations (parties, unions, etc.) to digitally enabled networks. The same line of argument was developed by Lance Bennett and Alexandra Segerberg's theory about 'connective' action replacing 'collective' political identities (2013). These theories have the merit to highlight that the nature of political engagement, mobilisation, and control by elites has been affected by the advent of digital platforms and social media. However, these authors tend to posit an untenable antagonism between 'connected' individuals and 'collective' agency, which necessarily posits technologies as determining how political agency is articulated.

The main focus of critical theorists of platform politics regards whether it rendered politics less or more democratic in the last decade. Although I consider the question badly focused, as it would imply, again, some form of techno-determinism whereby the socio-technical landscape would determine, *per se*, the forms of politics, the issue is worth considering as the conceptualisations of platform politics have broader implications on how political parties understand the scenarios within which they operate. Broadly speaking, two subsequent phases can be identified within the literature on platform politics, reflecting the analyses of contrasting political events. The first phase, roughly from 2004 to 2015, was characterised mainly by techno-optimistic theories about platforms as democratic boosters. First, platforms connected previously dispersed radical social movements, contributing to the emergence of what Paolo Gerbaudo came to label as 'citisenism', namely the belief that platforms enable direct democracy and made possible institutional routes to disrupt corrupted political elites (2017b; see also Coleman and Freelon, 2015; Fenton, 2016a). Second, digital platforms prompted the renewal of political parties. Hereby, the use of digital media during Obama's campaigns in 2008 and 2012 was commonly theorised as the most advanced example of how platforms may reconnect progressive democratic leaders to disengaged constituents (Vaccari, 2014; Chadwick and Stromer-Galley, 2016). 2016, however, marked a turning point in the perception of the democratising potentialities of digital platforms, as, at that time, the connection of nativist supporters on social media was considered crucial for the election of Trump in the US. From then on, politics on digital platforms was theorised as boosting aggressive styles of communication fostering nativist projects in the Global North that would threaten the quality of democracy (Smith, 2017; see also Inglehart and Norris, 2016; Fraser, 2019).

All in all, therefore, critical theorists conceptualise platform politics as a new game-field of political confrontation, providing two crucial resources for renewing left-wing visions and practices. First, the Left should embrace digital platforms as they would allow connecting otherwise dispersed individuals. However, the digitalisation of politics implies the adoption of 'movement-alike' forms of organisation that privilege speed and horizontality over the typical structures of mass parties. Second, and relatedly, the Left should understand platform politics as the base to connect liberatory movements around claims for more direct and participatory forms of democratic decision making, therefore putting under discussion the representative structures through which parties' elites channel popular demands into institutions. However, these theorists do not investigate how ELPs understood and orientated their organisational choices, which defines a second area requiring new and more thorough empirical research.

.3 The place of the thesis. A Gramscian framework for critical party politics studies

The previous analysis defines the research puzzle that the thesis seeks to disentangle. On the one hand, ELPs underwent a 'crisis' in elaborating new visions. On the other hand, the digital revolution opened new possibilities for left-wing politics that, overall, ELPs may have failed to exploit. In order to explain how the thesis aims at disentangling this puzzle, in this section, I will first define the positioning of the thesis with regards to whether parties may still be considered relevant actors for social change and second, I will explain why a Gramscian approach to critically analyse party politics is relevant to my research purposes.

.3.1 Contemporary party politics. Decline or change?

In this subsection, by providing a brief overview of key approaches to the study of party politics, I will define the rationale for developing a Gramscian critical framework to understand the most recent evolutions of ELPs in platform societies.

Historically, political parties played several functions, such as: competing in elections to gain votes (Sartori, 1976); recruiting and integrating activists in communities 'actively shaping their interpretations of political developments' (Albertazzi and Van Kessel, 2021, p. 225); organizing government by ordering complex policies' agendas (Dalton *et al.*, 2011). The articulation of these functions inherently results in a tense balance between 'responsiveness' to partisan activists and constituents and 'responsibility' toward the 'general' interests of the population (Bardi *et al.*, 2014; Keman, 2014). Changes among these functions have been, since the crisis of the 'liberal Keynesian' post-war settlement in the 1970s, at the core of diverging interpretations among political scientists on whether parties are in decline (i.e. Mair, 2003; Katz and Mair, 2009; Keman, 2014; Van Biezen, 2014) or change (i.e. Saward, 2008; Dalton *et al.*, 2011; Kriesi, 2014).

The 'decline' theses claim that mainstream parties, by shifting from 'mass' to 'electoral-professional' and/or personalistic machinery (Panebianco, 1988; Calise, 2015) turned into 'state-agents', therefore abandoning their democratic linkages with civil society (Mair, 2013). Within this intellectual field, the 'cartel party' theory by Richard Katz and Peter Mair (2018) asserted that, as mainstream parties turned to the state, European party systems were divided between 'parties which claim to represent, but don't deliver, and those which deliver, but are no longer seen to represent' (Mair, 2011, p. 14). The turn to the state at the expense of civil

society was the result of collusive practices put in place by mainstream parties, therefore acting as a cartel to prevent the risks of electoral marginalisation. As a result of this process of convergence, 'the left-right divide loses its interpretive power as a schema for making overall sense of mainstream politics and is not replaced by any alternative overarching paradigm' (Mair, 2013, p. 72). One of the impacts of cartelisation was a polarisation between 'insider' and 'outsider' parties, with the upsurging radical left and right populist parties shaping a new pattern of party competition that in the normative views of these authors, represented a major challenge for the quality of Western democracies (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2012).

On the contrary, 'party change' theses focused on how parties adapted their policies proposals to fit into new cleavages between globalisation's 'winners' and 'losers' (Kriesi *et al.*, 2008; Kriesi *et al.*, 2012) and reformed their organisations to recruit 'multi-speed' activists (Scarrow, 2015). Also, these scholars, whilst challenging 'decline' theorists through identifying processes of 'adaptation' to new contexts by mainstream parties, tend to pessimistically see all new radical parties as problematic for the quality of democracy. For instance, Russel Dalton *et al.* (2011, pp. 215-231) depicted emerging anti-party movements claiming direct democracy through digital platforms as 'threats' to democratic politics.

Overall, two common problems affect the mainstream schools of party politics. First, by focusing on parties' relations with the 'state' and the 'civil society', the discipline of party politics does not consider with sufficient depth how the economic base shapes, constraints, or enables parties' ideas and practices. Second, political scientists conflate contrasting instances of radical politics as potentially dangerous for (liberal) democracies without properly considering which 'structural' goals radical parties pursue. 'Outsiderness' and 'radicality',

therefore, become overarching schemes that tend to flatten the differences, for instance, between radical parties seeking to disrupt capitalist rulership and those seeking to authoritatively lead the subalterns' frustrations into sexist and nativist projects (Dean and Maiguashca, 2020).

In the remainder of the section, I will specify why a Gramscian critical approach to political party studies may be fruitful at overcoming such limitations, as it allows to consider parties both as constrained by the 'real' hegemony of politics and cultural-strategic agents that contribute to reproduce or challenge structural domination.

.3.2 Taking Gramsci back in political science

> 'The basic innovation introduced by the philosophy of praxis into the science of politics and history is the demonstration that there is no abstract "human nature", fixed and immutable (…), but that human nature is the totality of historically determined social relations. Hence, historical facts can, with some limitations, be ascertained with the methods of philology and criticism. Consequently, political science, as far as both its concrete content and its logical formulation are concerned, must be seen as a developing organism'.
> (Gramsci, 2014 Q13 §18)

Antonio Gramsci's intellectual contribution provided key insights within the Marxist tradition to understand politics as both shaped by the economic base and acting back on the relations of production through 'hegemonic' or revolutionary praxes by political agents. Within political science, Gramsci was interested in identifying which actors organised the confrontations for hegemony, and he identified the party (the Modern Prince) as the primary actor in achieving political change. It may come as a surprise, therefore, that Gramsci's insights inspired critical theories in disparate directions, as with 'cultural studies' and 'critical discourse analyses' (i.e. Williams, 1973; Hall, 1992; Fairclough *et al.*, 2011; van Dijk, 2015), 'international relations' and 'international political economy' (Cox, 1987; Gill, 2008), 'cultural political economy' (Jessop,

2010; Sum and Jessop, 2014), but not in political science (among few notable exceptions see Motta and Bailey, 2007; Hall, 2017).

Therefore, this thesis aims at taking back Gramsci in political science. It aims at doing so by adopting methods of 'philology' and 'criticism', meaning that any analysis of political phenomena should look both at parties' 'cultural' production, for instance, their discourses, and at their 'material' praxes as emerging from and impacting upon concrete societal formations. The framework resonates with Ngai Ling Sum and Bob Jessop's claim for a cultural political economy seeking to navigate between 'the structuralist Scylla' and 'the constructivist Charybdis' (2014, p. 148), in the attempt to avoid both economistic and culturalist reductionisms to understand political practices.

The framework I develop throughout the thesis is defined, following the seminal contribution of the Gramscian intellectual Bob Jessop (2005a), a 'strategical-relational approach' (SRA) to societal reproduction and transformation.

First, a Gramscian approach is 'relational', as it rejects views of institutions or societal groups as 'reified' through fixed attributes by looking instead at the relations through which they are dynamically shaped. Crucially, with Marxism, a 'relational' approach refutes considering social classes as 'reified' sociological categories based, for instance, on levels of income (Piketty, 2014) or of autonomy in the performance of labour (Oesch, 2003). Instead, classes are defined through the relations between groups. Therefore, classes are structurally and historically determined through ongoing dialectical relations between exploitation/domination and subalternity/liberation (Marx and Engels, 2010). This conceptualisation explains why, throughout the thesis, I will refer to 'ruling/capitalist' and 'subaltern' classes, in the plural, to

signify that also multiple relations of hegemony occur within each pole of class relations (Buttigieg, 2018).

Second, a Gramscian approach is 'strategic', as it considers that any particular 'structural configuration' of the economic base -in this research, platform capitalism – shapes (not determines) the 'superstructure' of politics through 'strategic selectivity', that is to say, that structures 'selectively reinforce specific forms of action, tactics, or strategies and discourage others' (Jessop, 2005a, p. 49). Through these selections, the ruling classes shape the superstructure of politics, in Gramscian terms 'the integral state', that is, the ensemble of the relations between agents of the state and the civil society. Hereby, the concept of 'hegemony' makes its entrance as the cornerstone of Gramscian intellectual contribution. Indeed, the integral state is governed through 'real' hegemony, the 'general social requirement for the construction of rulership' (Joseph, 2002, p. 28). That is to say, political agents contribute to securing the reproduction of the economic base through diversified mixes of consent (by the subaltern to the ruling classes) and coercion.

Third, a Gramscian approach is strategical *and* relational as it claims that agents' understandings of the relations between economic base and superstructure are key to defining their strategies and tactics to act back on structures alternatively for conservative or transformative ends. Therefore, political agents are (potentially) reflexive on the constraints and possibilities within each historical configuration of 'real' hegemony either to secure its reproduction or to transform it through political practices to achieve 'counter-hegemony' (Worth, 2015). The Gramscian conceptualisation of 'ideology' is crucial to understanding how political agents tap into these interplays, and it also sets the rationale to adopt 'ideologies' as

the main perspective through which I will analyse the most recent evolutions of ELPs. Indeed, in a Gramscian sense, ideologies are a twofold concept. As detailed in Chapter 2, ideologies will be defined first as the 'systems of beliefs' that represent the shared interpretations of social events by each political group. The systems of beliefs are at the same time the result of past 'entrenchments' of each group in hegemonic relations, and they are dynamically adapted or changed depending on how political agents reflect on new structural configurations of the economic base and the political superstructure. Second, ideologies are the material organising principles through which political agents define their 'strategic projects' seeking to navigate or transform 'real' hegemony. The strategic projects, therefore, can be defined as the ensemble of the cultural and material practices informing the choices of specific 'means' and interventions to achieve political agents' desired ends. Gramsci conceptualised another distinction to understand ideologies as both cultural and material constructs, the one between 'organic' and 'arbitrary' ideologies (2014, Q7 §19). Indeed, for ideologies to effectively 'organise' human masses, they must 'organically' represent the social classes they aim at coalescing into conservative or transformative projects. On the contrary, ideologies that do not organically represent social classes are 'arbitrary' intellectual products that, while still relevant for social relations, do not substantially intervene in the confrontations between hegemony and counter-hegemony.

Therefore, in this thesis, I will draw upon critical theories of platform societies to assess how platform capitalism shaped the real hegemony of platform politics to empirically assess how the selected ELPs' ideologies, first, resulted from the emergence of this new hegemony and, second, defined their systems of beliefs and strategic projects to navigate or transform it. Through this process, the expected contribution of the thesis is to provide an up-to-date

account of ELPs' strategic responses to their crisis ‘of visions’ by taking into consideration both the structural and conjunctural conditions for their emergence.

.4 Research questions, argument, and thesis’ structure

Having defined the research puzzle and introduced the key concepts through which I developed the theoretical framework, in this section, I will specify the research questions, introduce the main argument of the thesis, and describe how it is unpacked throughout the research design, defining the thesis’ structure.

As the research goal is to investigate the recent evolutions of ELPs vis-à-vis the digital revolution as resulting from the interplays between their reflections on platform societies and the ideological changes seeking to tap into the hegemony governing its directionality, I formulated two main research questions:

1. How did European Left Parties reflect on the societal impacts of the digital revolution in the 2010s?
2. How did ELPs reshape their ideologies to navigate or transform the real hegemony of platform societies?

The answers to these questions will define the thesis’ main argument, namely that the politics of the digital revolution provided cultural and material resources that informed and shaped the ideas and strategic projects of European Left Parties for their elites to design ways out of their crises of visions. Through the empirical analysis, I will theorise the emergence of three ‘digital’ left-wing ideologies, defined as Techno-Third Way, Post-Social Democracy and

Platform Socialism, to argue that the European Left was highly polarised among contrasting approaches to address the real hegemony of platform societies. By looking at ELPs evolutions through ideologies, I will come to re-conceptualise the 'crisis' of the Left. Indeed, I will argue that, on the one hand, Techno-Third Way and Platform Socialism represent 'organic' ideologies, consistently tying parties to, alternatively, the ruling and the subaltern classes of platform capitalism, and that, therefore, they represent opposite but consistent ways out of left-wing 'crises'. On the contrary, I will argue that Post-Social Democracy was an intrinsically 'arbitrary' ideology, therefore representing the ongoing crisis of those attempts by political elites to achieve (impossible) compromises with ruling classes as the 'real' hegemony of platform society shrunk the spaces of intervention for Social Democracy.

The argument is developed through two stages of empirical research, starting from Chapter 3, that rely upon two theoretical Chapters that develop the analytical framework to assess ELPs evolutions vis-à-vis the digital revolution. The whole thesis is structured as follows.

Chapter 1 reviews two bodies of literature to better identify the research gap the thesis aims to contribute. On the one hand, recent literature on ELPs' crises and renewal does not investigate how parties understood and reacted to the digital revolution. On the other hand, normative theories on the transformational potentialities emerging from the digital revolution do not consider, neither theoretically nor empirically, whether Left-wing parties are barriers or facilitators to advancing radical change.

Having defined the research gap, Chapter 2 will develop the Gramscian theoretical framework and specify how it inspired the research design. The framework will specify why conceiving parties as operating at the junctures between the economic base and the political

superstructure allows making sense of ELPs' specific functions for the reproduction or transformation of hegemony. By conceptualising ideologies as a twofold concept encompassing ELPs' systems of beliefs and strategic projects, I will better specify the focus of the thesis. Finally, I will explain how a cross-case comparative analysis will be the research design through which the empirical study of the thesis will be conducted.

Having defined 'ideologies' as a twofold concept (systems of beliefs and strategic projects) and their evolutions as the result of the interactions between parties' reflections on hegemony and parties' agency to navigate or transform hegemony, the empirical research is structured in two stages. The first stage aims at mapping ELPs' ideologies to identify parties' systems of beliefs regarding the digital revolution, and it will then locate these ideologies in the processes of ideological change characterising ELPs' evolutions along the 2010s. This stage of research seeks answers to two sub-questions:

- How did ELPs' systems of beliefs signify the digital revolution in relation to their claims about the reproduction or transformation of capitalism and democracy?
- Under which conjunctural conditions did ELPs ideologies change from 'non-digital' to 'digital' (or vice versa) during the 2010s?

Relatedly, Chapter 3 will adopt set-theoretic methods to devise a typology of the 'digitally proactive' ideologies adopted by the selected ELPs by analysing parties' manifestos, and Chapter 4 will describe the processes of ideological change that occurred during the 2010s.

The second stage of empirical research will investigate how the three 'digital' ideologies that I theorised in the first stage resulted in parties' strategic projects for hegemony or counter-hegemony. This research stage will draw upon an original data set from thirty-seven elites'

interviews alongside secondary data sources from twenty-four ELPs' official documents. The research question to which the research stage seeks to answer is

- How did ELPs' reflections on the digital revolution inform their strategic projects to navigate or transform the real hegemony of platform societies?

Accordingly, Chapters 5 to 7 are dedicated, respectively, to in-depth case studies of the 'Techno-Third Way', 'Post Social Democratic' and 'Platform Socialist' parties in a twofold way. First, I operationalise the theoretical framework by identifying three 'indicators' to evaluate parties' strategic projects for hegemony or counter-hegemony: their desired function *vis-à-vis* radical alternatives, their strategies to establish organic ties to the ruling or subaltern classes, and how their projects were meant to reproduce or elevate 'common-sense' views. Second, I analyse each party's elite's stances on platform capitalism and platform party politics.

Finally, in Chapter 8, I will bring together the two stages of empirical research to develop a typological theory of ELPs 'digital ideologies'. Comparing the three ideologies will answer the main research questions and develop the thesis argument.

In the Conclusions, I will summarise the findings of the thesis, specify its original contribution and identify its limitations, which will define the opportunities for a future research agenda.

CHAPTER 1 . EUROPEAN LEFT PARTIES AND THE DIGITAL REVOLUTION. A REVIEW OF CURRENT DEBATES

1.1 Introduction

Why did supposedly anti-neoliberal political actors fail, overall, at taking advantage of the popular discontent from the consequences of the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) if it was a neoliberal one (see Callaghan *et al.*, 2009)? Why was left-wing politics indifferent to the transformative potentialities of the digital revolution if it provided new radical progressive visions? To seek answers to these apparently puzzling combinations, the thesis will start by establishing a dialogue between two fields of recent literature that tend to be indifferent to each other: research on European Left Parties' (ELPs) crises and changes and critical theories about the radical potentialities of the digital revolution.

The survey of this literature will highlight a twofold 'blind spot' in current research. First, recent literature on ELPs, overall, is focused on the effects of the Third Way turn, debating Social Democratic Parties' (SDPs) adaptations, Radical Left Parties' (RLPs) reactions, and the emergence of a 'new' left. Still, it does not investigate how platform societies may provide new means to achieve progressive transformations. Second, critical theories of the digital revolution explicitly refer to left or progressive politics as the 'field' that should carry on its transformational possibilities, but they do not investigate what role ELPs may play in these processes. As a result, we cannot know whether ELPs may be considered obstacles or instead facilitators and organisers of radical mobilisations in platform societies. The analysis of this

Chapter traces back the reasons for these 'blind spots' to the underlying theoretical perspectives through which recent research is conducted.

First, regarding literature on ELPs' crises, whilst 'critical realist' and Marxist authors provide key insights to identify the mechanisms through which SDPs and RLPs are entrenched within neoliberal hegemony and its ruling classes, this strand of literature tends to reduce parties to objects functional to reproduce domination, therefore neglecting their potential strategic role at shaping new paths forward to disruption. On the contrary, post-structuralist accounts, by neglecting class relations as primary determinants of party politics, render parties as 'floating' subjectivities without considering the spaces within which they operate.

Second, concerning critical theories of the digital revolution, I observed two complementary flaws. First, 'post-capitalist' theories' theoretical roots in autonomism lead these authors to ongoingly assume that collective organisations are inherently oligarchic, therefore failing to investigate who may enable transitions from platform capitalism to post-capitalism. Second, 'radical democratic' theories, by deterministically assuming that digital technologies lead to unmediated direct and participatory democratic systems, neglect contrasting directionalities for politicisation through platforms. Therefore, these theories do not explain why online mobilisations can prompt both radical transformative and nativist conservative movements.

The Chapter is structured as follows: section two analyses literature on ELPs crises and changes; section three will survey critical literature on platform capitalism and platform politics; finally, I will bring together previous accounts to identify the theoretical flaws that the thesis aims to address. The Chapter's findings will set the rationale for developing a Gramscian framework to analyse ELPs' responses to the digital revolution.

1.2 European Left Parties. Is 'the old' dying? Has 'the new' been born?

This section provides an overview of recent debates in the literature on ELPs. It does so by primarily looking at comparative analyses of the crises and changes of SDPs and RLPs in the aftermath of the GFC. First, I will survey critical analyses depicting the struggles by established ELPs at defining new visions beyond neoliberalism and Keynesianism because of their entrenchment in the structures of capitalism and (neo-)liberal democracy against rational choice accounts focused on emerging post-modern dilemmas as main sources of crisis for the Left. This focus will allow defining a first area of crisis for ELPs to which the digital revolution may have provided solutions: the struggles at keeping their social linkages with the subaltern classes. Next, I will move to analyse post-structuralist accounts contending that whilst the 'old' Left may be dying, a new Left may be emerging. More specifically, I will critically review left-populist research pointing to the emergence of new left-wing movements in the 2010s. Within this scenario, I will identify a second relevant area of transformation for the Left to which the digital revolution may matter: the redefinition of organisational forms of ELPs in the age of austerity. Throughout the section, I will highlight the strengths and limitations of different approaches by explaining why the lack of research on ELPs' understandings of the digital revolution is problematic in uncovering their most recent evolutions.

1.2.1 Established ELPs. Losing the working class and the subalterns?

In this subsection, I will argue that accounts of the crisis and decline of 'old' ELPs in the aftermath of the GFC can be traced back to two contrasting approaches. The first focuses on ELPs as structurally constrained by neoliberal capitalism. The second points to new post-modern dilemmas experienced by ELPs as 'rational' agents.

Although grounded in contrasting premises resulting in different outlooks, both these approaches tend to present ELPs as deemed to decline. The argument I draw from this analysis is twofold. First, whilst structuralist approaches provide relevant insights to understand ELPs' recent crises, these authors tend to understand economic structures as determining political actors who in turn, are depicted as pure 'executors' of capitalists' interests. Second, 'rational-choice' scholars, by underestimating the constraints imposed by economic structures, tend to obfuscate the relevance of social linkages to classes as a primary source of ELPs' crisis.

Before surveying the literature, a caveat. When analysing the evolutions of Social Democracy (SD) and Radical Left (RL), two distinct units of analysis may come under scrutiny. First, SD and RL as visions. Second, SDPs and RLPs as the parties that historically embodied those visions. The analysis of recent literature on ELPs will consider how the relations between these two units were conceptualised. SD and RL as visions are contested concepts, as highlighted in the Introduction (.1). However, there is a growing consensus among researchers from distinct approaches at observing an increased divergence between SD/RL visions and their embodiment by SDPs and RLPs. For instance, authors scrutinising SDPs evolutions pointed to a general trend of integration of these parties into neoliberal visions (i.e. Mudge, 2011; Schmidt, 2016a), whilst many authors observed recent evolutions by RLPs as embracing 'critical' SD visions (i.e. March, 2011; Chiocchetti, 2016). On the one hand, this consensus signals the relevance of further research to understand the reconfigurations of the relations between the ideologies and organisations of ELPs. On the other hand, different perspectives on the evolutions of ELPs must be scrutinised to identify new potential paths of change by left-wing parties.

To begin my literature review, authors within the 'structural dependency' approach assert that ELPs are in crisis because the reconfigurations within the economic structures of capitalism determined unredeemable struggles by ELPs to preserve their traditional social linkages with the working class and other subaltern groups.

Regarding Social Democracy, this scholarship pays tribute to Adam Przeworski (1985) conceptualisation of SDPs as those parties seeking to empower the working class through the welfare state (Esping-Andersen, 1985; see also Przeworski and Sprague, 1986; Esping-Andersen, 1990; Callaghan, 2000). The structural configuration of post-war settlement from the 1950s to the early 1970s, so this line of argument goes, allowed SDPs to advance SD visions through the winning formula 'welfare state plus Keynes plus corporatism' (Jackson, 2013, p. 345). However, since the 1970s, SDPs went into crisis because of the structural changes of the 'Keynesian consensus' that determined the shrinking of its social base, the industrial working class. From then on, any attempt by SDPs to keep their traditional re-distributive commitments has resulted in losing traction over middle-class voters. Conversely, by moderating their agendas, SDPs would have lost terrain among their traditional working-class constituencies (Przeworski and Sprague, 1986). Recent literature within this tradition argues that following the shift from a 'Keynesian' to a 'neoliberal' consensus, SDPs ongoingly prioritised centrist agendas, therefore worsening their structural crisis. This is why these authors affirm the 'death' of SD as an emancipatory vision resulting from the structural turn imposed by capitalist classes in the Global North (Lavelle, 2008). Not only SDPs renounced to represent the subalterns (Przeworski, 2001), but they became barriers to empowering the working class as 'there is no longer any legislative desire to reduce inequality and restrain capitalism' (Lavelle, 2008, p. 14). David J. Bailey's (2009a) theorisation of SDPs' transformation

better clarifies this perspective. Indeed, Bailey argued that traditional SDPs represented workers through a precarious equilibrium led by party elites' attempting 'to regulate and contain the demands for decommodification made by an electoral constituency which includes, but extends beyond, the industrial working class' (2009a, p. 39). Instead, since the '70s, party elites reprioritized SDPs values to protect capitalism and states' apparatuses. Finally, since the emergence of the Third-Way ideology in the 1990s (see also Arndt and van Kersbergen, 2015), SDPs elites endorsed a stark re-commodification of work and public goods to suppress the demands of their traditional constituencies,

> 'in order that these demands might be both (a) "representable" within the institutions of the representative democratic state, and (b) compatible with the successful reproduction of the capital-labour relations' (Bailey, 2009a, p. 94).

Similarly, the entrenchment by SDPs in the structures of neoliberal capitalism was the main determinant for the failed attempts to find new visions to tackle the 'age of austerity' in the aftermath of the GFC. More specifically, SDPs' appeals for a 'Social Europe' since 2008 to tame and control neoliberal globalisation were based on fragile roots, as EU institutions were constitutionally linked to the neo-liberal reproduction of capitalist rulership, shaping a political space which hampers party competition (Ryner, 2014; De Waele *et al.*, 2013). Fabien Escalona and Mathieu Vieira described this turn to the EU institutions as the final stage of a long-term decline of SDPs, 'wavering between a continuous adjustment to the constraints of neo-liberal globalisation and the search for an improbable continent-wide "green high-tech Keynesianism"' (Chapter 2 in Bailey *et al.*, 2014, p. 29). These authors have the merit to explain how SDPs' ongoing entrenchment within capitalist structures, whilst initially facilitating pro-labour compromises, turned SDPs into antagonists to SD visions, therefore setting a divide between SD as vision and as the organisation of subaltern classes (see also Arndt, 2013;

Karreth *et al.*, 2013; Bonoli, 2014; Mudge, 2018). However, by theorising that economic structures determine parties' evolutions, 'structural dependency' theories are affected by two limitations in capturing more recent evolutions by SDPs. First, these authors tend to reduce labour antagonism to static views equating the working class with the industrial labourers, underestimating, for instance, the increased stratification of labour to encompass precarious autonomous workers (Benedetto *et al.*, 2020; Rennwald, 2020; Polacko, 2022). Second, SDPs are reduced to 'objects' that inevitably follow structural changes without further consideration for party agency. Similar limitations affect structural-dependent accounts of RLPs crises.

Indeed, theorists of structural crisis by RLPs claimed that these parties followed SDPs to the centre of the ideological spectrum and that, consequently, they are deemed to marginality. Ideologically, this move was first conceptualised by David Arter as the RLPs' 'social-democratisation' following and seeking to exploit for electoral advantages the SDP's 'neo-liberalisation' (2002). As a result of this process, RLPs turned from Marxist to Keynesian stances and from adopting anti- to espousing pro/alter- views towards the European Union (March, 2011). Moreover, RLPs combined these moderate stances with environmentalist, feminist and pro LGBTQIA+ claims. The mix of moderate Keynesianism and radical pro-environment and pro-civil rights positions resulted in 'social democracy plus' visions becoming the new normal for RLPs (Bailey, 2016). This process of adaptation by RLPs resulted in two problematic outcomes. First, the ideology of RLPs, overall, was defined in the negative, what they criticised about neoliberalism, rather than in 'the positive', what they wanted to achieve (March and Mudde, 2005; March, 2011; Chiocchetti, 2016). Second, and relatedly, the lack of a radical project failed, overall, to attract working class and subaltern constituents

disappointed by SDPs neoliberal turn (Visser *et al.*, 2014; March and Rommerskirchen, 2015; Hansen and Olsen, 2021). Therefore, scholars within this tradition tend to pessimistically theorise the evolutions of RLPs as a troubled 'normalisation'. That is to say that RLPs 'mostly failed to develop coherent anti-neoliberal projects, effective strategies, and solid organisational mediations, remaining a medium-sized but relatively uninfluential political actor' (Chiocchetti, 2016, p. 357). As with accounts of the crisis of SDPs, therefore, structural-dependency theories conceive ELPs as dependent upon the evolutions of capitalism, without proper consideration for how parties' agency may act back on these reconfigurations.

Contrary to structuralist accounts, the literature focusing on ELPs' 'rational' agency, by overlooking the constraints emerging from the structures of capitalism, depicted the crises and changes of ELPs as mostly associated with the emergence of 'post-modern' challenges. The overview of this literature will show that whilst they criticize economic determinism as reductionist, these authors end up in a contradictory cultural reductionism. Apart from a few notable exceptions (i.e. Olsen *et al.*, 2010), this scholarly strand is focused on the evolutions of SDPs. The roots of this scholars' interpretation of SDP can be traced back to Shery Berman (2006) argument that SD was never rooted in representing the working class but in the primacy of democratic politics to achieve equality. If SD is first and foremost a vision of democracy (Meyer and Hinchman, 2007), therefore, the crisis of SDPs should be understood as dependent on their rational choices to represent 'equality' in liberal democracy, not the working class against capitalism. Following this line of reasoning, Herbert Kitschelt (1994) argued that the political competitive space shifted, since the 1970s, from a linear left-right divide over distributive issues to a twofold space of competition whereby class cleavages were cross-cut by a libertarian-authoritarian divide. Therefore, SDPs mainly changed as the result

of rational strategies to represent left-libertarian constituencies. These views influenced more recent accounts of the struggles faced by SDPs in tackling the age of austerity. For instance, Michael Keating and David McCrone (2013) argue that Social Democracy was never a coherent ideology based on the social linkages with the working class. Instead, SD should be seen as a multidirectional political philosophy seeking to 'reconcile market capitalism with social responsibility' (p. 2; see also Cramme and Diamond, 2012). Therefore, the recent crisis of SDPs does not depend on the transformation of capitalism but on the increasing salience of 'post-modern' issues among voters, especially multiculturalism and the integration of immigrants. As a result, SDPs were recently affected by a dilemma in making a choice

> 'between a false binary – defending the jobs and economic conditions of its "traditional" white, working-class support, and balancing the claims of new migrants and other communities. In effect, it becomes electorally constrained by the populists, who argue that the centre-left has abandoned the former in favour of the latter' (Manwaring and Kennedy, 2018, p. 210; similar points are made by Bale *et al.*, 2010; Ricolfi, 2017)

The SDPs' crisis, therefore, should be understood as a matter of strategy at mixing their policies' proposals in ways that may appeal both to their 'traditional' constituencies and to urban libertarian middle and upper classes (Kitschelt and Hellemans, 1990). Not only is this argument self-contradictory, as it starts by denying any 'real' grounds in class politics by ELPs to then reaffirm its relevance for parties' choices. Most substantively, the emphasis on parties' agency is, in fact, denied by assuming that ELPs play no function in shaping citizens' preferences. That is to say that these authors assume that parties are irrelevant at modifying roaring nativist attitudes by working class and subaltern constituents (Benedetto *et al.*, 2020), while instead, as observed by many authors, the turn to nativism by these classes may exactly be a reaction to ELPs abandonment of subalterns' protection (Bailey *et al.*, 2017; Mudge, 2018).

All in all, two related flaws affect the current literature on the crisis of established ELPs. First, by reducing parties' evolution to narrow economic or cultural determinants, ELPs are conceptualised as only oscillating between neoliberalism and Keynesianism and/or between culturally libertarian or conservative postures. As a consequence, these analyses cannot grasp the more dynamic relations between structural constraints and agents' strategies. Although the literature on the emergence of a 'new' left in the aftermath of the GFC addressed some of these limitations, the underestimation of the relevance of the digital revolution also affects this strand of literature, which will be analysed in the next subsection.

1.2.2 The emergence of a new Left. Beyond working classes and the mass party?

The recent electoral struggles by established ELPs and the emergence of anti-elite social movements since the 2010s have been theorised as the main reasons for the emergence and increased relevance of new left-wing parties, although with relevant differences between European regions. This process has resulted in different organisational projects, for instance, with the foundation of new parties, as with Syriza in Greece, Podemos in Spain, La France Insoumise (Katsambekis and Kioupkiolis, 2019), or with radical leaderships 'occupying' centre-left parties, as with Corbyn in the UK or Sanders' campaigns in the US (Panitch and Gindin, 2020). This trend also raised a new interest among left-wing scholars, with comparative studies seeking to assess the extent to which new ELPs were more successful than established ones (Visser *et al.*, 2014; Gomez and Ramiro, 2019; Hansen and Olsen, 2021), and the ruptures and continuities with traditional RLPs (Gomez *et al.*, 2016; Escalona, 2017). In this subsection, while critically reviewing the main theoretical approach to the emergence of a new Left, namely the Laclauian left populist school, I will highlight how a second area of crisis and transformation of ELPs emerged during the 2010s, intersecting the one about traditional social

linkages with working class and subaltern groups: that of the established form of organisation of the mass-bureaucratic party. An area of change within which the adoption of digital platforms for the political organisation was recognised to be crucial (Chadwick and Stromer-Galley, 2016; Gerbaudo, 2018), without, however, proper consideration for the different reasons why new parties' elites came to adopt digital platforms within their organisations.

The crucial perspective through which to make sense of the emergence of new left-wing actors is to look at the conjuncture of the wave of protests against austerity spreading across Europe from 2010 to 2015, commonly defined as the 'squares movements' (Della Porta *et al.*, 2017; Bailey, 2017). As observed by many authors, there was a relevant change in the culture of main social movements. On the one hand, in the early 2000s, anti-globalisation protesters were anti-system and informed by anarchist cultures. On the other hand, the 'squares movements' of the early 2010s sought routes into institutional politics to affirm their anti-neoliberal and anti-political elites' claims (Maeckelbergh, 2009; Badiou, 2012; Gerbaudo, 2017b). These 'demands' for radical left-wing politics to disrupt established political elites were either generative of entirely new Radical Left movements or attracted by political leaderships adopting clear-cut anti-elitist postures (Gerbaudo, 2017a; Ward and Guglielmo, 2021). This conjunctural match between activists from social movements seeking to disrupt political institutions from within and new left-wing radical leaderships and organisations has mostly been theorised as defining a left-wing 'populist' wave since the early 2010s.

Indeed, recent interpretations of the Radical Left as new 'articulations' of populism classify as such almost any new RLP in Europe (Syriza, Podemos, LFI), alongside established parties such as the German Die Linke or the Irish Sinn Fein and new formations in Central and Eastern

Europe such as Levica in Slovenia (Chapters in Katsambekis and Kioupkiolis, 2019; see also Stavrakakis, 2017; Damiani, 2020). These theorists argue that a major shift occurred from a 'traditional' to a 'new' (populist) left, grounded in the subsumption or substitution of left-wing mobilisations along workers-capitalists cleavages with 'new' people-elites divides. Radical leftists would do so as the

> 'traditional left conception of the capital/labour cleavage (…), despite having survived the post-Fordist age and into the early years of the third millennium, no longer produces much political effect' (Damiani, 2020, p. 167).

This theory draws on Ernesto Laclau's conceptualisation of populism, at first theorising it as peculiar to those political projects establishing a frontier of antagonism between people and power, therefore asserting that 'highest forms of populism can only be socialist' (1977, p. 196), to then abandon altogether any theoretical relation between populism and socialism. This evolution was grounded in Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's radical democratic theory, rejecting Marxist structuralism as

> 'affected by a radical insufficiency, as class opposition is incapable of dividing the totality of the social in two antagonistic camps, or of reproducing itself automatically as the line of demarcation of the political sphere' (2001, p. 152).

Hence, the normative rejection of Marxism was the ground upon which Laclauian populist scholarship emerged. Authors within this 'school' normatively assume that the Left may succeed at gaining counter-hegemony only if it abandons class antagonism as the cornerstone of its identity. Instead, left populists should constitute their projects through the articulations of discourses gathering a 'class-less' social majority. Consequently, in these accounts, parties as Podemos and La France Insoumise are antagonists to traditional left parties (Izquierda Unida and Parti Communiste) because the latter allegedly rely on the primacy of class

antagonisms (Kioupkiolis, 2016; Ramiro and Gomez, 2017; Marlière, 2019). Not only is there no clear empirical evidence supporting such claims. Most importantly, these authors tend to flatten distinct points of confrontation, pulling together critical views on traditional parties' organisations, styles of leadership and mass integration with criticisms of their ideological roots. Crucially, by depicting as 'populist' any discursive construction, regardless of its content, that is built around (1) people-centrism and (2) anti-elitism (Katsambekis, 2022, p. 9), left-populist scholars fail to detect any relevant distinction within and among these movements. Therefore, either they end up recognising that the discursive 'empty signifier' the 'people' by left populists is never 'signified', remaining fluid and undetermined, or they must acknowledge that the people are a genus subsuming labour as a frontier of antagonism for the left (Stavrakakis in Katsambekis and Kioupkiolis, 2019, pp. 200-202). Consequently, left populism as a theoretical framework fails to capture innovation within RLPs ideologies, strategies, and organisations. As a normative theory, it does not allow assessing how parties conceive the evolutions of economic structures and whether and how ELPs aim at opposing capitalist rulership.

To sum up, recent literature on the emergence of a 'new' Left, while relevantly identifying the relations with social movements as a source of renewal for the identities and organisations of some ELPs, is flawed by overlooking how emerging structural configurations of capitalism may affect the Left. More specifically, left-populist theorists normatively assert a divide between a new and a traditional left along the lines of new cleavages of political articulation, from capital-labour to political elites-people ones. Therefore, by assuming that the defining attribute for a new Left replacing the traditional one is the rejection of class antagonism, the issue of how

ELPs actually responded to the changing configurations of capitalism and democratic politics in relation to the digital revolution remain largely unanswered.

1.3 Digital Revolution. New routes for transformative Left politics?

The previous section highlighted that ELPs faced multiple crises in the aftermath of the GFC. Despite the differences in the analyses resting on contrasting theoretical approaches, two main areas of crisis and change can be observed by surveying recent literature on the Left. First, overall, ELPs seemed to struggle at representing disadvantaged social classes and/or at elaborating visions that may attract popular discontent and turn it into consistent transformative projects. Second, the emergence of new left-wing parties and/or leaderships sought to renew the organisational forms of the established Left by borrowing styles of organisation from 'anti-austerity' social movements. Throughout this section, I will review literature arguing that the 'digital revolution' represented an emerging socio-technical landscape that provides potentially crucial resources to address these areas of crisis and change for the Left. This is the main reason to establish a dialogue between research on ELPs and critical literature elaborating normative theories about how platform societies may provide key resources for leftist mobilisations.

The analysis will show that also critical literature on platform societies is characterised by a divide between structuralist and post-structuralist approaches that results in partial accounts of the interactions between the structures of platform capitalism and the agency of platform politics. On the one hand, literature conceiving the digital revolution as opening ways towards post-capitalism or platform socialism is mostly concerned with how the structures of platform

capitalism are characterised by self-disruptive tendencies while overlooking how the organisation of politics may facilitate or halt this transition. On the other hand, literature on platform politics is mostly characterised by the indifference to the relations between the structures of platform capitalism and the organisation of politics. Consequently, the digitalisation of politics is understood as isolated from the relations of production. Despite these limitations, critical theories of platform societies are fruitful at providing updated analytical tools that can also advance more refined understandings of the recent evolutions of ELPs. Indeed, these scholars elaborate on new frameworks to conceptualise the emergence of new dialectical relations between platform capitalists and the subaltern classes of platform societies. The latter defines the field of 'liberation' that may be providing crucial resources for ELPs to challenge exploitative capital-labour relations and redirect democracy to the empowerment of disadvantaged groups. However, the lack of empirical research on how ELPs are understanding and seeking to act upon these new dialectics does not allow, up to date, to assess whether these actors should be considered as facilitators or barriers for such potential transformative politics.

1.3.1 Digital Platforms as ways forward to post-capitalism?

In this subsection, I will provide an overview of critical theoretical approaches asserting that platform capitalism, while reviving and reshaping exploitation, also enables practices of resistance and liberation that may revitalise radical left-wing projects. As mentioned in the Introduction (.2), these theoretical approaches, classified as techno-Keynesianism, post-capitalism/post-workerism and platform socialism, while all referring to the Left as the 'field' that should carry on transformative agendas, do not investigate whether different ELPs are subjects of transformation or barriers to change. However, altogether, this literature has the

merit of providing a theoretical compass to conceptualise three key areas of political intervention that may provide solutions to ELPs' crises. First, platform societies open opportunities for the states to proactively govern the relations of production. Second, automation is leading to post-work societies, and therefore, the Left should abandon 'labourism' and focus on the redistribution of incomes to reconnect to subalterns. Third, digital infrastructures are the new 'means of production' that capitalists control and manage, and therefore new socialist agendas should target the structures of property of platforms to advance radical change by disrupting current forms of control and domination.

To begin with the first point, Techno-Keynesians argue that in platform societies, the states can win back their centrality through investing in digital innovation and taking control of the rewards of their investments. Marianna Mazzucato is the key author within this 'school' (2015; Jacobs and Mazzucato, 2016). Indeed, Mazzucato argues that contrary to the culturally hegemonic view imposed by neoliberals that portray private companies as innovators and the state as bureaucratic barriers, it is the state, not private companies, that prompts major innovations. However, under neoliberal hegemony, platform capitalists were capable of imposing policies' agendas that socialise the risks of public investments while privatising the rewards. Left-wing actors facilitated the emergence of this hegemony by focusing on agendas to tame inequalities, defensively seeking to protect national welfare states instead of establishing mechanisms to gain back and socialise the rewards of public investments.

Whereas Techno-Keynesianism advocates for new ways to 'tame' platform capitalism, most radical approaches assert that the digital revolution and automation are already paving the way toward a post-capitalist and post-workerist society. All these theorists of 'disruptive'

automation draw from autonomist Marxist readings of the 'Fragment on the Machine' in the 'Grundrisse' (Marx, 1971) to argue that technology determines the conditions for socialism by reducing the necessary labour time for production (Fuchs, 2019d), and overcoming scarcity, a key condition for the reproduction of capitalist relations of exploitation (Bastani, 2019). Relatedly, these authors espouse the 'Universal Basic Income' (UBI) as the flagship proposal for a new post-workerist Left (Van Parijs and Vanderborght, 2017). Upon this common ground, distinct positions emerged regarding how the transition to post-capitalism should be achieved.

Techno-determinist authors argue that capitalism has already entered its final crisis thanks to the digital revolution. The journalist Paul Mason (2016), for instance, asserted that platform capitalism drives to a whole new level the failing tendency of profits accumulation. More specifically, the profitability of private enterprises is falling as a result of decreasing marginal costs of production. Indeed, the marginal costs of production for essential goods and services in a digital economy would tend to zero, as with cultural artefacts, marketing services, etc. (see also Rifkin, 2015). Moreover, the logic underlying platforms' economic relations would be one of 'sharism', empowering individuals to cooperate to produce public and private goods and services. The match between these two tendencies is leading to 'post-capitalism' (see also Berry, 2014). Whilst theorising digital platforms as the 'final' stage of capitalism may capture certain real trends in the fall of profits, techno-determinist approaches come with severe shortcomings. At best, they may indicate a tendency for alternative modes of economic organisation in specific sectors such as culture or social care (Mair and Noboa, 2006; Corvo *et al.*, 2018). However, inferring a general theory about the crisis of capitalism from these partial

tendencies is analytically flawed as it does not place crisis and transition as confrontations between antagonist groups competing for rulership and hegemony.

Whereas techno-determinists theorise the final crisis of capitalism, post-autonomist Marxists focus on how the digital revolution is reshaping class relations in platform societies. The tetralogy 'Empire', 'Multitude', 'Commonwealth' and 'Assembly' by Micheal Hardt and Antonio Negri is paramount to this techno-optimist turn in the autonomist-Marxist tradition (2000; 2005; 2009; 2017). In a nutshell, Hardt and Negri's argument is that class divides within 'cognitive capitalism' (Vercellone, 2010) were reshaped along the lines of the rulership of the 'Empire', roughly comprising financial and big tech companies alongside states' bureaucracies and parties, and the increasingly relevant resistance by the 'Multitude', a dispersed ensemble of exploited individuals. The dialectical relations between these groups have been overcoming the 'traditional' equation of labour with waged employees, as

> 'immaterial labor power (involved in communication, cooperation, and the production and reproduction of affects) occupies an increasingly central position in both the schema of capitalist production and the composition of the proletariat' (Hardt and Negri, 2000, p. 53).

Hardt and Negri theorisation has the merit to identify two crucial trends in how new spaces for movements of resistance and liberation may be confronting the rulership of platform capitalists. First, the multitudes are shaping resistance by forging the space of the 'digital commons' by organising forms of production and socialisation that are subtracted from the control of capitalist rulership. Second, the shift from the centrality of 'industrial' to 'digital' machines in production challenges one of the main sources of capitalist exploitation, the subsumption of the 'general intellect' of labourers into 'automated processes of production', resulting in the alienation of workers (Virno, 2004). The digital machines, indeed, necessarily

enable and connect the creative intelligence of producers, therefore de-alienating proletarians and turning digital workers into revolutionary political subjectivities (Hardt and Negri, 2009; Fuchs, 2018; Negri, 2019). However, the first problem in Hardt and Negri's accounts is that they tend to present a utopian normative view about a potential future requiring political agency to succeed as an already-present trend of recent history (Pitts, 2017). Second, the re-inversion of the relation between humans and machines, from instrumentalising humans to machines (as with the industrial configuration of capitalism) to nourishing creative and connected human intelligence, is too optimistic, as even 'immaterial' jobs (for instance, developing digital codes) are mostly routinised and monitored forms of alienating labour (Haidar and Keune, 2021). Third, Hardt and Negri's techno-optimistic turn attempts to revive the autonomist tradition in the rejection of parties as necessarily hierarchical-bureaucratic barriers to radical progress to which, however, they fail at providing any logically viable alternative. As convincingly put by Jodi Dean, indeed, Hardt and Negri

> 'model of institutions suggests that a party or parties could be such a carrier, but rather than present their platform as a party platform, Hardt and Negri present it as a series of demands to be made to existing governments and institutions of global governance (but who makes these demands?)' (2019b, p. 181).

Accelerationism is an emerging 'school' that, while drawing upon autonomist post-workerist traditions, substantially differs in how the transition to post-capitalism should be organised, namely by claiming the need for political and cultural leadership to enable a post-workerist left-wing movement. The main proponents of this approach are Alex Williams and Nick Srnicek with the pamphlet '#Accelerate. Manifesto for an accelerationist politics' (2013). Contrary to Hardt and Negri, Williams and Srnicek argue that without a hierarchically organised mobilisation of the Left, platform capitalism is accelerating the destruction of the common

wealth, putting at risk the natural environment, commodifying welfare public services, imposing a social race to 'the bottom'. In this scenario, instead of acting on the defensive and trying to tame and brake the digital revolution, left-wing politics should go on the offensive, embracing acceleration and redirecting its forces from exploitative to post-capitalist ends (Williams and Srnicek, 2013). The same authors, in a more recent book (Srnicek and Williams, 2016), provided a more detailed agenda for the next Left. First and foremost, left-wing politics should abandon 'labourism' in favour of 'post-workerism', prioritising the liberation of human beings from the slavery of waged jobs over the defence of traditional labour. This position explains why left-wing agendas and mobilisations should claim for UBI and stark reductions in working times. Indeed, UBI has widely been adopted by post-workerists as the flagship proposal to take the Left out of its crisis, first and foremost as it would invert the centrality of wage and unemployment insurances that would represent a losing game-field for the Left (Van Parijs and Vanderborght, 2017; Bregman, 2018). When defining the subjects to bring about this transformation, however, accelerationists fail to go beyond superficial views of how a post-workerist Left should be organised. Srnicek and Williams may be right at criticising both autonomist horizontalist fetishism and the conservativism of established left-wing parties. Further, they convincingly claim for 'a counter-hegemonic strategy. (…) to install a new common sense – one organised around the crisis of work and its effects on the proletariat' (2016, p. 132). However, the claims for an accelerationist 'ecosystem' of organisations to advance counter-hegemony remain quite vague. This is particularly clear when Srnicek and Williams claim for a 'left populist' movement, without never specifying, first, what are the attributes of this 'populism', and second, how the movement should relate to existing or new political parties of the left (pp. 157-161, see also Gilbert, 2017).

Theorists of 'Platform Socialism' contend that post-capitalist scholars fail to address the cornerstone of capitalist exploitation, the accumulation of profits made possible by the structure of property of digital means of production (Panitch and Albo, 2020; Hrynyshyn, 2021). This is also why platform socialists are critical of UBI because, as argued by Aaron Benanav, 'the profit motive would remain the driving force of the economy because capitalists would retain their power over investment decisions, which would continue to determine whether the economy grows or shrinks' (Benanav, 2019, pp. 134-135; see also Sage and Diamond, 2017; Benanav, 2020). Evgenij Morozov argued that the transition to platform socialism could not 'materialize if the means for creating alternative modes of social coordination—the "feedback infrastructure"—remain the exclusive property of tech giants' (2019, p. 66). Morozov identifies a key mechanism to activate a disruptive process towards platform socialism in 'decentralised planning'. In this utopian system, producers could be organised as cooperative platforms to coordinate the collection of needs for consumption and manage the production of goods and services (p. 68). This coordination system would be non-profit, and the prices would be calculated not to maximise companies' incomes but social wealth (see also Saros, 2014; Morozov, 2017). As Morozov recognises, however, these potential processes are affected by an unavoidable tension on who should carry on the transition to platform socialism. More specifically, this tension regards the role of the state at managing socialist regimes of property. Morozov himself, on the one hand, advocates for 'socialised' and distributed data centres and infrastructures, that should not be run by the state, but on the other hand he recognises that for this disruption to happen, it would necessitate 'at least to pass some sort of legislation to change the status of data, and you would need the state to enforce it' (2015, p. 65).

Overall, each of these perspectives provides fruitful insights to develop analytical tools to analyse current trends within left-wing politics. To begin with, changing capital-labour dialectics provides potential ways out from the crisis of representation of subaltern classes by ELPs. First, because cognitive digital workers and producers are ongoingly organising resistance to platform capitalist exploitation by connecting their general intellect to generate the space of the 'digital commons' (Jordan, 2015; Kostakis, 2018). Second, because automation, by reducing the total amount of labour necessary for production, may justify post-workerist political agendas claiming redistribution through UBI. Further, platform societies may reshape the relations between states, private markets, and the public. First, as suggested by Techno-Keynesian, by providing fresh opportunities for innovative states' to take back the rewards of public investments from private companies. Second, as claimed by platform socialists, left-wing antagonistic projects can be revitalised by seeking to socialise and/or nationalise the infrastructures upon which platform economy flourishes.

1.3.2 Platforms as ways forward to radical democracy?

This subsection analyses key theories on 'platform politics', namely a space of political interactions enabled and prompted by the exercise of political functions (mobilisation, voting etc.) through digital platforms (see Fenton, 2016a; Nunes, 2021, p. 205). This literature can be conceptualised as informed by two contrasting approaches to understanding what the role of the parties in platform politics is, namely 'anti-party platform politics', and 'platform party politics'. Altogether, theorists of platform politics define two areas of change that may be relevant for ELPs' evolutions. First, platforms as architectures for political organisation reshape the relations between the horizontal coordination of activists, infringing upon the typical functions played by the intermediate cadres of the mass-bureaucratic party. Second,

by decisively reducing the barriers to the direct participation of citizens in politics, digital platforms may enable more 'radical' forms of democracy, making it possible to transform democratic institutions into participatory and/or directly governed by citizens (Luppicini and Baarda, 2017).

To begin with, theorist of anti-party platform politics, Manuel Castells (2010; 2015) conceived 'network societies' as reshaping power relations by connecting multi-level networks. For instance, global financial networks link bankers and stock-market brokers for them to operate through coercion (by states' agents) and symbolic manipulation, as with promises of high rewards for speculative financial investments. However, digital platforms also enable the emergence of new networks challenging power because 'mass-self communication provides the technological platforms for the construction of the autonomy of the social actor (…) vis-á-vis the institutions' (Castells, 2015, p. 24; see also 2007). After the GFC, these networks connected 'outraged' individuals igniting 'hope' for radical changes. However, the emergence of networked social movements is also a critical stage, as established political parties could jeopardize their transformative goals by co-opting movements into mechanisms of political representation. Therefore, Castells problematically theorises as a new attribute of platform politics the trade-off between social movements' radical goals and the constraints imposed by established political institutions, the latter inevitably reproducing 'their own bureaucratic, economic, and personal interests' (2015, p. 157). Castells' theory has merit in shedding light on how digital platforms are more than communication systems but, instead, organisational infrastructures facilitating more individualised connections between separated instances of protest (see also Bennett and Segerberg, 2013; Bennett *et al.*, 2014). However, first, Castells seems to conflate normative views about global networks of resistance beyond and against

established political actors with a necessary causal relation about why social movements tend to fade over time. Second, by adopting a post-structuralist outlook that prioritises radical democracy over the relations of production, how the latter may shape the former remains largely unexplored.

Contrary to Castells' anti-party theory, other authors claimed that digital platforms may re-direct democracy by rendering its institutions more participatory primarily through renewing parties, as digital tools curtail the frictions impeding full democratic processes and replace the intermediary functions commonly played by parties' bureaucracies (Vaccari, 2017; Margetts, 2019; Deseriis, 2020). These authors emphasise how brand new types of parties emerged in the 'digital age', conceptualised as 'cyber' (Margetts, 2006), 'anti-establishment cyber-' (Hartleb, 2013), 'network-' (Klimowicz, 2018) or 'digital' parties (Gerbaudo, 2018). Although sharing common views of platforms as democratic boosters, these scholars diverge about the impacts of digital parties on democracy, reaching more optimistic or pessimistic views.

Among the techno-optimists, Andrew Chadwik and Jenifer Stromer-Galley (2016) argued that digital activism enforced, especially for left-wing politics, a transformation of parties through practices of organizational experimentation, shaping a new mentality for political organisations to become 'parties-as movements' (ibid, p. 287). Through this new mindset, the Left could resolve some of the gridlocks between representation and a more positive democratic engagement and between their centralistic bureaucratised structures and more efficient dissemination of power to their activists. Further, digitalisation leads parties to adopt new styles of engagement and more flexible forms of organisation with a sort of 'contagion' effect that spreads from movement parties to established mainstream parties, taking, overall,

positive consequences for party renewal (Lachapelle and Maarek, 2015). Further, digital platforms inherently provide the sources to unlock dilemmas between horizontal participation and vertical leadership, as argued, for instance, by Cristian Vaccari when highlighting that digitalised parties would result in 'hybrid organizations that merge and mediate between top-down and bottom-up modes of operation and between formal and informal modes of engagement' (Vaccari, 2014, p. 16). This 'techno-optimism' is problematic both on empirical and theoretical grounds. Empirically, these theorists seem to reflect the first moment of techno-enthusiasm based on observations of the first 'liberatory' wave of politics on social media, symbolised by Obama's grassroots campaign in 2008 and influenced by the emergence of radical social movements in the early 2010s. Consequently, by inferring from these exceptional events that digital platforms are democratisers, per se, does not allow assessing why processes of digitalisation of parties may result in opposite directions, such as empowering grass-roots socialist campaigns (i.e. Sanders in the US) or facilitating powerful nativist insurgence through social media's echo-chambers (Margetts, 2019).

Similar problems affect techno-pessimistic accounts of platform party politics. Paolo Gerbaudo's theorisation of the 'digital party' (2018) is a seminal contribution to this perspective. Gerbaudo categorises the historical evolution of parties according to the main communication systems of different periods. The mass party reflected the epoch of newspapers (Revelli, 2013). The TV party was mostly associated with the electoral-personalistic party (Panebianco, 1988). The digital party reflects the advent of social media and the narratives attached to their emergence (see also Nunes, 2021). Indeed, 'digital party as a new party type is not simply the embracing of digital technology but the purpose of democratisation which digital technology is called to fulfil' (Gerbaudo, 2018, p. 14).

Accordingly, digital parties share two commonalities. First, they are identified by a common ideology, 'participationism', conceptualised as 'a radical democratic creed which considers participation rather than representation the ultimate source of political legitimacy. Participation is thereby framed as the normative criteria of good politics´ (2018, p. 81). Second, digital parties' organisation tends to be polarised between 'hyper-leaders', commonly charismatic figures attracting wide audiences on social media and a 'super-base' of activists engaged through online activities. These two poles annihilate the functions of intermediate cadres. Gerbaudo's classification corresponds to parties and movements, including Podemos, La France Insoumise, the 5 Star Movement, the British Momentum, and the Pirate Parties. Parties that range, ideologically, from the RL to techno-libertarianism. Therefore, Gerbaudo does not consider whether the attachment of a 'digital party' organisation to contrasting ideologies may result in different practices regarding parties' impact on democracy. This flaw is relevant as it also becomes the theoretical perspective through which the actual performances of digital parties as democratisers of party systems are assessed. Indeed, Gerbaudo and other authors measured intra-party democracy against the background of participationism, pessimistically theorising that digital parties 'betrayed' their promises. As a result, by imposing 'reactive' styles of intra-party democracy, digital parties' activists would be mostly reduced to followers of the leader (Gerbaudo, 2019a; see also Caruso, 2017; De Blasio and Sorice, 2018). Even though these trends are supported by empirical evidence as the shares of approvals of leaders' proposals through votes on online platforms, this perspective operates a 'digital reductionism' that seeks to analyse parties' debates against an 'idealised' view of digital democracy. Further, evidence suggests that increasing digitalisation is reducing the gulf between 'digitally native' and 'established parties' (Karpf, 2010) regarding which

organisational functions are transferred online and which areas of intra-party democracy are more problematic (García Lupato and Meloni, 2021).

As with the critical literature on 'platform capitalism', theorists of 'platform politics' provide key analytical tools to further research on the Left in two key dimensions. The first regards democracy as the ensemble of relations between states' and civil societies' agents. Platforms, indeed, may enable societies at large with new possibilities to connect into networks otherwise dispersed instances of resistance and transformation. Second, regarding parties, on the one hand, the literature suggests that by substituting hierarchical 'human' intermediation between civil society and state institutions with digital platforms, parties may become more democratic and more responsive to societal demands. On the other hand, however, these authors highlight that digitalisation is never a neutral process but instead a politicised one, whose directionality should be assessed by understanding the structurally ruling forces and how they manipulate practices and discourses about digital platforms.

1.4 Summary and next steps

Throughout this Chapter, I have analysed two bodies of recent literature that tend to be indifferent to each other. Theorists addressing ELPs' crises and changes in the age of austerity do not consider how these parties reacted to the digital revolution. Meanwhile, critical approaches envisioning the digital revolution as opening new transformational possibilities for the Left do not consider whether and how ELPs may hamper or enable the processes of radical transformation these authors theorise about. As a result, theories of ELPs' crises and change may suffer from a lack of more up-to-date analytical tools to interpret parties' recent

evolutions. Conversely, critical theorists of platform societies provide normative accounts without proper empirical observations of which confrontations are emerging within party politics. This twofold gap, therefore, defines the rationale for developing, in the next Chapter, a theoretical framework to analyse ELPs evolutions in platform societies.

Although from different perspectives and focusing on different units of analyses, ranging from studies on parties and social movements to international political economy and theories of the state, all the literature under analysis is affected by a stark divide between accounts focusing on 'structures' and others prioritising 'agency'. This divide was more evident with literature on ELPs. Structuralist analyses, though providing crucial insights into the mechanisms through which parties' élites contain and discipline transformative goals by subaltern classes (i.e. Bailey, 2009a), seem incapable of avoiding some degree of economic determinism whereby parties necessarily follow structural capitalist rulership. On the other hand, the analyses focused on parties' agency, by overlooking how structural constraints shape political parties (i.e. Mouffe, 2018) end up in an 'absolute relativism' (i.e. Ricolfi, 2017). Therefore, both these approaches seem to underestimate the interplays within which political parties are both constrained by structures and capable of intervening in the reproduction/transformation of social relations. Further, ELPs literature appears stuck in a conundrum to explain a conundrum. Indeed, even though there is enough evidence to support statements about ELPs as 'stuck', in recent decades, between unsolvable dilemmas and trade-offs among Keynesian or neoliberal economic stances and libertarian or conservative cultural ones, these polarities are also the main analytical tools to study ELPs. As a result, attempts to grasp new trends in ELPs evolutions may be affected by an 'empiricism' that requires new theoretical frameworks.

Starting from the same divide, the opposite flaw affects critical literature on platform societies. Also in this case, the structure-agency divide can be identified as a barrier to advance knowledge. Indeed, structuralist approaches, while crucial for identifying key tendencies from platform capitalism affecting capital-labour relations, tend to end up in techno-deterministic views about a necessary transition from platform capitalism to post-capitalism (i.e. Mason, 2016), without proper consideration of the political subjectivities that may embody this transition. Conversely, authors theorising platform society as a rupture in itself, by focusing on the agency of networks (i.e. Castells, 2015) conceive these 'digital agents' as floating in the void. All in all, this body of literature provides key theoretical insights to make sense of how left-wing politics may change during the digital revolution, but there is a gap in empirically analysing such changes.

These gaps set the rationale for developing a Gramscian theoretical framework to analyse ELPs evolutions vis-à-vis the digital revolution, which will be the core of the next Chapter. I will argue that a Gramscian framework addresses the research gaps identified up to this point for three reasons. First, theoretically, Gramsci provided key insights to analyse political phenomena within a 'dialectical unity' between structure and agency. Second, by theorising ideologies as a twofold concept, as agents' systems of beliefs and material organising principles for their (counter-)hegemonic strategic projects, a Gramscian approach can overcome the structure-agency divide. Third, by conceiving politics as the realm of the struggles for hegemony, as the mix of consent and coercion through which domination in the economic base is secured or radical transformation is achieved, a Gramscian approach allows conceiving agents as strategic actors who select their goals and forms of organisations in relation to their aimed contrasting functions to reproduce or transform structures.

CHAPTER 2. A GRAMSCIAN FRAMEWORK TO ANALYSE LEFT PARTY POLITICS IN PLATFORM SOCIETIES

2.1 Introduction

Through the review of recent literature in Chapter 1, I identified two related blind spots and consequent research gaps. First, literature on ELPs lacks systematic theoretical frameworks to analyse how the digital revolution may impact on parties' evolutions and how parties, in turn, aim to act back on platform societies. Second, conversely, normative theories foreseeing transformative possibilities within platform societies as 'new visions' for the Left do not elaborate further on their views through empirical analyses about the political subjectivities that may hamper or embody those visions.

This Chapter develops a Gramscian theoretical framework to study ELPs vis-à-vis the digital revolution and a research design for the empirical stages of the thesis. More specifically, I will explain why a Gramscian approach is particularly well suited to unveil the interplays between structural constraints and potential transformative praxes by political agents.

The Chapter will argue that a Gramscian approach allows for research of these interplays, first, because it conceptualises the economic base and the political superstructure as woven in a dialectical unity, whereby the former shapes -not determines- the latter through the interactions with political agents. Hegemony is the key concept to understanding how political power secures structural domination of ruling classes in the economic base. The 'real' hegemony condensates political power as the result of both the emergent properties of the economic base and the interactions among agents of the 'integral state', namely states'

apparatuses and organisations of the civil society. Parties are peculiar agents as they perform their functions at the junctures between the state and civil society. Therefore, they are key actors contributing to the reproduction or disruption of real hegemony. Ideologies are crucial to understanding how parties perform this function. Indeed, in a Gramscian sense, ideologies are twofold constructs. First, they are systems of beliefs shaped by parties' understandings of 'real' hegemony. Second, they are material organising principles of parties' strategic projects to navigate or transform real hegemony. Therefore, the Gramscian framework and the research design will develop a project to study how ELPs reflected on the structural dialectics of platform capitalism and the real hegemony of platform societies and how they changed their ideologies to navigate or transform such real hegemony.

The Chapter is structured as follows: the next section will explain why Gramsci's intellectual production is inspiring to develop further a critical approach to political science. By drawing upon Gramscian concepts, section three will develop the theoretical framework to analyse how ELPs tapped into the confrontations between hegemony and counter-hegemony in platform societies. Section four will explain how the framework inspired a comparative research design to develop the empirical analysis across the remainder of the thesis.

2.2 Antonio Gramsci's core concepts for a critical political science

In the Introduction (.3.2), I advocated the need to reappropriate Gramsci in political science. Indeed, Gramsci was, within Marxism, a key figure in deepening a transformative epistemology concerning the reproduction of political power through material and cultural means. This section will specify key Gramscian concepts that will then inform the thesis'

theoretical framework to investigate ELPs attitudes vis-à-vis the digital revolution. Indeed, Gramscian research seeks to assess how social groups relate to each other at the junctures of historically determined structural constraints (Morton, 2003; Simon, 2015) and conservative or transformative agential (im-)possibilities (Filippini, 2017, p. 10).

The main source to understand Gramsci's thinking, the Prison Notebooks (2014 -1929/1936), is an inevitably fragmented and unfinished oeuvre conditioned by the restrictions and censorship of fascist incarceration (McNally and Schwarzmantel, 2009). Nonetheless, the Notebooks' evolutionary style makes it possible to seize some intellectual patterns representing the core of Gramscian analyses. The following subsections will trace the Gramscian critical approach to political science by summarising key points about the historically determined dialectical unity of base and superstructure, the interplays between ideology and political hegemony and the reflections on the 'subjects' of politics. Finally, the core of Gramscian political science will be summarised against post-structuralist and determinist competing critical approaches.

2.2.1 The dialectical unity of base and superstructure

As Ralph Miliband correctly put it, Gramsci has been, above all, 'the analyst of the complex and highly mediated reciprocities between structure and superstructure' (1972, p. 106). To explain these interplays, first, I will focus on Gramsci's proposed research agendas on how to investigate the dialectics between economic base and superstructure (Thomas, 2009). Second, I will highlight how Gramscian understandings of human nature as 'the ensemble of historically determined social relations' (Gramsci, 2014, Q13 §20) resulted in his conceptualisation of the dialectical unity between base and superstructure.

Gramsci consistently asserted throughout the Notebooks the features required by critical research agendas aimed at understanding (and transforming) the dialectical relations within and between the economic base and cultural/political superstructure. As specified by Gramsci, to make sense of these relations, critical political science should investigate:

> '1) the objective formation of the subaltern groups by the developments and transformations occurring in the sphere of economic production; their quantitative diffusion and their origins in pre-existing classes; 2) their passive or active affiliation to the dominant political formations; that is, their efforts to influence the programs of these formations (…); 3) the birth of new parties of the dominant groups to maintain control of the subaltern classes; 4) the formations of the subaltern groups themselves, formations of a limited and partial character; 5) the political formations that assert the autonomy of the subaltern groups, but within the old framework; 6) the political formations that assert their integral autonomy, …etc'. (Gramsci, 2014, Q25 §5)

Gramsci constantly refers to the 'dialectical unity' and indissolubility of the relations between base and superstructure. Therefore, it is neither the economic base that determines superstructures nor the other way around. Consistently with Marxism, Gramsci understands the dialectics between ruling and subaltern classes as a primary perspective through which to examine the materiality of historical developments. However, these structural dialectics do not determine, per se, political and cultural relations but instead shape them. Conversely, the relatively autonomous 'intellectuals' articulating the superstructures are historically necessary to reproduce or transform the content of the productive base. Gramsci, in a nutshell, conceives of the 'dialectical' unity between economic base and superstructures by defining the former as the content and the latter as the shape of social relations (2014, Q7 §21). However, Gramsci specified that this distinction is purely analytical, as 'the material forces would be historically unconceivable without any shape and ideologies would result in pure individual speculations without material forces' (2014, Q7 §21). Elsewhere (Q4 §15), he used the metaphor of the skeleton and skin to clarify this relationship.

For the base-superstructure unity to be 'dialectical', both the contents and the shapes of social relations must be characterised by different levels of coherence/contradiction within and between them, resulting in disparate historical conditions. Two 'extremes' can be identified over this relational 'spectrum'. On the one hand, the emergence of a 'historical bloc', whereby 'the complex, contradictory and discordant ensemble of the superstructures is the reflection of the ensemble of the social relations of production' (Gramsci, 2014, Q8 §162). Therefore 'historical blocs' represent the situation of maximum coherence between the economic classes and their political organizations (Williams, 2019). On the other hand, the 'organic crises' are those long-term situations whereby irreconcilable structural contradictions between the base and the superstructure have become mature (Gramsci, 2014; Q3 §40). These extremes and the spaces in between are the battlefields for political projects aimed at the conservation or transformation of economic structures, and this is the ground upon which Gramsci qualifies his conceptualisation of how ideologies work.

2.2.2 Ideology and hegemony

Gramsci, with Lenin, played a crucial role in extending the Marxist conceptualization of ideologies from the terrain of the inversion of reality performed by 'super-structural' actors seeking to secure capitalist rulership to a multifaceted/strategic and relational concept (Larrain, 1991). More specifically, according to Gramsci, ideologies are a twofold construct. First, ideologies are the shared systems of beliefs of social groups. A concept developed further by Stuart Hall when defining ideologies as 'those concepts, images and premises which provide the frameworks through which we represent, interpret, understand and "make sense" of some aspect of social existence' (1981, p. 31). Second, ideologies can be understood and classified depending on the extent to which they represent (if at all) the material organising

principles of the ruling or subaltern classes. This twofold characterisation of the concept is evident in Gramsci's distinction between two types of ideologies, those

> 'that are historically organic, necessary to some structure, and the arbitrary ones, rationalistic, "desired". As historically organic, ideologies have a "psychological" validity, they organise human masses (…). In as much as "arbitrary", they only determine "individual movements", or polemics' (Gramsci, 2014, Q7 §19)

Therefore, the more organic to classes, the more ideologies play an educative role for the popular masses by reproducing or elevating the 'common sense' through which the people make sense of the world (Gencarella, 2010). This function can be alternatively played to energise transformational agency or to domesticate subaltern classes to conserve and reproduce current structures of rulership (Filippini, 2017, p. 17). These operations are primarily performed by 'intellectual agents' and have been conceptualised by Gramsci in relation to the overarching conceptual framework of 'hegemony'.

Peter D. Thomas described Gramscian theorisation of hegemony as 'a particular practice of consolidating social forces and condensing them into political power on a mass basis – the mode of production of the modern "political"' (2009, p. 194). Hence, Gramsci extended what Lenin described as a strategy for the working class to win the consent of a majority of the peasantry (1989 -1902-) towards a Janus-faced ensemble of ideological-political interventions alternatively constituting: (1) the 'consensual', active or passive, integration of subaltern social groups into existing rulership; (2) the 'path' of subaltern classes to disrupt economic and political domination (Jessop, 2005b; Cospito, 2018). Hence, Gramsci conceives hegemony as the 'general social requirement for the construction of rulership' (Joseph, 2002, p. 28) as a necessary attribute of the 'integral state', which is famously summarised in the formula:

> (General notion of the) 'State= political society + civil society, in other words, hegemony armoured with coercion' (Gramsci, 2014, Q6 §88)

Understanding the components of the 'integral state' is crucial to define an analytical distinction in Gramscian theory of hegemony, the one between 'real' hegemony and hegemonic/counter-hegemonic strategic projects. Indeed, real hegemony corresponds to the (unstable) equilibrium points between different social subjects within which hegemonic groups articulate their own interests as the ones of other groups (Joseph, 2002, p. 32; Williams, 2019, p. 97). Real hegemony secures the reproduction of structural rulership within the 'integral state' by the interactions between agents of civil and political societies. By civil society, Gramsci refers to the organisations of intellectuals (media, business' associations and unions, schools and universities, political parties etc.) (Buci-Glucksmann, 1975), constituting, in the more advanced societies, 'a succession of sturdy fortresses and emplacements' (Gramsci, 2014, Q7 §16). By 'political society', Gramsci means the ensemble of states' apparatuses that provide 'the institutional framework for the implementation of hegemonic projects' (Joseph, 2002, p. 32). However, any real hegemony is an unstable and dynamic process that results from the dialectical relations between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic strategic projects carried on by agents of both the political and civil society. The (counter-) hegemonic strategic projects, therefore, are a constitutive part of the Gramscian conceptualisation of ideologies encompassing the ensemble of intellectual and material practices through which agents of civil society aim at reproducing or disrupting real hegemony (Joseph, 2002; Jessop, 2005b).

Accordingly, to understand how politics may secure or disrupt capitalist rulership, a Gramscian approach seeks to uncover the interactions between 'real' hegemony and (counter-)

hegemonic strategic projects through the intellectual and material practices of agents of the integral state. Two main types of practices can be identified. The first is referred to the concessions made by the rulers to subaltern groups. In the words of Gramsci, indeed:

> 'The fact of hegemony presupposes that account is taken of the interests and tendencies of the groups over which hegemony is to be exercised and that a compromise is reached – in other words, that the ruling groups make sacrifices of an economic-corporative kind. But there is also no doubt that such sacrifices and such compromises cannot touch the essential: for though hegemony is ethical-political, it must also be economic; it must necessarily be based on the decisive function exercised by the ruling groups in the decisive nucleus of economic activity' (2014, Q13 §18).

The second regards the broad range of practices by hegemonic groups to prevent revolutionary uptakes by the subaltern classes. These operations involve, among others: (1) the disciplining and domestication of potentially counter-hegemonic forces (Thomas, 2018); (2) the dissemination of world-views by the rulers to 'naturalise' domination, representing the 'ideological structure of a ruling class: that is the material organization meant to preserve, defend, and develop the theoretical or ideological "front"' (Gramsci, 2014, Q3 §49); (3) the de-politicisation of policies-areas that could represent a field of organisation for antagonistic forces (Hall, 2017).

The definition of the disparate practices through which hegemony is secured is crucial for Gramsci to affirm the logical steps to be taken to define counter-hegemonic strategic projects. Above all, indeed, hegemony serves the goal of securing current rulership by disaggregating and disorganizing the 'subalterns' (Buttigieg, 2018). Therefore, understanding the contradictions within the 'hegemonic blocs' and the political organization of the subaltern classes are crucial steps to progressively winning control of the 'fortresses and emplacements' of modern civil societies (Green, 2002, p. 62).

In analysing his contemporary context, and in line with Marx and Engels (2010 -1848-), Gramsci identified the 'most innovative class', the organized industrialised working class, as the crucial agent for counter-hegemonic projects to win over capitalism (Buttigieg, 2018, p. 13). This sets the rationale for Gramsci's particular interest in the intertwined developments of 'Fordism' in the realm of production and 'Americanisation' of cultures and lifestyles. These notes are particularly relevant to understanding how Gramsci conceived the societal impacts of technologies. Gramsci was firmly critical of the idea that technological changes in the sphere of production determine, *per se*, major historical changes (Q13 §48). However, as already stated by Marx in 'A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy' (1904 -1859-), and in the 'Grundrisse' (1971 -1858-), technologies were recognized as having wide impacts on the modes of production and consequently on social relations. For instance, Gramsci understood 'Fordism' as a mode of production crucial to split the working class between an 'aristocracy' of high-waged workers and proletarian low-skilled ones (2014, Q22 §11). Meanwhile, the 'Americanisation' of culture praised the working spirit of Northern American capitalists demonising the 'parasitic' attitudes of the European rulers, and by doing so it reinforced the emergence of Fordism as a 'real' hegemony (2014, Q22 §24).

Having defined the twofold attributes of ideologies and hegemony in Gramscian philosophy, I can now move on to consider how Gramsci conceptualised the functions of political parties as key strategical and relational agents operating at the intersections between the economic base and the political superstructure.

2.2.3 The political party as the 'Modern Prince'

When it comes to identifying the primary actors that organise economic classes into politico-ideological agents seeking to navigate or transform real hegemony, and theorise who should bring about revolutionary changes, Gramsci consistently refers to the parties as key players:

> 'For each economic group, the political party is the mechanism performing in civil society what the State does on a wider and more systematic basis, in political society. Indeed, it provides the connection between the organic intellectuals of the ruling class and the traditional intellectuals. The party plays this role because of its fundamental function, that of elevating its members, elements of a social group born and developed as 'economic', up to politically qualified intellectuals, leaders, and organisers of all the activities and functions pertinent to the organic development of an integral society, civil and political'.
> (Gramsci, 2014, Q12 §1)

Therefore, parties are conceived as 'the organising principle of the organisers' (Thomas, 2017, p. 437), providing the political shape to the economic classes. This relational function of the parties is, as seen for ideologies and hegemony, dual in its nature, for them being '"made to operate" both as organic mechanisms rebalancing the power system and as an independent expression of the subalterns' potentially revolutionary demands' (Filippini, 2017, p. 47).

When analysing the historical conjuncture of industrial societies, Gramsci argued that the transformation of social relations could not occur in the absence of a 'new type of political party', that he famously referred to as the 'Modern Prince', that

> 'cannot be a real person, a concrete individual. It can be only an organism, a social element in which a collective will becomes concrete (…). This organism is already given by historical development; it is the political party, the modern form in which the partial, collective wills that tend to become universal and total are gathered together' (Gramsci, 2014, Q8 §21)

As convincingly argued by Peter D. Thomas (2017), the scope of Gramsci's interest in Machiavelli's Prince was broader than simply adopting the 'Modern Prince' as a codeword for the Communist Party to escape fascist censorship. It was based on a 'critical democratic'

reading of Machiavelli, according to which the Florentine theorised both the obstacles to the irruption of popular masses into political power and a positive political manifesto based on a 'realist' reading of the structures within which change could occur. Gramsci pointed out the 'educative' function of the 'myth-Prince', as 'grounded in reality', *contra* Sorel's conception of myths (1999), as the revolutionary uptakes based on the idealistic abstraction of a violent upheaval by the working class, and *contra* Michel's 'iron law of oligarchy' (1968), according to which, the complexification of political functions couldn't escape the bureaucratization and 'elitism' of masses' organizations. The revolutionary party as a Modern Prince, therefore, should be understood as the dialectical unity between the real struggle within class structures and the 'imaginary' devoted to the elevation of subaltern masses. Three main features can be identified to specify the concept/project of the Modern Prince:

1. It represents a combination of 'spontaneous mass movements' by the subalterns, and organic activities of leadership (Gramsci, 2014, Q3 §48). This aspect should be understood in combination with Gramsci's idea that, for a party to exist, three 'fundamental elements (…) have to converge: (1) a mass element (…); (2) the principal cohesive element, which centralises nationally and renders effective and powerful a complex of forces which left to themselves would count for little or nothing (…); (3) an intermediate element, which links the first element with the second' (2014, Q14 §70). Hence, a party can be revolutionary only in as much as the cohesive element is in a relation of democratic centralisation with the grassroots, that is the situation occurring when there is a continuous adaptation of the organisation to the most innovative social movements, and when the leadership is open to rank-and-file members whose

escalation is facilitated by the overall educative functions played by the intermediate cadres (Gramsci, 2014, Q13 §36).

2. It acts as a pedagogical mediator (Williams, 2019), as it elevates popular 'common sense' through successive gains in the field of hegemonic ideological systems of beliefs, 'it is the organiser of a moral and intellectual reform, that means to create the ground for a development of a national-popular collective will aiming at the realisation of a superior and totalising modern civilisation' (Gramsci, 2014, Q13 §1).

3. It represents the 'non-state' state of the subaltern classes (La Porta, 2019), that is to say, it should represent a laboratory of experimentation to pre-figure the revolutionary state (Thomas, 2017). This feature implies that the Modern Prince should not replicate the division of labour that it aims at overcoming in society at large.

Given the relevance accorded by Gramsci to the conservative/transformative potential functions of political parties, it is surprising that they are an under-investigated topic by Gramscian authors (Green, 2022). The consequence of this void is that Gramsci's key insights are not well developed in political science. Therefore, it is relevant to develop an up-to-date framework inspired by Gramscian core concepts to analyse whether parties still play, at least potentially, both conservative and transformative functions, or instead, the conceptualisation of the 'Modern Prince' has lost its analytical validity (see Miles and Croucher, 2013; Roberts, 2018). Before formulating such an updated framework, I will briefly explain why a Gramscian approach is considered best suited to understand contemporary politics in comparison to contrasting critical approaches.

2.2.4 A Gramscian approach contra structuralism and discourse theories

If anything can be identified as the core of Gramscian political theory, is that two 'moments' must be considered in the relations between structures and agency. First, understanding politics requires the critical assessment of historical 'real' relations of forces. Second, the critique of 'real' hegemony is the premise to organise transformative praxes (see Q13 §17). This is why Gramsci famously incited 'organic' intellectuals to practice the 'pessimism of the intellect and optimism of the will' (2014, Q9 § 60).

This 'dual' function of a critical political science was criticised by structuralists and discourse theorists. First, Louis Althusser and Étienne Balibar (1970) contended that, by overemphasising that it is history and not the economic base that 'determines' social relations, Gramsci relativized the 'material' ever-present nature of exploitative relations of production, ending up in denying capitalism as the determinant in the last instance of social relations. Second, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (2001), contested Gramsci's allegedly 'residual' economic determinism, as they argued that politics is an autonomous space of agonism between 'constitutive' discourses without any privileged 'real' foundation in the sphere of material (re)production. Therefore, politics must be understood as an un-saturable ongoing struggle for hegemony articulated through discourses.

On the one hand, structuralists such as Althusser (2008) or the early Nikos Poulantzas (1973) recognise that social reality is made up of relatively autonomous parts (i.e. classes' fractions and strata, ideological state apparatuses etc.). However, through asserting a mono-directional determination by the economic structures on politics, they tend to deny the complexity of interactions between these parts. On the other hand, by reducing Gramscian hegemony to 'a

generic theory of the political construction of the social' (Williams, 2019, p. 124), Laclau and Mouffe render discourses synonymous with social relations. These authors have merits in developing a framework to analyse the 'micro-physics' of how semiosis works to constitute the chain of equivalences between ideas so that political concepts that left alone would be 'empty signifiers', acquire political connotation and work to 'interpellate' individuals into specific political projects (Laclau, 2014; Mouffe, 2005). However, when the articulation of discourses is collapsed into political hegemony, the latter is turned into a game theory on 'who wins over language' that disconnects the manufacturing of consent from any structural anchorage (Joseph, 2002; see also Geras, 1988). Further, the critique of economic reductionism ends up in an opposite 'cultural reductionism'. Consequently, as noted by Geoff Boucher (2008) in Laclau and Mouffe's theory either the economic base is one of the fields structured by discourses, therefore determined by culture, or it is an independent 'object' upon which political discourses cannot operate any substantial transformation. If so, agonisms between discourses for the sake of political hegemony would be incapable of re-directing the relations of production to radical transformative ends.

I briefly recalled these competing approaches to Gramscianism, because structuralism and discourse theories ongoingly inspire recent research on ELPs (Ch. 1.2). By developing an updated Gramscian approach, in the next section, I aim to provide a framework that can capture both, how the most advanced structural configuration of capitalism shapes politics, and how political agents understand this configuration to define their strategic projects for hegemony or counter-hegemony.

2.3 Developing a Gramscian framework to analyse party politics in platform societies

So far, I have highlighted three core attributes of Gramsci's critical political science,

1. Social relations are historically shaped by the dialectical interplays between the economic base and the political/cultural superstructure.

2. Politics is the ensemble of relations that organise economic classes and social groups in the 'integral state' (states' apparatuses and organisations of the civil society), either to secure the consent contributing to reproducing structural rulership (real hegemony) or to disrupt and transform domination.

3. Parties are key players to navigate or transform real hegemony because,

    a. they operate at the crossroads of states' apparatuses and civil society,

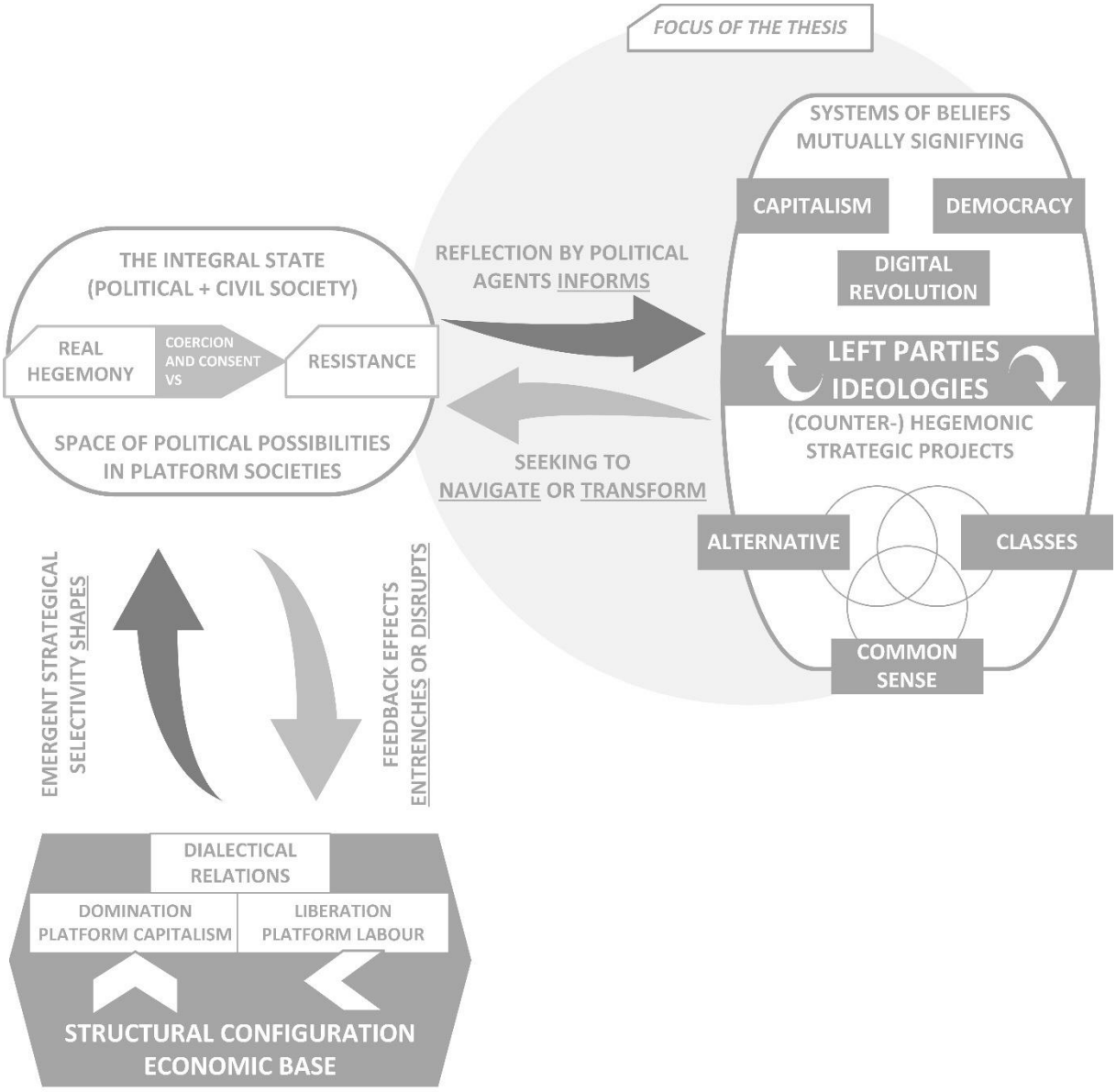
    b. they contribute to shaping real hegemony through ideologies, conceived as their systems of beliefs and their strategic projects to reproduce hegemony or advance counter-hegemony,

    c. ideologies infringe upon real hegemony to the extent to which they 'organically' tie parties' to social classes. Namely, in as much as organic, parties can elevate the common sense of the subalterns into transformative projects through playing key pedagogical functions.

In this section, these core concepts would be the ground upon which to develop a Gramscian theoretical framework to analyse how parties' ideologies changed to reproduce or challenge 'real' hegemony in platform societies. The key relations through which the framework is developed are plotted in a flowchart in Figure 2.1. The following subsections are organised to

focus on the 'blocs' of the flowchart, representing, respectively, the economic base, the 'integral state' (see 2.2.2) and political agents (for this thesis, European Left Parties). First, I will summarise what we know from literature about the dialectics of platform capitalism and, second, how they shape the real hegemony of platform societies. Third, I will focus on what is unknown up to date: how ELPs reflected on the real hegemony of platform societies and how their ideologies changed to navigate or transform hegemony.

Figure 2.1 Flowchart. Gramscian theoretical framework



2.3.1 The dialectical relations of platform capitalism

The first moment of a Gramscian analysis requires taking into consideration the real dialectics between classes in the most advanced stage of the relations of production. As explained in the Introduction (.2.1), following Nick Srnicek (2016), I conceive platform capitalism as the structural configuration (Sum and Jessop, 2014) that is currently governing the directionality of the relations of production within capitalism after the GFC. Despite being governed through 'platforms', this structural configuration is still capitalist, a mode of production based on the exploitation of value by the owners (and managers) of the means of production through the extraction of surplus value from labourers and the ever-expanding commodification of natural and social resources (Przeworski, 2020; Morozov, 2022). However, 'platform' capitalism brings about its specific means through which it reproduces capitalist rulership, and by doing so, it structures peculiar dialectical relations between the ruling and the subaltern classes, resulting in specific confrontations between domination and liberation (Scholz, 2013; Allmer *et al.*, 2015).

Regarding the ways through which the domination by the ruling classes of platform capitalism (broadly speaking, an alliance of big tech and financial capitalists) is put in place, I identified through critical literature two main processes. First, platform capitalism is characterised by the extraction and control of commodified data as the necessary fuel to expand private companies' profitability (Fuchs, 2019b; 2021). Geert Lovink defined this practice as the 'commodification of everything' (2019, p. 5), to signal that even the most intimate emotions of individuals are turned into digital commodities and exchanged for the sake of private profits. Second, and relatedly, as discussed in the Introduction (.2.1), platform capitalists extract surplus value from the free labour of 'prosumers' (Jordan, 2020, p. 123), namely the

‘consumers’ of social media outlets, search engines, apps and websites, that ‘produce’ data for platform capitalists. Further, and crucially, platform capitalism elevates to a whole new level the casualisation of labour in two key directions (Fuchs, 2014). First, the business models of platforms deny any right to the labourers by imposing the status of false self-entrepreneurs to platform workers (Bröckling, 2015), whose fictitious autonomy in managing their productive time is instead strictly monitored through the algorithms governing the platforms (Zuboff, 2019). Second, by selectively promoting automation not as a source of liberation from the drudgeries of labour, but instead as a way to eject low-skilled workers from production to be then reabsorbed in labour markets as false self-employees (Dyer-Witheford, 2015).

However, platform capitalist exploitation and domination determine the organisation of new forms of resistance within the economic base in two main directions. First, with new forms of unionisation of platform labourers, as with the resistance of platform riders and drivers across the Global North, often beyond established and institutionalised unions (Moore, 2019; Cant, 2020). Second, through the initiatives of platform workers and creative producers to establish prefigurative and alternative models of economic organisation, namely the economy of the digital commons, mostly resulting in the form of platform cooperatives that aim at producing social shared value through forms of open and non-proprietary management of data (Scholz and Schneider, 2017).

Having deduced from the literature the key attributes of the dialectical relations between platform capitalists and platform labourers, I can now move on to identify how this structural configuration came to shape the real hegemony governing the integral state of platform societies.

2.3.2 How platform capitalism shapes the real hegemony of platform societies

As explained above, real hegemony is the historically contingent condensation of material and intellectual practices by agents of the states' apparatuses (in Gramscian terms, the political society) and the organisations of the civil society to secure the reproduction of domination in the economic base through a mix of coercion upon- and consent by fractions of the subalterns. To make sense of how the structural configuration of the economic base 'platform capitalism' shapes the real hegemony of the 'integral state' governing platform societies (van Dijck *et al.*, 2018), my theoretical framework expands upon recent theories from Gramscian authors, more specifically Bob Jessop (2005a) 'Strategic Relational Approach' (SRA), and Alex Williams (2019) 'Hegemony and Social Complexity' (HSC).

First, any historical stage of real hegemony is governed through the emergence of specific properties from the economic base (Williams, 2019, p. 139), through which capitalists strategically select a limited number of 'parameters of control' to shape the directionality of the whole political system (Jessop, 2005a, p. 49). As a result of this strategic selectivity, real hegemony comes to define the 'game-field' of politics as a limited 'space of political possibilities'. This means that real hegemony restricts the number of existing possibilities through relatively stable points of attraction. For example, in the Fordist settlement, real hegemony corresponded to the control over a Keynesian political economy and the supply of universal public services mastered by welfare state institutions. Instead, in post-Fordist settlements, hegemonic agents controlled the adoption of neoliberal deflationary policies and the commodification of 'reparative' welfare provisions (Williams, 2019, pp. 146-149). Even though any stage of real hegemony controls the directionality of political power to secure the reproduction of domination in the economic base, it is overdetermined by the interactions of

multiple social groups that may be bearers of conflicting interests. This is why real hegemony is considered an unstable equilibrium that can only be assessed in its historical conjuncture (Jessop, 2005b). Crucially, real hegemony is unstable as it must confront the resistance of subaltern groups mobilised through their organisations within the civil society (Jessop, 2010).

Second, the dialectics between real hegemony and resistance in the integral state can be understood as articulated in two spaces cross-cut by the leadership over the main technologies (Terranova, 2004; Williams, 2019), and more specifically:

1. Economy, as the domain within which specific groups lead the strategies of accumulation. For example, since the emergence of neoliberal consensus (Harvey, 2017), financial agents came to impose the retreat of the state from certain policies' areas that may give space to political contestation thanks to new institutional settings as the financial rules governing the EU (see Bruff, 2014).

2. Politics, as the sum of the activities of the integral state, to be conceived with Jessop as the relational ensembles of 'power centres for different fractions or fractional alliances in the [ruling] power bloc and/or as centres of resistance for different elements among the popular masses' (2008, p. 123).

Third, the 'strategic selectivity' of any structural configuration results in the real hegemony governing the organisation of economy and politics through three 'areas of intervention' by social agents (Worth, 2015, p. 150), and more specifically,

1. Disaggregating alternatives, for instance through practices naturalising domination, as with demonising the adoption of transformative policies agendas as detrimental to economic wealth.

2. Rendering the organisations of political and civil societies organic to the interests of the ruling classes, for instance through the intellectual hegemony of certain 'Business Schools' at protecting certain political-economic agendas as the only viable ones (Mudge, 2018).

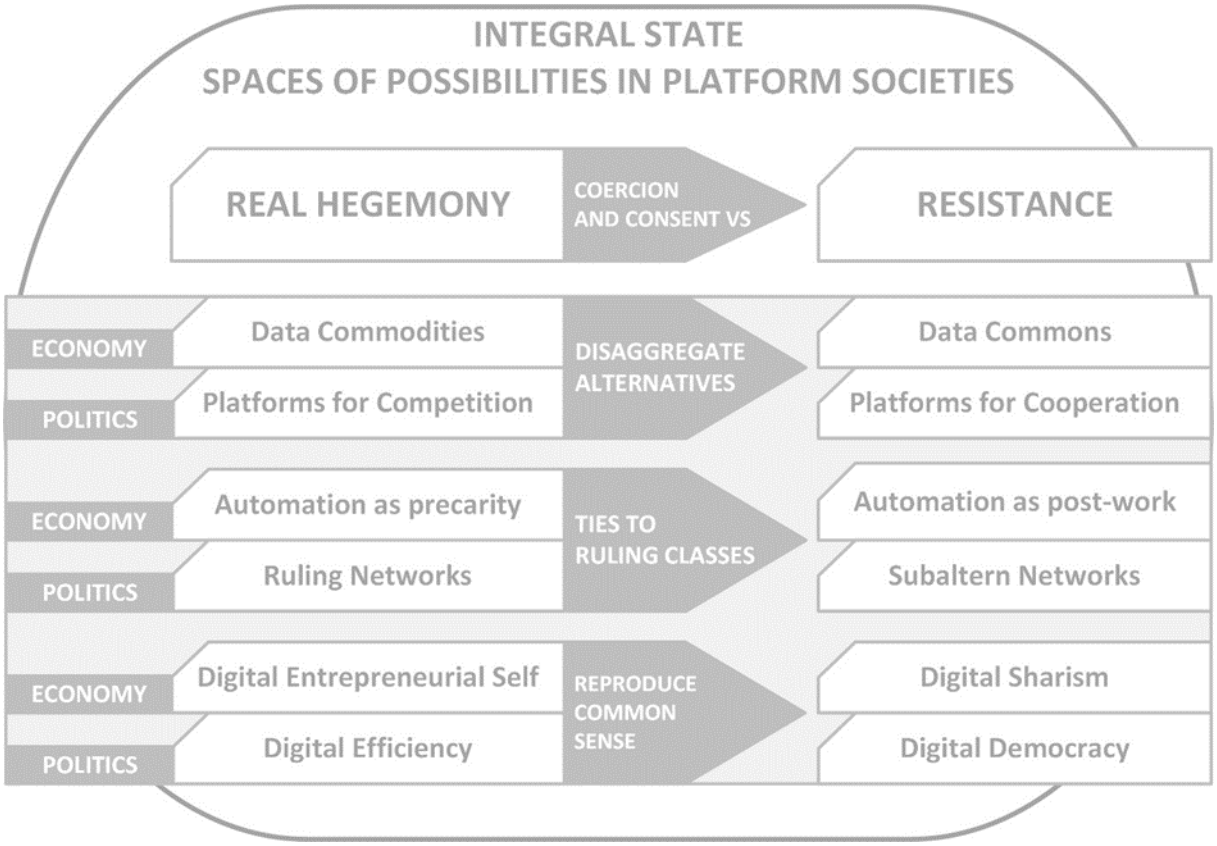
3. Reproducing popular common sense, by spreading systems of beliefs that legitimate domination while at the same time naturalising the logic of TINA (there is no alternative) (Hall, 2017).

Having defined, on theoretical grounds, how the economic base shapes the real hegemony governing the integral state, the key spaces through which the game-filed of politics is articulated, and the main areas of intervention for states and civil societies' agents to secure (or challenge) hegemony, I can now assert the key 'points of control' through which the real hegemony of platform societies has been achieved in the 2010s. It must be stressed again that real hegemony is an unstable equilibrium and that even within the historical conjunctures of maximum coherence between the economic base and the integral state (in Gramscian terms, the 'historical bloc', see 2.2.1), the dialectical nature of social relations provides the resources to advance resistance. The practices through which the real hegemony of platform societies is secured in the Global North are plotted in Figure 2.2.

First, regarding how real hegemony is secured by disaggregating alternatives, platform capitalists shape the governance of the economy, by seeking alliances with agents securing the ongoing commodification of digital data and opposing initiatives to socialise the infrastructures of platforms to turn them into 'digital commons' (Birkinbine, 2018). Accordingly, platform capitalists strategically select practices and discourses to advance data

commodification as the main model to be applied both by private entrepreneurs and state bureaucracies, to maximise private profitability and wealth generation (Fuchs, 2019c).

Figure 2.2 Real hegemony (and resistance) in platform societies



Relatedly, for instance, the regulation of big tech companies as those at the EU level is facilitated only in as much as limited to marginally protect privacy without touching the 'core' processes of data management and accumulation by big tech companies (Gawer and Srnicek, 2021). Accordingly, hegemonic agents demonise as obstacles to economic growth any initiative seeking to socialise digital infrastructures (Morozov, 2017). Regarding platform politics, hegemony strategically selects the adoption of platforms as positive to enhance competition, in a broad sense. This can be observed with the adoption of platforms replicating the proprietary models of big-tech platforms by public offices to compete among themselves

on efficiency or to promote discourses about the state as 'market-friendly' to attract flows of financial capital in national stock markets (Gawer and Srnicek, 2021). At the same time, the practices of resistance claiming the adoption of digital platforms to advance alternative models of political decision-making, for instance, through social movements demanding the adoption of open-source software by public administrations, are marginalised as detrimental to the state (Rossiter and Zehle, 2012).

Second, real hegemony is achieved by establishing organic ties between organisations of the integral state and the ruling classes of platform capitalism. These ties are established through discourses and practices naturalising the oligopolistic control of a limited number of big-tech companies which act as gate-keepers for the access to the material infrastructures of the platform economy, and the management of data as means of production and organising principles of distribution and consumption (Plantin and Punathambekar, 2019; Flensburg and Lai, 2020; Gawer and Srnicek, 2021). Therefore, real hegemony secures the consent to the rulers of potentially subaltern groups, such as small entrepreneurs, for instance by approving policy plans to incentivise the digitalisation and automation of small companies, attracting these groups through promises of cost reduction (Acemoglu and Restrepo, 2017; Thewissen and Rueda, 2019). At the same time, competing logics of automation as drivers to post-work societies, for instance with campaigns for stark reductions in working times are demonised as dangerous for market competition, or, as in the case of the UBI, as detrimentally fostering cultures of welfare dependency (Cowan, 2017). Regarding how hegemony shapes platform politics, digital platforms are presented as positive to establish networks of the ruling classes. For instance, public administrations provide banks and other financial institutions with access to their databases under the promise to render public services more competitive (Gawer and

Srnicek, 2021). Conversely, radical attempts to establish networks of the subalterns to activate democratic processes in companies and public offices are demonised as detrimental to political decision-making or marginally co-opted by local governments (Fenton, 2016b).

Third, real hegemony is achieved through the control of common sense views. The hegemony over 'common sense' regarding platform economy works through the promotion of discourses emphasising individual effort as opening chances of enrichment for digital self-entrepreneurs (see Sum and Jessop, 2014, p. Ch. 7; Bröckling, 2015), while at the same time blaming those who fail to take advantage of the new opportunities allegedly provided by the digital markets (see Stanley, 2015). Meanwhile, the real hegemony of platform society tends to co-opt radical views on 'sharism' as one of the alternative principles to capitalist competition. For instance platforms such as Airbnb and Uber promote themselves as enablers of a 'sharing' economy (Aslam and Woodcock, 2020). Politics is shaped by hegemonic common sense views that naturalise the adoption of models of political organisation mimicking social media as a benchmark of innovative and efficient political formations (Nunes, 2021). The field of resistance, promoting discourses about new possibilities to promote radical democracy through 'commons' digital platforms are demonised as destructive of political established institutions (Avril, 2015).

Up to this point, I have analysed how platform capitalism 'shapes' the real hegemony of the integral state of 'platform societies'. However, following the logic of a Gramscian framework, the base and the superstructure ongoingly and dynamically interact with each other. That is to say that real hegemony acts back on the base. Crucially for my argument, this feedback can generate two opposite effects. On the one hand, real hegemony is a generative entrenchment

of structural domination. From this point of view, real hegemony is an 'autocatalysis' of power, meaning that it accelerates the reproduction of given power settlements through a mixture of 'enablement and constraint' (Williams, 2019, p. 153). On the other hand, the transformation of real hegemony, and its spaces of possibilities is how structural domination may be disrupted (Jessop, 2005b). To understand whether one or the other effect is achieved, the analysis should move on to assess how agents of the integral state possibly reflect 'about the strategic selectivity inscribed within structures so that they come to orient their strategies and tactics in terms of their understanding of the current conjuncture' (Jessop, 2005a, p. 49). At this point, I move from what can be known through existing research to what is unknown. First, how European Left Parties, conceived as agents operating at the junctures between civil and political society reflect on the real hegemony of platform societies. And second, how these reflections shape their systems of beliefs and strategic projects to contribute to the reproduction or disruption of platform capitalism by navigating or transforming the current space of political possibilities. Accordingly, the next subsection will better specify how the theoretical framework will inform the research design of the following empirical research.

2.3.3 Parties as relational and strategic (counter-) hegemonic agents

In this subsection, I will develop the analytical tools to conduct critical research on parties as agents reflexively understanding the real hegemony of platform societies and strategically seeking to act back on the structures of platform capitalism. More specifically, as agents operating at the junctures between civil and political society (Gramsci, 2014, Q12 §1), either ELPs seek to navigate the spaces of real hegemony aiming to integrate varied social groups into existing ruling conditions, or they pursue the organisation of counter-hegemony to transform those spaces through practices aimed at connecting dispersed instances of

resistance. The analytical framework to assess how parties perform these functions is drawn upon Gramscian literature on hegemonic parties and Owen Worth (2015)'s theorisation about the attributes of counter-hegemony.

First, the articles analysing Labour Party and the Chilean Socialist Party by Sara C. Motta and colleagues (2008; Motta and Bailey, 2007; Mansell and Motta, 2013) provide relevant insights to understanding key mechanisms through which these parties supported the 'real' hegemony of financial capitalism *via* their integration into dominant power networks. More specifically, these authors conceptualise hegemonic parties as adopting and promoting ideas and norms that naturalise domination and disarticulate and de-legitimise potentially counter-hegemonic agents, interests and practices (see also Bruff, 2010). Moreover, the analyses by Stuart Hall (1988; 2017) on the crisis of Labour amidst the emergence of Thatcherism during the 1970s highlighted how parties' cultural functions were crucial to gaining or losing traction over common sense views by subaltern classes (see also Williams, 1973; Rehmann, 2016).

These different perspectives, alternatively focused on parties as active agents of structural rulership or as 'intellectuals' competing upon cultural values, are complements to each other under a Gramscian perspective. Indeed, this twofold dimension (cultural and material) through which parties understand the structural configurations of capitalism, and how they shape the real hegemony of the integral state, defines the rationale for looking at parties' ideologies as the perspective through which to assess their functions in the interplays between the base and the superstructure. Parties' ideologies as systems of beliefs interact with ideologies as 'material' organising principles of their strategic projects to secure hegemony or advance counter-hegemony. Both dimensions depend on parties' elites and

members' previous understandings and relations with social classes, previous ideologies and the paths that shaped parties' institutional forms (Jessop, 2005a).

Therefore, to research how parties are shaped by- and aim at shaping real hegemony, first, my research will look at how their systems of beliefs reflect their understandings of the real hegemony of platform societies (see 2.3.2). Second, by mirroring the analytical areas of intervention through which real hegemony is achieved, my Gramscian research will look at the practices defining parties' strategic projects for hegemony or counter-hegemony as aiming at impacting upon:

1. Alternatives, that hegemonic parties will seek to disaggregate, whereby counter-hegemonic parties will seek to embody radical alternatives by providing platforms to connect dispersed instances challenging the status quo.

2. Classes, with hegemonic parties seeking to be integrated into dominant power networks by representing the interests of the ruling classes whereas counter-hegemonic parties will aim at establishing organic ties with subaltern classes.

3. Common sense, with hegemonic parties aiming at reproducing discourses that legitimate domination while at the same time demonising alternative views as detrimental for society, whereas counter-hegemonic parties will seek anchorages to 'good sense' claims to elevate common sense by performing an intellectual leadership to challenge domination.

These key dimensions will inform the empirical analysis of how ELPs tapped into confrontations for political hegemony vis-à-vis the digital revolution. The next section will specify how the framework is turned into the research design for my empirical analysis.

2.4 From a Gramscian theoretical framework to a comparative research design

Throughout the Chapter, I have defined the theoretical framework and the main concepts through which to develop a Gramscian critical approach to party politics. I can now move on to explain how the Gramscian approach inspired the research design and methodology for the following empirical study. The research, as anticipated in the Introduction (.4), seeks answers to the two main research questions:

1. How did European Left Parties reflect on the societal impacts of the digital revolution in the 2010s?

2. How did ELPs reshape their ideologies to navigate or transform the real hegemony of platform societies?

After specifying the research design, I will define the logic of case selection for my empirical research, and next, I will provide an overview of the methodology that will characterize the two main stages through which the analysis is developed. The specific methods for each stage will be detailed in Chapters 3 (.2) and 5 (.2).

The empirical research is a cross-case comparative analysis seeking to understand how ELPs reshaped their ideologies to react to the real hegemony of platform societies. The study is exploratory in essence, as the literature review on ELPs demonstrated that up-to-date no empirical studies have been conducted on how parties understand the emergence of this new socio-technical landscape and which goals they pursue, for instance, when adopting certain policy positions or models of organisation related to platform societies. However, as argued throughout Chapters 1 and 2, critical theories of the digital revolution provide crucial insights to define the key attributes of the dialectics of platform capitalism, how they shape the 'real'

hegemony of platform societies and the relations between the platform's economy and politics. The Gramscian approach developed throughout this Chapter, therefore, aims at uncovering how ELPs tapped into these relations. Relatedly, I aim to map the historically conjunctural (counter-) tendencies that conditioned the outcome of interest (Jessop, 2005a, p. 42), namely ELPs' ideologies. Accordingly, the thesis sits on a critical realist ontological and epistemological understanding of social science (Joseph, 1998). In a nutshell, first, *contra* interpretivism, critical realism affirms ontological 'realism', that is to say, that structures pre-exist to individual agency and that social reality is stratified at three levels: the empirical, the observable and interpretable phenomena; the actual, where the events occur whether observed or not; the real, the causal mechanisms within structures generating the events at the empirical level to occur (Archer *et al.*, 1998; Sayer, 2000). Second, *contra* positivism, critical realism asserts epistemological relativism, namely that social research can identify the mechanisms that correspond to conjunctural tendencies about how 'real' objects of analysis are generative of empirical outcomes and not 'naturalistic-' alike 'laws' governing social relations (Jessop, 2005a, p. 43). This is why the logics of inference within critical realism is retroductive, meaning that research defines hypotheses about the effect generated by the interactions between the 'real' objects configuring structures and human agency that may lead to equifinal (different combinations resulting in the same outcome) or multi-final (same combinations resulting in distinct outcomes) results of social inquiry (Bhaskar, 1978).

Therefore, my research design is meant to generate a typological theory about the attributes of parties' changing ideologies vis-à-vis the digital revolution. Indeed, the proponents of 'typological theories' Alexander George and Andrew Bennett describe it as suited to reaching 'contingent generalizations on how and under what conditions […social agents…] behave in

specified conjunctions or configurations' (2005, p. 223). Hence, consistently with a Gramscian analysis, research aimed at generating a typological theory not only compares cases based on how they are classified within certain property spaces (Ryan, 2018, p. 273) but seeks to uncover the structural conditions from which specific configurations emerge.

The research design is case-oriented as it aims at understanding complex combinations of factors intervening in the outcome of interest, ELPs ideologies vis-à-vis the digital revolution (Gschwend and Schimmelfennig, 2011; Marx *et al.*, 2014). Accordingly, case selection is purposive and reflects the logic of the 'most similar systems designs' as elaborated by Przeworski and Teune (1970). That is to say, I am interested in analysing the maximum variations in the outcome (ELPs ideologies) by parties operating within similar political contexts.

ELPs in three countries, France, Italy and Spain, correspond to these criteria. For each country, I will look both at SDPs and RLPs parties, and therefore the research will be focused on six parties: the French Parti Socialiste-PS (Socialist Party) and La France Insoumise- LFI (Unbowed France); the Italian Partito Democratico-PD (Democratic Party) and Sinistra Ecologia e Libertà-SEL (Left, Environment, Freedom); the Spanish Partido Socialista Obrero Español -PSOE (Spanish Socialist Party of Workers) and Podemos-POD (We Can). First, a preliminary observation of the ideologies of these parties, conducted through the Right-Left index (RILE) by Ian Budge and M.J. Laver (1992) detected significant ideological variations during the 2010s. Most importantly, these ideological changes took contrasting directions, for instance, with the PD and POD alleged shifts to the right and the PS and PSOE purported turns to the

left. Second, these parties operate within similar political systems, according to the following criteria:

1. Western Europe. This criterion of selection reflects most of ELPs' comparative literature (i.e. Bailey *et al.*, 2014; Damiani, 2016) researching cases within rooted liberal democratic systems and established patterns of party competition along the left-right dimension of citizens' ideological identification (Nwokora and Pelizzo, 2018).

2. Multi-party systems. Although the classification of party systems based on how many parties gain parliamentary representation is contested in literature (i.e. Bardi and Mair, 2008; Dalton, 2008), for the sake of this research project, which aims at comparing multiple processes of change by parties by considering their relations, the criterion is considered sufficient for case selection.

3. Ongoing national parliamentary representation by SDPs and RLPs meant as parties affiliated to the European parliamentary groups S&D (Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats) and GUE/NGL (European United Left / Nordic Green Left),

4. Emergence, during the 2010s, of new Left-wing parties that recent literature has classified as digital (Gerbaudo, 2018; Barberà *et al.*, 2021) and/or 'populist' (Damiani, 2020) and that challenged SDPs as the most voted left-wing parties.

Even though the ongoing reliability of RILE index as a source to measure ideological change is debatable (Bauer *et al.*, 2017, see Ch. 3.2 and 4.7), the preliminary observation of ideological changes in multiple directions is sufficient to consider the six parties in France, Italy and Spain as providing variation with consideration to the outcome of interest.

The research project is designed, first, to analyse ELPs ideologies as systems of beliefs by looking at parties' official discourses. Second, I will go in-depth with each case to analyse their (counter-) hegemonic strategic projects from the perspective of parties' elites.

Following this design, the research will be developed in two stages. The first stage (Chapters 3 and 4, Appendix 2) will map ideologies as systems of beliefs and the ideological changes experienced by the selected ELPs in the 2010s. This first stage is meant to identify parties' understandings of the (1) salience of the digital revolution in relation to their claims for (2) the transformation or reproduction of capitalism and (3) the progressive or conservative attributes of democracy. These dimensions correspond to the spaces within which real hegemony is materialised and upon which strategic (counter-) hegemonic projects aim to produce their impacts (see 2.3.2 and 2.3.3). By adopting set-theoretic methods (Ragin, 2014), I will therefore identify ELPs 'digitally proactive' ideologies and map how these 'systems of beliefs' came to redefine parties' identity, goals, activities and relations (Gramsci, 2014; see also van Dijk, 2011). Set-theoretic methods allow me to classify the cases as configurations of conditions (Ragin, 2000). There are two main advantages to the adoption of set-theoretic methods for this stage of the research project:

1. They are well fitted at answering 'how' questions, allowing comparisons across and within cases while retaining detailed information about conjunctural and structural conditions (Marx *et al.*, 2014).

2. They strengthen the validity and reliability of qualitative research even with a small number of cases, as they are based on the analytical tool of the 'truth tables' that

consider all the logical possible combinations of the conditions under scrutiny (Ragin, 2014).

The first stage of the research, however, which considers ideologies as systems of beliefs, cannot delve into their materiality. Therefore, through the second stage of research (Chapters 5 to 7), I will go into depth within each case to define the attributes of each 'digital' ideology with regards to how parties' elites, first, reflected on the 'real' hegemony of platform societies, and second, defined their strategic projects to navigate or transform real hegemony. Therefore, methodologically, the stage will be conducted with in-depth case analyses drawn upon primary sources of data primarily collected by interviewing parties' elites (Patton, 2015; Mason, 2017). Parties' ideologies will be traced back retroductively (Joseph, 1998; Gerrits and Verweij, 2013; Belfrage and Hauf, 2017) to the identification of parties' responses both to the strategic selectivity emerging from the structures of platform societies and the conjunctural conditions within which parties operated. The details of data collection and analysis for this second stage will be presented in Chapter 5.2 and Appendixes 1 and 3. The themes around which parties' practices will be analysed are structured around the three 'areas of intervention' (see 2.3.3) within which parties are expected to perform their hegemonic or counter-hegemonic functions, namely alternatives, ties to classes and 'common sense'.

Finally, in Chapter 8, the findings from the two empirical stages will be brought together to map ideologies both as cultural products and 'material' organising principles of ELPs' strategic projects. The comparative analysis will allow theorising, for each ideology, how parties responded to the digital revolution. More specifically, parties' ideologies will be related to their understandings of the constraints and possibilities emerging from platform capitalism

and shaping platform societies. Further, these understandings and the subsequent strategical re-orientations by parties will be considered in combination with contextual factors, for instance, with the patterns of party competition within which parties are entrenched.

2.5 Summary and next steps

Throughout this Chapter, by identifying the core of Gramsci's conceptualisations to analyse party politics, I have defined the critical framework to research the ideologies of ELPs in platform societies. Gramsci's key theories about the dialectical unity between structures and agents, the interplays between ideologies and political hegemony, and parties as key subjectivities within these relations have been the ground to refine a theoretical framework that clarifies,

1. The philosophical approach underpinning the thesis. More specifically, I highlighted the resonance of Gramsci's research agendas for political science with my research project that seeks to map and uncover political events at the junctures between economic base and superstructures.

2. The attributes of how the structural configurations of the base strategically select cultural and material practices shaping the real hegemony of the 'integral state'.

3. How agents' reflections on 'real' hegemony shape their ideologies, conceptualised as both systems of beliefs and organising principles of their strategic projects for hegemony or counter-hegemony.

Finally, the theoretical framework was linked to a research design aimed at analysing how parties perform their functions in the interplays between economic base and superstructures in platform societies.

Accordingly, the next step of the thesis is to move to the first stage of empirical research, which will map parties' ideologies as systems of beliefs by looking at parties' official discourses through a qualitative analysis of twelve electoral manifestos. This first step will identify how ELPs signified the digital revolution in relation to their claims for the reproduction or transformation of capitalism and the conservative or progressive nature of democracy.

CHAPTER 3. MAPPING LEFT-WING IDEOLOGIES IN PLATFORM SOCIETIES

3.1 Introduction

Having defined, with Gramsci, ideologies as a twofold concept encompassing systems of beliefs and strategic projects for (counter-) hegemony, this Chapter begins with an analysis of ELPs ideologies as systems of beliefs. As I identified the economy and politics crosscut by technologies as the main spaces of political interactions between hegemony and counter-hegemony (Ch. 2.3.2), the Chapter will focus on how views on the digital revolution have been mutually signified with parties' claims on capitalism and democracy.

This Chapter aims to provide a threefold contribution to developing a Gramscian critical approach to party politics. First, methodologically, I combine critical ideological discourse analysis (CIDA) and set-theoretic methods to devise a classification of ideologies (i.e. Kvist, 2007; Fairclough, 2013; Büchel *et al.*, 2016). Second, I offer a critical analysis that develops indicators to measure the extent to which ideologies aim at radically disrupting capitalism and at making democracy more progressive. Third, I provide an original conceptualisation of the digital revolution as a politicised and ideologically 'loaded' space of political contestation.

By analysing twelve manifestos by the selected parties between 2011 and 2018, the Chapter will seek answers to the research sub-question:

- How did ELPs' systems of beliefs signify the digital revolution in relation to their claims about the reproduction or transformation of capitalism and democracy?

The Chapter's analysis leads me to identify and theorise the attributes of three distinct 'digitally proactive' ideologies. I labelled them as follows:

1. Techno-Third Way is an ideology within the Neoliberal tradition that signifies the digital revolution as fuel for entrepreneurial market competition and bureaucratic slimming.

2. Post-Social Democracy is an ideology seeking to revive the core of SD principles by envisioning the digital revolution as a toolkit to reassert the control of public powers over the ruling classes of capitalism.

3. Platform Socialism is an ideology that conceives the digital revolution as a battlefield to build up new frontiers of class antagonism and radical democratic organisations.

The Italian Partito Democratico -PD (Democratic Party, 2018) and the Partido Socialista Obrero Español -PSOE (Spanish Socialist Party of Workers, 2016) are classified as Techno-Third Way. The French Parti Socialiste-PS (Socialist Party, 2017), the Italian Sinistra Ecologia e Libertà-SEL (Left, Environment, Freedom, 2013) and the Spanish Podemos – POD (We Can, 2016) are cases of Post-Social Democracy. La France Insoumise - LFI (Unbowed France, 2017) is mapped as Platform Socialism.

The Chapter is structured as follows: in the next section, I will present how set-theoretic methods and CIDA were combined to map ELPs' ideologies and how these methods relate to mainstream indexes mostly used in political science; the following sections will present the classification by analysing how parties' official discourses represented cases of the three 'digital' ideologies and how their systems of beliefs shaped parties' identities, activities, goals and relations.

3.2 Combining CIDA and set-theoretic methods to map ELPs' ideologies in platform societies

In this section, I will first define the rationale for developing a more critical approach to political ideologies, explaining how it overcomes the flaws of mainstream indexes commonly adopted in political science. Second, I will specify how set-theoretic methods were developed to inform the qualitative data analysis through which I mapped ELPs ideologies.

The approach I develop is critical as it explicitly assumes that society is heavily influenced by forms of domination and inequality. Further, it assumes that research agendas should be committed to unveiling how certain discursive forms are adopted, alternatively, to naturalise and reproduce domination or to organise resistance and opposition. While critical approaches are quite developed in disciplines such as discourse studies (i.e. Fairclough, 2013) or 'cultural political economy' (i.e. Jessop, 2004; Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005), they lack a systematisation in political science, whereby ideologies are mostly classified through quantitative indexes including limited indicators of transformative politics. For instance, the Right-Left Index by Laver and Hunt (1992), based on the salience of political issues in parties' manifestos (Volkens *et al.*, 2018), defines equally 'left-wing' indicators such as 'market regulations' and 'nationalisations', without considering that they represent qualitatively contrasting goals. In a similar vein, the recent classification by Pippa Norris (2020), based on expert surveys, defines the left-right axis as an economic dimension limited to parties' claims for state interventionism, assuming that 'big government' is the only way to define parties' 'leftism' or 'rightism'. Therefore, Norris identifies 'Keynesian statism' or 'neoliberal privatizations' as the only games in town available for parties. Further, the indexes to capture post-modern values as those by Ronald Inglehart (1990) or Herbert Kitschelt and Staf Hellemans (1990) consider 'libertarian' those parties showing openness to gender equality

and ethnic minorities. However, they do not assess whether these stances aim to limit broader transformative agendas, for instance, by displacing the claims for equality from economic to cultural issues, or instead, they aim to connect varied marginalised groups for counter-hegemonic purposes (i.e. Fraser, 2019). Obviously, these criticisms are not meant to dismiss the value of these seminal contributions to understanding political parties globally and over time. Nonetheless, while these indexes are crucial to identify, for instance, statistical correlations between parties' changing attitudes and voters' preferences, they do not fit with research looking at whether parties aim at shifting the spaces of political possibilities (Williams, 2019) or at how and why parties adopt broad transformative agendas. This sets the rationale for the development of an alternative critical way to measure parties' ideologies, which is operationalised through set-theoretic methods.

Set-theoretic methods suit the aim to provide a more detailed understanding of ELPs ideologies compared to mainstream indexes by allowing to capture the maximum variations between ideologies. Indeed, as argued by Jon Kvist,

> 'the view of cases as configurations of aspects introduces the idea that a single difference between two cases may constitute a difference in kind — a qualitative distinction' (2007, p. 479; see also Büchel *et al.*, 2016, p. 213).

My classification results from the qualitative analysis of twelve ELPs' manifestos presented at general elections between 2011 and 2018 (Table 3.1). The calibration of qualitative data, namely how to score cases within sets, is recognised as one of the most challenging steps in set-theoretic methods. However, recent research has defined a range of calibration procedures to improve the internal validity and reliability of qualitative analysis (Basurto and Speer, 2012; Legewie, 2017; Tóth *et al.*, 2017).

Table 3.1 List of twelve parties' manifestos for qualitative data analysis

Country	Year	Party Name and Acronym	Party Family	Code
France	2012	Parti Socialiste – Socialist Party, PS	SD	FRSD12
		Front de Gauche – Left Front, FdG	RL	FRRL12
	2017	Parti Socialiste – Socialist Party, PS	SD	FRSD17
		La France Insoumise – Unbowed France, LFI	RL	FRRL17
Italy	2013	Partito Democratico – Democratic Party, PD	SD	ITSD13
		Sinistra Ecologia e Libertà – Left Environment Freedom, SEL	RL	ITRL13
	2018	Partito Democratico – Democratic Party, PD	SD	ITSD18
		Liberi e Uguali – Free and Equal, LeU	RL	ITRL18
Spain	2011	Partido Socialista Obrero Español - Spanish Socialist Party of Workers, PSOE	SD	SPSD11
		Izquierda Unida, IU	RL	SPRL11
	2016	Partido Socialista Obrero Español - Spanish Socialist Party of Workers, PSOE	SD	SPSD16
		Podemos – We Can, POD	RL	SPRL16

Accordingly, I drew upon the 'anchored calibration of qualitative data' method by Nicolas Legewie (2017), which proceeds via the following steps and tasks:

1. Constructing a calibration framework:
    a. Formulating concepts' trees;
    b. Determining relevant variations;
    c. Defining the characteristics of variations.
2. Applying the calibration framework to the data:
    a. Sorting data pieces;
    b. Defining data anchors;
    c. Minimizing grey zones.

3. Assigning fuzzy memberships:

    a. Scoring cases on indicator-level dimensions;

    b. Defining rules of aggregation.

Details of how each step and task was performed are reported in Appendix 2. In this section, I summarise the main operations I undertook to map ideologies to better clarify the core concepts determining the spaces and axes that define the attributes of ELPs ideologies.

As the classification is meant to capture maximum variation concerning if and how the digital revolution was conceived by parties as facilitating agendas aimed at transforming dominant economic structures and pursuing political arrangements to empower subaltern groups, the core concepts (sets) to measure parties' ideologies are:

1. Transformation of Capitalism (CAPTRANSF);

2. Progressive Democracy (PROGDEM);

3. Digital Proactivity (DIGPROACT).

How parties' ideologies will be scored on these dimensions, depend on the definition of secondary level concepts and indicators (full details in Appendix 2).

Capitalism is understood as a regime of accumulation ruled by the class of owners (and/or strategic managers) of the means of production seeking to maximise private profits through exploiting subaltern classes and commodifying valuable assets. Accordingly, two secondary-level concepts measure whether political actors aim at reproducing or transforming capitalism: 'Property Socialization' (SOCPROP); 'Decommodification of Social Life' (DECOMM).

These concepts are deduced from literature emphasising the unbalances in property distribution (see Przeworski, 2020; Piketty, 2020), and the dialectics between commodification and de-commodification (see Polanyi, 1957; Bailey, 2009a), as crucial areas for capitalist reproduction.

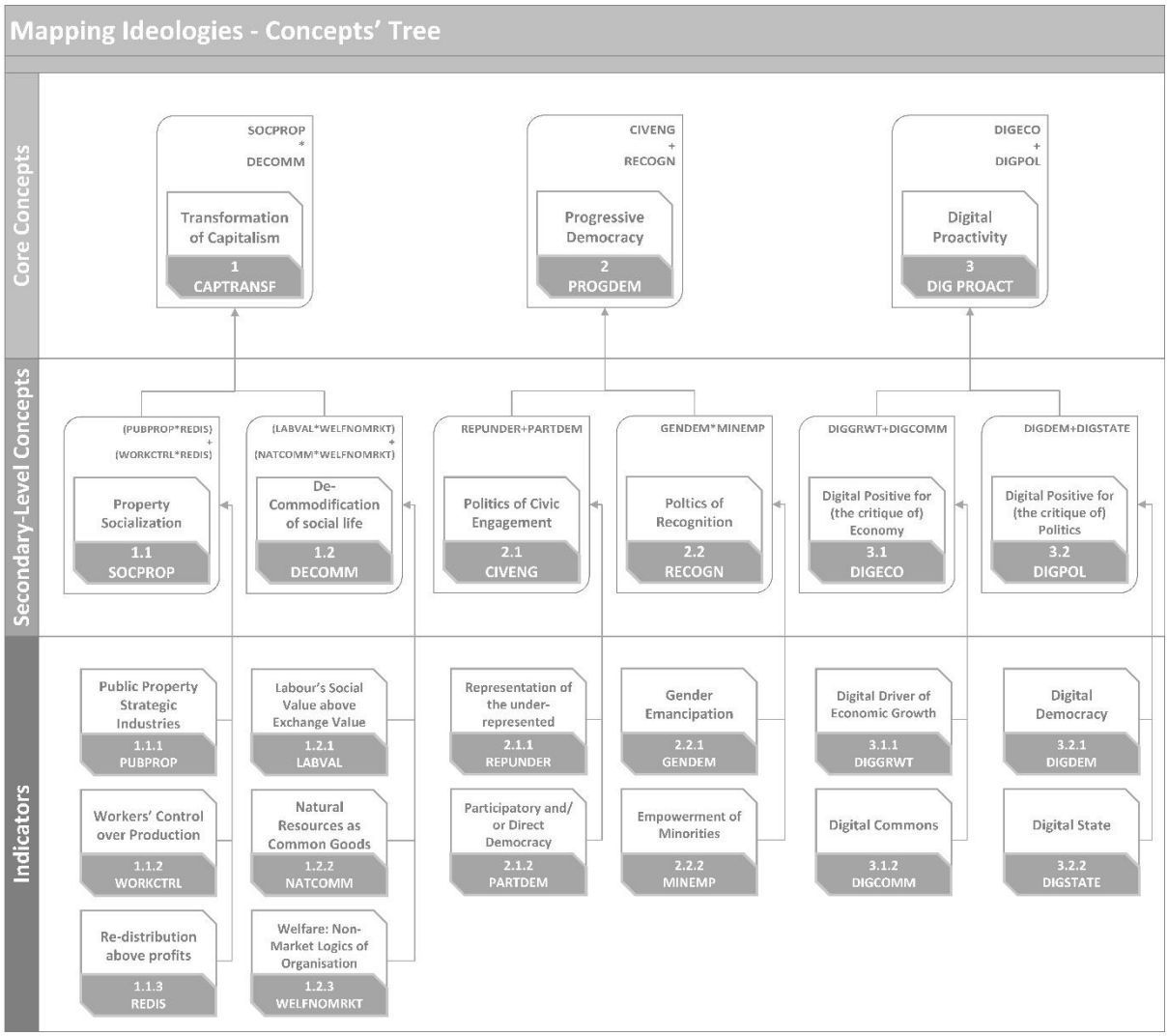
Democracy is conceived, with Thomas Meyer and Lewis Hinchman, as 'a pluralistic regime that respects human rights and abides by the rule of law' (2007, p. 2) through institutions mutually checking and balancing each other to protect individual freedom as if every citizen has equal sources of liberty (see Bobbio, 2007). Two secondary-level concepts are deduced from literature to capture whether political actors aim at progressive democratic changes: 'Politics of Civic Engagement' (CIVENG); 'Politics of Recognition' (RECOGN). The former refers to goals aiming to include and activate otherwise excluded citizens within decision-making (see Mudge, 2018). The latter focuses on political practices seeking to overcome substantial inequalities suffered, for instance, by women and immigrants (Fraser, 2019).

The digital revolution is conceptualised as a technological paradigm developing an infrastructure connecting platforms 'fueled by data, automated and organized through algorithms and interfaces, formalized through ownership relations driven by business models, and governed through user agreements' (van Dijck *et al.*, 2018, p. 23). Two secondary-level concepts capture whether ELPs conceive the digital revolution as a booster of their societal visions: 'Digital Positive for (the Critique of) Economy' (DIGECO); 'Digital Positive for (the Critique) of Politics' (DIGPOL). The former refers, alternatively, to understandings of digital paradigms as accelerators of market efficiency (Mayer-Schönberger and Ramge, 2018) or as leverage to enact shared forms of property and distribution (Morozov, 2019). The latter refers,

alternatively, to views on digital technologies as tools to improve the functioning of existing political institutions (Vaccari, 2014), or as 'liberating' spaces to connect dispersed instances of radical politics (Castells, 2007; Fenton, 2016a).

For each of the secondary concepts, indicators have been identified through a dialogue between theories and data. The resulting concepts tree is displayed in Figure 3.1, and the indicators are listed and defined in Appendix 2.

Figure 3.1 Set-theoretic methods to map ideologies. Concepts' tree and logical connectors



Next, I defined the relevant variations for each indicator and theorised the characteristics attached to each score. More specifically, I operationalised the memberships of cases into sets through an eleven-values fuzzy set scale (see Table 3.2. My elaboration on Ragin, 2000, p. 156; Schneider and Wagemann, 2012, p. 30). Then, I fixed as data anchors those paragraphs of ELPs' manifestos that were most closely associated with each definition. Accordingly, data anchors were the reference points against which cases were scored for each indicator.

Table 3.2 Set-theoretic methods to map ideologies. Eleven values fuzzy-sets scale

Fuzzy Value	The element is
1	Fully in
0.9	Almost Fully in
0.8	Mostly in
0.7	More In than Out
0.6	Less or more In
0.5	Crossover: neither in nor out
0.4	Less or more Out
0.3	More Out than In
0.2	Mostly Out
0.1	Almost Fully Out
0	Fully Out

Therefore, I aggregated the scores up from indicator levels to secondary and core ones. The choice of logical connectors was guided by the theoretical framework. Therefore, as with Gramsci, I consider ideologies primarily structured around views on the economic base (2014; Q7§19), I scored ELPs as committed to the Transformation of Capitalism to the extent to which both the 'Socialization of Property' AND the 'Decommodification of Social Life' are present, meaning that the score on the core concept will be the minimum among the two secondary

level concepts. Conversely, as I want to capture how discourses on democracy and the digital revolution are related to capitalism, I consider their constitutive parts as substitutable and therefore connected through the logical OR. Hence, for instance, a case scoring 0.2 in the secondary level concept 'Politics of Civic Engagement', and 0.8 in 'Politics on Recognition' was scored as 0.8 on the core concept 'Progressive Democracy'.

The number of possible combinations defining the property spaces of each ideology (Lazarsfeld, 1937; Weber, 2011) depends on which variations are considered qualitatively relevant for the cases to be in or out of each set. Accordingly, I defined the thresholds above and below which a condition is considered present or absent. I conceptualised the set CAPTRANSF as structured around three ranges of values to sort cases according to historically relevant ideological traditions: (Neo-)Liberal, scores ≤ 0.3; Social, scores (0.4;0.6); Socialist, scores ≥ 0.7. This classification is consistent with the identification of broad ideological traditions in the literature around the primacy accorded to individual freedom and competition ((Neo-)Liberal ideologies), collective action to balance excesses of competition (Social ideologies), and cooperation against competition as the condition for human progress (Socialist ideologies) (i.e. Freeden, 1996; Freeden and Stears, 2013; Heywood, 2017). The second and third dimensions -PROGDEM and DIGPROACT- are instead considered present when their value is ≥ 0.6 and absent when their value is ≤ 0.4. More specifically, the 'democratic' dimension crosscuts the first one, resulting in progressive or conservative ideologies (Poulantzas, 2013; Bruff, 2014), whereby the third dimension determines whether ideologies are conceptualised as 'digitally proactive' or not. The list of the twelve possible combinations is displayed in a truth table in Appendix 2.

Based on the conceptualisation of the key dimensions to analyse ideologies and on the logical connection between them, I performed CIDA to analyse parties' manifestos. More specifically, data analysis was carried out by coding manifestos' paragraphs through NVivo software. The coding provided data for each indicator, covering the following topics regarding parties' (1) identity, who they are, (2) activities, the tasks they perform, (3) goals, what they want to obtain, and (4) relations, who are their allies and opponents (van Dijk, 2011, pp. 424-425). This approach is particularly suitable for Gramscian research as, with Matthew Donoghue, I understand CIDA as 'intimately concerned with how groups marshal and control social power' (2018, p. 395), and therefore its 'focus is on how the emergence and dominance of particular discourses help some blocs consolidate their power over others' (ibid.). Accordingly, besides sorting cases into sets, through CIDA, I focused on how discourses, alternatively, naturalise and reproduce domination or attempt to organise resistance (i.e. Wodak, 2004; Fairclough *et al.*, 2011).

Having applied these methods to the selected data, I can now move on to present the results of data analysis through mapping and theorising the attributes of three left-wing 'digitally proactive' ideologies.

3.3 Classifying digital ideologies by ELPs in the 2010s

As shown in Table 3.3, six ideologies are populated by cases. The scores for the selected cases are summarised in Table 3.4 and plotted in a three-dimensional space in Figure 3.2. More specifically, I found that three 'digitally proactive ideologies' were populated by cases:

1. Techno-Third Way, two cases, PD 2018 and PSOE 2016

2. Post-Social Democracy, three cases, PS 2017, SEL 2013, POD 2016

3. Platform Socialism, one case, LFI 2017.

Table 3.3 Classification of ELPs' ideologies in the 2010s

Tradition	Ideology	CAPTRANSF	PROGDEM	DIGPROACT	CASES
(Neo)Liberal	Neolib-Lab	-	-	-	SPSD11 FRSD12 ITSD13
	Techno-Third Way	**-**	**-**	**+**	**SPSD16** **ITSD18**
	Lib-Lab	-	+	-	ITRL18
Social	**Post-Social Democracy**	**+/-**	**+**	**+**	**ITRL13** **SPRL16** **FRSD17**
Socialist	Popular Socialism	+	+	-	SPRL11 FRRL12
	Platform Socialism	**+**	**+**	**+**	**FRRL17**

Table 3.4 Selected ELPs' scores on core concepts

CASES	CAPTRANSF	PROGDEM	DIGPROACT	IDEOLOGY
FRSD12	0.3	0.3	0.2	Neolib-Lab
FRSD17	**0.4**	**0.6**	**0.8**	**Post-Social Democracy**
FRRL12	0.9	0.9	0	Popular Socialism
FRRL17	**0.8**	**0.8**	**1**	**Platform Socialism**
ITSD13	0.2	0.2	0.1	Neolib-Lab
ITSD18	**0**	**0.2**	**0.7**	**Techno-Third Way**
ITRL13	**0.6**	**0.7**	**0.6**	**Post-Social Democracy**
ITRL18	0.3	0.6	0.4	Lib-Lab
SPSD11	0.1	0.1	0.3	Neolib-Lab
SPSD16	**0.3**	**0.4**	**1**	**Techno-Third Way**
SPRL11	1	1	0.4	Popular Socialism
SPRL16	**0.6**	**0.9**	**0.9**	**Post-Social Democracy**

In the following sub-sections, I will analyse, first, how the digital revolution was signified under different ideologies in relation to parties' claims about capitalism and democracy. Second, I will empirically scrutinise how each ideology answered the questions:

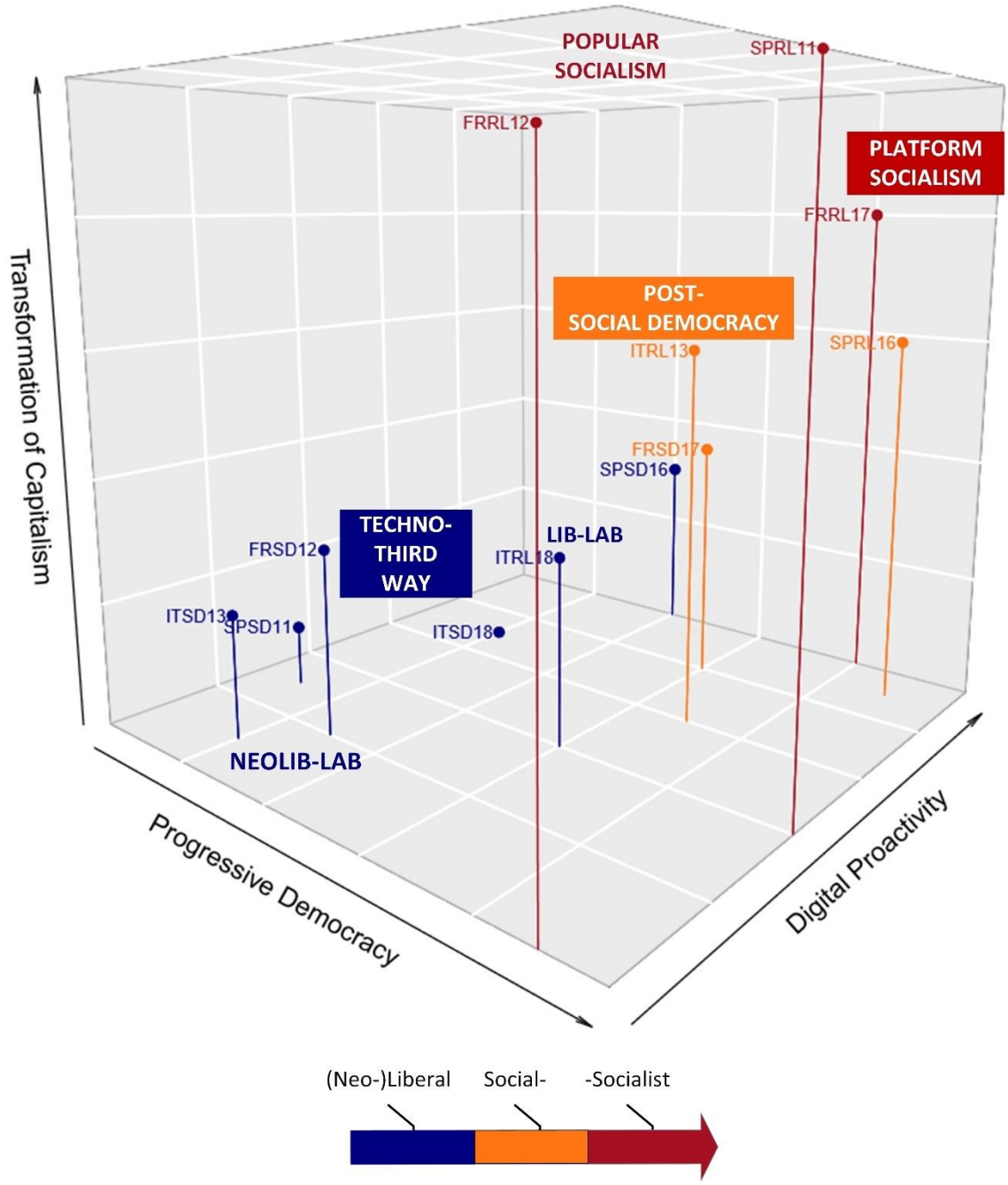
1. What defines parties' identity?

2. Which activities do they aim to perform?

3. Which goals do they pursue?

4. Who are their allies or opponents defining their relations?

Figure 3.2 Three-D plot. ELPs ideologies in the 2010s



3.3.1 Techno-Third Way. The digital as fuel for capitalist competition

Techno-Third Way is an ideology within neoliberalism that signifies the digital revolution as fuel to boost market competition and slim down states' bureaucracy. It is an ideology within a neoliberal tradition as it aims to provide an institutional framework that 'facilitates conditions for profitable capital accumulation' (Harvey, 2005, p. 7; see also Garrett, 2019), by promoting discourses and practices which emphasise individual liberties and opportunities as keys to prompt economic growth. It is digitally proactive as it conceives a crucial goal of politics the support to technological innovation for providing the best conditions to compete within 'knowledge-based economies' as the desirable horizon for societal wealth to flourish (Huo, 2009). The emphasis in parties' discourses on education and support for start-ups as key to fueling economic growth is understood as a revival of Third Way politics characterising the centre-left in the late 1990s across the Global North (Giddens, 1998; Keman, 2008).

Techno-Third Way represents an upgrade of the Third Way tradition by subsuming optimistic stances towards knowledge-based economies under hyper-optimistic views of digital technologies. This was evident from the analysis of the manifestos of the PD and PSOE that promote discourses on the digital revolution as representing a paradigmatic rupture from outdated models of production and consumption. For instance, the PD claimed that there is a need to invest in digital infrastructures as they are as relevant for competitiveness as building 'the highways [was] after World War two' (2018). In the same line of argument, the PSOE 2016's manifesto claimed that

> 'we are now facing a radical change, not an incremental one. Digital technologies display two powerful features: first, they are growing exponentially, and second, they produce wide general effects penetrating and re-combining all the old processes, products and

> services (…)', allowing to 'improve economic productivity, by boosting the most advanced and valuable industrial sectors of the country'[1].

Relatedly, the PSOE's manifesto proposed several plans to achieve a '4.0 economy and state', by promising to set incentives for the most advanced sectors of the industry capable of winning over global market competitions in digital services. The prevailing narratives on digital technologies play two functions. First, by proposing to support start-ups and innovative enterprises, these ELPs promise to expand economic opportunities for all. Second, digital technologies are conceived as accelerators to lighten state bureaucracies, for instance, by proposing the establishment of a

> 'laboratory for public innovation whose goal is to design, with the cooperation of public officers and private socio-economic actors, the processes leading to the digital transformation of the state' (PSOE, 2016).

The narratives on digital platforms are meant by these parties to embody three key principles identified by Ian Bruff (2014) as essential for neoliberal ideologies: first, politics is devoted to pleasing financial markets; second, welfare state organisations should mimic the logic of private companies; third, social antagonism is detrimental in itself, and therefore potential areas of political conflict should be de-politicised.

The first point emerges from the promotion of discourses naturalising TINA ('there is no alternative') logics of confrontations with financial markets. For instance, the Italian PD in 2018 affirmed that 'to reassure financial markets, lending us 400 billion a year to finance our public debt (…) we pursue a constant reduction of the debt stock'. Second, claims for a managerial reorganization of welfare states characterise the two Techno-Third Way

[1] All translations of parties' manifestos are mine

manifestos. Efficiency, cost-reduction, and dynamism are the semantic benchmarks of parties' discourses. Third, support for financial capitalism and managerialism are mutually reinforced through the attempts to depoliticise areas of dissent to insulate them from political antagonism (see Bruff, 2014, p. 115). These positions are associated with discourses pointing to a politics 'for all', as with the PSOE's promise to

> 'change Spain into a more innovative and more egalitarian country, grounded on robust enterprises generating high revenues, with less dualism within job markets, (…) and a citizens' and enterprises' friendly state' (2016).

These parties, therefore, shape their identities by accepting platform capitalism rulership as a positive booster of companies' profitability while providing resources to all (individual) citizens to take part in markets' competition through the promise of equal opportunity achievable *via* educative efforts. Digital innovation is deemed as the main driver of 'success' and 'merit' to compete in this scenario. Accordingly, 'digital platforms' are the fuel to improve efficiency for states and (small to large) enterprises, whose growth is inherently linked with the reproduction of platform capitalist relations.

Therefore, Techno-Third Way parties understand digital technologies as bearers of opportunities to reshape the relations between the economy, state and citizenship. On the one hand, as powerful means to transform state bureaucracies into 'light' apparatuses (Ryner, 2010, p. 556). On the other hand, by structuring new paradigms for social relations characterised by entrepreneurialism and dynamism as benchmarks of 'good' citizenship. Relatedly, any antagonism is pointed as a detrimental brake for the opportunities coming from new platform economies.

3.3.2 Post-Social Democracy. The digital revolution as a toolkit for public empowerment

Post-Social Democracy is an ideology signifying the digital revolution as a toolkit providing the resources to reshape the desired relations between markets and the power of the 'public'. Post-Social Democracy combines continuities and ruptures with the core of Social Democratic (SD) worldviews.

On the one hand, this ideology represents a renewal of SD's optimistic views on modernity combining (1) a critical acceptance of capitalism 'as a force capable of bringing about that modernity' (Andersson, 2009, p. 7) and (2) the confidence in democratic politics to re-direct capitalism toward egalitarian ends. On the other hand, I labelled this ideology as 'Post', as it moves beyond some of Social Democratic tenets, namely its roots in industrial economies and the related social and political mass organizations as necessary forms of mediation and representation within democracies (Schmidt, 2016a; Bremer, 2018). In both these dimensions, the understanding of the digital revolution played a crucial role in how parties shaped their ideologies. However, the observation made in the three parties' manifestos that fall into this category demonstrates relevant differences regarding which 'tools' are privileged to reshape SD projects.

First, for traditional Social Democrats to keep political traction, the continuous growth of productivity in the industry was considered the necessary condition for collecting the public resources to provide universal public services (Fitzpatrick, 2004, p. 213). Post-Social Democrats, instead, attempt to re-design economic relations towards post-productivity and post-work (Fitzpatrick, 2004, p. 218). Hereby, the digital revolution is understood as a toolkit to organise new cooperative forms of enterprises and liberate citizens from the drudgeries of

waged jobs (Scholz, 2016). More specifically, discourses on digital platforms were crucially associated with parties' goals to make Social Democratic tenets fit for post-industrial societies to take back public control over the global forces ruling capitalism (Piketty, 2014). However, the cases show relevant differences in their emphasis on the 'radicality' of digital platforms to redesign market competition. On the one hand, Podemos adopted techno-optimistic discourses in a less antagonistic style in comparison to SEL and the PS, as with the promise to establish 'public-private partnerships to produce digital applications for the public interest' (2016). On the other hand, SEL and the PS envisioned the digital revolution as providing the means to radically reshape the relations of production towards cooperative models of economic organisation prioritising 'social' over 'market' value. For instance, the PS made radical proposals to establish a tax on robots to establish a 'Jobs' Transitions Fund, whose mission was to create as many new employments as those disappearing' because of the digital transformation of production, and to associate this process with

> 'a new pillar of social protection, the Universal Basic Income, that will allow facing changes in jobs and digital revolution peacefully' (2017).

Further, digital economies were presented as prompting human creativity and autonomy, as with SEL's manifesto claiming that politics should contribute to 'multiplicate participatory and collective creative workplaces, through supporting co-working laboratories, the spaces for autonomous jobs in a shared ecosystem' (2013). Therefore, while all these parties envisioned the digital revolution as a potential bearer of economic relations based on cooperation and 'sharing' values, the directionality of these beliefs tends to differ along less or more antagonistic views by the three ELPs.

Second, Post- Social Democracy represents a turn from traditional SD for its claims on participatory and/or direct forms of democracy to overcome the neoliberal 'occupation' of liberal democracies (Crouch, 2004). This turn is conceived as a torsion of SD away from its identity in mass- organisations as key mediators between social demands and political supplies (Streeck, 2014; see also Ronzoni, 2018). The irruption of positive discourses about digital technologies as tools to 'radicalise' democracies and gather new social alliances between workers and post-materialistic activists is relevant to this trend (Margetts, 2019). However, the intensity of this ideological reconfiguration is varied in our cases. On the one hand, the French PS and Italian SEL refer to digital platforms as allowing 'to expand human capabilities and push to enact forms of participatory democracy' (SEL, 2013), and to move to 'a 4.0 Democracy (…) that doesn't accept to be sporadic or immature, but instead grounded in collective intelligence' (PS, 2017). However, these parties conceive of online participatory democracy as a complement rather than a replacement for representative politics. Podemos, on the other hand, explicitly refers to 'radical democracy' (see Kioupkiolis and Pérez, 2019) as its overarching and primary goal and logic of organisation. Indeed, Podemos' manifesto in 2016 emphasised how the most voted proposal among the activists on its digital platform was the one regarding 'the chance to organise a revocatory referendum in case the Government impinges its programme'. Podemos' range of proposals on direct and participatory democracy are innumerable, from the 'popular vetoing' to law proposals, to participatory schemes through digital platforms. Therefore, while all these parties promote discourses claiming the need to re-engage massive shares of citizens to rebalance the forces of global capitalism and the malfunctioning of politics, the nature of this integration, whether complementary to

existing representative organisations, or challenging to established institutions, consistently varies among the cases.

All in all, therefore, Post-Social Democrats promote views of the digital revolution as a toolkit to re-design a political tradition (SD) seeking to combine a critical acceptance of capitalism with strong public counter-balances through participatory democracy.

3.3.3 Platform Socialism. The digital revolution as a battlefield to disrupt capitalism

Platform Socialism is an ideology that encompasses views about the digital revolution as an emerging battlefield providing both novel spaces of confrontation against capitalists and a new logic of political organization for resistance. It is grounded in Socialism as it promotes an identity rendering capitalism as intrinsically unjust and irreformable (see March and Mudde, 2005, p. 34), and it aims at replacing capitalism with a 'humanist' and cooperative Socialism.

These stances regard both the structures of property of capitalism and the institutional activities to gain ground to de-commodify common goods (Panitch and Gindin, 2020). Consistently with this definition, LFI's manifesto supports views of 'the digital revolution as a domain of public interest to be reconquered through the public property of ICT's infrastructures'. Crucially, the emergence of the digital revolution is understood as offering fresh opportunities to gain ground for socialist politics. Hence, LFI insists that

> 'the digital revolution may be essential leverage to develop a truly collaborative economy. But this view presupposes not to leave this field at the disposal of multinational companies and their logics of profit accumulation' (2017c).

These principles inform many of LFI's most salient policies' proposals, as the ones regarding the reduction of working times to 32 hours per week. This techno-optimism must be understood in the context of the anti-austerity's movements that were perceived as opening

new windows of opportunities for radical digital parties seeking to scale up the anti-capitalist agendas of protesters into the arenas of formal politics (Marlière, 2019). Platform capitalism was considered relevant as a battlefield for socialist antagonism as well as for providing unknown means to disrupt corrupted neoliberal democratic institutions. To begin with, for instance, LFI proposed to nationalise essential common assets as all energetic supplies and asserted a proactive role of the state through the establishment of a nationalised bank of investments. Further, LFI proposed to establish 'the right to work, by making the state the last resort employer' (2017c), while advocating for a 400,000 € cap for individual revenues.

Platform Socialism is conceptualised in this thesis as an evolution of popular-democratic Socialism, as it ongoingly aims at activating and mobilizing from the bottom up subaltern classes, by aiming to attract these citizens through anti-political élites claims grounded in the promise of more 'participation and substantive democracy' (March, 2011, p. 17). Accordingly, platform societies are also conceived as a battlefield to radically reshape the institutions of liberal democracy that are portrayed as discredited emanations of big-tech and financial corporations (see Hrynyshyn, 2021). This understanding of the digital revolution is relevant for three defining activities, goals and social relations of LFI. Indeed, this ideology envisions an evolution in how the 'field' of Socialism should organise social antagonism by redirecting its ideological emphasis from the centrality of a single mass party of the subaltern classes to movements-alike platforms to match more individualised and dispersed forms of resistance. Relatedly, digital platforms are conceived as providing unknown possibilities to horizontally organise and coordinate protest movements (Fenton, 2016a; Gerbaudo, 2017a). This is why traditional mass parties and unions should be transformed into cooperative platforms enabling more flexible forms of activism. This organisational principle for the field of Socialism

was also supposed to prefigure new forms of democracy which were expected to disrupt what was considered the inextricable alliance between capitalist rulers and states' elites. Accordingly, LFI aimed at placing itself as the platform to ignite a

> 'citizens' revolution, (…) the pacific and democratic way through which we can turn the page of the current tyranny of the financial oligarchy and the political caste serving its interests' (2017).

Digital platforms were key in LFI manifesto's (2017) multiple proposals to radically change the French Constitution by moving to a 'Sixth Republic' whose functioning was crucially informed by direct and participatory forms of democracy. For instance, LFI prioritises referenda as new means to put an end to what they call 'the presidential monarchy' currently ruling France, proposing to extend their use to the right to revoke MPs during their mandate.

Therefore, Platform Socialism places digital platforms at the core of key trends of renewal of the socialist tradition in two directions. First, platforms provide a battlefield to confront the alliance of the 'rulers' led by financial and big tech private companies. This hegemonic alliance can be disrupted from above, through states' actions to take over private property of digital infrastructures, and from below, through the prefiguration of cooperative modes of production and social value exchange. Second, digital platforms are said to provide the resources to mobilise and connect multiple subaltern groups around the goal of the radical disruption of existing political institutions. This focus concerning where antagonism should be ignited is crucial to broadening social alliances specifically targeting social movements and young voters.

3.4 Summary and next steps

To sum up, through this Chapter I mapped the ideologies of the selected ELPs, representing their systems of beliefs on three dimensions (capitalism, democracy, and digital technologies). By detailing how set-theoretic methods and CIDA were combined to map parties' ideologies, I explained how the selection of key concepts to reach the classification was informed by a critical approach. Accordingly, differently from mainstream indexes in political science measuring parties' ideologies on one or two dimensions, through indicators that only capture limited possibilities, first and foremost I mapped ideologies as based on the core dimension 'transformation of capitalism'. Further, I defined stances toward democracy as composed of the (lack) of identities and goals aimed at empowering disadvantaged groups. Finally, I designed a set of indicators to measure digital proactivity that, while capturing how the digital revolution is signified, also allows to consider distinct directionalities for how digital technologies may facilitate parties' strategies. Through the qualitative data analysis of twelve parties' manifestos, I identified three 'digitally proactive' ideologies that showed contrasting understandings of the digital revolution, namely

1. A fuel for entrepreneurial competition and for states' efficiency through bureaucratic slimming, Techno-Third Way,

2. A toolkit to reshape the boundaries between markets and 'public' democratic power and between political representation and participation, Post-Social Democracy,

3. A battlefield to build-up new frontiers of antagonism and organisation of new spaces of resistance and disruption, Platform Socialism.

I summarised in Table 3.5 how these three ideologies shaped parties' systems of beliefs defining their identity, activity, goals and relations. All in all, this classification allows, first, to look at the digital revolution as a space of ideological articulation resulting in competing understandings of how it may shape social relations. Second I considered views on the digital revolution not in isolation but as a cross-cutting dimension that is signified through its relations with parties' claims for the transformation of capitalism and the advance of progressive democracy.

Table 3.5 ELPs' digital ideologies. Identity, activity, goals and relations

Ideology	IDENTITY	ACTIVITY	GOALS	RELATIONS
Techno-Third Way	Capitalism is the driver of innovation and growth. Entrepreneurialism and managerialism as totalising styles of social life	Reshape institutional politics to please the interests of financial and big tech companies. Domesticate and prevent radical demands by subaltern groups	Expand and distribute opportunities provided by digital and financial capitalism. Discipline antagonist politics as detrimental to economic growth	Opponents: unions, radical politics, public officers. Alliances: big tech and financial corporates. Innovative entrepreneurs, especially targeting digital start-ups
Post Social Democracy	Critical acceptance of market economy as expanding both wealth and inequalities, to be balanced by autonomous political organisations	Organise institutionalised counter-weights to ruling classes. Explore through digital tools new combinations between representative and participatory forms of democracy	Subtract certain common goods from market competition. Boost social innovation through exploiting the collaborative potentialities of digital platforms	Opponents: rentiers, big corporations and conservative parties. Alliances: reformist unions, innovative small entrepreneurs, young activists in post-materialist movements
Platform Socialism	Confidence in the disruptive potentialities of digital platforms to overcome capitalism	Activate popular classes through 'prefigurative platforms organisations'. Experiment new style of radical politics	Expand political antagonism to new frontiers –i.e. environment and digital capitalism. Improve participatory forms of democracy	Opponents: Big-tech and financial corporations. Alliances: social movements boosted by young generations

The classification of digital ideologies by ELPs provides a first compass to advance research on how they were meant to organise parties' strategic projects tapping into the confrontations for real hegemony in platform societies. However, the analysis of this Chapter is static, in as

much as it does not locate the emergence of digital ideologies within parties' conjunctural evolutions. Accordingly, the next step in the thesis is to trace the processes of ideological changes experienced by the selected parties during the 2010s and at what point and within which conjunctural configurations their ideologies went 'digital'.

CHAPTER 4. GOING DIGITAL, FROM WHERE? TRACING ELPs IDEOLOGICAL CHANGES DURING THE 2010s

4.1 Introduction

Through the previous classification, I identified three distinct 'digital ideologies', differently signifying the digital revolution in relation to parties' claims on capitalism and democracy. However, this first map only offers a static account of how the selected ELPs' ideologies, at specific points in time, were informed by the salience of the digital revolution. As a Gramscian approach requires dynamic analyses of how ideologies tap into the interplays between economic base and superstructures, in this Chapter, I will locate the three 'digital' ideologies within the processes of ideological changes in the respective national contexts. Before describing the national conjunctures within which parties changed their ideologies, I will briefly introduce the three non-digitally proactive ideologies that were populated by the cases in my empirical analysis of parties' manifestos. I defined these ideologies as Neolib-Lab, Lib-Lab and Popular Socialism.

The findings will show that all the selected ELPs changed their ideologies across the 2010s in multiple directions. More specifically,

- two cases, the Italian Partito Democratico-PD (Democratic Party) and the 'Partido Socialista Obrero Español' -PSOE (Spanish Socialist Party of Workers), moved to Techno-Third Way from a Neolib-Lab ideology. Therefore, these parties' ideologies went 'digital' with a change within a neoliberal tradition.

- One case, the Italian 'Sinistra Ecologia e Libertà' -SEL (Left, Environment, Freedom) and its successor 'Liberi e Uguali', LeU (Free and Equal), shifted from Post-Social Democracy to a Lib-Lab ideology. Therefore the 'digital' was abandoned to embrace a more moderate ideology.
- One case, the French 'Parti Socialiste' -PS (Socialist Party), shifted from Neolib-Lab to Post-Social Democracy, therefore going digital while abandoning a neoliberal tradition.
- One case, 'La France Insoumise' – LFI (Unbowed France), evolved to Platform Socialism from the Popular Socialist ideology of its predecessor 'Front de Gauche' -FdG (Left Front), therefore going digital within a socialist tradition.
- One case, 'Podemos' – POD (We Can), adopted Post-Social Democracy, shifting from a Popular Socialist ideology of its predecessor Izquierda Unida -IU (United Left), therefore going digital while moderating its claims on capitalism.

This Chapter will describe the conjunctures within which these contrasting changes occurred. Identifying the relations between ELPs in single countries will be necessary to orientate the next stage of empirical research, looking at how ELPs' systems of beliefs related to parties' strategic projects for hegemony or counter-hegemony.

The Chapter is structured as follows: the next section will briefly introduce the key elements of the non-digitally proactive ideologies found in my empirical analysis of parties' manifestos; sections three to five will provide descriptions of ideological changes for each country; finally, I will discuss how this stage of research contribute to further the understandings of ELPs ideologies and explain how these processes set the rationale for the next phase of research.

4.2 Surveying the non-digitally proactive ELPs ideologies in the 2010s

To make sense of where 'digitally' proactive ideologies came from (or, in one case, the Italian RLP, went to), I will briefly summarise the main traits of the three other ideologies that were populated by cases through the previous qualitative analysis of parties' manifestos. I defined these ideologies Neolib-Lab, Lib-Lab, and Popular Socialism.

First, within neoliberalism, I labelled Neolib-Lab (PS 2012, PD 2013, PSOE 2011) the ideology aimed at the reproduction of capitalist rulership while attempting to promote discourses about the necessity to tame some of its excesses through references to past Labourist identities and traditions (Lavelle, 2010; Meyer, 2012). Neolib-Lab is distinct from Techno-Third Way with regards to the attitudes towards innovation. Indeed, whilst Techno-Third Way understood the digital revolution as fuel for capitalist competition (see Ch.3.3.1), Neolib-Lab defended traditional industrial relations. It was so as, under Neolib-Lab, the ELPs perceived platform societies as disruptive of how parties traditionally enforced compromises between ruling and subaltern classes.

Lib-Lab (LeU 2018) aims to advance progressive democracy within capitalist rulership. This ideology is informed by a 'social' view of liberalism (see Rawls, 2009). Therefore, Lib-Lab claims for a more invasive role of the state to promote 'positive' freedom through universally accessible welfare state provisions. (Olssen, 2010). Lib-Lab had quite a neutral view of the digital revolution as a landscape posing new challenges for regulation without changing the nature of economic or political relations.

Popular Socialism (FdG 2012, IU 2011) is the third non-digital ideology identified through the analysis of manifestos. In line with Stuart Hall's definition of 'popular democracy' (1985; see

also 1988), popular socialists emphasise participation as the key to attracting new constituencies to socialist goals. However, unlike Platform Socialism, this ideology conceives its main activity as channelling radical instances into the arenas of institutional politics through traditional organisations, mainly the mass- political parties and unions. This logic of political mobilisation mirrors an understanding of affluent societies as ongoingly dominated by big industrial corporates and demonstrates a passive attitude vis-à-vis the digital revolution.

Having defined the ideologies from (or to) which ELPs changed their systems of beliefs, I can now turn to describe the conjunctures within which these changes took place. I will do so by placing the ideological changes within the context of the GFC and the following austerity age as contributing to new patterns of competition within the space of the political left.

4.3 French left-wing Parties

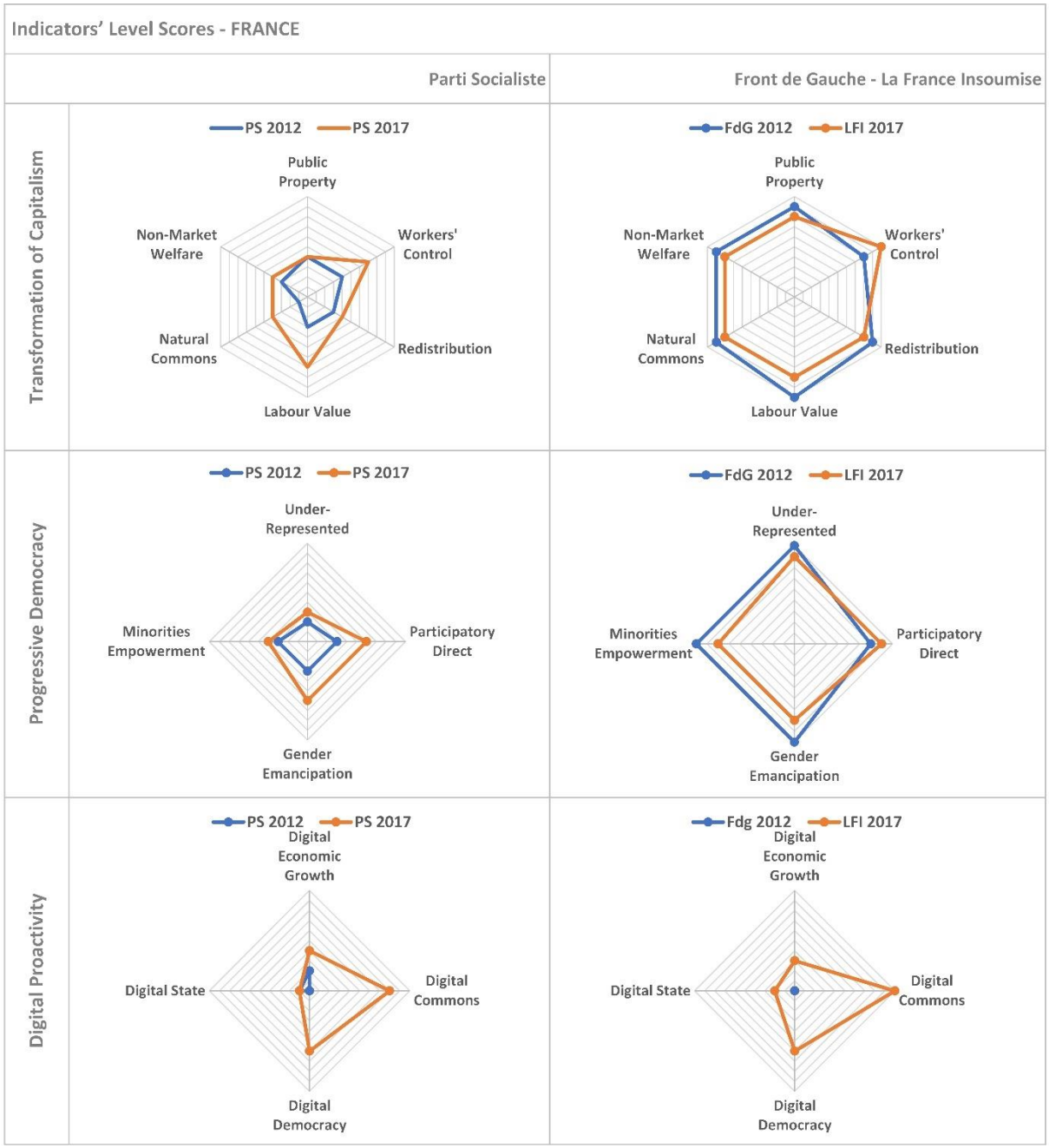
This section describes French ELPs' ideological evolutions, respectively, from NeoLib-Lab to Post-Social Democracy (PS) and from Popular to Platform Socialism (FdG-LFI). Figure 4.1 displays these changes for each indicator (see the concepts' tree in Figure 3.1 and Table 16 in Appendix 2 for the scores by each case on indicators).

4.3.1 Parti Socialiste. From Neolib-Lab to Post-Social Democracy

The PS consistently changed its ideology during the 2010s, shifting from Neolib-Lab to Post-Social Democracy. Looking at Figure 4.1, this is particularly evident, with the indicators 'decommodification of work' and 'participatory democracy'. In 2012, the PS was a moderate party promising marginal economic reforms, as demonstrated by the goal to co-opt subaltern classes into power networks by seeking 'cooperation between all the social groups in the law-

making processes' (PS, 2012). On the contrary, the party's manifesto in 2017, promised, first, to repeal the 'labour law' approved under the PS government in 2016, which facilitated job casualisation, and, second, to empower workers, by 'reinforcing democracy within companies, as employees' representatives will be half of big and medium enterprises' boards' (2017).

Figure 4.1 Radial charts. French left-wing parties. Ideological changes at indicators level



The context of the GFC is crucial to make sense of the PS' evolution throughout the decade. Indeed, being in opposition since 2002, the PS took advantage of the GFC to gain the 2012 elections by promising moderate social democratic reforms and more protections from international competition for national companies (PS, 2012). However, the actual implementation of the PS programmes as the incumbent party between 2012-2017 under the Presidency of François Hollande was informed by neoliberal agendas. This 'turn' worked as a catalyst for the explosion of the PS's ideological intrinsic antagonisms, countering radical 'quasi-socialist' views and liberal-social democratic ones (Clift and McDaniel, 2017). The approval of a new 'labour law' in 2016 under the government Valls (the 'El Khomri' law from the name of the Secretary of State for Labour), that facilitated redundancies of workers and provided the companies with mechanisms to overturn the 35-hours working week (France and Vauchez, 2017), was a crucial turning point for the PS evolutions. First, it represented a rupture with the attempts to co-opt institutionalized unions into the governance of the French political economy, resulting in multiple waves of strikes (Elmaleh *et al.*, 2018). Second, the protests against the PS 'austerity' agenda took new forms in the 'Nuit Debout' (Standing Nights) movement, which was vital to reshaping the political organisation of the French Radical Left (Felicetti and Della Porta, 2018). Third, it polarised up to a non-returning point the PS intra-party factionalism (Schmidt, 2016b).

Indeed, the incumbent Prime minister Emmanuel Valls lost PS' primaries for the presidential elections, which saw the surprising victory of the outsider candidate Benoît Hamon. Hamon represented a rupture with Hollande's agenda, leading to an ideological shift towards a systemic critique of the market economy. As previously highlighted, discourses on sound finances were replaced by the flagship proposal of a 'Universal Basic Income' (UBI), which was

key for a narrative built around a vision of the future strongly influenced by the digital revolution. The 'digital' was crucial to sustaining discourses of re-foundation for the French Republic and for the national economy (PS, 2017, in figure 3, see indicators 'digital commons' and 'digital democracy'). However, the ambition to radically shift the PS agenda failed, as the party experienced in 2017 its worst defeat since the foundation of the Fifth Republic (Cautrès, 2017, p. 181; Ivaldi, 2018, p. 287). Along these processes, the PS was shrunk by outsider leaders and parties, both on the left and the centre. The most centrist PS officers joined Emmanuel Macron and his centrist movement 'La République En Marche'-LREM (Marching Republic), which won the presidential elections in 2017. On the left, the same Hamon abandoned the PS to establish a new movement called 'Génerations'.

4.3.2 Front de Gauche and La France Insoumise. From Popular to Platform Socialism

Both manifestos by the French Radical Left in 2012 and 2017 supported Jean-Luc Mélenchon as the presidential candidate. However, in 2012, Mélenchon ran as the coalition 'Front de Gauche' (FdG) candidate after he prevailed in the primaries elections held by the Communist Party in 2011. In 2017, LFI emerged as a 'movement-not-a-party' subsuming RLPs' elites under a single platform (Guglielmo in Barberà *et al.*, 2021 Ch. 12). This organisational change was crucially reflected in the shift, within socialism, from a Popular to a Platform ideology. The continuities and changes are represented in Figure 4.1, displaying the almost perfect overlapping scores within the manifestos in their claims on capitalism and democracy. Regarding the latter, for instance, FdG claimed that 'people's passivity is the strongest fortress of tyrants. (…). To halt markets' tyranny, people must create a movement!' (2012), strongly resonating with the promise of a citizens' revolution towards a sixth Republic as the defining moment of LFI's foundation (Ch. 3.3.3).

However, there were relevant changes in the ideological posture of the French Radical Left. First, since 2012, after breaking up with the Communist Party over the coalition strategies at local elections, Mélenchon accelerated its rhetorical turn aiming to prioritise a reappropriation of the symbols of the 'Republic' by left-wing activists (Premat, 2019). The discourses emphasising the return to a Republic controlled by the people and not the incumbent political élites are constantly referred to as signs of the populist turn by the French RL (i.e. Hamburger, 2018; Katsambekis and Kioupkiolis, 2019). However, contrary to these analyses, identifying a trade-off between popular appeals and socialist goals, I understand this move as aiming to take off the French RL from the margins of the national party system. By looking at parties' manifestos, the narratives about the digital revolution were crucial for this change, as platforms were seen as opening novel chances to activate citizens.

Gaining traction over the social movements mobilising protesters against the 'labour law' in 2016 was crucial for the evolution of Mélenchon's strategy. Indeed, by presenting himself as disentangled from established left-wing parties, Mélenchon succeeded in attracting leading intellectuals of the 'Standing Nights' by placing them in charge of the definition of the programme 'L'Avenir en Commun' (A Common Future). Then, Mélenchon called for support for the manifesto through an online platform that became the first organisational infrastructure upon which La France Insoumise was developed (Damiani, 2020). This strategy successfully attracted wider constituencies from the PS discontents in a climate of increased opposition towards the whole political élites (Cautrès, 2017). The salience of discourses about the digital revolution, completely ignored in 2012's manifesto, was relevant to understanding this trend. Indeed, digital platforms were understood to fight the 'new' leading forces of capitalism as well as crucial resources to reorganise radical politics around platform

organisations mimicking the most recent forms of protests against austerity (Marlière, 2019). More specifically, the overarching narrative through which Mélenchon gained momentum, achieving 19.6% votes in the first round of the 2017 Presidential election, was the claim for 'dégagisme', a French word meaning the act of cleaning-off politics (Premat, 2019) through advancing participatory democracy. Digital platforms, therefore, within this narrative, not only provided the resources to revitalise the anti-capitalist stances of the Radical Left, but crucially, they signified in LFI's discourses the possibility of activating new means to advance the disruption of the alliance between capitalist and political elites.

4.4 Italian left-wing Parties

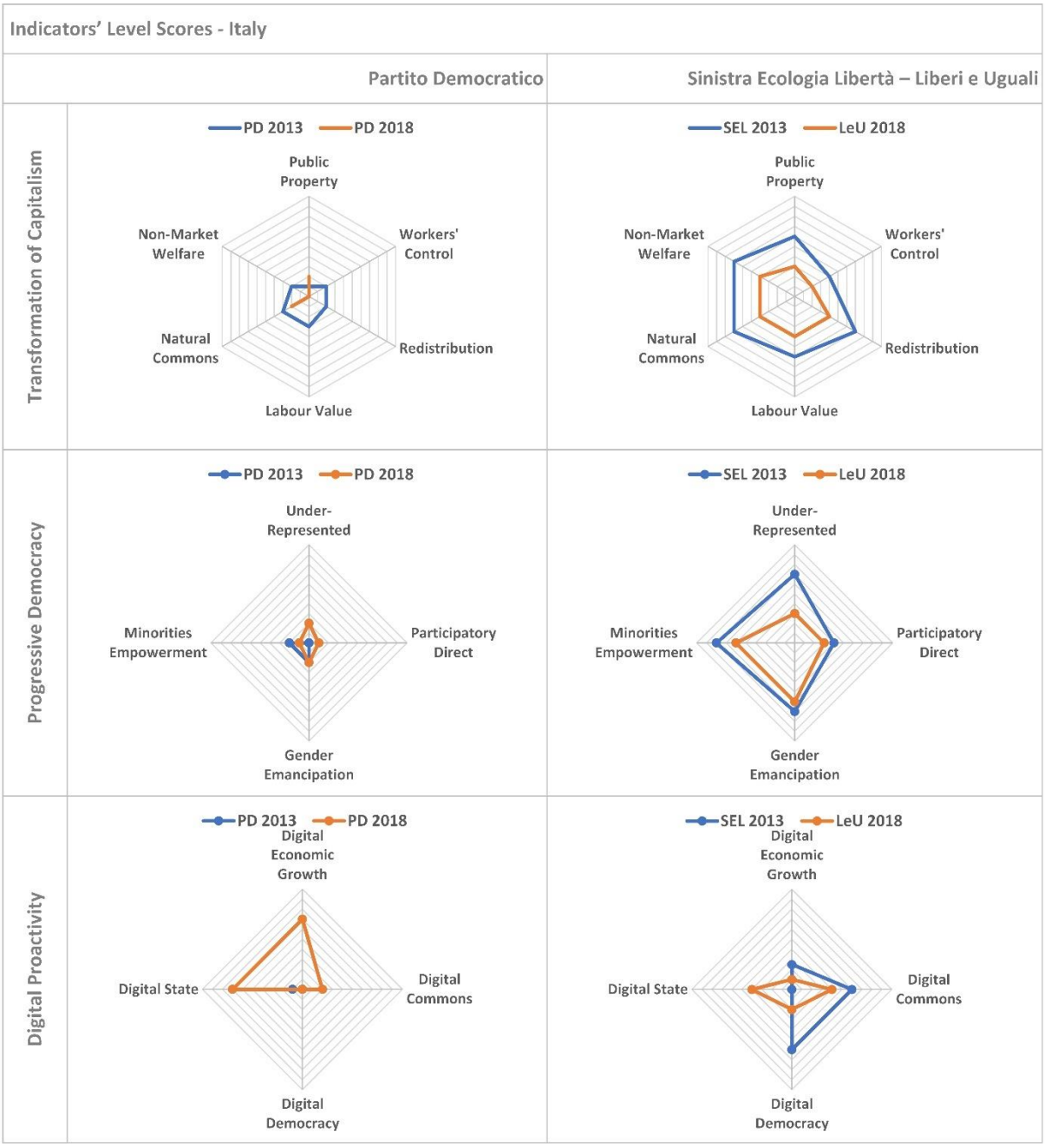
This section describes Italian ELPs' ideological changes, respectively, from Neolib-Lab to Techno-Third Way (PD) and from Post-Social Democracy (SEL) to Lib-Lab (LeU). Figure 4.2 displays these changes through radial charts.

4.4.1 Partito Democratico. From Neolib-Lab to Techno-Third Way

The Italian PD, between 2013 and 2018, moved from a Neolib-Lab to a Techno-Third Way ideology. The PD kept a soft reformist approach toward capitalism while changing its posture concerning innovation (Pasquino, 2018, p. 137; Ventura, 2018). The relevant differences detected in the PD's manifestos can be understood as a turn in the PD stances from a passive to a proactive attitude towards the ruling forces of capitalism. Indeed, on the one hand, under the leadership of the former communist Pierluigi Bersani, in 2013, the PD paid attention to keeping its linkages with traditional left-wing constituencies, with convoluted messages as

‘if austerity and sounds public finances, although necessary, become a dogma and an end -without paying attention to increase employment and investments in research- they end up in denying themselves’.

Figure 4.2 Radial charts. Italian left-wing parties. Ideological changes at indicators level



On the other hand, from 2014 to 2018, under the leadership of the former centrist Matteo Renzi, the PD assertively claimed that ‘we have pursued expansive policies while at the same

time reducing the public deficit (…) as we aim at a politics that works "for all"' (2018, see Figure 4.2, for instance, indicators 'Labour value' and 'Redistribution'). Further, as previously explained (see Ch.3.3.2), discourses about the digital revolution and innovation were particularly salient to prove this change of attitude. Indeed, only a few references to digital technologies could be found in 2013's manifesto, mostly with generic claims about public investments to create more jobs. Instead, in 2018, the emphasis on the 'fourth industrial revolution' to reinforce globalisation was consistently referred to as a new set of opportunities exploitable through a managerial and 'innovative' style of leadership (Fasano, 2020).

The trajectory of the PD in the aftermath of the GFC explains this ideological shift. Indeed, the PD, founded in 2008 by merging previous centre-left and left parties, was in opposition until the fall of Berlusconi's government amidst the 'debt' crisis in 2011. After Berlusconi resigned, the PD answered on the positive to the call for 'national unity' by the President of the Republic, Giorgio Napolitano (a former communist and PD officer), to support the 'technical' government led by the former member of the European Commission, Mario Monti (Culpepper, 2014). The technical government imposed draconian austerity agendas to halt speculations on Italian public debt, including a new labour law facilitating unjustified dismissals. The PD, led by Bersani, guaranteed parliamentary support until the general elections in 2013, characterising the election campaign with attempts to distance the party from the measures it had just supported (Tedeschi, 2018). As a result, the PD only scored 25.3% in 2013 elections, characterised by the outburst of the 5 Star Movement-M5S, led by the comedian Beppe Grillo (Caruso, 2017). This result opened a window of opportunity for the emerging young leader Matteo Renzi, former mayor of Florence and coming from the centrist 'Popular Party' to present himself as the frontrunner to succeed Bersani in party leadership.

Renzi conducted the campaign for the PD primaries by promising to 'scrap' the old losing elites of the PD by portraying himself as representative of the younger generations growing up in digital cultures (Bickerton and Accetti, 2021). By conquering the party's leadership, and being elected Prime Minister in 2014, Renzi gained momentum to reshape the PD's ideology to revive Third Way leadership styles, antagonistically using discourses on innovation against outdated bureaucracies both in states' institutions and left-wing organisations. For instance, a defining moment of Renzi's leadership as a Prime Minister was the approval of the 'Jobs Act' in 2015, a law that enhanced the liberalisation of unjustified dismissals and that caused a wave of strikes even by the most moderate unions (Cirillo *et al.*, 2017). This background is relevant as this ideological turn also raised new conflicts within the PD, up to the crisis of Renzi's leadership, ending in 2018, with a new failure at general elections (Ventura, 2018). After Renzi resigned from the leadership, the PD elected a new leader, the former Left Democrat Nicola Zingaretti. Whilst retaining most of Renzi's reforms as the Jobs Act, under the new leader, the PD aimed at re-establishing more cooperative relations with moderate unions, and, within the party, Zingaretti claimed the need to reinforce the intermediate cadres of the mass party.

4.4.2 Sinistra Ecologia e Libertà and Liberi e Uguali. From Post-Social Democracy to Lib-lab

The Italian Radical Left, represented in 2013 by SEL, led by Nichi Vendola, at that time Regional Governor in Apulia, and in 2018 by LeU, led by Pietro Grasso, a former anti-mafia prosecutor, shifted from Post-Social Democracy to Lib-Lab, moderating its ideology about capitalism and democracy (see all the indicators in Figure 4.2). I found evidence of this change, for example, in the rhetorical shift from the emphasis by SEL on 'common goods', as 'those basic and necessary goods to promote a decent life as water, food, air, education, that must be subtracted from markets' (SEL, 2013), to a return to 'productivism' in LeU's manifesto blaming

‘casualisation as a brake for enterprises to face stagnation in productivity’ (2018). Making sense of the Italian Radical Left as a unitary actor is challenging, as it ran under different symbols resulting from multiple splits and alliances between factions at each election. Nonetheless, its ideological changes can be traced back to the strategies pursued by the Italian RLPs since the aftermath of the GFC.

It is important to highlight that the Italian RL is the only case whose ideology went less digital during the decade. By placing this evolution in its conjuncture, the remainder of the sub-section will argue that this was the case for the combination of three conditions.

First, Italy was characterised by anti-austerity protests since 2009, especially with student movements, earlier than other European countries (Della Porta, 2015). Second, in 2008’s general elections, the RL lost parliamentary representation for the first time in history. This ‘shocking’ loss set incentives for radical innovations in the political supply of the RL (Damiani, 2016). Third, the coalition linkages with the PD in the age of austerity and the outburst of the 5 Start Movement led to a poor result in 2013’s elections that hampered the ‘momentum’ of success by the new Radical Left, explaining the return to more traditional ideas and forms of organisation.

Indeed, after 2008, Nichi Vendola emerged as the RL outsider leader, coalescing factions splitting from existing parties, first and foremost from the Communist Refoundation party. After winning Apulia’s regional primaries and elections in 2005 and 2010, Vendola became the most popular leader in the whole centre-left (Damiani, 2013). Therefore, SEL represented the attempt to synthesise radical and reformist cultures, incarnated by Vendola’s extroverted personality (Gerbaudo, 2011; Bordandini, 2013). Since then, SEL’s strategy was to hegemonise

the whole centre-left coalition (Chiocchetti, 2016) by launching, in 2010, a campaign to support Vendola as the candidate Prime Minister of the coalition with PD at the fore-coming national primaries.

The analysis of the discourses on digital technologies must be understood within this campaign. SEL, alongside which Vendola launched a movement-alike organisation to support his campaigns, called 'Nichi's Factories', attracted young leaders from social movements, mostly from the students' and water-supply nationalisation movements. Especially between 2010 and 2012, Vendola raised a novel sense of excitement among activists for the new possibilities for the RL to win new consent (Ward and Guglielmo, 2021). Indeed, the 'digital' was key in the discourses about connecting and organising varied instances of protests and providing an innovative economic agenda grounded in cooperativism and the de-commodification of natural and social common goods. However, Vendola's momentum was short-lived. The attempt to keep a radical left stance by opposing Monti austerity agendas while ongoingly pursuing a coalition with the PD undermined the field upon which SEL project had flourished (Damiani, 2016). After 2013, intra-party factionalism within SEL raised while at the same time, Vendola's popularity declined. As a result, in 2015, the party was shut down and split between Radical Left officers constituting a successor party, Italian Left (SI) and others joining Renzi's PD.

SI, however, merged with officers who abandoned the PD against Renzi's leadership to form the electoral cartel LeU in 2018. At that time, LeU was competing against the PD, and the attempt by their élites, mainly influenced by those officers previously part of the Democratic Party, was to attract traditional left-wing moderate Democratic constituencies by adopting a

‘typical’ soft Keynesian and liberal democratic agenda (Tarditi and Vittori, 2019). Therefore, the abandonment of the salience of digital innovation should be understood as a tactic by LeU elites targeting first and foremost unionised constituencies and older generations disappointed by Renzi’s PD. As a result, although LeU gained representation in Parliament, it remained a relatively marginal force in the Italian political landscape.

4.5 Spanish left-wing Parties

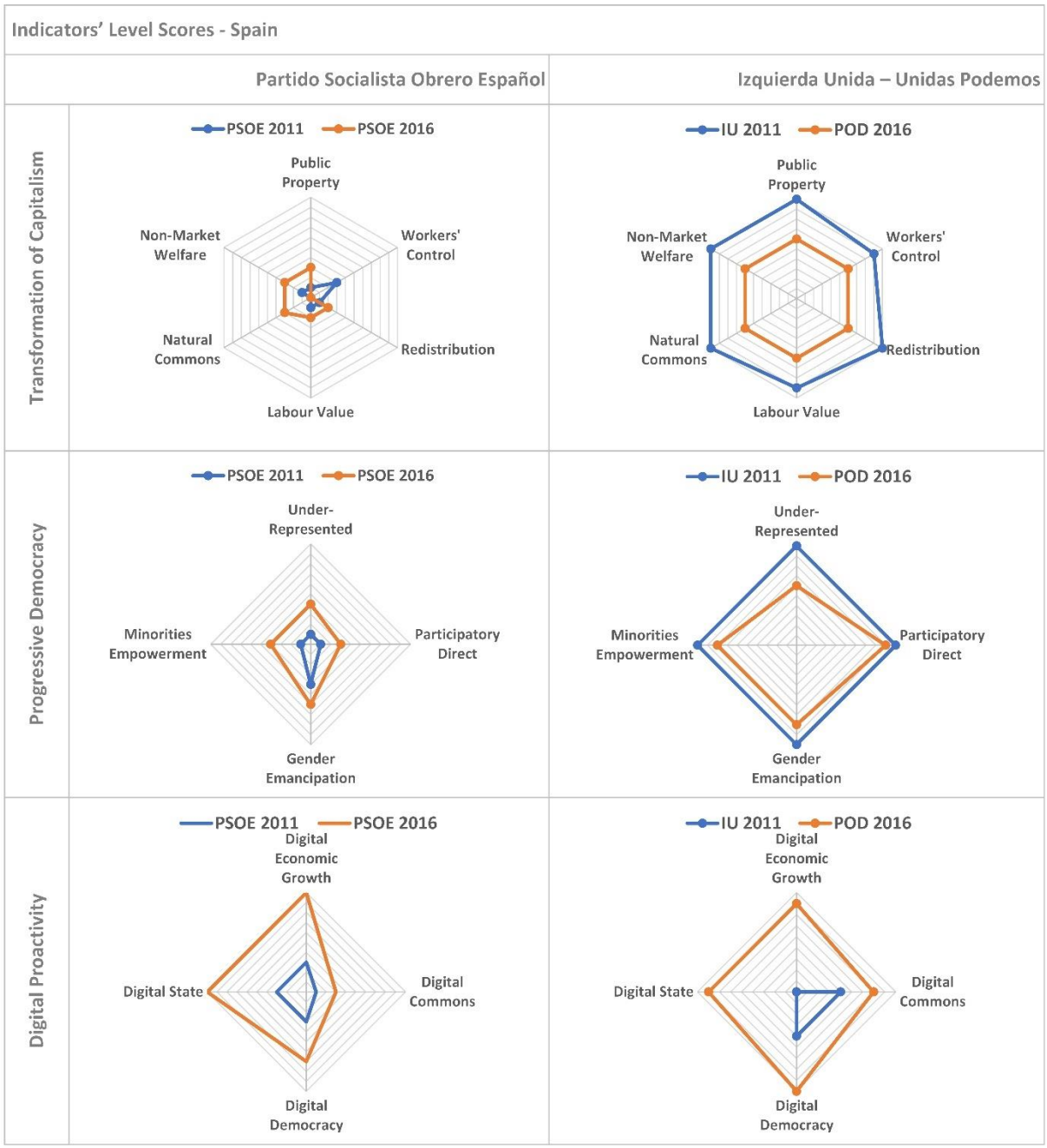
This section describes Spanish ELPs’ ideological changes, respectively, from Neolib-Lab to Techno-Third Way (PSOE) and from Popular Socialism to Post-Social Democracy (IU-POD). Figure 4.3 displays these changes through radial charts.

4.5.1 Partido Socialista Obrero Español. From Neolib-Lab to Techno-Third Way

As for Italy, the ideological change experienced by the PSOE has been classified as a shift from Neolib-Lab to Techno-Third Way. Whilst the core represented by the consensus on the financial paradigms of neoliberalism was retained, there was a move from a defensive attitude to tame its excesses toward a proactive stance to restore economic growth through incentives to private companies. The evidence from the PSOE manifestos shows this change from Neolib-Lab claims to ‘disincentivise excesses in temporary contracts (…) by reducing the gap in the costs between temporary and permanent jobs’ (PSOE, 2011), to Techno-Third Way proactive stances asserting the need to transform Spain ‘in an innovative and more egalitarian country, through a stronger entrepreneurial sector that must generate high market value to better compete abroad’ (PSOE, 2016).

Similarly to SDPs in Italy and France, the conjuncture of the GFC and the subsequent 'austerity age' was particularly challenging for the PSOE's evolution. But, unlike in the other two cases, the party was hit harder by the political consequences of the crisis.

Figure 4.3 Radial charts. Spanish left-wing parties. Ideological changes at indicators level



Indeed, in 2008, the PSOE won the general elections by gaining 43.9% of the votes and the absolute majority of parliamentary seats, promising social protection from the effects of the GFC through generous unemployment insurance schemes. However, since 2010, the deterioration of growth and the expansion of the public deficit made Spain one of the targets of speculative attacks on its public debt stocks (Meyenberg and Corrochano, 2015). The fall in GDP was particularly harsh as the Spanish economy was heavily dependent on estate market values that financial markets' speculations pumped up. Consequently, the Socialist government led by José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero followed the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and European Commission memoranda imposing harsh cuts to the welfare provisions. These cuts raised the squares' movements that connected varied instances of protest, from workers within public services to citizens evicted from their houses. As a consequence, Zapatero resigned in 2011 and called for snap elections. The PSOE faced the election campaign under the leadership of Alfredo Pérez Rubalcaba, a pragmatist centrist. His strategy was to convince Spanish citizens of the affordability of the PSOE in managing the economy compared to its right-wing counterparts. In this context, the PSOE experienced the worst loss of votes in two elections, gaining 28.76% of the votes (Manwaring and Kennedy, 2018, p. Ch. 9). In the wake of austerity, the PSOE struggled to position itself as a credible alternative to the right-wing government.

Therefore, the election of a young leader in a moment of challenging crisis, Pedro Sanchez, whose discourses were crucially informed by claims for innovation and ruptures with the party's established élites, was key to renewing the PSOE's posture (Fernández García and Luengo, 2020). The salience of the digital revolution as an innovative political and economic imaginary within which to regain centrality for the PSOE was a crucial benchmark of Sanchez's

leadership. Indeed, on the one hand, the implementation of digital tools within PSOE's organisation played an essential function for the leader to gain support, through online votes, for his strategy aimed at denying the consent to the centre-right government as advocated by a majority of the Parliamentary party (Barberà and Rodríguez-Teruel, 2020). Not only the 'digital' was meant as an organizational device to secure the party's internal control. Moreover, it was presented as fuel for the PSOE's democratic re-foundation when emergent movements such as Podemos from the Left and Ciudadanos from the centre attacked the party. Further, as the horizon driving an optimistic view for the Spanish economy, to be re-founded through the ITCs-driven multiple plans for an 'Economy 4.0'. This encompassing and optimistic vision of the 'digital paradigm' is reflected by the PSOE's high memberships in the sets 'digital economic growth', 'digital state' and 'digital democracy' (Figure 4.3).

4.5.2 Izquierda Unida and Podemos. From Popular Socialism to Post-Social Democracy

The traditional Spanish Left was disrupted during the 2010s by the abrupt insurgence of a new party, Podemos, that at first replaced and then subsumed Izquierda Unida (IU), the main electoral coalition of RLPs, that, until 2011, was hegemonised by the Spanish Communist Party. Ideologically, I traced this change in the Spanish Radical Left as one from Popular Socialism to Post-Social Democracy. Looking at Figure 4.3, this change is particularly evident with regard to the transformation of capitalism. For example, IU's manifesto promoted stark anti-capitalist views by claiming that 'it is impossible to defend left-wing ideas without (…) the fight for Socialism, as the only way to halt the organized barbarity of capitalism' (2011). On the contrary, Podemos abandoned Socialist 'grand visions' altogether, by asserting that its programme was to implement the existing Spanish Constitution, promising that 'public power

will promote favourable conditions for social and economic progress through a fair distribution of wealth within a framework of economic stability' (2016).

This change process was similar to the one reconfiguring the Italian RL when the crisis of the SDP opened an opportunity for the RL to reshape its ideology to synthesise radicalism and reformism (Damiani, 2016). However, two unique features characterized the Spanish case. First, Spanish politics was shaken by the enormous relevance of the 'Squares' anti-austerity movements' in 2011, gathering vast masses of protesters around an anti-established parties agenda (Gerbaudo, 2017b). Second, and relatedly, the abrupt insurgence of a new movement party as Podemos (Della Porta *et al.*, 2017) paved the way into the institutions of representative politics for former protesters. The origin of Podemos was relevant to understanding its ideology. In 2014, indeed, a group of intellectuals, mostly academics from the Complutense University in Madrid, launched a manifesto for the upcoming European elections that turned into a movement surprisingly gaining 8% of the votes. A radical left leader guided Podemos, Pablo Iglesias, himself an academic and host of TV broadcasts inquiring about the roots of corruption in the linkages between political elites and financial institutions (Rodríguez-Teruel *et al.*, 2016). Iglesias' outsiderness and public image allowed the movement to promote discourses promising to disrupt the whole political system beyond the boundaries of the Radical Left.

Since the European elections, Podemos roared in the opinion polls. However, in the 2015 and 2016 elections, Podemos failed to overcome the PSOE as the first left-wing party. Podemos also established a strategic alliance with IU in between these elections. IU was led, since 2011, by a young and 'innovative' leader, Alberto Garzón, that tried to connect IU to the squares

movements (Damiani, 2016). Therefore, the references to the squares' movements constituted a common space for the convergence between the two parties. These linkages are also relevant to understanding the popular democratic appeals foundational for Podemos, grounded in an encompassing agenda to promote direct democracy (Katsambekis and Kioupkiolis, 2019). In this respect, as shown in Figure 4.3, the views on digital technologies mirror the attempt to change the ideology of the Spanish RL towards a 'catch-all' one, for instance, with a strong emphasis on the new technologies as tools to support at the same time, platform cooperatives, and platform capitalist companies' interests. By looking at the radial charts, Podemos is the only party with high scores in all the indicators of 'Digital Proactivity', even though they may be considered antinomic views about the digital revolution. Therefore, I understand the evolutions of the Spanish RLPs as an attempt to gain traction for a radical alternative to the PSOE through the redefinition of a vision encompassing digital technologies as a set of tools to reshape both economic and political relations.

4.6 Conjunctures for ideological change

In this section, I will briefly summarise the main conjunctural attributes within which varied processes of ideological change have been observed in the previous sections.

First, all selected parties underwent processes of ideological change facing the common conjuncture of the 'austerity age' after the GFC. Unsurprisingly, all SDPs under analysis faced severe backlashes and crises as held responsible by their constituencies and protesters of the anti-austerity social movements for implementing or supporting austerity agendas (Manwaring and Kennedy, 2018). Conversely, the crises of SDPs and the stagnation of

established RLPs set the scene for the emergence of new movement parties that aimed at exploiting popular protests against austerity to channel these demands within parliamentary politics (Della Porta *et al.*, 2017). Second, paralleling the reconfiguration of capitalism through platforms, the digital revolution provided resources to shape the systems of beliefs of all parties under consideration in the attempt to place themselves at the forefront of 'innovation'. Third, in all cases, the promotion of new discourses on platforms was associated with the emergence of outsider leaders (Dean, 2017) that aimed at presenting themselves as breaking up established styles of politics within the respective parties or political spaces. Even though pointing to different goals, leaders' outsiderness was central to making sense of how ELPs sought solutions to their crises through mastering innovation and change.

However, the directionalities of these changes were highly differentiated among the cases. I plotted in Figures 4.4 and 4.5 the ideological shifts at national and party family levels to make sense of the multiple directions of these evolutions. First, the ideologies of five over six cases went more 'digital' during the 2010s, as shown in the 3-D plots with their movements along the axis 'Digital Proactivity'. I detailed in section 4.4.2 the specific conjunctures of Italian politics that explain the only exception to this trend, with the Italian RL going 'less' digital throughout the decade. Second, the findings seem to confirm, with authors such as Ashely Lavelle (2008) and Stephanie L. Mudge (2018), that regardless of their self-description, the terms Social Democratic and Radical Left parties are less and less associated with common ideologies. Indeed, the findings demonstrate that, among SDPs, two of three cases, the PD and PSOE, went from Neolib-Lab to Techno-Third Way, remaining within a neoliberal tradition. In contrast, the French PS abandoned neoliberalism to adopt a Post-Social Democratic ideology. The ideological changes were even starker among RLPs, also as a consequence of

the emergence and ongoing reconfiguration along different parties. In one case, France, the RL moved within a socialist tradition from a Popular to a Platform ideology. In Italy, the Radical Left abandoned the 'digital' ideology 'Post-Social Democracy' to move to 'LibLab'. In Spain, the Radical Left shifted from Popular Socialism to Post-Social Democracy.

Figure 4.4 Three-D plots. Directions of ELPs ideological change by country

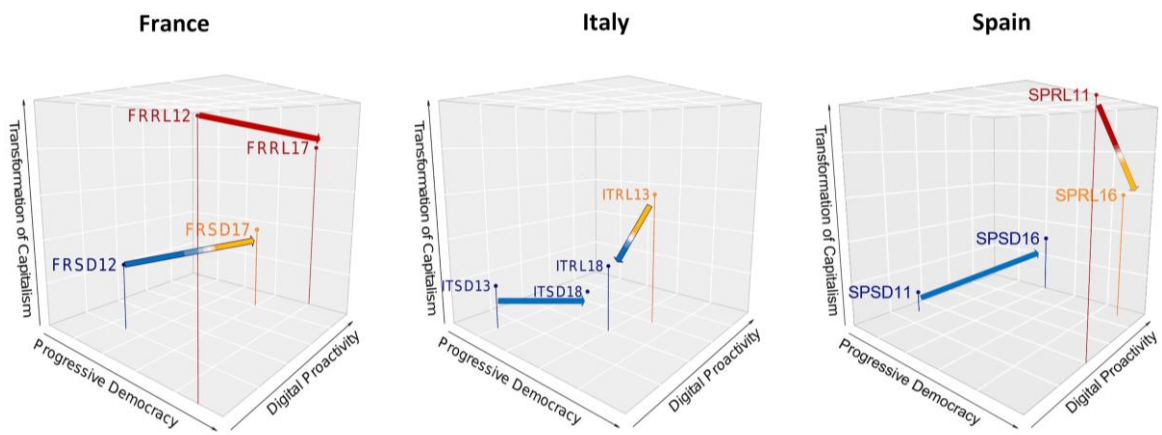
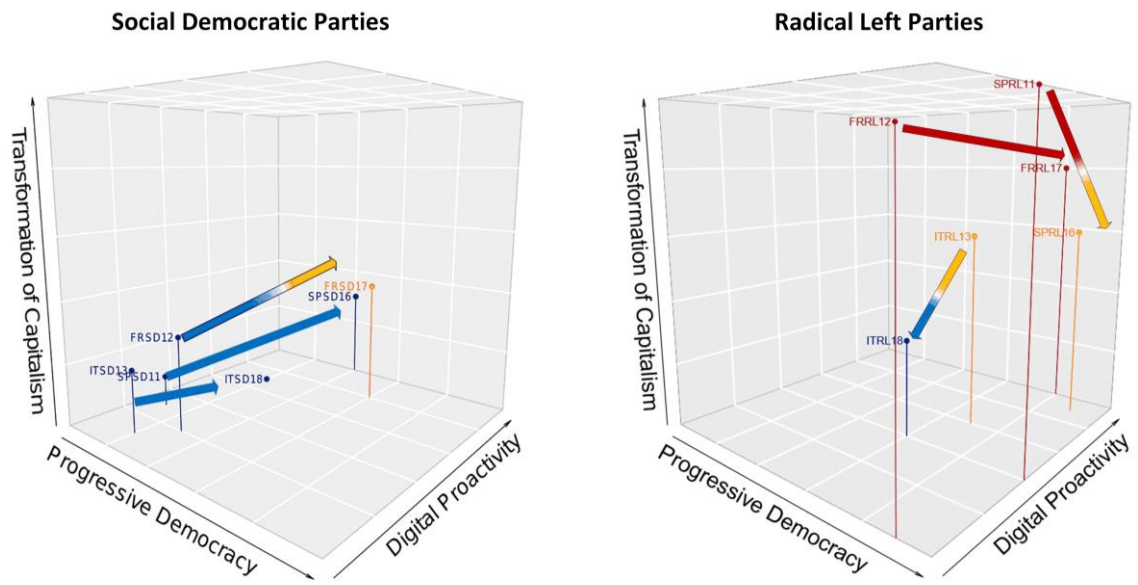


Figure 4.5 Three-D plots. Directions of ELPs ideological change by party families



First, these change processes suggest that parties' elites were reactive agents reflecting on the emergence of a new socio-technological landscape as providing opportunities to reshape parties' ideologies. Second, the evidence suggests that similar conjunctural conditions may lead to contrasting ideological changes. For instance, being held responsible for adopting austerity agendas as the incumbent parties and the emergence of new left movement parties, although associated with ideological changes, cannot be left alone as predictors of the directions of those changes. To make sense of how these evolutions can be interpreted, in the remainder of the Chapter, I will first discuss the contribution of the thesis up to this point, and I will explain how this first stage sets the rationale to move to the second phase of empirical research.

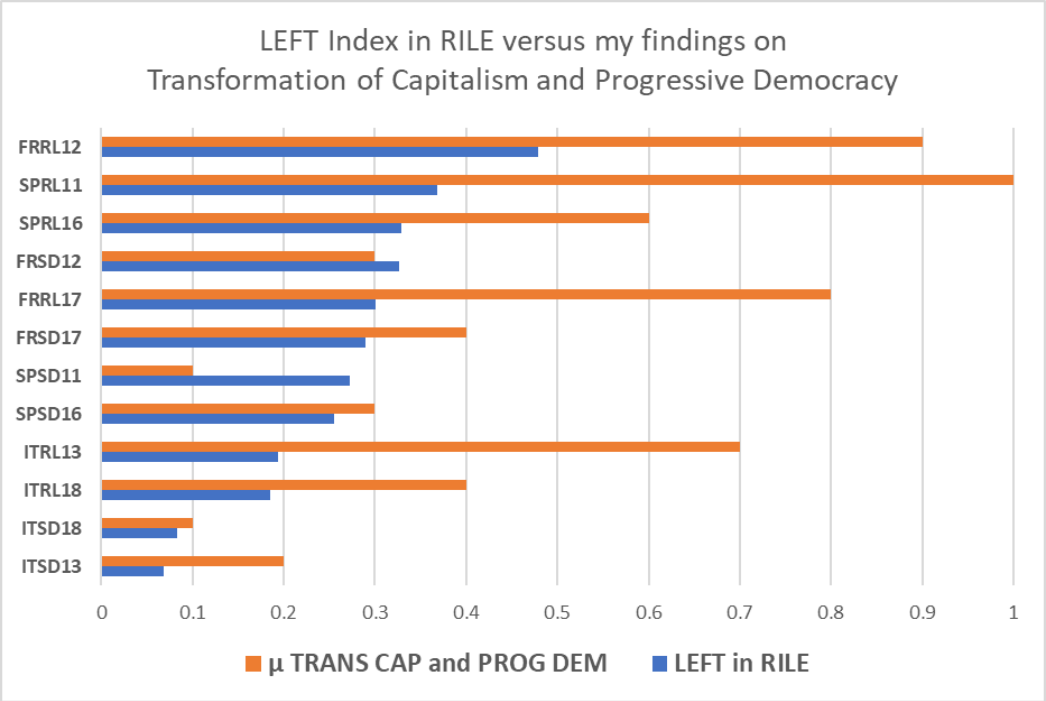
4.7 A Gramscian analysis of ideologies as systems of beliefs. Discussion.

Chapters 3 and 4 analysed ELPs' ideologies in platform societies. First, by elaborating on critical indicators, I identified how the digital revolution shaped 'digitally' proactive systems of beliefs re-defining ELPs' identities, goals, activities and relations. Second, I performed a conjunctural analysis of change processes from non-digital to digital ideologies (and vice versa). This empirical research stage contributes to advancing the understanding of ELPs' ideologies in two directions.

First, the findings confirm that the ideological variations among ELPs are broader than commonly acknowledged by literature relying on measurements through mainstream indexes such as the RILE (Volkens *et al.*, 2018). To prove this point, the bar chart in Figure 4.6 compares

the 'Left' index of RILE[2] with the results of my analysis, displaying the average scores of the cases on the axes 'Transformation of Capitalism' and 'Progressive Democracy' (see Table 3.4). First, the Left index of RILE measures a variation ranging from 0.06 for the Italian PD in 2013 up to 0.47 for the French Front de Gauche in 2012, while my scores ranged from 0.1 (PSOE 2011, PD 2018) to 1 (IU 2011) (Laver and Hunt, 1992; Volkens *et al.*, 2018). Second, by looking more in-depth within the cases, to give one example, according to the RILE index, the French PS in 2012 would be more 'leftist' than La France Insoumise and on a similar level to the Spanish IU, even though the former is a party that stood firmly for a neoliberal agenda, whereas the Spanish Radical Left explicitly called for the reversal of capitalism as an unjust political system (sections 4.3, 4.4).

Figure 4.6. Bar-chart. Left Index in RILE vs thesis' classification of twelve ELPs manifestos



[2] The RILE index measures parties' ideologies on a scale from -1 to 0 (Right) and 0 to 1 (Left)

These differences justify the point I made in Chapter 1 and then Chapter 3.1 when arguing that current mainstream indexes to analyse parties' ideologies are limited as they collapse a limited number of contrasting political positions altogether. On the contrary, by adopting a Gramscian approach to measure parties' ideologies on the extent to which they aim at transforming the economic base and relatedly at conceiving democracy as the progressive empowerment of subaltern groups, it is possible to understand parties' distinct identities and goals better.

Second, my analysis provides a more detailed account of the ideological variation compared to current literature on ELPs. First, my research rejects theories identifying common trends of de- and re-social democratisation by European SDPs in the 'austerity' age (i.e. Moschonas, 2014; Schmidt, 2016a). Second, I contest the overarching perspective of left-populism, in Laclauian terms (see Ch. 1.2.2), that would flatten all new instances of radical politics under the replacement of class antagonisms with people-elites ones (Panitch and Gindin, 2020). Indeed, regardless of their parties' families, some went more radical and some more moderate among the cases under consideration. For instance, the status of 'new' parties does not relate, per se, to common, anti-socialist ideologies. Further, the analysis demonstrates that two cases commonly considered as the benchmark of 'left-populism', Podemos and La France Insoumise (Katsambekis and Kioupkiolis, 2019; Damiani, 2020), are bearers of distinct ideologies, Post-Social Democracy and Platform Socialism.

However, looking at parties' ideologies as systems of beliefs would render parties' ideologies as 'floating objects' on platform societies. Instead, under a Gramscian perspective, ideologies must also be understood in their materiality, as organising principles of parties' strategic

projects to navigate or transform real hegemony. In the next section, after summarising the findings of the first stage of empirical research, I will define how they will inspire the next steps of the thesis.

4.8 Summary and next steps

This Chapter completed the first stage of my empirical analysis beginning with Chapter 3 by identifying three digitally proactive ideologies among the selected ELPs. Techno-Third Way, Post-Social Democracy, and Platform Socialism signified the digital revolution, respectively, as fuel for market competition, a toolkit to reassert public control of capitalist and political elites and as a battlefield for antagonism.

Throughout this Chapter, I highlighted how these ideologies emerged within their national conjunctures. The analysis identified two related conjunctural conditions that set incentives for parties' elites to promote discourses on innovation, associated with competing views of the digital revolution, as ways to face the 'crisis within the crisis' (Galli, 2013) of established ELPs. First, the 'austerity age' following the GFC, at different points in time, resulted in social cutbacks carried on by Social Democratic incumbent parties. Second, the emergence of anti-austerity social movements set pressure on SDPs and RLPs. Concerning the latter, the goal to establish linkages with protesters by outsider leaders resulted in the generation of new parties that aimed at competing with SDPs attempting to occupy the position of the main actor within the parliamentary left. Conversely, the emergence of new parties defined relevant incentives for SDPs' change. These demands were matched by outsider leaders who presented

themselves, though in distinct directions, at the forefront of the new frontiers of societal innovation brought about by the digital revolution.

Therefore, this first empirical stage of the thesis developed a theoretical compass to identify distinct approaches by ELPs to the digital revolution and identified the conjunctures within which digital ideologies emerged. Following the Gramscian framework that I developed in Chapter 2, to make sense of how these ideologies were related to the interplays between the economic structures of platform capitalism and the real hegemony of the superstructures of platform societies, I will now move on to the second stage of empirical research. I will look in-depth within the cases to assess how ideologies informed parties' strategic projects to navigate hegemony or advance counter-hegemony.

CHAPTER 5. TECHNO-THIRD WAY. NAVIGATING HEGEMONY

5.1 Introduction

In the previous stage of empirical research, I identified three 'digitally proactive' ideologies representing the ELPs' systems of beliefs. I defined these ideologies Techno-Third Way, Post-Social Democracy and Platform Socialism. Then, I analysed the conjunctures within which these ideologies emerged. With this Chapter, I will begin to explore the 'material' attributes of ideologies assessing how parties' elites defined their strategic projects to navigate the 'real' hegemony of platform societies or to transform it by seeking to advance counter-hegemony. Accordingly, this stage of the empirical investigation will seek answers to the sub-question

- How did ELPs' reflections on the digital revolution inform their strategic projects to navigate or transform the real hegemony of platform societies?

The question will be unpacked by looking at how parties' strategic projects were meant to intervene concerning 'alternatives', ties to classes and common sense in two spaces: platform capitalism and platform party politics.

This Chapter begins with the two parties whose ideologies were mapped as Techno-Third Way (see Ch. 3.3.1), the Italian 'Partito Democratico'-PD (Democratic Party) and the Partido Socialista Obrero Español -PSOE (Spanish Socialist Party of Workers). The findings result from the qualitative analysis of multiple data sources, including fourteen interviews with parties' officers and experts on digital platforms (see Appendix 1) and nine textual data sources comprehending official congress resolutions, policies' reports and position papers.

In both cases, Techno-Third Way informed a strategic project to place the PD and PSOE at the forefront of the reproduction of 'real' hegemony governing platform society. However, the logic informing their strategic projects also showed some relevant differences between the cases. These commonalities and differences can be summarised as follows:

1. Both parties aim to secure the reproduction of platform capitalism by disseminating views about big tech companies as wealth boosters, marking them as the benchmark for innovation and generating new opportunities for citizens. Moreover, both cases adopted models of parties' digitalisation that replicated the hegemonic logics of platform politics by furthering the 'personalisation' of parties' organisations (Calise, 2015) and attempting to reshape 'mass' parties' organisations.

2. The strategic project of the PD sought to 'weaponise' the digital revolution to confront established organisations of labour, demonised as barriers to innovation, and parties' intermediate cadres, blamed as outdated burdens on the PD's electoral potentialities. Conversely, the PSOE promoted hyper-optimistic views of the digital revolution to 'catalyse' new alliances aiming at co-opting within hegemony potentially radical opponents both within party organisation and in society at large.

The Chapter is structured as follows: section two will summarise the methods that I adopted in Chapters 5 to 7; section three will specify the analytical tools to identify hegemonic practices in parties' strategic projects; sections four and five will analyse the cases by looking at how they faced platform capitalism and platform party politics; finally, I will compare parties' strategic projects and highlight the areas of tension emerging from these parties' evolutions.

5.2 Methods. Multiple case studies and thematic analysis

Chapters 5 to 7 are multiple case studies describing how the ideologies Techno-Third Way, Post-Social Democracy and Platform Socialism informed ELPs' strategic projects aimed at reproducing hegemony or advancing counter-hegemony. Multiple case studies fit my purpose for two main reasons:

1. they are designed to focus on in-depth understandings of complex dynamics within organizations (Aaboen *et al.*, 2012; Yin, 2017);

2. case studies on strategic projects, along with the previous critical discourse analysis, will provide key concepts to develop a typological theory of ELPs' digital ideologies (George and Bennett, 2005) by conceptualising commonalities and differences among the cases (Baxter and Jack, 2008). This will be developed in Chapter 8.

In this research stage, as the goal is to understand the agency of parties' elites about how they reflected on the real hegemony of platform societies and how they designed their strategic projects to tap into those dynamics, I conducted the analysis primarily through thirty-seven semi-structured elites interviews with parties' officers (Francis *et al.*, 2010). The list of interviewees is detailed in Appendix 1. I stratified the sample according to the following criteria: first, I identified key officers with expertise in platform capitalism and party politics; second, I interviewed officers with broader responsibilities of parties' leadership; third, I balanced the number of interviews for each party, by collecting between four and ten interviews in each case (see Guest *et al.*, 2006; Patton, 2015). Further, I analysed twenty-six textual data sources, including conferences' resolutions, working papers, policies reports and position papers. These data complemented interviews by providing crucial information to

assess parties' strategic projects and were meant to triangulate data analysis by (in-)validating 'factual' claims made by the interviewees (Gioia *et al.*, 2013).

I performed the qualitative data analysis (QDA) by adopting the criteria of thematic analysis (Braun *et al.*, 2019) and coding the data via NVivo software. The logic of inference is retroductive (Belfrage and Hauf, 2017). Accordingly, I deduced from the literature the logically most extensive range of 'themes' characterising the emergence of real hegemony in platform societies (see Ch. 2.3.2). Next, through the analysis of data, I identified the actual themes representing parties' practices composing their strategic projects, representing the interactions between their reflections and their strategic choices.

Therefore, I developed the final coding structure through the themes that emerged from the data for each group of parties (see Appendix 3 for details). Just to provide an example regarding how real hegemony worked to disaggregate alternatives, I deduced from the literature, among others, the theme 'data as commodities against data as commons' (Fuchs, 2011; Morozov, 2019). Techno-Third Way Parties reflected on this strategic area of intervention by promoting practices emerging from the themes 'digital positive for competition and growth'. When looking instead at Platform Socialism (Ch. 7), I identified their reflections to enable alternatives around 'data as commons' through the theme 'platforms as commons disrupt platform capitalism'.

The themes constitute the building blocks through which to advance understandings of ELPs' strategic projects in the confrontation for/against real hegemony in platform societies. In the following section, I will specify the analytical tools through which these blocs have articulated Techno-Third Way strategic projects to reproduce hegemony.

5.3 How to analyse Techno-Third Way as a hegemonic strategic project

In this section, I specify the analytical framework to understand how the PD's and PSOE's Techno-Third Way ideology 'organised' a strategic project to reproduce hegemony. As specified through the theoretical framework elaborated in Chapter 2 (.3.3), the interplays between 'real' hegemony and the strategic projects for (counter-)hegemony can be analysed by looking at three main areas of intervention: alternatives, ties to classes, common sense. Within these areas, when looking at strategic projects aiming at reproducing hegemony, the main range of strategic choices that parties may take to secure hegemony can be categorised as follows:

1- Disaggregating alternatives and resistance to hegemony. These strategies can be enacted, alternatively or in conjunction through the following:

    a. by co-opting into hegemony some fractions of the subaltern classes, for instance, by facilitating compromises that, however, do not affect the core of rulers' interests (Gramsci, 2014; Q3 §18);

    b. by delegitimising potentially counter-hegemonic actors, for instance, 'demonising' their practices as generative of chaos, or marking them as the antagonists to economic growth and a stable social order (see Motta and Bailey, 2007).

2- Establishing organic ties with ruling classes. With Gramsci, I define as 'organic' those ideologies that protect specific class interests. Therefore, I will examine the practices through which these parties aim to tie themselves to the dominant classes.

3- Reinforcing hegemonic common sense views. Hegemonic strategic projects promote narratives and practices to naturalise 'common sense' claims compatible with the reproduction of hegemony to gain traction over subaltern classes (see Hall, 2017).

I will analyse how parties' elites strategically aimed to define the range of operations within these areas of intervention within the spaces of platform capitalism and platform party politics.

Regarding platform capitalism, I will look, first, at how the PD and PSOE naturalise the ongoing commodification of data (Srnicek, 2016). Second, I will focus on how parties attempt to position themselves as representative of the interests of the ruling classes of platform capitalism (see Jordan, 2020). Finally, I will focus on how these parties adopt certain narratives about platform capitalism to disseminate common sense views about modernity.

Regarding platform party politics, I will focus on the strategic choices inspiring the adoption of digital platforms to parties' organisations to understand how they were meant to facilitate the reproduction of hegemony. First, I will look at how the PD and PSOE adopted digital architectures to centralise leadership control over activists' communication while at the same time co-opting some of the claims for a more participatory form of intra-party democracy (Bennett *et al.*, 2018). Second, I will look at how adopting digital tools facilitated the resistance of hierarchical models of parties' organisation. Finally, I will assess how these organisational innovations were associated with discourses prompting dominant common sense views about the advantages of digital politics (see Deseriis, 2020).

After analysing the practices of the PD and PSOE within these two spaces, I will compare the strategic projects by the two parties to highlight the main commonalities and differences.

5.4 PD and Techno-Third Way. Digital platforms as 'weapons' against resistance

In this section, I will analyse the PD's Techno-Third Way strategic project to place the party at the forefront of the reproduction of real hegemony in platform societies. The main findings allow conceptualising the Techno-Third Way strategic project by Matteo Renzi and PD's elites as seeking to 'weaponise' digital platforms against opponents, ranging from moderate unions and their allies within the PD to radical social movements.

5.4.1 Platform capitalism

In this subsection, I will first present how the PD's Techno-Third Way project aimed at naturalising platform capitalism as a positive innovation by highlighting the key themes that emerged from the data analysis. Second, I will analyse how these understandings informed a strategic project aimed at weaponising digital innovation against what was depicted as the 'old' Left. Finally, I will highlight how the aggressive attitude towards unions and left groups resulted in increasing intra-party tensions that determined a turn back to more moderate strategic choices when Renzi resigned from party leadership in 2018.

5.4.1.1 The 'myth' of platform capitalism.

The PD under Renzi's leadership, lasting from 2014 to 2018, promoted what Simone Tani (member of the Economic Advisors' board for PM Renzi, interview 11/03/2021) defined as a 'mythological view of the digital'. The PD aimed at spreading common-sense views of platform capitalism as a 'promised land' enhancing entrepreneurial opportunities for those citizens who accept the hazards of market competition. As declared by Renzi when presenting the Italian Plan 'Industry 4.0',

> 'For those who look only to the past, this epochal transition will involve more risks and consequent harm than rewards. For those who prefer to deal with the present and the

> future, the transformation underway is bringing with it many opportunities and future benefits[3]'. (2018)

From this perspective, big tech companies were presented as the benchmark of business models to be adopted by entrepreneurs and states' apparatuses to innovate Italian capitalism and the state. All the interviewees confirmed that the Techno-Third Way project was based on the acceptance of the rulership of big tech companies, even though they acknowledged that new private oligopolies governed platform capitalism. It was so as their priority was to boost competition through innovation by removing supposedly outdated forms of regulation. As sharply put by Paolo Barberis, Renzi's advisor for Digital Innovation (25/03/2021), platform capitalism was meant to inspire a new wave of 'trickle-down economy':

> 'Let's say that the "digital" creates lower friction for large companies, allowing them to gain higher profits. Part of these profits will be distributed through taxes and reach those left behind. Therefore we should not "kill those who've made it" .. Right? ... It means taxing those who have made it fairly and teaching those who are left behind the way forward'.

The promotion of common-sense views about the advantages of entrepreneurialism and 'risk' as available for all citizens were meant to tackle what the PD elites at the time understood as a 'crisis' in the party's traditional social linkages. Indeed, as recurrently emerged from all interviews, the PD's activists and the party's electoral base were mostly comprised of middle-aged to elder groups, large factory workers and public officers within state and regional bureaucracies, education and health services. There is a broad agreement among the PD's officers that, since one of the consequences of the GFC after 2008 was the impoverishment of the Italian middle classes, the party struggled to channel the growing frustration of younger generations and subaltern classes into its agendas. However, as mentioned by Walter Tocci

[3] All translations of interviews and textual data are mine.

(Senator 2006-2018, 09/03/2021), the shrinking of the PD linkages to popular classes had been a long-term trend:

> 'The loss of consent by PD among popular and middle classes, (…) was the main cause of a meltdown from which no exit way is still foreseeable. As the party only represented affluent groups, this process led to the selection of a political elite that represents these interests, a bourgeois political class without any capacity not only to represent, but even to know how to talk to the working class'.

However, the strategic turn by Renzi's leadership to resolve this problem was not to reconnect the party to the subaltern classes. On the contrary, the crisis in its traditional social linkages was seen as a leverage point to boost a more radical anti-subaltern classes stance by the PD. Renzi's PD pursued this strategy in a twofold way. First, when asked which social groups the party aim to represent, the interviewees answered the 'whole of society' and especially those entrepreneurs that accept innovation (interview Chiara Braga, MP and PD Secretary for Environment, 2013-current, 03/06/2021) or, concerning the digital transformation

> 'The individuals! Not the classes! We need to think and realize a new humanism of which the digital - if well governed- is an ally. At the centre of every choice must be the individuals, with their rights and freedoms -education and skills, decent work, freedom of enterprise, simple and secure digital public services-' (interview Marianna Madia, Secretary of State for Public Offices, Renzi's government, and Secretary of PD for Innovation between 2018 and 2021, 23/04/2021).

Therefore, the PD promoted growing individualism and entrepreneurialism as 'good citizenship' benchmarks. Second, Renzi's strategic project was to weaponise digital innovation to politicise a generational divide, by claiming the need to attract younger constituencies against the unionised bureaucrats that were 'marked' as the main obstacle for the country to flourish and innovate (interview Francesco Nicodemo, chief of Renzi's communication both in PD and as Prime Minister, 2014-2016, 12/12/2020).

5.4.1.2 Young and digital against the old (and losing) Left

The strategic project of Renzi was constantly seeking to ignite new antagonisms between the innovative, young and digital 'Left', and the outdated, bureaucratic cadres of the old PD that Renzi promised to 'scrap' (see Ch.4.4.1). The party of innovation should embrace platform capitalism and to represent platform capitalists as a 'role-model', not opponents. A symbolic choice to demonstrate this affinity with big-tech companies was the appointment of Diego Piacentini, former vice-president of Amazon, as chair of a 'Committee for the Digital Transformation' of Italian Public Offices (interviews Tani, Barberis). The team declared in the report of its activities in 2018 that its goal was to achieve

> 'a more efficient state, less bureaucratic, and whose processes and services have been simplified and digitalised to help companies to be more competitive on a global level' (Docs.italia.it, 2018).

This goal was consistent with Renzi's strategic project to present the PD as the driving force of economic innovation. The PD economic agendas aimed at supporting the digitalisation of companies through hyper-tax credits for investments in digital machinery and services (interview Tommaso Nannicini, Senator, economic advisor of Renzi, PD NEC Secretary of Economic Affairs 2018-2019, 28/06/2021), while at the same time deregulating the job markets.

The most symbolic measure through which Renzi pursued this goal was the adoption, in 2015, of the 'Jobs Act, which provoked a wave of strikes and protests by the unions as the law dismantled workers' protections against unjustified dismissals (see Cirillo *et al.*, 2017). The strategy underlying the 'Jobs Act' was made particularly clear by Nannicini when arguing that

> 'Matteo Renzi's leadership aimed at creating a new centre on economic and social agendas. Therefore, some symbolic turns had to be enacted. Renzi was inspired by Blair's

> confrontation with unions. His tactic was to break any tie with them. Hence, the rupture was not a mean; it was an end. It was a key political goal of Renzi's leadership. Accordingly, strikes were not avoided but sought. The goal was to send out a message of credibility, to tell to large international investors "come to invest in Italy because there is a new Italy no longer full of rigid rules" and to the EU "give us the flexibility clauses because we are carrying out structural reforms to return to growth"'.

The empowerment of the entrepreneurial skills of younger generations as antagonistic to left-wing radical groups is also the key perspective to analyse how the PD understood 'digital labour'. Following this approach, Nannicini and Nicodemo claimed that the Jobs Act was meant to intervene in a supposed trade-off between older workers and younger generations. Nannicini further clarified this point by specifying that the 'Jobs Act'

> 'logic was to say: we erased the workers' right to reinstatement in the event of unjustified dismissal, but in exchange, we gave young workers more protections. And indeed, for instance, there was a verdict of the Court of Turin, which used a piece of the Jobs Act to affirm the rights of the Deliveroo riders. Therefore, I still believe that our design was right. But the public investments and political emphasis were only placed on one issue, the dismissals, that derailed everything else.'

However, riders and platforms' precarious workers were only considered marginally relevant in the PD's agendas. Indeed, the PD sought primarily to attract the 'VAT people', the small entrepreneurs working in sectors such as digital graphics and design (see interviews Nicodemo, Nannicini). Further, the 'start-up' ecosystem was prioritised as the model to boost creativity and innovation by young entrepreneurs. According to this point of view, on the one hand, under Renzi's government, public investments -through the state-owned 'Deposits and Loans Institute'- were raised up to 1 billion € (interview Tani). On the other hand, this sector's marginal growth was again weaponised in Renzi's discourses against the state's bureaucracies. Indeed, as explained by Tani,

> 'the big problem with our agendas for start-ups is that we provided the funds in national budgets, but then the bureaucratic procedures to access those funds were too complex. As

a result, most of those public funds were not spent as states' bureaucracies halt innovation with outdated rules'.

The emphasis on young generations, entrepreneurialism and start-ups can be understood as the strategic attempt to position the PD as a proactive agent within the hegemonic social bloc driving platform capitalism. The role of the state in implementing this agenda was twofold. First, as aforementioned, the PD aimed to provide the resources to the small Italian companies to invest in their digitalisation without any conditionality on their social impacts (interview Nannicini). Second, the state's digitalisation should support data commodification, as declared by Madia, when proposing to provide private banks with data collected by the public administrations.

All in all, the attacks on unions and states' bureaucracies were underlined by a common theme emerging from the interviewees. Criticisms by established organisations were sought to raise confrontations between innovation and conservation fields (interviews Braga, Nannicini, Tocci).

5.4.1.3 Backlashes from the analogue 'old' left

Renzi's Techno-Third Way strategic project was relatively short-lived. Renzi was forced to resign as Prime Minister in 2016 after the Italian electorate rejected his proposal of a Constitutional Reform allegedly seeking to centralise political power in the hands of the Government to the detriment of Parliament and to take back to central state areas of policy previously devolved to Regional Governments. Then, in 2018, the PD reached its lowest result in the general elections. After that defeat, Renzi resigned as party leader, to be replaced in 2019 by the moderate leftist Nicola Zingaretti (Tedeschi, 2018; see Ch. 4.4.1).

Even if the PD retained all of Renzi's pro-business reforms, the party under Zingaretti's leadership aimed to return to a cooperative strategy with moderate unions and other intermediate groups. The limitations of Renzi's project were clearly explained by Nannicini as strongly related to the digital revolution:

> 'there was an excess of techno-optimism. We should have worked to make sure that investments in technology did not replace employees but helped the demand for work to increase its quality. We struggled to understand that platform capitalism created high costs for low-skilled workers and to understand how to respond to their anxieties and their demands for protection. There are indeed major problems of equity between the generations in our country, but, despite our rhetoric, we failed at attracting young people. They did not look at us as a party that enables their skills to create new worlds, as we were inciting them to take hazard without a safety net.'

Therefore, after 2018, while ongoingly pursuing the same agendas, the PD's leadership attempted to dismiss the Techno-Third Way's more aggressive stances on platform capitalism as the benchmark of innovation. As declared by Braga, with Zingaretti's leadership, there was a reorientation vis-à-vis platform capitalism, understanding it as a process to be 'governed' to mitigate its social impacts on inequalities and job markets through the dialogue with unions and small companies' organisations.

To sum up, the PD's Techno-Third Way strategic project was to weaponise the logic of capitalist platforms as 'innovation' against radical resistance, demonised as an outdated brake to economic wealth. For instance, this was evident with the PD's elites' violent attacks on any proposals on Universal Basic Income (UBI) as fostering welfare scroungers (see interviews Nannicini and Nicodemo). These attitudes generated a double backlash that undermined the Italian Techno-Third Way strategic project. On the one hand, the young constituents that Renzi targeted to renew the PD did not become a consistent base of support for the PD's new project (interview Nicodemo). Nonetheless, the strategic project was consistent with the goal to keep

the previous organic ties of the PD elites with the interests of the ruling classes by placing the party at the forefront of the disaggregation of radical alternatives.

5.4.2 Platform Party Politics

Similarly to the PD strategic project concerning platform capitalism, the practices underlying the party's digitalisation were informed by the goal to 'weaponise' platforms against internal and external opponents. In this subsection, I will argue that the fragmented implementation of digital tools within the PD's organisation was strategically designed to achieve two goals. First, it was meant to personalise and professionalise parties' activities to dismantle the PD's traditional mass organisation. Second, it was planned to attack the intermediate cadres depicted as outdated bureaucracies hampering the PD's electoral potentialities. Finally, I will analyse the internal clashes between two logics of the digital organisation that characterised the PD's evolution.

5.4.2.1 Digital platforms against the mass party

The PD digitalisation was highly patchy and incomplete (see Lioy *et al.*, 2019, p. 53). This outcome is observable through its multiple platforms' lack of continuity and consistency. For instance, the platform 'Democratic Network' involved a training programme for intermediate cadres to organise 2013's election campaigns (interview Stefano Di Traglia, former spokesperson and chief of Communication under Bersani's leadership, 26/02/2021). The app 'Bob', named so honouring Bob Kennedy, under Renzi's leadership (PD, 2017), was launched to establish direct communication between the leader and parties' constituencies. More recently, the party implemented an app called Agora (PD, 2021), presented by Stefano Vaccari, Secretary of Organisation since 2018 (interview 12/04/2021), as a platform

> ‘whereby the party’s NEC can perform varied functions, such as surveying members on policy proposals, but also manage multi-level debates dedicated, for instance, to local branch secretaries or officers from Provincial Federations’.

The fragmented nature of the PD digital devices mirrored diverging strategies by the different leaders that governed the PD during the 2010s. Indeed, from the onset, the PD was characterised by the tensions in holding together an electoral-personalistic model of party organisation (Diamond and Gunther, 2001, p. 9) and a mass-bureaucratic one (Panebianco, 1988). The open primaries symbolised the former model as a rule to select national and regional leaders (Pasquino, 2014). The latter was grounded upon the inheritance of large membership and intermediate bureaucracies from the former Communist Party. Even though the PD’s membership remained consistent over time, with around 400.000 members between 2012 and 2020 (interview Vaccari), the function of the mass party to integrate activists into stable local communities (Albertazzi and Van Kessel, 2021) for them to debate parties’ positions became an area of stark disputes between competing factions. More specifically, on the one hand, parties elites from the former Communist Party sought to retain the communitarian linkages of the mass party (interviews Di Traglia, Vaccari). On the contrary, young centrist officers supporting Renzi claimed the need to starkly modernise the party by orientating its activities to election campaigns (interviews Nicodemo, Nannicini). These differences were mirrored in competing understandings and strategic projects in relation to the party’s digitalisation. Techno-Third Way factions tended to prioritise the electoral campaigning functions of digital tools. For instance, Nicodemo pointed out that

> ‘Renzi’s leadership was innovative at using digital media. For example, the famous 'Matteo answers', a video chat with his voters on Twitter and Hangout, and then Facebook's live feeds for the first time in Italy, relied on the idea that digital media could be powerful tools for disintermediation, allowing the leader to reach wider audiences’.

Conversely, officers from leftist traditions perceived these changes as a hyper-personalisation of the party, damaging the main organisational asset of the PD, its mass base of activists. Hence, Nico Stumpo, Secretary of Organization between 2009 and 2013 (interview 19/03/2021), said that:

> 'in an electoral competition such as the primaries, there is no space for political confrontation on ideas, cadres' selections etc. Primaries impose the rule of the 'strong-man', and whoever takes one more vote gains control over the party. I never supported this party model'.

A related confrontation regarded how the digital platforms were meant to redefine the internal relations between activists, intermediate cadres, and leadership.

5.4.2.2 The activists as micro-influencers against the intermediate cadres

As previously argued (see 4.4.1), the Techno-Third Way represented Renzi's strategic project to redirect the PD's hegemonic function from co-opting traditional left-wing constituencies into hegemony to occupying the centre of the Italian party system by waging frontal attacks against the unions and their allies within the PD.

Regarding platform party politics, this strategical turn was mirrored by practices pointing to parties' intermediate cadres as outdated bureaucracies restraining PD's electoral expansion (see interviews Nicodemo and Vaccari). Professionalising the party's presence on social media was crucial to achieving Renzi's goals. The backbone of this project was to redirect the function of intermediate cadres and activists from organising parties' primary operations -candidates' selections, consensus building for policies' agendas etc.- to social media mini-influencers. The main project to implement this strategy was named 'Pd Community', a Whatsapp chat aggregating 200 intermediate cadres. As clearly explained by Nicodemo,

> ‘that was the “war room” of PD’s national communication. (…). The idea was to build a national community of 200 people that would then multiply the same model within local communities. The idea was to build a digital militancy of at least 5,000 people whose goal was not only to like Renzi's Tweets but to replicate our messages in their own “echo-chambers”, among soccer friends on Whatsapp etc.”

Therefore, the main logic of the party’s digitalisation was to train elites to learn professional techniques of social media usage to support Renzi’s leadership. On the contrary, competing factions conceived the party’s digitalisation as an organisational adaptation to secure the survival of the mass party, facilitate the offline activism of local communities and reinforce the role of intermediate cadres.

5.4.2.3 Going digital to reproduce hegemony. Tensions and failures of the PD’s digitalisation

Hence, the inconsistent digitalisation of the PD was characterised by the clashes between two distinct projects. First, the one pursued by Renzi’s predecessor Pier Luigi Bersani and his successor Zingaretti conceived the party’s digitalisation as an organisational adaptation for the survival of the mass-bureaucratic party (interviews Stumpo and Vaccari). On the other hand, the Techno-Third Way project sought to reconfigure the party as a network of digital followers (see Gibson *et al.*, 2017). Nonetheless, these digitalisation logics shared three commonalities, configuring them as strategically oriented to reproduce the hegemony of platform societies. First, the party’s digitalisation aimed to perpetuate top-down direction forms by parties’ elites over activists and constituents. This feature characterised all the digital initiatives of PD, such as the recent ‘Agora’, which does not allow horizontal interaction among members (interview Vaccari). As critically pointed out by Tocci, this is the case because among the PD’s leadership,

> ‘Views about digital technologies as an organisational infrastructure have no space. In my opinion, the mistake lies in considering digital technologies as 'media' (…). Instead, digital

platforms may allow people to get in touch with each other at the grassroots, which is a basic -but essential- action for any political organisation'.

Second, the PD adopted platforms that reflected proprietary forms of data exploitation and management (Lioy *et al.*, 2019, see interviews Stumpo, Vaccari). For instance, the PD held five open primaries to elect its general secretary and select the premiership candidacy between 2009 and 2019, with an average turnout of around 2.5 million citizens (Tedeschi, 2018; Sandri *et al.*, 2020). However, the only time the PD imposed an online registration of voters was in 2012 when selecting the premier candidate. Not only, as declared by Stumpo, at the time chief or primaries' organisation, the collected data of around 1.2 million individuals were stored on private companies' clouds, but in his opinion, afterwards, that database was sold to private companies, and used 'brutally, for commercial reasons'. Finally, all our interviewees delegitimate potential alternative views of digital organisations prompting horizontal networking and non-proprietary models of data extraction and management, typically by ridiculing the platforms of the 5 Stars Movement as unrealistic claims for direct democracy that would damage the essence of a representative one (interviews Di Traglia, Nicodemo).

To sum up, the Techno Third Way strategic project attempted to digitalise the PD to dismiss parties' bureaucracies as outdated burdens over the PD's electoral expansion. Accordingly, the party's digitalisation was designed to advance two goals. First, digital tools centralised the direction of communication to turn parties' cadres into micro-influencers whose goal was to widen the leader's followers' basis. Second, platforms should establish a more direct communication channel between the leader and citizens. Even though Renzi's plans failed to define a long-term and consistent reorganisation of the PD, his strategic project advanced views of the digital platforms as replicating into platform party politics, the data extraction

and management models of big tech companies. Therefore, digital platforms represented, first and foremost, a means to improve parties' efficiency regarding leader's communication and electoral campaigning and not spaces to empower the party's grassroots or to re-link the PD to the subaltern classes.

5.5 PSOE and Techno-Third Way. Digital platforms as 'catalyst' of hegemonic consensus

In this section, I will analyse how the PSOE's Techno-Third Way ideology organised its strategic project to navigate hegemony. The analysis will show that the PSOE's strategic project was to promote hyper-optimistic views of platform societies to cement a broad political and social consensus toward its hegemonic goals. Accordingly, digital platforms were meant to function as a 'catalyst' to merge potentially antagonistic logics of organisations and social groups. Regarding platform capitalism, the strategy informed the attempts by the PSOE to promote pro-big tech agendas while attempting to co-opt unions and precarious workers into hegemony. Concerning platform party politics, the PSOE's main goal was to hybridise mass- and personalistic party models by consistently digitalising party organisation.

5.5.1 Platform Capitalism

In this subsection, I will first show how PSOE's understanding of platform capitalism is associated with hyper-optimistic views about technologies as the bearer of new opportunities for all citizens. Accordingly, platform capitalism was presented as a 'catalyst' to merge a vast majority of citizens into a new social consensus. Second, I will analyse how the digital revolution was one of the main axes through which the PSOE aimed to gain back political traction over subaltern classes. Finally, I will show that the PSOE's goal was to co-opt

subalterns into hegemony by combining traditional references to social democratic claims while simultaneously integrating the party within the dominant networks of platform capitalism.

5.5.1.1 Techno-optimism. A 'human platform capitalism' to overcome economic scarcity

The data analysis of interviews and texts shows that the PSOE's turn to a Techno-Third Way ideology emphasised the digital revolution as a paradigmatic change. These views have informed the PSOE's strategic project since 2015, both in the party's resolutions and in the agendas of the governments led by Pedro Sanchez since 2019. The PSOE constantly mentioned the digital revolution in the party's analyses of new global scenarios as a paradigmatic shift opening vast opportunities for the PSOE's project (interview Ignacio López Cano, MP, PSOE's Secretary of Social Movements, 28/07/2021). For instance, the party's Congress Resolution of 2017 made clear that globalisation and the digital economy must be accepted as irreversible phenomena and that the role of the political Left is to 'govern' their underlying processes, not disrupt their ruling classes. The same document clarifies how the digital revolution is crucial for the abandonment of 'traditional leftism' when stating that

> 'Unlike what was postulated from the point of view of elementary Marxism, it cannot currently be argued that capitalism carries within itself the seeds of its automatic destruction. (…) Under the current technological revolution, we can move towards a society without scarcity, a community of equality and well-being in harmony with our planet's ecological limits (p. 10).

Therefore, the party's strategic project naturalises views about platform capitalism as the bearer of post-scarcity (see Mayer-Schönberger and Ramge, 2018). Consequently, the PSOE aimed to reshape the party's projects to govern the directionality of the digital transition. On the one hand, interviewees constantly refer to the need to make platform capitalism

compatible with social justice by 'humanising' it (see interview Iban García del Blanco, PSOE NEC 2017-2021, MEP, Spokesperson of EP Special Committee 'Artificial Intelligence, 17/06/2021). But on the other hand, the PSOE adopted an a-conflictual understanding of platform capitalism by promoting views about big tech companies as business models that also small and medium enterprises (SMEs) should adopt (see Gob.es, 2021). Further, the PSOE's views about the digital revolution are constantly referred back to as wholly aligned with EU agendas about data protection and anti-trust regulations (see Nooren *et al.*, 2018). María Ángeles Marra (MP, Spokesperson for the parliamentary committee on Economic Affairs and Digital of the Spanish Parliament, interview 21/04/2021) further clarified this point when speaking of data accumulation and artificial intelligence (AI):

> 'Our view is that the digital revolution must be human, different from what is happening in China or the United States. More concretely, AI in China is seen as a means for the state to control citizens. In the United States, instead, it is more oriented toward private companies for profit maximisation. Our view that is the one of the EU is that AI can be more human to serve our citizens'.

All interviewees emphasised how the PSOE's top priority was not to leave anyone behind amidst the digital revolution. However, the priority for this seemingly egalitarian goal is typically inscribed within the Third-Way's emphasis on (technological) education (Andersson, 2009) as a means to empower individuals in the new markets' competition. As clearly stated by Marra, indeed,

> 'we are facing a revolution. It is already called the fourth industrial revolution, and it is changing everything. And within these radical changes, citizens must adapt, as happened amidst all the industrial revolutions. Training and education will be essential in this respect'.

This hyper-optimistic and a-critical understanding of platform capitalism are relevant to understanding how the PSOE sought new ways to cement a broad social consensus to the

hegemony governing platform societies. First, by naturalising anti-class views of contemporary societies, as stated by Lopez Cano when arguing that 'we cannot separate ourselves into compartments, social classes, especially economic ones in current societies. Today, we live in an individualistic society, and we must deal with this change'.

Second and relatedly, the PSOE's officers emphasised the need to attract young, 'digitally native' generations as the key target groups to renew the party and make it fit for an individualistic society. As stated in the PSOE's 39th congress resolution, indeed, the 'digital space'

> 'requires new frameworks to exercise rights and freedoms. It is a space of unprecedented human development. New opportunities are emerging, but also significant risks. The answer that we, the socialists, must give regards not only to offering solutions and horizons to the new digital citizenship. We must also learn from the young generations, incorporating their digital skills, listening to them and making them protagonists of a new political and social agenda, harnessing the full bandwidth of civic energy in the 21st century' (p. 42)

Relatedly, the PSOE understands digital labour extensively, not only affecting workers in communication and digital platforms. First, the PSOE prioritised plans to improve individual digital skills through education. Second, the Sanchez government prioritised public investments directed to the digitalisation of small and medium enterprises. However, the logic underlying the PSOE's plans for SMEs' digitalisation was consistent with the goal of re-producing capitalistic logics of accumulation by empowering individual entrepreneurs to compete in new markets. As explained by Marra, indeed,

> 'When it comes to giving SMEs chances to grow, to enhance their abilities to compete in international markets through products' internationalization, or when it comes to digital marketing, SMEs have no choice but to go digital'.

Therefore, the Techno-Third Way strategic project informed practices to establish a broad social consensus that was meant to reinforce the party's position to navigate the real hegemony of platform societies.

5.5.1.2 A catch-all strategic project. Protecting platform capitalism, co-opting alternatives

The PSOE's views on platform capitalism should be understood in the context of the challenge by Sanchez's leadership to overcome the risks of marginalisation that the party was experiencing in the mid-2010s. Indeed, as explained above (see Ch. 4.5.1), at that time, the PSOE experienced severe electoral losses after Zapatero's governments imposed austerity agendas in 2009-2010 (Delgado-Fernandez and Cazorla-Martin, 2017). Therefore, the Techno-Third Way's strategic project sought to re-orientate the PSOE's priorities around two new axes, the digital and ecological transitions, overlapping the three more 'typical dimensions' of the PSOE's politics as pro-social inclusion, pro-gender equality and pro-EU party (Interview López Cano). According to Garcia Blanco, Sanchez was elected party leader by putting forward a

> 'clear social democratic project, one that has to do with a much more important participation of the state within the country's policies and, on the other hand, an approach to a comprehensive reform of our productive model'.

Therefore, the party's strategy was to bring together moderate redistributive reforms and pro-business agendas to cement a hegemonic social bloc to be realised through two primary strategic practices.

First, the PSOE aimed to co-opt factions of the subaltern classes within the logic of platform capitalist competition. This goal is evident with policy decisions such as the limited raise in minimum legal wage that Sanchez's government approved in 2019 (interview Marra). Most

relevantly for platform capitalism, the PSOE adopted in its resolutions some of the theories claiming that the digital revolution will pave the way to post-work societies, as with the 39th Congress Resolution stating that

> 'It is not human work that has been jeopardised by the digital revolution but waged work. In contemporary societies, many jobs have a high social value but not a market one. Therefore, these jobs should be compensated with a basic income. At the same time, many jobs with high social value should be created, recognized, valued, and dignified by the private sector. ' (98).

Relatedly, the PSOE declared its support for the idea of a 'Universal Basic Income' in relation to the risks of raising inequalities and job destruction due to technological advances. However, this support was mitigated by the need to assess 'viable formulas for Universal Basic Income. Moreover, not every type of UBI is acceptable, since the reforms advocated by the social democrats must be viable and sustainable over time' (PSOE, 2017b, p. 98). Therefore the PSOE espoused neoliberal views of UBI (see Cowan, 2017) as 'negative income taxes'. Consistently with these views, the Sanchez government adopted a moderated version of UBI, the Minimum Living Income (MLI) (see Seg-social.es, 2020). The MLI was hampered by the conditionality to be active in job-seeking and, therefore, alien to the more radical logics of the unconditional UBI supported by post-workerists (Williams and Srnicek, 2013).

Second, the PSOE's government prioritised pro- digital business policies. A brief overview of the main plans regarding the digital economy approved by Sanchez's government since 2020 clarifies this point. First, the masterplan 'Agenda for Digital Spain 2025' aims to regulations

> "facilitating both start-ups and financial actors to attract direct foreign investments. Likewise, The Agenda will facilitate the development of venture capital funds (Venture Capital and Private Equity) and "business angels" in Spain" (Gob.es, 2020, p. 23).

The subsequent 'Strategy for Spain Entrepreneurial Nation' is even more clearly informed by an a-conflictual view about the ruling forces of platform capitalism. On the one hand, the plan refers to Mariana Mazzucato's (2015) theorisations about the need for an 'entrepreneurial state', whose investments are crucial for innovation and economic growth (see Gob.es, 2021, p. 35). On the other hand, however, Mazzucato's (2015) key argument about the state taking back control of the stream of revenues generated by its investments is absent in the Spanish plan. Instead, the Plan claims that there is a need to hold together public research centres, big tech companies, small start-ups, venture capitalists, and young generations without considering the conflictual interests among these actors (Gob.es, 2021, p. 42). Therefore, the latter plan is an essential strategic project to put the party at the forefront of the political representatives of the ruling classes of platform capitalism.

Consequently, the PSOE's Techno-Third Way is theorised as a hegemonic strategic project aimed at restoring the party's electoral strength by placing the PSOE at the forefront of the real hegemony of platform societies and by emphasising narratives on innovation and social equity in the party's initiatives. This strategy pursued, at the same time, centrist pro-business policies and pro-labourers moderate reforms and advancements. As specified by García Blanco when explaining the PSOE's approach regarding the need to design new regulations for data-extracting companies, indeed,

> 'There are those who want to make an exhaustive review of the phenomenon and those who, especially in the economic field, want a jungle without rules. But, as in almost everything, in the end, we are in a middle ground between these positions'.

Therefore, the PSOE placed the digital economy at the top of its priorities to succeed as a catch-all party, aimed at integrating into its plans some of the views of potential opponents to

the logic of platform capitalism while simultaneously supporting its ruling forces. These 'catch-all' narratives sustained the promotion of hyper-optimistic views about the paradigmatic changes brought about by the 'digital revolution', as challenging, per se, some of the conditions that may have hampered both capitalist and socialist projects in the 19th and 20th centuries.

To sum up, the PSOE's Techno-Third Way strategic project vis-à-vis platform capitalism aims at disseminating optimistic and a-conflictual views about the emergence of new opportunities for all citizens and enterprises. This overarching 'catch-all' strategy is pursued in a twofold way. First, by incorporating in parties' discourses views about the digital revolution as overcoming economic scarcity. The strategical function of these narratives is to combine traditional social democratic practices, such as policies to moderately raise minimum wages, with crucial governmental agendas aimed at achieving the light regulation of big tech and public investment plans oriented towards private companies' growth. Relatedly, the PSOE naturalised pro-platform capitalist EU agendas. According to this point of view, the party's peculiar function was to use EU regulations as drivers of public investments in innovation and simultaneously as 'humanist' compromises with big-tech companies. Second, digital platforms were considered a 'catalyst' to merge a broad consensus around platform capitalist 'innovation'. The PSOE's practices to co-opt subaltern groups into this hegemonic project were crucial in this respect, as demonstrated by the partial adoption of a basic income. Whilst the PSOE adopted MLI to promote a narrative optimistically promising a transition to post-work society, its actual function was to disaggregate the subaltern groups affected by economic digitalisation.

5.5.2 Platform party politics

The PSOE's understanding of digital platforms as 'catalysts' to forge consensus for Techno-Third Way hegemonic project is even more evident when analysing the party's digitalisation. In this subsection, I will first describe how the PSOE's deep digitalisation was part of a reconfiguration aimed at hybridising mass- and personalistic- models of organisations. Second, I will explain how the PSOE's digitalisation sought to combine a centralised and professionalised management of the party's campaigning and the implementation of a relevant number of tools to improve activists' participation.

5.5.2.1 The hybrid digital party. Integrating mass and personal models of organisation

The PSOE undertook a consistent digitalisation process, especially after Pedro Sanchez gained back the party's leadership in 2017. The milestones of this reconfiguration can be identified in three sets of tools. First, the development of an app, miPSOE, then transformed into the 'Militants' Portal'. The portal encompasses the main organisational features of the party, such as the registration of members, intra-party votes, and the collection of support for intra-party and election candidacies (see interview Mariano Moreno Pavón, national managing director of PSOE 2017-2021, 30/07/2021). Second, establishing a 'Department of Innovation, Analysis and New Audiences (DIANA)' (PSOE, 2021) to professionalise the party's communication and organisation of election campaigns. Third, creating a 'Department for the Revitalisation of Local Branches' whose aim was to refreshen 'the political action of the militant activist in the era of social media, the so-called instant-time society' (PSOE, 2021, p. 25).

These projects have been the landmarks of the PSOE's 'ecological and digital transformation plan', put in place since 2019, which was also associated with increased financial investment

by central party offices on the party's digitalisation -from 600,000 €/year up to 4 million € (interview Moreno). Moreover, the party established a system of micro-loans online, through which 'citizens and activists invest with a remuneration of 3 per cent per year to fund its digital and ecological transformation' (interview Moreno). The party's digitalisation was the cornerstone of an organisational reconfiguration brought by Sanchez to empower members in intra-party decision making to the detriment both of regional and national directive committees (PSOE, 2017a; see also Barberà and Rodríguez-Teruel, 2020). As pointed out by García Blanco, the imposition of members-primaries to select the leadership should be understood in association with the adoption of digital tools as ways to

> 'adapt to a new reality that somehow requires greater permeability to society. Those who are critical of the primary system emphasise the risks of Bonapartism that would convert a general secretary legitimated by 200,000 militants into an irremovable and unaccountable chief. However, as with every change, the point is not about resisting it but putting fair counterweights in place. Above all, we wanted to overcome the past flaws of our party's structure, which I suffered with Pedro Sanchez when intermediate bureaucracies disconnected from activists made crucial decisions without listening to their voices'.

Therefore, the digital organisation was strategically adopted to present a new image of the PSOE, redirecting decision-making from parties' intermediate cadres to activists. However, this 'democratiser' function of platforms should be understood in combination with intense practices of centralised management of the party's functions to reinforce the PSOE's hegemonic project.

5.5.2.2 Enabling and controlling activism. Hegemonic practices through digital platforms

The PSOE understood digital platforms as a space to multiplicate the spread of leader's and central party's messages, and this view informed the adoption of practices for the professional

management of organisational and communication functions. As stated in the 'Management Report' by the party's NEC 2017-2021, thanks to the new technologies

> 'a new political "consumer" is emerging, not a mere recipient of information, characterized by apathy, but actively engaged in content creation, consumption and distribution (…). Therefore, social media transform activists and citizens who never started an ideological discussion in their private relations by enabling them to actively participate in discussions on social networks, offering a much greater reach of contact than any other offline initiative'. (pp. 25-26)

Second, this understanding of how digital media changes the nature of militancy as an active reproducer of centrally-managed messages was the basis for developing DIANA, a department in charge of mimicking hegemonic data extraction and management techniques for the control of online party's presence. Only to mention a few operations performed by the Department, through 'Dianatron', the PSOE developed a system of active social media analysis. First, 'Dianatron' provided micro-targeted campaigns based on sociodemographic and policy interests. Second, the PSOE established a 'target alert system', providing the activists with pre-formatted answers to discussions on social media that may be perceived as detrimental to Sanchez or the party's image. Consequently, activists are meant to perform as micro-influencers replicating centrally managed messages.

Third, the 'Department for the Revitalisation of Local Branches' contributed further to centralising control over the party's debates by redirecting local discussions to initiatives to support national leadership and Government. The 'Management Report' 2017-2021, indeed, made this shift clear by quantifying the local engagement of activists as follows:

> 'Through a survey conducted in 2019, we discovered that activists' participation was structured in a way that 71.3% concerned the local branch, 25.8% municipal, provincial and regional issues and only 2.9% was focused on the federal government. After implementing the Federal Action and Promotion Plan for Local Groups, in 2021, we achieved a shift in debates' focus with 28.3% on local issues, 31.6% on municipal, provincial and regional

> levels and 40.1% on municipal, provincial and regional levels on the federal government. Therefore, a process of "Mutual Visibility" militants-party-government-society has been promoted from the heart of the local branches'. (p. 24)

These practices are considered relevant for the Techno-Third Way strategic project in two ways. First, the professionalisation and centralisation of the party's digitalisation aimed to reinforce the grassroots support for the leader while restricting the power of internal opponents among the intermediates cadres (see Ruiz, 2017). Second, while serving the goal of presenting an innovative image of the PSOE, the digital plans and departments never touched the core of its hierarchical organisation. This process is evident, for instance, when looking at the functions of the 'Militants' Portal', which represented a way back from the experiment with the app miPSOE, which was also open to non-members and allowed participants to open horizontal forms of discussion. As declared by Moreno, indeed

> 'People did not participate on miPSOE. Hence, we decided to reorient the platform to members and only with top-down information flows'.

Moreover, although the PSOE officers develop party platforms internally, they adopt forms of data management that mimic EU regulations, with a data manager that protects from abuses. Therefore, the PSOE did not implement its platforms through open software or procedures of non-proprietary data management. Accordingly, the PSOE became a highly digitalised party seeking to exploit platforms to revive its social linkages with activists while simultaneously turning them into consumers and reproducers of centralised messages.

The PSOE's digitalisation was part of a strategical response to take back some fractions of potentially counter-hegemonic subaltern groups into the field of hegemony. First, as declared by Moreno, the 'ecological and digital transformation plan' was conceived within a broader strategy to target young and women that may be more sensitive to 'green' and 'digital issues':

> ‘Our members’ average age is 56, and women’s activism is around 36 per cent. In the past, we have not been able to attract or connect with these population shares’.

Second, many young voters had been politicised through the squares movements, around agendas demanding participatory democracy through online platforms as crucial channels to disrupt mainstream parties. As shown before (Ch.4.5), these demands were crucial for how Podemos sought to challenge the PSOE (see Bennett *et al.*, 2018; Fernández García and Luengo, 2020). Therefore, the adoption of online consultations to the members was meant to co-opt into the field of hegemony some of these demands while at the same time restricting their logic to confirmatory votes to the leadership’s aims (see interview Moreno).

To sum up, the PSOE’s consistent digitalisation was a distinctive attribute of its Techno-Third Way strategic project. It encompassed the adoption of multiple tools to reconfigure all the essential functions of the party, from activists’ engagement in national campaigns to candidates’ selection procedures. This architecture was meant to refresh the party’s image as empowering grass-root participation while at the same time centralising leadership control over the party. These goals were pursued by highly professionalised forms of management of members' and constituents’ data to reproduce forms of micro-targeted communication through social media. Consequently, the PSOE’s digitalisation first reinforced its hegemonic role in the Spanish political system by taking back into centralised forms of party organisation shares of constituencies that had abandoned the Socialists when they had imposed austerity agendas. Second, and relatedly, the PSOE sought to exploit platform party politics to disaggregate radical opponents that were challenging mainstream politics by claiming the emancipatory potentialities of participatory democracy through online platforms.

5.6 Techno-Third Way strategic projects to navigate hegemony. Comparative analysis

I summarised in Table 5.1 the main practices through which the PD and PSOE shaped their Techno-Third Way strategic projects. In this section, I will discuss the main commonalities and differences between the cases. Accordingly, I will first explore how the parties aimed at disaggregating alternatives to platform capitalism. Second, I will analyse how the PD and PSOE organically represented the interests of the ruling classes of platform capitalism. Third, I will focus on these parties' elites reproduced 'common-sense' views to facilitate the reproduction of hegemony in platform societies' hegemony. Finally, I will highlight how the differences in parties' approaches resulted in contrasting areas of tension.

Table 5.1 Techno-Third Way. Strategic projects for hegemony. Main attributes

	DISAGGREGATING ALTERNATIVES	ORGANIC TIES TO RULING CLASSES	DISSEMINATING COMMON SENSE	AREAS OF TENSION
Platform Capitalism	Promoting data commodification and exploitation	Further deregulations to attract big fin-tech direct investments.	'Digital Innovation' as opportunities for all	
	Incentives to start-ups to attract young generations	Platform business model for SME and state	Entrepreneurialism as good citizenship	
Differences PD	Unions and public officers as brakes to innovation	Deregulating job markets as credibility to tech investors	Critical views equate attacks to any innovation	Intra-party factionalism concerning attacks on unions
PSOE	Compromises with unions: wages for public subsidies	Displacement at the EU level of soft regulations for platform capitalists	Social consensus brings to post-scarcity	Clashes between public investments and the social impacts of big tech
Platform Party Politics	Activists as leader's followers. Social media managed to silence intra-party opponents	No horizontal integration on parties' platforms. Big tech alike data management.	Social media establish direct links leader-citizens	
Differences				
PD	Digital weaponised vs mass party	Intermediate cadres turned to micro-influencers	Ridiculing digital direct democracy	Clashes with pro-mass party factions
PSOE	Digital to co-opt mass into electoral professional party	Managerial use of micro-targeted campaigns to centralise party debates.	Mimicking marginal forms of online participation	Promises of horizontality vs actual centralisation

Regarding the disaggregation of alternatives to hegemony, the analysis identifies one main commonality and one main difference between the cases. Both parties promote anti-class views of societies. This stance was evident, for instance, in the shared views by parties' officers naturalising individualism as a benchmark of modernity and in their acceptance of market competition as the standard of good citizenship. In addition, both parties actively advocated views about the business models of platform capitalism, selecting discourses and policies' agendas to boost data commodification. Further, both parties endorsed innovation to justify practices seeking to attract young generations into the field of hegemony. However, on the one hand, the PD under Renzi's leadership adopted a strategic project seeking to disaggregate working class organisations through harsh confrontations by promoting anti-union and anti-state bureaucracies' discourses and policies' agendas. Further, the PD's emphasis on 'start-ups' and self-entrepreneurialism aimed to prompt a generational divide within subaltern classes. On the contrary, the PSOE's strategy under Sanchez's leadership was oriented toward integrating within hegemony subaltern groups by seeking broad social consensus. Hence, the main goal of the PSOE was to co-opt some of the logic of resistance by neutralising the aspects that may affect the core of platform capitalist hegemony. I identified this strategy in two domains. First, the PSOE supported narratives about the positive effects of digital technologies beyond 'waged jobs' through adopting a limited version of a basic income. Second, the encompassing digitalisation of the party's organisation sustained the narratives about its potentiality to foster grassroots participation while simultaneously centralising the control of activists' debates.

Empirical findings demonstrate similar commonalities and differences concerning how the PD and PSOE aimed at gaining credibility as organic representatives of the ruling classes of

platform capitalism. Both parties sought to guarantee the representation of the core interests of big tech companies by promoting, at best, soft regulations for data extraction and commodification practices. In addition, the PD and PSOE turned the business models of platform capitalist companies into the benchmark for SME digitalisation. However, regarding the strategic projects to cement hegemonic alliances, the two parties differ in their approaches. Indeed, the PD under Renzi's leadership aimed at exploiting the opposition by unions to its government to present the party as business-friendly, as the 'champion' of deregulation of the Italian job markets to attract big tech direct investments. Relatedly, the PD aimed at establishing a 'vanguard' social alliance ruled by tech and financial corporates and a mass of young self-entrepreneurs in the digital sectors. Conversely, Sanchez's leadership prioritised holding together the representation of big tech companies with the consensual adherence to these policies by unions and SME representatives. Relatedly, the PSOE's strategy was to cement a broad social alliance encompassing big companies, small entrepreneurs and domesticated workers.

Techno-Third Way was key for both parties to disseminating 'common-sense' hegemonic views. The PD and the PSOE adopted narratives marking the digital as the bearer of a positive 'revolution' opening opportunities for all citizens whilst minimising its disruptive effects on jobs. Further, the PD and PSOE a-critically espoused the logic of data extraction and management of the big techs to make public offices more efficient and less 'bureaucratic'. However, these views resulted in different combinations between the two parties. The PD elites supportive of Renzi's leadership mostly adopted discourses and practices turning the 'digital' into a 'symbolic weapon' against its opponents to raise divides between those outdated groups stuck in the past and nostalgia and those 'young and innovative' groups

enthusiastically engaged in digital markets competition. On the contrary, the PSOE adopted hyper-optimistic narratives on digital platforms to put them at work as a 'catalyst' to cement a majoritarian social alliance around its hegemonic project. Therefore, for instance, the digital economy was the ground for narratives aiming at supporting innovative capitalist companies while integrating precarious young generations with LMI. Further, the adoption of professionalised digital tools within party organisation aimed to attract young constituents by responding to some of their demands for participatory democracy while implementing professionalised and centralised tools to control the party's communication.

The differences in hegemonic strategic projects between the two parties resulted in diverging areas of tension. In the Italian case, I identified two tensions related to relevant clashes between parties' competing factions. First, the 'weaponisation' of platform capitalism logics against unions, states' bureaucracies and older generations was highly contested by 'soft leftist' factions within the party, which claimed the need for more consensual forms of dialogue with workers' organisations. Second, the implementation of digital platforms for the party's organisation and communication, which Renzi's supporters meant as means to turn activists and intermediate cadres into a base of mini-influencers replicating the leader's messages, was contested as detrimental to the mass party. In the Spanish case, two different tensions emerge from the analysis, and they are related to the consequences of the party's hyper-optimistic views about the digital revolution. First, the narratives and policies' agendas about the digital revolution do not consider the emergence of potential clashes between the interests of subaltern groups with those of the ruling classes. Second, there is an intrinsic tension between the promise to implement digital tools within the party organisation for

participatory purposes and how these tools were actually exploited to professionalise and personalise the party.

5.7 Summary and next steps

In this Chapter, I began to analyse how the digitally proactive Techno-Third Way ideology was to be understood, besides a system of beliefs, as a material organising principle for parties' strategic projects to actively navigate the 'real' hegemony governing platform societies. By looking through the perspective of the PD and PSOE elites at how parties understood the 'real' hegemony of platform societies and the ways it shapes platform capitalism and platform politics, the ideology acquires material strength as related to parties' strategic goals. The analysis of this Chapter allowed to better understand Techno-Third Way as an overarching perspective to reproduce hegemony. However, the findings show that the PD and PSOE interpreted the strategic projects through two 'equifinal' paths. The first, by the PD, aimed at 'weaponising' digital platforms to disaggregate and demonise resistance. The second, by the PSOE, conceived digital platforms as a 'catalyst' to cement a consensus to hegemony in platform society by attempting to co-opt some potentially opponent groups within hegemony.

The analysis of this Chapter also allows identifying one commonality alongside differentiated reactions by parties' elites to conjunctural phenomena characterising party internal factionalism and national party systems. Indeed, both parties reshaped their strategic projects under 'outsider' leaders. Renzi and Sanchez aimed to gain control over their parties by exploiting digital platforms to restrict the intermediate cadres' intra-party functions. Indeed, both leaders saw the intermediate levels as those within which opponent factions could retain

their spaces of manoeuvre. However, whilst Renzi, also given the specific origin of the PD as resulting from the merge of antecedent leftist and centrist parties, ignited confrontations with opponent factions, Sanchez aimed at building a broader consensus around his leadership, crucially by promoting a comprehensive reorganisation of the PSOE as a hybrid digital party. This difference is even starker regarding how the PD and PSOE tactically reacted to the emergence in their respective parties' systems of radical competitors, namely with the 5 Star Movement (M5S) in Italy and Podemos in Spain. Indeed, whilst Renzi's tactic was to frontally attack the M5S by ridiculing their claims for direct democracy through digital platforms and UBI, Sanchez's tactic was to co-opt some of the instances brought about by Podemos and the squares' movements.

The combination of these structural and conjunctural reorientations allows identifying a common overarching strategic project interpreted through two different paths to navigate real hegemony in platform societies. In the next Chapter, I will move into the field of counter-hegemony by looking at how the three parties that I identified as 'Post Social Democratic' -the French PS, the Italian SEL, and the Spanish Podemos- tapped into the confrontations for hegemony.

CHAPTER 6. POST-SOCIAL DEMOCRACY.NETWORKING COUNTER-HEGEMONY?

6.1 Introduction

In this Chapter, I focus on how Post-Social Democracy (PSD) informed strategic projects seeking to initiate counter-hegemony. In Chapter 3, I conceptualised PSD as an ideology conceiving the digital revolution as a toolkit to rebalance markets and public powers whilst overcoming some of the SD's traditional fundamental roots in industrial productivism, labourism, and representative democracy. More specifically, I argued that understanding the 'digital revolution' as providing new tools for participatory democracy and cooperative relations of production was crucial for this change process. Therefore, as a system of beliefs, PSD seems to indicate a radicalisation process of traditional Social Democracy. As with Chapters 5 and 7, the analysis of PSD strategic projects will seek to answer the following question:

- How did ELPs' reflections on the digital revolution inform their strategic projects to navigate or transform the real hegemony of platform societies?

The question will be unpacked by looking at how parties' strategic projects were meant to intervene to tackle alternatives, ties to classes and common sense in two spaces: platform capitalism and platform party politics.

One Social Democratic Party, the French Parti Socialiste-PS (Socialist Party) and two Radical Left Parties, the Italian Sinistra Ecologia Libertà-SEL (Left, Environment, Freedom) and the Spanish Podemos-POD (We Can), are the cases upon which this Chapter is focused. I analyse

the strategic projects of these parties through multiple qualitative data, including sixteen interviews with parties' officers and experts in digital economy and politics (list in Appendix 1) and twelve secondary sources as congress resolutions, policies' reports and position papers. The analysis identifies one commonality and one main area of difference among the cases:

1. PSD was a strategic project to radicalise SD reformist approaches. The afore-mentioned parties understood the digital revolution as the bearer of significant transformations to the structures of capitalism and democracy. Accordingly, the three parties aimed to exploit digital platforms to open up new possibilities for advancing counter-hegemonic strategic projects by channelling radical demands into democratic institutions.

2. PSD strategic projects substantially differed in how they understood resistance in platform societies. On the one hand, the PS focused on platform capitalism to innovate its egalitarian agendas but conceived platform party politics as a hostile space threatening the traditional representative functions of political parties. SEL and Podemos, instead, mainly emphasised platform party politics as prefiguring the possibility of new forms of radical democracy to disrupt centre-left mainstream parties. Still, both RLPs adopted a-conflictual optimistic views on the chances to tame platform capitalism that eventually constrained their spaces of manoeuvre.

The Chapter is structured as follows: the next section will specify the analytical tools to assess counter-hegemony by PSD parties; sections three to five will look at how each case sought to advance counter-hegemony in platform capitalism and platform party politics. Finally, I will bring the cases together to compare commonalities and differences in their strategic projects.

6.2 How to analyse Post-Social Democracy as a counter-hegemonic strategic project

In this section, I specify the analytical framework to analyse how PSD parties' strategic projects sought to open spaces of possibilities for counter-hegemonic resistance. Assessing whether PSD fits into counter-hegemony is particularly challenging as, traditionally, Social Democracy was alternatively interpreted as aiming at disrupting hegemony 'from inside-out' (Berman, 2009) or reproducing hegemony by marginally reshaping its ruling forces (Bailey, 2009a). As theorised above (Ch.3.3), the emergence of Post-Social Democracy may be understood as an attempt to renew and radicalise Social Democracy by envisioning transformative alternatives to the digital revolution. However, Social Democracy tends to operate at the crossroads between hegemonic navigation and counter-hegemonic transformation. Therefore, throughout this Chapter, I will consider to what extent PSD strategic projects worked to advance counter-hegemony or if this ideology was, in Gramscian terms, an arbitrary intellectual product incapable of generating organic movements of the subaltern classes (see Worth, 2015, p. 150). As with Techno-Third Way, the analysis will uncover parties' practices in three main areas of intervention: alternatives, ties to classes, and common sense. More specifically, the range of practices that PSD parties may adopt can be categorised as

1- Enabling alternatives and resistance. This strategy may be pursued by:

    a. Disentangling some fractions of subaltern groups previously co-opted within hegemony;

    b. Channelling resistance into the institutions of liberal democracy to transform the game-field of political possibilities for transformative agendas.

2- Establishing ties with the subaltern classes. Parties' practices may seek to:

a. Empower subaltern groups and organisations of civil society by providing political platforms to advance their claims;

b. Networking dispersed subaltern groups through unifying agendas.

3- Elevating 'common-sense' views through practices that may provide:

a. An anchorage to 'popular' claims that challenge consent towards hegemonic blocs by popular classes;

b. A pedagogical elevator to organise popular common sense claims into counter-hegemonic movements.

These analytical tools will be adopted in the following sections to investigate practices of political counter-hegemony with regard to platform capitalism and platform party politics.

First, I look at how PSD parties understood platform capitalism and which contradictions they identified within its hegemonic driving forces. Second, I focus on how these views are related to broader strategies to aggregate potential counter-hegemonic groups by channelling them within the struggles to win over institutional power. Finally, I examine whether these parties sought to elevate 'common-sense' views about platform societies to enable resistance.

Regarding platform party politics, I focus on the logic driving PSD parties' digitalisation to assess the extent to which they were designed to facilitate the advance of counter-hegemony. First, I analyse how digital platforms are implemented to subvert hegemonic forms of political organisation (Chadwick and Stromer-Galley, 2016). Second, I focus on how parties' platforms are meant to combine spontaneous forms of mass activism with centralised vertical political direction (Gramsci, 1971).

After analysing the PS, SEL and Podemos practices, I will bring the findings together to identify and compare the main patterns among the party's strategic projects to advance counter-hegemony and the tensions involved in these processes that may have hampered the transformational potentialities of PSD parties.

6.3 PS and Post-Social Democracy. A digital update for social democratic survival

In this section, I will analyse the main attributes of the French PS counter-hegemonic strategic project. First, I will highlight that the PS elites understood platform capitalism as bearing new inequalities and defining a new game-field for renewed egalitarian agendas seeking to establish digital universal public services. Second, I will focus on how the PS elites conceived platform party politics as a threat to the representative and mediating functions of the party. Overall, the analysis will show that the PS strategic project interpreted the logic of the digital revolution as an 'update' to revive the functions of Social Democracy in platform societies.

6.3.1 Platform capitalism

In this subsection, I will, first, analyse the PS' critical understanding of platform capitalism as the bearer of new social divides but also opportunities to achieve greater equality. Second, I will highlight how new agendas regarding platform labour targeted the 'left behind' by the digital revolution as an attempt to revitalise the PS social linkages with subaltern groups. Finally, I will identify the core tensions that affected the PS strategic project, leading the party to conceive platform capitalism as an 'update' to revive social democracy after abandoning the more radical turn undertaken in 2017 during Benoît Hamon's presidential campaign (see Ch. 3.3.2).

6.3.1.1 Platform capitalism. Equality, again.

The PS elites' understandings of the digital revolution contributed to a process of ideological and strategical reconfiguration that took place during the crisis experienced by the party after the backlashes from the discontent towards the presidency of the Socialist François Hollande (see Ch.4.3.1). Indeed, since the 2017 elections, the PS elites aimed at defining a 'new' Social Democratic project autonomous both to the centrist movement of President Macron and the leftist LFI.

Consequently, the PS Post-Social Democratic turn sought, first and foremost, to distance the party from the inheritance of Hollande's presidency and his austerity agenda (see Ch. 4.3.1 and interview Isabelle This-Saint Jean, NEC 2018-current Secretary of Party Researches, 04/05/2021). Going back to equality and confronting platform societies' injustices were the fundamental driving principles of this strategic project. Indeed, as stated by the congress resolution electing Olivier Faure as party leader in 2018, the PS wanted to make clear that equality was not

> 'a theme, but a compass. (…). By upsetting the structures of the economy and the distribution of wealth, globalization and the digital revolution have weakened the middle classes, impoverished the most modest, and considerably reinforced the concentration of wealth' (PS, 2018, p. 7).

Therefore, economic globalisation and platform capitalism were considered inter-related phenomena to understand three negative impacts of current capitalist rulership. First, platform capitalists subtracted resources to fund public services through tax avoidance. Second, big-tech companies further split the working class imposing a new polarisation between 'digitally' trained and uneducated workers. Third, the real hegemony of platform society was increasingly widening digital divides, limiting citizens' rights to access digitalised

public services (interview This Saint Jean). However, besides these critical views, informing more 'techno-pessimist' officers, other PS leaders espouse more optimist outlooks regarding the digital revolution. On the one hand, the PS experienced stark debates between these tendencies. On the other hand, the party's leadership attempted to elaborate its agendas to mediate between opposite views. As stated by Olivier Jacquin (Senator, NEC 2018-current, Secretary of Transports and Uberization interview 06/05/2021), indeed,

> 'We were initially fascinated by the start-up model (…). Since 2017, however, we also had in our internal debates dogmatic views along slogans like "Amazon is killing small businesses". But our party should not refuse progress, as the industrial revolution brought by Amazon is inescapable. However, we want a progress that preserves the French socio-economic model. We don't want cheaters or slavers, so we must impose regulations!'

All interviewees emphasised that the PS ideological reorientation was key to overcoming these divides and tackling the harsh consequence of Hollande's 'austerity agendas' that made the PS lose traction over subaltern classes. Therefore, since 2017, the PS elites reshaped the party's agendas to reconnect to those groups most affected by social insecurity. As explained by This Saint Jean, the party aimed at finding a common denominator around

> 'social justice. This change meant that we prioritised popular classes as our target. (…). However, inequalities today can no longer be understood strictly in terms of classes but must be combined with other components. This combination is the strength of the idea of intersectionality'.

Relatedly, defining regulatory agendas to tame big-tech companies was a crucial ground upon which PS attempted to rebuild its Post-Social Democratic strategic project.

6.3.1.2 Thinking globally, acting locally. Networking the 'left behind' of platform capitalism

The cornerstone of the PS strategy was to take advantage of the party's ongoing strength in leading local governments to promote policies to reposition the party as egalitarian. As argued

by Sébastien Vincini (NEC 2018-current Secretary of Party Development and Vice-President of Department Haute Garonne, 26/11/2021), indeed,

> 'We are really in the logic of thinking globally and acting locally. The question of the digital revolution is key in this respect, notably regarding labour and digital divides. On the one hand, we see discourses by Macron on the start-up nation, smart cities etc. On the other hand, many are 'left behind' by the digital revolution. We are the party of those people. We think that the digital revolution can be governed to improve public services and boost economic growth. For instance, Macron announced a plan to expand broadband infrastructures to all households by 2025. In Socialist departments, instead, we decided to go further and faster: by injecting public money, by controlling and negotiating with private investors, we made sure that each household, free of charge, may be connected by 2022 and that no one is left behind even in the smallest villages'.

Therefore, the PS practices aimed at gaining back public control over the deployment of digital infrastructures without, however, challenging their private property (see interview Remi Cardon -Senator, NEC 2018-current Secretary of Digital Divides, 21/05/2021). The PS strategic project aimed at overcoming digital divides by providing on a local level 'universal digital services' (interviews Cardon and Vincini). These local policies aimed to provide 'good practices' upon which to build from the bottom-up national initiatives to tackle big-tech monopolies. Indeed, the PS discourses are strongly critical of big-tech as attacking public sovereignty. As argued by Cardon,

> 'Microsoft knows French companies and consumers better than anyone, which is worrying. Moreover, when data are stored abroad, cyber-security issues exist, and the states struggle even to get access to data. Therefore, I think that the challenge to be faced at the European level is to gain back sovereignty over digital technologies, to face GAFAM and Chinese companies'.

Overall, the PS strategic project was meant to connect and represent the 'left behind' by platform capitalism. More specifically, as emerged from the interviews, the PS elites attempted to establish close linkages to two groups affected by platform capitalists'

exploitation. First, the precarious 'platform workers'. Second, the citizens who were excluded from access to digitalised public services.

6.3.1.3 Forward to post-workerism or back to labourism?

On the one hand, the strategic project to attract 'disconnected' citizens was an area of consensus among the PS elites, as it targeted citizens from the working class (see interview Cardon) while at the same time opening up opportunities to innovate and expand public services. On the other hand, representing platform workers was an area of tension within the party. Indeed, the conditions of platform workers as self-entrepreneurs challenged those traditional left-wing views equating labour with waged employees. Jacquin made clear this point when talking about his meetings with an independent movement of French deliverers named CLAPS (Collectif de Livreurs Autonomes de Paris – Paris Autonomous Deliverers Collective)

> 'They shook me up. These workers told me: "We don't care about being reclassified as employees. We just want a decent life. Appealing the Supreme Court to get re-qualified in years… is useless for us!" This meeting led me to change my mindset. And consequently, I wrote an amendment to say: "they need minimum incomes. No minimum wages". "Minimum wage" implied that they should be employees. But I was attacked by many comrades for this proposal. They accused me of supporting false self-employment and being against labour protection. I always answered that we must establish a proper dialogue with these groups to win elections. But reformist unions and many PS officers are just formatted on the defence of waged workers'.

These debates suggest that the PS strategic project to advance counter-hegemony was affected by a tension between more innovative post-workerist views (Srnicek and Williams, 2016) and traditional labourist approaches. The first tendency arose, as shown above (see Ch. 3.3.2), with the flagship proposals by the Presidential candidate Hamon in 2017 around 'taxing robots' to fund jobs transitions and unconditional Universal Basic Income (UBI). Hamon's

strategy was to disentangle the PS from the field of hegemony by radically challenging productivism as the key to providing increased resources to be redistributed through the welfare state. After the 2017 electoral defeats, however, on the one hand, Hamon's inheritance was relevant to shaping the PS' ideology along critical understanding of platform capitalism. On the other hand, the PS abandoned some of his most innovative proposals. All the interviewees made clear this turn when explaining why the party left the proposals about 'taxing robots' and shifted from supporting UBI to more moderate forms of basic income. Regarding the former, Jacquin explained that

> 'Robotisation is not different from what happened with any industrial revolutions, whereby machines substitute human work. It is just a different form, and our goal is to accompany this modernisation. We saw the risk of a 'reactionary' turn with Hamon's proposal. We cannot be against innovations that make companies more competitive. We do not want to disrupt the generation of value'.

Regarding the shift from UBI to basic income, Vincini argued that 'since 2018 our project is basic income. It is not the unconditional UBI. It is both an income of dignity and an income of activation'.

Therefore, the PS oscillated between turns to more radical stances and returns to moderate agendas. These uncertainties signal that, overall, the PS counter-hegemonic strategic project was affected by the ongoing attempts to elaborate compromises between subaltern and ruling classes (see PS, 2014, p. 20). Therefore, the most recent posture vis-à-vis platform capitalism can be conceptualised as a problematic attempt to radicalise PS within the constraints of reformist practices. This-Saint Jean sustained this analysis when explaining that

> 'The PS wants to affirm a new radicalism that, in any case, must be specific to Social Democracy. This principle has driven a strong reorientation of PS since 2017. First, we abandoned any influence from Third Way views prioritising "responsibilities" over "rights". Second, we integrated environmentalism as an issue as salient as social justice. Finally, we

> went back to a more interventionist approach. But at the same time, we abandoned productivism, a major break for Social Democracy. We think now that not only we need to govern the mode of production, but to radically reform the modes of consumption'.

To sum up, platform capitalism was a crucial driver of a process of strategical reorientation by the PS since 2017. Party's elites aimed to open a new space of opportunity for a 'counter-hegemonic' strategy to tame platform capitalism's driving forces. However, the project to radically refresh SD was inherently affected by tension with views about the digital revolution as a more limited 'update' of SD. As a result, the PS strategic project was affected by abrupt movements toward fully Post-Social Democratic claims, as with Hamon's post-workerist agenda in 2017, and returns to more traditional reformist postures.

6.3.2 Platform party politics

In this subsection, I will analyse how the PS did consider the party's digitalisation as a problem to define its counter-hegemonic strategic project. First, I will highlight how platform party politics was primarily considered a hostile environment by the PS elites, as the party's antagonists were exploiting new technologies to attack the elites of representative democracy. Second, however, I will focus on how the party undertook a process of innovative adaptation by adopting limited digital tools. Relatedly, I will highlight some contradictions affecting the PS strategic project, as the party's elites oscillate between prioritizing digital platforms as tools to implement direct and participatory intra-party democracy or professionalise electoral campaigns.

6.3.2.1 Under the siege. Platform politics as a hostile space

The PS elites were starkly resistant to change the party's organisation through digitalisation for two main reasons. First, they conceived platforms as contributing to over-simplify political

debates while instead, politics is about the ongoing games of mediation and compromises between competing instances and groups. Indeed, as stated in 'Socialist Chart', the document collecting the core principles of the PS,

> 'New social media are changing the public debate. The saturation of images, the immediacy and the emotion, the excessive personalization eclipse the argumentation and the collective commitment. Socialist and social-democratic formations are shaken by this universe which consecrates the leader over the party, the slogan over the programmes' (2014, p. 10).

Second, the PS elites critically saw platform politics as spreading 'common-sense' views about horizontal participation against hierarchical political structures, a trend that the French Socialists understood as extremely dangerous for democracy. For instance, Vincini clearly pointed out that the digitalisation of politics brings about big risks to the functioning of democracy by arguing that

> 'Platforms make possible a total horizontality. But horizontality also brings the permanent agora and the permanent mess whereby every opinion, true or false, informed or not, is equally valuable. And this is not good for democracy. Democracy requires organisation. (…) Our party is made of activists, and above them, of Federations led by first secretaries, and so on, up to the national organisation. We have not done as LFI. We do not want a model like LFI, with "Mélenchon and the people". We go on differently because democracy cannot resist that "horizontality". Even in a digital world, we keep the system very pyramidal and organised. We send information from the NEC to the local cadres. But not all the information to everyone, as it would be overwhelming and end up disempowering people instead of empowering them. Without intermediate leaders, it is a permanent agora. And that system does not work'.

This line of reasoning clearly reflects the PS elites' perception of digital politics as a hostile environment placing the party under siege. The PS elites observe the attacks on the party's structure through digitalised politics as coming from all competitors. From the left, by LFI, that is seen as a threat because platform movements (see Ch. 7.4) claim to replace left-right divides with people-elites ones, whereas the PS strategy is to establish a broad left-wing coalition to

overcome electoral marginality (see PS, 2018, p. 3). From the centre and the right, with Macron's movement La République En Marche (LReM) and Le Pen's radical right Rassemblement National hegemony on social media through

> ‘armies of trolls who completely destabilise democracy, imposing a continuous flow of over-simplified messages without any hierarchy that makes any democratic debate impossible’ (Interview This-Saint Jean).

However, the PS elites eventually conceived the ‘digital ecosystem’ also as a new game-field imposing multiple processes of organisational adaptation for the party to survive.

6.3.2.2 Troubled digital adaptation for the survival of the bureaucratic party

The process of digital organisational adaptation by the PS was characterised by a mismatch between declared goals and actual practices. On the one hand, the PS leader Faure claimed the need to implement participatory platforms to reduce Federations' rigid bureaucratic intra-party power (see PS, 2018, p. 1). On the other hand, only marginal organisational functions were transferred online. For instance, the PS platform has allowed since 2018 the registration of members, although membership is still to be validated by Federations (see PS, 2021). Further, the party’s website is mainly designed as a ‘showcase’ for parties’ news, providing materials for activists without chances for horizontal discussion or participation (PS, 2022). All in all, the PS’ digitalisation seems affected by competing views among the party’s elites. On the one hand, some officers claim the need to enhance the use of platforms to disintermediate the relations between citizens and elites. On the contrary, other factions conceive digital platforms mainly as providing a set of techniques to professionalise party campaigns. Recently, the PS implemented a digital platform in preparation for the 2022 Presidential elections, through which to collect programmatic proposals, to be voted on by all citizens

registered on the platform (https://www.rdv2022.fr/). However, the platform was shut down once the delegates at the National Conference selected Anne Hidalgo, the Socialist mayor of Paris, as the presidential candidate (see interview Vincini). At the same time, the PS struggles at achieving effective professionalisation of its campaigns, for instance, through data analytical techniques, as a result of resistance to putting under review its traditional forms of militancy. As clearly explained by Cardon

> 'I organised training on digital tools among activists every week. Most of them thought it was about publishing more Facebook posts. But this is not the main point. Most of them do not understand that it is about changing our mindset. It is about adopting entirely new forms of political debates. Currently, users' average time of attention on social media when scrolling their news feeds is four seconds. It means that we are ignored if we do not provide striking messages. We are now using more digital tools for internal communication. But we need to accelerate our transition. We must spend less time in internal debates and reflections and focus on popularising our proposals, making them more accessible. We have a traditional base, and therefore a cultural gap must be filled'.

In summary, the PS elites understand parties' digitalisation as bearing dangers more than opportunities. Platform party politics is seen as a hostile game field contributing to the party's marginalisation. Therefore, the PS digitalisation passively adapted to new external challenges. The PS adopted digital tools mostly to make internal pyramidal communications more fluid and efficient. Instead, experimentations at adopting platforms to make democracy more participatory and horizontal are mostly rhetorical promises, which did not result in major organisational reforms for two main inter-related reasons. First, the PS conceives participatory democracy, at the most, as a complement to make representative democracy more efficient, but not a replacement for any of its traditional institutionalised functions. The second reason is related to recent evolutions of the French party system, with the emergence of 'platform parties' as LFI, on the Left and LReM on the centre. The PS's strategy to face these parties is to renew its agenda by prioritising its proposals and social linkages in response to platform

capitalism while at the same time conceiving the resistance of a traditional mass bureaucratic party as a frontier of survival for Social Democratic Politics.

6.4 SEL and Post-Social Democracy. Platforms as a bridge to link radical and reformist politics

In this section, I will look at how Italian SEL adopted a strategic project to advance counter-hegemony in platform society. First, I will highlight how SEL's elites' understandings of platform capitalism went from 'techno-optimism' to 'techno-pessimism' regarding whether the digital economy may boost 'sharism' or worsen labour exploitation. Second, I will look at how SEL elites attempted to organise a network linking the party to a platform social movement to attract new activists when marginally digitalising the mass party itself. Overall, I will conceptualise SEL strategic project for counter-hegemony as aiming to build up a 'bridge' to link radical and reformist politics.

6.4.1 Platform Capitalism

In this subsection, I will first look at how the initial techno-optimism of SEL elites inspired a strategic project that links radical and reformist politics. Second, I will highlight the struggles at keeping alive the SEL experiment during the age of austerity. Finally, I will explain how these struggles were associated with a turn to techno-pessimism that characterised the declining phase of SEL marked by internal generational clashes overlapping factional disputes between radical and reformist factions.

6.4.1.1 Digital social innovation to link radical and reformist politics

SEL's attitudes vis-à-vis platform capitalism were part of a broader strategic project by the leader and regional Governor of Apulia (2005-2015), Nichi Vendola, to bring together radical

and reformist politics. Indeed, SEL elites promoted views of platform societies as potentially overcoming the perceived trade-offs between 'quasi-socialist' goals and reformist means. As Vendola put it, SEL attempted to

> 'reconstruct a "philosophy", a political culture […] The pace of the reformist and the horizon of the revolutionary can prepare a new route that seeks to gather and sever the root of modern alienation in production and the organisation of social reproduction' (2011, p. 13)

As previously discussed (see Ch. 4.4.2), the SEL trajectory was characterised by a rapid outburst between 2009 and 2012 and an abrupt decline until its transformation into Italian Left (SI) in 2015 (see Chiocchetti, 2016). The succession of these phases also characterised SEL officers' understandings of platform capitalism. As described by Elisabetta Piccolotti (Secretary of Communication within SEL and SI NECs from 2011, 26/03/2021),

> 'Initially, a defining attribute of SEL was techno-optimism, the idea that digital technologies can liberate societies from the burdens of manual jobs and open new creative scenarios'.

Two main features characterised SEL techno-enthusiasm. First, the platform economy was seen as opening opportunities to advance counter-hegemony by radically containing capitalist rulership through gaining space for social and common goods. These views were influenced by 'social innovation' theories focusing on the production of social value through 'sharing' platforms as potentially transforming capitalism from a system of competition and exploitation into one of cooperation (see Mair and Martí, 2006, p. 37). Relatedly, 'sharing' platform economy positively blurred the boundaries between 'state' and 'markets', orienting the economic base towards a society of the 'common goods'. Accordingly, as stated in SEL's second Congress Resolution

> 'The nature of 'common goods' does not concern the traditional distinction between the state and the market or that between public and private property, but it introduces a more

> complex dimension (…) to affirm that property, both public and private, cannot damage the common good' (2014a, p. 17).

Second, the platform economy was considered crucial in overcoming the splits between manual and intellectual work. A division that SEL considered a significant barrier to advancing its counter-hegemonic strategic projects (see interview Giuseppe De Cristofaro, Senator 2013-2018, LEF NEC Coordinator between 2011 and 2015, 17/03/2021). As detailed by LEF's second Congress Resolution, indeed,

> 'Intellectual work is increasingly mixed with manual work, and this trend may finally overcome the fracture between cognitive and manual skills (…). Co-working spaces, start-ups, innovative companies in the knowledge economy, (…) the economy of care and relationship, smart grids, social communication flows, smart redevelopment of spaces and times. We must understand in depth these phenomena as attempts to escape from the present state of things and to open up new relationships between labour and entrepreneurship' (2014a, p. 4).

These optimistic views about platforms as commons to develop a renewed counter-hegemonic agenda were mirrored in SEL strategies to cement a broad social alliance between subaltern groups. All interviewees emphasised that the party's name 'Left, Environment, Freedom' aimed to signify the shift of left-wing culture 'from the primacy of the capital-labour antagonism, to one built-around a multi-centrality' (interview De Cristofaro). However, at least in parties' official discourses, this innovation sought to reinvigorate, not replace, the party's linkages to subaltern classes. All interviewees critically recognised that SEL activists and voters mainly were from 'urban and intellectual middle classes"' (see interviews Celeste Costantino, MP 2013-2018, SEL NEC 2010-2015, 03/05/2021 and Francesco Ferrara, Secretary of LEF Organisation between 2010 and 2014, 08/04/2021). According to De Cristofaro, the ongoing disconnection from the subaltern classes can be traced back to two related transformations that the Left was overall unable to face:

> ‘First, there is no more mass politicisation… the popular classes are now depoliticised, and therefore, the messages of our adversaries are more effective and easier to grasp. Traditionally, the Left successfully articulated complex understandings of society that were transferred to popular classes through the pedagogical function played by mass organisations. Once this massive politicisation vanished, our messages could not deliver successfully. Second, our inability reflected a delay in facing structural changes. The political Left was inextricably rooted in a precise idea of the state and labour organisation, Fordism (…). The Left faced a gigantic struggle to redefine a new political culture when that mode of production changed. As a result, we found ourselves, paradoxically, incapable of connecting with those we wish to represent’.

Adopting innovative agendas and organisational practices related to digital technologies were critical resources to address this disconnection. Similarly to what was described above for the PS (6.3.1), the experiences of local and regional governments were considered crucial to position SEL as a transformative agent of Italian politics. In the SEL case, however, the reference to local governments was more than an anchorage to radical policies-agendas. Instead, it was the cornerstone of an ‘epic’ narrative on the transformative potentialities of the SEL project. Indeed, as mentioned above (4.4.2), the victories of Vendola in Apulia as an outsider candidate inspired a sense of excitement among activists about SEL’s disruptive potential. As explained by Costantino, Vendola’s victories proved

> ‘that it was possible to govern according to leftist values, without diluting our ideals because of government. Apulia experience was the ground for us to shout out: Yes, we can!’

All our interviewees equate what they call the ‘cycle of victories’ of SEL (between 2009 and 2011) with Vendola’s performances as regional governor, and they relate SEL's success to the promotion of agendas that aimed at placing the Radical Left at the forefront of ‘innovation’. Two examples explain this point. First, as emphasised by Elisabetta Piccolotti (NEC 2011-2015 Secretary of Communication, 26/03/2021), regional policies to facilitate cooperative start-ups and innovative social enterprises

> ‘were key in Vendola’s regional government. Targeting young generations through innovation was crucial to challenging the dominant economic system. Technological and cultural innovation and start-up ecosystems were considered primary sources to get rid of Italian “nepotistic capitalism”’.

Second, all our interviewees constantly referred to ‘Boiling Spirits’ as the benchmark of Vendola’s innovation. That was a regional policy targeting young citizens to fund training programmes under the condition to transfer their knowledge in the creation of socially innovative and cooperative start-ups and enterprises. As recalled by Costantino

> ‘nowadays, everybody speaks about start-ups, co-working spaces and new models of collaborative enterprises. But at the beginning of the 2010s, we were the only party to give salience to these models. However, we must now recognise that even Vendola’s policies were targeting the young people in higher education, not those with subaltern backgrounds that were abandoning schools’

However, the over-emphasis on opportunities arising from the ‘sharing’ economy left the party disoriented on how to face the new context of the austerity crisis outburst in 2011, the context within which also changed attitudes vis-à-vis the digital revolution emerged.

6.4.1.2 The crisis of techno-optimism during the austerity age

As mentioned above (Ch. 4.4.2), the Italian ‘austerity age’ was a dramatic break in SEL and Vendola's growing traction over popular constituents (Bordandini, 2013). SEL struggled at presenting itself as a credible opponent to the austerity agendas imposed by the ‘technical’ government of Mario Monti, despite being at that time out of Parliament and therefore ‘free’ from institutional constraints. The main reason for this hardship was the ongoing attempt to keep its coalition with PD, which at that time was ongoingly supporting Monti’s government in Parliament (interviews De Cristofaro, Ferrara). This linkage with the PD eventually damaged SEL’s public image as a radical and disruptive organisation.

Within this changing context, the contradictions affecting SEL's optimistic understandings of platform economy as the space of the 'common goods' emerged. The over-reliance on the sense of possibility excited by Vendola's governorship resulted in the inability to redirect SEL strategies once the regional government adopted austerity policies. This process critically undermined the popularity of Vendola since 2011 (Damiani, 2016).

SEL elites recognised their struggles at redefining their strategic projects vis-à-vis the digital revolution during the age of austerity (see interview De Cristofaro). As the attempt to build up bridges between radical and reformist politics lost traction, SEL was increasingly affected by intra-party factionalism on two axes. First, SEL experienced harsh confrontations between radical and reformist factions. Second young officers advocating for 'post-workerist' agendas attacked elder officers coming from unions claiming the need to re-prioritise labour protection as SEL's primary goal. The intra-party debate about Universal Basic Income (UBI) exemplifies the latter divides. Indeed, UBI was the flagship proposal of young officers, considering it the cornerstone to keeping Vendola's traction over young generations alive. As explained by Maria Pia Pizzolante (member of SEL NEC 2013-2015, founder of the affiliated movement TILT, 11/03/2021),

> 'We aimed to address the fragmentation of workers affecting young generations. Some of them were free-lance, some of them employees. They may have specific needs, but focusing on differences, let them divided. Therefore, UBI was meant to provide these groups with a common goal and build mutual solidarity'.

However, elder officers linked to moderate unions attacked UBI, perceived as a project undermining the centrality of labour as the defining attribute of left-wing social linkages (see interviews Piccolotti, Pizzolante). The interviewees relate to the generational clashes and the UBI campaign as key examples of SEL 'lost chances'. More specifically, they refer to the fact

that Vendola initially succeeded at leveraging young activism and rebellion to connect broader constituencies around SEL counter-hegemonic project. However, finally, the indecisiveness of the leadership at breaking-up the cultural ties with the traditional Left hampered the disruptive potentialities of SEL's innovative strategy (interviews Costantino, Pizzolante).

6.4.1.3 The bridge did not unite. SEL decline and the turn to techno-pessimism

The general crisis of SEL from late 2011 until the party was shut down in 2015 was mirrored by an abrupt turn to techno-pessimism regarding both platform capitalist exploitation and the chances to advance alternative agendas. As emphasised by Erasmo Palazzotto (MP 2013-current, SEL NEC 2011-2015, 06/07/2021), this pessimism was grounded in

> ‘a typical leftist “vice”. We are excellent at reading the processes that are about to happen, we can describe them, but we fail at challenging them. For example, we understood that the control of the means of production is the key to exploitation and that nowadays, those means of production are mainly data (…), but we are incapable of thinking about how to regulate and change the control of these new means. For the Left, it is just a short-circuit’.

This reflection by Palazzotto on the challenge of going beyond the ‘critique’ of exploitation is evident when looking at SEL's struggles at defining unitary agendas to tackle austerity. SEL elites were unified by critical understandings of adverse effects on labour that increasingly emerged throughout the 2010s from platform capitalism, as with the ejection of workers through automation and the reabsorption of the unemployed through brutally precarious jobs (see Dyer-Witheford, 2015). As stated by Palazzotto

> ‘Let’s think about logistics. It is a clear example of how capitalism is being restructured by discharging the consequences of market competition at the bottom. Capitalists use algorithms to maximise their profits by lowering prices. To achieve this goal they discharge cost reduction to the bottom, to those workers whose functions cannot be automated…. Therefore, what matters to understanding exploitation is the control of the means of production’.

However, as shown above, with the debate about UBI, the overlap of factional disputes along the lines of radical and reformist views with generational clashes led to the impossibility of defining new constructive agendas informing counter-hegemonic strategies at the peak of the austerity age (interviews Costantino, Ferrara, Pizzolante).

To sum up, SEL was characterised by an initial phase of techno-optimism associated with a broader strategy to advance counter-hegemony by channelling radical agendas into institutional politics. However, the strategic project to build up bridges between radical and reformist politics through innovation underwent a major crisis when the 'austerity crisis' burst in 2011 when SEL began to decline. At first, SEL's crisis was associated with a turn to techno-pessimism at elaborating new agendas to organise counter-hegemony. Finally, the emergence of increasing clashes among SEL elites between radical and reformist factions and elder and younger generations led to the party shutting down in 2015.

6.4.2 Platform party politics

In this subsection, I will analyse SEL's' troubled' digitalisation as part of a broader strategy to bring together different forms of activism. First, I will analyse the SEL strategy of digitalisation to organise a network system gathering around the leader persona, a 'quasi-traditional' party and a digital social movement ('Nichi's Factories'). Second, I will focus on how this 'network' model raised unsolvable tensions between the logic of the movement- and the one of the mass- party and how the latest attempts to integrate these logics into SEL undermined its counter-hegemonic strategic project.

6.4.2.1 The Radical Left Network to link social movements and the mass party

From the onset, Vendola's project sought to connect, besides radical and reformist ideologies, anti- and pro-mass parties' stances. As recalled by Pizzolante, Vendola described traditional parties as 'disgusting dead-bodies, whose cadres were repulsive to any positive instance emerging from society'. These anti-parties' positions were relevant for Vendola's project to exploit 'common-sense' views as an anchorage to activate disenchanted voters from popular classes. However, at the same time, Vendola aimed to secure the consent of many factions from traditional left-wing parties that contributed to the creation of SEL in 2009. However, also SEL was supposed to overcome the typical organisation of the mass party. Indeed, as put by Ferrara,

> 'we did not want to create a classical Leninist party. Because it is top-down, it's a pyramid from the local "sections" to the "vertex". Instead, we called the local branches "circles" because they expressed the idea of circularity. We sincerely wanted to innovate. We wanted to be attractive to activists from social movements without forcing them to adhere to the party formally. Maybe it was not entirely a "bottom-up" movement, but we tried to break up the barriers impeding more political participation'.

To achieve these goals, a movement-alike organisation, 'Nichi's Factories', was created alongside the party, SEL. Therefore, initially, Vendola's project was a 'network system' (see Nunes, 2014) configured as a space with 'one head' (Vendola) and 'two bodies' (Nichi Factories and SEL, see interviews De Cristofaro, Ferrara). The two organisations, however, were not linked by any formal rule to regulate their relations and the lack of clear definitions about the spheres of actions of the organisations generated increased tensions among activists and officers. This 'void' of formal rules raised several conflicts about who should organise local initiatives, whether the SEL circle or the local Nichi Factory (interviews Ferrara, Piccolotti). This 'separation' between the network's nodes was also evident in the strongly asymmetrical levels

of digitalisation of the different organisations. More specifically, platforms were key tools to boost the leader's direct communication to citizens and to coordinate Nichi's Factories' activities, whereas SEL loosely adopted them. This model succeeded in advancing the network project in the short term, prompted by Vendola's success at 'occupying' social media (see Bordandini, 2013). As explained by Piccolotti, social media at the beginning of the 2010s were a free space without strong competitors. For instance, Vendola was the first Italian politician to use online videos to establish direct communication and dialogue with citizens,

> 'to disintermediate the relations between the leader and the people. The effects on party organisation were huge. Traditionally, to understand whether our agendas were attractive, we had to proceed from the base up through a pyramid (…). Therefore, leadership's perceptions depended on cadres' acumen or skills. (…) There were no other tools to understand what common people thought, and therefore there was a great centrality of parties' cadres' (interview Piccolotti).

Nichi's Factories were crucial for advancing these processes. They were a network of local committees, each coordinating through Facebook groups and directed by 'Factory zero', the committee established in Apulia to coordinate Vendola's regional campaign (interview Nico Bavaro, Nichi's Factories Secretary of Communication, 06/11/2020). Their main goal was to integrate off- and online activism starting from small-scale initiatives (see interviews Ferrara, Pizzolante). As recalled by Piccolotti, they were seen as

> 'a great breath of fresh air because they were free. Parties' structures and central offices were burdened and slowed down by liturgies hampering creativity. Factories, instead, had no liturgies. They were action-oriented, quickly responsive to immediate political needs, without the difficulties that arise from internal procedures'.

However, the phase of organisational experimentation around the network system was short-lived, as the Italian political conjuncture changed amidst the austerity age.

6.4.2.2 The crisis of the network model

Adopting a network model of organisation informed a strategic project aiming at activating different types of activists through multiple but separate channels. The goal unifying these groups was to support Vendola at the forthcoming primaries of the centre-left coalition between the PD and SEL to select the candidate Prime minister for the general elections (Ward and Guglielmo, 2021). The primaries were initially scheduled in 2011, but they were postponed to late 2012 when the PD decided to support the Monti technical government until the end of the legislature (see Ch.4.4.1). The extension of the timeline of the primaries cross-cut the aforementioned SEL's struggles at defining viable tactical positions vis-à-vis its centre-left ally during the age of austerity. As a result of these two processes, the common objective to take Vendola to win centre-left primaries became untenable. Consequently, the 'network system' model became the core of harsh internal disputes that eventually undermined its consistency. As recalled by Ferrara, in an attempt to win over the party, some of the Factories' leaders aimed to give them a more solid structure. This proposal activated internal clashes that led to their shutdown. After the closure of Nichi's Factories, the tensions between mass- and movement- party models were internalised by SEL, counter-posing officers claiming for disintermediation of parties' activities through digital platforms and those reclaiming the need to keep in place a more traditional bureaucratic party structure (see interviews Piccolotti, Pizzolante).

In the final stages of its trajectory, SEL's elites tried to accelerate the party's digitalisation to innovate the party's organisation and overcome these clashes. For instance, the new party constitution in 2014 included the project of a participatory online platform, COMMO (see SEL, 2014b). Further, SEL leadership declared the intention to undertake 'a reform of our structure

to disempower provincial Federations and to define the mission and centrality of local circles' (SEL, 2015). However, the participatory platform was never implemented, and when SEL shut down in 2015, its inheritor IL underwent back to more traditional forms of party organisation (interviews Ferrara, Palazzotto).

All the interviewees interpreted the crisis at experimenting with new forms of political organisation as related to SEL's inability to organically represent the interests of the subaltern classes. This process occurred when the techno-populist 5 Star Movement and the radical right League could succeed at hegemonising the rage of the Italian subaltern classes against the traditional parties (De Blasio and Sorice, 2018; Zulianello, 2019). This decline corresponded to the decreased ability of the Left to exploit digital technologies for progressive ends. As explained by De Cristofaro,

> 'In 2001, with the anti-globalisation movement, the radical left was familiar with new technologies, up to the point that networks became the mechanism through which mobilisations were organized .. think about Indymedia! We were really a technological vanguard. Currently, we lost traction on platforms, and the radical right has become hegemonic. However, I don't think it simply depends on social media or technologies. It always depends on the hegemony of discourses. If your discourses are hegemonic in society, they also work online. If your messages are not attractive or too complex, you also lose over the digital spaces'.

To sum up, Vendola's strategic project aimed at advancing counter-hegemony by innovating the party's organisation through a network system juxtaposing a quasi-traditional mass party and a social movement alike organisation. The design of this 'network' was inherently affected by the tensions between the logic of the movement and that of the mass party. This architecture was tenable only in the short run. The indecisiveness at prioritising the mass- or the movement- party accompanied SEL's declining phase and can be understood as a failure of the attempt to exploit platform party politics to advance SEL's counter-hegemonic project.

6.5 Podemos and Post-Social Democracy. Digital platforms as 'agora' for radical democracy

This section will analyse Podemos' strategic project to network a counter-hegemonic movement. First, I will look at how the party's elites understood platform capitalism as a system of exploitation to be allegedly tamed through a 'techno-Keynesian' agenda. Second, I will highlight how Podemos's strategy prioritised digital platforms as political and organisational tools to disrupt 'traditional' parties. Overall, Podemos' elites' strategic project was informed by views of the digital revolution as an 'agora' to engage and mobilise new activists in a radical democratic project.

6.5.1 Platform capitalism

In this subsection, I will analyse Podemos' critical understanding of platform capitalism as increasing socio-economic inequalities. First, I will highlight how these views informed a counter-hegemonic strategic project seeking to achieve the political construction of a broad social alliance. Second, I will look at how these understandings were associated with strategies aiming to challenge platform capitalism at its margins through adopting a 'techno-Keynesian' agenda. Finally, I will argue that Podemos' counter-hegemonic strategic project is inherently affected by the tension between its roots in radical social movements and the promise to achieve disruptive goals through 'occupying' neoliberal democratic institutions.

6.5.1.1 Turning the 'losers of the digital revolution into a democratic historical bloc

As previously discussed (see Ch.3.5.1), Podemos suddenly burst into the Spanish political system in 2014 by offering a platform to bring the feelings of 'indignation' characterising the squares' anti-austerity movements (Rodríguez-Teruel *et al.*, 2016) into democratic institutions. Podemos' emphasis on the corruption of the Spanish representative system as

the critical dimension to be disrupted to advance counter-hegemony was inherently constitutive of its two-pronged strategy. On the one hand, the party aimed at aggregating disenchanted popular constituencies around radical politics. On the other hand, Podemos elites primarily focused on democratic means for a change instead of a transformational agenda to disrupt capitalism. Accordingly, Podemos' understanding of platform capitalism had two main features. First, as the bearer of 'Uberisation', a model of extreme labour exploitation governed by unaccountable algorithms (Haidar and Keune, 2021), platform capitalism was described by Podemos elites' in the 2020 Congress Political Resolution as

> 'an economic model disguised as supposedly leading to a collaborative economy, while instead planning strategies to constitute monopolies in key sectors, such as public services. Uberisation is the economic, social and political engineering operated by fractions of the financial capital placing themselves above any sovereignty or jurisdiction and is based on two axes. On the one hand, the looting mechanism resulting from tax avoidance by large transnational companies is a mechanism facilitating the separation of corporations from the society within which they operate. On the other hand, renewed forms of exploitation, by false self-employed contractual formulas alien to democratic labour laws' (p. 17).

Second, Podemos aimed at incremental changes through policy reforms to challenge these forms of domination. As declared by Pablo Iglesias (Podemos leader between 2014 and 2021, and Vice-Prime Minister 2020-2021, 19/11/2021), when facing platform capitalism, however,

> 'there is a scale problem because national states were powerless to deal with dynamics and decisions made on globalised markets. The open issue for us is still: how can we impose democratic limits on the logic of capitalist operations by operating on a national scale? This is a permanent contradiction for the Left'.

This twofold nature of Podemos can be better understood through Alexandros Kioupkiolis's and Francisco Seoane Pérez's argument that Podemos' elites 'see their party-cum-movement as a practical implementation of the theories of the Argentinean philosopher Ernesto Laclau" (2019, p. 24; see Laclau, 2005). Indeed, Podemos' elites conceive social groups as the outcome

of the political articulation by political agents and not as emergent from class dialectics. This cultural background was directed against the importance of class antagonisms to advance counter-hegemony. Accordingly, Podemos' aimed at providing a space to constitute a 'transversal social majority politically'. As stated in the 2020 Congress Resolution,

> "we have been carrying out a process of political articulation from the perspective of a social majority. We must carry out a fundamental work of connection to put an end to the artificial separation between the social and the political that neoliberalism imposed and that seeks nothing less than to relegate the social majority into resignation so that it would not conceive politics as a tool to achieve social transformation. This process allowed us to articulate political programmes connected with many social realities" (p.23).

These views went against strategies prioritising the working class as the subject to advance counter-hegemony. Iglesias made this point clear when arguing that

> 'social classes are still relevant for economic organisation and political subjectification. However, it is naive to think that class structure operates politically as eighty years ago. There have been redefinitions. Crucially, how classes become or not political subjectivities depend on how people see themselves. I will give you an example: most of those who define themselves as working class are Podemos' voters. In other words, Podemos is the majority among those who define themselves as the working class. The problem is that a majority of those who objectively belong to the working class do not define themselves as such.'

However, instead of intervening to re-ignite class antagonism as the key to activating transformative mobilisations, Podemos elites, by following Laclauian theories, accepted the mismatch between 'real' class positions and their political subjectification as an irredeemable characteristic of modernity. Accordingly, Podemos aimed at articulating these dispersed individuals, the 'losers of the digital revolution', a subset of the 'losers of globalisation' (see Podemos, 2018, p. 25), in a broad platform that, to gain immediate consensus, did not attempt to prioritise disruptive agendas. Podemos' declared goal, indeed, was to turn this 'losers' front into a 'democratic historical bloc' (Podemos, 2020a, p. 28) by providing its platform

organisation as a 'useful tool to broaden the participation of social majorities in processes of change' (Podemos, 2020a, p. 23). However, this strategy appears increasingly flawed by the institutional constraints at holding together contrasting goals. On the one hand, Podemos claimed to appeal to new subalterns. As declared by Iglesias

> 'historically, the left placed the working class organized in unions at the core of its initiatives. Nowadays, we must link to other social groups that acquire increasing centrality in economic relations. Women, young generations, precarious and migrant workers are invisible sectors of the collective labour force with increasingly political potentialities to drive change'.

On the other hand, Podemos' strategy to lead the action of this social 'democratic bloc' against the State's elites is hampered by the cooperation as a junior party in the coalition government with the PSOE since 2020. As a result, Podemos' strategy repeatedly oscillated between radical and reformist stances. I argue that this strategical inconsistency can be traced back to the Podemos elites' refusal to incorporate the primacy of class antagonism in its ideology to design effective counter-hegemonic strategies. For instance, Podemos initially promoted UBI as a paradigmatic measure to protect subalterns within digital globalisation as 'the digital economy is nowadays one of the most important game-fields to challenge neoliberal hegemony' (Iglesias). However, this initial radical proposal was strongly moderated once in government, resulting in a minimum basic income limited by strong conditionalities (Ch. 5.5.1).

6.5.1.2 A 'techno-Keynesian' agenda to protect the losers of the digital revolution

The 'techno-Keynesian' agenda that Podemos developed to face increasing inequalities emerging from platform capitalism are relevant to make sense of its oscillations between anti-state elites- and 'cum-state' reform stances. The 'techno-Keynesian' agenda was the cornerstone of the party's strategic project to aggregate the 'losers of the digital revolution'.

Two main axes of state intervention were crucial for advancing this project. First is the promotion of stricter labour market regulations. Podemos' officers claim the merit to oversee jobs protection by occupying the Department of Labour within the coalition government since 2020. All the interviewees emphasise the merit of the Secretary of Labour Yolanda Diaz in promoting the adoption of a 'riders' law' ending the false self-autonomous status of platform workers (i.e. interview Txema Guijarro Garcìa, MP 2016-current, spokesperson of Parliamentarian Committee on Economic Affairs and Digital Transition, 07/06/2021 and Iglesias). However, interviewees also revindicated that these reforms were passed with the consensus of the ruling classes. As explained by Guijarro Garcia, indeed

> 'our most important achievement was to carry on labour reforms through permanent social dialogue. Yolanda Diaz succeeded at constantly bringing together unions and the employers' Federations. This posture was vital for us, as we achieved greater visibility as a political force guaranteeing social peace'.

The second 'pillar' of Podemos' techno-Keynesianism was to re-direct public investments for digitalisation from big-tech companies to small and medium ones. Therefore, as pointed out by Guijarro Garcìa, Podemos' strategic project was grounded in

> 'the hope and the faith in the state as the key actor to guide the digital revolution. Our views are inspired by the Italian economist Mazzucato, who emphasises the primary role of the states in guaranteeing sustainable and egalitarian development. This view is also why we still want to carry forward our flagship proposal about the instalment of a publicly owned Investment Bank'.

Therefore, Podemos aimed at opening new spaces of opportunities for a 'techno-Keynesian' agenda carried on by an 'entrepreneurial state' (Mazzucato, 2015) as key to directing the digital revolution toward increased wages and better market opportunities for small enterprises (see Podemos, 2020a, p. 18 see also interviews Guijarro Garcia, Iglesias). Party's leadership aimed at fuelling this strategy by channelling into state institutions the demands

from both radical social movements and popular classes disenchanted with traditional parties. The desire to hold together these elements represents a strong element of continuity in Podemos' trajectory.

6.5.1.3 The 'agora' and the Parliament. Tensions within Podemos strategic project

The process of institutionalisation of Podemos, unsurprisingly, ignited increased tensions between its constitutive elements as a disruptive movement and a parliamentary party. This process was clearly explained by Antonio Montiel (Regional MP 2015-19, Podemos General Secretary in Valencia Region, 30/07/2021) when arguing that in its initial stage, Podemos succeeded in redirecting popular common sense

> 'by simplifying the language of political debates. The political and financial elites "kidnapped" debates about the political economy by presenting its principles as a matter of expertise. Instead, it was about common people's life! And Podemos acted to facilitate people's comprehension of complex processes to give back a say to popular classes and empower them'.

However, this traction over 'common-sense' views about the chances to disrupt mainstream politics by 'occupying' democratic institutions also raised the expectations about what Podemos may achieve once the party began to take part in coalition governments, and according to Montiel,

> 'when you convert yourself into an incumbent party, you are constrained by the logic of annual budgets, EU directives etc. And therefore, you are no longer 'the voice of the street'. And this transformation has generated frustration for both, the representatives within institutions, and the people, that instead were initially tied together at designing disruptive strategies'.

The clashes between popular expectations and institutional practices may be traced back to the genesis of Podemos as a party by a group of intellectuals, as suggested by Ruben Martínez

Dalmau (MP 2016, Vice-President Valencia Region 2019-2021, 05/04/2021), when arguing that within Podemos

> 'there was an ongoing clash between the social classes to which our policies' proposals were directed and the backgrounds of Podemos' elites and voters, mostly middle-class professionals. We attempted to facilitate a better dialogue with subaltern groups to overcome this clash, but we must recognise that there is a puzzle that has not been sorted yet'.

To sum up, Podemos critically conceived platform capitalism as a process driven by financial fractions of capitalism aiming at maximising their profits through tax avoidance and job casualisations. The counter-hegemonic strategic project by Podemos was grounded in post-structuralist views endorsing the primacy of politics to articulate broad social alliances and overcome neoliberalism. Under this perspective, Podemos considered platform capitalism as a key driver of fragmentation among subaltern groups that could be re-connected by channelling them within institutions around a radical democratic project, not a socialist one. Promoting a 'Techno-Keynesian' agenda was the cornerstone to boost Podemos' strategy, as it would improve platform workers' conditions and re-distribute public investments to small enterprises, two key groups that Podemos targeted to build up a 'democratic historical bloc'. However, this strategic project was inherently affected by a tension between its anti-state elites' roots in radical social movements and its reformist practices within parliamentary institutions.

6.5.2 Platform Party Politics

In this subsection, I will analyse how Podemos' digital organisation sought to provide an 'agora' for the party's disruptive goals against 'politics-as-usual'. First, by overviewing the evolution of Podemos' digital architecture, I will focus on how the party adapted its

organisation to its increased institutionalisation by turning from 'digital' to a 'hybrid online-offline' party model. Second, I will highlight how Podemos' hybrid nature as a movement party is inherently affected by three tensions between: (1) vertical leadership and horizontal participation; (2) new and traditional leftists organisational practices; and (3) the movement and Parliamentarian party.

6.5.2.1 From the digital to the hybrid 'online-offline party model

The logic underlying the adoption of digital platforms as the backbone of Podemos' origins in 2014 – 2015 was to disrupt the Spanish party system in two ways. First, by prefiguring alternative models of 'real democracy' drawn from 15-M social movements practices grounded in online participation and e-votes (see interview Martínez Dalmau). Second, by providing a political channel to turn protesters' disruption into the 'constitution' of a popular parliamentarian movement (see Podemos, 2020a, p. 30).

Since the onset, the Podemos organisation was structured around a digital platform (https://participa.podemos.info/es) collecting all the typical organisational functions of political parties, such as the free registration of members, votes on strategic resolutions and party leadership selection (Martínez Dalmau, 2019). The interviewees refer to this architecture as a vital source of 'popular empowerment' (i.e. interview Julián Macías Tovar, National Secretary of Social Media, 30/07/2021), and a crucial way to appear 'sexy, to bring about fresh air, a renewal, a break' (interview Montiel). Podemos adopted open source licenses and non-proprietary models of data management as a way to prove its commitment to the 'commons-driven' net (Martínez Dalmau, 2019, p. 201, see also interview Macìas Tovar). Party's platform was an ecosystem of tools directed to horizontal integration and

vertical direction. Regarding the first dimension, between 2014 and 2020, the platform included a participatory space called 'Plaza Podemos' (Podemos Square), whereby members could open forums and formulate proposals for policies and organisational reforms (Martínez Dalmau, 2019, p. 204). Further, all members vote online for national offices and strategies. Third-party companies such as Agora-N Votes audit Podemos' votes to guarantee ballots' transparency (see Gerbaudo, 2018; Martínez Dalmau, 2019). This architecture was designed to achieve the continuous engagement of activists by building up a digital party connecting accountable leadership and a vast base of members (interview Guijarro Garcìa). Moreover, Podemos increasingly adopted Telegram chats as a vital organisational tool for communications from national offices to the grassroots. As explained by Macías Tovar, a Telegram channel currently connects 40.000 activists. This model was designed to overcome what was addressed as one of the main reasons for the ongoing marginality of the Left, the exxaggerated relevance of internal debates. As explained by Juan Carlos Monedero (NEC 2014-2015, Secretary of Party Constitution. President of 15-M Foundation 2020-current, interview 20/04/2022),

> 'one of the main reasons for left crises is a defensive posture towards neoliberal "common sense". Podemos represented a change of posture by seeking to articulate civil society in a democratic project excited by the goal to disrupt the monarchical and corrupted Spanish two-party system'.

Accordingly, as explained by Iglesias, the major innovation brought about by Podemos was to impose a generational break in the party system by enabling the advance of young politicians at their ease with the use of digital platforms. Digital party was key to substantiating leaders' claims about their credibility as 'different' from other parties (Vittori, 2017). As explained by Iglesias,

> ‘our primaries were open to the public. Anyone could register from their smartphones. This model was disruptive! It brought freshness against the bureaucratic logic of the parties. Spain was under the domain of traditional parties, both left-wing and right-wing, in which apparatuses are the ones making decisions about leadership, candidacies etc. In other words, the key for a leader to be elected will be to gain control of parties’ apparatuses. Thanks to open primaries and new technologies, we broke up this model by introducing some fresh air and achieving greater citizen involvement and participation’.

However, the ongoing integration of Podemos into local and national governments, the decline of membership (from 500.000 in 2015 to around 100.000 in 2020, as declared by the interviewee Guijarro Garcìa), and the struggles at keeping political traction over constituencies from social movements were reasons identified by the interviewees (i.e. Macìas Tovar, Montiel) to explain the recent organisational reforms aiming at hybridising the digital party with a more traditional structure empowering local circles and intermediate cadres. More specifically, Podemos approved a major reform of its organisation during the ’Citizens’ Assembly’ (the party conference of Podemos) held in 2020. The reform activated a process to reshape the party’s local committees and intermediate levels in a transitionary period up to 2021 when the new structure was definitely approved. First, alongside members, Podemos established the figure of the ‘militant’, the activists entitled to participate and vote at local and regional levels of the party (Podemos, 2021a, p. 7). Second, Podemos assigned formal powers of coordination to intermediate cadres (Podemos, 2020b, pp. 23-34). These evolutions marked the need by Podemos’ elites to adapt its structure to ‘resist’ the attacks from right-wing parties at the moment when the party could not rely on the support of the ‘squares’. Indeed, as explained by Monedero,

> ‘social movements are like sea waves, and they need “wind” to remain strong. However, we faced the normal downturn of this tide from squares’ movements, the moment of the barricades, and our goal was to turn barricades into an army’.

6.5.2.2 Tensions between the digital movement and the institutional party

The evolutions of Podemos from a digital to a hybrid online/offline organisational model have been inherently characterised by three inter-related tensions. First, between the horizontal integration and vertical direction. On the one hand, the digital party tore down barriers to participation in key decisions and strategies. On the other hand, in practice, the party prioritised support for leadership rather than participatory intra-party democracy (Vampa, 2020; García Lupato and Meloni, 2021). Second, between new and traditional repertoires of discussion within the left. This tension mirrors a constitutive strategy by Podemos leadership at holding together activists from traditional organisations (such as the Anti-Capitalist Left) with new members more oriented to transformative local actions. The interviewees presented contrasting views on whether Podemos succeeded or failed at hybridising these forms of activism. Among the more optimistic, according to Martínez Dalmau, this process

> "helped different activists to overcome each other's flaws. They have interpenetrated. For people coming from Izquierda Unida, meeting people from Podemos, activists who perhaps never read a book on Marxism, was like a blow of fresh air. Those with more structured intellectual backgrounds, however, helped those activists with 'anti-politics' views to better understand politics".

On the contrary, Macìas Tovar argued that there was tension between the 'action-oriented' participation of young activists and members coming from established parties. The former tended to underestimate the relevance of in-depth ideological debates, whereas the latter considered it a priority to develop more consistent ideological grounds for Podemos (see also interview Montiel). Finally, these tensions reflected the struggles to maintain the nature of Podemos as a movement party. Indeed, Podemos' organisation aimed at providing a channel to engage activists from social movements through supporting fluid forms of protest while at the same time increasingly taking part in the representative institutions of liberal democracy

(Gerbaudo, 2019a; see also Podemos, 2021b, p. 21). However, according to Iglesias, even though activism in social movements was a crucial background for most Podemos officers, these experiences could not overcome the fact that

> ‘Podemos is a party, with all the implications of what being a party means. Having bureaucratic structures, rules about decision-making, and participating in parliamentary institutions and governments. No matter how much their leaders come from social movements, although that may imprint a style, movements and parties are different things and have different structures and operating mechanisms’.

To sum up, Podemos' digital organisation was key to opening up a space of opportunities for a counter-hegemonic movement to disrupt the Spanish party system. Adopting participatory and digital voting tools was an organisational cornerstone to provide an alternative space to aggregate activists from social movements and popular classes. However, the party increasingly shifted its organisation by hybridising the digital-movement model with the more typical structures of a mass party.

6.6 Post-Social Democratic counter-hegemonic strategic projects. Comparative analysis

I summarised in Table 6.1 the main practices through which the PS, SEL and Podemos shaped their Post-Social Democratic counter-hegemonic strategic projects. This section will discuss the main commonalities and differences among the cases. Accordingly, I will explore how, if at all, these parties aimed at enabling alternatives, establishing ties with subaltern classes and at elevating common-sense views to transform the real hegemony of platform societies. Finally, I will highlight how the differences in parties’ strategic projects resulted in contrasting areas of tension.

Table 6.1 Post-Social Democracy. Strategic projects for counter-hegemony. Main attributes

	ENABLING ALTERNATIVES	ORGANIC TIES TO SUBALTERN CLASSES	ELEVATING COMMON SENSE	AREAS OF TENSION
Platform Capitalism	Targeting inequalities and opportunities for cooperation	Attempts to connect 'left behind'/'losers' of digitaliisation'	Big tech hyper-profits as increasing inequalities	
	Innovation to revive the welfare state	Extend platform workers' rights		
Differences				
PS	Radical local agendas for universal digital public services	Targeting digital divides and digital education	Defence of public services	Critical analyses vs dependency on reformism
SEL	Radical claims on new digital cooperativism as bridge with reformism	Shared social value vs capitalist value, pro-coop start up policies	Anti-system discourses to anchor common sense	Post-workerism vs traditional labourism
PODEMOS	Critical agendas from social movements emphasising radical democrracy	Connecting subalterns in 'democratic historical bloc'	Simplified anti-elitist discourses. Emphasis on political elites	High expectations for radical change vs reformist institutional practices
Platform Party Politics	Emphasis on participatory democracy	Organizational experimentations to reconnect subalterns	Digital tools provide opportunities for wide participation	
Differences				
PS	Defence of intermediate cadres	No horizontal integration.	Critique of social media over simplifications	Digital prompting participation as attack on representation
SEL	Digital movement-alike node to attract younger activists	Troubled unmediated relations leader/citizens	Oscillations on social media as enablers or barriers for change	Clashes on models of digital organisation: movement vs mass
PODEMOS	Disruption of intermediation through platforms	Open platforms. Hybrid horizontal integration and vertical selection of strategies	Platforms participation disrupts corruption	Clashes between movements- and party- activism

The analysis identified three paths within a common framework regarding how these parties aimed at enabling alternatives and resistance to 'real' hegemony in platform society. All these parties understood platform capitalism as bearing, at the same time, new social inequalities and new opportunities for cooperative relations of production. Accordingly, their trajectories during the 2010s were characterised by counter-hegemonic movements that struggled to find a balance between radical claims and reformist practices. Within this common approach,

three divergent paths characterised parties' trajectories. The PS adopted radical discourses in 2017 as part of a radical reorientation of its agendas. However, after the severe electoral defeat in 2017, the PS's practices were affected by the resistance of more traditional SD cultures. This is particularly evident with the opposition by the PS elites at consistently digitalising the party's organisation. SEL's initial techno-optimism, grounded in Vendola's experimental regional policies and organisational innovations, conceived the digital revolution as providing new forms of societal organisation that allowed the 'bridging' of radical and reformist politics. However, party elites turned to techno-pessimism once the party tactic to 'occupy' the centre-left coalition failed during the austerity age (Damiani, 2016). After 2011, the party was unable to connect radical claims and reformist practices and was unsuccessful in exploiting innovation as a key to coalescing wider social alliances in the medium term. Podemos prioritised platform party politics and, more specifically, the promise to bring horizontality and participatory democracy through its movement- alike digital party model, to gain momentum as a force capable of disrupting the Spanish party system. However, its two-pronged strategic project seeking to keep alive a movement party while becoming more and more institutionalised led to increased tensions between the two logics, especially since the party moved from an adversarial to an accommodative strategy of cooperation with the PSOE in national government (Albertazzi *et al.*, 2021, p. 54).

Post-Social Democratic counter-hegemonic strategic projects were inherently affected by the lack of means to 'organically' represent the subaltern classes of platform societies and elevate them into a transformative political project. The PS adopted practices targeting the 'left behind' by the digital revolution as the key to widening the party's social base and reviving its function as the institutional representative of subaltern groups. However, the PS counter-

hegemonic strategy was first affected by the resistance of 'productivism' as the key driver for economic growth (Crouch, 2017) and second by defending its function as a top-down leader of subaltern groups through the party's bureaucracies. SEL adopted discourses and initiatives presenting the digital 'sharing' economy to target young generations as the key to networking subaltern groups around a radical reformist agenda. However, as shown throughout, the party's elites chose to keep its alliance with the neoliberal PD in the austerity age, and the indecisiveness at tackling the contrasting goals and interests between traditional unionised cadres of the working class and precarious young workers hampered its strategy. Podemos conceived the 'losers of digitisation' as a subset of the 'losers of globalisation' as its main target to connect a 'democratic historical bloc' through its political project. However, the party's post-structuralist cultural roots affected Podemos' counter-hegemonic strategic project. At first, the movement succeeded in attracting vast and transversal constituencies around a radical democratic project. However, once integrated into parliamentary politics and decisively after the choice to seek a cooperative strategy with the neoliberal PSOE, the adoption of moderate 'techno-Keynesian' agendas, in conjunction with some shortcomings within its horizontal form of digital organisation, contributed to demobilise some of the most radical groups that the party initially attracted (Kioupkiolis and Pérez, 2019).

The analysis showed relevant differences in how the parties attempted to adopt 'common-sense' views to fuel their counter-hegemonic strategic projects. On the one hand, the PS critically perceived platform politics as boosting 'anti-political' over-simplified discourses. The PS elites understood this new space as a hostile environment within which Social Democratic tenets were attacked from the left and the right (Clift and McDaniel, 2017). Therefore, the party demonised radical claims about platform party politics and, by doing so, failed at

improving its declared goals to reconnect the party to popular classes. On the contrary, SEL and Podemos adopted 'common-sense' views, primarily through 'anti-elites' discourses by their leadership (Damiani, 2013; 2020). In this respect, the narratives about digital platforms opening new spaces for horizontal participation as disruptive of political and financial elites were vital. However, this common ground resulted in two diverging paths. In the case of SEL, 'anti-political' and 'pro-technologies' practices were meant to provide the space for the party to perform as a pedagogical elevator of popular claims by directing them to 'quasi-socialist' goals. Instead, Podemos' project was self-constrained by prioritising changes in political systems over structural understandings of capitalist rulership (Kioupkiolis and Pérez, 2019). As a result, the adoption of 'common-sense' views about the political elite's corruption eventually worked as a barrier to advancing consistent counter-hegemonic agendas once the party was more and more institutionalised.

The developments of Post-Social Democratic counter-hegemonic strategic projects can be understood as inherently characterised by a tension between the attempt to promote radical alternative agendas and the refusal to turn these parties against the ruling classes of platform capitalism. However, the different origins of these parties also characterised contrasting their paths during the 2010s. Indeed, the PS's path-dependency from its past as a moderate reformist party influenced how its elites understood the transformational possibilities of platform societies by rendering its project resistant to reviewing the forms of its organisation (Bremer and McDaniel, 2019). Indeed, the PS elites ongoingly conceived politics as the control of the leadership to mediate between contrasting societal interests through representation in political institutions. SEL was born as a new party coalescing previous Radical Left and Social Democratic factions with new young activists from Italian social movements. These

components also clashed on several levels, determining fractures between reformist and radical views overlapped by a generational divide between post-workerist young officers and elder elites from the unions. Podemos, similarly to SEL, aimed at merging previous factions from Radical Left and, most relevantly, providing a platform to activists from anti-austerity movements. However, after the 'momentum' of its successful outbreak, the Podemos' trajectory within institutions resulted in an inherent tension between its nature as a platform to channel radical instances from social movements and reformist practices into institutions.

6.7 Summary and next steps

In this Chapter, I analysed the attributes of Post-Social Democracy ideology, besides a system of beliefs, as a material organising principle for parties' strategic projects to network counter-hegemonic movements seeking to transform the 'real' hegemony of platform society. The analysis of this Chapter allowed to better understand Post-Social Democracy as an overarching perspective through which the PS, SEL and Podemos attempted to combine radical agendas and reformist institutional practices. However, the findings also showed that the components of these combinations were differentiated among the cases. More specifically, the PS project was to 'update' social democracy to face new challenges emerging in platform society, mainly focusing on economic agendas and (local) governmental practices. At the same time, the PS elites resisted digitalising the party's organisation as platform party politics was conceived as a hostile space attacking the party's functions of representation. SEL initially saw platform societies as providing new economic relations enabling the advance of the 'digital commons' and 'sharism'. Overall, the SEL strategy aimed at developing bridges between, first, radical and

reformist views, and second, movements-alike and mass party organisations. Podemos' understandings of platform societies were mostly focused on the digital revolution as providing an 'agora' for radical forms of participatory democracy. Relatedly, providing platforms for radical democracy was considered by Podemos' elites as the sufficient condition to disrupt hegemony by articulating a social majority in a democratic historical bloc.

The analysis of this Chapter also allows identifying the main difference regarding conjunctural patterns of competition that these parties were facing. First, the PS elites sought to 'update' the party's identity and agendas to assert French Socialist autonomy when the party was being marginalised in the national party system, hollowed out from the Left with the emergence of LFI and from the centre with Macron's movement. The PS, however, was retaining some strength at local and regional elections, and the PS central offices aimed at exploiting this front of resistance to guarantee the party's survival. Conversely, SEL and Podemos were characterised by rapid outbursts in a moment of crisis by their moderate counterparts within the centre-left, the PD and PSOE. Both parties' elites, therefore, aimed at achieving the position of mainstream actor of the parliamentary left.

The combination of these structural and conjunctural reorientations allows identifying a common overarching strategic project interpreted through different paths by which Post-Social Democratic parties aimed at advancing counter-hegemony within platform societies. In the next Chapter, I will look at how LFI, the only case I classified within 'Platform Socialism', aimed at advancing its radical project.

CHAPTER 7. PLATFORM SOCIALISM. ADVANCING COUNTER-HEGEMONY

7.1 Introduction

In this Chapter, I focus on how the ideology I conceptualised as Platform Socialism informed the strategic projects to transform the real hegemony of platform societies. In Chapter 3, I argued that Platform Socialism was a system of beliefs signifying the digital revolution as a new battlefield to advance antagonistic confrontations against platform capitalist rulership. More specifically, I argued that the critical understandings of the 'digital revolution' by Platform Socialists defined the alliance between big tech and financial corporates as the main antagonists against which to advance a progressive digital revolution prompted by the logic of the platforms as 'commons'. In this Chapter, by looking at how this ideology was the material organising principle for a strategic project to advance counter-hegemony, I will seek answers to the question

- How did ELPs' reflections on the digital revolution inform their strategic projects to navigate or transform the real hegemony of platform societies?

As with the analysis of Techno-Third Way and Post-Social Democratic parties (Ch. 5 and 6), the question will be unpacked by looking at how Platform Socialist's strategic project was meant to intervene to tackle alternatives, ties to classes and common sense in two spaces: platform capitalism and platform party politics.

One Radical Left Party, La France Insoumise-LFI (Unbowed France), is the case upon which this chapter is focused. I analysed LFI's strategic projects through multiple qualitative data,

including six interviews with party officers and experts in platform economy and party politics (see Appendix 1) and five secondary sources as congress resolutions and position papers. The main findings can be summarised as follows:

1. Platform Socialists aim to disrupt platform capitalism by challenging common-sense views on big tech companies as wealth boosters. Furthermore, LFI seeks to establish linkages with 'platform workers' movements, for instance, Uber drivers and food deliverers, and digital cooperatives and creative 'digital commoners'. LFI's strategic project can be understood as aiming to cement these subaltern groups in a counter-hegemonic bloc. By doing so, the party's strategy aims at reviving class antagonism.

2. Digital platforms are the backbone of LFI's organisation, aimed at performing a twofold function. First, platforms are meant to facilitate activism beyond traditional forms of mass integration as with Radical Left traditional mass parties. Second, platform organisation aims to prefigure an alternative model of democracy based on fluid networks and horizontal forms of mobilisation against hierarchies.

The Chapter is structured as follows: the next section will specify the analytical tools to assess instances of counter-hegemony by LFI; sections three and four will look at how LFI project addressed platform capitalism and platform party politics; in section five, I will bring findings together to describe the attributes of Platform Socialism as a strategic project to advance counter-hegemony and by identifying the main tensions that characterised LFI's project. Finally, I will summarise the findings and will define the next step in the research project.

7.2 How to analyse Platform Socialism as a counter-hegemonic strategic project

In this section, I specify the analytical framework to analyse how Platform Socialist's strategic project sought to advance counter-hegemony. Following the Gramscian theoretical framework, as with previous case studies (Ch. 5.3 and 6.2), I will research how LFI reflected on the real hegemony in platform societies to design its strategic project to transform hegemony through three areas of intervention: alternatives, ties to classes, common sense. Within these areas, the main range of strategic choices that a Platform Socialist party may take can be categorised as follows:

1- Enabling alternatives and resistance through practices aiming to connect dispersed radical instances of antagonism challenging platform capitalism and established political hierarchies,

2- Establishing ties with subaltern classes through practices seeking to cement a counter-hegemonic bloc encompassing platform labourers and other groups organising resistance in platform societies,

3- Elevating 'common-sense' views through 'pedagogical' practices that establish an anchorage to 'popular' claims to elevate them into counter-hegemonic mobilisations.

Regarding platform capitalism, first, I will look at how LFI's elites understood this structural configuration as an advanced frontier of exploitation enforced through data commodification and the exploitation of platform labour (Srnicek, 2016; Fuchs, 2019b). Second, I will explain how LFI's strategies are meant to channel and organise resistance to platform capitalism. Hence, I will identify how LFI attempts to politically articulate the field of the digital commons, that is to say, those economic and political groups adopting platforms as means to advance

non-proprietary logics of value generation and shared management (Jordan, 2015, p. 25; see also Bollier and Helfrich, 2014). Finally, I will look at how LFI combines radical views from digital social movements with broader forms of resistance (Cruddas and Pitts, 2020).

Concerning platform party politics, I will focus on how the logic of digitalisation by LFI is meant to facilitate the advancement of counter-hegemony. First, I will investigate whether they are meant to disrupt hegemonic forms of political organisation, challenging mainstream forms of intermediation between political elites and subaltern groups (Chadwick and Stromer-Galley, 2016). Second, I will focus on how LFI's platforms are meant to combine spontaneous forms of mass activism with activities of political direction (Gramsci, 2014). Third, I will look at whether platform organisation is understood and put in place as a laboratory to experiment with prefigurative forms of alternative organisations for the subalterns (Thomas, 2017; La Porta, 2019).

After analysing LFI's instances of counter-hegemony within these areas of operation, I will bring them together to identify the main attributes of LFI's counter-hegemonic strategic project, also highlighting the areas of tension affecting Platform Socialism in practice.

7.3 Platform capitalism

In this section, I will survey how LFI's understanding of platform capitalism informed the party's counter-hegemonic practices. First, I will focus on how the reflections on the contradictions of platform capitalism were turned into practices to enable resistance (Green, 2002, p. 62). Second, I will analyse how LFI sought to exploit the logic of the 'digital commons' to fuel renewed class antagonisms. Finally, I will highlight how LFI's practices informed

agendas claiming to empower both grassroots autonomous views of the digital with state-driven initiatives to disrupt big-tech hegemony (see Zanoni, 2020) and how LFI sought to address the potential tensions between these two logics.

7.3.1 Organising resistance to disrupt the 'GAFAM'

LFI's discourses constantly refer to big-tech companies as bearers of unjust and exploitative practices that seek to insulate political power from popular contestation. Indeed, as stated by the pamphlet on 'New Digital Liberties and Rights':

> 'Under the apparent gratuity of services, the GAFAM (Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon and Microsoft) vampirise the Internet by capitalising and commodifying our most personal data behind our backs' (LFI, 2017e, p. 7).

GAFAM is a crucial semantic reference to platform capitalist exploiters that aims at challenging 'common-sense' views around big-tech as wealth boosters to attract wider audiences and activists into a new battlefield for counter-hegemony. All interviewees constantly refer to the GAFAM as the main target to disrupt, describing them as 'States within States' (Alexandre Schon, co-coordinator of the 'Digital Action Group', interview 20/03/2021) or as 'an attack on fiscal sovereignty' (Manuel Bompard, MEP and LFI's national coordinator between 2016 and 2019, interview 13/04/2021).

Crucially, LFI's elites understand big-tech companies as performing a twofold distortion. First, they falsely present themselves as 'free-markets' enablers and 'jobs' creators' while instead contributing both to the casualisation of workers and to the collapse of local small businesses. Secondly, and relatedly, by spreading 'common-sense' views about their functions as re-directing capitalism towards a 'shared' and collaborative economy while accelerating exploitation through data commodification (Ossewaarde and Reijers, 2017, p. 621).

Leïla Chaibi (MEP and coordinator of LFI's 'Space of Fights and self-Organisation', interview 21/07/2021) explained the first dynamic by taking as an example the practices of food delivery companies

> 'saying, "our activity is to create a relation between a restaurant and the customer".. That is false! Their basic activity is not delivery but data accumulation. This is their core business. And it is dangerous because their goal is to replace the local restaurants. They are not intermediaries. (…) They expropriate data from restaurants. They exploit this information to cut restaurants off the market (…). Above anything, these platforms care about data accumulation, contrary to the official activities they present to the public'.

With regards to the second dynamic, LFI's thematic pamphlet claiming for an 'Alternative Digital revolution' makes clear that

> 'Big-tech platforms take advantage of unfair fiscal advantages and are the spearhead of relevant social deregulation. They organise, under messages about "flexibility" and "collaborative economy", new forms of social casualisation'. (LFI, 2017d, p. 6).

The LFI's 'Digital Action Group' activities are crucial to drawing upon these critical views to develop an agenda of resistance and transformation in a twofold way. First, to engage within LFI the 'hacktivists' from digital counter-cultures. Second, as a channel of expertise for LFI's representatives in democratic institutions to challenge hegemonic political actors through alternative agendas. According to Schon, indeed, the activities of the 'Digital Action Group' are crucial

> 'to elaborate an alternative model. Because the risk is that activists may become anti-technologies because they cannot think of any other "digital" than the one occupied by GAFAM (…). However, there are alternatives! The idea of a multi-polar Internet, driven by a logic of inter-operability among 'free' platforms, is possible. What is necessary is not the technical knowledge to realise it but the political will to do so!'

These understandings of the dialectics between domination and liberation in platform capitalism are the ground upon which LFI designs its strategies to organise counter-hegemonic

movements by politicising platform capitalism as a battlefield to advance a Platform Socialist counter-hegemony.

7.3.2 A new class antagonism for the digital age

Looking at LFI's elites' broader conceptions of the evolutions of class antagonism is crucial to better understand how LFI's strategic project seeks to organically represent the interests of the subaltern classes in platform societies. Indeed, all interviewees claimed that LFI aims to represent an alliance between varied groups of the subaltern classes, such as precarious employees and impoverished small entrepreneurs. LFI's elites speak the language of class antagonism, as with Schon emphasising that 'whether we want it or not, there is a class struggle', just to add that

> 'It is not anymore that of manual workers on one side and industrial capitalists on the other as in the 19th century. But it is the one by popular, middle, and precarious ones facing a fin-tech oligarchy'.

LFI's elites demonstrated a solid awareness of the stratification affecting the working class in post-industrial and affluent societies. Further, the interviewees showed sophisticated reflexivity about the contrasting consequences of the splits in the workforces that are accelerated by the financialisation and digitalisation of the relations of production (see Huws, 2014, p. 158). However, this awareness is not directed against the relevance of class politics but at how, under the current configuration of capitalism, a political movement can facilitate its emergence. Bompard clearly demonstrates this point when affirming

> 'Do we contest the idea of the existence of social classes? No, but we think it is currently harder for class consciousness to emerge because the social paths are more differentiated. Therefore, the issue is how to connect the demands of popular classes to turn them into a political majority. And this majority is the people. Hence, what does this mean in terms of social categories? How can we articulate the popular and middle classes in a transformative

> project? This goal implies some hardship because sometimes subaltern classes have divergent aspirations. But reuniting these groups is LFI's mission'.

Consequently, LFI's primary strategy is to elaborate programmes and initiatives to network and establish linkages between potentially different aspirations. For instance, as reported by Bompard, LFI's critical stand towards the EU aims to tie together urban middle classes and marginalised groups from the countryside.

The goal to connect dispersed instances of radical politics inspired LFI's initiatives targeting social groups exploited by platform capitalists. LFI's elites conceive these groups in a twofold way, in a broad sense, focusing on the impacts emanating from platform companies to non-digital sectors and in a narrower sense in relation to 'platform workers', as with the Uber drivers and food deliverers. However, the practices aimed at performing this 'organising' function of platform capitalism's subalterns also show an emergent area of tension between potentially contrasting logics. This tension concerns the extent to which Platform Socialist politics should enable linkages between relatively autonomous social movements or promote state-driven radical policies' agendas.

7.3.3 The digital as a common domain. Organising the 'commoners' within 'the state'

On the one hand, LFI aims to provide a platform for the 'digital commoners' (Jordan, 2015, p. 199). The digital commoners are those activists claiming that open source software and non-proprietary logic of digital infrastructures and data management can be means to achieve a distributed Internet, not owned and managed by a few oligopolistic companies nor state authorities. But, on the other hand, the state is conceived as a necessary actor to break up big-tech's power and redistribute their resources (Kostakis, 2018).

The interviewees clarified that LFI's strategic project aimed at exploiting state investments to disrupt the commodification of data taken forward by platform capitalists and to advance a socialist economy conceiving the digital as a 'common domain' (LFI, 2017d, see also Schon). The logic of this approach aimed at synthesising potentially opposed views is well explained by Florence Poznanski, co-coordinator of the 'Digital Action Group' (interview 21/05/2021):

> 'We need to redirect research investments from start-ups per se to those boosting autonomy and creativity. This flow would allow the shift to a collaborative platform economy. But this is hard because the job suppliers in France are capitalist companies that will not change their practices. Therefore, we need state-driven public services because the state has the scale and resources to do so. The State may habilitate this change. But it is not easy as market logic has also permeated the French state.

Therefore, Poznanski acknowledges that while the state may have a positive role in re-directing the logic of investments to facilitate the scaling-up of alternative digital business models, this function may happen only under the condition of the radical transformation of the logic of the state itself.

The same strategical approach (and related tension) between the logic of the commons and state-driven policies' agendas emerged concerning specific impacts of platform capitalism upon broader class relations. LFI's elites understand platform capitalism as the bearer of devastating impacts at accelerating the splitting of workforces through the ejection of workers via automation and the re-engagement of workers through casualised jobs (LFI, 2017a, p. 6; see also Dyer-Witheford, 2015, p. 38). These processes are understood, in the words of Poznanski, as problematic because

> 'when the digitalisation of work is so strong that a human becomes just an applier of digital processes and human creativity is annihilated, it is alienation. And alienation is problematic because it is a barrier to activating revolutionary processes'.

More specifically, LFI's elites consider it crucial to gain traction among the 'platform workers' movements to advance its counter-hegemonic project. These workers are considered the main target by LFI as their exploitation as false self-entrepreneurs is understood as a broader dynamic of modern capitalism that may spread from platforms to other industrial sectors. At the same time, the way LFI relate to platform workers is taken as an example of how the movement aims at networking instances of protest. More specifically, Chaibi stressed that LFI's goal is not to replace unions or autonomous workers' organisations but rather to

> 'serve as a tool for the organisation of workers. We work together as a network, but we don't pretend to replace the organisation of workers in their workplace. I like the slogan of the Autonomous Platform Delivery Collective, which says, "The street is our factory." This slogan shows that it's much harder to organize when you're not in a factory and when you're all alone in your vehicle. And the forms of collective organization must consider this aspect and these obstacles'.

Therefore, on the one hand, LFI presents itself as a platform to link societal and institutional fights starting from the autonomous agendas elaborated by workers' collective movements. But, on the other hand, LFI's agendas within parliamentary institutions seek to re-include these workers within existing regulations for employees.

Similarly, LFI tends to juxtapose the logics of the autonomous movements of the 'commons' and state-led socialist agendas when planning its operations to connect platform workers with broader subaltern classes. Regarding the first logic, LFI emphasises the need to politicise local digital cooperatives as alternatives to disrupt the monopolies of the leading platforms such as Uber and Amazon (interview Schon, see also LFI, 2017d). For instance, Chaibi emphasises the need for new agendas to impose an 'algorithmic democracy', as algorithms are conceived as the new governing principles of modern markets. More specifically, she argues that LFI advocates for

> ‘an algorithmic co-management whereby workers' representatives sit around the table and participate in defining their criteria. Everyone has tried to caricature our position by saying, "Wait, we're not going to write lines of code". But it's not about writing lines of code. It's about determining together the principles of industrial relations!’

Concerning the statist logic to represent subaltern classes, LFI’s elites tend to oppose the project of a Universal Basic Income. LFI’s representatives take this position forward for two main reasons. First, as declared by Charles Alonso (Deputy MP 2017-current, interview 16/03/2021), it may be ‘a way to cut public budgets by transferring all welfare provisions in the same ‘package’ to reduce its total volume’. Second, and more importantly, for its correlations with the consequences of automation, as declared by Bompard, UBI is criticised because

> ‘it gives the impression that we need fewer jobs overall. I'm not sure about that. Because today you have challenges like the ecological transition, and therefore there are also jobs to be created. (…) You have a large ageing population in France, and you have the question of how to deal with the new problems that will be linked to new forms of dependence. All these change processes will require the creation of new jobs, not less’.

Instead, Bompard and Chaibi advocate for reducing working times to 32 hours a week as the flagship proposal by LFI to gather the subaltern classes, and they connect the possibility of this policy as a direct, and in this case positive, effect of the automation of production processes.

To sum up, LFI’s elites understand platform capitalism as a new frontier of exploitation seeking to maximise private profits through data commodification. This critical understanding informed a strategic project seeking to enable alternatives by providing a platform for agendas challenging the capitalist property of digital infrastructures and data to advance platforms as a domain of the ‘commons’ (see LFI, 2017c, p. 8-9, see also interviews Schon and Chaibi). This agenda is the ground upon which LFI undertakes initiatives to attract and connect both radical digital activists and broader social groups. More specifically, the latter are meant to be

attracted by politicising the popular 'good-sense' antagonism to the GAFAM. LFI's elites aim at exploiting these critical stances to renew a politics grounded in class antagonism. First, by striving to organise the precarious 'platform workers' as a reference point of resistance to casualisation also for industrial relations at large. Second, by challenging discourses on the lack of alternatives to the domination of GAFAM, for instance, by politicising the role of digital cooperative movements as alternative models (interviews Chaibi, Schon). The analysis showed that LFI's elites attempt to juxtapose a double-sword approach to connect radical instances from civil society while simultaneously seeking to provide a platform for these autonomous movements to carry on socialist state-driven agendas.

7.4 Platform party politics

In this section, I will focus on how LFI's digitalisation was part of a broader strategy to implement alternative logic of political organisation. First, I will analyse how LFI's strategic project prioritised the activation of individual and outsider groups to overcome the flaws of the traditional bureaucratic mass party on the Left at maintaining traction over subaltern classes. Second, I will discuss how LFI's digital movement-party model represents an attempt to prefigure a counter-hegemonic form of democracy.

7.4.1 The digital movement party. Disrupting liberal democracy (and the 'old' Left)

All interviewees explained the political logic underlying the development of LFI's digital architecture as part of a broader wave of reconfiguration of the European Radical Left. These officers referred to changes inspired by the adoption of digital movements-alike organisations

aimed at disrupting the symbolic burdens of the 'traditional' left, blamed by LFI's elites as inhibiting the attraction of popular constituencies. As Chaibi sharply put it:

> 'We got rid of the red, of the pompous rhetoric about "the real left, the leftist left, the purest left etc." We targeted people who were horrified by politics. In shaping LFI's organisation, our starting point was the view that old parties had become more and more self-centred 'machineries', instead of being inclusive tools open to what was outside of them and therefore capable of making positive impacts on societies. This is why we wanted to invent new styles of organisation'.

Accordingly, LFI's organisation was built through the digital platform 'Agir' (To Act), that since 2020 was rebranded as 'Action Populaire' (Popular Action), whereby activists can register without fees. LFI's members can establish 'actions groups' to regroup up to fifteen activists based on territory or policy areas. The 'Chart of Actions Groups' explicitly forbids establishing permanent forms of intermediary coordination (LFI, 2017b; see also Marlière, 2019). Above the actions' groups, there are six 'national spaces', areas of intervention (i.e. policies' elaboration, social struggles, organization) coordinated by a member of staff nominated by Mélenchon besides officers selected through raffles. Drawing is also the typical technique for selecting the participants for national assemblies. This organisational design was consistent, according to Bompard, with what LFI did not want to be:

> 'What we do not do, is to set up special committees to amend the congress' resolutions going on all night to reach compromises between factions. What we do not do, is splitting delegates between factions. What we do not do, is to adopt a method that, in our opinion, takes a party slice after slice to split itself and waste energy'.

Concerning the adoption of digital technologies within LFI's organisation and communication, Bompard, also director of Mélenchon's campaign in 2017, also said that

> 'they are not gadgets but tools to present our movement as projected towards the future. Innovation through platforms was relevant as we know that we are often depicted as nostalgic for 19th-century communism. Instead, we wanted to show that our programme was fully in the 21st century. (…) Popular styles of digital communication inspired us.

> Because if they are popular, it means that people like them. We oppose those haughty leftists saying, "it's the people that are badly educated, and they do not understand our contents". You can do it this way, except that, if your interesting contents will be followed just by your friends, it means that they won't be attractive more broadly'.

The digitalisation processes operate a strategic double movement that was crucial for LFI's strategic project. On the one hand, the digital organisation aims at disintermediating the relations between activists and leadership by erasing the functions of intermediate bureaucracies, symbolised in the French Left by the executive committees of the provincial 'Federations', targeted as outdated obstacles to attracting new members (interviews Alonso, Bompard, Chaibi). On the other hand, a new digital mediation was implemented. According to Jill Royer (director of LFI's digital platforms, interview 16/06/2021), this reconfiguration succeeded first at reaching massive membership levels, up to 500.000 citizens (Gerbaudo, 2018). Further, it guaranteed better linkages among grassroots activists and between action groups and national spaces, supporting local activities by providing them with political education and campaigns materials. Even though this architecture raised some criticism from within the movement, as recognised by Bompard, LFI's leadership considers it a milestone to prove the consistency between the movement's ideas and practices. Indeed, only minor internal reforms were put in place as with the establishment, in 2019, of a national assembly of the groups of actions (LFI, 2019). However, the assembly only performs limited functions, sharing good practices and elaborating policy proposals, without any salient power to select LFI's strategic choices.

7.4.2 Action-oriented platform party politics. The organisation of counter-hegemony

The rationale of a model aimed at providing the tools for individualised forms of activism was explained, by the interviewees, as grounded in an understanding of contemporary militancy

as different from the traditional full-time engagement characterising traditional left-wing mass-bureaucratic parties. LFI's strategy from the onset, as explained by Bompard, was to reduce the amount of energy dispersed in internal factional disputes, as there would be a trade-off with the disruptive potentialities of taking external action. Chaibi described as follows LFI's organisation, taking as an example the national space of 'fights and self-organisation':

> 'Our political function is to engage activists differently than traditional parties. How to reach this goal in a political organisation? I drew upon my experience as a "community organiser" in social movements to move ourselves to the people, not the other way around. We meet people not to "sell" them a manifesto or ask for a vote but to support them in finding ways to transform their rage into claims and their claims into actions up to victories. In this way, we disrupt the greatest barrier to political engagement, resignation'.

These discourses on the organisation by LFI's elites are an essential part of the strategic project to advance a counter-hegemonic movement by disentangling the radical left from marginality. Crucially, LFI's officers consider competing RLPs' bureaucracies as actively reproducing their marginalisation to maintain their shares of local power (interviews Royer, Chaibi). However, this model is also characterised by the inherent tension between its declared disruptive goals and forms of plebiscitary decision-making (see Scarrow *et al.*, 2017; Guglielmo in Barberà *et al.*, 2021, Ch. 12) that would isolate the movement's élites from internal competition. Royer, while acknowledging that LFI's organisation may involve a plebiscitary rather than deliberative type of decision-making, emphasised on the contrary that

> 'Our movement is more collective, as our political choices depend less on parties' bureaucrats (…). Consequently, the conflictual issues that are actually present in societies cannot be cut off by leadership. We developed a type of collective organisation that allows us to work together, regardless of those societal splits that may also create rivalries within the organisation as in a traditional political party. (…). I believe that our democracy works better than one that revolves around false problems and that leads to cut-off problems that are real'.

The emphasis on activating the popular masses is related to the need to establish counter-hegemonic forms of digital organisation to contrast the hegemony on mainstream social media by conservative political forces. Royer argued that Facebook has recently become a battlefield whereby the unbalances of resources with reactionary agents have worsened up to a point to push LFI's officers to design an alternative social media, 'Popular Action', 'not a space for internal debates, but to organise action'. As presented by Bompard:

> 'Popular Action is cool. We presented it as an action-oriented social network. And crucially, it improves our independency because it sets a counterweight to mainstream social media, whereby our campaign should be tamed and mediated by changing algorithms that may annihilate our communicative efforts. (…) therefore, Popular Action has been developed as a place whereby our activists can interact and exchange experiences, without being dependent upon mainstream social media'.

As declared by Royer, the 'home-made' social network is part of a broader practice by LFI to adhere to 'Creative Commons' protocols concerning the algorithms governing their platforms while at the same time protecting the data of their members. These practices, alongside the emphasis on the horizontal nature of participation, are presented as ways to prefigure an alternative model of democracy consistent with Platform Socialist ideology (see Ch. 3.3.3). However, as LFI's goal is to 'transform society by winning elections', as declared by Bompard, some tensions arise concerning the compatibility of a horizontal network with the leading functions of the party centre. Indeed, on the one hand, LFI's officers emphasise the advantages of a model of management of internal disagreement based on the research of consensus. Further, the interviewees stressed the salience of carrying on with ongoing organisational experimentations, as the drawings, that would improve equality of opportunities for all activists to scale up to the party's leadership. Nonetheless, on the other

hand, evidence that most internal votes confirm the leader's proposals (Gerbaudo, 2018) may witness a renewed centralisation by the party leadership.

To sum up, LFI promotes an organisational model inextricably weaved to adopting alternative digital platforms, aiming to activate party members and establish direct linkages between the movement's base and the central offices. This platform model is meant to facilitate horizontal links among varied and dispersed subaltern groups and to challenge common sense views about the bureaucratisation and intellectual elitism of traditional left-wing mass bureaucratic parties.

7.5 Platform Socialist's strategic project. Platforms as a backbone for counter-hegemony

I summarised in Table 7.1 the main practices through which LFI shaped its Platform Socialist counter-hegemonic strategic project. In this section, I will first explore how LFI aims to enable alternatives to hegemony. Second, I will analyse how the strategic choices by LFI's elites were meant to establish organic ties with subaltern classes. Third, I will focus on how LFI elites aimed at performing their 'intellectual' function to elevate common-sense views to transformative goals. Overall, the analysis indicates that LFI reflected on the transformational possibilities of the digital revolution as providing the backbone of a strategic project aimed at organising the field of the 'digital commons' as the antagonist to capitalist rulership and elitism in liberal democracy.

LFI's strategic project aims at enabling alternatives and resistance in a twofold way. First, by presenting the movement as a reference point of an alternative digital organisation governed through transparent algorithms and non-proprietary forms of data management, LFI claims to

prove that alternative digital societies are a concrete possibility. Second, raising antagonism to big techs as exploitative rulers is the critical stance to gathering alternative agendas drawing both from 'hacktivist' counter-cultures and state-driven policies' agendas to socialise digital infrastructures (Morozov, 2015).

Table 7.1 Platform Socialism. Strategic project for counter-hegemony. Main attributes

	ENABLING ALTERNATIVES	ORGANIC TIES TO SUBALTERN CLASSES	ELEVATING COMMON SENSE	AREAS OF TENSIONS
Platform Capitalism	Providing resources and institutional channels for digital platforms as a common domain	Digital Action Group to engage with LFI hacktivists and advance understandings of commons	GAFAM as exploiters of workers' rights and local businesses	Potential clashes between logics of the commons and support for autonomous social movements and state-driven policies' agendas
	Linking resistance to big-tech to radical redistributive agendas	Supporting autonomous initiatives by 'platform workers' and providing political and institutional channels for their demands	Platform socialism opens opportunities to empower subaltern classes -i.e. reduction of working times	
Platform Party Politics	Non-proprietary platforms and data protection as alternatives to mainstream platforms.	Platforms to connect individual activists and collective organisations, social movements and leadership.	Platform movement disrupts pro-capitalism liberal elites	Potential contradictions between emphasis on horizontal integration and centralised decision-making
	Action-oriented social network prefiguring an alternative platform society	'Creative common' license and alternative modes of data management to protect resistance by subalterns	Platform movement antagonist to traditional left bureaucratic models	

Concerning how LFI strategically aimed at establishing organic ties with the subaltern classes, digital platforms are essential in two directions. First, as defining the battlefield upon which otherwise dispersed groups could coalesce, as with platform workers, platform cooperatives and broader forms of casualised labour. Second, digital platforms are conceived as the backbone of a digital movement party to activate autonomous forms of resistance by subalterns and facilitate connections among dispersed activists (Plancq *et al.*, 2018a). All in all, the analysis demonstrated that LFI is a movement that conceived class relations as dialectical

in nature and perceived its historical function as the organisation to articulate various fractions of the subaltern classes.

LFI's practices are relevant to how the movement seeks to elevate common-sense views to inspire transformative activism. First, the pejorative discourses about GAFAM are meant to challenge hegemonic views about big tech as modernisers and the bearers of a sharing and 'cool' capitalism (see McGuigan, 2009). Second, conversely, digital platforms as a 'common domain' are depicted as connected to broad agendas to empower subaltern groups, for instance, with the emphasis on reducing working times under the condition that capitalist rulership is challenged. Third, the narratives about the potentialities of an alternative, distributed, and horizontal internet are crucial to challenge political elitism, defining both the pro-capitalism neoliberal elites and the parties' bureaucracies governing traditional left mass parties.

The analysis identified two related areas of tension for LFI's counter-hegemonic strategic project. The first regards the potential contradictions between the platform movement organisation as a 'passive networker' or an 'active leader' of the social groups it aims at empowering. The second regards the potential conflicts between libertarian 'commons' tendencies and statist ones. Data analysis indicates that LFI's officers tactically tend to avoid seeking syntheses between potentially contrasting views to bond together varied groups.

7.6 Summary and next steps

In this Chapter, I analysed how Platform Socialism can be understood as a material organising principle for a strategic project to organise a counter-hegemonic movement to disrupt the

‘real’ hegemony governing platform societies. The analysis of this Chapter allowed to better understand Platform Socialism as an overarching perspective through which LFI designed a strategy conceiving alternative digital platforms as a crucial backbone to activate a radical counter-hegemonic movement.

The Chapter’s findings suggest that LFI’s elites are reflective agents with a strong knowledge of the key dynamics of exploitation and resistance within ‘platform capitalism’. Their strategic choices are informed by critical understandings of new forms of exploitation inherent to platform capitalism as well as attentive toward the transformational possibilities emerging from the logic of the commons. Platform Socialism, therefore, inspired an organisational architecture for the movement to gain traction over new forms of subalternity in a twofold direction. First, as one of the critical roots to advance and update socialist agendas to gain traction over spontaneous forms of organisation of ‘platform workers’ to be connected to more traditional instances of resistance by precarious workers. Second, by adopting the logic of the commons as the cornerstone of the party-as-movement organisation. As shown throughout the Chapter, this organisational model was meant to demonstrate the consistency of LFI’s project as a movement aimed at connecting varied groups to disrupt both neoliberal political elites as well as established forms of organisation of the Radical Left.

Within both spaces, platform capitalism and platform party politics, the findings indicate that LFI’s elites aimed at tying together potentially contrasting logics, namely the economic movements for the distributed digital commons with state-driven radical policies’ agendas and horizontal forms of integration among activists with top-down leadership by movement’s elites.

Up to this point, I have analysed how the three 'digitally' proactive ideologies correspond to varied organising principles of ELPs strategic projects to navigate or transform the 'real' hegemony of platform societies. For each ideology, I have identified a range of practices through which parties' elites sought to intervene in the areas of alternatives, ties to classes and common sense. Having identified these practices, I can now move on to the last step of the empirical research, which will summarise the findings of the two stages developed from Chapters 3 to 7 and compare how the three ideologies were shaped by- and aim to impact on the real hegemony of platform societies.

CHAPTER 8. NAVIGATING OR TRANSFORMING HEGEMONY IN PLATFORM SOCIETIES. COMPARING LEFT-WING 'DIGITAL' IDEOLOGIES

8.1 Introduction

Through previous empirical research, I identified three 'digital' left-wing ideologies, Techno-Third Way, Post-Social Democracy and Platform Socialism and defined their attributes in two stages. First, I mapped how the 'digital revolution' was signified by different parties in relation to their claims on the reproduction or transformation of capitalism and democracy. Second, I identified how ELPs' elites' reflections on platform societies informed their choices of cultural and material practices defining their strategic projects to navigate or transform hegemony. More specifically, I identified the practices through which parties' elites sought to alternatively disaggregate or enable alternatives, establishing organic ties with the ruling or subaltern classes, reproduce or elevate 'common-sense'. The main practices identified throughout Chapters 5 to 7 are summarised in Table 8.1.

In this Chapter, I will bring together the empirical findings to develop a typological theory of how ELPs faced the digital revolution during the 2010s. Then, I will develop the thesis argument by answering the two related main research questions.

1. How did European Left Parties reflect on the societal impacts of the digital revolution in the 2010s?

2. How did ELPs reshape their ideologies to navigate or transform the real hegemony of platform societies?

The main answer to these questions defines the argument of the thesis, namely that the politics of the digital revolution provided cultural and material resources that informed and shaped the ideas and strategic projects of European Left Parties for their elites to design ways out of their crises of visions. However, the thesis demonstrates that these reconfigurations (re-)polarised the Left in opposite directions, that depended on past and present 'organic' relations by ELPs with (counter-)hegemonic networks of domination or liberation and on how parties' elites reflected on the conjunctural conditions within which they operate.

This argument is inferred through looking at how different ideologies were relevant for parties to operate at the junctions between the dialectics of the economic base 'platform capitalism' and the hegemony governing the superstructure 'platform politics'. Indeed, I identified the following attributes defining each ideology:

1. Techno-Third Way parties understood the digital revolution as fuel for market competition and state slimming. These beliefs informed a strategic project aimed at disaggregating alternatives by practices to protect platform capitalist 'core' interests and promoting common-sense views about 'digital opportunities'. However, the analysis identified two equifinal paths by the Partito Democratico-PD (Democratic Party) and the Partido Socialista Obrero Español -PSOE (Spanish Socialist Party of Workers), with the former conceiving digital platforms as 'weapons' to confront opponents (unions and party's intermediate cadres) and the latter conceiving them as 'catalysts' to tie together contrasting groups into a hegemonic consensus.

2. Post-Social Democracy was associated with understandings of the digital revolution as a 'toolkit' to rebalance the relations between democratic public power and markets.

The analysis showed consistent differences regarding how this ideology drove parties' strategic projects. Indeed, the French Parti Socialiste-PS (Socialist Party) mostly understood platform societies as a new political space to 'update' its policies' agendas and proposals while opposing platform party politics as dangerous for democracy. Conversely, Podemos-POD (We Can) understood digital platforms as 'agora' to channel participatory practices from social movements into democratic institutions while at the same time aiming to bind a broad social consensus to reformist changes to tackle platform capitalism. Sinistra Ecologia e Libertà-SEL (Left, Environment, Freedom), conceived digital platforms as a bridge to link radical claims and reformist approaches, for instance, by optimistically endorsing views of the platform economy as a bearer, per se, of logics of 'sharism' and cooperation.

3. Platform Socialism inspired La France Insoumise- LFI's (Unbowed France) ideology in a twofold direction. First, the critical understanding of the dialectics between data commodification and platform 'commonism' led the party to a system of beliefs defining the digital revolution as a new battlefield for political antagonism. Besides, LFI's strategic project conceived digital platforms as a backbone to organise and advance counter-hegemony by enabling connections between radical social groups and movements as well as means to disrupt established political elites.

This Chapter will expand upon these findings to compare how these ideologies operate at the junctions of the multiple crises experienced by the European Left after the GFC. Namely, how the ELPs' crises of visions impacted on their social linkages to classes and their organisational forms. The Chapter is structured as follows: the next section will recap how the Gramscian

theoretical framework is applied through the empirical analysis; sections three to five will analyse, respectively, Techno-Third Way, Post-Social Democracy and Platform Socialism as ideologies encompassing systems of beliefs and strategic projects; finally, in section six, by comparing the different ideologies, I will infer the main commonalities and differences on how ELPs faced the digital revolution during the 2010s.

Table 8.1 Attributes of ELPs hegemonic/counter-hegemonic strategic projects. Summary

			Areas of intervention of ELPs strategic projects			
Ideology	Case	*	Alternatives	Ties to Classes	Common Sense	Dialectics
Techno-Third Way	PD	PC	Brakes to innovation	Deregulation to attract big-tech	Tech synonym of opportunities	Tension Attack on unions
		PPP	Attacks on mass party	Cadres as micro-influencers	Weaponised vs direct democracy	Contradictions personal/mass party
	PSOE	PC	Pro-big tech social consensus	Compromises on soft regulations	Tech synonym of post-scarcity	Contradiction public private interests
		PPP	Hybridise mass and professional party	Micro-targeted campaigning	Mimics direct participation	Tension participation vs centralisation
Post- Social Democracy	PS	PC	Radical local agendas	Targeting digital divides for equality	Big-tech monopolies attacks on equality	Contradiction radical goals vs reformism
		PPP	Adaptation pro-representation	Top-down initiatives to boost activism	Digital politics over-simplify complexity	Tension participation vs mediation
	SEL	PC	Overcoming divides radical/reformism	Shared value to disrupt capitalism	'Sharing' prompts anti-system views	Contradictions techno optimism/pessimism
		PPP	Networking party and movements	Un-mediating leader people relations	Platforms enabling politics' renewal	Tensions mass party vs movements
	POD	PC	Radical agendas from movements	Political networks of social majority	Political elites' barriers to change	Contradiction radical goals vs reformism
		PPP	Platforms disrupt mediation	'Participationism' to connect majorities	Direct democracy disrupts corruption	Tensions participation centralisation
Platform Socialism	LFI	PC	Pro- commons and redistribution	Connector of varied subalterns	GAFAM false 'sharing' economy	Tensions commoners and state logics
		PPP	Prefigurative alternative platform	Enabling direct participation	Platform vs parties' bureaucracies	Tensions participation centralisation

*PC= Platform Capitalism; PPP= Platform Party Politics

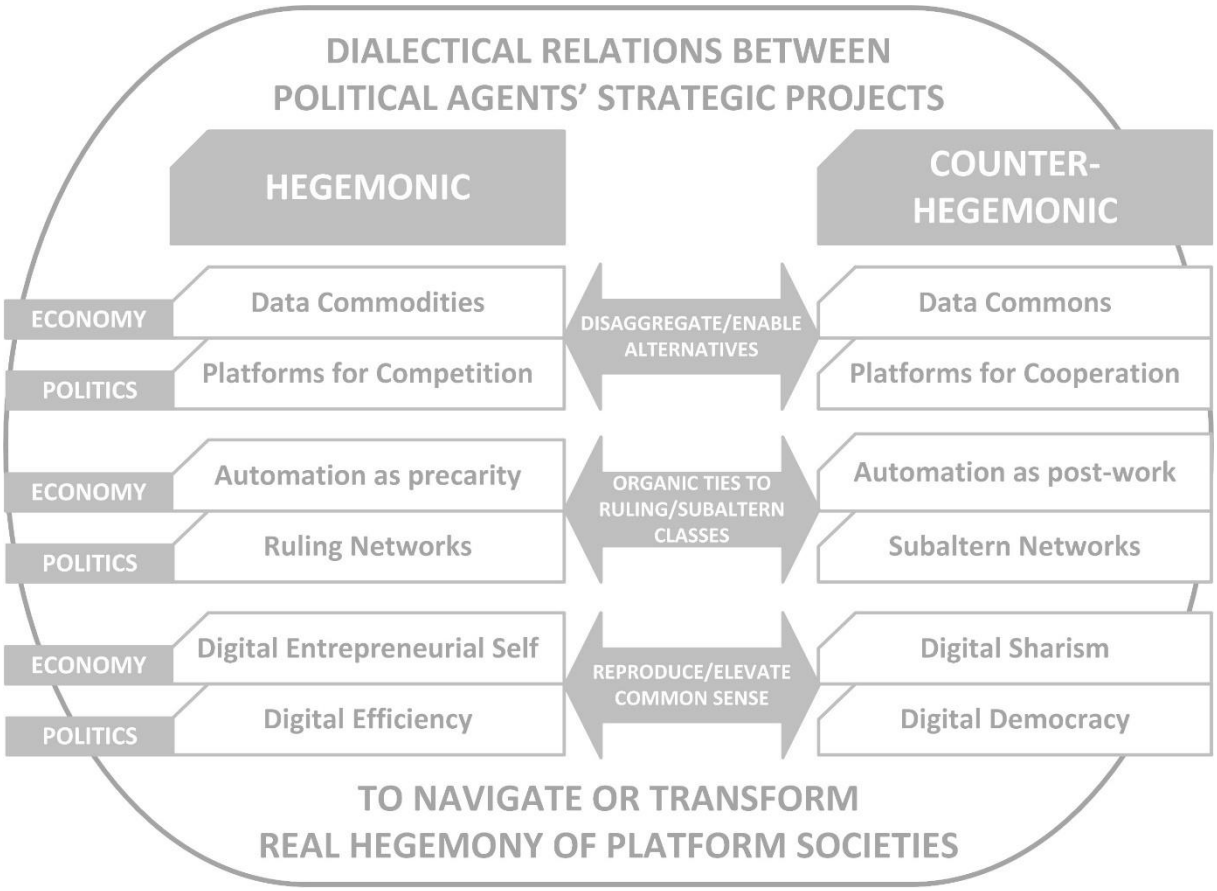
8.2 Real hegemony and (counter-)hegemonic strategic projects. The Gramscian approach.

In this section, I will specify how the empirical findings (Chapters 3 to 7) are brought together through the Gramscian framework developed in Chapter 2 to devise a typological theory of how the three ideologies emerged from (and sought to impact on) the relations between the real hegemony of platform societies and ELPs' (counter-) hegemonic strategic projects. First, I will briefly recall the dialectical relations I identified by surveying critical literature concerning platform societies. Second, I will illustrate how I will bring together the empirical findings to theorise on how the selected ELPs changed their ideologies to face the digital revolution in the remainder of the Chapter.

In Chapter 2.3.2, I deduced from critical literature the fundamental dialectical relations through which the agents of the 'integral state' govern the 'space of political possibilities' of platform societies. I identified how hegemonic agents confront resistance through a mix of coercion and practices to secure the consent of the subaltern classes to platform capitalist rulership. However, as previously argued, the real hegemony is an ever-unstable and dynamic equilibrium, resulting, on the one hand, from the structural dialectical relations emerging from the economic base, and on the other hand, from the relations between the agents of the political and civil societies. Therefore, the spaces and areas of intervention that I previously conceptualised (see figure 2.2) as the points of control for real hegemony are to be understood, also, as the points of confrontations between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic strategic projects. To recap, these 'poles' of confrontation are portrayed in Figure 8.1.

In a nutshell, the main polarities of these dialectics are summarised as follows:

Figure 8.1 The dialectics between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic strategic projects



1. Hegemonic agents seek to secure and protect data commodification, the main source for platform capitalists to keep control over the economy. Conversely, the alternative views and practices of digital platforms as 'commons' represent the frontier of resistance to advance counter-hegemony.

2. Political hegemony represents the ruling classes of platform capitalism by controlling that automation leads to reduced costs and maximises profits for companies (Srnicek, 2017), and it also defines new modes to control the organisation of politics (van Dijck *et al.*, 2018). Counter-hegemony claims that automation can lead to post-work societies and that alternative platforms can connect and mobilise subaltern classes (Dean, 2018).

3. Hegemony seeks to sediment common-sense views claiming that the digital revolution can turn every citizen into self-entrepreneurs and that it fosters the efficiency of political organisations (Bröckling, 2015). On the other hand, counter-hegemony seeks to elevate into transformative political projects common-sense views about platforms providing the means for 'sharing' economies and radical digital democracy (Fuchs, 2019a).

As previously argued (Ch.2.3), a Gramscian theoretical framework for party politics aims to uncover how political parties reflect on these dialectics. Further, it allows identifying which conditions shape different understandings, and how, through their ideologies, parties seek to navigate or transform such hegemony.

Accordingly, in the remainder of the Chapter, I will perform a Gramscian analysis of the three ideologies to analyse and compare, first, whether they were organic to social classes or instead arbitrary intellectual products (Gramsci, 2014, Q7 §19). Second, I will examine whether they actively connected social classes in historical blocs or instead they represented passive adaptations to new societal configurations (Gramsci, 2014, Q3 §90). I will argue that digital ideologies resulted from the 'historical' combinations of (1) their previous and current structural entrenchments as representatives (or not) of the ruling or subaltern classes and (2) the conjunctural path-dependencies from previous levels of parties' institutionalisation. That is to say that parties do not 'float' in the void also because their choices are shaped by past institutional arrangements and ideas that may provide incentives not to change the course of action (McDaniel, forthcoming, p. 32; see also Meyer, 2013).

Accordingly, I will first analyse the attributes of each ideology in relation to the conditions (structural and conjunctural) from which they emerged and upon which they sought to impact,

and then I will bring the three ideologies together for a comparative study of how the European Left Parties faced the political effects of the digital revolution during the 2010s.

8.3 Techno-Third Way. Navigating hegemony in platform societies

The PD and PSOE's ideology was conceptualised as Techno-Third Way. In this section, besides summarising the key attributes of the Techno-Third Way, I will identify the conditions under which the two parties adopted two 'equifinal' paths to navigate hegemony.

Both the PD and PSOE actively promoted views of platform capitalism, over-emphasising the advantages it takes for societies at large (i.e. interviews Barberis, Madia, Lopez Cano, Marra) by 'facilitating exchanges/transactions and through fostering innovation' (Gawer and Srnicek, 2021, p. I). As shown above, (Ch.3.3.1), both parties, in their discourses, defined the digital revolution as 'a paradigmatic change, not an incremental one' (PSOE, 2016). Both parties arrived at Techno-Third Way ideology as a response to conjunctural crises faced by parties' elites, blamed for passively adopting austerity agendas in the aftermath of the GFC (see Schmidt, 2016a; Manwaring and Kennedy, 2018). On the one hand, the past entrenchment of the PD and PSOE in the representation of the interests of neoliberal capitalism defined a path-dependency to retain a neoliberal ideology (Bailey *et al.*, 2014). On the other hand, however, the electoral losses experienced in the first half of the 2010s (see Table.1) and the emergence of radical competitors, such as Podemos in Spain, and the techno-populist Five Star Movement-M5S in Italy, (see Ch.4.4.1 and 4.5.1) also contributed to set incentives for 'refreshing' parties' ideologies. The emergence of outsider leaders was crucial in this process to reshape parties' images and overcome, as explained by Nannicini for the PD, 'the weakness

of a party that used to delegate crucial choices to other subjects, as unions and vested stakeholders'.

However, the empirical analysis identified how the different origins of parties' traditions and the leader themselves also led to interpreting Techno-Third Way along distinct paths to navigate hegemony. On the one hand, the PD's origin from merging leftist and centrist parties and the previous affiliation of Matteo Renzi to centrist parties shaped the leadership's understanding of the Techno-Third-Way, as a revival of the Blairite Third-Way to confront even moderate leftist alternatives. As critically noticed by Tocci, indeed Renzi's leadership was inspired by

> 'A 1990s' vision of the world, as if it were still possible to see globalisation as a totally positive phenomenon. But unfortunately, this was not the case in the 2010s'.

On the other hand, Sanchez claimed to project the image of PSOE as a renewed Social Democratic Party, to distance the party from the austerity agenda it imposed in 2009-2010. However, the PSOE was still grounded in the idea that 'Socialists cannot deny or oppose globalization, just as we do not oppose technology and the changes it produces. But we do want to regulate them, order them, put them at the service of humanity' (PSOE, 2017b, p. 9). Therefore, the core of the PSOE's project was still to actively promote initiatives and policies' agendas to empower individuals to better compete in capitalist markets, not to put under discussion the core of capitalist rulership. Hence, the Techno-Third Way ideology sought to secure hegemony for platform capitalist competition. This goal was pursued, for instance, by adopting policies supporting marginal regulatory frameworks to big-tech monopolies over data (see Docs.italia.it, 2018; Gob.es, 2020) and by promoting discourses that identify digital entrepreneurship as the new benchmark of good citizenship (PSOE, 2016; PD, 2018).

Relatedly, the Techno-Third Way is understood as an ideology that was 'organic' to the interests of the ruling classes of platform capitalism. These linkages are evident, for instance, in the adoption by these parties of practices to attract big-tech investors (see interviews Marra, Nannicini, Tocci). However, the in-depth analysis of Techno-Third Way strategic projects uncovered a relevant difference regarding how parties' elites meant to redefine the PD and PSOE's social linkages. On the one hand, the PD aimed to exploit the hegemony of platform society to demonise competing groups and parties. This trend is evident in elites' discourses attacking UBI as prompting welfare dependency and marginalising the relevance of platform workers as a residual phenomenon in an antagonistic relation with 'virtuous' digital start-uppers and small entrepreneurs (see Ch. 5.4.1 and interviews Barberis, Tani). On the other hand, Sanchez's leadership aimed at co-opting into hegemony fractions of subaltern classes. For instance, the PSOE sought to build a consensus around agendas marginally advancing platform workers' rights and approving a limited and conditional version of the basic income (Seg-social.es, 2020, see interview Garcìa Blanco). Similar commonalities and differences were evident in the analysis of how the Techno-Third Way inspired the logic of digitalisation of the PD and PSOE's organisations. The previous analysis (Ch. 5.4.2 and 5.5.2) found that both cases adopted managerial models of parties' organisation. Centralised forms of data exploitation borrowed from the techniques of big tech companies were used to transform activists into micro-influencers whose primary function is to replicate leaders' messages (see Fuchs, 2019a; PSOE, 2021, interviews Moreno, Nicodemo, Stumpo). However, on the one hand, Renzi's strategy was meant to fuel attacks on intermediate cadres and the mass-bureaucratic party model as outdated bureaucratic forms of politics hampering innovation (Ch. 5.4.2 and interviews Nicodemo, Vaccari). On the other hand, Sanchez's

leadership promoted a strategy of party digitalisation aimed at hybridising 'mass' and 'electoral-professional' models of organisation. These processes sought to co-opt radical activists asking for more horizontal and participatory forms of democracy (interview Moreno, see also PSOE, 2021).

Techno-Third Way is conceptualised as an 'active' ideology at reproducing and sedimenting 'common-sense' views about the digital revolution. Therefore, these parties naturalise views about the emergence of new areas of market competition over commodified data as a bearer of opportunities for all individuals. The result would be a societal win-win game that simultaneously reduces production and transaction costs while securing affluence and the horizon of post-scarcity (Docs.italia.it, 2018; Gob.es, 2021). In relation to the Techno-Third Way strategic project, I conceive the PD and PSOE's ideology as fuelling common-sense views about 'digital meritocracy', directed against outdated models of economic and political organisation. This claim is supported by interviewees, for instance with Nannicini explaining that Renzi's attacks on unions and states' bureaucracies were meant to prove that

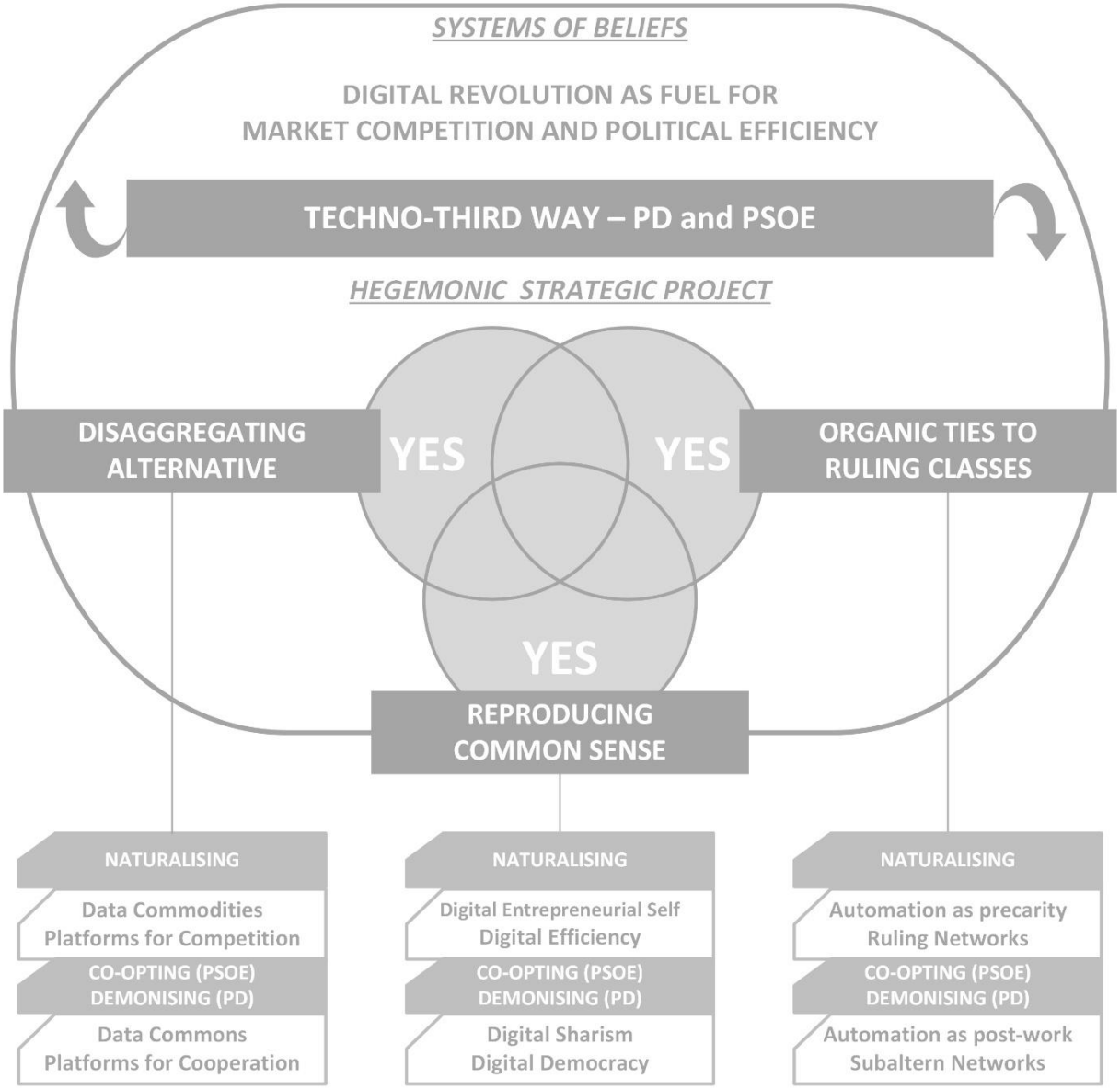
> 'we were changing for real, ending up with politics seeking consensus among social partners, with Italy as usual, a country whereby nothing really changes, ever'.

Regarding the PSOE, García Blanco depicted Sanchez's project as directed against outdated 'vested interests and networks interfering with our policies' agendas'. The main difference between how the PD and PSOE sought to reproduce 'common-sense' views to reproduce hegemony regarded the emphasis by parties' leaderships on the digital revolution to attack opponents or gather a broad social consensus around hegemony. Indeed, on the one hand, Renzi tended to demonise alternative 'common-sense' views, for instance, by ridiculing the 5MS and social movements' statements in favour of direct democracy as 'populist' attacks on

pragmatic and managerial politics (interviews Nicodemo, Tani). On the other hand, the PSOE aimed at co-opting radical claims from the squares' movements to attract young constituents into its hegemonic project (interviews López Cano, Moreno).

All in all, the Techno-Third Way is an ideology 'organic' to ruling classes of platform capitalism and 'active' at securing real hegemony through reproducing common sense. I portrayed, in Figure 8.2, the core elements defining these attributes of the Techno-Third Way.

Figure 8.2 Diagram. Techno-Third Way ideology (PD and PSOE)



Although with differences in their practices, both parties were reactive to platform society's real hegemony and actively sought to reproduce it. For instance, the overlap of the three attributes can be detected in how the PD and PSOE's elites promoted platform capitalism as business models to be adopted by the Italian and Spanish small and medium enterprises that represented the backbone of their respective economic systems (see interviews López Cano, García Blanco, Tani, Nannicini). Through their discourses and policies, indeed, at the same time, they aim at disaggregating alternative (cooperative) models of economic organisation, they naturalise the models of proprietary and exploitative platforms as positive for growth, and they promote common-sense views fuelling the small 'entrepreneurial selves'. The analysis showed, however, that the PD and PSOE's Techno-Third Way leaderships, while sharing common goals driving the re-definition of parties' ideas and practices, also adopted different strategic projects to a common end. More specifically, the PD's Techno-Third Way strategic project understood digital platforms as 'weapons' to frontally attack those subjects that were marked as key opponents of its values. Internally, these antagonists were the activists resisting personalistic and electoral-professional models of organisation and the intermediate cadres defending the mass-bureaucratic form of party organisation. Externally, they were the unions and states' bureaucracies deemed as barriers to positive innovation. Differently, the PSOE's elites understood digital platforms as 'catalysts' to merge potentially antinomic forms of social relations: internally, activists claiming for more horizontal and participatory forms of organisation with parties' managers aiming to redirect PSOE towards an electoral professional party; externally, to coalesce moderate unions, self-entrepreneurs and industrial associations in a consensus supporting the PSOE's plans for digitalisation. These different postures also resulted in different tensions and impacts of the PD and PSOE's

Techno-Third Way ideology. Indeed, the empirical analysis showed how Renzi's project was undermined by the reactions of internal factions and unions that he sought to marginalise amidst the struggles to keep traction over the PD's organisation when he was also Prime Minister (Ventura, 2018; Sandri and Seddone, 2018). On the contrary, Sanchez's leadership succeeded in gaining a new centrality for PSOE, improving the party's electoral performances in the two general elections held in 2019, and leading a coalition government with Podemos since early 2020 (Simón, 2020). Further, Sanchez's strategy succeeded in securing leadership control over party organisation by diminishing the impacts of intra-party factionalism.

8.4 Post-Social Democracy. Networking counter-hegemony

The ideology of the PS, SEL and Podemos was classified as Post-Social Democracy. Through this section, I will summarise findings on how Post-Social Democratic systems of beliefs were related to the PSD's strategic projects to analyse the recent evolutions by the PS, SEL and Podemos. All in all, the analysis will demonstrate that Post-Social Democracy can be theorised as an 'arbitrary' ideology as these parties' elites did not orientate their choices to (re-) establish organic ties of representation to the subaltern classes of platform capitalism.

PSD parties' elites shared critical understandings of platform capitalism whilst at the same time showing confidence in digital platforms as providing material and cultural resources to enable alternatives to hegemony (SEL, 2015; PS, 2018; Podemos, 2018). The empirical analysis identified two different approaches these parties' elites followed in seeking to transform real hegemony.

On the one hand, the PS reflected on platform societies as a way to face a major moment of crisis after the policies of President Hollande imposing austerity agendas (interviews This Saint Jean, Vincini). These reflections inspired the PS's ideological reorientation toward an 'updated' social democracy prioritising equality and public services. Therefore, the conjuncture of an ideological crisis and the emergence of direct competitors from the Left and the centre was the context for the PS elites to determine a significant ideological break from a neoliberal to a new social democratic vision (Bremer and McDaniel, 2019). At the same time, the past institutional function of the PS as a reformist party and the mass-bureaucratic model of organisation traced the 'path-dependencies' within which making sense of the choices by the PS elites not to change their party model through alternative platforms (see Ch.6.3).

On the other hand, SEL and Podemos' elites, although with different intensities, reflected upon the digital revolution as opening new potentialities for radical political articulations based on 'directness, disintermediation, interactivity, adaptability and instantaneous responsiveness' (Gerbaudo, 2019b, p. 189; see also van Dijck, 2013). SEL conceived its strategic project about platform societies as enabling alternatives in two directions. First, as cooperative models of economic organisation to generate social value (SEL, 2014a, p. 20). Second, digital parties provided innovative spaces to connect instances of resistance, mainly targeting young generations politicised through the alter-globalisation movement since the anti-G8 protests at Genoa back in 2001 (Badiou, 2012, see interviews De Cristofaro and Piccolotti). Attracting young protesters from social movements was also the main defining attribute of Podemos' practices imposing a 'generational break-up to redefine the image of the traditional Left' (interview Iglesias). More specifically, digital platforms provided 'agora' seeking to disrupt institutional politics by channelling (primarily) young protesters politicised

through the 'squares movements' of 2011 into institutional politics (Bailey *et al.*, 2018). However, Podemos' elites prioritised platform party politics over platform capitalism as a battlefield to advance alternatives. This was the case because Podemos' elites conceived the latter as a 'cognitive capitalism' that rendered impossible the subjectification of subaltern classes into coherent political movements (interviews Iglesias and Monedero). Therefore, two conjunctural conditions explain the choices by SEL and Podemos elites. First, the electoral crisis of the PD and PSOE, in conjunction with the stagnation of established RLPs (the Party of the Communist Refoundation in Italy and Izquierda Unida in Spain), set incentives for an ideological reconfiguration seeking to moderate the Radical Left ideology to attract constituents disappointed by the neoliberal SDPs. Second, the organisational experimentations of social movements to mobilise and connect young activists were seen as opening new paths forward for political projects seeking to hybridise radical goals and reformist means (Damiani, 2016).

Post-Social Democracy is conceptualised as an 'arbitrary' ideology in Gramscian terms. Although the analysis suggests this common outcome for all PSD parties, the lack of organic ties with subaltern classes results from different understandings by parties' elites. The PS elites conceived their renewed critical agendas on platform capitalism and local governmental practices as sufficient conditions for reconnecting the party with subaltern classes. By doing so, the PS elites were hoping to overcome the nefarious impacts of the 'labour law by Minister Myriam El Khomry, that triggered a "social storm" against us, ongoingly determining harsh consequences for us to restore our electoral strength' (interview Jacquin). However, the data analysis indicates that the PS elites avoided tackling two inter-related transformations for their strategic project to achieve the re-connection with subaltern classes. First, the PS is

strongly dependent on a view of class politics that, although recognising the structural roots of subalternity, dismisses antagonistic relations as damaging to social peace (PS, 2014). Second, this view is rooted in an understanding of politics as a locus of mediation of social instances by an elite. The linkage between these elements was evident in the denial of all PS interviewees to push further their alternative agendas regarding Universal Basic Income and the 'tax on robots' and in the resistance to digitalising the party's organisation beyond a marginal adaptation. As shown above (Ch. 6.3.2), the PS' elites understood platform party politics as a hostile space, extremely damaging for the PS 'as we do not have armies of online trolls, as the far right and Macron' (interview This-Saint Jean), and most importantly because politics, as clearly pointed by Jacquin

> 'is done in the corridors, which is something that those not directly involved in politics cannot understand. (…) Politics is about preparatory meetings, phone calls, and informal exchanges. We think that the digital revolution can facilitate these communications but cannot replace these processes'.

As previously argued, SEL's elites initially were influenced by optimistic and a-critical understandings of the digital revolution as providing, per se, new means to re-connect the party to subaltern classes. This process resulted in the attempt to 'bridge' antinomic logics informing SEL policies' agendas and organisational experimentations. Indeed, SEL's elites attempted to juxtapose claims from different groups by redefining a 'radical reformist' ideology combining references to working-class antagonism alongside feminism, environmentalism and libertarianism (interviews Ferrara, De Cristofaro). Further, during the 'momentum' of local victories championed by the leader Vendola, SEL's elites aimed at juxtaposing different forms of party organisation by avoiding to prioritise more traditional forms of mass-party organisation or the logics of flexible digital movements. A common theme

among all interviewees was to understand SEL as a 'pioneer' of organisational experimentation and innovation (interviews Pizzolante and Bavaro). However, these experiments failed as SEL's elites could not succeed at pulling together different forms of activism in the austerity age. Among the PSD parties under consideration, Podemos is the movement whose elites were most reflective at considering any prioritisation of class antagonism as a residual barrier to counter-hegemonic advancements. The point is made particularly clear by Monedero when explaining that

> 'the subjectivity of the working class in the Global North is gone. Nobody conceives themselves as pertaining to the working class. (…) They claim to be "middle classes", at least aspirational middle classes. (…) Therefore, when Podemos aimed at constituting its project, we could not rely on what traditionally defined the sources for left-wing politics, the class issue'.

Empirical findings indicate contrasting findings regarding how parties' elites aimed at elevating common-sense views to transformative goals. Indeed, for instance, the PS elites constantly referred to digital 'democracy' as detrimental to representative democracy and for how the PS integrated activists. As explained by Vincini, indeed

> 'left-wing political movements need human contact. The PS is a party based on face-to-face meetings and activities, as this is what creates camaraderie and fraternity. And digital technologies are detrimental for these essential forms of conviviality'.

On the other hand, both SEL and Podemos considered it crucial to anchor their parties to popular common-sense views to elevate anti-rulers and anti-elitist positions into transformative political projects. In both cases, the emergence of charismatic leaders was crucial for these goals. In the Italian case, as explained by Piccolotti

> 'Vendola won because he seemed far from elites as usual… and he was… his personality, that of a gay, communist and catholic, was a powerful cultural mix in itself. Moreover, he had this extraordinary ability to fascinate popular audiences with a culturally sophisticated

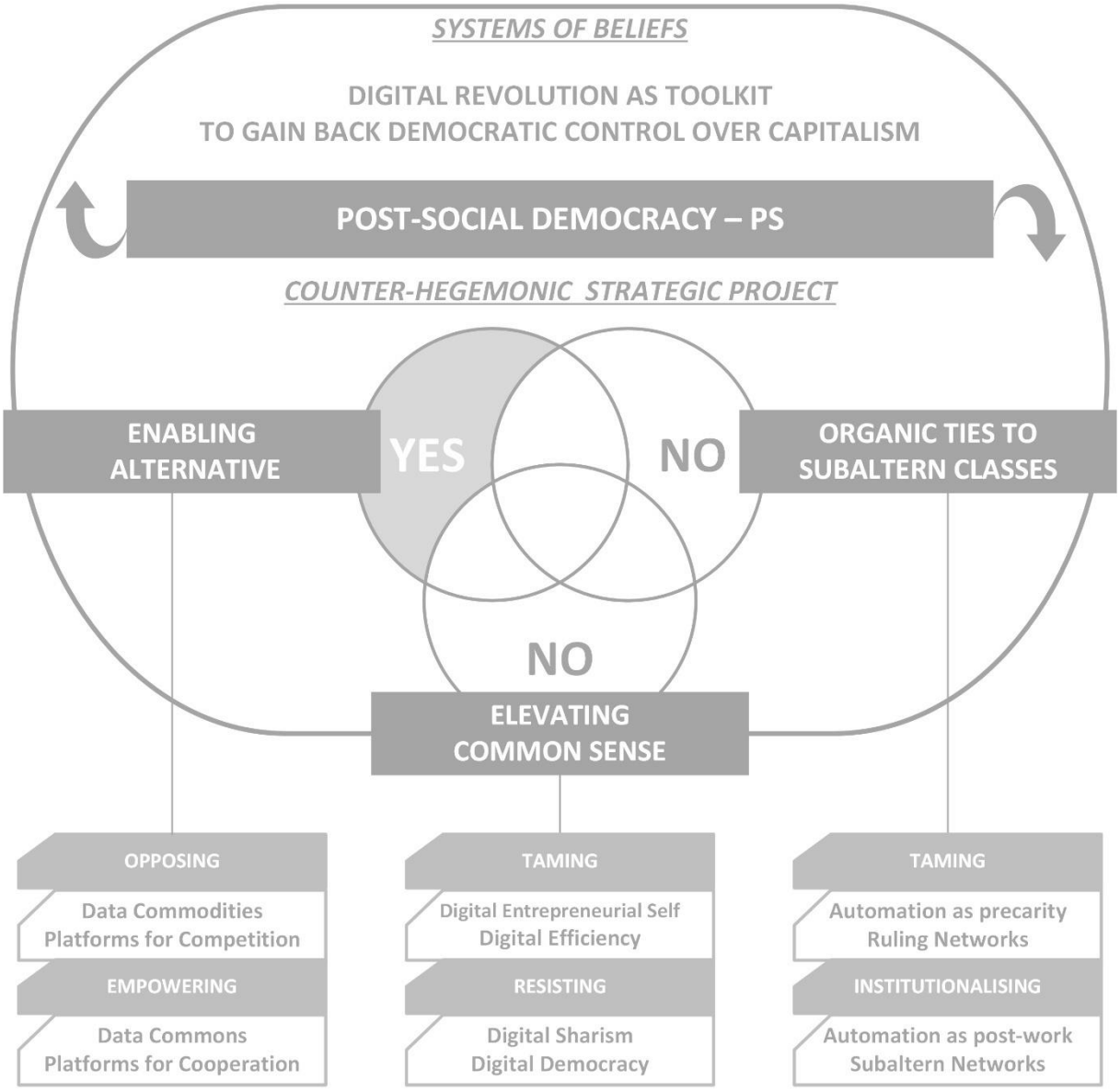
language. This combination generated something unique, as he could stand up as an anti-elitist leader without being simply destructive in his proposals'.

In the Spanish case, Iglesias' emergence as a famous journalist denouncing cases of corruption was key to the rapid outburst by Podemos in 2014 (Rodríguez-Teruel *et al.*, 2016). The emphasis on digital platforms as 'agora' to activate the disruption of the Spanish party system was the cornerstone of the party's initial strategic project. The abandonment of models of politicisation marked as 'outdated' was associated with the adoption of discourses and practices prioritising 'corrupted politics' as the main barrier to radical change (Williams, 2015).

To sum up, I theorise the Post-Social Democratic ideology as a system of beliefs signifying the digital revolution as a 'toolkit' to strengthen public agency's chances at pushing back the hegemony of platform capitalists. The findings also showed how the three parties' elites defined different strategic projects to network counter-hegemonic movements. These differences are plotted in Figures 8.3 (PS) and 8.4 (SEL and Podemos).

These different approaches resulted, however, in what in Gramscian terms may be defined as an 'arbitrary' ideology, as parties' strategic projects did not prioritise practices to establish organic representation of the subaltern classes, although for different reasons. In the case of the French PS, its officers aim to resist radical change concerning models of intermediation grounded in the function of multi-layered and pyramidal forms of political organisation. In combination with the hyper-optimistic understandings of the initial stages of 'sharing' economies, SEL's' network' form of organisation was associated with a crisis for party elites in defining syntheses between contrasting agendas. Podemos elites' cultural roots in post-structuralism informed its strategic project aiming to overcome any residual centrality of class antagonism as the organising principle of the radical left (Kioupkiolis and Pérez, 2019).

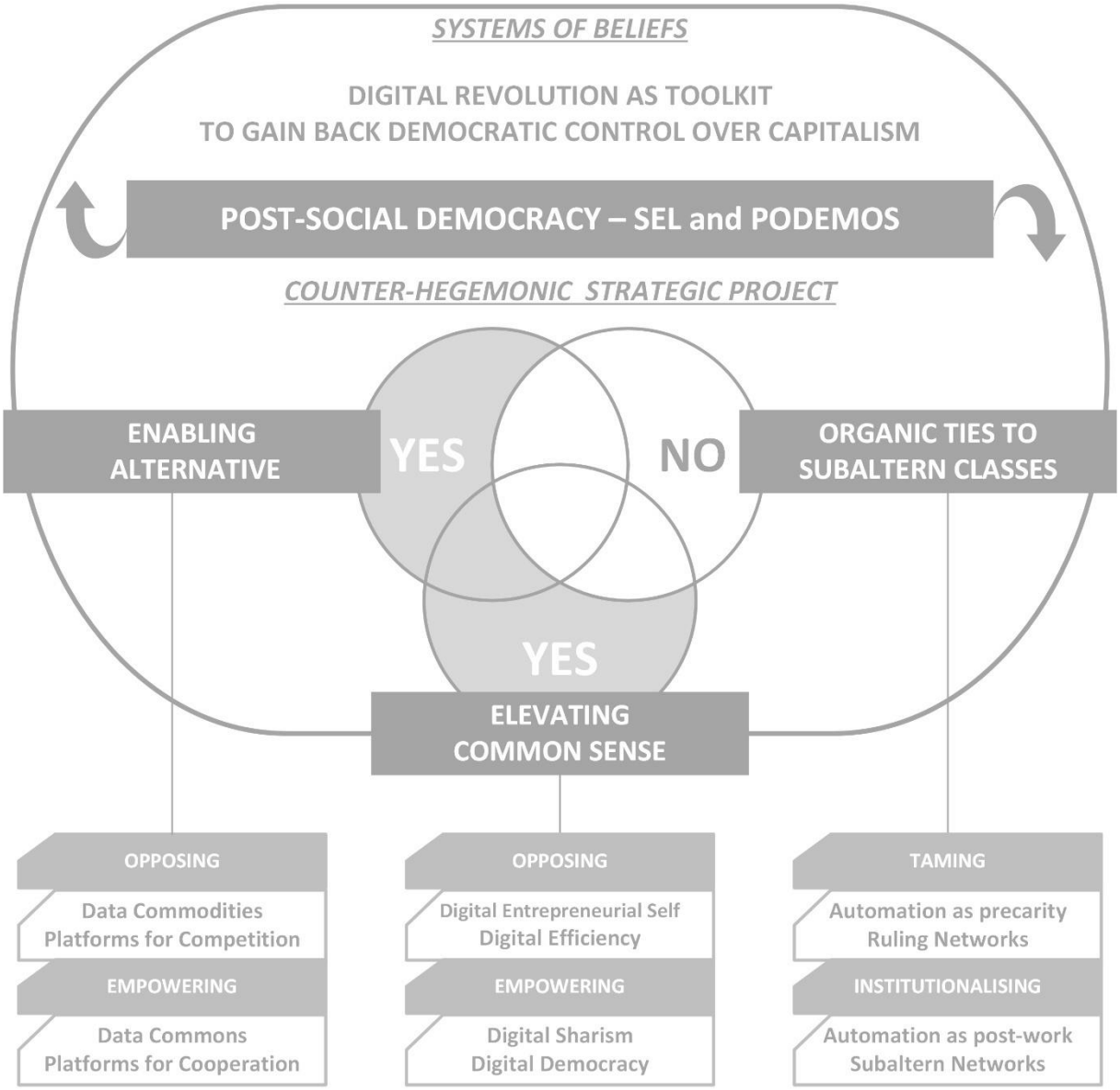
Figure 8.3 Diagram. Post Social Democratic ideology (PS)



However, the PS' Post-Social Democratic project was also 'passive' concerning practices to anchor the party to common-sense views about digital platforms as boosters for radical disruption. On the contrary, SEL and Podemos' elites' practices to gain traction over common sense views to articulate radical projects demonstrate an 'active' attribute of their strategic projects. This combination results in the overlap in Figure 8.4 of the areas 'enabling alternative' and 'elevating common sense' but in the absence of 'ties to subaltern classes'. For

instance, this area of overlap can be seen in SEL and Podemos' emphasis on radical democracy as disruptive of established power, that however, was not linked to anti-capitalist agendas.

Figure 8.4 Diagram. Post Social Democratic ideology (SEL and Podemos)



The empirical analysis identified a common area of tension for Post-Social Democracy in the struggles by these parties to consistently combine radical reorientations and institutionalist routes to radical change. Within this broader struggle, however, the analysis allowed identifying specific tensions among these parties. The French PS struggled to combine the

proposed reorganisation of the party as a 'platform for civil society' (PS, 2018) and the ongoing resistance of its intermediate cadres. SEL and Podemos, meanwhile, inherently oscillated between postures as 'anti-system' movements and as radical parliamentary parties (Damiani, 2016; Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2015).

8.5 Platform Socialism. Organising counter-hegemony

LFI was classified as the only case within Platform Socialist ideology. Through this section, I will summarise findings on how Platform Socialism was related to the strategic areas of intervention (alternatives, ties to classes, common sense) to identify the main patterns of transformation that LFI sought to achieve.

LFI's Platform Socialist ideology signified the digital revolution as a battlefield to disrupt the latest stage of capitalism that, although operating alongside different forms of exploitation, is advancing as the gate-keeper defining the hegemonic rules of economic competition (see Moulier-Boutang, 2011). LFI sought to advance counter-hegemony within this battlefield by politicising 'the antagonism between the digital commodity created by digital labour on the one side, and the digital commons on the other' (Fuchs, 2019c, p. 62). Indeed, LFI's elites understand the real hegemony of platform societies as primarily structured by the dialectical relations between exploitation and liberation. This view was evident, for instance, with LFI's claims that there is an increasing digital divide whereby 'large platforms impose a logic of value exploitation. These same platforms take advantage of unfair fiscal advantages and social de-regulation' (LFI, 2017d, p. 6). However, more optimistically, as declared by Schon

> ‘We think that the digital can be a great opportunity through prioritising free and open software that boosts a participative approach to co-construction, through software conceived not as a commodity but as a common domain. Therefore, the “digital commons” approach is crucial for our project. As a movement, we still need to evolve. However, our position is clear-cut and exact. We defend the idea of the digital commons’

This antagonistic stance is mirrored in the adoption of digital models of party organisation that aim at enabling alternative forms of political organisation. The digital movement, indeed, as pointed out by Chaibi, ‘moves towards the people, enabling engagement and participation even when citizens cannot attend in-person campaigns’. The emergence of Platform Socialism was explained throughout the thesis at the intersection of three related conjunctural conditions. First, the crisis experienced by the PS as the incumbent party imposing austerity agendas and the stagnation of the main Radical Left party (the Communist Party) opened a window of opportunity to propose new forms of political organisation to radically disrupt ‘politics as usual’ (Marlière, 2019). Second, the position of Mélenchon as the Presidential candidate in 2012 for an electoral cartel of the Radical Left (the Left Front) gave him the space of manoeuvre to use this previous leadership to turn the coalition of parties into a new digital movement. This anchorage to the Radical Left also defined a relevant path-dependency to facilitate the emergence of LFI’s ideology as a renewal, not a rejection of key Socialist principles (Damiani, 2016). Third, the emergence of the anti-austerity movement of the ‘Standing Nights’ provided the grass-root base of activists to be channelled into a radically new political project. These activists were indeed a pivotal resource to transfer into LFI the techniques of coordination of their mobilisations through alternative digital platforms (Damiani, 2020; see also Plancq *et al.*, 2018b)

Platform Socialism is theorised as an ideology organic to the interests of the subaltern classes of platform capitalism. LFI’s officers, as those of SEL and Podemos, acknowledge the

evolutions of class structures towards a diversification of the subjectivities of the subalterns. Nonetheless, contrary to those parties slipping toward PSD, LFI's elites speak the language of class antagonism, and their strategic project is to provide a platform to represent subalterns' interests organically. A common theme constantly emerging from interviews is that, on the one hand, platform capitalism means at the same a 'way back to serfdom and slavery, whereby workers have all the disadvantages of both the self-employed and employee statuses' (interview Chaibi) and the invention of new routes of exploitation determining

> 'the emergence of a new proletariat, that of deliverers, uber drivers. This is the dream of capitalists come true. Namely, they could invent jobs without any social protection and patrol workers to accomplish the order of their new boss, the platforms' (interview Bompard).

The dialectics of platform capitalism, however, are also understood as providing possibilities to cement alliances among subalterns, as 'the left is meant to fight against exploitation' (interview Bompard). LFI aims to provide a platform to activate and synthesise instances from autonomous movements of platform workers (see Cant, 2020) with those from platform cooperatives (see Scholz and Schneider, 2017; McCann and Yazici, 2018). This function is strategically designed by LFI through agendas aimed at combining local and international forms of subalterns' organisation, as with Chaibi's claim that

> 'there may be alternatives, such as developing a pan-European public Amazon, but there are already many local alternatives that are already disrupting big tech platforms'

Platform Socialism was an 'active' ideology seeking to elevate 'common sense' views into radical transformative movements in a twofold direction. First, by promoting discourses attacking 'GAFAM' exploitation as damaging for workers, small businesses and local communities, to advance the logic of the 'commons' (LFI, 2017e, interviews Poznanski, Schon).

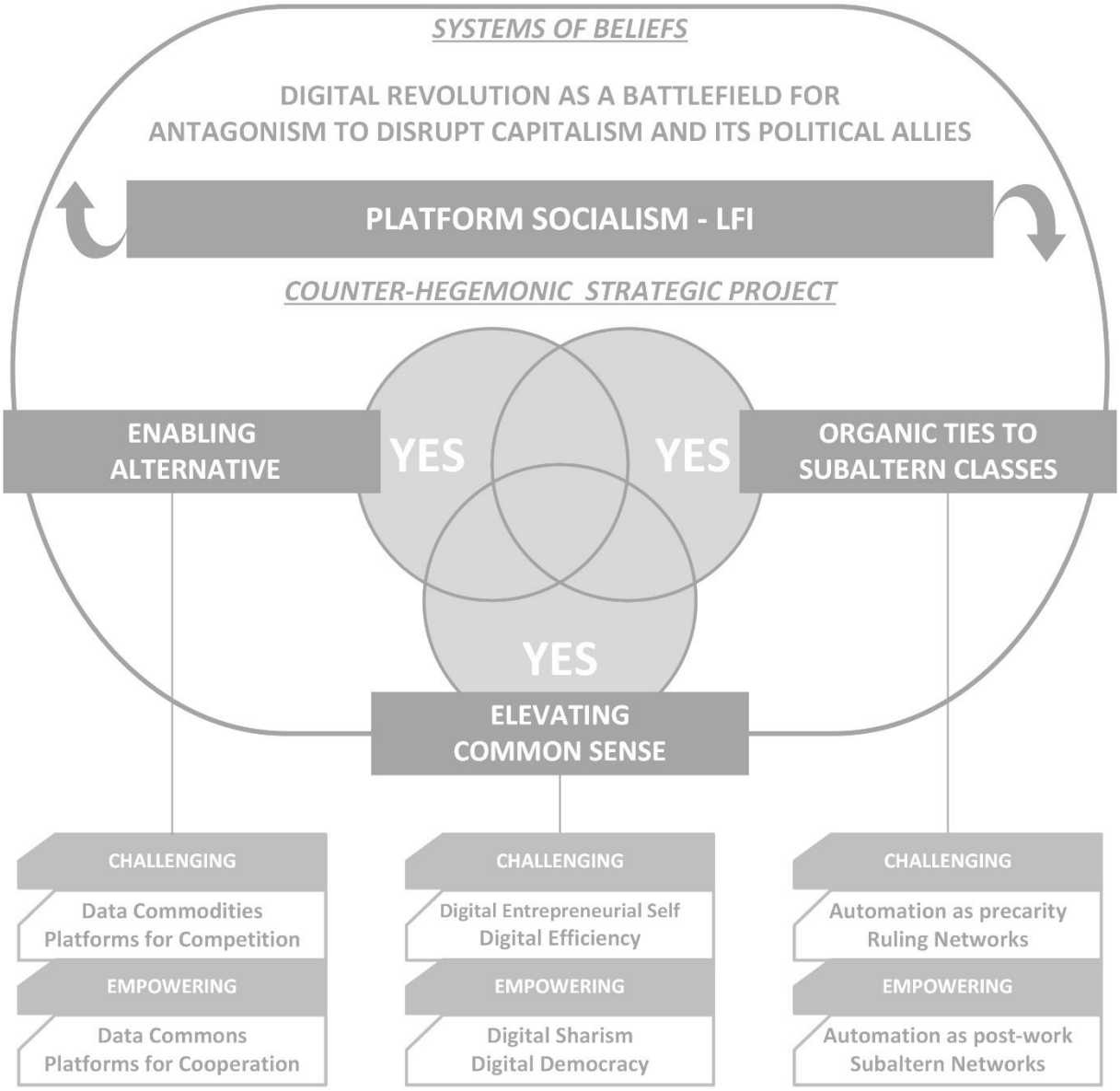
Second, by inspiring a new model of organisation for the field of counter-hegemony as shown throughout with the logic informing the strategies of movement digitalisation adopted by LFI. Indeed, LFI's counter-hegemonic strategic project conceives platforms as providing crucial transformative potentialities to disrupt the ruling classes and their affiliated political elites. Platforms have this unique power because they can prompt direct participation and the disintermediation of political relations as traditionally operated by parties' bureaucracies. As shown before (Ch.7.4), digital platforms were the organisational backbone upon which all the main functions of the movement were performed. LFI's interviewees were clear-cut at explaining that this organisational evolution was meant to distance the movement from traditional forms of integration of the mass party around what was negatively marked as 'leftist folklore' (Chaibi). Instead, LFI's project was, according to Bompard,

> 'to fit into a new wave of leftist politics in Europe that began with Podemos in Spain, which demonstrated that parties' coalitions were ineffective at taking power. Therefore, we wanted to create a different type of movement to revitalise the ideas of Gramsci by disrupting neoliberal hegemony'.

In figure 8.5, I plotted the defining attributes of Platform Socialism as an 'organic' and 'active' counter-hegemonic ideology. The overlaps between the areas of intervention resulted, for instance, from the initiatives to turn the economic claims of the riders' movements into a broader agenda to connect precarious workers through discourses elevating the population's awareness about the exploitative practices of GAFAM (interviews Bompard, Chaibi).

Platform Socialism's ideology as a system of beliefs and a counter-hegemonic strategic project encompassed the two Gramscian moments of the critical understandings of the most advanced forms of capitalist exploitation by GAFAM and the constructive agency seeking to organically represent the subalterns.

Figure 8.5 Diagram. Platform Socialist ideology



LFI's case study also highlighted how the movement had been affected by a tension between its nature as a radical transformative movement and its institutional practices. Regarding platform capitalism, on the one hand, LFI organises campaigns to attack the private property of digital infrastructures and data by promoting the logic of distributed commons (interviews Chaibi, Schon). On the other, the priority of its parliamentary activities is to elaborate state-driven policy proposals about taxation and state distribution to subaltern classes (interviews

Poznanski, Bompard). Regarding platform party politics, LFI, on the one hand, remains a unique case of organisational experimentation, for instance, by the systematic use of drawings to select members of the national coordination spaces (LFI, 2017b). On the other hand, national leadership retained certain areas of intra-party power, as with Mélenchon nominating LFI's national coordinator (see Premat, 2019). However, the original digital architecture of the party fuels the implementation of flexible forms of organisation, as with the more recent rebranding of the movement as 'Union Populaire' (Popular Union, UP) (interviews Bompard, Royer), to stay faithful to its key project at mobilising wide constituencies at multiple levels.

8.6 Three left-wing ideologies for platform societies. Comparative analysis

In this section, I will bring together the main findings from the empirical research to outline a comparison between the three digital 'ideologies' and analyse whether and how they impacted the 'crises' of the ELPs in the 2010s. In the Introduction (.1), I argued that the 'crisis' of the Left from the early 2000s to the 'age of austerity' should be understood first and foremost as one of 'visions'. In Chapter 1 (.2), I specified that this primary crisis had stark effects on how ELPs retained their social linkages, to argue that this area of crisis regarded both, who they aimed at representing, the 'problem' with subaltern classes, and how they seek to engage the social groups they targeted, the 'problem' of party's organisation. However, I surveyed emerging theories claiming that platform societies provide new opportunities for the political left to exit these crises (Ch. 1.3), which defined the research puzzle that set the scene for my empirical research. Relatedly, this section will analyse

whether and how the selected ELPs took advantage of new opportunities by reshaping their ideologies and how, if at all, the ideological changes that have been theorised throughout the thesis were meant to impact upon ELPs' crises. Finally, by bringing together the comparative analysis, I will specify the thesis' main argument.

8.6.1 Platform capitalism vs 'commonism'. ELPs and the 'problem' of subaltern classes

By looking at ELPs, through a Gramscian perspective, as cultural and strategic agents immersed in the relations that define the dialectics between hegemony and counter-hegemony, the empirical research shed new light on the 'crisis' of ELPs at representing the working- and more generally subaltern classes (Przeworski, 1985; Benedetto *et al.*, 2020). Indeed, by understanding parties as seeking to navigate or transform hegemony, the thesis develops the argument that the crisis of representation should be understood in a twofold way. First, by hegemonic parties, the crisis relates to whether their ideologies work to secure the consent of subalterns to hegemonic rulership. Second, by counter-hegemonic parties, the crisis relates to whether they can organise economic subaltern classes into a political transformative counter-hegemonic movement (Gramsci, 2014, Q3 §90). By adopting this perspective, I can compare how parties reflected on the new possibilities of platform societies to re-link their parties to whom they sought to represent.

More specifically, I identified through critical literature on platform societies normative claims for how the Left should innovate its ideas to empower the subalterns. A first reformist approach was represented by Marianna Mazzucato's (2015) 'Techno-Keynesianism', arguing that the Left should focus on how to redesign the state for public institutions to get back the rewards of their long-term investments in innovation. Further, I identify radical theories

claiming the need for the Left to organise and mobilise the field of 'platform commonism' (Fuchs, 2019c) to disrupt the rulership of platform capitalism. These normative theories were developed under two different approaches. First, post-workerist authors claimed the need to abandon the ideology of 'labourism', the protection of employees, to embrace 'post-workerism', focusing on the distribution of value through the Universal Basic Income, not wages and welfare insurance (Srnicek and Williams, 2016; Van Parijs and Vanderborght, 2017). Second, a platform socialist approach claimed the need to go back to the property of the (digital) means of production through socialising the infrastructures enabling the flows of data on platforms and prefiguring alternative forms of cooperative economic organisation (Morozov, 2019; Benanav, 2019). Not only do these theories provide the analytical tools to develop the empirical research, but they are also a reference point to make sense of how the different ideologies theorised in this thesis were 'put at work' by parties' elites to renew their social linkages.

The empirical analysis demonstrated that the elites of the selected ELPs were well-aware of these intellectual debates. As a result, I could identify a first common area of ideological change for all ELPs in the posture of their leaders as seeking to place their parties at the forefront of 'digital innovation' to gain traction over their targeted social groups. However, the analysis showed that by looking at parties' elites' strategic choices as shaped, both, by their structural entrenchments (Bailey, 2009b) and by conjunctural 'path-dependencies' (Bremer and McDaniel, 2019), the three ideologies were meant to serve contrasting goals.

Techno-Third Way, therefore, can be theorised as an ideology seeking to provide new intellectual and material resources for ELPs to secure the consent of the subaltern classes to

the ruling classes of platform society. The PD and PSOE represent cases aimed at ongoingly integrating the political Left into the dominant networks of power of platform capitalism, actively seeking to naturalise practices by its ruling classes. The case studies showed how parties' elites concretely orientated their choices in platform societies to secure the consent to hegemony by specific fractions of the subaltern classes, resulting in two different paths for the same goal. Both parties promoted practices to naturalise capitalist rulership over supposedly digital self-entrepreneurs. These practices were meant to secure the consent among one of their main social targets, the young generations, to their hegemonic projects. However, on the one hand, the PD sought to disaggregate resistance by demonising transformative views, for instance, by ridiculing the claims for UBI as fostering welfare-dependency cultures. On the other hand, the PSOE's elites demonstrated to be consistently reflective of post-workerist theories, and they aimed at co-opting these logics, as with policies' agendas to adopt marginal forms of basic income.

Conversely, Platform Socialism drew upon critical theories of platform societies to design an ideology that sought to connect subaltern classes that were divided and dispersed amidst the hegemony of financial and platform capitalism. This goal was evident with LFI's claims to take public control of digital infrastructures signified through the initiatives to turn platforms into a 'common domain'. However, with authors such as Aaron Benanav (2020), LFI's elites were critical of 'post-workerist' claims, not on a theoretical basis, but as they reflected on how the 'real' hegemony of platform society worked to co-opt the claims for UBI (see also Pitts *et al.*, 2017). LFI's Platform Socialist ideology sought to draw upon practices of resistance by platform labourers as the riders, to turn them into symbolic references to attract (especially

young) casualised workers and impoverished small entrepreneurs and cement them into a counter-hegemonic historical bloc.

Therefore, Techno-Third Way and Platform Socialism are conceptualised as ideologies providing critical resources for the parties to exit their crisis of representation of classes, as parties' elites, drawing upon innovation, adopted ideas and practices to pursue their goals consistently.

Instead, the analysis showed that Post-Social Democracy, although representing an ideology seeking to take Social Democracy into the field of counter-hegemony, was a case of an ongoing 'organic' crisis (Gramsci, 2014, Q7 §19). This hardship was particularly evident with PSD's elites' struggles to redefine their understandings and practices to represent subaltern classes organically. Indeed, on the one hand, the empirical analysis demonstrated that these parties sought to elaborate innovative, radical claims. But, on the other hand, the 'ideational' path dependency on Social Democracy as an ideology seeking to tame, not raise, class antagonism resulted in the indecisiveness at fully taking the side of 'platform labour' against platform capitalism (Dean, 2019a). This is why PSD has been theorised, in Gramscian terms, as an 'arbitrary' ideology, as it is inherently flawed at designing effective strategies to organically represent and elevate subaltern classes into transformative projects. The arbitrary nature of PSD was particularly evident, for instance, when looking at how the three parties reflected and orientated their choices about post-workerism through UBI. After the short post-workerist moment during Hamon's presidential campaign, the PS turned to views about UBI as one of 'n-' policies' proposals to revive a welfarist project by abandoning radical proposals of UBI as means to disrupt capitalist rulership (McDaniel, forthcoming). The Italian SEL

attempted to juxtapose post-workerist claims about UBI by young officers with traditional labourist claims. As a result, the party failed at elevating these different practices into a unitary transformative project. Podemos' elites, meanwhile, by reflecting on platform societies as a space overcoming the primacy of class antagonisms (Mouffe, 2018) to transform hegemony, accepted UBI as a marginal policy-proposal complementary to a Techno-Keynesian agenda. However, the latter agenda only prioritised the need to increase states' investments without proper consideration of how the value generated by platform capitalists, thanks to public investments, should be reappropriated by states' institutions.

All in all, therefore, the thesis develops the argument that digital ideologies resulted in two contrasting patterns concerning how ELPs sought to re-link their projects to social classes. On the one hand, those ideologies that aimed to be organically tied to the 'real' dialectics of platform capitalism exploited these dialectical relations as resources to design consistent strategic projects either to secure the domination of platform capitalists or to empower platform labourers. On the other hand, Post-Social Democracy could not find an effective way to face the structural reasons for its crisis of representation of the subaltern classes (Mudge, 2018). This subsection theorised how the digital revolution enabled ELPs to redefine who they sought to represent. The following subsection will look at the second crucial area of crisis for ELPs, concerning how the parties' sought to organise those groups they wanted to represent.

8.6.2 Platform politics. Efficiency or democracy? The Left and the 'problem' of the party

The differences in parties' understandings of class relations under platform capitalism are mirrored in varied choices regarding the digitalisation of ELPs' organisations during the 2010s. Tracing organisational changes or adaptations back to parties' ideas and strategies allows

achieving more precise theorisations of how parties' elites' choices shaped some common trends characterising the recent evolutions of political parties in the Global North.

Overall, some common trends have been identified in the literature, since the 1980s onwards, as bearing strong impacts on the most 'typical' form of organisation of the Left, that of the mass-bureaucratic party (Revelli, 2013). First, parties' elites turned their organisations to the state at the expense of the 'party on the ground' (Mair and Katz, 2002). Moreover, parties' organisations were increasingly transformed into professional machinery for managing election campaigns (Panebianco, 1988). Finally, parties became more 'personalistic' and dependent on the leaders' personas more than on the community of activists and voters (Calise, 2015).

The recent literature on the impacts of the digital revolution on parties' organisations, although with different degrees of optimism or pessimism concerning the effects of these processes, highlighted how digital platforms provided several routes for the parties to re-shape their organisations to (re-)engage their communities of activists. To begin with activism, digital platforms would enable 'multi-speed' forms of engagement that blur the boundaries between the full-time traditional militants and the occasional followers (Scarrow, 2015; see also Gibson *et al.*, 2017). Moreover, platform party politics would incentivise parties to adopt movement-like forms of organisation, whereby platforms, not intermediate cadres or national bureaucracies, would design more flexible forms of activism (Chadwick and Stromer-Galley, 2016; Nunes, 2021). Crucially, the defining feature of the 'digital' party, according to Paolo Gerbaudo (2018), was that it was polarised around a 'hyper-leader', a powerful and connected individual and a 'super-base', made of large audiences of online activists. Although most of

these trends apply to some or other cases examined through the thesis, as with the 'problem' of social classes, understanding the organisational choices through the perspective of how they were meant to navigate or transform hegemony develops key understandings about the main directions along which these processes took place. Further, the analysis allows to identify distinct directions of the relations between the leadership and the base.

The empirical analysis showed that all the selected ELPs but one underwent major processes of organisational reconfiguration or, as in the case of the new parties, of organisational experimentation, to which the adoption of digital platforms was particularly relevant. The only 'deviant' case was the French PS, whose elites resisted moving the party online as platform politics was conceived as a hostile space attacking the core of the party's representative functions. On the one hand, this choice by the PS elites impacted the 'consistency' of its attempt to move the party into the field of counter-hegemony. On the other hand, however, as shown throughout (Ch. 4.3.1 and 6.5.2), this 'exception' can be explained by the peculiar conjuncture placing the PS' 'frontier' of resistance in local governments. Hence, the PS elites had strong incentives to keep in place powerful intermediate cadres precisely as they were the ones that could protect the vital emplacement of the PS on the territory (McDaniel, forthcoming). In the remaining cases, instead, two main strategical approaches can be theorised concerning how organisational digitalisation could provide resources to strengthen parties' social linkages.

First, overall, Techno-Third Way elites understood platforms as providing means to further advance electoral-professional and personalistic models of parties' organisations with different styles and degrees of departure from the mass-party model (Calise, 2016; Filippini,

2017; Kefford and McDonnell, 2018). Relatedly, in both cases, parties' elites operated to change the nature of activism from the 'grassroots' to strengthen the party 'on the ground', to shape a mass of 'micro-influencers' to be trained to replicate leaders' messages on social media. However, upon this common ground, the case studies (see Ch.5.4.2 and 5.5.2) also demonstrated that the PD and PSOE's elites differed regarding the extent of parties' digitalisation and the goals that digital platforms were meant to serve. On the one hand, the PD's scattered digitalisation sought to fuel party personalisation by prioritising Renzi's leadership's direct communications to constituents. This primary goal explains the 'weaponisation' of platforms against the cadres of the mass party defended by competing factions. On the other hand, the PSOE's intense digitalisation was meant to hybridise mass activism with centrally managed communication to fuel the party's leadership campaigning (Pasquino, 2014; Scarrow *et al.*, 2017). Therefore, the real hegemony of platform societies provided these parties with the organisational models to restore their societal functions. Indeed, although with different consistency and outcomes, the PD and PSOE adapted their organisations by incorporating the logic governing big-tech platforms, reflecting on digital platforms as providing new means to achieve political efficiency. Accordingly, both parties saw opportunities to strengthen their leadership and electoral marketing by rendering activism a source of data extraction. Indeed, these parties sought to exploit their activists' 'commodified' data to enhance micro-targeted campaigns and leaders' performances on social media.

On the contrary, the logic of digitalisation of the three RLPs was informed by views of digital platforms as commons to foster new forms of more direct and participatory radical democracy (Fenton, 2016a). The empirical findings show that the three cases aimed at using digital platforms as new 'intermediate' cadres to prompt activism (Deseriis, 2020). All these parties

orientated their organisational reconfigurations towards the digital-movement party model (Della Porta *et al.*, 2017). Whereas for hegemonic parties, the activists were to be turned into 'micro-influencers', among these parties' activists should be meant as 'community- and protests organisers'. However, the distinct ideologies, Post-Social Democracy and Platform Socialism, provide a relevant perspective to understand key differences in the evolutions of these strategic projects regarding parties' digitalisation. Indeed, on the one hand, SEL and Podemos represented cases of organisational renewal and experimentation through digital platforms that were meant to primarily support discourses and practices concerning, per se, participatory democracy. However, as shown above (see Ch.6.4.2 and 6.5.2), the two cases differed as SEL's elites attempted to juxtapose a more traditional party with a platform movement, whereas Podemos' architecture was inherently designed as a digital platform to enable activism. LFI, on the other hand, was a platform organisation intended to provide a space of connection for multiple groups of resistance to platform capitalism. LFI's digital strategy was meant, first, to prefigure an alternative to proprietary platforms and to fuel organisational experimentation. Second, digital platforms were crucial to support LFI's strategic project aiming to overcome traditional mass-party organisations of the Left, which were considered detrimental to the activation of broader counter-hegemonic alliances.

All in all, with the exception of the PS, ideologies concerning the digital revolution are relevant to uncovering how organisational innovation was related to parties' systems of beliefs and goals in the confrontation for political hegemony. As shown throughout, the adoption of 'radical' digital movement types of organisation can be understood as affected by a trade-off with the level of integration of these into institutional practices. This finding, per se, is unsurprising, as participation in governments is recognised as challenging for radical parties

to keep alive more radical ideological goals and disruptive forms of mobilisation (Hough *et al.*, 2010; Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2015). However, considering parties as less or more 'organic' to the real hegemony of platform societies also allows identifying different reasons for why these different strategies emerged. Indeed, for instance, LFI's elites made a strategic choice to pursue an adversarial strategy to the institutional Left (Albertazzi *et al.*, 2021), even though this choice implied losing relative shares of power in local coalition governments. LFI's strategic project, however, was to keep the movement organically tied to the mobilisations of the subalterns against financial and platform capitalism and this primary goal was a key reason for the party's elites choices. On the other hand, SEL and Podemos' ideologies, seeking ways out of the dialectics of platform capitalism to elaborate new and more radical compromises, also resulted in strategies of cooperation with their moderate Left (and hegemonic) counter-parts that in turn put 'under stress' the survivance of their organisational experimentations.

All in all, therefore, mirroring the reflections on the 'problem' of class, platform societies provided resources to tackle the 'problem' of party organisation along two contrasting logics. On the one hand, platform party politics inspired the adoption of models of organisation borrowed from the big tech platforms. On the other, it led to the digitalisation of counter-hegemonic movements along the line of the platform commons (Nunes, 2021). As for the organic linkages to social classes, Techno-Third Way and Platform Socialism were the ideologies that could effectively design ideas and strategies to face the real hegemony of platform societies. Instead, the space of Post-Social Democracy was shrunk by the impossibility of consistently defining tenable compromises between the contrasting logics of digital political organisations.

8.6.3 The ELPs and the real hegemony of platform societies. Concluding remarks

The comparative analysis of the three 'digital' left-wing ideologies defines two key building blocs constituting the thesis' argument. First, by looking at the evolutions of ELPs amidst the digital revolution through the perspective of ideologies, I argue that the concept of the 'Left' as substantially related to common goals and strategies is less and less valid in understanding parties evolutions. Second, and relatedly, by looking at how politics is shaped through the relations and confrontations between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic projects, I come to argue that there is not an overarching 'crisis' of the whole Left. Instead, the crisis regards one of the 'left-wing' ideologies, (Post-)Social Democracy, as the political conditions that shaped SD's 'hegemonic' historical moment are structurally shrunk. Consequently, findings indicate that any attempt to revive that tradition through the same strategies of compromise with the ruling classes of capitalism is deemed to result in arbitrary and ineffective movements.

Regarding the first claim, by focusing on the reflexive agency of party elites on a major reconfiguration of capitalism, the thesis highlighted that the concept of the 'political Left', while still defining how parties and citizens locate themselves in national spaces of party competition (Bauer *et al.*, 2017; Vegetti and Širinić, 2019), has lost its analytical validity to identify common ideologies encompassing minimally unifying visions and organising principles (Mudge, 2011). Indeed, the findings indicate that within the 'political Left', ideologies range from neoliberal views supporting the ruling classes of platform capitalism to socialist ones, providing new frameworks to revive class antagonism and the emergence of transformative alternatives (Panitch and Albo, 2020).

Second, by considering party politics as operating at the junctures between the dialectical relations of platform capitalism and the reflexive responses by political agents to secure or disrupt hegemony, the theoretical framework allows to better identify the nature of the 'Left' crisis. Indeed, the findings indicate that, on the one hand, the ideologies reflecting the dialectical relations of platform capitalism aiming to organically represent the pole of domination (Techno-Third Way) or liberation (Platform Socialism), provide the parties with intellectual resources to exit left-wing crises of visions. On the other hand, the study of Post-Social Democratic cases indicates that, although Post-, Social Democracy as a vision is ongoingly in crisis as it results in systems of beliefs and strategic projects aimed at bridging irreconcilable interests within the structures of platform capitalism.

Throughout this Chapter, by summarising the findings of previous empirical research, I conceptualised how the structures resulting from the digital revolution informed changes in left-wing ideologies contributing to the emergence of three distinct ideologies encompassing parties' systems of beliefs and strategic projects for hegemony and counter-hegemony. In the thesis' conclusion, I will better specify the theoretical and empirical contributions of the research project while identifying its limitations and how future research may address them.

CONCLUSIONS

.1 Summary and argument

The thesis analysed how six ELPs reacted to the digital revolution by changing critical aspects of their ideologies amidst a broad 'crisis' of visions for the Left. In the Conclusions, I will, first, summarise the main argument of the thesis and how the two stages of empirical research contributed to developing it. Second, I will specify the aimed contributions of the thesis. Third, I will identify the thesis' limitations in its breadth and depth and outline how the thesis' findings may be seen as a ground to develop a future research agenda.

As specified in the Introduction (.4), the thesis aimed to provide answers to the questions:

- How did European Left Parties reflect on the societal impacts of the digital revolution in the 2010s?
- How did ELPs reshape their ideologies to navigate or transform the real hegemony of platform societies?

Empirical findings indicate that the selected ELPs reacted to the digital revolution in three distinct directions corresponding to three 'digital' ideologies I theorised throughout the thesis.

First, 'Techno-Third Way' was the ideology, within a neoliberal tradition, adopted by the PD and PSOE, encompassing systems of beliefs including views on platforms as 'fuel' for market competition and further commodification of public offices (Ch. 3.3.1). Further, the Techno-Third Way inspired strategic projects (Ch.5) to navigate the 'real' hegemony of platform

societies by placing the parties at the forefront of platform capitalist rulership. Therefore, the Techno-Third Way was characterised by the common goal of the PD and PSOE's elites to strategically orientate respective parties to navigate hegemony. However, the findings also highlighted the differences between the parties regarding how their elites aimed to confront resistance, with the PD's elites demonising alternatives and PSOE aiming to co-opt them into hegemony.

Second, 'Post-Social Democracy' (PSD) was the ideology, within a Social Democratic tradition, adopted by one (previously neoliberal) SDP, the PS, and two RLPs (SEL and Podemos) seeking new 'toolkits' to assert the primacy of democracy to gain back public control over capitalist market competition. PSD resulted in two distinct strategic projects by these parties (Ch.6). The first, by the PS, sought to enable alternatives through an updated Social Democratic project provided that the PS elites could retain centralised control over activism. Accordingly, the PS was interpreted as a case of resistance to adopting the logic of platforms to change its organisation and activate new forms of horizontal participation, perceived as disruptive of politics as representation. The second strategic project, by SEL and Podemos, aimed at enabling alternatives through channelling radical movements into institutional politics in a way that may elevate common-sense views about exploitative practices by platform capitalists.

Third, 'Platform Socialism' was the ideology of LFI signifying the digital revolution as a new and salient 'battlefield' for socialist antagonism and a strategic project counter-posing the field of 'the digital commons' to platform capitalism to organically represent through alternative platforms the subalterns of platform capitalism. This is also the perspective

through which I conceptualised LFI's organisation as a digital movement party. This organisation model represented a project seeking to connect and empower dispersed instances of resistance while at the same time prefigure an alternative model of democracy and use of platforms.

These empirical findings form the thesis' main argument, namely that the politics of the digital revolution provided cultural and material resources that informed and shaped the ideas and strategic projects of European Left Parties for their elites to design solutions to their crises of visions. The thesis developed the argument by uncovering two key processes of change experienced by the ELPs.

First, the thesis conceptualised parties as strategic and relational agents whose choices are organised through ideologies shaped by and seeking to shape the space of possibilities of the 'real' hegemony of platform societies. Through this conceptualisation of parties as 'relational' agents, the thesis explains how and why ELPs orientated their choices along opposite goals. Indeed, on the one hand, the digital ideologies were explained as shaped by the combination of parties' (1) previous structural social linkages (i.e. with the ruling or subaltern classes, unions etc.) and (2) conjunctural path dependencies from their previous level of institutionalisation. On the other hand, however, by conceiving parties as 'strategic' and relatively autonomous agents, the thesis focused on whether the emergence of new ideologies represented 'organic' or 'arbitrary' movements to act back on real hegemony.

Second, analysing parties' systems of beliefs and strategic projects allows theorising on the historical processes configuring the junctures between the 'real' hegemony of platform societies and the projects to secure or challenge it. By doing so, the thesis came to contest

theories about the current 'crisis' of the (whole) Left (Cronin *et al.*, 2011; Manwaring and Kennedy, 2018). Indeed, based on the empirical findings, I argue that there is not a single and overarching crisis for the whole Left because, when looking at how parties operate within real hegemony, there is currently nothing as the 'Left' as a unitary political vision. Indeed, 'left-wing' politics may still correspond to both common-sense beliefs about the projects of political agents committed to more equal societies (Bobbio, 2004; Mudge, 2018) and research heuristic tools to assess how parties compete to gain political power and represent constituents in liberal democracies (Kitschelt and Hellemans, 1990; Kriesi *et al.*, 2012). However, to better understand whether these interpretations hold on empirical grounds, I followed Gramsci's exhortation to look at the most advanced stages of capitalist development to make sense of where transformation may emerge. This is why I looked at platform capitalism and politics as the spaces within which to understand ELPs evolutions. By adopting this focus of analysis, the thesis comes to empirically assess and theorise that those ideologies that are 'organic' to the class relations of platform capitalism represent potential solutions to the conjunctural crises of visions of the Left. Indeed, the thesis demonstrated that Techno-Third Way and Platform Socialism, provided (opposite) cultural and material practices for some ELPs to design effective strategic projects to exit their crises of visions, because, put it simply, these parties know which classes they (seek to) represent and organise. On the other hand, the thesis theorised on Post-Social Democracy as an 'arbitrary' ideology, as representative of the ongoing structural crisis of Social Democracy. Even though Post-Social Democracy can be conceptualised as an attempt by some parties' elites to bring back Social Democracy into the field of counter-hegemony, PSD's strategic projects were conceptually

undermined by the ongoing 'organic' crisis of representation and organisation of the classes that should embody their visions.

Having defined the thesis' main argument, in the next section, I will specify the thesis' contribution to current debates about the evolutions of the European Left and the political impacts of the digital revolution.

.2 Original contribution

In this section, I will specify the thesis' original theoretical and empirical contributions to the literature on the 'Left' crisis (and change) and the radical transformational possibilities of the digital revolution. First, I will highlight how, by looking at parties as strategic and relational agents shaped by and seeking to shape real hegemony, the thesis contributes to refining structural analyses of ELPs' crises while better defining the directions of ELPs' changes. Second, I will focus on how taking into consideration the relational nature of political agency contributes to advancing critical understandings of platform societies while overcoming the limitations of techno-determinism. Finally, I will explain how the thesis disentangles the research puzzle that this project addressed.

The thesis contributes to the literature on European left-wing politics on theoretical and empirical grounds. First, by elaborating a Gramscian framework for a critical analysis of party politics, it allows to overcome certain limitations of 'structural' analyses of Left-wing 'crisis' (see Ch. 1.2). Indeed, by focusing on how the economic base of the platform capitalism shapes parties through the real hegemony of platform society, the thesis refines 'structural dependency' arguments that render the crisis of the Left as inescapable. In a nutshell, authors

within this school affirm that the crisis is inescapable because ELPs are inevitably determined by the structures of neoliberal capitalism (Lavelle, 2008; Bailey *et al.*, 2014). While the thesis confirmed, in line with these 'structural' approaches, that certain SDPs have been increasingly integrated into neoliberal hegemony, findings allow contending whether this process can be understood as a 'crisis'. Indeed, on the one hand, it can be argued that neoliberal SDPs' elites must confront specific tensions between popular expectations for them to provide 'egalitarian' agendas and their actual functions at reproducing hegemony by promoting competition and commodification. However, the thesis' findings show that this tension does not result in an organic 'crisis' of visions by neoliberal SDPs that, on the contrary, can find within hegemony the resources to reshape their ideas (Mansell and Motta, 2013). On the other hand, the thesis allows being more precise at defining the ongoing crisis of Social Democracy as a vision. The Social Democratic project may not be 'dead', as argued by Ashley Lavelle (2008). However, by analysing SD's evolution through a Gramscian perspective in platform societies, with the attempts by parties' elites to take back Social Democracy into counter-hegemony, the thesis showed that its project is 'hollowed out' from current historical conjunctures. It is so as PSD cannot organically organise the subalterns these parties claim to represent, as their elites are influenced by ideational path dependencies shaping their institutional practices into the search for impossible compromises with the ruling classes of platform capitalism. Therefore, PSD is intrinsically flawed as its vision lacks any proper consideration of the 'real' leverage points through which force capitalists to accept the compromises they claim to pursue.

Second, the thesis allows to contest the Laclauian 'left populism' scholars theorising that left populism is the main attribute characterising the emergence of a new Left (Stavrakakis, 2017;

Mouffe, 2018; Santana and Rama, 2018). Indeed, by considering ideologies not only as discourses but as material organising principles of parties' practices to navigate or transform 'real' hegemony, the thesis overcomes the flaws in understanding the different paths undertaken by various new Left-wing parties. These differences were particularly evident throughout the thesis when looking at Podemos and LFI, two parties that Laclauian scholars constantly refer to as the benchmark of left populism (i.e. Katsambekis and Kioupkiolis, 2019; Damiani, 2020). On the one hand, my findings confirm that these new movements aimed at exploiting digital organisations to confront 'traditional' radical left parties, as argued by left-populist scholars (Ramiro and Gomez, 2017). On the other hand, the thesis identifies a crucial difference between these cases when looking at how parties' ideologies reflected on class antagonisms and how their strategic projects sought to organise or not subaltern classes for transformative ends. Indeed, LFI's project was to revive Socialist antagonisms in platform societies, whereas Podemos sought new 'social democratic' compromises within platform capitalism. Overall, therefore, the thesis contributes to the literature on 'left-wing' crisis and change by identifying different strategic projects elaborated by parties' elites to confront the aftermath of the GFC. On the one hand, Techno-Third Way and Platform Socialism corresponded to consistent ideologies encompassing visions to come out of previous crises. On the other hand, Post-Social Democracy can be understood as a process of the ongoing crisis of vision for those left parties seeking to refuse the structural dialectics between domination and liberation.

The thesis contributes to the critical literature on the political impacts of the digital revolution in a twofold way. First, I elaborated a framework to assess the 'ideologies' of platform societies. Classifying competing ideologies regarding the digital revolution allows me to

overcome some shortcomings in identifying the 'subjectivities' that should bring about societal change normatively claimed by critical authors (Srnicek and Williams, 2016; Morozov, 2019; Fuchs, 2019a; Hrynyshyn, 2021). Indeed, as previously discussed (Ch.1.3.1), this critical literature on the political consequences of platform capitalism has the merit of uncovering new dialectics between the ruling and subaltern classes of platform capitalism. These authors theorise that platform capitalism exploits value through data commodification and subaltern classes organise resistance around 'digital commons'. However, to date, whether the political Left is a barrier or a facilitator for a radical transformation of platform capitalism was a question without answers. By identifying the three 'digital' left-wing ideologies, the thesis provides the first contribution to this research gap. Second, by elaborating a Gramscian framework that understands politics as the recursive relations between structures and agents, it is possible to overcome the flaws of 'techno-deterministic' accounts claiming that digital platforms are leading, *per se*, to post-capitalism (Hardt and Negri, 2009; Mason, 2016) and/or to political organisation as digital networks overcoming collective action (Castells, 2010). First, although the thesis corroborates the argument that technological paradigms are spaces of confrontation for political hegemony (Williams, 2019), it also allows rejecting any form of techno-determinism. Indeed, by considering the digital revolution as a space of political confrontation, it is possible to grasp different potential evolutions along the reproduction of hegemony or the organisation of counter-hegemony. Second, by theorising parties' digitalisation as a process driven by different strategic projects, I contribute to the literature on 'digital parties' (Gerbaudo, 2019b) that mostly revolves around the issue of whether platforms make parties less or more responsive to public opinion and democratic in their internal decision-making processes (Vaccari, 2014; García Lupato and Meloni, 2021). By

focusing on the ideas and strategies from which the choices on parties' digitalisation are made, the thesis allows outlining a first theorisation of why parties' elites experimented with new forms of organisation for radical democracy. For instance, I came to theorise that whereas radical movement parties seek to engage activists as community organisers, hegemonic parties reorganise their organisations by borrowing the 'business' models of big tech social media for the sake of boosting the efficiency of leaders' communication, and therefore seeking to turn activists into micro-influencers.

In the Introduction, I identified a research puzzle that motivated the development of this research project. ELPs, based on existing research, were stuck between limited oscillations between neoliberalism/Keynesianism and libertarianism/nativism. However, new critical visions defining the transformational opportunities from the digital revolution have emerged. Yet, ELPs may have failed to exploit these possibilities (Introduction.3). The thesis contributes to disentangling this puzzle in a twofold way. First, by understanding parties as reflexive agents upon the most advanced structural configurations of platform societies, the thesis argues that there is not an overarching 'crisis' of vision by the European Left. Indeed, two of the three ideologies I identified through empirical analysis represent ways out of crises experienced in the immediate aftermath of the GFC. Second, the thesis allows identifying some of the conditions under which parties exploit alternatively new structural constraints or transformational possibilities emerging from the digital revolution. In turn, this new theorisation allows advancing normative theories on platform societies. We can consider post-workerist approaches and their crucial proposal for the left, UBI, as a seminal example (Hardt and Negri, 2009; Frase, 2016). While providing critical insights on the changing nature of capitalist exploitation beyond labour-for-wage relations, these authors' emphasis on the 'end

of work' is contested by Platform Socialists who, instead, seek precisely to politicise 'platform labourers' to engage 'non-platform' exploited labourers in a socialist project. Crucially, for instance, the stances of LFI and PSOE on UBI demonstrate that the normative views of post-workerist theorists do not consider the empirical pieces of evidence suggesting that neoliberal left-wing parties are ongoingly co-opting UBI as a more efficient way to tackle poverty while cutting more generous welfare provisions. And this dynamic is exactly the reason why Platform Socialists do not consider UBI as the flagship proposal for a transformative alternative (Benanav, 2020).

However, it must be stressed that the thesis' focus was on the relations between understandings by parties' elites of 'real' hegemony and their systems of beliefs/strategic projects to act back on it. Therefore, on the one hand, the research project can formulate conclusions about the 'inherent' attributes of ideologies as ways out (or not) of ELPs' crises. Hence, the thesis cannot assess the real feedback impacts on the structures of platform capitalism. In the next section, this last remark will be the starting point for considering the thesis' limitations and how future research can address them.

.3 Limitations and future research

The research focus of the thesis was on how parties understand structural dialectics of platform capitalism as shaping the 'real' hegemony of platform societies (see Ch.2.3) and on how, through their ideologies, ELPs seek to navigate or transform 'real' hegemony to act back on economic structures. Whilst this focus was necessary to develop a thesis that is exploratory in nature, the thesis cannot assess the actual effects of 'digital' ideologies on real hegemony.

This limitation sets the first area for future research by expanding the scope of the investigation to the relations between left-wing politics and the digital revolution. Three further limitations are worth considering, as they also define paths for a future research agenda.

The first regards the generalisability of my theorisation to European and Global North Left Parties. Indeed, as the primary research goal was to elaborate an analytical compass to classify contrasting approaches to the digital revolution by Left-wing parties, one of the criteria of case selection was the focus on countries that previous literature described as characterised by the emergence of 'digital' movement-parties competing with established RLPs and SDPs (see Ch. 2.4). Previous research indicated that these new left actors being 'digital' also comprehended views of platforms as enabling and networking different forms of activism (Gerbaudo, 2018; Chadwick and Stromer-Galley, 2016). Although the thesis contributed to this literature by better specifying the contents of left-wing ideologies in relation to digital platforms, it cannot clarify whether digital proactivity in ideological changes by ELPs is a general trend or limited to countries that experienced the emergence of 'digital' movements. This gap defines the rationale for the second direction of future research by expanding the breadth of empirical investigation to more cases across the Global North, including countries in Middle-North, Eastern Europe, and North America. This broader analysis would allow, for instance, to identify key differences among countries where ELPs' ideologies did not evolve in a 'digital proactive' way or to identify new digital ideologies. However, instances regarding other parties and movements seem to suggest that the three ideologies conceptualised in this thesis may apply on a broader scale. For example, the German SPD's recent agendas to prioritise investments in digital infrastructures and to reassert the party's role as a mediator of workers' demands

(Manwaring and Holloway, 2022), may indicate that the German Social Democrats adopted a Techno-Third Way ideology or a form of Techno-Lib Lab ideology that could provide relevant insights to better capture the evolutions of neoliberal SDPs. Further, the emergence of 'digital' movements such as 'Our Revolution' supporting Bernie Sanders' primaries' campaigns, and British 'Momentum', organising activists to redirect Labour Party to Socialist visions (Panitch and Gindin, 2020), may indicate that Platform Socialism is a type of ideology that which left-wing radical movements adopted beyond the three countries I surveyed.

The second limitation regards the depth of the critical theoretical framework, as this research investigated only marginally how the digital revolution reproduces patriarchy and gendered division of labour (Huws, 2014; Moore, 2019). Besides, the thesis did not consider with sufficient depth how the digital revolution affects the current environmental crisis by boosting the private appropriation and exploitation of limited minerals for the production of the material digital infrastructure, ranging from submarine cables to personal devices (Fuchs, 2014; Plantin and Punathambekar, 2019). This research considered indicators such as 'gender empowerment' and 'natural commons' to classify ideologies in relation to views on the digital revolution. However, case studies did not focus in-depth on the intersections between these areas of political interventions by parties. For instance, interviewees from Techno-Third Way parties claimed gender 'equal opportunities' to compete in digital economies (interviews Marra, Madia). Instead, Post-Social Democrats focused on unequal effects of 'digital divides' as disproportionately affecting women (interviews This-Saint Jean, Pizzolante), and Platform Socialists on the gender divisions of 'platform labour', for instance, between deliverers and social care platforms (interviews Bompard, Chaibi). However, this research prioritised breadth over depth in this respect, as the primary goal was to explore parties' reflections and

understandings of platform capitalism and labour. Further, only interviewees from LFI (Poznanski, Royer, Schon) reflected on how platform capitalism, contrary to hegemonic rhetoric about smart grids to gain energetic efficiency, is increasingly contributing to worsening the environmental crisis by accelerating further products' obsolescence requiring ongoing exploitation of natural resources. All in all, the intersections of the digital revolution with sexist structural practices and exploitative commodification of limited natural resources provide a relevant area of future research to understand the 'transformative' quality of left-wing ideologies.

Finally, the temporal horizon of this research project did not explore in depth the changes after the political consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic. It is indisputable that the availability of digital platforms mattered for managing the pandemic, both as means of personal interaction substituting the previous in-person relations and as means through which political authorities sought to control the spread of the virus. However, the analyses of how digital platforms served contrasting interests during the pandemic are so complex that they require a specific investigation. Indeed, and obviously, new debates are emerging, for instance, arguing that the pandemic represented a rupture in neoliberal 'hegemony' by imposing a 'return of the state' (Gerbaudo, 2021) or instead facilitated increased surveillance by big tech on public health and individual behaviours (Delanty, 2021). Therefore, the analysis of post-pandemic evolutions can inform further research that, while 'testing' the salience of the ideologies elaborated with this thesis, can allow to better specify future evolutions by left-wing parties in a context determining new demands for social protection.

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APPENDIX 1. LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

	Name	Party	Office	Date
1	Alonso Charles	LFI	Assistant and substitute MP Sabin Rubin	16/03/2021
2	Barberis Paolo	PD	Renzi PM Advisor for Digital Innovation	25/03/2021
3	Bavaro Nico	SEL	Secretary SEL Apulia Region 2011-2015, Secretary of Communication Nichi's Factories	06/11/2020
4	Bompard Manuel	LFI	MEP, 2019-current, National Coordinator LFI 2016-2019, Managing director of Mélenchon campaign	13/04/2021
5	Braga Chiara	PD	MP 2008-current, NEC 2013-current, Secretary for Environment	03/06/2021
6	Cardon Rémi	PS	Senator 2017- current, NEC, Secretary for Digital Divides	21/05/2021
7	Chaibi Leila	LFI	MEP 2019 - current, coordinator pole auto-organisation, expert in Uberisation	21/07/2021
8	Costantino Celeste	SEL	NEC 2010-2014 Secretary of Education, MP 2013-2018	03/05/2021
9	De Cristofaro Giuseppe	SEL	MP 2006-2008, Senator 2013-2018, Viceminister Education and Universities 2019-2021, 2012-2014 NEC Coordinator	17/03/2021
10	Di Traglia Stefano	PD	Spokesperson of Bersani, Party leader 2009-2013, Communication Department Director, the same period	26/02/2021
11	Ferrara Francesco	SEL	MP 2006-2008, 2013-2018, NEC, Secretary of Organization	08/04/2021
12	García del Blanco Iban	PSOE	MEP 2019- current, NEC Secretary Sport and Culture, Special Committee EP Artificial Intelligence in a Digital Age	17/06/2021
13	Guijarro Garcìa Txema	POD	MP 2016- current, General Secretary Parliamentary Party, Spokesperson Committee Economic affairs and Digital Transition	07/06/2021
14	Iglesias Turrion Pablo	POD	Party Leader 2015-2021, Vice-President of Spanish Government 2019-2021	19/11/2021
15	Jacquin Olivier	PS	Senator 2017- current, NEC, Secretary for Infrasctructures, Mobility and Uberisation	06/05/2021
16	López Cano Ignacio	PSOE	MP 2019-current, NEC Secretary Social Movements	28/07/2021
17	Macías Tovar Julián	POD	Party National Council, Secretary Social Networks	30/07/2021
18	Madia Marianna	PD	MP, NEC Secretary of Innovation 2018 -2021 current, former Secretary of State for Public Administration Renzi's Government 2014-2017	23/04/2021
19	Marra Domínguez María Ángeles	PSOE	MP, 2019- current, Senator 2016-2019, Spokeperson Committe Economic Affairs and Digital Transition	21/04/2021

20	Martínez Dalmau Ruben	POD	Vice-President Generalitat Valenciana 2019-2021, MP 2016	05/04/2021
21	Monedero Juan Carlos	POD	NEC 2014-2015, Secretary of Party Constitution. President of 15-M Foundation 2020-current	20/04/2022
22	Montiel Antonio	POD	Regional MP 2015-2019, Party Coordinator Valencia's Region	30/07/2021
23	Moreno Pavón Mariano	PSOE	Federal Managing Director PSOE 2015-2021	30/07/2021
24	Nannicini Tommaso	PD	Senator 2018-current, Economic Advisor Renzi PM 2014-2016, NEC Secretary for Economy 2016-2019	28/06/2021
25	Nicodemo Francesco	PD	NEC 2014-2015, Secretary of Communication, Advisor for Communication to Renzi PM 2015-2016	12/12/2020
26	Palazzotto Erasmo	SEL	MP 2013- current, NEC SEL Secretary Foreign Policies	06/07/2021
27	Piccolotti Elisabetta	SEL	NEC SEL 2011-2015 Secretary of Communication. Coordinator LeU 2018 campaign	26/03/2021
28	Pizzolante Maria Pia	SEL	NEC 2013-2015, President of the affiliated movement TILT	11/03/2021
29	Poznanski Florence	LFI	Co-Coordinator Working Group on 'Digital Affairs'	21/05/2021
30	Royer Jill-Maud	LFI	Coordinator National Space Digital Tools	16/06/2021
31	Schon Alexandre	LFI	Co-Coordinator Working Group on 'Digital Affairs'	20/03/2021
32	Stumpo Nico	PD	MP 2013- Current. Secretary of Organization PD 2009-2013	19/03/2021
33	Tani Simone	PD	Member of Economic Advisors' board for PM Renzi 2014-2016	11/03/2021
34	This Saint Jean Isabelle	PS	NEC, 2017-current, Secretary for Parties' Researches	04/05/2021
35	Tocci Walter	PD	Member of Senate 2001-2018	09/03/2021
36	Vaccari Stefano	PD	NEC PD 2018-current Secretary of Organization, Senator 2013-2018	12/04/2021
37	Vincini Sébastien	PS	NEC 2021, Secretary for Party Development, Spokesperson Presidential campaign 2022	26/11/2021

APPENDIX 2. CALIBRATION OF QUALITATIVE DATA

This Appendix to Chapters 3 and 4 details the application of the 'anchored calibration of qualitative data' by Nicolas Legewie (2017), consisting of three steps and eight tasks.

STEP 1. CONSTRUCTING A CALIBRATION FRAMEWORK

a. Formulating Concept Trees

Table 1 displays in detail the Concept Tree through which I classified ELPs ideologies (see Chapter 3 Figure 1). I identified the core concepts and the secondary-level concepts associated with them through existing theories. Therefore, I have identified and defined the indicators for each secondary-level concept through a dialogue between theories and data.

b. Determining relevant variations

c. Defining characteristics

Tables 2 to 15 show, for each indicator, the definitions of the variations that I considered qualitatively relevant in relation to the 11 values fuzzy scale adopted in the Chapter.

STEP 2. APPLYING THE CALIBRATION FRAMEWORK TO THE DATA

a. Sorting data pieces

b. Defining data anchors

I first applied the calibration framework to the data by coding parties' manifestos through NVivo software at the level of each indicator (task 2.a), sorting paragraphs into codes representing the fuzzy scale scores. Hence, within each code, I identified the paragraphs more closely associated with the defining characteristic of a particular score and fixed them as data anchors (task 2.b). The results of these processes are detailed in the last column in Tables 2 to 15. To provide an explanatory example, with regards to the indicator 'Workers' Control over Production' (1.1.2 WORKCTRL), I defined as 'fully in -1', those paragraphs emphasising the need for workers' control over companies as ways to overcome capitalism. Accordingly, I identified as data anchor an extract from LFI's 2017 manifesto stating that 'the permission by workers' representatives will be mandatory for all strategic choices by companies' boards'. Within the same indicator, I considered qualitatively 'mostly out- 0.2' generic mentions to unions' representatives as actors to be engaged in the definition of job contracts, as claimed by PD 2013's manifesto.

c. Minimizing grey zones

In set-theoretic methods, the 0.5 value is the point of maximum ambiguity for the (non)membership in a set. This is why, to minimize the 'grey zones' of analysis, the cases initially scoring 0.5 were moved to 0.4 -less or more out- or 0.6 -less or more in- the sets. Accordingly, in Tables 2 to 15, the 0.5 value is not defined nor anchored to data pieces.

Table 1 – Left-wing Ideologies Concepts. Core, Secondary, Indicators on three dimensions

1.	**TRANSFORMATION OF CAPITALISM - CAPTRANSF**	
	SECONDARY	***Definition***
1.1	*Property Socialization* SOCPROP	Emphasis on the relevance of property structure – the rules governing it and its distribution- as a main area to address critiques to capitalism. Agendas combining proposals to socialise property rights, especially to disadvantaged groups.
	INDICATORS	
1.1.1	*Public Property Strategic Industries* PUBPROP	Favourable mentions of state and/or public ownership of industries, either partial -but substantial- or complete; calls for nationalising currently private industries.
1.1.2	*Workers' Control over Production* WORKCTRL	Favourable mentions of partial -but substantial- or complete forms of determination of production by workers. May include a strong emphasis on cooperative forms of enterprise as the core of the economic organization.
1.1.3	*Re-distribution above profits* REDIS	Strong and positive emphasis on the primacy of fair and equal distribution of value and other economic sources of wealth over private profits. May include proposals of substantial state-driven means to re-distribute wealth.
	SECONDARY	
1.2	*Decommodification of Social Life DECOMM*	Emphasis on the critiques of the tendency of the capitalist economy to extend the commodification of natural and human resources. Agendas combining proposals to de-commodify substantial areas of social life
	INDICATORS	
1.2.1	*Labour's social value above exchange value* LABVAL	Favourable mentions of the need to expand social rights to improve working conditions and/or to decrease the dependency of wealth from waged labour. May include favourable mentions to the unionization of working forces.
1.2.2	*Natural Resources as Common Goods* NATCOMM	Favourable mentions to natural resources as common goods. May include an emphasis on the exclusion of these resources from market competition and the extension of public policies to protect them.
1.2.3	*Welfare: non-market logics of organization* WELFNOMRKT	Favourable mentions of the need to expand public services or social security schemes beyond managerial styles of organization. May include an emphasis on non-profit driven models of governance for public services
2.	**PROGRESSIVE DEMOCRACY -PROGDEM**	
	SECONDARY	
2.1	Decommodification of Social Life DECOMM	Emphasis on progressive politics as the primary means to engage under-represented citizens in the arenas of political contestation. May include either mentions of the advantages of representation by mass-political organizations or direct participation.
	INDICATORS	
2.1.1	*Representation of the under-represented* REPUNDER	Favourable mentions of political organizations/movements/institutions as primary means to empower otherwise excluded social groups. May include representation as primary means to realise broader societal views.
2.1.2	*Participatory and/or direct democracy* PARTDEM	Favourable mentions to participation and activation of citizens as a necessary condition to improve democracy. Favourable mentions of means for direct decision-making by citizens both within state institutions and parties.

	SECONDARY	
2.2	Politics of Recognition RECOGN	Emphasis on progressive politics as grounded on an egalitarian and emancipatory recognition into the mechanisms of democracy to empower -mainly- women and immigrants
	INDICATORS	
2.2.1	*Gender emancipation* GENDEM	Favourable mentions of political arrangements to empower women. May include positive views upon: measures to implement equal opportunities in politics and society at large; movements for the emancipation of women from patriarchal institutions.
2.2.2	*Empowerment of minorities* MINEMP	Favourable mentions of political arrangements to empower minoritarian groups. Emphasis on the advantages for democracy from multiculturalism. May include positive views on: measures to protect or extend the rights of ethnic or religious minorities

3.	**DIGITAL PROACTIVITY - DIGPROACT**	
	SECONDARY	***Definition***
3.1	Digital Positive for (the critique of) Economy DIGECO	Emphasis on digital technologies as driving a paradigmatic shift for the organization of the economy. May include positive mentions either to the beneficial effects of 'the digital' for the reproduction or the disruption of capitalist economies.
	INDICATORS	
3.1.1	*Digital driver of economic growth* DIGGRWT	Favourable mentions to digital technologies as improving economic performances and growth. May include an emphasis on: new technologies to reduce costs for firms; incentives to firms to 'digitize their activities; incentives to finance start-ups ecosystems.
3.1.2	*Digital Commons* DIGCOMM	Favourable mentions to digital technologies as potentially disruptive for capitalist regimes of accumulation. May include emphasis on: public property of digital infrastructure; non-private property and access to data; the advantages of automation in manufacture and services as liberating humans from the drudgeries of work.
	SECONDARY	
3.2	Digital Positive for (the critique of) Politics DIGPOL	Emphasis on digital technologies as drivers of paradigmatic shifts for politics. May include: mentions of renewed opportunities to improve the functioning of representative democracies and/or opening new spaces for participatory forms of democracy.
3.2.1	*Digital democracy* DIGDEM	Digital technologies as positive means either for liberal-democratic or radical politics. May involve emphasis on the digital as: media to involve citizens in political decisions; tools to improve the accountability and representativeness of political officers; platforms prompting horizontality and direct participation in politics.
3.2.2	*Digital State* DIGSTATE	Favourable mentions to the adoption of digital technologies to reform and/or improve the quality of the state apparatuses. May involve emphasis on the advantages of: the digitization of bureaucratic processes; the improvement of basic services for citizens.

Table 2 - 1.1.1 Public Property Strategic Industries -PUBPROP

Membership Score		Defining Characteristic	Data anchor
1	**Fully in**	Explicit reference to socialism as antagonistic to capitalism as the main way to replace it	Es imposible defender las ideas y los valores de la izquierda sin ejercer y practicar una visión internacionalista en la lucha por el Socialismo que ponga fin a la barbarie organizada del capitalismo. (IU, 2011)
0.9	**Almost Fully in**	Strong emphasis on the need to extend the public property of strategic industries in key areas of societal organization	Notre programme prévoit l'extension de la propriété publique par le développement des services publics. Il promeut de nouvelles appropriations sociales par la nationalisation de grands leviers de l'action économique, industrielle et financière. Il propose des formes décentralisées de la propriété sociale. Il veut aussi systématiser le recours à l'économie sociale et solidaire (ESS). (FdG, 2012)
0.8	**Mostly in**	Emphasis on the need to reduce the level of privately owned strategic industries to disrupt capitalism	À l'inverse des idéologues du marché qui font de l'entreprise capitaliste privée le modèle unique, nous encouragerons la diversité des formes de propriété, indispensable à une politique efficace de création d'emplois. La loi reconnaîtra cette diversité et la protégera face à la « concurrence libre et non faussée » qui revient en fait à imposer partout la seule logique du profit privé. (LFI, 2017)
0.7	**More In than Out**	Emphasis on the creation of publicly owned institutions to re-direct the sources of investment to non-market goals	No data anchors
0.6	**Less or more In**	Mentions to further areas of public property, as a favourable condition to improve fair market competition	Apoyaremos la creación de una agencia europea de calificación, independiente y pública. Esta medida reducirá las posibilidades de que las empresas de rating continúen suministrando información asimétrica y enviando incentivos erróneos a los inversores privados y públicos, poniendo con ello en peligro el equilibrio macroeconómico. (PODEMOS, 2016)
0.5	**Neither in nor out**	NA	NA
0.4	**Less or more Out**	Mentions to nationalisations of strategic industries as temporary emergency policies.	Je préserverai LA PART DU CAPITAL PUBLIC DANS LES GRANDES ENTREPRISES PUBLIQUES et permettrai à l'État d'utiliser la possibilité d'une nationalisation temporaire en cas de nécessité. (PS, 2017)
0.3	**More Out than In**	Generic mentions to the public property of strategic industries, as a factor to improve private sectors of the economy	El papel del sector público es fundamental en nuestra economía. En España representa alrededor del 40% de la economía, siendo además un importante factor de dinamización para el resto de la misma. Por eso debe mejorar su actuación (PSOE, 2016)
0.2	**Mostly Out**	Mentions to the advantages of specific regulations for privatized areas of economic organization	Occorre rendere veramente competitivo il mercato elettrico e del gas, dando piena attuazione a quanto previsto dalla recente legge sulla concorrenza, con un consumatore consapevole in grado di operare in un mercato trasparente e di facile accessibilità (PD, 2018)
0.1	**Almost Fully Out**	Generic mentions of the regulatory role by public institutions at governing privatizations processes	La privatización de Bankia se llevará a cabo, de acuerdo con las autoridades europeas, en el momento que permita recuperar todo o la mayor parte del valor invertido por el Estado (PSOE, 2011)
0	**Fully Out**	Emphasis on the need to further privatize public strategic industries	No data anchors

Table 3 - 1.1.2 Workers' Control over Production - WORKCTRL

Membership Score		Defining Characteristic	Data anchor
1	**Fully in**	Emphasis on worker control of companies as strategic means to re-orientate the whole economic system	Le pouvoir économique ne sera plus entre les mains des seuls actionnaires, les salariés et leurs représentants seront appelés à participer aux choix d'investissement des entreprises en tenant compte priorités sociales, écologiques et économiques démocratiquement débattues. L'avis favorable des représentants du personnel ou des comités d'entreprise sera obligatoire pour toutes les décisions stratégiques (LFI, 2017)
0.9	**Almost Fully in**	Emphasis on economic democracy without distinctions between small and big enterprises as leading to an alternative social economy	Proponemos introducir la democracia en la economía, desde la planificación sostenible del desarrollo h la gestión de cada empresa concreta. Defendemos la participación democrática de los trabajadores en planificación económica y en la gestión de las empresas. Apostamos decididamente por la economía so (IU, 2011)
0.8	**Mostly in**	Emphasis on workers' control over strategic decisions of companies – i.e. investments and human resources	La « gouvernance » d'un tel pôle (financier, nda) reposera sur des pouvoirs nouveaux exercés par les représentants de la nation, les représentants des salariés travaillant dans ces institutions et leurs usage les entreprises et collectivités territoriales, bien sûr, mais aussi les salariés, les chômeurs, les précaires leurs représentants, les associations de consommateurs et les associations de défense de l'environnem (FdG, 2012)
0.7	**More In than Out**	Favourable mentions to workers' participation in companies' management extended to medium ones.	Nous renforcerons la DÉMOCRATIE EN ENTREPRISE. Les salariés représenteront la moitié des membres votants des conseils d'administration des grandes entreprises et des entreprises de taille intermédiaire Je conforterai la démocratie sociale et maintiendrai le paritarisme. (PS, 2017)
0.6	**Less or more In**	Mentions to the participation of workers to the management of big enterprises and limited incentives to their participation in enterprises' capitals.	Impulsaremos una mayor participación de los trabajadores en la gestión de las empresas de más de cie empleados a través del fortalecimiento de los procedimientos de información y consulta establecidos e Estatuto de los Trabajadores, y mediante la implantación de un sistema similar a los consejos de vigilar establecidos en Alemania. Impulsaremos, además, una ley de participación financiera de los trabajador la empresa que, con carácter voluntario por parte de las empresas, permita incorporar algunas de las mejores experiencias de participación de los trabajadores (Podemos, 2016)
0.5	**Neither in nor out**	NA	NA
0.4	**Less or more Out**	Favourable mentions to the participation of workers in companies' boards with no specification for their areas of intervention	Je permettrai la présence des représentants des salariés dans les conseils d'administration et dans les comités de rémunération des grandes entreprises. (PS 2012)
0.3	**More Out than In**	Generic favourable mentions to democracy in companies' management, and to the extension of cooperatives models in limited economic sectors.	Establecer un tratamiento fiscal favorable para las empresas de economía social que destinen exceden empresariales para que los trabajadores y trabajadoras asalariados de estas empresas pasen a formar de las mismas con la condición de socios trabajadores. Las Sociedades Laborales, modelo de democrac económica y empleo estable, serán objeto de incentivación fiscal, tanto en su creación como en la incorporación de socios y socias a las mismas. (PSOE, 2011)
0.2	**Mostly Out**	Generic mentions to policies to regulate representations by unions as placing rights and duties on workers' organizations	Occorre una legge sulla rappresentanza che consenta l'esercizio effettivo della democrazia per chi lavo Non possiamo consentire né che si continui con l'arbitrio della condotta di aziende che discriminano i lavoratori, né che ci sia una rappresentanza sindacale che prescinda dal voto dei lavoratori sui contratt 2013)
0.1	**Almost Fully Out**	Generic mentions on incentives for enterprises to facilitate the involvement of workers in strategic decisions	No data anchors
0	**Fully Out**	No mentions to workers or unions as actors to be involved in enterprises' decisions	Incorporar en la legislación correspondiente, un nuevo modelo de gobernanza empresarial para las gra empresas que: (1) refuerce el papel de la Junta de Accionistas ante decisiones relevantes de la empres separe las funciones de dirección estratégica (Consejo de Administración) de las de la gestión diaria y; refuerce los mecanismos de control y supervisión sobre los gestores (PSOE, 2016)

Table 4 - 1.1.3 Re-distribution above profits -REDIS

Membership Score		Defining Characteristic	Data anchor
1	**Fully in**	Explicit mention of goals aiming at overcoming capitalist mode of production and/or the instalment of socialist economies.	Debe quedar claro que no nos proponemos que el capitalismo sea más eficiente sino superar el capitalismo y para ello, las medidas de este programa permitirán crear mejores condiciones objetivas y un mayor bienestar social para alcanzar esos objetivos. (IU, 2011)
0.9	**Almost Fully in**	Policies' proposal to redistribute resources from high to low incomes by abolishing fiscal benefits	Nous proposerons des mesures précises pour désintoxiquer les entreprises de la finance et pour mettre fin à la déstructuration du marché du travail et à la désindustrialisation du pays. Nous en finirons avec les 30 milliards d'euros annuels d'exonérations de cotisations sociales patronales, dont on a pu constater l'inefficacité pour l'emploi, et avec les exonérations fiscales. (FdG, 2012)
0.8	**Mostly in**	Policies' proposals to fix by law a ratio between highest and lowest wages and other incomes in private companies and to cap the maximum individual revenues	Instaurer un revenu maximum autorisé : 100 % d'impôt pour la tranche au-dessus de 20 fois le revenu médian, soit 400 000 euros de revenus annuels (33 000 euros par mois) Nous proposons de réaliser les mesures suivantes : ● Fixer un salaire maximum autorisé pour limiter l'écart de 1 à 20 entre le salaire le plus bas et le salaire le plus haut dans une entreprise (…) (LFI, 2017)
0.7	**More In than Out**	Specific but limited policies' proposals to raise at a national level taxes on capital flows and assets as primary means to redistribute resources to low-income classes.	Proponiamo l'introduzione di una imposta patrimoniale che gravi sugli attivi finanziari. (…)La nostra proposta intende esonerare totalmente il 50% più povero della popolazione, assoggettare all'aliquota massima ipotizzata il 10% più ricco e individuare un'aliquota agevolata per il rimanente. (…)n questa ipotesi il gettito si attesta intorno ai 20 miliardi di euro annui, che verrebbe ridotto di circa 5 miliardi per l'abolizione delle imposte di bollo. Vogliamo proporre un sostanziale riequilibrio del prelievo in favore delle classi meno abbienti. (SEL, 2013)
0.6	**Less or more In**	Specific mentions to new means to tax international capital flows and assets, to be taken by supra- or international organizations	El estudio de la creación de un impuesto global sobre la riqueza que grave gradualmente los grandes patrimonios como garantía de los derechos sociales. La adopción de un impuesto sobre las transacciones financieras. La fijación de una definición universal y normativa vinculante para los paraísos fiscales. (Podemos, 2016)
0.5	**Neither in nor out**	NA	NA
0.4	**Less or more Out**	Emphasis on measures to halt tax breaks by multinational companies to be pursued at a national level	Pour mettre fin à l'optimisation fiscale qui prive notre pays des ressources qui lui sont dues, j'instaurerai une TAXE SUR LES BÉNÉFICES DÉTOURNÉS par les multinationales et j'imposerai la TRANSPARENCE FISCALE aux entreprises, qui devront transmettre les activités et impôts payés dans tous les pays où elles sont présentes (PS, 2017)
0.3	**More Out than In**	Specific but moderate mentions to fiscal policies to redistribute resources from the wealthiest to the poorest shares of citizens.	Je ferai contribuer les plus fortunés des Français à l'effort national en créant une tranche supplémentaire de 45% pour les revenus supérieurs à 150 000 euros par part. (PS, 2012)
0.2	**Mostly Out**	References to goals aiming at combining profit-driven economic growth and fair redistribution of opportunities to all, beyond any potential antagonism between social groups.	proponemos un cambio estructural del sistema impositivo para incrementar la recaudación sin subir los impuestos a las rentas medias y a los trabajadores; una reordenación y mayor eficacia del gasto público en la lucha contra la desigualdad y la creación de riqueza (...). Lo anterior, (...) contribuirá a reducir las desigualdades y, consiguientemente, a reactivar la creación de empleo, sin poner en riesgo los equilibrios macroeconómicos. (PSOE, 2016)
0.1	**Almost Fully Out**	Emphasis on the primacy of sound public finances over redistributive goals. Generic mentions on the reduction of inequalities without references to their roots.	El PSOE está comprometido plenamente con el cumplimiento del plan de consolidación fiscal acordado en el marco comunitario, que persigue recuperar la confianza de los inversores en la economía española y la estabilidad presupuestaria.(...) Nuestra propuesta no es más o menos impuestos, es justicia fiscal: que todas las rentas tributen de la misma manera, sean del capital o del trabajo, y que paguen más los que más tienen y más ganan. (PSOE, 2011)
0	**Fully Out**	Emphasis on sound public finances and on the need not to pursue any goal opposed to financial markets as primary sources to provide public resources.	L'obiettivo del Partito Democratico è ridurre gradualmente ma stabilmente il rapporto tra debito pubblico e Pil al valore del 100% entro i prossimi 10 anni. Quello che serve per rassicurare i mercati, che ci prestano ogni anno mediamente 400 miliardi per rifinanziarci, non è tanto il livello del debito, né sicuramente annunci roboanti e poco credibili, che anzi hanno l'effetto opposto (PD, 2018)

Table 5 - 1.2.1 Labour's social value above exchange value -LABVAL

Membership Score		Defining Characteristic	Data anchor
1	**Fully in**	Development of workers' rights as explicitly opposed to capitalist modes of production	Le mode de production actuel ne vise pas la satisfaction des besoins humains. Il donne la priorité au pr court terme, laisse de côté des besoins sociaux immenses parce que ceux-ci sont non rentables (…). Il dégrade gravement les conditions de travail et d'emploi. Nous lui opposons un nouveau mode de production dont la finalité sera le développement de toutes les capacités humaines et l'épanouisseme chacun(e) plutôt que l'intérêt du capital. (FdG, 2012)
0.9	**Almost Fully in**	Emphasis on Universal Basic Income as an anti-capitalist policy.	la renta básica es una medida que permitirá superar las relaciones laborales capitalistas en el marco de sociedad avanzada. Las formas y aplicación de la renta básica universal deben entrar en el debate económico y social (IU, 2011)
0.8	**Mostly in**	Emphasis on the state as the institution responsible to eliminate unemployment as primary means to fight against jobs' casualisation.	Établir le « droit opposable à l'emploi » en faisant de l'État l'employeur en dernier ressort : en cas de chômage de longue durée, l'État doit proposer un emploi au chômeur en lien avec sa qualification, sur mission d'intérêt général. L'indemnisation par l'allocation-chômage se poursuit jusqu'à ce qu'un tel em soit proposé par l'État (LFI, 2017)
0.7	**More In than Out**	Mention to Universal Basic Income as a new set of policies to overcome jobs' casualisation. Moderate and step by step phases of implementation.	Je créerai UN REVENU UNIVERSEL D'EXISTENCE (RUE). Il permettra, dans une première étape, d'augme automatiquement, le revenu des actifs, ouvriers, employés, indépendants et étudiants dont les revenu inférieurs à 2 200 euros net, et prioritairement ceux dont les moyens sont les plus faibles. (PS, 2017)
0.6	**Less or more In**	Generic mentions to policies aiming at reducing working times, as the result of a negotiations between businesses and unions.	Impulsaremos legalmente los mecanismos de flexibilidad interna (ya existentes, pero poco utilizados) a través de la reducción de la jornada laboral. (…) fortaleceremos un mecanismo de ajuste que sea simila modelo alemán, en el que la pérdida de jornada laboral se ve compensada en términos salariales por e Estado. (Podemos, 2016)
0.5	**Neither in nor out**	NA	NA
0.4	**Less or more Out**	Emphasis on jobs' casualization as affecting workers' right. Need to extend insurances schemes to protect individuals from involuntary unemployment.	È quindi necessario intervenire con decisione, superando il Jobs Act e tutte le forme contrattuali che alimentano il peggiore sfruttamento. La nostra proposta è tornare a considerare il contratto a tempo indeterminato a piene tutele, con il ripristino dell'art.18 (…). Ad esso possono affiancarsi il contratto a tempo determinato e il lavoro in somministrazione, esclusivamente con il ripristino della causale (LEU 2018)
0.3	**More Out than In**	Mentions to specific but moderate policy proposals to reduce jobs' casualisation mainly referred to big corporates.	Je lutterai contre la précarité qui frappe avant tout les jeunes, les femmes et les salariés les moins qual à cette fin, j'augmenterai les cotisations chômage sur les entreprises qui abusent des emplois précaires mettrai en place un dispositif de notation sociale obligeant les entreprises de plus de 500 salariés à fair certifier annuellement la gestion de leurs ressources humaines au regard de critères de qualité de l'em et de conditions de travail. (PS 2012)
0.2	**Mostly Out**	Emphasis on the advantages of competition in labour market. Need to reduce the dualization of working conditions by redistributing rights between them.	El PSOE quiere cambiar España, convertir a España en un país más innovador y más igualitario, con un empresarial más sólido, que genere alto valor añadido y se vuelque hacia el exterior, con menor dualid el mercado de trabajo, con mayor protección de los trabajadores, con un sistema fiscal que recaude lo suficiente y lo haga equitativamente, con una administración al servicio del ciudadano y de la empresa (PSOE, 2016)
0.1	**Almost Fully Out**	Mentions to the need to limit the excesses of temporary contracts for workers as damaging the economic performances of the country	tiene pleno sentido económico desincentivar, en cualquier momento del ciclo económico, la temporali excesiva. Para lograrlo y con ello alcanzar una mayor estabilidad real en el empleo, debe seguir avanzá en las políticas para aproximar los costes de los contratos indefinidos y los contratos temporales (PSOE 2011)
0	**Fully Out**	Mentions to labour as a cost for enterprises. Emphasis on the need to reduce labour costs through pro-business fiscal policies	Si scrive salari che non salgono, ma si legge produttività che non cresce. Il secondo: il lavoro è ancora t costoso per le imprese, che devono sobbarcarsi l'onere di contributi che raggiungono il 33% della retribuzione, percentuale che disincentiva il datore di lavoro ad assumere a tempo indeterminato. (PD, 2018)

Table 6 - 1.2.2 Natural Resources as Common Goods -NATCOMM

Membership Score		Defining Characteristic	Data anchor
1	**Fully in**	Strong emphasis on both public property and management of a wide range of natural common goods.	es fundamental la propiedad y la gestión pública de los recursos naturales estratégicos: agua, energía, aire y suelo, evitando que se conviertan en mercancías. (Iu, 2011)
0.9	**Almost Fully in**	Environmentalism as opposed to productivism. Primacy of environment over economic growth.	Face à la tyrannie du productivisme, nous proposons la planification écologique comme moyen de redéfinir nos modes de production, de consommation et d'échange en fonction de l'intérêt général de l'humanité et de l'impact de l'activité économique sur l'écosystème. (FdG, 2012)
0.8	**Mostly in**	Emphasis on environmental protection as opposed to financial and capitalist logics of production and exchange.	l'exigence écologique ne peut être réduite à des proclamations et des mesures qui épargnent le système. La finance n'en veut pas : elle préfère les grands rendements de la spéculation. La définanciarisation de l'économie est une condition incontournable de la transition écologique. (LFI, 2017)
0.7	**More In than Out**	Emphasis on a wide range of natural resources as commons to be decommodified, with no specific policies' proposals.	L'acqua è un bene comune. Indietro non si torna. Dobbiamo ripensare i suoi modelli di gestione, favorendo la pubblicizzazione delle reti e dei sistemi di gestione. Quei beni necessari ed essenziali per proteggere e promuovere una vita degna per ognuno ed ognuna, l'acqua, il cibo, l'aria, la conoscenza, non possono essere messe a disposizione del mercato, ma riconosciuti come beni comuni. (SEL, 2013)
0.6	**Less or more In**	Specific mentions to policies' goals for the self-production and distribution of energy.	La aprobación de una legislación del autoconsumo de modo que a) la energía autoconsumida instantáneamente quede libre de cualquier tipo de imposición, b) la energía vertida al sistema eléctrico sea justamente retribuida por la empresa comercializadora, c) los trámites administrativos sean ágiles, d) se permitan instalaciones compartidas (PODEMOS, 2016)
0.5	**Neither in nor out**	NA	NA
0.4	**Less or more Out**	Generic mentions to publicly distributed means of energetic production, as means to reduce big corporates power position in the field.	Operare per il superamento della dipendenza dalle energie fossili significa, anche, costruire un modello di "democrazia energetica" che favorisca l'autoproduzione di energia pulita, in cui i cittadini e le comunità siano sempre di più consumatori, produttori e distributori di energia, riducendo così lo strapotere economico e geopolitico degli oligopolisti che oggi controllano nel mondo il settore energetico (LEU, 2018)
0.3	**More Out than In**	Wide range of natural resources and basic infrastructures as public accessible goods. State function either as public manager or regulatory agency of market competition.	L'energia, il patrimonio culturale e del paesaggio, le infrastrutture dello sviluppo sostenibile, la rete dei servizi di welfare e formazione, sono beni che devono vivere in un quadro di programmazione, regolazione e controllo sulla qualità delle prestazioni. Per tutto questo, introdurremo normative che definiscano i parametri della gestione pubblica o, in alternativa, i compiti delle autorità di controllo a tutela delle finalità pubbliche dei servizi. In ogni caso non può venir meno una responsabilità pubblica dei cicli e dei processi, che garantisca l'universalità di accesso e la sostenibilità nel lungo periodo. (PD, 2013)
0.2	**Mostly Out**	Generic mentions to natural commons. State as regulating fair competition rather than public management for these resources.	Vogliamo puntare sulla rigenerazione urbana e difendere il suolo con la legge contro la cementificazione e con l'azzeramento dell'uso dei pesticidi entro il 2025, anche per consolidare il primato europeo nel biologico. Proponiamo di investire nella salvaguardia di una risorsa cruciale come l'acqua, per rendere più efficienti invasi e acquedotti e combattere la siccità (PD, 2018)
0.1	**Almost Fully Out**	No specific mentions to natural resources as common goods. Policies' goals related to the universal access to basic natural resources	Je ferai adopter une nouvelle tarification progressive de l'eau, de l'électricité et du gaz afin de garantir l'accès de tous à ces biens essentiels (PS, 2012)
0	**Fully Out**	No mentions to natural resources as common goods. Emphasis on sustainability as facilitating economic efficiency	Los socialistas queremos incorporar decididamente en nuestras propuestas un enfoque de sostenibilidad que garantice un progreso duradero y equitativo, dentro y fuera de nuestras fronteras. Se trata de fortalecer la necesaria responsabilidad de todos los ciudadanos, haciéndolos más conscientes de los efectos (económicos, sociales y ambientales) de su propio comportamiento, como empresarios, como consumidores, y como miembros de instituciones públicas. (PSOE, 2011)

Table 7 – Welfare: non-market logics of organization -WELFNOMRKT

Membership Score		Defining Characteristic	Data anchor
1	**Fully in**	Radical sets of policies' proposals to extend the areas of state intervention in areas of economic competition	La educación, el cuidado de la infancia, la enfermedad, la tercera edad, la salud, el suministro de agua potable y el sistema de desagüe, la energía, el transporte público, correos, el deporte y la cultura... no mercancías sino servicios públicos que dependen de la responsabilidad estatal. Por ello no se les puede someter al principio de la competitividad del coste más bajo y el máximo beneficio. (IU, 2011)
0.9	**Almost Fully in**	Strong emphasis on the extension of public services as both means to overcome the fallacies of markets and to empower subaltern groups of citizens	Nous ferons de la protection sociale un bien commun et un droit de base pour tous en renforçant le pr de solidarité entre les générations. La perte d'autonomie (que la droite nomme « dépendance ») sera couverte dans le cadre de la protection sociale sans recours aux assureurs privés. Et nous favoriserons, niveau départemental, la création de pôles publics de « l'autonomie ». (FdG, 2012)
0.8	**Mostly in**	Emphasis on public services as non-capitalist institutions to redefine the models of development	Protéger les biens communs : l'air, l'eau, l'alimentation, le vivant, la santé, l'énergie, la monnaie ne sor des marchandises. Ils doivent être gérés démocratiquement : le droit de propriété doit être soumis à l'intérêt général, la propriété commune protégée et les services publics développés. (LFI, 2017)
0.7	**More In than Out**	Emphasis on non-market logics of welfare state organization. Policies' proposals to extend these logics beyond public services.	Noi proponiamo di investire sullo stato sociale: esso prima di tutto non è un costo, bensì una condizion essenziale allo sviluppo e alla coesione sociale. (…)noi consideriamo limitativo continuare a misurare la ricchezza e il benessere della popolazione tramite il prodotto interno lordo (PIL). Ci impegniamo a modificare questo indicatore e ad introdurre il Prodotto nazionale sapere e il Prodotto nazionale salute (PNS) come indicatori del futuro di una società. (SEL, 2013)
0.6	**Less or more In**	Weak emphasis on public agencies or non-profit enterprises as primary actors for the provisions of welfare services	Solo cuando las administraciones públicas no estén en condiciones de asumir la prestación de servicios sociales garantizando su calidad y accesibilidad, contemplaremos su externalización. En tales casos, se priorizará la concertación y el convenio con las entidades de la economía colaborativa, social y del bien común. (Podemos, 2016)
0.5	**Neither in nor out**	NA	NA
0.4	**Less or more Out**	Emphasis on social value of welfare state without specific policies' proposals to extend its areas of intervention	Una sanità pubblica moderna ed efficiente, un sistema delle pensioni rispettoso dei diritti e delle diffe l'equità e la progressività del sistema fiscale, (..) sono gli altri tasselli essenziali di un progetto di ricostruzione dello Stato democratico e della sua insostituibile funzione economico-sociale. Ci battiam un welfare universale, non solo per motivi di equità, ma anche per motivi di efficienza ed efficacia. (LE 2018)
0.3	**More Out than In**	Generic mentions on the need to enlarge welfare state as opportunities' booster, mainly in the fields of education and vocational training	Cuanto más desigual sea la distribución inicial de recursos y oportunidades, más desigualdad generará mercado. Por eso, los socialdemócratas creemos que es fundamental llevar a cabo reformas ambiciosa hagan más igualitaria la distribución de oportunidades y recursos antes de que operen los mecanismos mercado. (PSOE, 2016)
0.2	**Mostly Out**	Claims to reproduce welfare state provisions as opportunity booster. No contrast between welfare and markets logics of organization	Il tema del merito non può essere contrapposto a quello dell'eguaglianza delle opportunità. Libertà dei progetti di vita e valorizzazione del merito sono i presupposti di una società più aperta ed eguale. Attra l'introduzione di misure più incisive, ciò deve valere nel campo delle professioni, della scuola e dell'università, dell'amministrazione pubblica e dell'impresa privata (PD, 2013)
0.1	**Almost Fully Out**	Mentions to the conservation and/or moderate reduction of welfare state to be reorganized prioritizing costs' reductions and efficiency	Preservar el Estado del Bienestar. Por el lado del gasto público, el objetivo prioritario para los socialista preservar el Estado del Bienestar y la cohesión social, por lo que es necesario profundizar los esfuerzos racionalización del gasto y de mejora de la eficacia y la eficiencia de su gestión. (PSOE, 2011)
0	**Fully Out**	Strong emphasis on the reorganization of welfare provisions incorporating market logics and private companies in delivering services	Previdenza integrativa e Casse previdenziali. Si avverte l'esigenza di un sistema rinnovato, più convenie soprattutto per i lavoratori più giovani, con meno vincoli e che possa finanziare lo sviluppo degli investimenti in Italia. (PD, 2018)

Table 8 – 2.1.1 Representation of the under-represented - REPUNDER

Membership Score		Defining Characteristic	Data anchor
1	**Fully in**	Radical proposals and processes to radically re-design national Constitutions on democratic grounds.	ante el agotamiento de un sistema que ha devenido ilegítimo y que funciona de espaldas al pueblo, ter la obligación de impulsar desde la base, con la co-creación como línea de funcionamiento, un nuevo pr constituyente que por medio del desbordamiento democrático, trabajando dentro y especialmente fue las instituciones, logre una constitución republicana, fundamentada en la participación ciudadana. (IU,
0.9	**Almost Fully in**	Emphasis on political unbalances of power as the primary loci within which inequalities emerge. Role of alternative systems of representation to overcome current fallacies of democratic systems	Le problème est donc politique. Tout comme la noblesse de 1789 ne pouvait rompre avec l'Ancien Rég le capitalisme financier est incapable de sortir d'un système qui le gave de privilèges. Pour résoudre la il faut reprendre le pouvoir. (…)il faut que soient élus des dirigeants qui ne dépendent d'aucune manièr l'oligarchie financière et que le peuple, à la faveur d'une Sixième République, exerce le pouvoir pour de Il faut une révolution citoyenne. (FdG, 2012)
0.8	**Mostly in**	Emphasis on the need to shift political power to popular strata, as currently displaced to the top by political and economic élites	Tout commence par le pouvoir des citoyens. Comment rendre le pouvoir au peuple, en finir avec le sys de la caste médiatico politique et de la monarchie présidentielle ? C'est l'ère du peuple qui doit comme ! La révolution citoyenne à laquelle je crois est le moyen pacifique et démocratique de tourner la page tyrannie de l'oligarchie financière et de la caste qui est à son service. (LFI, 2017)
0.7	**More In than Out**	Definition of ruling groups as an obstacle for the improvement of the institutions of democracy	Non sono state né le immutabili leggi di natura né la presunta oggettività ed inevitabilità delle cose a te di spingerci nell'angolo dell'impotenza. È stata prima di tutto una certa politica fin qui complice di una finanza predona e malata della propria onnipotenza. È una politica che ha nomi e cognomi, ha partiti e giornali, ha banche e televisioni. (SEL, 2013)
0.6	**Less or more In**	Emphasis on under-representation within currents political institutions as the main route through which to pursue transformative goals at large.	Proponemos una ruta capaz de dejar atrás la España de los cinco millones de parados, de la precarieda la explotación de los autónomos, de la competitividad de la bajada salarial y de la dependencia energé (…). Es una senda a través de la cual podemos construir democráticamente la España plurinacional y respetuosa que ya existe en las ciudades y en los pueblos y que aún no ha entrado en los partidos y en instituciones. (PODEMOS, 2016)
0.5	**Neither in nor out**	NA	NA
0.4	**Less or more Out**	Specific mentions to the need to rebalance political power in favour of disadvantaged social groups through moderate policies' proposals	En España el poder económico está demasiado concentrado e influye demasiado sobre el poder polític imprescindible que existan partidos políticos sólidos, que canalicen las demandas de la sociedad civil y resistan las presiones de los grandes grupos corporativos. En este sentido, es preciso regular mejor el tránsito entre la política y la gran empresa (las llamadas puertas giratorias) y asimismo entre el sector privado y los altos niveles de la administración. (PSOE, 2016)
0.3	**More Out than In**	Generic mentions to the relations between increased inequalities and malfunctioning of democracies.	Il progetto di Liberi e Uguali nasce per restituire speranza nella democrazia a milioni di cittadine e citta che oggi non si sentono più rappresentati da nessuno. (…) La crescita delle diseguaglianze è oggi il prin fattore di crisi dei sistemi democratici. (…) . (LEU, 2018)
0.2	**Mostly Out**	Generic mentions to the need to better engage social groups, without distinctions among them, to improve democratic systems.	Tout texte de loi concernant les partenaires sociaux devra être précédé d'une concertation avec eux. Je modifier la Constitution pour qu'elle reconnaisse et garantisse cette nouvelle forme de démocratie soc Dès l'été 2012, je réunirai une grande conférence économique et sociale qui sera saisie des priorités du quinquennat (PS, 2012)
0.1	**Almost Fully Out**	Favourable mentions to current democratic polities whose functioning may be improved through increased accountability of representatives	Nuestra reciente democracia ha funcionado bien. Ha supuesto un buen compromiso entre representat y gobernabilidad. Pero es cierto que ha llegado la hora de mejorarla. Y para mejorarla, lo primero que tenemos que hacer es aumentar el escrutinio público de la acción política. Los ciudadanos tienen que p controlar de forma más directa, más cercana, más eficaz, lo que hacen sus representantes. (PSOE, 201
0	**Fully Out**	Generic mentions to malfunctioning of representative systems with no references neither to specific social groups nor to specific policies to be adopted	Dovremo colmare la faglia che si è scavata tra cittadini e politica. Qui non bastano le parole. Servirann comportamenti, le azioni, le coerenze. Faremo in modo che buona politica e riscossa civica procedano affiancate. Il traguardo è ricostruire quel patrimonio collettivo che la destra e i populismi stanno disgregando: la qualità della democrazia, la legalità, la cittadinanza, la partecipazione. (PD, 2013)

Table 9 – 2.1.2 Participatory and/or direct democracy -PARTDEM

Membership Score		Defining Characteristic	Data anchor
1	**Fully in**	Participatory democracy as a radical view of society cross-cutting all the areas of public intervention.	Se trata de avanzar hacia una democracia participativa que ponga a los ciudadanos en el centro de la política y posibilite su participación en las decisiones de los Gobiernos, en la planificación y ejecución de las políticas públicas y en la gestión de los servicios públicos. (…). Queremos cambiar la tendencia actual neoliberal de convertir a los ciudadanos en sujetos pasivos y acríticos, "consumidores" de servicios. (IU, 2011)
0.9	**Almost Fully in**	Strong emphasis on proposals for direct democracy as opposed to the distortion of representative systems.	No se nos va a olvidar que, de todas las medidas elegidas, la más votada ha sido la que propone la posibilidad de celebrar un «referéndum revocatorio si el Gobierno incumple de manera sustancial y manifiesta su programa electoral». Una medida aportada en Plaza Podemos por una ciudadana anónima o por un ciudadano anónimo, y que se ha convertido en la propuesta de mayor consenso. (Podemos, 2016)
0.8	**Mostly in**	Primacy of direct participation to radically reform political system. Emphasis on participation as anti-élite unbalanced power.	La priorité pour nous c'est de donner le pouvoir, tout le pouvoir, au peuple, c'est-à-dire à la communauté humaine, parce qu'elle est la mieux placée pour s'occuper de son intérêt général. Le peuple souverain doit définir lui-même ses règles de fonctionnement politique. La monarchie présidentielle doit être abolie. La convocation d'une assemblée composée de gens qui n'ont jamais été élus au Parlement auparavant pour écrire une nouvelle Constitution est l'acte fondateur par lequel nous commencerons le prochain quinquennat. (LFI, 2017)
0.7	**More In than Out**	Emphasis on participatory democracy as a relevant goal to improve political system.	Nous voulons renforcer et amplifier la souveraineté directe du peuple. La démocratie participative sera inscrite dans la Constitution et des lois déclineront ce principe pour donner les moyens, les outils, les espaces pour sa mise en œuvre. Elle s'appliquera à l'élaboration des lois, à la mise en œuvre des grandes politiques publiques et à la gestion des collectivités territoriales, notamment au moyen de budgets participatifs. (FdG, 2012)
0.6	**Less or more In**	Emphasis on citizens' direct engagement in reforming democratic systems.	Faire respirer la démocratie. Je vous propose de construire une 6e République qui remettra le citoyen au cœur de la décision publique. Une démocratie qui ne se résigne plus à être intermittente et immature, mais qui croit à l'intelligence collective. (PS, 2017)
0.5	**Neither in nor out**	NA	NA
0.4	**Less or more Out**	Mentions to increased direct participation as a primary goal to radically reform the political system	La buona politica è quella che vive attraverso la partecipazione diffusa e diretta dei cittadini, che si dà regole e controlli trasparenti e che nega anche il minimo privilegio di casta proprio perché realizza la sobrietà nelle proprie pratiche ed azioni come condizione del suo unico scopo: essere lo strumento per l'affermazione della cosa pubblica. (SEL, 2013)
0.3	**More Out than In**	Emphasis on parties as the representative bodies through which citizens should participate to improve democracy in societies at large.	Nosotros iniciamos el camino, introducimos los mecanismos de participación en nuestra organización, y en ello debemos avanzar a nivel institucional en la Legislación de Partidos, contribuyendo al desarrollo de nuestra democracia exclusivamente de carácter representativo hacia una "democracia participativa" donde la participación política directa del ciudadano se equilibre con la representativa, haciéndole sujeto activo y directo del ejercicio del poder, también a través de los Partidos Políticos (PSOE, 2016)
0.2	**Mostly Out**	Generic mentions to citizens' participation to tame some of the distortions by representative systems.	No Data anchors
0.1	**Almost Fully Out**	Generic attention to increased citizens' demands for more participation with no specific proposals to address them	En estos últimos meses hemos podido escuchar en nuestras calles la reivindicación de un Estado más abierto y de una práctica política más transparente, participativa e incluyente. Precisamente, la participación cívica como libre expresión del pluralismo y la diversidad en la sociedad española forma parte de los valores más arraigados del PSOE. (PSOE, 2011)
0	**Fully Out**	No mentions to any form of participatory and/or direct democracy to improve its functioning	La sola vera risposta al populismo è la partecipazione democratica. La crisi della democrazia non si combatte con "meno" ma con "più" democrazia. Più rispetto delle regole, una netta separazione dei poteri, una vera democrazia paritaria e l'applicazione corretta e integrale di quella Costituzione che rimane tra le più belle e avanzate del mondo. (PD, 2013)

Table 10 – 2.2.1 Gender Emancipation -GENDEM

Membership Score		Defining Characteristic	Data anchor
1	**Fully in**	Emphasis on radical proposals to enforce women's empowerment in all areas of society as a way to overcome current economic and political systems	Desarrollo del Consejo Estatal de las Mujeres, compuesto exclusivamente por asociaciones feministas, mujeres por la igualdad y consejos autonómicos de mujeres, dotado plenamente de autonomía y suste económicamente por el Estado. Sus informes/ dictámenes serán vinculantes en todas aquellas materia de carácter general, tengan especial incidencia en la vida de las mujeres. (IU, 2011)
0.9	**Almost Fully in**	Emphasis on radical policies' proposals to enforce gender equality in work.	Le nouveau Code du travail assurera l'abolition de la précarité et l'égalité femmes-hommes dans l'entr en prévoyant de lourdes pénalités pour les entreprises qui ne respecteront pas cette égalité. (FdG, 201
0.8	**Mostly in**	Emphasis on the role of politics to empower women as a way to overcome sexism in society at large.	Aseguraremos la independencia de las mujeres. Una persona solo puede poner fin a una situación de violencia si es independiente y tiene, por tanto, alternativas. Modificaremos la Ley de Violencia de Gén para que se conciba a las mujeres como sujetos activos y no como víctimas; e incluiremos todas las for de violencia machista, como indica el Convenio de Estambul: matrimonio forzoso, crímenes «de honor trata de mujeres y niñas, mutilación genital femenina, etcétera. (PODEMOS, 2016)
0.7	**More In than Out**	Wide policies' proposals to improve women's rights in a vast range of social areas.	L'aumento dell'occupazione femminile è in grado di determinare un aumento del PIL fino al 7%, come sostiene la Banca d'Italia. Occorre per questo investire in infrastrutture sociali come gli asili nido, istitui congedi di paternità obbligatori di due settimane, dare sostegno fiscale alle imprese che aiutano la condivisione delle responsabilità familiari tra donne e uomini per mezzo della flessibilità degli orari di l (SEL, 2013)
0.6	**Less or more In**	Mentions to gender equality as a cross-cutting set of policies regarding both economic and political systems.	Modificar la Ley de Régimen Electoral para garantizar la paridad mediante el sistema de listas cremalle con una representación equilibrada de hombres y mujeres al 50%. Incluir la perspectiva de género en l Presupuestos Generales del Estado contabilizando y estableciendo partidas suficientes que la desarroll todos los ministerios dando especial reconocimiento al trabajo no remunerado. (PSOE, 2016)
0.5	**Neither in nor out**	NA	NA
0.4	**Less or more Out**	Policies proposals aiming at imposing gender equality in the world of economy under limited circumstances	Hacer efectiva una cuota mínima de un 40% de presencia de mujeres en los consejos de administración las grandes empresas cotizadas y de todas las empresas públicas. (PSOE, 2011)
0.3	**More Out than In**	Specific but limited proposals to improve gender equality in companies, including sanctions for transgressors	Je défendrai l'égalité des carrières professionnelles et des rémunérations entre les femmes et les hom Une loi sanctionnera les entreprises qui ne respectent pas cette règle, notamment par la suppression d exonérations de cotisations sociales. Un ministère des droits des femmes veillera notamment à son application effective. (PS, 2012)
0.2	**Mostly Out**	Generic mentions to the need to improve gender equality prioritizing working conditions and welfare provisions.	Serve un grande piano per aumentare e migliorare l'occupazione femminile, contrastare la disparità ne redditi e nelle carriere, sradicare i pregiudizi sulla presenza delle donne nel mondo del lavoro e delle professioni. A tale scopo è indispensabile alleggerire la distribuzione del carico di lavoro e di cura nella famiglia, sostenendo una riforma del welfare, politiche di conciliazione e condivisione e varando un programma straordinario per la diffusione degli asili nido. (PD, 2013)
0.1	**Almost Fully Out**	Generic mentions to gender equality as a broad but vague goal to be pursued.	No Data Anchors
0	**Fully Out**	No mentions to gender equality as one of the main areas affecting opportunities for citizens	No Data Anchors

Table 11 – 2.2.2 Integration and empowerment of minorities -MINEMP

Membership Score		Defining Characteristic	Data anchor
1	**Fully in**	Strong emphasis on the positive impacts of immigration and cross-cutting viewpoints to consider anti-immigrants	El PSOE parece haber asumido la "impopularidad" de discursos centrados en la defensa de los derecho humanos de los inmigrantes (sean regulares o irregulares) presentes en nuestro país. Su satisfacción al sumarse al discurso del inmigrante bueno es el inmigrante con una elevada cualificación profesional y vocación de asimilarse al nacional pasado un tiempo prudencial, no contribuye a hacer una pedagogía la izquierda sobre la realidad de la inmigración, su vínculo con las políticas de la globalización neolibera sobre todo, permite la subsistencia de una situación de "irregularidad" administrativa que despoja a m de seres humanos de sus más elementales derechos. (IU, 2011)
0.9	**Almost Fully in**	Emphasis on positive ideas about raising immigration as positive for society at large. Strong criticism to 'mainstream' discourses about immigration.	La haine des étrangers, la chasse aux immigrés défigurent notre République : il faut en finir ! Les flux migratoires se développent dans le monde, ils mêlent des motivations diverses. La France ne doit pas l craindre, elle ne doit pas mépriser l'immense apport humain et matériel qu'ils lui ont déjà procuré. No présence des immigrés en France n'est pas un problème. L'immigration zéro est un mythe qui divise et affaiblit notre pays. (…) Il faut donc mener des politiques refusant de ghettoïser la société, qui ne soien guidées par l'obsession du refoulement des étrangers. (FdG, 2012)
0.8	**Mostly in**	Emphasis on the need to abolish laws restricting immigration and immigrants' rights as core policies for the party.	La nostra prima proposta consiste nell'abolizione della pessima legge Bossi-Fini e le leggi successive ch hanno peggiorato sempre più la condizione dei migranti, violando fondamentali diritti umani, come qu che ha istituito il reato di clandestinità. Vogliamo abolire i Cie e cancellare i vergognosi accordi con la Li vogliamo che sia scritta la legge sui diritti di asilo, attuando in tal modo l'articolo 10 della Costituzione. Vogliamo che sia introdotto il permesso di soggiorno per cercare lavoro e che siano garantiti i diritti de migranti con permesso di soggiorno (SEL, 2013)
0.7	**More In than Out**	Specific policies' proposals aiming at the full integration of immigrants into the national political system.	Derecho a voto y a la participación política de la población extranjera residente en nuestro país. Regularemos el derecho de sufragio mediante una reforma de la Ley Orgánica del Régimen Electoral General, y no por medio de tratados internacionales bilaterales. Reconoceremos el sufragio pasivo a to los residentes extranjeros estables, no solo a los ciudadanos de la Unión Europea. (PODEMOS, 2016)
0.6	**Less or more In**	Specific policies' proposals to facilitate the integration of immigrants.	Défendre le droit du sol intégral pour les enfants nés en France, y compris dans les Outre-mer. Faciliter l'accès à la nationalité française pour les personnes étrangères présentes légalement sur le territoire. Rétablir la carte de séjour de dix ans comme titre de séjour de référence pour les étrangers. (LFI, 2017)
0.5	**Neither in nor out**	NA	NA
0.4	**Less or more Out**	Mentions to proposals facilitating immigration while displacing these proposals to supranational arenas.	En Europe, j'instaurerai un VISA HUMANITAIRE pour l'accueil des réfugiés, et l'expérimentation de nou formes de circulation permettant une fluidification des allers-retours pour les migrations de travail. Je soutiendrai une révision du règlement de Dublin fondée sur les valeurs d'accueil et de solidarité entre l États de l'Union européenne. (PS, 2017)
0.3	**More Out than In**	Limited proposals to enhance the integration of immigrants in national political system.	J'accorderai le droit de vote aux élections locales aux étrangers résidant légalement en France depuis c ans. Je conduirai une lutte implacable contre l'immigration illégale et les filières du travail clandestin. J sécuriserai l'immigration légale. Les régularisations seront opérées au cas par cas sur la base de critère objectifs. (PS, 2012)
0.2	**Mostly Out**	Emphasis on the need to prioritize limited proposals for the integration of immigrants.	Sul piano dei diritti di cittadinanza l'Italia attende da troppo tempo una legge semplice ma irrinunciabil bambino, figlio d'immigrati, nato e cresciuto in Italia, è un cittadino italiano. L'approvazione di questa r sarà simbolicamente il primo atto che ci proponiamo di compiere nella prossima legislatura (PD, 2013)
0.1	**Almost Fully Out**	Generic mentions to immigrant rights' within the limits imposed by the availability of job opportunities.	Asimismo, continuaremos desarrollando un modelo migratorio que permita el control de los flujos de entrada apostando por la regularidad y que permita gestionar las entradas y residencia de acuerdo con posibilidades del mercado de trabajo. (PSOE, 2011)
0	**Fully Out**	Generic mentions to the need of better regulations for immigration, while considering integration as a limited resource.	No data anchors

Table 12 – 3.1.1 Digital driver of economic growth -DIGGRWT

Membership Score		Defining Characteristic	Data anchor
1	**Fully in**	Strong Emphasis on digitization as a positive paradigmatic shift for economy and societies at large.	Asistimos a una digitalización progresiva de la economía, la sociedad y la política. Digitalización que está transformando nuestras vidas, nuestra economía y nuestra sociedad. No nos encontramos ante un cambio incremental, sino ante un cambio radical. Las tecnologías digitales tienen dos propiedades que las hacen poderosas: están creciendo de modo exponencial, y, además, son una innovación generalista y combinatoria, que penetra y, combinándose, transforma todos los procesos, productos y servicios que conocemos. (PSOE, 2016)
0.9	**Almost Fully in**	Emphasis on economic digitization as the primary key to improve national economic performances whereas the state is required to facilitate private investments and fair competition.	La economía 4.0 es la plasmación del cambio de modelo de crecimiento que necesita España para asegurar más empleo y de mayor calidad. Un cambio que tiene como primer objetivo mejorar la productividad de la economía, impulsando los sectores industriales y sectores avanzados de alto valor añadido. (...) La economía 4.0 tiene que ser más global, más internacionalizada.(…). La economía 4.0 es dinámica, con más actividad emprendedora y mayores niveles de natalidad empresarial. (PSOE, 2016)
0.8	**Mostly in**	Specific mentions to sets of policies to enhance SMEs performances and to private-public infrastructures to improve digital entrepreneurship.	Apoyaremos e impulsaremos el emprendimiento en sectores innovadores, particularmente en la economía digital, mediante el impulso de hubs (pequeños centros de negocio) y clústeres de innovación. Favoreceremos el acceso a espacios de trabajo y de coworking (trabajo colaborativo) a las incubadoras de emprendedores y empresas start-up, hasta conseguir crear una red de espacios de colaboración que permitan a pequeños emprendedores la mutualización de recursos. (PODEMOS, 2016)
0.7	**More In than Out**	Specific mentions to proposals aiming at privatizations of markets to match the economic opportunities opened by the digital technologies	Se vogliamo garantire una politica industriale moderna le reti devono rappresentare quello che rappresentò l'autostrada del sole nel dopoguerra, unendo Nord e Sud. (…)Parlare di liberalizzazioni significa anche guardare ai nuovi mercati e alle enormi potenzialità che l'economia digitale può creare in un Paese come il nostro, caratterizzato dalla presenza di (…) piccole imprese spesso dinamiche e innovative. (PD, 2018)
0.6	**Less or more In**	Emphasis on digital technologies as primary resources to foster the growth of SMEs.	No data anchors
0.5	**Neither in nor out**	NA	NA
0.4	**Less or more Out**	Generic mentions to digital technologies as an area of economic international competition	Nous ferons de la France UN PAYS EN POINTE SUR LE NUMÉRIQUE, en développant l'accès au très haut débit fixe et mobile sur l'ensemble du territoire. J'assurerai la transition numérique des organisations et l'appropriation des usages numériques par tous (la médiation numérique, le numérique éducatif et la montée en compétences des actifs). (PS, 2017)
0.3	**More Out than In**	Mentions to digital technologies as an emerging landscape opening new spaces for market growth and competition	El amplio sector de las TIC sigue siendo uno de los que ofrecen mayores expectativas de crecimiento en el futuro. La Sociedad de la Información se está expandiendo continuamente en todos los ámbitos de la vida, sea el laboral, el de los servicios públicos o la vida personal, lo que asigna al sector TIC un papel crucial por su amplia transversalidad. De ahí, nuestra apuesta por impulsar este sector como generador de empleos en la próxima legislatura. (PSOE, 2011)
0.2	**Mostly Out**	Generic mentions to the need to invest public resources in digital technologies as leverages to restore economic growth.	Je soutiendrai le développement des nouvelles technologies et de l'économie numérique, levier essentiel d'une nouvelle croissance, et j'organiserai avec les collectivités locales et l'industrie la couverture intégrale de la France en très haut débit d'ici à dix ans. (PS, 2012)
0.1	**Almost Fully Out**	Generic mentions to the public investments necessary to improve the performances of enterprises through innovation including also, but not only, digital technologies.	La politica deve sfruttare pienamente le potenzialità delle nuove tecnologie per promuovere un nuovo modello di sviluppo che sia socialmente ma anche ecologicamente sostenibile (…). Deve aumentare in modo considerevole gli investimenti pubblici nella ricerca e nell'innovazione rappresentata dalle tante giovani imprese, così che facciano da traino agli investimenti privati. (LEU, 2018)
0	**Fully Out**	Generic mentions of digital technologies as means to improve economic performances among other potential areas of intervention.	Noi immaginiamo un progetto-Paese che individui grandi aree d'investimento, di ricerca, di innovazione verso le quali orientare il sistema delle imprese, nell'industria, nell'agricoltura e nei servizi. La qualità e le tipicità, mobilità sostenibile, risparmio ed efficienza energetica, le tecnologie legate alla salute, alla cultura, all'arte, ai beni di valore storico e alla nostra tradizione, l'agenda digitale. (PD, 2013)

Table 13 – 3.1.2 Digital Commons -DIGCOMM

Membership Score		Defining Characteristic	Data anchor
1	**Fully in**	Digital economy as a leverage to set an alternative to current economic structures through an alternative public management.	Face à la prédation de la finance et à la dictature des actionnaires, une autre économie est possible ! Elle existe déjà, avec des centaines de milliers d'entreprises et des millions d'emplois. (…). La révolution numérique peut être un levier pour de nouvelles activités réellement collaboratives. Mais cela suppose de ne pas laisser le champ libre aux multinationales et aux stratégies lucratives ou d'évasion fiscale qui prévalent aujourd'hui. (LFI, 2017)
0.9	**Almost Fully in**	Emphasis on digital economy as a field of political conflict counterposing digital commons to (neoliberal) digital private services.	No Data Anchors
0.8	**Mostly in**	Policies' proposals emphasising a strong role of the state at managing the changes in jobs resulting from automation of productive processes and a reorganisation of welfare services to protect lower classes.	Pour répondre aux mutations du travail, je créerai une CONTRIBUTION SOCIALE SUR LES ROBOTS. Elle alimentera un Fonds de Transition Travail (FTT), dont la mission sera de créer autant d'emplois nouveaux que ceux qui disparaîtront. Je propose de fonder un nouveau pilier de la protection sociale, le revenu universel d'existence. Il nous permettra d'aborder les mutations du travail et la révolution numérique avec sérenité. Il représente un soutien inédit au revenu des classes populaires et moyennes. (PS, 2017)
0.7	**More In than Out**	Emphasis on digital ecosystems as prompting new shared forms of creation of value and its distribution	Impulsaremos los fondos públicos de inversión en estos sectores y la colaboración público-privada para producir aplicaciones digitales de interés general. Por otro lado, regularemos la economía colaborativa para dotarla de un marco legal claro y, asimismo, fomentaremos la incorporación de servicios de la economía digital y colaborativa por parte de las administraciones (sharing). (PODEMOS, 2016)
0.6	**Less or more In**	Specific policies proposals emphasising digital technologies as primary means to foster the availability of digital common goods.	Ripensare al ruolo delle biblioteche investendo in progetti di riqualificazione, ampliamento, riconversione o costruzione ex novo di edifici e biblioteche per rilanciarne il ruolo e la centra lità culturale e sociale. Ciò anche attraverso l'implementazione di nuovi servizi digitali per il pubblico, la trasformazione e l'attrattività degli spazi dedicati, la costruzione di servizi e relazioni culturali con l'utenza anche tramite il web e i sistemi di catalogazione integrata in rete (SEL, 2013)
0.5	**Neither in nor out**	NA	NA
0.4	**Less or more Out**	Generic mentions to potentially detrimental effects of automation of jobs without specific commitments to counteract these effects.	In un'epoca segnata da grandi progressi sul piano dell'automazione e della robotizzazione riteniamo ineludibile affrontare il tema della riduzione dell'orario di lavoro a parità di salario. Poichè il sistema di welfare si basa prevalentemente sul prelievo che grava sui redditi da lavoro, la riduzione del monte salari a fronte della robotizzazione pone interrogativi in termini di sostenibilità. Si deve ragionare in anticipo su questi temi, per evitare di essere colti impreparati: per esempio spostando il prelievo dai redditi da lavoro all'intero valore aggiunto (LEU, 2018)
0.3	**More Out than In**	Emphasis on data as a new powerful resource for the protection of citizens. Displacement of their regulations to supranational arenas.	I dati oggi valgono come l'oro e la battaglia sulla loro portabilità non può più essere rimandata. I dati non sono di chi li gestisce ma di chi li genera, quindi di ciascuno di noi. A cominciare da quelli personali: anagrafici, sanitari, fiscali. Siamo nel pieno della data economy e le principali democrazie non hanno ancora un cloud pubblico. L'Europa su questo tema ha iniziato a muovere i primi passi e noi non possiamo restare immobili. (PD, 2018)
0.2	**Mostly Out**	Limited policies' proposals on data protection as displaced to supranational arenas	No data anchors
0.1	**Almost Fully Out**	Generic mentions to the need for new regulations for digital ecosystems.	El actual proceso de convergencia tecnológica ha supuesto que los ciudadanos puedan tener acceso a una multiplicidad de contenidos en varios soportes. Incluso está variando la forma de consumir los contenidos audiovisuales y demás servicios que los operadores ofrecen a los ciudadanos. Lógicamente, la regulación de estos escenarios requiere de medidas o instrumentos suficientemente flexibles y adaptados a la realidad del sector y a sus propias necesidades, requerimientos y aspiraciones. (PSOE, 2011)
0	**Fully Out**	Generic mentions to digital as affecting public spaces without specific proposals	No data anchors

Table 14 – 3.2.1 Digital democracy -DIGDEM

Membership Score		Defining Characteristic	Data anchor
1	**Fully in**	Digital technologies as opening the way to radical changes in the functioning of liberal democracies at large.	No data anchors
0.9	**Almost Fully in**	Strong emphasis on proposals to radically renew elections' procedures incorporating the use of digital technologies.	Obligación legal de presentarse a primarias por parte de todos aquellos candidatos a presidir órganos ejecutivos de los partidos políticos Los partidos políticos estarán obligados legalmente a presentar a primarias a todos aquellos candidatos a presidir sus órganos ejecutivos. La Junta Electoral Central orga un sistema telemático y presencial de participación para que durante un periodo determinado la gente pueda votar al precandidato dentro del partido que elija (PODEMOS, 2016)
0.8	**Mostly in**	Generic positive mentions to digital technologies as facilitating social movements disrupting supposedly corrupted political systems	
0.7	**More In than Out**	Emphasis on the positive impacts for democratic systems from increased critical skills by citizens made possible by the spread of digital tools.	Para atraer a los ciudadanos a la política, hay que darles más voz y más canales de participación en la conformación de las decisiones colectivas. (...). Una ciudadanía crítica dificultará que los políticos se de de los compromisos adquiridos ante el electorado. La revolución tecnológica y digital hace posible que ciudadanos puedan ejercer un mayor control sobre las decisiones políticas. El PSOE aprovechará estos nuevos mecanismos participativos para que el proceso de deliberación y crítica tenga un peso importa las consideraciones de los representantes políticos. (PSOE, 2016)
0.6	**Less or more In**	Generic emphasis on digital technologies as empowering participatory democracy, without specific commitments or proposals.	La Rete consente l'estensione delle capacità delle donne e degli uomini e preme per l'attuazione di for democrazia partecipata, in cui ognuno è chiamato al proprio compito di cittadino del mondo. (SEL 201
0.5	**Neither in nor out**	NA	NA
0.4	**Less or more Out**	Generic commitment to the need to extend the use of digital technologies to renew democracy and make it more participatory.	Las Tecnologías de la Información y la Comunicación (TIC) son un factor de gran relevancia en casi todo campos de nuestras sociedades contemporáneas, incluidos el político y el personal, como demuestran recientes revueltas populares en el mundo árabe o movimientos como el 15-M, en cuyo éxito han teni importante papel redes sociales como Facebook y Twitter. (IU, 2011)
0.3	**More Out than In**	Mentions to new opportunities opened up by digital technologies to increase the accountability of governmental institutions.	Extenderemos y potenciaremos el Gobierno electrónico para que los ciudadanos puedan canalizar su participación en la cosa pública por vía electrónica, a través de Internet o de otras posibilidades que las (Tecnologías de la Información y Comunicación) vayan ofreciendo, como por ejemplo, la telefonía móv ley asegurará la posibilidad de participación ciudadana en los procesos legislativos más importantes. (P 2011)
0.2	**Mostly Out**	Generic description of digital technologies as potentially positive for democracy, without any specific policy- or party- related proposals.	Internet ha contribuito in maniera decisiva a ridefinire lo spazio pubblico e privato, a strutturare i rapp tra le persone e tra queste e le Istituzioni. (…) Ha ampliato le possibilità di intervento diretto delle pers nella sfera pubblica. (…) Ha consentito lo sviluppo di una società più aperta e libera. Internet deve esse considerata come una risorsa globale e si configura come uno spazio economico che rende possibile innovazione e crescita in un contesto democratico. Per tutti questi motivi l'accesso al web rappresenta strumento che può influire in maniera determinante sull'effettività dei diritti fondamentali. (LEU, 2018
0.1	**Almost Fully Out**	Generic and neutral description of digital technologies as tools for top-down political engagement	No data anchors
0	**Fully Out**		No data anchors

Table 15 – 3.2.2 Digital state -DIGSTATE

Membership Score		Defining Characteristic	Data anchor
1	**Fully in**	Strong emphasis on digital tools as essential to radically renovate state apparatuses	Desarrollar el plan "Gobierno Abierto" para favorecer la transparencia de las instituciones. El plan amp el catálogo de la información que el Gobierno debe publicar de manera proactiva; obligará a la utilizaci formatos abiertos por defecto; simplificará los mecanismos de acceso a los datos; creará los mecanism para que la ciudadanía conozca en todo momento los proyectos y las políticas que diseña el gobierno y establecerá procedimientos para que puedan participar en su diseño y seguimiento; y creará laborator para la innovación pública abiertos a la participación de la ciudadanía, el sector público y el sector priva (PSOE, 2016)
0.9	**Almost Fully in**	Emphasis on broad agendas to transform processes and organizations of public offices through digital tools	No data anchors
0.8	**Mostly in**	Specific mentions to broad policies' proposals to digitize state apparatuses as a primary way to improve citizens' rights.	Consolidar una auténtica administración digital que permita a la ciudadanía realizar cualquier trámite c manera más rápida y ágil, a cualquier hora y desde cualquier lugar, gracias a una ventanilla virtual únic ello se evitará el tener que aportar documentación que ya está digitalizada. • Incorporar plenamente la nuevas tecnologías en los trámites administrativos. • Avanzar hacia la superación de la brecha digital e sociedad. • Garantizar puntos de asesoramiento permanente, tanto online como presenciales, que a su faciliten la tramitación del certificado digital a solicitud de los interesados. (PODEMOS, 2016)
0.7	**More In than Out**	Specific mentions to policies' proposals to digitize public offices and facilitate citizens' access to public services.	Realizzare la transizione verso l'amministrazione digitale. Abbiamo realizzato sperimentazioni e un piar strategico per traghettare il pubblico verso un'amministrazione digitale. Il passaggio a un'amministrazi pubblica che agisca stabilmente mediante le tecnologie digitali necessita di ulteriori interventi, nello specifico: a) Anagrafe nazionale della popolazione residente ("i dati devono essere unici e in un unico luogo"); (…) d) Open data e Data analytics (da "questo dato è mio e lo gestisco io" a "questi dati sono a e condivisibili"). (PD, 2018)
0.6	**Less or more In**	Mentions to the relevance of public offices digitisation as prompting state efficiency	No data anchors
0.5	**Neither in nor out**	NA	NA
0.4	**Less or more Out**	Generic emphasis on digital technologies as empowering fiscal efficiency for state apparatuses.	Una lotta senza tregua all'evasione fiscale deve andare a beneficio di chi le tasse le paga fino all'ultimo centesimo: la lotta all'evasione si fa utilizzando le nuove tecnologie, secondo proposte da tempo sul ta con le quali è possibile recuperare in pochi anni almeno 50 miliardi da utilizzare per ridurre le tasse (LE 2018)
0.3	**More Out than In**	Generic mentions to the potential positive impacts for state apparatuses to gain efficiency through the use of digital technologies.	Promover especialmente la innovación de procesos en las Administraciones Públicas, para que la implantación de tecnologías de la información y la comunicación en dichos procesos les permita ser mu más eficientes y austeras de forma que, con un menor coste, faciliten iguales o mejores servicios. (PSO 2011)
0.2	**Mostly Out**	Generic mentions to the advantages for public offices to contrast tax avoidance through the use of digital technologies	Renforcer les moyens humains et techniques de l'administration fiscale et des douanes dans la lutte co la fraude et l'évasion fiscales (LFI, 2017)
0.1	**Almost Fully Out**	Generic mentions to potential marginal changes in the processes and organizations of public offices	No data anchors
0	**Fully Out**	Marginal mentions to digital technologies as neutral tools for state apparatuses	No data anchors

STEP 3. ASSIGNING FUZZY MEMBERSHIPS

a. Scoring cases on indicator-level dimensions

Data anchors were treated as the reference points against which cases have been scored for each indicator (task 3.a).

b. Defining rules of aggregation

Next, I aggregated the scores up from indicator levels to secondary and core ones. Table 16 displays how the scores at the level of the indicators were aggregated up to secondary level and then core concepts. This task requires applying the Boolean logical operators AND (*) and OR (+) to the groups of indicators pertaining to the same secondary-level set and for the secondary sets derived from core concepts. Three ways of operating are available: (1) the strictest way is to consider all the conditions as essential, therefore linked by the logical AND; (2) the broadest way is to consider the conditions substitutable, therefore linked by the logical OR; (3) a middle ground considers at least M of N conditions as necessary, therefore combining logical AND and OR. Theoretical reasons guide the choice of logical connections. Therefore, as with Gramsci, I consider ideologies primarily grounded on their organic ties to economic structures, the set CAPTRANSF is necessarily resulting from the minimum value between the secondary-level concepts SOCPROP*DECOMM. Each of these secondary level concepts will be the result of the combinations of at least two of three underlying indicators. In formal terms, these are synthesised by the formulas:

CAPTRANSF=SOCPROP*DECOMM whereby

- SOCPROP= (PUBPROP*REDIS)+(WORKCTRL*REDIS) and
- DECOMM= (LABVAL*WELFNOMRKT)+(NATCOMM+WELFNOMRKT)

That is to say, for instance, that to consider an ideology committed to the transformation of capitalism, it should be at least more in than out of the four following sets: equal distribution of wealth above profit; public regimes of property of strategic assets; labour value disentangled by capitalistic extraction of exchange value; non-market logics of organizations of welfare. Having recognised CAPTRANSF as the primary dimension in our analysis, I will consider all the connections within the other two dimensions as substitutable, therefore linked by the logical OR, except for gender and minorities empowerments, which should be considered as both necessary. The rationale for this choice is that, for instance, a political ideology can be considered progressively democratic alternatively when maximising its views on representation or direct participation. Further, some ideologies may be considered members of the set digital proactivity, alternatively, when emphasising the positive effects of

digital technologies within or against market competition. Formally, these statements are expressed by the formulas:

- PROGDEM=CIVENG+RECOG whereby
  - CIVENG=REPUNDER+PARTDEM and
  - RECOG=GENDEM*MINEMP;

- DIGPROACT=DIGECO+DIGPOL whereby
  - DIGECO=DIGGRWT+DIGCOMM and
  - DIGPOL=DIGDEM+DIGSTATE.

Table 16. Scores on indicators and aggregations up to core concepts

	INDICATORS														SECONDARY LEVEL						CORE CONCEPTS		
	PUBPROP	WORKCTRL	REDIS	LABVAL	NATCOMM	WELFNOMRKT	REPUNDER	PARTDEM	GENDEM	MINEMP	DIGGRWT	DIGCOMM	DIGDEM	DIGST	SOCPROP	DECOMM	CIVENG	RECOGN	DIGECO+	DIGPOL+	CAPTRANSF	PROGDEM	DIGPROACT
FRSD12	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.1	**0.3**	**0.3**	**0.2**
FRSD17	0.4	0.7	0.4	0.7	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.6	0.6	0.4	0.4	0.8	0.6	0.1	0.4	0.4	0.6	0.4	0.8	0.6	**0.4**	**0.6**	**0.8**
FRRL12	0.9	0.8	0.9	1.0	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.7	0.9	0.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.0	0.0	**0.9**	**0.9**	**0.0**
FRRL17	0.8	1.0	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.3	1.0	0.6	0.2	0.9	0.8	0.8	0.7	1.0	0.6	**0.8**	**0.8**	**1.0**
ITSD13	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.1	**0.2**	**0.2**	**0.1**
ITSD18	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.7	0.2	0.0	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.1	0.7	0.7	**0.0**	**0.2**	**0.7**
ITRL13	0.6	0.4	0.7	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.4	0.7	0.8	0.3	0.6	0.6	0.0	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.6	0.6	**0.6**	**0.7**	**0.6**
ITRL18	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.6	0.6	0.1	0.4	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.6	0.4	0.4	**0.3**	**0.6**	**0.4**
SPSD11	0.1	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.4	0.1	0.3	0.1	0.3	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.3	**0.1**	**0.1**	**0.3**
SPSD16	0.3	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.6	0.4	1.0	0.3	0.7	1.0	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4	1.0	1.0	**0.3**	**0.4**	**1.0**
SPRL11	1.0	0.9	1.0	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.0	0.4	0.4	0.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.4	0.4	**1.0**	**1.0**	**0.4**
SPRL16	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.9	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.9	0.8	0.6	0.6	0.9	0.8	0.8	0.9	**0.6**	**0.9**	**0.9**
LOG OP	(1*3)+(2*3)			(1*3)+(2*3)			OR		AND		OR		OR		AND		OR		OR				

Finally, I defined on theoretical grounds the qualitative thresholds to consider a case as a member or non/member of each set. As explained in Chapter 3.2, I considered the set CAPTRANSF as structured around three range of values resulting in corresponding ideological families: liberal -scores ≤ 0.3-; social – scores (0.4;0.6); socialist -scores ≥ 0.7. The second and third dimensions -PROGDEM and DIGPROACT- are instead considered present when their value is ≥ 0.6, and absent when their value is ≤ 0.4. Accordingly, as summarised in the following truth table, the space of all potentially existing combinations will result in twelve different combinations (Table 18).

Table 18 Truth table, ideal-types left wing ideologies

Tradition	Ideology	CAPTRANSF	PROGDEM	DIGPROACT
Socialist	Techno-Democratic-Socialism	+	+	+
	Democratic- Socialism	+	+	-
	Techno-Statist-Socialism	+	-	+
	Statist-Socialism	+	-	-
Social	Techno-Social Democracy	+/-	+	+
	Social Democracy	+/-	+	-
	Techno-Social-Statism	+/-	-	+
	Social -Statism	+/-	-	-
Liberal	Techno-Liberal Democracy	-	+	+
	Liberal-Democracy	-	+	-
	Techno-Neoliberalism	-	-	+
	Neoliberalism	-	-	-

APPENDIX 3. THEMATIC ANALYSIS

This Appendix to Chapters 5 to 7 displays the themes (patterns) resulting from the data analysis of 37 semi-structured interviews (Appendix 1) and 26 sources of textual data (see References) by the six selected ELPs. As pointed out by the proponents of 'thematic analysis', Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (2006), 'a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set' (p. 82).

The research sub-question to which Chapters 5 to 7 seek answers was formulated as follows:

- How did ELPs' reflections on the digital revolution inform their strategic projects to navigate or transform the real hegemony of platform societies?

The question refers to the 'real' hegemony of platform societies. In Chapter 2, real hegemony has been defined as the condensation among agents of the state and the civil society of practices to secure consent to the rulership of the economic base 'platform capitalism'. Real hegemony has been conceptualised as operating among two main spaces within which cultural and material relations among political agents take place: economy and politics. Analytically, a distinction was formulated between three related areas of interventions through which political agents secure real hegemony: disaggregating alternatives; tying agents themselves to the interests of the ruling classes; reproducing common sense views that support the domination of ruling classes.

However, a Gramscian theoretical framework posits that any stage of real hegemony is an unstable equilibrium, as the intrinsical dialectics between domination and liberation within the economic base also shape certain forms of 'resistance'. The confrontations between real hegemony and resistance are the 'space of political possibilities' upon which political agents (in this thesis, six European Left Parties) may reflect. As the logic of inference of the empirical research is 'retroductive', I identified through literature the most extensive range of 'themes' defining the relations of 'real' structures of platform capitalism and how they shape platform societies. Parties will alternatively seek to navigate or transform real hegemony. Accordingly, the coding scheme was structured to look at the relations between understandings and strategic choices (i.e. justifying the adoption of certain practices in relation to some ends) by parties within the three areas of intervention.

As theoretically, I conceptualised an irredeemable dialectic between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic strategic projects, I elaborated two thematic maps. One was the result of data analysis for those parties whose ideology as systems of beliefs was identified in Chapter 3 as digitally proactive but not seeking to transform capitalism (Techno-Third Way). The second was the result of the data analysis of Post-Social Democratic and Platform Socialists, as these ideologies were identified as systems of beliefs aiming to transform the economic base of platform capitalism.

The resulting thematic maps are portrayed in Figures 1 (hegemonic strategic projects) and 2 (counter-hegemonic strategic projects). The qualitative data analysis (QDA) was performed on NVivo software. More specifically, the whole body of the textual data was sorted into codes and then aggregated up to how parties' elites' understandings and strategic choices related to the areas of intervention to navigate or transform hegemony. The first 'themes' refer to the dialectics defined in Chapter 2 (see Figure 2.2) and are not portrayed in the thematic maps. Next, to fit with the research questions, I organised the themes around 'reflections' and 'strategic choices'. The final themes were kept quite broad in scope to be effective 'containers' of distinct practices and interpretations of events reported by the interviewees.

Figure 1. Thematic map. Data analysis hegemonic parties (Techno-Third Way)

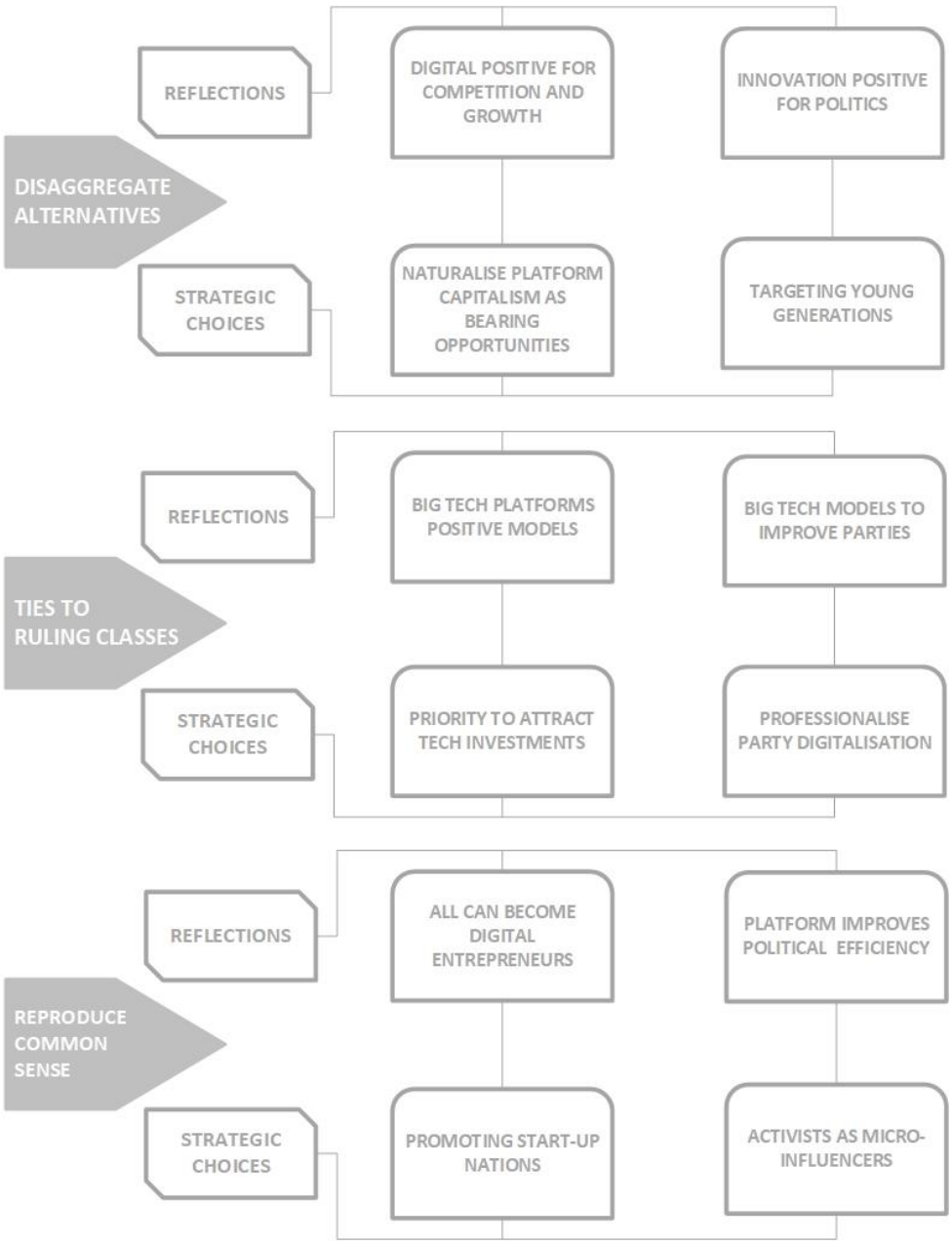

Figure 2. Thematic map. Data analysis counter-hegemonic parties (Post-Social Democracy and Platform Socialism)