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THE ROLE OF PARTICIPATION IN THE NEW MODELS OF POLITICAL PARTY

VOLUME 1

**Doctoral Thesis on Democracy in the 21st Century
Supervised by Professor Giovanni Allegretti and submitted to the
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Ai miei porti sicuri, a chi li ha costruiti con amore e serenità,

permettendomi di partire verso l'Indefinito.

Alla mia isola, alla mia famiglia

e a Sofia, il futuro che è già presente.

To my safe havens, to those who built them with love and serenity,

allowing me to leave for the Indefinite.

To my island, to my family

and to Sofia, the future that is already present.

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ABSTRACT

English version

In the context of the democratic crisis that affects 'Western' democracies, empirical evidence and a vast body of research has pointed out a surprising increase in membership roll and Intra-Party Democracy (IPD) procedures within a number of new or established European political parties during the second decade of 2000. Many of these processes and tools have been characterised by claims for innovative forms of participation, the use of digital technologies and charismatic leadership. On the one hand, the participation promoted by these parties seems to embrace new forms of mobilisation and activism; on the other hand, many of the participatory processes and tools promoted remained tokenistic in nature and ended up reaffirming the leadership's positions. What role has been given to members' participation in those parties? How is the members' participation reshaping the organisation of the political parties, in view of their crisis of perceived legitimacy? This thesis aims to analyse the role of members' participation within political parties particularly committed to promoting participation. The study examines their interpretation of participation, the participatory procedures, the ways they use digital technologies, and the intra-party participation promoted by political parties in the last decade. For this purpose, the present research applies the case study methodology and compares the participatory procedures within two political parties at the national level. The cases selected are the Spanish party Podemos (Spain), a new digital party-movement founded in 2014, and the Labour Party (UK) under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership, a long-standing party in a renewal phase. The empirical research relied on qualitative methods, mainly semi-structured in-depth interviews, participatory observation, document analysis and press reviews, jointly with the study of the participatory procedures' data and outcomes. Despite their different histories and models, both parties recognised participation as a fundamental value, and they developed and implemented participatory procedures open to members and sympathisers. Studying and mirroring the two cases, a complex scenario emerged, pointing out that both parties tended to promote a type of participation that was directly respondent to the quest of supporting and legitimising their leadership, lacking the institutionalisation of the participatory procedures and solid integration within the decision-making processes. Despite the differences between the two cases in terms of the usage and objectives of their participatory procedures, they often resulted in merely consultative and top-down procedures, with a high digital component that reinforced political individualisation.

Portuguese version

Na segunda década de 2000, durante a crise democrática que afeta as democracias 'ocidentais', evidências empíricas e um vasto corpo de pesquisa apontam para um aumento inesperado no número de membros e procedimentos de Democracia Intrapartidária (IPD) em alguns partidos políticos europeus, novos ou tradicionais. Muitos desses processos e respetivas ferramentas caracterizam-se pela reivindicação de formas inovadoras de participação, uso de tecnologias digitais e liderança carismática. Por um lado, a participação promovida por estes partidos parece abarcar novas formas de mobilização e ativismo; por outro, muitas das ferramentas participativas e processos promovidos permaneceram simbólicos e acabam por reafirmar as posições de liderança. Que papel tem sido dado à participação dos membros nestes partidos? De que forma é que a participação dos membros está a reconfigurar a organização dos partidos políticos, perante a sua crise de legitimidade percecionada? Esta tese visa analisar o papel da participação dos membros nos partidos políticos particularmente comprometidos com a promoção da participação. O estudo analisa as suas interpretações de participação, os procedimentos participativos, as formas de utilização de tecnologias digitais, bem como a participação intrapartidária promovida pelos partidos políticos na última década. Com esse propósito, a presente pesquisa compara - através de estudos de caso - os processos e ferramentas dentro de dois partidos políticos de âmbito nacional. Os casos selecionados são o partido espanhol Podemos, novo movimento-partido digital fundado em 2014; e o Labour Party Britânico sob a liderança de Jeremy Corbyn, um partido de longa data em fase de renovação. A pesquisa empírica contou com métodos qualitativos, principalmente entrevistas em profundidade semiestruturadas, observação participante, análise documental e resenhas de imprensa, juntamente com o estudo dos dados e resultados dos procedimentos participativos. Apesar das suas diferentes histórias e modelos, ambos os partidos reconheceram a participação como valor fundamental, e desenvolveram e implementaram procedimentos participativos abertos a membros e simpatizantes. Estudando e comparando os dois casos, emergiu um cenário complexo, indicando que ambas as partes tendem a promover uma participação visando diretamente o apoio e a legitimação da liderança, apresentando lacunas na institucionalização dos procedimentos participativos e de integração sólida nos processos de tomada de decisão. Apesar das diferenças entre os dois casos em termos de utilização e objetivos dos seus procedimentos participativos, o resultado culmina frequentemente em procedimentos meramente consultivos e *top-down,* com elevada componente digital que reforça a individualização política.

Table of contents

Lists of acronyms

ALC - Association of Labour Councillors (UK)

BAME - Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic (UK)

BdT - Bancos de Talentos (ES)

BLP - Branch Labour Party (UK)

CLP - Constituency Labour Party (UK)

DI - Democratic Innovation

EPLP - European Parliamentary Labour Party (UK)

ES - Spain

GDPR - General Data Protection Regulation

IA - Izquierda Anticapitalista (ES)

ICP - Podemos Citizen Initiatives (ES)

ICT - Information and Communication Technology

IPD - Intra-Party Democracy

IU - Izquierda Unida (ES)

LGBT - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender

M5S - Movimento 5 Stelle (Italy)

MP - Member of Parliament (UK)

NCC - National Constitutional Committee (UK)

NEC - National Executive Committee (UK)

NPF - National Policy Forum (UK)

OMOV - One Member One Vote

OPP - Online Participatory Platforms

PB - Participatory Budgeting

PLP - Parliamentary Labour Party (UK)

PSOE - Partido Socialista Obrero Español (ES)

15-M - May 15th (social movement) (ES)

TWT - The World Transformed (UK)

UK - United Kingdom

VoD - Variety of Demo

INTRODUCTION

A deep crisis of legitimacy affects the political system of 'Western' democracies, particularly in regards to the political parties' credibility to citizens, questioning the main intermediate bodies of representative democracy. Political science always considered these organisations between the principal objects of study. Even with the wide differences of views, the political science community tended to share the affirmation of the centrality of political parties in the liberal and representative democracies. As stated by Schattschneider (1942, p. 1): "Political parties created modern democracy, and modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of parties". Nowadays, his claim takes on a particular value and seems to clash with the crisis of credibility and political affection among citizens with respect to politics and parties. Indeed, the analysis of the electoral trends in many countries highlight party disaffection, membership decline and electoral volatility and abstention (Scarrow et al., 2017), until reaching real anti-party sentiment in many of the most consolidated democracies (Ignazi, 2014). The sixth wave of the World Values Surveys took in analysis a sampling of 21 democratic countries from Europe, the Americas, Asia, and Oceania (World Values Survey, n.d.). The results showed as only 19.8% "expressed 'quite a lot' or 'a great deal' of confidence in political parties" (Scarrow et al., 2017, p. 2).

Over the last century, the most eminent authors on party politics identified different models of political party from Duverger (1954), Neumann (1956) and Kirchheimer (1966) to Katz and Mair (1995) Scarrow, Webb and Poguntke (2017), passing by Sartori (1976) and Panebianco (1982). The models came in succession over the decades, adapting their organisation and strategies to the historical-political and social context. They arose, declined and coexisted. Differently from the past analysis, nowadays the party democracy is in crisis as a whole, and it affects all the theorised models: both popular/citizens based (e.g. mass party) and state/institutional ones (e.g. cartel party). The system's sustainability is challenged and the parties seems to have absolved from their formal role, disconnected from the society, competing with each other without people understanding, and bypassing popular involvement and control (Mair, 2013). They seem increasingly incapable of performing their function, both towards the electorate externally and towards the militants internally. Even if the parties still offer political platforms to leaders and candidates, they are diffusely interpreted instrumentally as steps towards positions of government and power. As Mair (2013) argued, a process of mutual withdrawal is ongoing, on the one hand, citizens tend to abandon political parties and retrain into their private lives (or eventually other forms of activism); on the other hand, political leaders abandon citizens retraining into institutions.

In this frame, the evidences and the literature that critical analyses political parties could suggest a possible overcoming of the parties in the future of the democratic systems. Indeed, even if the parties as organisations have been extensively criticised in the literature over the last century, under different perspectives (Ostrogorski, 1902; Michels, 1915 [first edition dated 1911]; Weil, 1950 [first edition dated 1943]), in the last decades they emerged as catalyst of a broader structural crisis of the representative democracy (Crouch 2004; Mair, 2013). The parties and the representative system are challenged more than they were in the past and, in the meantime, numerous theorists and activists are promoting alternative or complementary forms of democracy with new emphasis (cf. Dryzek, 2000; Santos, 2002; Wampler & Avritzer, 2004; Smith, 2009; Parkinson & Mansbridge, 2012). Additionally, different positions are multiplying in recent years in the field of technopolitics – proposing technological solution to integrate or substitute representative mechanisms (such as in the case of "technopopulist parties", Deseriis, 2017) - and neo-municipalism, favouring the municipal scale of political actors, both institutional and non-institutional, over the national party system (Interviewee 14 - PRC-LL, September 21, 2018). While among the authors who have hypothesised the overcoming of representative democracy, van Reybrouck (2018) stands out for his extremist positions on democracy, centred on the citizen, replacing elections with sortition (i.e. random selection, including parliament).

However, the positions that predict the end of political parties are still an extreme minority and widely opposed. At the moment, the parties still structure the political competition, maintain the legislative and governmental control (in particular selecting the elected representatives and the public officers) and they continue to represent the link between citizens and government (Mastropaolo, 2007). Although with significant differences, the great majority of the political science authors continue sharing the affirmation of centrality of political parties in the liberal and representative democracies. Schattschneider theorised in his book "Party Government" (1942) that the centrality of the political parties in democratic government assigns to them a determinative and creative role. Many things have markedly changed almost 80 years after those words, but even authors as Dalton and Wattenberg (2000, p. 275) - who pointed out the parties' crisis in the last decades and invited the readers to "think Schattschneider's unthinkable" - still recognised that "it remains difficult to think of national governments functioning without parties playing a significant role in connecting the various elements of the political process". Therefore, the framework

that emerges from the analysis of the current situation seems to simultaneously suggest a profound crisis of legitimacy of political parties and their inescapability (i.e. systemic necessity), at least within representative democracy. Even if at present the enduring of the representative system still guarantees the survival of the parties, their crisis remains a main issue, both in terms of quality of democracy and in terms of the sustainability of representative democracy itself.

The crisis of democracy as an overall system and the crisis of political parties are inevitably intertwined. Despite the surprisingly scarce conversation between democratic theorists and party scholars (van Biezen & Saward, 2008), their objects are facing very similar problems and there is a very close link between how democracies work and the role of parties. Studying the crisis of political parties and their reactions in the light of the crisis of democracy studies - including their strategies, innovations and processes put in place to face it - offers an interesting opportunity for research on this topic, particularly if considered the decades of advance that various fields of research have, such as democratic innovation research communities. Although it has long been denied and opposed, currently there is a widespread consensus in the academic and political communities in recognising the democratic crisis as overall phenomenon. Democratic crisis theorists, such as Crouch (2004), Streeck (2011), Foa and Mounk (2016), Levistky and Ziblatt (2018), and Norris and Inglehart (2016), passed from being considered catastrophic to mainstream authors. Their focus was the representativeness and systemic legitimacy crisis, as in Crouch (2004) theorisation of "post-democracy". Within it, the crisis of a single parts of the system, e.g. political party, results in a broader crisis. Foa and Mounk (2016) counterposed to the democratic consolidation widely claimed in the previous decades the definition of "democratic deconsolidation", i.e. a reverse trend on the legitimacy of democracy. They argued that citizens "have also become more cynical about the value of democracy as a political system", along with "less hopeful that anything they do might influence public policy, and more willing to express support for authoritarian alternatives" (2016, pp. 6-7). In this frame, democracy and political parties have both been looking for new ways, mechanisms and innovations that could help them to regain legitimacy and to overcome their crisis.

Particularly, among many parties that compose the 'Western' party's systems, the participation of the party's members assumed an important role in changing the parties'

structures and procedures. It has been particularly interpreted in terms of internal democracy within the organisation models, denominated Intra-Party Democracy (IPD), jointly with other hybrid forms of citizen's engagement within political parties (Rahat et.al., 2008; Von dem Berge & Poguntke, 2017; Wolkenstein, 2018; Ignazi, 2020). Back in the 90s, this participative wave in political parties has been mainly characterised by the opening and fostering of "aggregation procedures", especially party primary elections and candidate selection (Gerber & Morton, 1998; Hazan & Rahat, 2010; Cross & Katz, 2013; Sandri et al., 2015). A large part of the literature on this topic tended to focus on them, depending mainly on the large number of cases that have occurred in recent decades, their replicability in different party contexts and quantitative measurable results. In particular, in the last political seasons, the primary elections have been diffusely used in many countries, with a movement that started from the social-democratic mass parties and spread in various other typologies of parties of the political panorama. Despite a broad opening to new members and sympathisers, the growing role of intra-party competition tended to respond to the quest for internal legitimacy by party leadership, in many cases without real competition between candidates (Kitschelt, 1994; Rodríguez Teruel & Barberá, 2017). Overall, the use of selective incentives to regain internal and external and support seems to have not fostered credibility and thus legitimacy, on the contrary, this route often led to the opposite effects (Ignazi, 2014).

Within the last decades, various parties expanded the IPD procedures, looking to regain legitimacy and support by bridging the gaps between parties and members or general citizens. Though their level of innovation contested at times, the processes certainly counted on the development of new procedures and tools – especially digital ones - and tended to address more open targets compared to traditional procedures. Some of them have still been part of the "aggregation procedures" that include referenda or other specific voting mechanisms in party's decision-making processes, which call the members to take a position on a specific issue. This type of decision-making process could be more plebiscitary or assembly-based (von dem Berge & Poguntke, 2017), implying a choice between more participation (i.e. higher number of participants) or more discussion respectively. Some other processes have been part of the deliberative procedures that tend to focus on the debate and process to reach a party decision or position (Invernizzi & Wolkenstein, 2017). They could offer arenas for political deliberation to member and/or citizens (Ebeling & Wolkenstein, 2018) and opportunities for reflexive control by citizens, i.e. enabling them to exercise

critical reflection over the political decision-making (Ottonelli & Biale, 2019). Such procedures have been spreading in 'Western' party systems, mainly promoted by new parties, but often propagated between more traditional parties too.

Between the most relevant cases in Europe, new and challenger parties (De Vries & Hobolt, 2020) as the German Pirates or the Italian Movimento 5 Stelle (M5S - Five Stars Movement) offer interesting case of studies on "internet-based decision-making" procedures (Scarrow et al., 2017, p. 4). For instance, the M5S implemented since December 2012 online and non-centralised primary elections for Member of Parliament candidates, named *Parlamentarie* (Lanzone & Rombi, 2014). After a more cells-based phase, all the M5S IPD procedures are hosted in the *Rousseau* digital platform, launched in October 2013. Trough the platform, the party implemented referenda, consultations, law-making processes, e-learning activities, fundraising and other activities, divided in 12 areas in total (Deseriis & Vittori, 2019). Nevertheless, the M5S participatory processes are widely criticised in the academic and political communities. The membership rolls interrupted its ascent – after reaching the relatively modest pick of 150'000 members in total - and started to decrease significantly (Gerbaudo, 2021). Similarly, the members participation in online ballots changed markedly from the 60% in the first poll (2012), to the 14% five years later, in 2017 (Mosca, 2020). To give an idea, some MP candidates in the 2018 elections were selected through the *Parlamentarie*; obtaining very few votes, e.g. 40, 57, 73 and 80 votes (Buzzi, 2018). While the Spanish Podemos party have been used as reference for the translation on a "grass-roots democracy 'movement' spirit" (Scarrow et al., 2017: 4) into hybrid IPD procedures. Podemos started developing its first electoral program in open participatory form for the 2014 European elections. Following, a series of participative tools have been developed within the party. Among them, the *Consulta Ciudadana* is the Podemos procedure for calling party members to vote for internal referendums, including online primary elections for the selection of all candidates and elected party's officers at the different levels, both national and locals. While the *Plaza Podemos* (and its *2.0* version) has been a digital deliberative tool for debating and presenting proposals (Vittori, 2017; Podemos, 2014). Nevertheless, on the one hand all the 12 consultations promoted at national level[1] since the Party foundation in 2014 (up to 2020) confirmed in the (digital) ballot the indications of the leadership that called it, with an overwhelming majority. On the other hand, *Plaza Podemos* has generally

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[1] Excluding 6 *Consultas* used as primary elections' voting.

disappointed the high expectations during its activity and on July 2019 it has been replaced by the *Oficina de Soporte Territorial* (Territorial Support Office), a top-down initiative defined as a one-stop shop, which offered help and advice on organisational, procedural or financial issues.

The other side of the coin have been some of the long-standing political parties that are reorienting their models and tools for responding to the membership crisis by reducing the gaps between party, members and voters. Countering the criticisms raised in particular by new parties, they tended to converge on similar participatory tools and processes. Between them, the Partido Socialista Obrero Español – PSOE (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party) in Spain[2] (Barberà & Rodríguez-Teruel, 2020) and the British Labour Party, particularly during the reforming intent promoted by the Jeremy Corbyn's leadership, offered interesting elements of analysis in this direction. For instance, the Labour Party developed a series of procedures and reforms toward members participation. Among them, first on November 2017 launched the multichannel process named Democracy Review aimed at democratising the party (Labour, 2018b); second, the party changed its candidate selections, empowering the role of members in the local constituencies; and third, it implemented the Labour Policy Forum, i.e. an online deliberative process supported by a specific party platform oriented to the elaboration of the party's manifesto. However, the Labour tended to foster IPD procedures already existent, giving predominantly consultative and marginal role to new processes. Furthermore, in a complex and troubled UK political context, the elections of 12 December 2019 did not reward Labour's opening efforts, paving the way to change of leadership during the 2020 Special Conference. Overall, even though these processes and tools are extremely important and recently growing, their democratic consequences are far from satisfactory. Often, they end up merely enhancing the leadership's control over the party decision-making process.

In IPD as well - as analysed in democracy - the growing of the processes and tools numbers often did not correspond to an equivalent quality trend, outlining a phenomenon that Baiocchi and Ganuza (2016) - referring to democratic innovations - named "paradox of participation". The international spreading of Intra-Party Democracy initiatives and other hybrid forms of citizen's engagement within political parties at the moment have not

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[2] For example, in October 2020, PSOE launched the *Plan de Transformación Ecológica y Digital* (Plan on Ecological and Digital Transformation) financed by microcredits (see PSOE, 2020).

delivered the promises that many expected. Many of the processes and tools often responded to objectives that are not deeper and more open democracy, for which they should be developed in contrast to the crisis of representative democracy. Without this purpose, low-profile participatory initiatives were reduced to a set of processes and tools extremely adaptable, depoliticised and dependent on leadership interests.

Moreover, many of the different types of institutional innovations - proposed to reform and deepen democracy - have a particular emphasis on the digital dimension. In Intra-Party Democracy processes, this dimension had an even greater centrality. The spread and evolution of digital technologies - including the disruptive development of social networks and social media - raised expectations towards the so-called "liberation technology" (Diamond, 2010). According to Diamond, this concept refers to "any form of information and communication technology (ICT) that can expand political, social, and economic freedom" (Diamond, 2010, p. 70). Digital ICT could offer significative advantages compared with offline procedures and tools, as the capacity to reach a very broad audience in a very limited time span, economic advantages, and 'multiway' form of communication. Although pointing out the possible negative consequences, many authors such as Diamond considered that these technologies had an unprecedent potential for political progress. Digital technologies generated expectations in terms of widening the public sphere, fostering transparency and monitoring of governments and, especially, helping to create pluralistic societies that can support in the overcoming of authoritarian rule. Nevertheless, at the moment the promises of digital (democratic) revolution have not been fulfilled. On the contrary, just 9 years later, the same Diamond claimed that "[r]arely in history have views about the social impact of a new technology swing so quickly from optimism (if not euphoria) to pessimism (if not despair) as has been the case with respect to social media" (Diamond, 2019, p. 20). At present, the promises of digital technologies are clashing with their risks, and to "prevent cyberspace from becoming an arena of surveillance, control, and manipulation" (p. 21) emerges as a priority for the democrats around the world. Countries like China and Russia, but also corporations like Google and Meta/Facebook (and their business models) are rousing a growing concern on the impact of the digital on democracy, especially in terms of truth, control, social polarisation and filter bubbles. Technology, that was seen as a key and disruptor way for fostering democratic change, is now rather considerable a tool that can be used or for facilitating democracy or, on the contrary, can convey misinformation, manipulation and social control. Therefore, digital technologies per

se at the moment have not delivered the positive effects that many expected, leaving room for complex, specific and less deterministic analyses.

Considering this wide frame, what interests the author of this thesis is to analyse the role of participation in the new and renewed parties[3] in the context of European democracies. Therefore, the main research question of the thesis is: **What role has been given to members' participation in the reshaping of political parties' organisation, in view of their crisis of perceived legitimacy?**

In particular, the objects of study of this thesis are the procedures (processes and tools) for members participation, including Intra-Party Democracy and other hybrid forms of citizen's engagement within political parties, which have been implemented by new and renewed parties in the last decade, looking for engagement and consensus. The sub-questions - that arise around this topic - addressed by the thesis are: How some political parties have tried to strengthen their internal democracy facing the party crisis? What are the roles of their membership? Which innovations have been implemented by the political parties in IPD? Did new and renewed parties implement similar processes and tools? To what extent is internal participation leading to new model(s) of political parties? What has been the role of digital technologies in fostering participation within political parties? Did technologies foster internal democracy or strengthen the leadership's control?

In summary, the goal of this thesis is to answer to the principal and secondary questions by analysing the interpretation of participation, the IPD procedures and other hybrid forms of citizen's engagement within political parties and their use of intra-party participation in the last decade. With this purpose, the research compares - as case studies - the processes and tools within two political parties at the national level, embedded in their socio-political context[4]. They are the Spanish party Podemos (We can), new party-movement founded in 2014 after the wave of the 15-M protest movement; and the British Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership; a long-standing party in a reforming phase. Despite their different histories and models, both parties recognise participation as fundamental value and in the last decade they developed and implemented participatory processes and tools open to

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[3] Traditional parties, which did an explicit effort to reformulate their functioning, particularly promoting a new role of members participation.
[4] The parties as a whole are not object of this study.

members and sympathisers. Analysing and comparing these cases points out differences and similarities in the use of participation within political parties. Thus, the methodology chosen for the thesis is the Case study research, particularly according to the indications of Merriam (1998) and Stake (1995, 2006) and the contribution of Yin (1994, 2014), as specifically examined in the methodological chapter.

The emergence of new political parties and the call for new party models, have been widely examined in literature focusing on the populist dimension (Pasquino, 2005; Vittori, 2017; Ivaldi et al., 2017). Certainly, the centrality of the topic of populism is indisputable nowadays. Important authors who in the last decades have dealt with it - often starting from the Latin American context, as Laclau (2005), De la Torre (2010) and Panizza (2005) - built an interpretative framework that today is applied to the emergence of new political subjects, in Europe and in other parts of the world. Nevertheless, the polarisation of this theme risks to generate mono-dimensional analysis that tend, on one side, to level out complex phenomena and undermine other important dimensions, identifying cases too heterogeneous in the same *genus*, and on the other, to circumscribe dynamics that influence all party systems limiting it only to specific party categories. With this perspective, the thesis bridges instead the political science debate on Intra-Party democracy with two others important academic debates: the one on democratic crisis intertwined with democratic innovations, and the claim of a new form of participation; and the one on techno-politics, considering that most of the processes and tools of participation recently implemented are digitally driven.

The introduction ends with the summary of the thesis chapters. The first of them presents an overview of the literature subdivided into the subchapters: democratic crisis, party: from the golden age to crisis, the enduring centrality of party democracy, party models, party change, Intra-party democracy, technopolitics and digital IPD. The second chapter focuses on the thesis methodology, including the framework and research design. The third chapter examines the role of participation in Podemos, exploring the interpretation of participation for the party, examining its procedures for members' participation, and analysing the use of IPD and intra-party participation and the role of digital technologies in Podemos participation. While, the fourth replicates the same scheme of analysis to study the role of participation in the Labour, focusing on its interpretation of participation, procedures for members participation, IPD and intra-party participation use, democratic reforms and

digitalisation. Lastly, the fifth chapter hold a comparative analysis on the role of members participation in Podemos and the British Labour Party, mirroring the two cases in the analysis of their interpretation of participation, the digital IPD and the intra-party participation. In the conclusion, the author presents his considerations and proposes future research questions.

1. THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The thesis embraces some of the main topics that shape or influence the contemporary democratic system in force in the 'Western' countries. Its wider objects - i.e. the political parties with their evolution and the systemic crisis that involve them - have been extensively studied from different perspectives, and the academic debate on them has always been particularly vivid. Nevertheless, nowadays some of the main theories and interpretations are questioned by the historical and socio-political circumstances. In this frame, the need to interpenetrate research analysis and methodologies widely emerges, both from the point of view of studies on political parties and on democratic theory. The thesis uses this theoretical chapter to retrace the most important conceptualisations, theories and analyses that dealt with the topic, building a bridge between the most established democratic theories and research on innovations and new challenges, with particular reference to the *in fieri* relationship between technologies and democracy.

The 'Political party' has been a classic object of study in political science. In the context of a widely recognised democratic crisis that directly addresses political parties and in a phase of emergence of new parties, procedures and tools, political party assumes a renewed centrality in the academic and political debate, both on the theoretical and on the empirical level. Party systems experts' authors, as Sartori (1976; 2005), Panebianco (1982), Pasquino (1994), Katz and Mair (1995), are joined by others who promote a multi-level analysis that explore different dimensions and innovations, as Hazan and Rahat (2010), van Biezen, Mair and Poguntke (2012), Ignazi (2014; 2020), Wolkenstein (2016), Scarrow et al. (2017), Della Porta et al., (2017) and Gerbaudo (2019).

In sequence, the next sub-chapters analyse in sequence the literature on democratic and party crisis, Intra-Party Democracy, party models, democratic innovation and technopolitics (with particular reference to Digital IPD). Following, the theories and approaches that have been specifically applied to the analysis of the case studies selected are presented jointly with their main authors. "You'll Never Walk Alone"[5] the song said, least of all in a Ph.D. thesis.

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[5] Show tune of the musical Carousel by Rodgers and Hammerstein (1945). The most famous cover, released in 1963 by Gerry and the Pacemakers band, became the anthem of Liverpool F.C.

1.1. Democratic crisis

In the 90's and early 2000s the applications of the definition of democratic crisis to the present political system of 'Western' democracies were still opposed and strongly criticised. Although numerous well-known authors began to present evidences in support of this thesis going beyond the quantitative analysis of democratic regimes (see Rancière, 1995; Crouch, 2004; Gaventa, 2006; Hermet, 2008; Norris & Inglehart, 2016; and Foa & Mounk, 2016), many others promoted an emphatic optimistic view, as Salvadori (2015) argued, after the 1989, democracy appeared "triumphant" (see also Freedom House, 1999). Earlier, various eminent authors assumed nuanced positions. Easton (1975) distinguished between "government legitimacy" already declining and "regime legitimacy", i.e. "diffuse support" for democracy as a system of government, which on the contrary, according to him, remained robust. Bobbio (1984) identified six "broken promises of democracy", pointing out the need to correct the direction of the democratic development in the light of the citizens expectations and the basic values of democracy, with the aim of filling the gap between them and the democratic practice. The first broken promise focuses on intermediations, i.e. on the modern democracy promise of power exercised directly by individuals denied by the key role of intermediate groups, as parties. The second deals with the general public interest, which - despite the modem democratic doctrine - does not prevail over private, particular interests. This promise is linked with the prohibition of imperative mandate in representative democracy that has been avoided to protect general interests (even if individual or group interests still triumphed). The third broken promise concerns the missed equal distribution of political power for the benefit of the ever-present elites that still control it in many forms. The fourth is the democratisation of the social life, i.e. only a part of the topic that interest the people lives reach the political decision arena. The fifth promise is the end of secret or invisible exercise of power to promote transparency. It has only been partially achieved, and democratic decision-making is still distorted. Lastly, the sixth focuses on the lack of citizens education for participation. In fact, citizens are not empowered for exercising political rights, they often end up alienated from democratic life or frustrated by ineffective and not constant participation (Yturbe, 1997). Similarly, Luckham et al. (2000, p. 22), identified "four broad types of democratic deficits", summarising a vast literature. They are: first, "hollow citizenship" - democracy loses meaning for people "if they do not enjoy equal rights and entitlements as citizens", for both reasons of exclusion or failing in guaranteeing rights (p. 22). Second, the "lack of vertical accountability", i.e. "the inability as citizens to hold

governments and political elites accountable for their use of power". It could depend from procedural defects, e.g. in voting system, or "weak societal support for democratic politics", e.g. no real alternatives in the political offer, or societal weaknesses and divisions, or the control by dominant interests (pp. 22-23). Third, "weak horizontal accountability" - "overpowerful potentially tyrannical executives" are able to corrupt, manipulate the legislature, the judiciary, parties and media (p. 23). Fourth, "international accountability dilemmas" – globalisation shifted crucial decision-making from national state/government to spaces and agents that citizens cannot democratically control, as global markets, multinational firms, and international bodies (p. 23). However, other critical authors such as Bobbio refused the assumption of democracy in crisis or the idea of "imminent collapse", preferring to speak about "transformations" of democracy and not doubting that democracy has a future (Yturbe, 1997, p. 390). Differently, Fukuyama (1992), after the fall of the Soviet bloc, identified in the bond between liberal representative democracy and market capitalism the so-called "end of history", that for him was "the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalisation of 'Western' liberal democracy as the final form of human government" (Fukuyama, 1989, p. 3).

At the moment, instead, there is a widespread consensus in the academic and political communities and the democratic crisis is widely recognised as an overall phenomenon, even if less critical visions and nuances in the evaluation of gravity and future scenarios remain present in the literature (see Mastropaolo, 2007). Democratic crisis theorists, such as Crouch (2004), Rosanvallon (2008), Streeck (2011), Foa and Mounk (2016), Levistky and Ziblatt (2018), and Norris and Inglehart (2019), are particularly important for the development of this thesis. Crouch (2004) defined the current socio-political context of 'Western' democracies as "post-democracy". This phase, following Crouch, conserves a large part of the formal characteristics of democracy - with respect to West post-war model, starting from the elections - but it is characterised by a crisis in the role of citizens, who are becoming more passive and acquiescent, mostly relegating their action to a mere reaction to incoming inputs. Beyond the electoral campaign, dominated by professional experts of marketing and communication, and strongly influenced by the huge investments, the public decisions are dominated by the interaction between governments and elites, especially of the economic and financial sectors. Indeed, the ordinary citizens are becoming "effectively non-sovereign", going beyond the Schattschneider's concept of semi-sovereignty (Mair, 2013, p. 2). Sintomer (2017) argued that post-democracy and authoritarianism are the most

significant trend in the global North. According to him, authoritarianism - unlike post-democracy - remodels even the democratic façade: elections are distorted by significant biases in competition, liberal freedoms/s (e.g. expression, association, press) are undermined by restrictive laws, independence of Justice is reduced. Particularly, authoritarianism is nourished by fomenting the fear of the "enemy" and xenophobia (Sintomer, 2017, pp. 31-32). Streeck (2011) framed the democratic crisis in the contradictions of the "democratic capitalism", that he defined as "condition ruled by an endemic conflict between capitalist markets and democratic politics" (p. 6). In this scenario, Governments are called to serve both principles simultaneously, which tend to collide. Progressively, economic power is overcoming democratic politics, becoming *de facto* political power. While, as Streeck argued, "citizens appear to be almost entirely stripped of their democratic defences and their capacity to impress upon the political economy interests and demands that are incommensurable with those of capital owners" (2011, p. 29). Foa and Mounk (2016) counterposed to the widely claimed "democratic consolidation" (Schedler, 1998) the concept of "democratic deconsolidation", that is a reverse trend on the legitimacy of democracy. Differently from Easton (1975), analysing the World Values Surveys data (Waves 3-6, 1995-2014), they noticed that North America and western Europe citizens are not just increasingly critical of political leaders. Rather, "they have also become more cynical about the value of democracy as a political system, less hopeful that anything they do might influence public policy, and more willing to express support for authoritarian alternatives" (Foa & Mounk, 2016, pp. 6-7). It affects 'Western' consolidated democracies where democracy seemed to be the "only game in town", opening the door to instability phases where democracy could be attacked for partisan advantage especially by "antisystem parties." In democratic deconsolidation, the "extent of democratic rule" is not compromised, at least in the short terms, instead their "durability" is putted on risk (Foa & Mounk, 2017, pp. 9-10). Thus, the effects do not hinder the formal processes of democracy, such as free and fair elections, what Castoriadis (1995) defined "procedural democracy." It explains why the quantitative indices, as Freedom House or Polity ones, tend not to trace the trends that are mining the heartland of liberal democracy, as minority rights, plurality and Checks and balances, principle (Foa & Mounk, 2017). Again, according to Foa and Mounk (2016), many citizens lost the trust on democracy, in particular they no longer believe that democracy can deliver on their most pressing needs and preferences (p. 16). Similarly, Diamond indicated "the decline of democratic efficacy" as the "most worrisome dimension of the democratic recession" (Diamond, 2015, p. 152). Therefore, such evidences reaffirm the necessity to deal with

"substantive democracy" (Castoriadis, 1995), in particular widely and systematically employing mixed and qualitative methods. As Gaventa (2006) argued, democracy-building cannot be evaluated just in terms of spread and quantity as the 'triumphalists' generally do, interpreting it as creating a standardised recipe of institutional designs around the world. Democracy, in fact, is not only about spread, it is also, and perhaps above all, about deepening its quality and meanings.

In the analysis of the crisis of democracy, jointly to its causes and effects, questioning which democracy is being examined is also necessary. In particular, the crisis under analysis is related to the current liberal democracy and its institutions, placed in the "hard core" 'Western' democracies (Freire, 2017, p. 41). Following Schumpeter (1943), liberal democracy development moved increasingly close to the aggregative model giving new understanding to popular sovereignty and to democracy overall. It bases on "aggregation of preferences" expressed by vote and organised by political parties. According to him, the aggregative model transformed democracy in a "system in which people have the opportunity of accepting or rejecting their leaders thanks to a competitive electoral process" (Mouffe, 1999, p. 2). Therefore, according to these elitist versions of democratic theory (shared by authors as Schumpeter, 1943, Riker,1982, and Sartori, 1987), liberal model of democracy relegates citizens actions to vote for expressing their preferences through a system of representation (Teorell, 2006). Thus, the model "works" if elected representatives and liberal institutions rely on widespread legitimacy from the citizens. Rawls (1971) and the normative political theory wave - influenced by him – identified in the aggregative view - consensus gather by "mere agreement on procedures" - the crisis agent that jeopardises the legitimacy of the liberal democracy and generated such a disaffection. Other authors, as Sintomer (2017), criticise liberal democracy and its hegemonic diffusion by questioning that a "normal" status has never existed, i.e. liberal democracy working beyond specific socio-historical context, hybrid dynamics and contradictions, even in 'Western' democracies. While, Mouffe (1999, p. 10) stressed the limitation and risk of privileging rationality as liberal democracy do, in aggregative perspectives as well as in some of the main alternatives, as deliberative ones. According to her, a crucial element has been widely underestimated by both perspectives: the "role played by passions and emotions in securing allegiance to democratic values". According to her, liberal democracy intentionally ostracises individuality in democratic citizenship, interpreting "the individuals as prior to society, as bearers of natural rights, and either as utility maximizing agents or as rational subjects".

Therefore, rationalistic approaches endanger "the conditions of existence of the democratic subject" and its "identification with democratic values" (Mouffe, 1999, p. 10).

So, was the liberal model of democracy crisis written in its *genus*? Or is democracy in a "mere" crisis? As Crozier, Huntington and Watanuki wondered already in 1975, 55 years ago. Whatever the answer is, what is certain is that, although the liberal democratic model is still hegemonic and its triumphalist narrative dominated the academic and political scene for decades, signs of disaffection with liberal democratic institutions are a growing constant in 'Western' democracies present, starting from traditional parties. As written above, many trends show citizens' criticism and scepticism, including a growing political space for "authoritarian interpretations of democracy" (Foa & Mounk, 2017, p. 6). Quoting Mouffe (1999, p. 1), there is "a negative force at work in most liberal democratic societies".

In the context of 'Western' democratic crisis (and in opposition to it), new parties developed. They claimed to be markedly different to the traditional ones and presented themselves to the electorate as organisations that are able to regain the lost legitimacy and credibility of parties and to rekindle political engagement and participation. The emergence of new parties has generated a lively and polarised debate between interpretations: who consider them as "indicators of increasingly critical or assertive forms of citizenship, an on the contrary who claims that they generally are "new forms of toxic, populist, anti-establishment politics" (Foa & Mounk, 2019, p. 1014 - supporting this latter point of view). Clearly, to study these new parties as a whole is not possible, belonging to different contexts and *genus*. Differently, it is necessary to research on the trends that they are experiencing. For instance, despite innovative intents - that generally characterised their first phases - new parties tend to face problems similar to the traditional parties' ones and to get close to them in the collective imaginary. Both need to promote different images of the parties in crisis, and are struggling with yet insufficient results.

As pointed out, one of the most crucial knots of democratic crisis passes by the political parties, i.e. the institution with more responsibilities in the representative democracy crisis, or at least the subjects where it is most evident (Dalton & Weldon, 2005). The process of mutual withdrawal, claimed by Mair (2013), increasingly alienates citizens and political (party) leaders. The political parties share a negative image with other elements of the democratic process and they are interrelated (Dalton & Weldon, 2005). This section focused

precisely on the contextualization of the crisis of political parties into a broader democratic crisis. However, the systemic analysis of democracy as a regime is significant but no longer sufficient to study the deep and multi-dimensional democratic crisis. Overturning the Sartori well-known statement "democracy on a large scale is not the sum of many little democracies" (1965, p. 124), could the sum of many nondemocratic "little democracies" generate democracy on a large scale?

1.1.1. The crisis of representation in terms of perceived legitimacy

One of the issues most questioned within the 'Western' liberal democratic model is representation, specifically its legitimacy crisis. The citizens of the established democracies of 'Western' countries have lost trust in political institutions such as parliaments, progressively in three decades (Foa & Mounk, 2016, p. 6). It directly includes the legitimacy of the processes to propose, elect and exercise the institution of representation and their agents, among them in particular political parties. Legitimacy is a key factor for democracy in every historical phase. The definition of legitimacy and of the process to achieve it, called legitimisation, is linked with its etymology, it comes from the Latin word "*legitimus*" that means lawful/legal. Thus, its original field is related to law/agreement, from there its use expanded outside the legal jargon towards extensive use often expressing the concept of "justification". (Reyes, 2011, p. 782). As stated by Buchanan (2002, pp. 689-690) "an entity has political legitimacy if and only if it is morally justified in wielding political power, where to wield political power is to attempt to exercise a monopoly, within a jurisdiction, in the making, application, and enforcement of laws." Legitimacy is particularly important for political parties of democratic systems. Its perception is fundamental to guaranteeing economic resources, human capital and votes. As analysed in the following sections, one of the main variables of political parties' legitimisation, in accordance with the historical-democratic phase and the context, is the source of legitimacy, strictly linked with the party model. Nowadays, the types of legitimacy sources - popular/citizens or state/institutional driven - are in deep crisis. Both the conditions in which party compete and governments govern are changed. In this frame, party are no longer able to act as a link in the gap between responsiveness and responsibility in front of their members, voters and civil society (Mair, 2009). In this frame, the representative system and parties are no longer responsive to citizens' needs and preferences - as long as it was - not even during the elections that increasingly fail in linking citizens to the political system (Teorell, 2006). Citizens

increasingly feel they have no convincing choices in the representative-party panorama, i.e. able to represent them, and that the decisions that interest them take place in other spaces and levels. Quoting Mair (2009, p. 5):

> "due to changes in their organizations and in their relationship with civil society, parties are no longer able to bridge this gap or even to persuade voters to accept it as a necessary element in political life. This, I argue, is one of the principal sources of the democratic malaise that confronts many Western democracies today".

Several authors criticised the institution of representation under different perspectives and aspects, even independently from the historical phase (before the current crisis). Among them, Rousseau already in the eighteenth century excluded the possibility that any elected representatives could protect the interests of individual citizens (in Pateman, 1970). In particular he used this assumption to support the development of direct decision making through citizens participation, which even has a legitimising effect for them (Teorell, 2006). Many alternatives to representation have been widely theorised but they have been mainly applied to localised or punctual forms. Although at the moment representation is largely hegemonic in the worldwide democracies, criticism around representation – and more in general representative democracy – increases with a renewed weight.

One of the most alarming data is that the "younger generations are deeply disappointed with existing democratic institutions" (Foa & Mounk, 2019, p. 1014)[6]. According to the data collected by YouGov with research on seven European countries in 2017 (Foa & Mounk, 2019), they tend to show dissatisfaction with democracy more than the old. Similarly, the young interviewees who declared to be open to authoritarian alternatives to democracy are clearly growing compared to the past, with percentages higher than older generations. Therefore, the signs of "democratic deconsolidation" are even more tangible among the new generations. In this context, according to Foa and Mounk (2019, p. 1016), the disconnection between establishment parties and their candidates and the younger voters is particularly deep, being almost unable to engage them and rouse their enthusiasm.

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[6] Differentiating dissatisfaction and dissent from disinterest and apathy, particularly considering the fundamental role of young generation in the last decade political mobilisations.

1.1.2. Participation crisis: models and challenges

Participation used to be indicated as a particularly crucial element for democratic crisis, in terms of critical issues and potential solutions at the same time. It could be understood according to different conceptualisations that match with different democratic models. Firstly, Verba and Nie defined political participation in term of "influencing attempts" (Teorell, 2006), quoting them directly "those activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of government personnel and/or the actions they take" (Verba & Nie, 1972, p. 2). This definition is the basis of the "responsive model of democracy", inasmuch participation is considered an "instrumental act through which citizens attempt to make the political system respond to their will" (Teorell, 2006, p. 789). This model, collecting the preferences and needs through participation and giving to the interest of each citizen equal weights, still acts on aggregate level (Teorell, 2006). Secondly, participation could be understood as the act of taking part in person in the decision-making process, according to both the etymological point of view (Sartori, 1987, p. 113) and the "participatory model of democracy" (Teorell, 2006). The term "participatory democracy" has been proposed by Kaufman (1960) and largely developed in the 70s, by authors such Pateman (1970), until today. Pateman argued that "one might characterise the participatory model as one where maximum input (participation) is required and where output includes not just policies (decisions) but also the development of the social and political capacities of each individual, so that there is "feedback" from output to input" (Pateman, 1970, p. 42). These words underlined even the pedagogical approach present from the beginning in Kaufman (1960). Thus, differently from the responsive model, participatory democracy hinge on the individual level (Teorell, 2006). Thirdly, participation could be seen as democratic process for overcoming the mere aggregation of interest "through arguing, demonstrating, expressing, and persuading", i.e. a "talk-based approach to political conflict and problem-solving" (Mansbridge et al., 2012, p. 19). This interpretation is the basis of the deliberative model. In particular, two arguments have been used to support it: the first is that widespread deliberation would impact on the quality of democratic in terms of outputs (Warren 1996). The second, at the individual level as participatory model, focuses on subjective legitimacy (Manin, 1987; Habermas, 1996) and on conflict delimitation, i.e. "agree about the dimensions over which they disagree" (Knight & Johnson, 1994, pp. 282–283). Quoting Teorell (2006, p. 803), its supporters "argue that only when arguments from each contending side has been sifted through political discussion will the outcomes of

democratic decision making be morally acceptable to the individual." The above-mentioned three models are outcome-oriented, differing in the consequences they are primarily looking for: respectively system responsiveness for the responsive model, self-development for the participatory model and democratic system legitimacy for the deliberative model. The models are not contradictory for a large part and there are numerous attempts at integration and systematisation of democratic participation (e.g. Smith, 2009; Mansbridge et al., 2012; Spada et al., 2016). Moreover, not even participatory democracy, supposedly the most radical of the three, uses to claim abolition of representative institutions, opting for a complementary approach and mainly focusing on the local level (Pateman, 1970). Nevertheless, none of the three models have been able to systematically challenge liberal democracy in practice, nor defeat the elitist view. Quoting Teorell (2006, p. 795):

"no democratic country in the world provides such widespread opportunities to the population at large or at least that the cross-country variation is not large enough to allow meaningful impact assessment. Controlled experiments or well-designed case studies of participatory initiatives at the local or organizational level, by contrast, could enable researchers to explore whether participation in direct decision making really pays the psychological dividends that participatory theorists claim".

The potential of deepening participation and its concretisation in participatory processes or so-called Democratic Innovations (DIs) - according to Smith (2009, p. 4), new opportunities "that increase and deepen citizen participation in political decision-making" - deserve to be further explored.

Nevertheless, both in analysis and in practice, participatory processes/democratic innovations encounter limitations that cannot be underestimated. As highlighted by the already mentioned analysis of Baiocchi and Ganuza (2016), many of the ongoing processes are highly critical. The growing of the processes number does not correspond to an equivalent quality trend, outlining a phenomenon that they named "paradox of participation". The global spreading of participatory processes tends to be disconnected from the key elements of which they were born from; particularly in relation to both, an administrative reform that should accompany them, and a broader transformative political project to which they should relate to, with sufficient credibility. Without them, low-profile participatory processes are reduced to a set of public meetings. These are extremely adaptable, depoliticised and based on guidelines contained in simple "toolkits" written to

promote their almost unconditional diffusion and application (Baiocchi & Ganuza, 2016). Dalton claimed that even in case of "stronger parties, fairer elections, more representative electoral systems", the representative democracy as it is known would not be enough, because "these reforms do not address expectations that the democratic process will expand to provide new opportunities for citizen input and control" (Dalton, 2004). Turning his thinking, neither of the democratic participation models' attempts have been enough so far.

However, other opposite views of the current state of 'Western' democracies emerged along these decades. Between them, there is a long-running theoretical questioning reclaimed by Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002) through the theorising of the "Stealth Democracy". They challenged the mainstream perspective, i.e. there is no a proper democratic crisis for them. According to their analysis, the real crisis is mainly in the narrative of the citizens willingness to participate. They stated that "participation in politics is low because people do not like politics even in the best of circumstances", in other words, people simply do not like the process of openly arriving at a decision in the face of diverse opinions. Citizens do not like politics when they view it from afar and they certainly do not like politics when they participate in it themselves (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2002, p. 4). Therefore, these authors proposed a conceptualisation of democracy in minimal terms and in a substantially technocratic direction. The focus is on the results not in the democratic level of the processes. Quoting them:

> "the processes people really want would not be provided by the populist reform agenda they often embrace; it would be provided by a stealth democratic arrangement in which decisions are made by neutral decision makers who do not require sustained input from the people in order to function" (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2002, p. 7).

This is not a new argument but it is interesting to note its return to the scene, after decades of equation that measures the democratic quality in terms of participation. Its validity can be criticised in many aspects - first of all in terms of the sustainability of concrete alternatives - but it is useful to describe a growing political and academic attitude. As Ganuza and Font (2018) ask in their latest book "*¿Por qué la gente odia la política?*" (Why do people hate politics?): do citizens really want to participate? This huge question cannot certainly have a unique nor a fixed answer. However, - the author asks - have they been enabled to participate effectively?

Other authors have tried to explain the participation crisis, i.e. its significant decrease, in terms of socio-cultural changes (such as Putnam, 2000, and Norris, 2011). The book Bowling Alone by Putnam (2000) has been particularly important for this approach. It is a milestone in social networks and social cohesion analysis. According to Putnam, an important part of the health of public institutions depends on "widespread participation" in private voluntary groups, from political parties to provincial bowling teams. Therefore, a deep and constant drop in this type of participation marks a consequence at institutional and systemic level. According to van Biezen et al. (2012) the traditional pillars of organised mass society are losing membership and connection with society in similar way political parties are, implying that neither of them are considered valid refuge to parties or alternatives in terms of civic/social engagement. Quoting them, "not only has the age of the mass party passed, but the conditions that fostered its development are also ceasing to prevail" (van Biezen et al., 2012, p. 42). Differently, dialoguing with Putnam analysis, Fischer (2005) criticised the lack of separation between three levels: "political" dimension characterised in these decades by distrust and alienation, e.g. turnout decline ; "personal sociability", for which the trends are mixed and difficult to interpret, for example the decline in entertainment at home is attributed to the increase of women's employment (Costa & Kahn, 2001, in Fischer, 2005); and "organizational participation" within which "civic activity has shifted in form", in direction of ad hoc participation - in terms of topic and time - as opposed to organised participation in bureaucratic groups (Wuthnow, 1998, in Fischer, 2005). In sum, for Fischer "people can be altruistic individualistically" (2005, p. 159).

Lastly, beyond the high or low level of participation and its dimensions, it is always important to question on 'who participates, how and why', including the questions of 'who does not participate and why'. Political participation did not involve every citizen, nor potentially, a relevant part of the population has always been largely excluded, especially depending on power and gender relations. For example, the ideal of deliberative democracy - the arrival point of many democrats - assumes that the participants are rational individuals, free and equal citizens who approach problems with an open-mind. The deliberation is seen as a moment to share and to listen to valid and rational arguments, in order to objectively choose the best proposal. Indeed, the goal of the process is to reach consensus by argumentation (Young, 1996). Therefore, the deliberative model assumes the universality and neutrality of the rationality and the modern West's origins clearly emerges in its

approach (Young, 1996). In this context, the legitimacy of the process is derived mainly from the quality of its procedure (Smith, 2009). Considering this, it is possible to notice the lack of some important considerations in the deliberative approach. First of all, the individuals do not have access to the same cultural tools and do not have the same personal skills, such as the ability to argue rationally. Therefore, it is not possible to consider egalitarian participation merely based on argumentation. A significant part of society practically risks being excluded from the deliberation that, in this way, is likely to act in undemocratic form, especially towards the most "systematically materially disadvantaged" categories (Sanders, 1997). Secondly, one of the objectives of the deliberation is to increase the number of participants, perspectives and ideas in the debate, in order to achieve this, it is offered as a solution to teach citizens how to argue, without training how to listen and to value different positions and different ways of expression. In addition, quoting Sanders (1997): "to meet the concern of equal participation, democrats should explicitly attend to issues of group dynamics and try to develop ways to undercut the dominance of higher-status individuals". Thirdly, considering just the issues of common interest as adequate for taking part in the deliberation, the deliberation leaves out people with special interests or simply citizens interested in a specific issue that concerns them, once again it tends to only select the elite of society, generally excluding the neediest (Sanders, 1997).

After all these arguments, is participation in crisis the same as representation? Surely, they are interconnected or, better, interdependent. According to Verba (1996), participation is a mechanism for representation - i.e. to transmit preferences and needs – but only if the system is responsive to citizens. As Dahl (1971, p. 2) claimed, responsiveness is the strategy "to reserve the term 'democracy' for a political system".

1.2. Party: from the golden age to crisis

Even if there are different nuances, the definitions of 'political party' tend to converge with the "minimal definition" of Sartori (1976, p. 63), i.e. "any political group identified by an official label that presents at elections, and is capable of placing through elections (free or non-free), candidates for public office." In addition to a similar definition, Duverger (1972, pp. 1-2) described parties through two elements: the first, "their primary goal" is "the conquest of power or a share in its exercise", the second, they draw "their support from a broad base". Differently from the notion, for a long time, the literature on the subject has

been discussing the role and contribution of the parties (Dalton & Weldon, 2005). In particular, two different approaches emerged: on one side, the positions that stressed the positive role of the parties in terms of citizens mobilisation, government organisation and framing political choices (see Sartori, 1976); on the other side, anti-party criticism, rooted from Rousseau to Madison that tended to focus on the negative aspects of fragmentation and immobilism that can prevent the proper functioning of democracy (Ignazi, 1996). In particular, many classical authors who criticised political parties during the last century focused on the ontological limits of social aggregates, such as parties (Ostrogorski, 1902; Michels, 1915 [first edition dated 1911]; Weil, 1950 [first edition dated 1943]). Michels (1915) coined the expression "Iron law of oligarchy" to describe the oligarchic (elitist) tendencies that - according to him - inevitably develop in every complex organisation between individuals, as tactical and technical necessities. This law, according to him, compromises the democracy within the parties, considered a prerequisite of the democratic state (Teorell, 1999). Michels' analysis questioned parties as organisations under different perspectives, from their over-determinism to the incoherence between interests they must defend (according to their party identity) and political narrative to obtain the votes necessary to do it (Michels, 1915). While, Schumpeter (1943) - proposing "another theory of democracy" different from the "people-centered" theory – argued the democracy is fundamentally a "direct and inevitable consequence of what parties must do in order to compete effectively for votes" (Lowi, 1963, p. 572), describing parties as competing teams of leaders. Despite the ontological criticism, from its early stage the contemporary 'Western' democracy became synonymous with party democracy - mass democracies with mass parties – and government with party government. Their affirmation in the political scenario kicks off the so-called "golden age" of political parties, i.e. quoting Mair (2013, p. 77) "an age in which, at least for a time, they dominated politics, constituting its principal point of reference". According to this narrative, that historical phase was characterised by identification and commitment, i.e. a sense of belonging, between the majority of voters and their parties, and by the establishment of political communities that are generally homogeneous and hierarchically organised (Mair, 2013). Parties made possible the coexistence and exercise of two key constitutive elements of democracy within one agency and organisation: representation and procedural legitimacy, i.e. the government by the people and the government for the people. According to Mair (2013, p. 81) "parties - or at least the classic mass party - gave voice to the people, while also ensuring that the institutions of government were accountable. The party was at once the representative and governor, and

hence constituted, as Rudolf Wildenmann (1986) once put it, 'the crucial agency of institutional legitimation'." According to Ignazi (2020, p. 9), "parties reached their apex when they were in tune with society". It is the case where the mass parties developed and became hegemonic in the industrial society, embodying all the by-products of the industrial society, such as "standardization, massification and well-defined group loyalties and identification" (2020, pp. 9-10).

At present, political parties are widely considered the crumbling pillar of 'Western' representative democracy in crisis. First, the intrinsic dualism of parties generated principal-agent problems, because basically they were both the principal and the agent at the same time. Then, when the parties gradually separated the two functions, they fostered the governing role to the detriment of the representative one (Mair, 2009). Starting from the 80s, the result has been "a gradual but also inexorable withdrawal of the parties from the realm of civil society towards the realm of government and the state, and together, these two processes have led to a situation in which each party tends to become more distant from the voters that it purports to represent while at the same time tending to become more closely associated with the alternative protagonists against which it purports to compete" (Mair, 2013, pp. 82-83). In this way, the parties shifted progressively from social actors – where the classic mass party model placed them – to a new position as state actors (Mair, 2013). In particular in the last decades, increasingly year after year, political parties no longer seem able to engage citizens and to connect them to their political leaders. Their role in the election is minimised and the electorate tends to consider elections and electoral process as formal ritual of the democratic constitution (Mair, 2013). Citizens tend to refuse active political commitment and to develop mistrust indignation against party system. The trend of the last two decades shows a scenario that is almost homogeneous. Firstly, the citizens of western Europe countries are voting with markedly reduced partisan commitment, when and where they don't opt for the abstention, and there is a "strong aggregate indicator of disengagement" (Mair, 2013, pp. 34-35). Secondly, even the membership rolls decreased significantly (Scarrow, 2000). In 'Western' democracies, with just few exceptions, the data show a progressive decline in the average membership ratio - both in absolute numbers and as a percentage in relation with the electorate - since the comparison between the 80s and 90s, with significantly lower numbers in the first two decades of the new century. According to van Biezen et al. (2012, p. 27) who analysed 27 countries in 2012 the average was just 4.7%. Party membership is affected both in quantitative terms, i.e. a lower number of

members, and in qualitative terms. On the one hand, decreased the level of activism and engagement of members who still are in the party (Mair, 2013), up to reach high proportion of inactive members, or even members on paper only; on the other, the members profiles tend to become unrepresentative in relation to the rest of the populations, in terms of education, social capital and integration – such as people associated with other social organisations - and gender (van Biezen et al., 2012). It means especially middle-class white men with high education. Moreover, the decrease of the positive incentives also undermines party membership and activism for citizens who are not political professionals or ambitious in that direction. Quoting van Biezen et al. (2012, p. 39), "membership of this type – in terms of social profile, education and sectoral employment – might have more in common with the party in central office and even the party in public office than with the party on the ground." Simultaneously, members' privileges tend to vanish and the relevance of the voices of the simple voters equals, if not exceeds, the voice of the party members, such as in decision-making (Mair, 2013). This is especially true in the widespread case of open primaries to select party leaders and candidates.

Thirdly, the electorate increasingly tends to abandon their political parties' affiliation without developing a new one; a phenomenon called dealignment (Schmitt, 2014). The distance between parties and potential members or voters increases at system level, as well as different parties' proposals move closer. Citizens' mistrust doesn't focus on a specific party that could be replaced. Popular discontentment and/or indifference is directed to party system, and more in general to politics (Mair, 2013). Fourthly, psychological attachments to political parties, i.e. party identifications and sense of attachment to the party, also are deeply undermined (Dalton & Weldon, 2005). This detachment has been fostered especially by the inability of political parties to interpret the concept of opposition (Dahl, 1966), as they used to in the past. Opposition – in its structured version - tended to be represented by organisations and movements outside conventional party politics (Mair, 2013). In the last year, new party emerged seeking to fill that gap and polarising the political panorama of many 'Western' democracies (Foa & Mounk, 2019). Similar efforts have also characterised some traditional parties that introduced movement strategies in their practices. Fifthly, at the present the public opinion tends to see political parties as "unresponsive, untrustworthy, and unrepresentative" (Dalton & Weldon, 2005, p. 937). In Global Corruption Barometer 2013 the political parties, jointly with the police, public officials and parliament, were the institutions perceived as the most corrupt. The Global Corruption Barometer 2017 taking

into analysis the "elected representatives" showed that in Europe they were seen as the most corrupt, only 31%, while in the Americas, the elected representatives competed for the title with the police, 46% both (Transparency International, n.d.). Dalton and Mair agree on stressing on the diffusion of the phenomenon, in all the cases analysed. Although it is always necessary to consider the circumstances and contingency, a common and unequivocal trend emerges across the 'Western' democracies and goes beyond the individual data (Mair, 2013).

Following the analysis by Ignazi (2020, p. 10), it seems that "by the end of the 20th century, parties became unfit for post-industrial and postmodern society." It implied a sort of "unsuitability" depending on the disconnection between parties (and their models and structures) and contemporary society characterised by deeply changing phenomena such as the globalisation, the neo-liberalism and the technological revolution (Ignazi, 2020). At the beginning of the new millennium, Bauman (2000) proposed the concept of "liquid modernity" to describe the transformations within the contemporary postmodern society. The liquidity of postmodernity counterposed the solidity of the modernity, that is, a new perception of the reality that is considered transitory rather than permanent, in which the immediate substituted the long term. This questioned the concepts of identity, individual and individuality; which inevitably and profoundly change the relationship between the individual and society. According to Ignazi (2020, p. 9-10), parties need to be in tune with society and that "this occurred at the time of the full deployment of the industrial society, when parties took the form of *mass parties*". At that time, there was a link between the by-product of the industrial society (standardisation, massification and clear group identification) and the way parties organised and delivered. Differently, "by the end of the 20th century, parties became unfit for post-industrial and postmodern society". The entire context in which parties operated has been deeply altered while they still tend to reason, considering a crystallised and solid environment. Thus, society has changed, but many of the parties' structures have not and they still respond to a model fitted for a society that does not exist anymore. It does not mean that parties have not changed at all, rather, that they do not control and interpret the changes. Quoting Ignazi (2020, p. 10), "the most dramatic change affecting party politics" is "the process of individualization" that implied the erosion of their essential collective dimension.

Furthermore, Crouch (2004) emphasised a genetic change in party structures and participation. According to him, it is possible to observe a shift from the "pure model" of

democratic party composed by concentric circles to a post-democratic one where the "inner circle" become elliptical. In the concentric "pure model", "the leaders are drawn from the activists, who are drawn from the party membership, which is part of and therefore reflect the concerns and interests of those parts of the electorate which the party most seeks to represent" (Crouch, 2004, p. 70). Via these circles, the leadership try to be bi-directionally linked with the electorate. While, the post-democratic model tends to include in the "inner circle" advisers and lobbyists and to skip the intermediate circles, trying to directly address the electorate. The latter model evidently jeopardises the effectiveness of the participation of the party's members/activists and it focuses on mass communication skills instead of deliberative and participatory dimension (already in crisis in the "pure model"). In this frame, party membership decline seems to be a side effect that tends to be knowingly ignored or underestimated by many parties. The membership could no longer offer a meaningful indicator to evaluate the party's organisational capacities, including a general reconsideration of the formal organisational level as indicator (van Biezen et al., 2012).

Overall, the electorate in retreat from political parties is becoming de-structured and the citizens are increasingly applying contingent voting behaviours, until reaching 'random' choices in a significative portion of the voters. Citizens gradually perceive conventional politics as external to their lives, and they tend to perceives their roles as spectators (Mair, 2013). At the same time, Western parties tend to move in two different directions, contrasting or complementary depending on the analysis. On one side, parties seem to have renounced being mass organisations (van Biezen et al., 2012) and replaced the connection with the society – including legitimisation and resources from it – with the relation with the state, i.e. their legitimacy and survival depend on the management and distribution of the material benefits acquired by and through the state (Ignazi, 2020; Katz & Mair, 1995). The so-called "cartelisation" of parties moved all the attention and energies to govern, it means that they are "all in office", either governing or waiting to govern. This implied the enhancement of the role of the party in the institutions, going to the detriment of the "party on the ground", shifting "the party centre of gravity" (Mair, 2013). According to Mair (2013, p. 76), it is a sort of "elite withdrawal" that matches "citizen withdrawal", parties and their leaders "retreat into their own version of this private and particular sphere, which is constituted by the closed world of the governing institutions". This was particularly fostered by the growing parties' tendency to consider themselves self-sufficient and specialised enough to depend on other social actors. Although maintaining heeding attitudes, they generally refused links with them

and promoted a decision-making process that is mainly unrestricted and top-down (Mair, 2013).

On the other side, many political parties are reacting to an increasingly deep disconnection with society and to the consequent crisis of legitimacy – especially intensified in the last decade – opening up their organisation by promoting processes and tools for participation. Many of them are framed as Intra-Party Democracy processes, which are widely analysed in the next section and chapters. For instance, they include the widespread primaries processes for selecting party leaders and candidates and the participative decision-making processes on policy issues (Ignazi, 2020). The parties that follow this second direction aim to counter balance the negative effect of the first one in terms of citizens legitimacy and representativeness, without renouncing the benefit acquired by and through the state, e.g. the widespread expansion of party budget by public funding (van Biezen & Kopecky, 2017, p. 100). Nevertheless, despite these initiatives, in the last year all the empirical data confirmed similar negative trends in the level of trust and confidence in 'Western' political parties (Ignazi, 2020, analysing Eurobarometer, 2015 and European Social Survey, 2012). If the crisis of party democracy is evident and demonstrated, it is much more complex to understand what will be its outcome in the long-term. Researching the development, evolutions and results of the initiatives and strategies to face the crisis implemented by political parties can offer a concrete opportunity for deepening the analysis and tracing projections.

1.3. The enduring centrality of party democracy

Bryce in 1921 stated that "parties are inevitable" (p. 119). For almost a century, at least, he was right. Certainly not as an unavoidable element, nor as an immutable category, but despite their crisis of perceived legitimacy and marginalisation, the parties still maintain centrality in representative democracy. Quoting Lowi (1963), inspired by Schattschneider (1942), parties have been "the makers of democratic government". According to him, "the condition of the parties is the best possible evidence of the nature of any regime. The most important distinction between democracy and dictatorship, can be made best in terms of party politics" (p. 572). Bobbio (1985) used to exclude every alternative to representative democracy, recognising to parties the fundamental role of mediation between the institution - responsible for responding to the demands - and the citizens - who express the demands -. With this

purpose, parties must organise and transmit the demand, in indirect and impersonal form, differently from the relation between private citizens, as in feudal times or in the abuse of modern times. Sartori (2005) attributed to party system three capabilities that are indispensable for a political system: the first, parties should provide widespread channels for expression; the second, they should guarantee the authenticity of expression through competitive elections; the third, they should implement the policies in demand. Despite the many critical analysis and evidences on how Western party system exercises (or doesn't) these capabilities, there are no other agencies at the moment that could be considered a substitute for a party system. For instance, pressure groups do not exercise a generalised and verified expressive role, neither do they assume expressive function with efficacy, e.g. implementing policy. According to Sartori, all party systems perform a key function that cannot be replaced or transferred: "allowing the governed to express their demands freely and in such a way as to render them effective within the very machinery of government" (2005, p. 30). In this frame, Mastropaolo (2007) argued that the change of the parties has been misinterpreted, leading to hypothesise their crisis and even their possible end. According to him, instead, the parties 'simply' modified their focus: concentrating on the electoral side (looking for Schumpeterian functions) and abandoning other sides, such as the democratic organisation of the citizens' will (their Kelsenian functions). While, Mair (2009) ascribed to parties two major roles in modern democracies: the above-mentioned classical duality between representation and government that they exercise simultaneously, as no other institutions or groups do, both in position of majority and minority in the democratic institutions. The debate on the absence of alternatives to political parties in theoretical and hypothetical terms is still open and lively, differently from that one on their practical application in the history of 'Western' democracies. As argued by Teorell (1999), despite the difficulties to collocate party within the theories of democracy, "no modern democratic state has been able to do without political parties" (p. 363). So, party have not been overcome and their crisis did not affect the status of "the masters of the play in the democratic representative chain", what happens instead – especially with their cartelisation - is that they "'lost their soul' in the eyes of public opinion" (Ignazi, 2020, p. 2). As already argued, the deep crisis of legitimacy of political parties coexists with their inescapability (i.e. systemic necessity), at least within representative democracy.

Within the academia, the attention on party topics seems to have declined in the 2000s, except for increasingly critical approaches to party politics. It depended partially on the

renewed interest on experiments of democratic deepening, from participatory democracy processes to the social movements' waves, and even more it is due to a focus shift from political parties to elected representatives, according to the supremacy acquired by "Party in Public Office" in respect of "Party Central Office" (Katz & Mair, 1993). Nevertheless, in the last years, party politics counted on renewed interests; particularly due to party transformations and to the development of new procedures and initiatives, but also to the fact that neither the institution of party and representative democracy have been overcome. Indeed, the citizens' mistrust, criticism and withdrawal have not changed their formal role: they are still the organisations upon which the democratic system - in force in 'Western' democracies - is based.

One of the most relevant key elements that shows how difficult it is to overcome the parties for the current democratic model is the evolution of some of the biggest protest movements of the last decade in Europe. They developed in opposition to the traditional parties, giving voice to the popular malcontent, but by presenting themselves to the elections, accepting the rules and structuring their organisations, they even became de facto political parties[7]. Some examples of these phenomena are Podemos and Ciudadanos in Spain, Movimento 5 Stelle (M5S) in Italy, the coalition SYRIZA in Greece, and La République En Marche! In France[8]. They have identified the party as the most effective organisation and tool to access the power or at least to influence it. Although all of them have claimed for the implementation of different organisational models as priority objective (the M5S even denying the same definition of political party), just few of them were able to pursue it (partially).

1.3.1. Alternatives to party democracy: challenges and difficulties

As argued, the (post-)democratic crisis embeds the parties' crisis, involving the whole representative democracy. In this context, public institutions of participation developed with the widely declared objective of reinvolving citizens (or engaging them for the first time). Specific communities of scholars and practitioners are linked to many of these institutions and their implementers, mutually feeding each other. Many of them focused on participation

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7 I.e. "any political group identified by an official label that presents at elections, and is capable of placing through elections (free or nonfree), candidates for public office" (Sartori, 1976, p. 63).
8 In the case of Ciudadanos and La République En Marche! it is more appropriate to describe them as movements/parties in opposition to traditional parties (rather than protest movements).

and participatory governance, particularly in terms of participants' engagement and effectiveness, such as Pateman (1970), Warren (2002), Fung and Wright (2003), Santos (2002), Allegretti and Herzberg (2004), Della Porta (2008), Smith (2009), Sintomer and Allegretti (2009), Avritzer (2012), Cabannes (2014), Elstub and Escobar (2019). Many others focused in particular on deliberation and deliberative systems, such as Dryzek, (2000), Parkinson and Mansbridge (2012) and Steiner, J. (2012). Smith (2009) categorised as democratic innovations the opportunities that "increase and deepen citizen participation in political decision-making" (2009, p.4). This category and others similar - such as the denomination of "democratic goods" (Saward, 1998) - tended to refer to public processes implemented by the state and its local institutions, generally at the municipal level and, more rarely, at the regional and national level. The choice of creating new institutions is based on the assumption that, even in the case of a more efficient representative democracy, it would not be enough. Because, according to Dalton (2004, p. 204) "these reforms do not address expectations that the democratic process will expand to provide new opportunities for citizen input and control." Many of the authors belonging to these communities grounded their theorisation on empirical cases, initially mainly located in the global 'South'; showcasing the production of knowledge and knowhow beyond the 'Western' countries, and so challenging in terms of epistemology the abyssal line, which separates the 'North'(s) and the 'South'(s) (Santos, Araújo & Baumgarten, 2016). Allegretti and Herzberg (2004) called the global spread of the democratic innovations developed in the 'South' "the return of the caravels". However, although the implementation cases are numerous and widespread the potential of these processes deserves to be further explored - at the moment they rarely reach high levels of systematicity and only in a few cases have they been significantly impactful on the main lines of public policies - and the related animated academic debate is still a niche. Moreover, both in analysis and in practice, existent democratic innovations encounter limits that cannot be underestimated (see Baiocchi & Ganuza, 2016). In many cases democratic experiments joined "opportunistic measures or marginal reforms" defined by Sintomer (2017, p. 29) as 'Western' "cosmetic responses" to face the crisis and renovate democracy. Therefore, while maintaining an important complementary role in several cases around the globe, there is a loss of propulsive energy of democratic innovations, at least as an alternative to representative democracy. This shift also depended on the political change in Brazil - and in more general terms South America, after the so-called 'golden decade' (2003–2013) -, which has dismantled or severely weakened many of the most famous and studied participatory processes, among them the well-known participatory budget of Porto

Alegre. Furthermore, according to Santos and Avritzer (see Santos & Avritzer, 2002), participatory processes need two main requirements to fulfil their ambitious goals: the bottom-up push of civil society for participation and inclusion; and the political will of constructing and maintaining real participatory spaces. Focusing on the second requirement, the public participation needs the political will and, in the representative democracy, the parties are the main actors in elaborating and organising it. Therefore, in the current democratic systems, democratic innovations can hardly develop and progress alternatively to political party or without their support.

In parallel, the second decade of the 21st century is characterised by a renewed role of the protest movements, with a preponderant return to the European and US scene. In particular two anti-austerity protest movements have generated great media attention, participation and impact: The *Indignados* in Spain and *Occupy Wall* Street in US - distant geographically - but not temporally and thematically. Both are inspired by the energy of the Arab Springs, in their most spontaneous moments, but they are strongly linked to 'Western' relativity; particularly to the effects of capitalism and the democratic crisis. The *Indignados* is a social movement arose to contrast the global economic crisis openly contrary to the positions and policies taken by the Spanish government and the European Union (Castañeda, 2012). Similarly, *Occupy Wall Street* claims for social justice and seeks out representation for the people in the democratic and economic crisis, as they used to say "We are the 99%" (Brown, 2011). Both movements manifestly share a strong critique of the representation system, in particular the political parties, which are incapable of giving voice to social unease and of proposing credible alternatives. *Indignados* and *Occupy Wall Street*, between others movements, have mobilised a huge number of citizens, especially the young, and gained a great, international media visibility. This movement wave(s) counted in particular on a manifesto, key reference both for activist and media: the short text by Hessel titled "*Indignez-vous!*" (2011), translated to English as "Time for outrage!". Hessel (2011, pp. 5-6) stated:

> "It is true that the reasons for outrage today may seem less clear or the world more complicated. Who runs things? Who decides? It is not always easy to distinguish the answers from among all the forces that rule us. […] I tell the young: just look, and you'll find something. The worst possible outlook is indifference that says, "I can't do anything about it; I'll just get by." Behaving like that deprives you of one of the essentials of being human: the capacity and the freedom to feel outraged. That freedom is indispensable, as is the political involvement that goes with it".

This authentical call-to-action proposes a direct civic action aimed at democratising power against apathy and the political and economic lobbies without popular legitimacy. The young generations tend to be the most active in "nonconventional" forms of activism breaking up with traditional forms of political participation. Although the data seems to suggest difficulties in transferring even this proclivity to the youngest who risk marginalization in both conventional and "nonconventional" political activities (Foa & Mounk, 2016), new young movements as the ecologist movement *Friday For Future* contrast this trend. Nevertheless, the movements' protests and activities demanded high-intensity participation. For instance, at a distance of 9 years from 2011 wave so much has been lost and the levels of mobilisation widely felt down. Only some of the energy generated has been transformed and catalysed by new political parties as in Spain or new project within a pre-existing party, as in US. According to Ignazi (2020), none of the social movements have been able to replace the organisations questioned by post-industrialism and postmodernism. This means that "political dealignment has not been replaced by any realignment" (Ignazi, 2020, p. 10). In addition, almost in between social movements and democratic innovation, different positions are multiplying in recent years in the field of technopolitics (see section 1.7. of this chapter) and neo-municipalism. They proposed technological solution to overcome representative democracy, favouring the municipal scale political actors, both institutional and non-institutional, over the national party system.

In sum, many of the democratic experiments and social protest/mobilisation above-mentioned aim to counterbalance the crisis of representative democracy, building participatory channels and counter-power spaces (Sintomer, 2017). Some work, some don't, and many only do in a limited manner. Mouffe (1999) focused on the need to formulate an alternative to the aggregative model(s), opposing extreme forms of individualism and the privatization of life building that undermine the conceptions of citizenship and the identification on it. She criticised in particular the deliberative approach that promote an inversely proportional relationship between democracy and power. Mouffe, on the contrary, considered that "relations of power are constitutive of the social", thus "the main question for democratic politics is not how to eliminate power but how to constitute forms of power more compatible with democratic values" (1999, p. 14). According to her, legitimacy depended on power and not on pure rationality. In this direction, she proposed "agonistic pluralism" in which "adversaries", i.e. legitimate enemies are in democratic conflict without

hiding the antagonistic dimension that is always present. In this section, Mouffe point of view is particularly useful both to highlight the power dimension in any alternative to representative democracy and to challenge rationality's domain in democratic politics, giving space and voice to the "passions from the sphere of the public" (1999, p. 16). This is increasingly important considering the social media expansion and the key role of emotion in contemporary politics. Quoting Ferguson (2019), "We no longer live in a democracy. We live in an emocracy", as analysed by Gutiérrez-Rubí in the book "*Gestionar las emociones políticas*" (Managing political emotions) (2019). In particular, Gutiérrez-Rubí (2019) directly linked the political praxis that has become 'insensitive' with the crisis of legitimacy and proximity toward citizens.

1.4. Party models

The political science community considers parties as one of the principal objects of study. The multiple dimensions within them offers a vast body of analytic possibilities at different levels, such as power, leadership, communication, institutionalisation and many others. Between them, the organisation models, strictly linked with internal level of democracy of the political parties, has been one of the most relevant. Several important authors studied and produced literature on it. Among them, there were Duverger (1954) and Neumann (1956) in the past, then Sartori (1976; 2005) and Panebianco (1982), in more recent times Hazan and Rahat (2010), Cross and Katz (2013) and Scarrow, Webb and Poguntke (2017) in the present. Over the decades, they have developed different theories and models, trying to follow the socio-political and institutional evolution, with particular reference to the 'Western' context. In particular, two interpretations emerged to explain the party system's evolution along the decades. The first, supported by classical authors such as Duverger (1954), Neumann (1956) and Panebianco (1982), linked the parties and their changes to civil society. Their analysis has generally led to the establishment of the mass party as a centre of gravity, i.e. a yardstick to evaluate the other party models. Moreover, the deepening of the relation between society and party tended to leave out other relations (Katz & Mair, 1995). The second interpretation considered the party models as stages of a continuous process, under the influence of others models. As argued by Katz and Mair: "the development of parties in western democracies has been reflective of a dialectical process in which each new party type generates a reaction that stimulates further development, thus leading to yet another new party type, and to another set of reactions, and so on" (1995, p. 6). The author

of this thesis considers that the last interpretation integrates elements of complexity that are useful to read the current situations of many democracies in which mass parties seem to be in crisis, and different party models and new parties in the process of self-definition can both coexist.

The party models that have received greater academic legitimacy are a relatively small in number and the evolutionary approach based on organisational level[9] seem to be prevalent. Organisation-based analysis has been challenged by various authors, such as Gunther and Diamond (2003) - limiting organisation to one of three minimum criteria - and expanded by others, such as Sartori (2005), who included "organisational density", "organisational pressure" and "coverage" in addition to the classical examination of the structural forms. According to him, the analysis should go beyond the party itself and include the "organisational network" of the party, i.e. the space that a party could occupy and influence, thus focusing in its power of penetration. One of the first parties' classifications belongs to Duverger (1954) who identified two different parties' typologies according to their anatomy, i.e. organisational structure: the committee party, the branch party, the cell party and the militia party, differentiated by their nuclear structure, i.e. basic organisational unit. Respectively, the middle class liberal-democratic parties tend to fit in committee-based parties, the socialist parties tend to fit in branch-based parties, the communist parties fit in cell-based parties, and Nazi-fascist parties fit in militia-based parties[10] (Sartori, 2005). More in general terms, Duverger (1954) identified two different organisational logic: the "cadre" parties, characterised by minimal organisation and leadership controlled by high social classes; and the "mass"' parties, characterised by a complex and well-developed organisation that seek to involve and mobilise broad segments of society. The traditional model of the mass party is largely based on his theorisation. This model understands party demos as citizens "of the party" (Rahat & Shapira, 2017) - i.e. members or supporters – and it has been the main "principal-agent model" that consider the government administration as the agent of the ministry, composed by members who are the agents of the parties in parliament, which in turn are the agents of the electorate (Katz, 2014). According to Sartori, mass party age has been characterised by two main elements: "first, the appeal of parties to large masses and their 'opening up' on the basis of achievement instead of ascription;

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[9] Sartori (2005) identified three criteria of classification (not mutually exclusive): historical, organisational and functional.

[10] Militia-based parties in same analysis are considered a sub-category of cell -based parties.

second, the fact that the electorate identifies itself with 'abstract' party images rather than with concrete people" (Sartori, 2005, p. 12). According to the fourfold parties' division defined by Apter (1958) - "bureaucratic and durable, personal and fragile, bureaucratic and fragile, personal and durable" (Sartori, 2005, p. 12) – mass party belongs to the first group "bureaucratic and durable", generally supported by an extensive organisational structure that gave to it the name of organisational party. Downs in 1957 proposed an alternative version to the principal-agent model(s) that consider parties as teams of politicians in competition between them to gain the agents seats within a fluid society - so-called Downsian party model -, rather than associations of citizens that respond to particular social segments (Katz, 2014). While, Neumann (1956) distinguished the parties by targets into two large groups: "parties of individual representation", which aim to represent the interests of specific social groups, and "parties of social integration", which aim to represent larger communities through a developed organisation that provides services to members. Neumann's classification has been challenged by the "'catch-all party" theorised by Kirchheimer (1966), a new party typology without a pre-defined community which widely seeks consensus throughout the society by extensive political programs and highly developed communication skills (Katz & Mair, 1995). Therefore, this model is characterised by a more aggressive approach to elections seeking to gain support as much is possible addressing a wider audience, abandoning ideological considerations and focusing especially on the short-term and contingencies (Rahat & Shapira, 2017). The catch-all people's party born as office-seeking party, where competitive goal and electoral success are above elaboration of party programmes, policies and strategies that became functional to them (Mair, 2013). The Kirchheimer (1966) theory is one of the first influential analysis that reported the end of the golden age of political parties, at least of the mass party model. After some decades, Panebianco (1982) proposed the electoral-professional model of party, dividing at level of organisation "mass-bureaucratic" parties and "electoral-professional" parties (Panebianco, 1988). While, Kitschelt (1989) differentiated between parties that prioritise the "logic of electoral competition' or parties based on the "logic of constituency representation". The same author (1994) distinguished among "centralist clubs", "Leninist cadre" parties, "decentralized clubs" and "decentralized mass" parties (Gunther & Diamond, 2003). Katz and Mair in 1995 contributed to the debate proposing the "cartel party", a functionalist logic model that became the hegemonic reference model up to the present - questioned only by the most recent analyses of the evolutions of party systems -. According to the authors (1995, p. 17), cartel party is "characterized by the interpenetration of party and state, and also by a

pattern of inter-party collusion". Considering that for Katz and Mair (1995), each model is related - or its organisation is more functional - to a type of democracy, cartel party - and more in general the process of constitutionalisation and cartelisation - is the results of the increasing role of the State and public resources in representative democracy. Cartel's model marked a deeper disconnection between parties and citizens. Differently from the catch-all parties that replaced members with the wider audience of society, cartel party moved away from entire citizenry, beyond party members, retreating in the mechanism of the state (Rahat & Shapira, 2017). In the last decades, the cartel model became hegemonic in 'Western' democracies, consequently parties have been held on the state structure. On the one hand, this shift increased material resources of parties that counted and depended on public subsidies; on the other, it "projected them into the opaque area of patronage and clientelism" (Ignazi, 2020, p. 2). In the 2000, Wolinetz (2002) categorised the parties in three groups based on their goals: "vote-seeking", "policy-seeking" and "office-seeking". Lastly, Gunther and Diamond, recapping a large part of the literature, proposed a complex classification in 15 categories of the party, on the basis of three criteria: "the nature of the formal organisation of the party"; "the nature of the party's programmatic commitments"; and "the strategy and behavioural norms of the party, specifically, whether the party is tolerant and pluralistic or proto-hegemonic in its objectives and behavioural style" (2003: 171).

According to the development approach of Sartori (2005) a model could overcome another without implying that the previous one vanishes. This means that more models could coexist at the same time, occupying different positions, especially in case of small parties. In this outline, it is possible to identify some dichotomies that mark trends and historical sequences, such as: (1) "electoral versus organisational parties, and/or intermittent versus permanent parties"; (2) "parties of notables versus bureaucratic parties, and/or parties of elite versus mass parties"; (3) "parties of opinion versus parties of platform" (Sartori, 2005, p. 12). Moreover, three stages of party development have been theorised as 'standard' evolution: first, the "legislative-electoral party, or the elite intermittent party" - organised principally to support the legislative body -; second, "the electoral mass party" – consisting in an election-oriented party machines that mobilises the electorate occasionally during the electoral campaign -; and third, the organisational mass party, or the party of apparatus" (Sartori, 2005, p. 17)

All these categories - and others, omitted here – need to be analysed in the light of their historical contexts of theorisation and application. According to the logic of Katz and Mair (1995), the present democratic crisis – that widely includes the crisis of political parties, as pointed out in the previous sections – may stimulate a reaction that could lead to new party type(s) and model(s). Various authors in recent times theorised new categories, and new party model(s), characterised by the claims of being alternative to traditional parties, with the use of technologies as a part of their identity and movement(s) legacy. Between them, the main references are the movement party (Kitschelt, 1988, 2006; Della Porta et al., 2017), the techno-populist movement (Bickerton & Accetti, 2018), the party-television (Domínguez & Giménez, 2014), the (new and) challenger parties (Hobolt & Tilley, 2016; Lavezzolo & Ramiro, 2017; De Vries & Hobolt, 2020), and the digital party (Gerbaudo, 2019; 2021). The following sub-section focuses on them.

1.4.1. New political parties' model(s)

Kitschelt (1988; 2006), analysing the emergence of a specific new party type already in the 1970s, defined it as movement party. According to him, the movement parties are "coalitions of political activists who emanate from social movements and try to apply the organisational and strategic practices of social movements in the arena of party competition" (2006, p. 280). They are characterised by (1) scarce investment in the formal organisational party structure, including the absence of definition of the membership role; (2) lack of an institutionalised system for aggregating interests and solving problems of social choice, i.e. there are no bodies or officer(s) in charge of formulating formal decisions and commitments; (3) predominance of a charismatic leader who employs his/her patrimonial resources and personal staff; and (4) the double-sided of formal representatives in institutions and at the same time informal promoters of extra-institutional activities. Kitschelt (2006) shapes the movement party using as main references the ecology parties "initially moulded in the image of a grassroots democratic movement party" (p. 285), but he had already identified their expansion on the political spectrum. Nevertheless, according to his analysis, movement parties are unstable as they tend to respond to institutional incentives, to be domesticated by inter-party competition or to collapse after the first elections due to internal tensions and contradictions (p. 288). This leads him to consider movement parties as "comparatively rare phenomena".

Della Porta et al. (2017) applied the movement parties' model to analyse new parties emerged as a reaction to the neoliberal critical juncture in Southern Europe (in particular in Greece, Spain and Italy) as in Latin America. They pointed out a twofold process that were transforming the party system of many countries in these areas: the emergence of new movements that catalyse mobilisation and mount waves of protest; and the fragility of the tradition parties that were occupying the political arena, particularly on the left (p. 183). Differently from Kitschelt (2006), Della Porta et al. (2017) examined movement parties in a different historical-political context, identifying a multi-layered set of conditions to explain the success of some of the movement parties. According to them, some causal mechanisms played a key role in the development of successful movement parties. Between them, the "organizational occupation" and the "overlapping membership" explain the level of penetration of these subjects and their source of human resources. While, the "galvanization" and the "reverse effects of blame" explain on the one hand the enthusiasm generated after the first electoral victories, and on the other hand the livid reaction of traditional parties and mass media that activated a "reverse reputational effect" (pp. 186-188). These mechanisms within the neoliberal critical juncture provided new and more stable perspectives for the movement parties.

Recently, authors as Hobolt and Tilley (2016), Lavezzolo and Ramiro (2017), De Vries and Hobolt (2020) developed the definition of ("new" and) "challenger party". They have been theorised as parties that oppose the dominant parties and that "have not yet held the reins of power", i.e. "parties without government experience" (De Vries & Hobolt, 2020, p. 17) or that "do not ordinarily enter government" (Hobolt, S. and J. Tilley, 2016, p. 972). Thus, the fulcrum of the theorisation of these authors is the dichotomy between dominant/mainstream and challenger parties. The literature has dealt with the division between the two categories using three types of criteria: the historical origins through the concept of 'party family', the programmatic strategies through the issues they mobilise, and the populism as element of distinction (De Vries & Hobolt, 2020, pp. 17-20). Differently, these authors opted to consider dominance as a marker. According to them, the challenger parties are parties with "lack of dominance within the political system" that aim "to unseat the dominant players through innovation" (De Vries & Hobolt, 2020, p. 20). This releases these parties from the responsibilities of government and allows them to have ample room to take extreme positions (Hobolt, S. and J. Tilley, 2016). The 2008 economic crisis and its aftermath overcame the classic theory of retrospective voting that predicts a sanctioning behaviour of

the voters, due to poor economic performance, for the benefit of the non-government parties. The scale of this crisis and its effects have amplified the negative perception of many voters, which has spread to all mainstream parties (not just those in government), paving the way for challenger parties (Hobolt, S. and J. Tilley, 2016). Those parties have presented to the voters an alternative to the mainstream left and right proposals, tendentially oriented to policy of austerity and compliance with the fiscal guidelines by the EU. Instead, challenger parties are unencumbered by government's role and they are not even limited by the dynamics of alternation between government and opposition. This allows them to claim for new issues, to take positions far from other parties, and to mobilise around them. According to Hobolt and Tilley (2016), having not formed part of any government is the defining feature of challenger parties, and it implies that they do not necessarily have to be new. Differently from other recent categories of political parties, the case studies - to which reference is made - belong to both the left, right and non-aligned fronts. Among them, Front National in France, Podemos in Spain and the Five Star Movement (M5S) in Italy have been the most cited, and regarded as successful challenger parties, but also parties such as the Alternative for Germany, radical right parties across Northern Europe, and the radical left-wing SYRIZA in Greece (for Podemos, Five Star Movement and SYRIZA the references used to be before they entered in the government). Lavezzolo and Ramiro (2017, p. 267) considered "new and challenger parties" also as "political reformers of democratic procedures", adding methodological focus to the economical anti-austerity claims. In particular, they identified two attitudes used by these parties to gather and aggregate preferences for the political decision-making, not necessarily alternative between them: on the one hand, the "delegation, efficiency, and experts' involvement" backing up the stealth democracy attitudes as reactions against the mainstream politics (Lavezzolo & Ramiro, 2017, p. 268); on the other hand, the adoption of more inclusive and participative internal processes.

While other authors focused in the technocratic elements present in the dualism that characterised the new parties, they were usually analysed using the populism lens. In this direction, Bickerton and Accetti (2018), between others, proposed the family of "techno-populist movement". Without undermining the populist characteristics of these parties, they highlighted the "distinctively 'technocratic' conception of politics and the kinds of policy proposals and modes of self-presentation that stem from it" (p. 133). Their opposition to the establishment and the system also passes through competence and expertise discourses. As widely argued by authors such as Mudde (2004) and Caramani (2017), technocracy and

populism could be compatible, the techno-populist movements draw on both to sustain their political-electoral proposals. Bickerton and Accetti (2018) shaped this category using in particular two iconic cases as a model: the M5S and Podemos. They pointed out the technocratic nature of these two parties based on their vision of politics as technique of which they present themselves as "'competent' problem-solvers" (Bickerton & Accetti, 2018, p. 143). These parties declare that the main source of their competence lies in "collective intelligence" or "common sense" and that it could be gathered using new technologies as form of "unmediated communication" (Bickerton & Accetti, 2018, p. 144).

Lastly, other categories and models have been developed hinging on the role of technologies, distinguishing between traditional parties - that tend to make instrumental use of technologies, especially in managing the external communication - and a new category of parties that consider new technologies as a part of their identity and cast and rearrange "the entire life of the party around the idea of a more direct and participatory democracy" through digital technologies (Gerbaudo, 2019, p. 13). Currently, the discussion on the relationship between parties and digital counts on several proposals for defining new party models, such as the "digital parties" (Gerbaudo, 2019), the "platform parties", due to their use of web platforms (Lioy et al., 2019), the "cyber-parties" (Margetts, 2001, 2006), and the "network parties" (Klimowicz, 2018). At the moment, one of the most cited references is the digital party proposed by Gerbaudo (2019; 2021). The term has been empirically coined inspired by the precursors of the Pirates Parties founded in many countries of Northern Europe and followed by new parties as Podemos in Spain, Five Star Movement in Italy and France Insoumise in France or organisations/movements linked to parties as Momentum (with the Labour Party) in the United Kingdom. The category includes largely different cases that share the promise "to be more democratic, more open to ordinary people, more immediate and direct, more authentic and transparent" through "new politics supported by digital technology" (Gerbaudo 2019, p. 3). Riding a utopian vision of technology and following the "operational model" of digital businesses, the digital parties delegate an important part of their decision-making to digital tools and platforms, in order to promote direct action (without mediation) of citizens in political decisions, transparency and accountability (see the *Rousseau* platform of the M5S, the *Participa* Podemos participation platform, and the *LiquidFeedback* app of the Pirate Parties). As Gerbaudo (2019; 2021) analysed the digital parties tend to promote "reactive democracy", as in social media participants/users are called to react to external inputs, assigning to them a ratification role in plebiscitary top-down

processes, instead of promote bottom-up participation as claimed. Examining these parties in a vertical axis, at the top Gerbaudo (2019) placed the "hyper-leadership" characterised by effective communication skills in the media, an immaculate history of political engagement (emanating an impression of authenticity, integrity and honesty), and realistic attitude (avoiding complex language and presenting his/her-self as an ordinary individual). While, at the bottom he placed the "super-base" (using a chemical metaphor) composed by reactive members, to which the "hyper-leadership" constantly appeals to legitimise the decision taken, especially claiming for the "return of the grassroots" that traditional parties have abandoned. In conclusion, considering his analysis of M5S and Podemos, Gerbaudo (2021, p. 739) argued that there is "a clear discrepancy between the lofty promise and the prosaic reality of digital democracy".

1.4.2. Functional modelling

The models mentioned in the section 1.4. are mainly based in organisational analysis. However, parties could be also divided in functional groups according to a functional criterion (Sartori, 2005). According to Lowi (1963), activities are not functions, in fact, "the functions of party can be determined only by assessments of the consequences of party activities" (p. 571). Moreover, they refer to "not actually functions at all, but standards for the proper functioning" (Lowi, 1963, p. 571). Despite all parties' performing system-related functions, there are significant variances in which function they perform (or don't) and how. Sartori (2005) stated that the main functions attributed to parties are the following: "participation, electioneering, integration, aggregation, conflict resolution, recruitment, policy-making and expression" (p. 24). Leaving "participation" - central topic for this thesis - at the end: "electioneering" refers to actions and predispositions in view of elections, organising allegiance and support. Through this function parties enlist the electorate, in particular the voters who take the specific party as group of reference. The "electioneering" uses to have three aspects: activation, reinforcement and conversion (Lazarsfeld et al., 1955 in Sartori, 2005). These aspects are performed tendentially from the top-down, giving the party the role of the influencer; differently from participation, where parties are supposed to be influenced by the voters. While, "integration" consists in a cohesive function aimed to avoid "particularism" and "diffuseness" (Parsons et al., 1953, in Sartori, 2005, p. 23).

Then, "aggregation" is the function for coordinating and reconciling different interest within the same party, vehiculating them to a general interest. It counts on compromise and mediation through which the party act as a "broker of interests" (Sartori, 2005). Instead, "conflict resolution" refers to the management of conflict and is strictly connected to the integrative and of the aggregative functions, partially overlapping them. The "recruitment" refers to the selection and nomination of the political leadership, through which vertical mobility occurs. While, "policy-making" is the function of the political decision-making to elaborate, propose and apply policies at the governmental level. While the "expression" function refers to the communication to link the demands of the society to the state, i.e. an ascending flow of communication managed by parties aimed at connecting the citizens to the government. Last but not least, the "participation" has been described as the function of the "party as creator of a 'practising electorate'" (Sartori, 2005, p. 24). It overcomes the mere participation in election, involving members (sometimes not only them) in the decision-making, i.e. to actively 'take part'. This function is essentially bottom-up because it is based on a process of "voluntarisation" that presupposes a "willing agent" (Sartori, 2005, p. 24). According to Neumann (1956) it "demands political activation through free choice and decision" (p. 409). In this regard, Teorell (1999, p. 363) argued that there is a lack of analysis "on the relationship between democratic theory and party organizations", with particular reference on the role of intra-party democracy. In addition, Lowi (1963) added the function of innovation performed by political parties as channels of innovation for both party system and institutions. In particular he attributed this function to the minority party, preferring the axis majority-minority to the classical left-right one.

1.4.3. Political parties' strategies and networks

Within party models, different strategies for facing the party democracy crisis emerged, at least at the communicative level. Particularly - following the analysis of Caramani (2017) - many new or renewed political projects opted for two different approaches, widely recognised in political literature: the populist and the technocratic approach. These approaches shape different forms of representation. Particularly in recent time, they have been strategically applied in the search for alternatives from the traditional party models in crisis, i.e. for generating new engagement, support and consensus. A univocal definition of

populism does not exist due its multiple declinations and contradictions. The central agreed element is the claim for a political action "guided by the unconstrained will of the people" (Caramani, 2017, p. 55). Therefore, the focus is primarily on the methodology, even more than on the content. What distinguishes populism is the degree of equivalence and emptiness with "the people" and antagonism against them (Laclau, 2005). 'Who are the people' and 'how to gather their will' are the big questions. In this direction, different populist political projects, mainly in Europe in the recent years, have tried to open participation channels for partisans, sympathisers and interested citizens. It is the case of Podemos in Spain, Moviemento 5 Stelle in Italy, Pirate Party in Germany and others, particularly in the early stages of their development. They can be considered as specific evolution of a participatory-populism category based on a participation narrative, in particular through digital processes. Instead, the term technocracy is used to indicate an expertise-based form of representation that stresses on the role of the expert to identify and implement public policies for solving societal problems by rationalism (Kenneally, 2009). The technocratic narrative is based on claims for responsibility and effectiveness in the government and more so in the political system in general (Caramani, 2017). The category of technocratic political projects includes a great variety of declinations. In the present, similar positions are multiplying within many parties in 'Western' democracies. Particularly, the technocratic claims are mainly observed within political parties that avoid self-defining themselves as technocratic parties, although they widely use their narratives.

Although they appear genetically different, they have significantly common elements and they can even coexist, at least at the narrative level seeking to contrast the political parties' crisis. The starting point of both is the harsh criticism of the established representative parties. They justify the citizens' distrust on parties and use it as motivation to promote themselves as alternatives. Both populist and technocratic narratives summarise their critique of party democracy focusing on three broad factors. The first is the electoralism, i.e. abandonment of the representative and governing roles to chase electoral support, to the point of directing government action into favouring their potential voters (Caramani, 2017). The second depends on the so-called II governance (Hooghe & Marks 2003), which includes international organism and organisations, trans-governmental networks and agencies, independent authorities and more. They are accused of limiting (or even jeopardising) the competences of the states, and consequently of parties that compete to govern them. Finally, the third group of factors is labelled as mediatisation, i.e. the professionalisation trend of

political communication by parties, leaders and governments. Nevertheless, populism and technocracy faulted established political party from two different perspectives: on the one hand, they are presented as "less responsive" by the populists with respect to the public, in terms of lack of policies, corruption and inadequacy in facing the economic crisis; on the other, they are presented as "less responsible" by the technocrats, with respect to the political choices taken seeking the popular consensus. In any case, both consider established parties as "noncredible" (Caramani, 2017).

Though, the criticism of the current party system is not the only element that bring them together. Technocracy and populism are both examples of unmediated politics that bypass intermediate structures, claiming to represent the "unitary and common interest of society on the one hand and elites on the other" (Caramani, 2017, p. 54). In particular, different elements mark this link between populism and technocracy. To begin with, both refer to the interest of the country as unitary and common, i.e. for them it is possible to represent the interests of society as a whole, with a non-pluralistic view. In the second place, they interpret the relationship with the electorate/citizens as "unmediated", to the point that an independent elite assumes the role of identifying the common interest and the appropriate solution, in spite of the populist anti-establishment narrative and the participatory processes implemented. In the third place, despite communicatively presenting themselves as more credible and the closest to the people's interests, both tend to avoid the accountability. The populists consider themselves part of the people, i.e. the holder of power; the technocrats, instead, are convinced that the people do not have sufficient capabilities to evaluate their action. Quoting Caramani (2017), "in populism people trust them because 'they are like us' while in technocracy precisely because 'they are not like us' (p. 62). Populism and technocracy are generally theorised in the literature as form of representation and form of power. In the current political context of 'Western' democracies, the categories of populism and technocracy can be applied also in terms of narratives and strategy options for new or renew parties seeking to stand out in the political panorama and to regain support and consensus lost by the traditional parties due to their crisis. In this frame, the division between them widely theorised in literature is partially challenged.

These versions of populism and technocracy joined other parties' strategies of the previous decades. Among them, Sartori (2005) described the "party colonisation", i.e. "occupying - via party-nominated members - the existing key managerial positions of a society in the

economic sphere (banks, industries, etc.), in the mass media, in the bureaucracy and, eventually, even in the military establishment" (p. 8). It has been a pervasive technique that particularly penetrates the labour dimension, seeking to control the labour movement troughs placing party officials in professional, syndicalist positions. According to Sartori (2005), the parties that apply this strategy are divided into two faces: on the one hand an "overt party face", on the other a "disguised labour face". This technique is defined as a type of organisational networks typical of strongly organised mass parties, which overcame the simple spoils system reaching the party control over those positions. Another organisational network technique is the "party proliferation", that is the creation of numerous subsidiary and collateral associations apparently disconnected to the party, often with apolitical façade (Sartori, 2005). Initially, it has been used for facilitating logistical reasons to penetrate in leisure, cultural and sports spaces. In more recent times, party proliferation has been useful for camouflaging party initiatives, attracting those that used to be reluctant to participate within the parties' spaces, even if, at the same time, the parties' capacity for organisational proliferation is dramatically reduced during their crisis.

1.5. Party change

Within the party crisis and beyond the party systems where new parties may arise, individual parties change. "Party change" has been defined by Harmel and Janda (1994, p. 275) as "any variation, alteration or modification in how parties are organised, what human and material resources they can draw upon, what they stand for and what they do". Why and how has been largely debated in literature. Despite considering parties as conservative organisations, Panebianco (1988) categorised the party change's theories according to three dimensions (Harmel & Janda, 1994). The first one is whether those changes are "evolutionary" or "developmental". On the one side, the "evolutionary" approach is based on the natural tendencies of the parties that imply the transition along different stages common to the political organisation. Between the scholars who supported that view, Michels (1915) emerged as the most influent. One the other side, scholars such as Panebianco considered the party change as "developmental". They tended to deny the existence of an "obligatory path", pointing out the role of the alliances among organisational actor as the most impacting factor in organisational change (Panebianco, 1988, p. 239). The second dimension is the intentionality, including two possibilities. On the one hand, according to the management theories, change has been considered rational as "effect of deliberate and conscious choices".

On the other hand, according to the natural systems' model, change has been studied as non-intentional effect of "disfunctions" generated in organisational crisis context limited to "exceptionally serious" causes (Panebianco, 1988, p. 240). While, the third dimension is the endogenous or exogenous origins of the change. Many scholars, including Panebianco (1988, p. 242), hypothesised that the change tend to be "an effect of an external stimulus (environmental and/or technological)", which could also join internal dynamics.

Differently, Harmel and Janda (1994) focusing on the endogenous-exogenous axis proposed their model looking for a less deterministic approach to internal changes. Without undermining the important role of environmental inputs, they pointed out two principal elements that differs with the Panebianco (1988) analysis. Indeed, according to them, internal factors alone could also imply party change and external stimuli are considered as external factors that cause an internal shock that impacts the primary goals of a party, leading to their redefinition (Harmel & Janda, 1994, p. 265). In particular, the authors identified specific "key independent variables": two internal variables, "a number of external stimuli" and the party's age as additional internal variable as an "indicator of institutionalization" (p. 266). The first internal variable included in the model has been the "leadership change". Thus, it considers the possible change linked to a new party leadership personnel who may be committed to significant change, involving (or not) the primary goals of a party. While, the authors indicated as second internal variable the "change in dominant faction(s)". It is defined as the replacement of a faction (or a coalition of factions) in power by another with different positions on the party principal aspects. The two internal variables mentioned could potentially occur separately (i.e. a change of leadership without change in dominant faction(s) or vice versa), but when they are simultaneous their impact is supposed to be additive (Harmel & Janda, 1994, pp. 266-267). Instead, the external stimuli are considered as a group of multiple environmental changes that occur outside a party but that imply an adaptation within its organisation. They could be "universal stimuli within the system", such as constitutional reforms, relevant changes in the public funding or the emergence of new party/parties that challenge the parties already in the system, or "party specific", such as changes in the party level of support. Both stimuli may imply an "external shock" for the party in case of impacting on its primary goal, causing a "fundamental reevaluation of the party's effectiveness on that goal dimension" by the party' decision-makers (pp. 267-268). When an external shock coincides with a change of leadership and of dominant faction(s),

"the circumstances are optimal for broad, fundamental party change" (Harmel & Janda, 1994, p. 267).

Inspired by Strøm's (1990) analysis, Harmel and Janda (1994, pp. 269-271) categorised political parties in four groups according to their primary goals: "vote maximization", for parties which the primary goal is the electoral result in terms of votes; "office maximization", for parties which primarily aim at controlling the government, being part or influencing it; "policy/ideology advocacy", for parties which consider "policy purity" as the primary goal, more important of the electoral results or governmental influence; and lastly, "intraparty democracy maximization", for parties which prioritise the "members' wishes (i.e. the majority wishes)" recognising the members participation and representation as their primary goal[11].

Beyond the impacts of external shocks and power changes on primary goals re-evaluation, other dynamics and trends could drive party change. Between them, individualisation, institutionalisation and centralisation emerged as ones of the most relevant. Gauja (2015a) focused on how parties adapted their organisation and processes to social trends, in particular to party membership decline following the societal individualisation. According to her, individualisation involves the notion that citizens increasingly tend to "seek to fulfil their own private desires rather than the common good", implying two options for political parties (Gauja, 2015a, p. 92). On the one hand, parties could opt for a withdrawal from society (see the process of mutual withdrawal by Mair, 2005); on the other hand, they could change internal structures and processes adapting them to individual participation and communication, particularly through digital technologies. In the latter case, Gauja (2015a, p. 93) argued that the "parties' reorientation towards more individualised practices should be viewed more as a strategic device for citizen engagement rather than a grassroots' led movement". In particular, she pointed out some main implications of this adaptation, including the decrease of ideological commitments toward a problem-solving approach, in which members are called to propose resolutions, the promotion of political activity as "fun and exciting" and the prominence of "*ad hoc* engagement" on the "long-term commitment" (pp. 93-94).

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[11] See Section 1.6. for a specific analysis of Intra-Party Democracy.

Harmel and Svåsand (1993) identified three stages of party development towards institutionalisation that imply party change. First, in the identification period, the party develops its message and identity; second, during the organisation period, the party grows in terms of organisation and electoral weight; third, in the stabilisation stage, the party focuses on "establishing the party's credibility as well as dependability" (p. 71). Between the changes along the stages, the authors pointed out the routinisation of the mechanisms of control as a distinctive element of the second phase, which was not necessary in the first one, and easily managed by the leader and eventually few others representatives of the party. Indeed, during the second phase the party tend to be subjected to multiple tensions and more complex coordination issues due to the emergence of both bottom-up demands and factionalism. While, the assumption of the possibility for the party to join in a coalition government marks the transition from the second to the third stage. In that period the party stabilises the organisation "on two fronts: within the party, and with other parties", completing its institutionalisation (Harmel & Svåsand, 1993, p. 73). In this regard, Scarrow (2005, p. 13) defined institutionalisation as the "degree to which internal decision procedures are formalized". However, the priorities of the party during the stabilisation gradually move from consolidation of the processes and structure to the promotion of acceptability of the party as a possible coalition partner by other parties and the electorate, "solidifying a reputation as credible and dependable (or in one word, 'stable')" (Harmel & Svåsand, 1993, p. 73). Parties used to change along those stage-revealing institutionalisation as one of the most relevant drivers of change.

Lastly, author as Scarrow (2005) and Gerbaudo (2019; 2021), also included centralisation in the trends that impact parties' organisational models and their changes, particularly in analysing intra-party democracy (see Section 1.6.). According to Scarrow (2005, p. 13), centralisation "describes the extent to which decisions are made by a single group or decision body". Thus, it is strictly connected with the role of the leadership (as a single person or his/her group) on the decision-making of the party. Depending on the level of centralisation, a party may organise its structures and implement the processes differently; accordingly, an increase or a decrease in centralisation may imply significant party changes.

1.6. Intra-party democracy (IPD)

Intra-Party Democracy consist in the democratic level of the decision-making process of a party, including different and potentially conflictive democratic dimensions, e.g. participation, inclusiveness, de/centralisation and accountability (von dem Berge & Poguntke, 2017). Even if, there is no clear or common definition of what exactly is Intra-Party Democracy, some characteristics are always present. Quoting Borz and Janda (2020, p. 3) "the common understanding is that it covers the organisational structure of a political party" from its basic units to the top leadership and their power relations. According to Von dem Berge et al. (2013, p. 2) IPD is related to "the implementation of a minimum set of norms within the organisations of political parties" and requires at the same time "a certain level of inclusiveness" – i.e. the participation of party members in the decision-making - and "a certain level of decentralization" – a non-totally centralised decision-making process and "a certain level of autonomy" for subnational party units. Despite the democratic claim that has accompanied the establishment of mass parties and has never left the scene of the parties' rhetoric in the liberal system, the Intra-Party Democracy assumed a particular meaning within the crisis of legitimacy of the political system, and of citizens' participation. In particular, it tends to reflect a "desire to reduce the oligarchic tendencies of parties by creating a participatory revolution [in order to] overcome an intra-party democratic deficit' (Kenig, 2008, p. 241, in Ignazi, 2020). Already in 1999, Teorell argued that "maybe the most intuitive response is to demand of political parties, as of the systems of which they form a part, that they be democratically ruled" (p. 364).

In this frame, many parties are trying to be more in tune with society and to reduce the lack of parties' evolution in terms of organisation, mechanism and institutional innovations (Ignazi, 2020). Consequently, the focus of their action has broadened to include more procedures and initiatives - jointly with what has been previously-mentioned - and even a more mainstream strategy: moving towards the State in the search for financial resources (widely raising patronage and clientelism). Therefore, many parties' intents focused in strengthening and adapting their internal structures, "opening [them] up" to members and supporters (Ignazi, 2020), with the declared purpose of improving their IPD. This raises a problem in terms of the logic of validity - the main ideas, structures and laws behind party organisation - that were fixed decades ago, following the mass party model (and society) and it is still hegemonic today. The main attempts to foster change on IPD precisely seeks to

change and overcome traditional ways of organising. In this sense, new parties seem well-facilitated in experiencing original organisational formulae (Ignazi, 2020), but they are not the only ones engaging in this direction. As Scarrow (1999) argued, the IPD is one of the most common strategies to bring back citizens into the political arena. Clearly, this can have a twofold interpretation: on the one hand, an authentic democratic goal, on the other, a simple make-up tool of political elites to strengthen their power, or at least to legitimate and conserve it. Although widely identified, the political outcomes of this phenomenon still are not properly analysed and evaluated (Hazan & Rahat, 2010), leaving aside the fundamental relation between its aims and consequences.

As stated by von dem Berge and Poguntke, it is possible to identify "two fundamentally different logics" in the democratic decision-making: the "direct (plebiscitary) or representative (assembly-based) decision-making" (2017, p. 138). The first one makes the choice between predetermined alternatives prevail, potentially allowing a greater participation but disconnecting the vote from the discussion on the alternatives, i.e. without giving the possibility to modify them. The second one is based on deliberation within an assembly and it prioritises the open discussion over the substance. The representative nature of the assembly-based decision-making generally depends on both the intent of representing (and balancing) the different interests of the groups within the party, and logistic and timing reasons. Nevertheless, the introduction of new information and communication technologies and the implementation of participatory methodologies could open other possibilities in between the two different logics, and challenge the division of the Intra-Party Democracy on assembly-based and plebiscitary. For Instance, new parties as the German Pirates, the Italian Movimento 5 Stelle or the Spanish Podemos implemented online or hybrid processes and developed online tools for deliberation and decision-making (Scarrow et al., 2017, p. 4). Even some long-standing political parties can offer elements of analysis in this direction, as the British Labour Party in the reforming intent promoted during Jeremy Corbyn's leadership. It is important to note that parties are starting to discuss or implement innovative ways of internal democracy for a variety of reason, both internal and external. As we claimed before, the legitimation crisis – both of democracy and of political parties – is fostering these types of innovations. However, as Borz and Janda (2020, p. 5) said, "[t]he importance of party democracy as a goal is expected to vary across parties but also within parties across time depending on electoral or other party strategic goals. Some parties will be more prone and open to these innovations than others".

The level of openness of democratic processes within political parties is another crucial object in the IPD academic and political debate, i.e. who can take part in it and with which role. Historically, the parties are "membership-based organization with clear organizational boundaries between those who belong to the organization and those who remain outside" (von dem Berge & Poguntke, 2017, p. 138), generally through a formal inscription and regular financial contribution. Therefore, many of the party's internal democratic processes of the last decades have only been open to registered members. Nevertheless, attempting to broaden the audience with the aim of regaining legitimacy and to fight disaffection and anti-party feelings - widespread among citizens, as argued - in many recent cases, the parties took more inclusive choices. In some cases, sympathisers and voters have been included in the community of the party, upon their declaration, in others it was decided to open the democratic process to all citizens interested.

Even if the Intra-Party Democracy is a variegated and multi-level phenomenon, the literature tended to focus mainly on the "aggregation procedures" (Hazan & Rahat, 2010), especially on the candidate selection process, e.g. primary election (Gerber & Morton, 1998; Sandri *et al.*, 2015; Cross & Katz, 2013). This choice depends mainly on the large number of cases that have occurred in recent decades, their replicability in different party contexts and measurable results, especially in quantitative terms. In particular, the primary elections have been diffusely deployed during the last two decades in many countries by different parties, starting mainly by the social-democratic mass parties but passing to various other typologies of parties of the political panorama - up to reach systematic levels in the political arena of some countries. Nowadays, on the one hand they seem to be losing energy and attractive power in many countries and only in certain cases the growing role of electoral and competition principles and dynamics have supposed an internal shock for party organisations (Cross & Pilet, 2015); on the other, - despite a broad opening to new members and sympathisers - the growing role of intra-party competition tended to respond to the quest for internal legitimacy by party leadership, in many cases without real competition between candidates (Kitschelt, 1994; Rodríguez Teruel & Barberá, 2017). Overall - even if it seems like a key element, especially relevant to members and public opinion - the use of selective incentives to regain internal and external support did not foster credibility and thus legitimacy, on the contrary often this route lead to opposite effects (Ignazi, 2014). The primaries remain a precious source of data and an interesting object of study, but a broader

analysis is needed to research on Intra-Party Democracy and, more in general, on the role of participation in political parties.

Other procedures and initiatives compose IPD beyond the candidate selection process, particularly through processes and tools developed during the spread of the political party crisis. Part of the new or renewed procedures are still based on "aggregation procedures" aiming to carry out party's decision-making by voting mechanisms which require the members to take a position on a specific issue - and not only to select leadership or candidates – such as referenda. Even though it is an extremely important and recently growing process - especially via digital - its democratic consequences are far from satisfactory. As well as candidate selection processes, these types of procedures have been criticised, because - implying voting procedures - they often overcome the role of delegates, and the deliberation within the party. It tends to stress the electoral principle of democracy but it does not enhance other democratic aspects. In this regard, Ignazi (2020, p. 3) argued that "the idea that direct democracy was *the* way to democratise and revitalize parties revealed a negative consideration of the traditional multistage internal decision-making process, that is, delegate democracy" (cursive in the original). Whether this may be true, what is more surprising is to consider certain democratic developments – like voting for candidate selection or participating in the decision-making process – as direct democracy while is the typical case for "minimal" conceptions of democracy where citizens/members key (and maybe unique) democratic role is to choose between alternative sets of elites in an election (Schumpeter, 1943). Moreover, reducing participation in decision-making to mere binary choices, these types of procedures often end up enhancing leadership control over the party's decisions and downplaying the role of minorities (Katz & Mair, 1995).

Another part of the initiative and theoretical development has been focused on other types and principles of (internal party) democracy. It is based on a more complex and qualitative concept of IPD that does not consider voting as a sufficient condition for democracy within a party. Quoting Ignazi (2020, p. 14):

> "since democracy embodies not only decision-making but also the modality of decisions - decision by participation, according to Urbinati (2014) - voting for the leader and candidate selection, and on some policy proposals, is not a sufficient condition for democracy".

Exploring the sufficient and necessary conditions for IPD, some scholars have focused on inclusion and decentralisation (von dem Berge et al., 2013), or on more variables such as participation, competition or transparency (Hazan & Rahat, 2010). Between them, Ignazi (2020, p. 14) proposed four elements, "a quadrille for intra-party democracy". They are:

a. Inclusion: direct involvement of members in decision-making process.

b. Pluralism: as Sartori (2005) argued, parties are micropolitical systems, and freedom of dissent and the expression of different opinions have been traditionally limited in a wide range of political parties.

c. Deliberation: that goes against the plebiscitary - referendum like - decision making process. In this sense, even if cautiously, members can horizontally and vertically relate and discuss about policy proposals, in some way against the idea of mere individualization. So, "elements of a deliberative praxis which enforces direct, face-to-face relation in spite of a sporadic call to raise a hand. The party, being a collective enterprise, needs collective involvement" (p. 7).

d. Diffusion: the key role of leadership goes against the different layers within parties. Concentration and verticalization go against diffusion. Collective organs, intermediate layers, have been bypassed. So, it implies for Ignazi the re-empowerment of intra-party delegate democracy.

Ignazi (2020) included deliberative models within IPD discussion following the considerations of Wolkenstein (2016; 2018), while the traditional models include only a) candidate selection and b) direct participation. Wolkenstein argued that "[m]issing from these models are fora of discussion and debate" (2016, p. 297) and this is the logic of the models of deliberative democracy (see also Elster, 1986). According to him, rather than considering preferences as a given, the real and differential aspects of IPD is the process of establishing these preferences. As Teorell (1999, p. 367) argued, democracy should not consider the preferences as "*exogenous* to the process of preference aggregation" assuming that "citizens have *pre-politically established, private* preferences". Democracy, instead, "should be concerned with the rational *formation* of preferences through *public* discussion and debate, thereby making the formation of these preferences *endogenous* to the political process" (Teorell, 1999, p. 367). Following this principle, the deliberative models of democracy criticised the competitive models, and the (only) electoral logic in "aggregation procedures" of IPD; corresponding to a minimal definition of democracy. As pointed out in

the democratic theory debates, deliberative mechanisms can enhance and correct certain aspects, particularly - perfectly suitable for parties - through "discursive exchanges". According to Wolkenstein (2016, p. 301), they are internal discussions on ideology or specific policies, on the basis that "people's positions and perspectives are, at least to some degree, open to reassessment and revision". Wolkenstein (2016) distinguished three deliberative aspects: 1) the members (good) deliberation; 2) the results of these deliberations are transmitted to party elite (face-to-face or via elected delegates) and 3) the regular engagement between elite and members on their positions, the "deliberative accountability" (p. 302). In any case, he considered that this deliberative model will not completely replace the other two classic models, as they fulfil important tasks within parties. Rather, it can significantly help to correct and complement them. Furthermore, he argued that deliberative procedures could work better in the local branch of the party inasmuch it is close enough, with a relatively small number of party members but even the sufficient diversity - e.g. age, education, type of job - with ties that somehow bond them as members of the party allowing "good deliberation" (Wolkenstein, 2016; 2018). In this regard, digital platforms generated expectations for overcoming these limitations, at least logistically.

While, Pettitt (2012) contributed to the debate focusing on six factors that have an impact on IPD. The first one is the party's origin: depending on its origin, parties tend to develop different measures and intensities. The second is ideology, with especial reference to members of left parties who seem to be more prone in trying to control the parliamentary party. Third factor is the party age, as older parties tend to lose touch with their base. The fourth one is the government's ambition, as parties that want to compete for government must be much more efficient and faster in their decision-making process and consequently party discipline is especially relevant. This links with the fifth factor, i.e. the type of democracy - consensual or majoritarian following Lijphart's (1999) scheme. In majoritarian democracies, parties have to be more efficient and IPD generally is not considered the most efficient way of adopting decisions. On the contrary, the logics within consensual models of democracy may be more suitable for some internal discussion to arrive to mediations and agreements, more on the logic of office or policy seeking strategies, rather than mere vote-maximizing ones (Strøm, 1990). The last one is the size, that may also be important even if Pedersen (2010, in Pettitt 2012, p. 637) showed that there isn't a significant relationship between size and level of independence of the parliamentary group. As Pettitt claimed, the

size could be important when there is a relatively very low number of members, pass a certain number, it does not make a real difference.

Additionally, the direct participation models – that tended to implement a form of direct intra-party democracy via membership ballots ("aggregation procedures") – experimented also other ways, such as rotation schemes for Members of Parliament. In this regard, although Manin (1997) remembered that the basis of Athenian democracy was the lot and rotation and, for example, rotation is a traditional democratic procedure that has been used by different parties - such as the German Greens in the 1980s, the Catalan CUP or the Italian Radical Party (under the leadership of Marco Pannella) - this mechanism generally presents different problems. In the case of rotation, it may imply the lack of expertise granting power to the unelected experts. Moreover, membership voting may present problems because "the agenda-setter and the initiator are often the same actor, namely the party elite" (Wolkenstein, 2016, p. 300). Nevertheless, recently random-selection based procedures came back in the political debate with a renewed emphasis, particularly supported by democratic innovations experiences, such as Citizens' Assemblies (Warren & Pearse, 2008).

Despite participation within parties - especially IPD - in recent time, it has often been presented as the panacea to party crisis [easier said than done], various scholars disagreed to the opportunity of more democracy – particularly in term of inclusiveness - within parties and pointed out negative effects that it could have. Rahat et al. (2008, p. 674) argued that "enhanced inclusiveness in a particular voluntary association – parties – can have a negative impact on competition and representation, and thus on the overall health of democracy." They counterposed inclusiveness to other democratic dimensions that, according to them, are more worthy of support such as competition and representation. This critique is based on the main argument that parties need to perform their role in the democratic system as best as possible in order to achieve "electoral efficiency" (Shugart, 2001), i.e. "the translation of the will of a majority of voters into policies" (Rahat et al., 2008, p. 674). It implies that other aspects – such as intra-party participatory democracy – need to be limited if they risk to undermine the party cohesion and the "electoral efficiency." Moreover, according to Rahat et al. (2008, 674), parties as voluntary associations are free to choose and use "differential incentives to encourage higher, more sincere, levels of activism beyond the candidate selection event itself". This impact to "the differential structure of rewards in parties", which, for instance, inclusiveness in candidate selection may jeopardise by levelling senior

members and new ones, or even empowering the latter to disempower the activist component of the party on the ground (Katz, 2014). Ignazi (2020) defined these dynamics as the counterpart of "opening up", which tendentially implies "less relevance and effectiveness" for party membership, activists and middle-level elites (Aylott & Bolin, 2017).

Furthermore, Ignazi (2020, p. 12) argued that "[m]embers' empowerment is motivated also by internal pressures and power conflicts", or as a form of affirmation of the leadership against other party actors or, at the contrary, as a way for challenging and overturning the leadership by "competing minority factions." In both cases, often "the membership is employed as a masse de manoeuvre to be thrown against the contenders." According to Rahat et al. (2008, p. 673), in the logic of the cartel party democratisation, i.e. intraparty participation, "supports oligarchic tendencies" and enhances "decision-making power at the top." In this frame, Katz (2014, p. 188) pointed out the existence of a potential conflict between IPD and "the Downsian understanding of the principal–agent relationship between parties and the electorate", i.e. "each candidate or party in public office is vying to be selected as the agent of the whole electorate, while at the same time trying to satisfy (act as the agent of) the associated party on the ground." He used the popular expression "no man can serve two masters" to argued that instead politicians are called to serve "two masters", i.e. a specific political community and the society as a whole. (Rahat & Shapira, 2017). Often, this generates conflicts in deciding between the policy promises by the party and the policy compromises required by the role in the government (Katz, 2014). Moreover, according to his vision, IPD risks – assuming "the autonomy of the party in public office from the party on the ground" – to disunite and unbalance the social structure of the party in existence that becomes uncoherent with the social structure at the basis of the IPD, which requires "a straight-forward principal-agent understanding of democracy" (Katz, 2014, p.189). Criticisms of internal democracy in political parties retraced an established theory supported by authors such as Schattschneider (1942, p. 60) and summarised by the expression "[d]emocracy is not to be found in the parties but between the parties", thus organisational level democracy should not be considered a prerequisite for large-scale democratic politics.

Nevertheless, intra-party democracy counts on sound support not only between scholars - with due scientific rigor and pros and cons analysis - but also international organisations that acknowledge the importance of IPD (Rahat & Shapira, 2017). For instance, the European

Commission for Democracy through Law, named Venice Commission, in its Code of Good Practice in the Field of Political Parties identified "to reinforce political parties' internal democracy" as "its explicit aim" (Venice Commission, 2009, p. 2). In any case, IPD is not the solution to all parties' problems and caution is needed in distinguishing between some innovations or procedures that may sound or look as democratic in their formulation and rationale, but in practice, they help foster the leadership's control over the organisation and silent organised minorities within parties. For instance, if a specific innovation fosters individual participation against middle range bodies of the party, or develop more direct mechanisms of decision-making, they can increase leadership control rather than empower membership or society at large. It is necessary to take into account how these mechanisms are regulated and implemented and, even more importantly, it is necessary to understand how these innovations fit within current ideas or dimensions of democracy. In this regard, the prevalent disconnection between democracy theorists and party's scholars assumes particular relevance. As well as it is not possible to consider prima facie a country as democracy just because it holds elections for selecting their leader/s, it is not acceptable to consider a party democratic (or more democratic) just because it organises primaries. Even if Borz and Janda (2020, p. 4) stated that "democracy as a concept has different interpretations, the same concept applied to party organisation risks to bring confusion to the field", they also argued that "[d]emocratic theory has made significant empirical advances (Varieties of democracy 2017), and IPD should follow similar systematic empirical routes".

1.6.1. IPD data and analysis

The empirical analysis of party organisations and IPD has fostered empirical research efforts, such as the Political Party Database Project (PPDB), led by Poguntke, Scarrow and Webb (2016). Presenting the first data and its possible uses, they argued, inspired by Bagehot, that internal party organisation was the "dignified element" of the party while the party in public office was the efficient party. Even if the latter has been considered much more important, internal organisation generates legitimacy, which is especially relevant considering the political parties' current crisis. Their data is based in a conceptualisation of party organisation described in terms of structures, resources and representative strategies (Poguntke et. al, 2016), mainly focusing on the "official story", i.e. they rely on party statues and procedures, while the practice itself can be significantly different. Their analysis, comparing both across countries and across party families, showed some interesting aspects.

In terms of resources - that include money, party's staff and members - they observed that firstly, the members-electorate ratios are decreasing everywhere; secondly, that parties widely depend in a large extent on public funding. And finally, they detected that there is some disparity regarding party financing across the countries, for instance German, French and Spanish parties resulted "richer" in terms of budget and party staff. For this analysis, they used the country-level variations instead of the party family one (Poguntke et. al 2016), particularly considering the growing process of constitutionalisation that have regulated the parties' finances and resources in many countries.

In terms of internal structure of party organisations, they found a "striking similarity in what might be termed the organizational skeletons of the parties" (Poguntke et. al 2016, p. 670). Most parts of the parties analysed applied the "subscriber democracy organizational model in which dues-paying members are the polis for most or all important decisions" (p. 669) and the party conference was the highest organ. Almost all parties included representative structures in their process of decision-making and the existence of smaller executive committees was widespread. Finally, party statues used to attribute markedly different levels of power to the formal role of the leader, in particular with differences according to the party families: "Far Right families give their leaders most formal power and the Left Socialists least" (p. 668). While the core party bodies tend to show a certain level of similarities between parties, in the linkage between the party and society it is possible to observe significative differences. In this regard, two different aspects need to be considered: on the one hand, the role of party members in the party's decision-making, including program elaboration, personnel selection and other intra-party decision-making processes; on the other, organisational decentralisation (and its relation with inclusiveness). They distinguish two variants of IPD, depending on their "approach to discerning the will of the group" (Poguntke et. al 2016, p. 671). First, the Assembly-based IPD takes decision in meetings, with participants debating on propositions and then taking the decision. Second, the Plebiscitary IPD separates the debate and decision-making periods, with the latter decided via voting by mass members. Both cannot be considered as more or less democratic per se. It depends on the specific mix of each variant in a given party. Even if, in different occasions, the evidences show that plebiscitary measures have been developed for legitimating (or enhancing) leadership decisions and autonomy, rather than empowering members. It is important to underline that Poguntke et. al (2016) focused mainly - almost exclusively - on the official story. In a logical way, it is easier, more reliable, objective and comparable to

focus more on these types of data than in their implementation and informal practices. Nevertheless, official story ends up leaving aside a difficult but fundamental part of the analysis.

1.6.2. The process of constitutionalisation of IPD

When the idea of cartelisation enlightened about the great importance of the relation between parties and the State, consequently increased the attention on the way parties organise around this "new" relation (Katz & Mair, 1995), including the role that the law played in their internal and external functions and organisations. Therefore, one of the most important aspect when we speak about intra-party democracy is to consider that in many cases, some of the most prominent features of party organisation and some level of intra-party democracy are regulated by the State, or at least influenced by it. For this reason - especially in the last decades of XX century and the beginning of the XXI - academic literature focused on the processes of constitutionalisation of political parties and on the development of party laws aiming at democratic deepening and regulation, i.e. juridification of parties (van Biezen & Borz, 2012; van Biezen & ten Napel, 2014; and Borz, 2017). It confirmed that parties are considered key actors for the hold over the democratic system. van Biezen and Borz (2012) argued that the inclusion of political parties in the state constitutions have been diffusely carried out in different moments. The first wave began just after World War II with the German constitution (art. 21), in which the party's democratic role and structure is clearly defined for the first time in a constitution. In comparison to other post-WWII constitution - in Italy, for example, citizens were entitled to freely associate in parties for competing in elections (art. 49) - the Bonn Basic law included a more detailed and broad regulation. To begin with, it recognised the unique role of parties in helping in shaping the political will of the people. Accordingly, their structure has to be democratic and their functions have to be transparent.

Secondly, it is stated that those parties, which goals or behaviour go against freedom or democracy in the German Republic, will be declared unconstitutional. This decision has been particularly inspired by the concept of "militant democracy" (Müller, 2012). Finally, party regulation is delegated to federal laws. The second wave of constitutionalisation started with the so-called third wave of democratisation (Huntington, 1991), and progressively saw the mention and recognition of political parties in the constitutions of 28

European countries out of 33 (not in the UK, for example, as it does not have a formal and written constitution). In recent times, many other countries regulated political parties and their activities, especially in Central and Eastern Europe and also in Latin America (Ignazi, 2020). As van Biezen and Borz (2012) noted, this process has happened in both old and new democracies, showing a change also in the way parties, their roles and functions, are currently conceptualised. Despite significant differences in the countries' regulation in terms of range of categories and magnitude (or level of detail), almost all countries present growing trend in parties' regulation. In this frame, van Biezen and Borz (2012, p. 348) distinguished three different models of party constitutionalisation. In the first model, named "defending democracy", parties are associated to fundamental rights (such as freedom of expression or association) and the regulation focuses more on the activity and behaviour of extra-parliamentary parties, which in some specific cases can be banned. While in the second, "parties in public office", the regulation is more centred on the parties' role in elections and government, considering in particular parties' functional role.

Finally in the third, "parties as public utilities", regulation focuses on few crucial democratic principles and public resources, and recognise the role of parties as a way to achieve participation, representation and expression of popular will. However, constitutionalisation is not the only regulation concerning parties. According to Katz (in van Biezen & Casal-Bertoa, 2014), the level of regulation of parties goes well beyond what could be considered acceptable in other private institutions. Indeed, parties have gained recognition of their crucial role in democratic politics, polity and regulation, e.g. from the way they behave or can access resources externally, to how they organise and manage the party internally. Borz (2017, pp. 103-104) identified six justification and benefits of the constitutional regulation of parties and their legitimation. In all of them the differential role of parties in democracy emerged, jointly with the need for special control due to their privileged access to power – including the possibility of excluding antisystem parties –, and the need for resources. Ignazi as well stated that "the intrusion of the law in the party domain has a positive side effect", being "a sort of warranty for the party existence" (2020, p. 14). The parties' essential role in democratic process is attested by law and it contribute to the recognition of parties as "legitimate actors in the delegation chain", i.e. the state provides guarantees in place of parties in crisis of legitimacy. Nevertheless, Ignazi (2020, p. 14) pointed out even the risks of the processes of constitutionalisation and juridification of parties. This process implied

that parties turned into "semi-public agencies" (Epstein, 1986) and it increased the risks of governmental control on them and their activities.

1.6.3. Multidimensional IPD

One of the main problems dealing with Intra Party Democracy (IPD) is the scarce structured connections between the discussion of IPD and the democratic theory and its principles. As widely mentioned, there are different ways, dimensions and factors for conceptualising IPD. Fundamentally, each of those aspect can be seen able to foster more or less IPD. However, some mechanisms may appear more democratic but it may not be the case in empirical terms. For this reason, to include democratic theory principles on the discussion of IPD is extremely relevant. Indeed, it can help to analyse and comprehend in a more structured way the different procedure, tools and channels that parties may develop looking for democracy at the internal level, in a multidimensional perspective of democracy. In this regard, the arguments and hypotheses made by Poguntke et al. (2016) provided a good example. Analysing how different countries and party families adopt assembly or plebiscitary mechanisms (albeit they show different choices depending on party family and empirically), according to them, "[t]hey do not, however, always meet the obvious theoretical expectations". For example, as they argued, the Greens "are associated with calls for democratisation of public life, overall they have only a mid-range score on our plebiscitary index" (p. 672), but they rank the highest on inclusion on assembly-based intra-party politics. At the opposite, the authors registered mid-score on assembly policies and low on plebiscitary values for other party families conform to conventional wisdom like Christian-Democrats/Conservative party family. Thus, intra-party democracy similarly to democracy should not be considered and evaluated as mono-dimensional, since that the parties or party families could rely on different procedures involving different democratic dimensions and typologies, such as aggregative procedures, or inclusive, pluralistic or egalitarian ones (which tend to include different perceptions, sensibilities and diversity rather than the mere majoritarian logic of the option with more votes). Therefore, to define one procedure more democratic than another is not possible *a priori*, since they could both be equally democratic, depending on the type of model or principle of democracy we are using.

García Lupato and Meloni (2020) introduced a scheme for analysing IPD, in particular following the democratic principles summarised by the Varieties of Democracy (VoD) index

(Coppedge et. al., 2019) and applied by them to parties, specifically to the Intra-Party Democracy (see also Borz & Janda, 2020). Their operations are based on five dimensions of democracy, derived from the five principles used to evaluate the democratic levels of States. The authors adapted the five democratic principles, defining them in IPD terms as:

1) Electoral Principle: the main logic is "making rulers responsive to citizens" (Coppedge et. al., 2019, p. 39) and this is mainly achieved through electoral competition between two or more groups or leaders or parties for the electoral approval, in line with Schumpeter's postulates. This includes freedom of expression, information, secret votes, and all the aspects that guarantee free and fair elections.

2) Liberal principle: the emphasis is on the protection of individual and minority rights "against the tyranny of the state and the tyranny of the majority" (Coppedge et. al., 2019, p. 40). In this case, it means the limits on government and the constitutional protection of civil liberties, rule of law, independent judiciary, division of power, etc.

3) Deliberative Principle: the focus is on the process by which decisions are taken. Public reasoning and common good are the basis of political decisions. So, it goes well beyond a mere logic of aggregation and focus on the process of deliberation and the way ideas are formed, with citizens opened to persuasion.

4) Participatory Principle: emphasises the "active participation by citizens in all political processes, electoral and non-electoral" (Coppedge et. al., 2019, p. 40). It counteracts the logic of electoral democracy and supposes a certain unease with the idea of representation. Hence, direct rule is preferred, with direct democracy and subnational bodies playing a more relevant role.

5) Egalitarian principle: considers "material and immaterial inequalities [that] inhibit the exercise of formal rights and liberties" (Coppedge et. al., 2019, p. 41) and, consequently, negatively affects the participation of certain groups. It is based on the idea of equal possibilities of participation for some specific groups, defined by gender, race, language religion, sexual identity and so forth.

Applying these principles for analysing IPD measures and mechanisms, it is possible to observe in general terms how the analysis of a certain procedure (such as aggregation measures or deliberative ones) could tell just one part of the story. Hence, the focus on electoral or participatory aspects of democracy, that often prevails on IPD analysis, tends to mirror certain models of democracy while not providing solutions to other important democratic aspects. Sometimes, even electoral principles are not fully achieved, for example in the case of primary election with just one candidate (Rodríguez Teruel & Barberá, 2017).

1.7. Technopolitics and digital IPD

The digital dimension deeply permeated politics at different levels, as it is inevitable in the 21st century. More than 20 years ago, the term technopolitics has been elaborated to express "the ability of competing actors to envision and enact political goals through the support of technical artefacts" (Gagliardone, 2014, p. 3). Among the first, Lebkowski and Rodotà in the same year, the 1997, contributed to the academic debate with two different visions of technopolitics. Lebkowski (1997) limited his definition to broad-based decision-making applied by groups with minimal organisation and narrow political agenda generally linked to constitutional integrity. Rather, Rodotà (1997) applied technopolitics to the traditional political spectrum, on the one hand improving its range and challenging the status quo, on the other risking to water down it (Kurban et al., 2017). Technopolitics considers the role of technologies in terms of political power and attributes to the present time a peculiar technopolitical contingency. In this context, the ICTs, especially Internet, have been identified as a great opportunity to enhance democracy (Lebkowsky, 1997), particularly in terms of citizen empowerment and resistance (Kellner, 2001). Technopolitics tends to choose the individual in a network as a "basic unit" (van Dijk, 2006) and the bottom-up as a participative approach. The first terrain of elaboration and study were the social movements. Nevertheless, it is recognised the applicability to many different political and social contexts. Between them, this thesis picks the "organizational (internal)" technopolitical strategies, defined as "using ICTS in political organization in particular for the purposes of cheap and easy ways of communication and organization, such as crowdfunding, crowdsourcing, candidate selection, e-campaigning" (Kurban et al., 2017, p. 507). In this frame, quoting Edwards and Hecht (2010, pp. 256-257), it is important to specify that "(t)hese technologies are not in and of themselves technopolitical. Rather, the practice of using them in political processes and/or toward political aims constitutes technopolitics." Scholars have been studying the impact of technology and social media on democracy for more than two decades, with differing views, moving "from optimism (if not euphoria) to pessimism (if not despair)" (Diamond, 2019, p. 20). Even if the consideration that digital technologies have not fulfilled the high expectations for politics is widely recognised (Diamond, 2019), new technologies have certainly become a relevant aspect of the organisation and strategies of a large part of the political panorama.

The academic debate on technopolitics integrates a broader literature on e-democracy that

focused mainly on the public space. Concerning the usage of new technologies, generally the public authorities and agencies tended to prioritise two areas: on one side the delivery of tailor-made services for the individual needs of the citizens, as a form of e-government; on the other the provision and dissemination of information by website and application without interaction and the accountability. A vast body of research on the subject focus on cases of study linked to these typologies (Torres et al., 2006; Chadwick & May, 2003). In more recent times, the public space has been increasingly involved in digital processes, especially at the local level, aiming at what Tsagarousianou et al. (1998) defined "most electronic democracy" that aims to overcome e-government or online information. However, the processes inspired by this broader concept, such as digital participatory budgeting, are experimenting similar difficulties and challenges analysed for democratic experiments or innovations (category in which they are generally included, see Smith, 2009). Many researches on the topic mainly focused on the analysis of single tool/element, others - less but increasingly - analysed the systemic impacts in terms of participants' engagement, quality and the effectiveness of the processes. Between them, the studies on "multi-channel participatory systems" centre on institutions that systemically integrate different participatory channels targeted to different audiences in order to engage the citizens in the political decision-making (Spada et al., 2016).

As technopolitics, e-democracy, e-government and so forth have flooded democracy, parties have also widely adopted digital tools, in particular for promoting digital participation and enhancing their Intra-Party Democracy. This is true for both new parties, as well as established parties in a reforming and/or opening phase. However, even if they are pursuing digital democracy, the digital dimension has been marginal in much of the theoretical and empirical discussion. In the last years the attention on this dimension increased, especially linked to new parties that claim for the use of technologies as identity element, beyond the traditional parties uses. As already mentioned, one of the most recent theorisations in this frame is the research by Gerbaudo (2019), on the "digital party". The digital party is particularly characterised by the focus on digital technologies as tools for democratisation, addressing the democratic crisis with particular reference to the limits of representation and political mandate. Technologies particularly impact on IPD of digital parties as they developed and use digital tools and platforms to move online an important part of their decision-making process, with the purpose of promoting the direct action of citizens in political decisions, transparency and accountability. In particular, the three platform he

analysed are the *Rousseau* platform by Five Star Movement, the *Participa* participation system by Podemos and the *LiquidFeedback* democracy app by Pirate Parties (Gerbaudo, 2019). Digital parties claim to update political parties and democratic system to modern times and to the ongoing technological revolution, which has changed the society and the relations between citizens, but still not the relations and the links between citizens, institutions and power. On the one hand, a utopian view of technology drives the digital parties' strategies for the democratisation of the "structures and processes of traditional parties that are accused of having contributed in making politics excessively bureaucratic, opaque and corrupt" (Gerbaudo, 2019, p. 4). On the other, they tend to follow the operational model of digital companies that allow them to astonishingly grow in the short term. As well as digital corporations they "constantly seeks to expand its database, the list, or 'stack', of contacts that it controls, i.e. they are "data hungry" (Gerbaudo, 2019, p. 5).

Nevertheless, neither the functional nor the ideological dimension is sufficient to explain the centrality of digital in their identity and action. Digital parties are essentially linked to their primary target: so-called "connected outsiders." Gerbaudo defined them as "people who are caught in a condition of dissonance between their cultural and socio-economic conditions" (2019, p. 43), that often coincide with the "people of the Web", who already sympathise with the digital revolution's principles and believes in its potential. Digital party is an evolution - or addition – of other aforementioned new parties' models and categories theorised, similarly to other categories that focus on the relationship between parties and digital, such as the "platform parties" (Lioy et al., 2019) and the "cyber-parties" (Margetts, 2001, 2006). Even if these new categories have generally been presented in relation to the emergence of new political parties, the authors of this thesis tend to consider them as a precious reference to describe an ongoing phenomenon that cross several political projects, rather than as a fixed definition of a specific political party category or model.

1.7.1. Party digitalisation

Not only are digital parties currently digitalising their procedures, tools and structure. Indeed, nowadays digitalisation is a cross-party tendency, widespread between parties belonging to different families, with different histories (new and traditional ones) and categorised within different models. In particular, digital technologies can perform three roles in political parties:

A) Facilitating: Digital technologies can help parties to do things in a faster, cheaper and more inclusive way, allowing the arrival of huge number of militants and supporters. It does not imply deep innovations because those procedures were already in practice, but now can be more efficient. For example, the party and/or leaders' communication with militants or the organisation of votes in primaries or selection of candidates.

B) Enhancing: Some procedures or processes, normally limited to very relevant or important decisions, can be used in a more continuous, widespread and fast way, increasing the scale and scope of some initiatives. In this sense, they can foster participatory procedures, such as voting for different party decisions, in a more constant and continuous way (from coalition agreements to daily political decisions), which was impossible previously due to the lack of time and rising costs.

C) Innovating: Doing something new that was not possible to do before digital technologies. This can be the case of internal deliberative procedures, where digital technologies allow the inclusion of thousands of militants and supporters who are spatially dispersed for organising an inclusive and open dialogue.

Beyond some parties that have used digital technologies in innovative ways (such as digital parties, Gerbaudo, 2019), many others tended to employ them mainly to facilitate and enhance their tools and processes, since they are "mostly interested in the technology as a means to continue performing their existing functions, only to a better level" (Gibson et al., 2004, p. 198). According to Dommett et al. (2020, p. 3), parties used digital technology mainly to involve citizens in daily campaigning and to be perceived closer to the electorate (see also Lioy et al., 2019), while it is "not seen to have revolutionised party organisation". On the contrary, the authors argued that it "has led to new forms of elite dominance and control", promoting "what Stromer-Galley has called 'controlled-interactivity' in the adoption of digital tools" (Dommett et al., 2020, p. 3). However, Dommett et al. (2020, pp. 3-4) pointed out two tendencies that could partially hinder the elite's control. On the one hand, the "elite intentions do not always translate into grassroots practices", on the other hand, "elite power is not as uniform as might be supposed" revealing layered party structures generally limiting the centralisation of the power.

Accordingly, the same authors categorised "five different digital adoption practices" at user/member level (based on empirical study on the British Labour Party): "adherence,

entrepreneurship, laggard, renegade and refusenik practices". The first category, "adherence", involves a high use of the digital tools organised by the central party, with generally high level of satisfaction and receptivity. While, the second behaviour, defined as "entrepreneurship", also includes high usage of digital tools but, differently from the "adherence" category, they are not limited to the tools offered by the central party. Indeed, this practice integrates or replaces some of those tools for party' activities or with "mundane tools" (usually already in use between members) or with "more specialist software" (generally considering the central party tools as insufficient or inadequate).

The "laggard" practice (third category) is defined as a "limited and often inefficient" use of official digital tools, tendentially linked to negative experiences with the tool provided by the central party to members. Generally, this category includes members with difficulty using new technologies and/or with preference for non-digital techniques. The fourth category, named "renegade", has been defined through two characteristics: on the one hand, the general "low levels of digital usage", on the other, the use of digital tools that tend to be "unofficial rather than provided by the party". According to the authors, this is mainly due to the preference for "familiar services and platforms", ending up in the use of generic tools for activities, such as emails. Lastly, the "refusenik" practice makes reference to members (especially of some local parties) who do "not to demonstrate any form of engagement with official or unofficial digital tools". Generally, this practice based on sceptical attitudes on digital technologies, at least for political use. Therefore, two categories make use of non-official party digital tools ("entrepreneurship" and "renegade") and one does not use digital tools at all ("refusenik"). On these three categories the leadership (or central party) has limited opportunities for control and influencing activities through the previously-mentioned "controlled interactivity" (Dommett et al., 2020, pp. 7-9).

One of the widespread impact factors of digital technologies in political parties – new and established – regarding the information, particularly the possibility to reduce the "information asymmetry" between the leadership and the party base. According to (Katz, 2014, pp.188-189), this asymmetry "inevitable in any principal-agent relationship" has been challenged by "the increases in education and information accessibility through broadcast media, and more recently through the Internet." It makes "more likely that party members will feel competent to question their leaders", reducing the possibility for parties to control the media and "encapsulate their supporters in environments in which most information is

filtered through the party organization", or at least forcing them to find other control techniques and strategies.

In general terms, digital and parties – in particular their intra-party democracy - seem destined to be more and more deeply combined. Once again, the open questions remain focused on the democratic level and quality: how much and which democratic quality does digital intra-party democracy guarantee? Is it more democratic than the "traditional" one?

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Case study research methodology

The thesis adopted the Case study research as methodology and research strategy, particularly according to the indications of Merriam (1998) and Stake (1995; 2006). The contribution of Yin (1994; 2014) is also considered fundamental, even if the constructivist approach to case study research by Merriam (1998) prevails on his post-positivism[12]. Indeed, the author shares what affirmed by Harrison et al. (2017, p. 24): "the researcher assumes that reality is constructed intersubjectively through meanings and understandings developed socially and experientially". As argued by Brown (2008, p. 9), summarising the influences of the three authors above-mentioned, the "case study research is supported by the pragmatic approach of Merriam, informed by the rigour of Yin and enriched by the creative interpretation described by Stake".

There are various interpretations on the definition of Case study research in the literature, which reflect different approaches and visions. Yin (1994) described the Case study as social inquiry and identified the research process as key elements. As he stated: "a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (1994, p. 13). While, Merriam (1998) defined the case study – particularly the qualitative case study - in terms of its "end product" (1998), reaffirming that "a qualitative case study is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit" (Merriam, 1988, p. 21). While, Stake (1995) underlined the importance of the context to study a case and considered case study research as "the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances" (Stake, 1995, in Harrison et al., 2017, p. 12), stressing in particular the interpretative role of the researcher. Lastly, Gerring (2004) focused on the aim of "generalization" in the Case study research and on the boundary of each case. He defined case study as "an intensive study of single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger of (similar) units. A unit connotes a spatially bounded phenomenon - e.g., a nation-state, revolution, political party, election, or person-observed at a single point time or over some delimited period of time" (2004, p. 342). These definitions express different points of view but they are not contradictory. Indeed, the methodological choice of case study research for

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[12] I.e. the approach to case study research described as "realist perspective" (2014, p. 17) and the claim for maintaining objectivity in the methodological processes (Harrison et al., 2017).

this thesis corresponds to the intention of deeply analysing circumscribed cases in their contexts in order to investigates and interpret a contemporary phenomenon. That for this thesis is the role of the members' participation in reshaping the political parties' organisation and in facing the crisis of legitimisation towards members and citizens, with particular focus on the Intra-Party Democracy procedures and other hybrid forms of citizens' engagement that were implemented by two parties in the last decade, looking for new processes and tools for promoting engagement and consensus.

The Case study research can be declined under a large number of categories theorised by the principal authors of this methodological community (e.g. Yin, 1994; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 2006). A tailor-made selection of them may help the researchers to identify, delimit and reflect on the study's objects and on their approach to the topic. Thus, this thesis project is categorised by its author as comparative analysis between multiple, instrumental (Stake, 2006) heuristic (Merriam, 1998) and explanatory (Yin, 1994) cases. Each of these adjectives (categories) needs an explanation, in terms of the meaning and the choices made. Firstly, the indications of Stake (2006) are taken as reference for multiple cases study research. He defined it as "a research design for closely examining several cases linked together" (Stake, 2006, p. V). Although the thesis project chooses to analyse two empirical objects, which is a limited number (between the multiple cases standard and the single case research), some key elements of the multiple cases study are considered precious for this study, in particular the balanced relation between the deep examination of each case and the "quintain" analysis. Stake defined the "quintain" as "an object or phenomenon or condition to be studied - a target, but not a bull's eye. In 'multicase' study, it is the target collection. In program evaluation, we may call it an 'evaluand'; in music, it may be a 'repertoire'" (Stake, 2006, p. 6). The above-mentioned balanced relation is based on the centrality of the case, as argued by Stake "a multicase study of a program is not so much a study of the quintain as it is a study of cases for what they tell us about the quintain" (Stake 2006, p. 7). Therefore, the cases are taking into consideration in order to examine the "quintain" without compromising the deep analysis of each, rather considering them the research essence. Secondly, strictly related to the multiple cases study choices, the cases in analysis are considered "primarily instrumental", i.e. "the purpose of case study is to go beyond the case" (Stake, 2006, p. 8). The interest on the overall phenomenon (quintain) - within its context(s) - determines the instrumental nature of the cases.

Thirdly, using a categorisation of Merriam (1998), the thesis project cases tend to have "heuristic quality". A case study is defined "heuristic" - differentiating from "particularistic" or "descriptive" – when: a) "explain the reasons for a problem, the background of a situation, what happened, and why"; b) "explain why an innovation worked or failed to work"; c) "discuss and evaluate alternatives not chosen"; d) "evaluate, summarize, and conclude, thus increasing its potential applicability" (Merriam, 1998, p. 30). Specifying, Brown argued, "a heuristic case study is able to shed light on the phenomenon, allowing the reader to extend their experience, discover new meaning, or confirm what is known. It explains the reasons for a problem, the background of the situation, what happened, and why" (Brown, 2008, p. 3). At the same time, the term "heuristic" suggests a hypothetical direction that is assumed as guiding idea in the research of the facts. As in the case of the role of participation in the re-legitimisation of political parties that is in constant change - particularly in the current democratic crisis - the thesis aims to offer a contribution that must be deepened and analysed according to the evolution of the trajectory of political parties within the present and the future's context.

Lastly, Yin (1994) provided another important categorisation based on the study's aim, reflected in the research question purpose: exploratory, explanatory, interpretive, or descriptive. In particular, exploratory and explanatory case study are particularly appropriated "to gain an understanding of the issue in *real life settings* and recommended to answer *how and why* or less frequently, *what* research questions" (Harrison et al., 2017, p. 28). According to the research's objectives that overcome the phenomenon description, the case study research of this thesis tends to have explanatory characteristic. In addition, the explanatory and heuristic attributes of this research borrowed some elements from the Grounded theory by Glaser and Strauss (1967), although the chosen methodology is markedly different. The Grounded theory is considered a "strategy of comparative analysis for generating theory" that "puts a high emphasis on *theory as process*" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 32). In their vision, the verification phase does not necessarily follow the elaboration in order to test a new theory, rather verification and elaboration can walk together in order to generate a theory process directly from the ground. In particular, the concept of "empirical generalizations" elaborated in this theory contributed to the thesis methodology, as stated by Glaser and Strauss (1967, p 24), "by comparing where the facts are similar or different, we can generate properties of categories that increase the categories' generality and explanatory power".

According to Yin (1994, p. 14), the Case study research can be based "on any mix of quantitative and qualitative evidence." Moreover, Yin (1994), Stake (1995) and Merriam (1998) tended to encourage the coexistence on both quantitative and qualitative methods in the research design (Harrison et al., 2017). In particular, "Merriam's approach demonstrates that when the integrity of the design is robust, methodological flexibility can be accommodated" (Harrison et al., 2017, p. 27). However, both Merriam and Stake are considered key authors for qualitative research and their indications particularly fitted in the qualitative paradigm. This thesis has been designed with a multimethod approach that combines qualitative and quantitative analysis. On the one hand the qualitative methods assume a pivoting role, considering both the research objects and the author's background, on the other the quantitative data are considered fundamental for the analysis (although not always accessible, as experienced in fieldwork). The choice responded both to the desire to dialogite the political science debates on the topic(s), with a certain level of credibility and concreteness recognised by the academic community, both for properly analysing new and complex processes, overcoming the mono-dimensional analysis that focus on the official story of the parties, i.e. relying on party statues and procedures, while the practice itself can be significantly different. For instance, the same parameters used for liberal and representative democracy are generally not appropriate to study participation in the perspective of a high-intensity democracy, or at least needs to be integrated.

2.2. The Framework and the Research Design

The aim of this thesis is to analyse the role of participation in the reshaping of political parties' organisation, with particular focus on the research for engagement and consensus through Intra-Party Democracy procedures and other hybrid forms of citizen's engagement within political parties, implemented by new and renewed parties in the last decade. In particular, the thesis' time frame included the evolution since Podemos' foundation in January 2014 and the beginning of Jeremy Corbyn's leadership in September 2015 and I present data until the third Podemos congress (*la tercera Asamblea Ciudadana Estatal*) in May 2020, for Podemos, and the end of Jeremy Corbyn's leadership in April 2020, for the Labour. The time interval has been selected to encompass different phases of the parties taken into examination, from the rise of claims on participation within and through the party (or from their relaunch with a new leadership), up to narrative decline, steps back and

changes in the parties' congresses.

The main research question of the thesis is: **What role has been given to members' participation in the reshaping of political parties' organisation, in view of their crisis of perceived legitimacy?**

The sub-questions - that arise around the topic - addressed by the thesis are:

Q1: How some political parties have tried to strengthen their internal democracy facing the party crisis? What are the roles of their membership?

Q2: Which innovations have been implemented by the political parties in IPD? Did new and renewed parties implement similar processes and tools?

Q3: To what extent is internal participation leading to new model(s) of political parties?

Q4: What has been the role of digital technologies in fostering participation within political parties? Did technologies foster internal democracy or strengthen leadership's control?

The thesis seeks to answer these questions to test the following research hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): In parties that recognise participation (even if regulated and limited in time) as a fundamental value, it is promoted as an identity and a distinctive element of the party, in particular aiming at increasing the membership and rekindling political parties' legitimacy in front of the electorate.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): The party's procedures towards individual members (generally through digital technologies) tend to promote a disintermediated participation that ends up favouring the leadership.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): The digitalisation tends to work better for aggregative Intra-Party Democracy processes and tools, while it struggles for other dimensions such as inclusion or deliberative ones.

Hypothesis 4 (H4): New parties committed to participation tend to develop more procedures for the members' participation (with a higher level of innovation) in comparison to traditional parties with the same commitment, but those new parties tend to also experience more setbacks in the members' participation than the traditional ones.

In this frame, some variables substantiated the analysis. They are:

- Independent variable: the representative democracy and the 'Western' democratic crisis.

- Intervenient variables: the party systems including the electoral law, the political culture of the countries communities and the individual party's characteristics including the parties' ideology, external relations, history and legacies.

- Dependent variable: Interpretation of participation expressed by the party during the time frame of analysis; Intra-Party Democracy procedures (processes and tools), and other hybrid forms of citizen's engagement within political parties; use of digital technologies promoted by the parties; characteristics of their intra-party participation.

The Case study research will focus in the processes and tools within two political parties at national level, embedded in their socio-political context. They are the Spanish party Podemos (We can) and the British Labour Party.

Figure 2.1 – case studies map

Source: author's elaboration.

As stated, the Case study research had recourse to a multimethod analysis. Particularly in, the qualitative analysis has been supported by the following methods:

-   Semi-structured interviews to activist and professional politicians, participants in the

processes, and designers of the participatory processes and digital platform that supports them, i.e. representatives of Party in Public Office, Party Central Office and Party on the Ground (Katz & Mair, 1993). The author carried out a total number of 30 in-deep interviews for the two main cases: 18 for the Podemos case (14 interviews to participants with key positions in the party + 2 interviews to officers of political projects linked to the party + 2 academic interviews) and 12 for the Labour Party case (to participants with key positions in the party). These numbers are the results of considerable networking efforts, until reaching a point of redundancy, i.e. "when no new information is forthcoming from new sampled units" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985 in Merriam, 1998, p. 102). The interviewees selection followed the "network" (also named "snowball") sampling, i.e. the engagement strategy worked asking each interviewee to refer you to another person (see Merriam, 1998). Every semi-structured interview has been based on three interview's protocols (English and Spanish versions, same contents). They had a fix General section (the same for all) and three Specific sections according to the interview target, respectively: political-militancy section, for professional politicians and party activists (see Annex 1 and 1b); technical/digital section, for digital experts and activists (see Annex 2); and academic section, for scholars linked to the parties (see Annex 3). Furthermore, the interview's protocols contained additional information section aiming at gathering some data on the interviewees' ages and backgrounds. Considering the object of study, the interview's protocols included mainly exploratory questions - designed to gather information about the topics and the cases -, and interpretative questions, which provide a check on what you think you are understanding, as well as provide an opportunity for yet more information, opinions, and feelings to be revealed (Merriam, 1998). Interviews were conducted in person - or by video-call in one case - and lasted on average 60 minutes.

- Participant observation during the participatory processes, initiatives, political meetings and informal moments of the parties under study. Through this method the author observed the participants and organisers in the environments of the offline processes promoted by the parties (or their internal subgroups), adopting the participants perspective to analyse practices and meanings. It implied the inscription to the initiatives that required, an active role in some of them - especially interacting with the other participants -, the subscription to mailing lists linked to the parties and

party websites. The researcher in his observational role gathered quantitative data: number of participants, gender balance, age distribution (when counting has been possible) and qualitative data observing the interaction between the people present, the moderation of the initiatives, the speakers and the group dynamics. In particular, during the participant observation, the author applied a combination of the following methods: unstructured conversations, notes on observations, video recording and photos and collecting information materials. The author applied participant observation in 16 official parties' initiatives (or promoted by parties' subgroups), of which: 8 for the Podemos case (13 days, considering some multi-day events) and 7 for the Labour Party case. Additionally, the author took part in 14 linked events and demonstrations promoted by the parties, linked group, associations with political linkage and supporters, respectively 9 for Podemos case and 5 for the Labour Party one. Counting all the events and initiatives of the two case studies, the author applied the participant observation 30 times.

- Document analysis of statutes, regulations, electoral programs, official communication – especially by e-mails - and other parties' official documents that refers to participation. According to Bowen (2009) document analysis is a form of qualitative research aiming at giving voice and meaning around an assessment topic by the interpretation of documents. This method resulted extremely useful to examine the parties' official story and to gather information from the comparison between parties' documents and practices.

These qualitative methods have been integrated by quantitative analysis that has been based in the analysis of online participatory platform processes data. In particular, the authors researched the following data: numbers of registered members, numbers of participants in each online participatory platform processes analysed, numbers of proposals, votes, likes and comments (if applicable), timeline of the processes and recurrence. These data have been particularly useful in "triangulation" (Gallagher, 2013) between the data gathered through document analysis, interviews (and participant observation) and data on the use of the procedures. Furthermore, the data triangulation has been useful also during the interviews, for encouraging dialogue and stressing on some specific aspects within the questions. However, often the access to the data has been much more difficult than expected, due to their only partial publication – and open consultation of data from past processes - in the

parties' digital platforms and websites.

Overall, the described methodology and methods of data collection have been extensively applied for both the main cases under analysis, although difficulties in the data access and in the political fieldwork penetration limited some of them, compared to the expectations of the preliminary research project (see Section 2.5.).

2.2.1. Interviews design

All the interviews carried out have been analysed by the author by with a deductive approach focusing on their meaning, in accordance with the mode of interview analysis named "meaning condensation" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018). All the interviews have been transcribed with consideration to the manifest's content (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008), i.e. cleaning utterances and interactions, if not soundly meaningful. In particular for the Podemos case, the author has chosen to report the quotations from the interviews in its' original language (Spanish), with translation in footnote (translated by him).

The author elaborated 8 categories to frame the interviewees, applying the following binary indicators to the 28 (16 for the Podemos case + 12 for the Labour Party case) participants with key positions in the party:

a) level of adherence/criticism to the party leadership;
b) new/old membership (including ex members);
c) participation as fundamental and constant value or as pragmatic instrument with specific time and space.

Intersecting these indicators, the author categorised the participants with key positions in the party interviewed during the fieldwork in:

1) adherent senior members who see participation as a fundamental and constant value;
2) adherent senior members who see participation as a pragmatic instrument with a specific time and space;
3) adherent new members who see participation as a pragmatic instrument with a specific time and space;

4) adherent new members who see participation as a fundamental and constant value.

5) critical senior (or ex) members who see participation as a fundamental and constant value;

6) critical senior (or ex) members who see participation as a pragmatic instrument with a specific time and space;

7) critical new members who see participation as a fundamental and constant value;

8) critical new members who see participation as a pragmatic instrument with a specific time and space[13].

In addition, the authors developed other two categories framing the remaining interviewees (particularly for the Podemos case):

9) critical member of linked political projects who see participation as a fundamental and constant value;

10) Scholars who analysed the case.

All the interviewed participants have been anonymised through the assignment of a sequential number and a short description of his/her profile to frame each positionality (reduced in text through an acronym). Table 2.1 shows the Podemos case interviewed participants' profiles (with their acronyms) intersected with the relative category assigned by the author; while Table 2.2 shows the same data for the Labour Party case.

Table 2.1 - **Profiles and categories of the Podemos' interviewees**

Interviewee	Profile	Category	Acronym
1	Podemos founder and ideologist at the national level	Adherent senior members who see participation as a pragmatic instrument with a specific time and space	PIF-NL
2	Former Podemos general secretary at the local level	Adherent senior members who see participation as a fundamental and constant value	PE-LL
3	Podemos founder and former party officer at the national/regional level	Critical senior (or ex) members who see participation as a fundamental and constant value	PFE-NL
4	Former Podemos central officer at the national level	Critical senior (or ex) members who see participation as a fundamental and constant value	PE-NL

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[13] None of the interviewees fell into this category.

	Profile	Category	Acronym
5	Officer of political projects linked to Podemos at the local level	Critical member of linked political projects, who see participation as a fundamental and constant value	PAO-LL
6	Podemos party body member at the local level	Adherent senior members who see participation as a fundamental and constant value	PE-LL
7	Podemos representative at the regional level	Critical senior (or ex) members who see participation as a fundamental and constant value	PR-RL
8	Podemos party body member at the local level	Critical senior (or ex) members who see participation as a fundamental and constant value	PE-LL
9	Podemos central officer at the national level	Adherent senior members who see participation as a fundamental and constant value	PE-NL
10	Podemos branch secretary at the local level	Critical senior (or ex) members who see participation as a fundamental and constant value	PE-LL
11	Officer of political projects linked to Podemos at the local level	Critical member of linked political projects, who see participation as a fundamental and constant value	PAO-LL
12	Podemos secretary at the local level	Adherent senior members who see participation as a fundamental and constant value	PE-LL
13	Podemos secretary at the local level	Adherent senior members who see participation as a fundamental and constant value	PE-LL
14	Local government representative and former Podemos collaborator	Critical senior (or ex) members who see participation as a fundamental and constant value	PRC-LL
15	Podemos founder and former party central officer at the national level	Critical senior (or ex) members who see participation as a pragmatic instrument with a specific time and space	PFE-NL
16	Podemos founder and former party representative at the national level	Critical senior (or ex) members who see participation as a pragmatic instrument with a specific time and space	PFR-NL
17	Spanish scholar (linked to Podemos)	Scholars who analysed the case(s)	PS-NL
18	Spanish scholar (linked to Podemos in the past)	Scholars who analysed the case(s)	PS-NL

Source: elaborated by the author.

Table 2.1 legend: P – Podemos; F – founder; I – ideologist; R – representative; E – Executive; AO – affiliated organisation; C – Collaborator; S – scholar; LL – local level; RL – regional level; NL – national level.

Table 2.2 - Profiles and categories of the Labour party' interviewees

Interviewee	Profile	Category	Acronym
19	Labour Party representative at the local level	Critical senior members who see participation as a pragmatic instrument with a specific time and space	LR-LL
20	Labour Party member and local organiser	Adherent new members who see participation as a fundamental and constant value	L-LL

21	Labour Party member and scholar on the topic	Adherent new members who see participation as a pragmatic instrument with a specific time and space	LS-NL
22	Labour ideologist at the national-level	Adherent senior members who see participation as a fundamental and constant value	LI-NL
23	Labour Party member and editor of a newspaper linked to the party	Adherent senior members who see participation as a fundamental and constant value	L-NL
24	Labour Party representative at the national level	Critical senior members who see participation as a fundamental and constant value	LR-NL
25	Labour ideologist and party body member at the national-level	Adherent senior members who see participation as a fundamental and constant value	LIE-NL
26	Labour Party member and central officer at the national level of an organisation affiliated to the party	Adherent new members who see participation as a fundamental and constant value	LAO-NL
27	Labour Party member and organiser of national events linked to the party	Adherent senior members who see participation as a fundamental and constant value	LAO-NL
28	Labour Party representative at the European level	Critical senior members who see participation as a fundamental and constant value	LR-EL
29	Labour Party member and former central officer at the national level of an organisation affiliated to the party	Adherent senior members who see participation as a fundamental and constant value	LAO-NL
30	Labour Party member and central officer at the national level of an organisation affiliated to the party	Adherent senior members who see participation as a fundamental and constant value	LAO-NL

Source: elaborated by the author.

Table 2.2 legend: L – Labour; I – ideologist; R – representative; E – Executive; AO – affiliated organisation; S – scholar; LL – local level; NL – national level; EL – European level.

In the interviews' analysis, the author elaborated a number of clusters in order to condensate the characteristics identified by the interviewees for describing the interpretation of participation for their party and the intra-party participation that has been developed. In particular, the incidence of 6 characteristics has been studied for the interpretation of participation in each of the case studies, divided in three categories ('General', 'Use' and 'Specific'). 'General' and 'Use' categories consisted in the same four clusters for both parties: respectively 'Identity value' and 'Instrumental value' (for the 'General' category), 'Specific time and space' and 'Reinforcing role' (for the 'Use category'). While, the 'Specific' category included two different clusters for each party. On the one hand, the Podemos's case has analysed the incidence of the 'Unmediated/Direct' and 'Controlled' characteristics in the interviews. On the other hand, the Labour Party's case has examined the characteristics of 'Lobbying' and 'Balanced'. Furthermore, two of the clusters has been phrased including

references to the 'Founding principle' in the 'Identity value' and to 'Reaffirmation' in the 'Reinforcing role', in order to maintain greater adherence to the vocabulary used by the interviewees.

Table 2.3 - Characteristics of participation in Podemos and the Labour Party' interviews

Category	Characteristic	Description
General	Identity value / Founding principle	Recognition of participation as one of the main pillars of the party's identity, which characterised and differentiated it from the others parties. It implies the consideration of participation (per se) as an aim of the party.
	Instrumental value	Participations as tool to achieve other party aims. It generally doesn't undervalue participation per se, while it tends to deny the participatory drive in the party identity and procedures.
Use	Specific time & space	Identification of structural limits of participation that lead the party to circumscribe it to specific time and space. In particular, it tends to refer to both the communities and individuals' life limits in participating, and to the parties' role within representative democracy.
	Reinforcing / Reaffirmation	Use of participation for reinforcing and/or reaffirming the leadership positions and its decisions. It implies a strategic use of the participation by the leadership, including different conflicting purposes: such as legitimisation, centralisation, defence, conflict of interests and plebiscitarian use.
Specific (Podemos)	Unmediated / Direct	Direct participation, unmediated by intermediate bodies of the party or party keepers. It includes party procedures addressed to individual members bypassing the party intermediate bodies and promoting liquid forms of membership.
	Controlled	Party (or leadership) control over participation, including on the one hand the supervision of the participatory procedures in terms of effectiveness and inclusion, on the other hand the control of the organisation aiming to prevent any relevant variation to the leadership' decisions and goals.
Specific (Labour Party)	Lobbying	Participation based on a lobbying approach, which consists of influencing the party bodies or groups of power within the party (including factions) in taking the decisions.
	Balanced	Participation within the structured relations between the party bodies/groups and membership, in which their interests and positions needs to be balanced.

Source: elaborated by the author based on the interviews.

Applying a similar scheme to the analysis of intra-party participation, the author identified 7 clusters of characteristics for each party and studied their incidence in the interviews, divided in four categories ('General', 'Structural', 'Principle' and 'Specific'). The first two categories

included the same clusters for both the parties. Indeed, the 'General' category consisted of 'Top-down' and 'Bottom-up' characteristics, while the 'Structural' category of 'Structured' and 'Disconnected' ones. Differently, the 'Principle' and 'Specific' categories included different clusters for each party. In the Podemos case, the incidence of 'Deliberative' characteristic has been studied within the 'Principle' category, and the 'Plebiscitary' and 'Majoritarian' within the 'Specific' category. In the Labour case, the interviews analysis focused on the 'Normative' characteristic within the 'Principle' category, and on the 'Factionalist' and 'Unclear' within the 'Specific' category. Furthermore, one of the clusters has been phrased including reference to 'Bureaucratised' in the 'Structured' characteristic, in order to maintain greater adherence to the vocabulary used by the interviewees.

Table 2.4 - Characteristics of participation in Podemos and the Labour Party' interviews

Category	Characteristic	Description
General	Top-down	Participation promoted by the top of the party (first of all its leadership) that determines the agenda, times and methods of the participatory procedures and - generally - of the decision-making processes. It implies the strengthening of the top of the organisation and the resulting centralisation of decision-making, tendentially linked with the fear of losing control over the party.
	Bottom-up	Grassroots participation characterised by the empowerment of membership. It can be concretised by processes, tools and approaches for involving the members in the party decision-making from the bottom, as well as supported by party culture and decentralised structure.
Structural	Structured / Bureaucratised	Characteristic based on the structured level of intra-party participation within the party, which describes a high/complex structuring of participation at an organisational level. It can include a central role of the party's bureaucracy in the organisation as well as in the decision-making.
	Disconnected	Disconnection between the party's decision-makers and the base (members), as well as between decision-making and participation addressed to the membership (both the party branches and the individual members). For instance, it includes leadership's attitudes toward the members and/or lack of party procedures to involve members in decision-making.
Principle	Deliberative (Podemos)	Characteristic of intra-party participation based on deliberation, promoting the debate, the co-elaboration and consensual decision-making within the party meeting/deliberative platforms (at different levels, particularly the local one). It implies the connection between the discussions during the meetings/online and the decision-making process/bodies.

	Normative (Labour Party)	Centrality of the party's norms in the membership participation, especially in terms of its aims. It characterises institutionalised parties when members participation is mainly oriented to promote (or support) internal reforms and rule changes.
Specific (Podemos)	Plebiscitary	Use of intra-party participation for ratifying the leadership decisions and to reaffirm its positions. It tends to limit the participation to top-down procedures promoted by the leadership aiming at legitimising itself in front of the membership (through acclamation) and/or the electorate and at hindering the minorities/opponents within the party.
	Majoritarian	Domain of the majority in the use of intra-party participation. It is based on aggregative procedures since the voting is considered the best form to make the will of the majority prevail in the decision-making process. The minorities tend to be excluded by the intra-party participation, relegating them to a passive role.
Specific (Labour Party)	Factionalist	Impact of factionalism in the intra-party participation of the membership. It occurs when the participation largely develops within organised internal groups, filtering the relation of the members with the party and applying nepotism's logic in the selection of the party representatives. In particular, it can be linked with the fragmentation of the party into different groups that competed for power.
	Unclear	Lack of clarity in the party's decision-making that hampers the intra-party participation. It is generally related to both, the lack of clear communication by the party and the effectiveness of participation; particularly in terms of processes' outcomes.

Source: elaborated by the author based on the interviews.

2.3. Case selection

Considering that Case study research focuses on the case(s) as an object of study, the case(s) selection has been one of the most important steps. The cases have been selected through a "strategic selection" following the indications by Flyvbjerg (2006). It aims at maximise the information and data on the phenomenon, not applying a random sample that could jeopardise the access to the fieldwork and the data collection. Thus, the cases have been chosen "for their validity" in order to "clarify the deeper causes behind a given problem and its consequences" (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 229). In particular, the author of this thesis applied the "information-oriented selection" in which the cases are selected "on the basis of expectations about their information content" aiming at propose the cases as "paradigmatic" for the issues under study (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 230). Considering this purpose, the cases

selection implemented could be also defined as purposive (Chein, 1981) or purposeful (Patton, 1990), described by Merriam (1998, p. 61) as "based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned". In specific, this thesis focuses on the investigation on two main case studies, belonging to two different political national contexts. The countries have been taking into account according to the following criteria:

- countries belonging to established 'Western' democracies that were experiencing a democratic crisis, as widely analysed in literature;
- countries where new or renewed parties, which claim for participation as one of their essential axes, were represented in parliament;
- countries with asymmetry in political culture, history, electoral system and constitutional frame;
- a maximum of two countries to allow an in-depth qualitative comparison.

Within the countries that fulfilled these criteria, the main cases have been selected according to the following list of criteria:

- identity of the party characterised by strong reference to bottom-up participation;
- implementation of intra-party democracy procedures;
- introduction of ICTs in the participatory processes and tools;
- the capacity to influence the debate within its national context, i.e. substantial political weight in terms of votes and militants.

Within this frame, the author selected as cases (and related countries) Podemos in Spain, and the Labour Party in UK (hereinafter referred also as the Labour), particularly under Corbyn's leadership. The cases belong to two markedly different countries and backgrounds with manifest asymmetry in political culture, history, electoral system and legal frame, Spain and the UK. However, both countries match with the other identified criteria: they are established 'Western' democracies where the evidences of the democratic crisis are on the one side widely analysed in literature, and on the other faced in the last decade by protest and political movements; in both countries new parties (mainly in the case of Spain) or renewed parties (mainly in the case of UK) - represented in parliament - claim for a new relation between people and politics based on more direct participation, assimilating it in their narrative and

practices. It is important at this stage to specify that the study is limited to the comparative analysis of the Intra-Party Democracy and participatory processes (if any), their tools and organisation within the parties, embedded in their socio-political context. Instead, the parties as a whole and their histories are not objects of this study (although extensive contextualisation references have been included along the empirical chapters).

2.3.1. The cases

Despite their differences in terms of contexts, histories and structures, Podemos and the Labour, share important similarities, in particular both organisations are left-wing parties with a strong commitment to participation and Intra-Party Democracy. This is especially relevant for the aim of this thesis: precisely to analyse the role of members' participation in political parties; with a particular focus on the initiatives and tools deployed by parties in the last decade to regain engagement and consensus through IPD initiatives and other hybrid forms of citizen's engagement. As argued in the theoretical chapter, even though in many countries, the law obliges parties to be internally democratic, it is not clear what it really means in practical terms. In this frame, selecting two parties that publicly defend and are committed with IPD procedures have the scope to better understand IPD practices and their potential and limitations. However, also the marked asymmetries between the cases were at the basis of the choice. Particularly, the different origins and ages of each party has been fundamental for the analysis: hence, they consist of a traditional, mass party organisation and a new, digital native one.

The Spanish party Podemos was founded in March 2014, with the declared aim of changing the national political panorama, in particular facing the political and economic crisis and giving voice and answers to the people (evoking the anti-austerity protest movement 15-M[14] claims). Since the beginning, Podemos pinpointed participation as one of the principal features of its identity and declaimed its commitment for participation and democracy, inside and outside the party. According to Vittori (2017, p. 151), the "political mobilisation is a distinctive feature of Podemos' organisation", and Scarrow et al., (2017, p. 4) considered it a "grass-roots democracy 'movement'". Podemos is self-recognised and presented as populist

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[14] Leading movement of the anti-austerity protest's wave in Spain - jointly with other groups such as the *Indignados* Movement and *Toma la Plaza* - that organised the popular demonstrations on 15 May 2011, few days before the local and regional elections.

party, which gathers the will of the people through the participation opened to partisans, sympathisers and interested citizens. In 2014, its leader Pablo Iglesias Turrión presented Podemos as "*un método participativo abierto a toda la ciudadanía*"[15] (Giménez San Miguel, 2014). In the Podemos Organisational Document (2017b, p. 6), justifying the need for their party's organisation, they declared that:

> "*[L]a fuerte apuesta originaria de Podemos por la participación ciudadana - la partícula elemental de la democracia - nos ha diferenciado claramente del resto de formaciones políticas. Sin participación real y efectiva la democracia se vacía de su verdadero potencial transformador. Bajo esta premisa hemos abierto el campo político al desborde ciudadano consolidando, a la vez, una lógica política participativa sin precedentes en los partidos políticos de nuestro país*"[16].

In 2018, in preparation for the general elections of 2019, the party launched the motto "*la participación por encima de la representación*"[17] within the campaign named *En Marcha 2019* (Under way 2019). Especially during the first years, a series of participative procedures (tools and related processes) have been developed within the party to channel the propulsive energy that arose its foundation and an environment of enthusiasm and mobilisation (still present in the society after the protests), with particular expectations on the digital-driven ones, considering the digital native characteristic of Podemos. The party activated participatory processes to encourage militant engagement and commitment, in particular through open intra-party democracy processes. Among them, emerged the electoral program developed in participatory form for the 2014 European elections, the first elections in which Podemos ran. Starting from that, a series of participative tools have been developed within the party. Among the most significant participatory processes and tools of Podemos there are (or have been): *Consulta Ciudadana* (Citizen Consultation), internal referendums open to party members, including the more traditional primary elections among the members of the party for the selection of the leadership and members of elected bodies of the parties, internally, and for all candidates of the parties to different levels of elections, both national and locals, externally; and *Plaza Podemos* (Podemos Square, including its 2.0 version), digital deliberative tool for debating and presenting proposals (Vittori, 2017; Podemos, 2014).

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[15] A participatory method, open to all citizens.

[16] The strong commitment of Podemos for citizen participation - the elementary particle of democracy - has clearly differentiated us from the rest of political formations. Without real and effective participation, democracy empties itself of its true transformative potential. Under this premise we have opened the political field to citizen overflow by consolidating, at the same time, an unprecedented participatory political logic in the political parties of our country.

[17] Participation above representation (see Podemos, 2018b).

The new tools implemented within the party have different objectives and priorities, some of them evolved throughout the years, some others have been replaced or suspended. For instance, the *Plaza Podemos 2*.0 has been replaced on July 2019 by the *Oficina de Soporte Territorial* (Territorial Support Office) (Podemos, n.d.c), a one-stop shop that simply make available to members, party officials and citizens three traditional communication channels top-down: an email, a phone number and an online form. Podemos is included in the parties that Gerbaudo (2019) examines to elaborate the category of "digital party". At the moment, Podemos is the fourth largest political party in Spain for number of representatives in the *Congreso* and it is part of the government coalition of the President Pedro Sánchez (PSOE).

The British Labour Party is a traditional party, self-defined as a "democratic socialist party" (Labour, 2019, Clause IV), with a long political history and more than a century of political representation and governmental experience. In December 2018, the Labour Party counted on 518,659 as published in the Party's annual accounts (Audickas et al., 2019)[18]. Historically, it has a central role in the UK political system (essentially two-party system) and has been a governmental party for 13 mandates, from 1924. Despite its long history, Labour "remained relatively weak in organizational terms", counting on a strong class identity and opting for "a sort of federal party to which local organizations and trade unions could become affiliated" (Mair, 2013, p. 80). Factionalism has marked Labour's history, coming from ideological divisions (Finlayson, 2013) and different visions on party democracy (Dommett, 2018). The latter have been traditionally linked with the type of leadership, such as the shift from a formal model of membership to a model of supporters' networks (see Avril, 2013), particularly promoted by the New Labour during Tony Blair's leadership. From 2015-2020, Labour has undertaken intense political changes and some internal reforms oriented to open the party to society and to give a new role for members, including new procedures for selecting the party's leadership, and the candidates for the parliament and a controversial debate on how the party should be (re-) organised. This party change had a key starting moment in 2015, when the mechanism for electing the party leader has been modified, applying for the first time the principle of "one person, one vote" and open to "supporters[19]" (Russell, 2016). It has been a fundamental precondition for the

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[18] More recent press reports estimated Labour membership around 512,000 members in February 2019 and they reported a decrease to 485,000 by August 2019 (Audickas et al., 2019, p. 10).
[19] i.e. who had paid at least £3 to the Labour party.

unexpected Jeremy Corbyn election during the leadership contest of 2015 (after the resignation of Ed Miliband).

Relevant changes took place under Corbyn's leadership, supported especially by both recently-active single members and supporting groups, as the Momentum organisation[20]. In particular, the shift brought in a model of Intra-Party Democracy much more oriented towards party membership to the detriment of MPs and trade unions that used to formulate the party's strategy. The regeneration of the party has been based, at least rhetorically, on claims for the inclusion of (and participation by) members along with their ideas. Some of these processes were digitally driven, seeking to attract and consolidate the new members, most of whom were young members. The winning of a second leadership contest by Corbyn in 2016 - after the Shadow Cabinet resignations and Labour MPs vote of no confidence - and the upswing results on the General Election of 2017 animated the party and his group obtains even more legitimacy. On 4th November 2017 Labour launched the multichannel process Democracy Review aimed at democratising the party, as stated on the Labour website "looking at how our hugely expanded membership becomes a mass movement which can transform society" (Labour, 2017b). The Corbyn's rhetoric strongly claimed for inclusion and participation, frequently matching with the discourse of the historical left of the party. The participatory processes promoted and implemented by the Labour Party under Corbyn leadership aimed to concretise this political direction. Moreover, Corbyn has been marked by the increase and deepening of digital-driven processes, "supported by external campaign organisations" (Dommett et al., 2020, p. 12), such as Momentum, seeking on the one hand to attract and consolidate the new and/or young's membership, which tended to support the Corbyn line, on the other to bypass regional offices and party segments. In 2020, Keir Starmer succeeded to Corbyn as party leader[21], defeating Rebecca Long-Bailey, who was supported by Momentum.

Despite the political differences, the change of leadership seems to not have affected the digitalisation trends. During the first months of the mandate, Starmer promoted online meetings and processes, considering also that the effects of COVID-19 outbreak supposed

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[20] Momentum is a left-wing political organisation founded to support Corbyn's leadership after his election. See section 4.3.2. of this thesis.
[21] The leadership election has been triggered by the disappointing Labour's results in the 2019 general election - 32% Labour's vote share with 202 seats – and the consequently Corbyn's declaration that he would not lead Labour into the next election.

an accelerating factor for party digitalisation. In particular, two processes with significative digital component opened to party members and supporters have been implemented by the party under Corbyn's leadership. The first one is the Labour Policy Forum, an online process supported by a specific party platform aimed to develop and elaborate policy proposals and ideas, particularly oriented to the party's manifestos. The proposals are submitted online to the National Policy Forum (NPF)[22] and its eight Policy Commissions. The process is open to Labour Party members, supporters and policy stakeholders. The Labour Policy Forum platform substituted the Your Britain website, aiming to relaunch the members' and supporters' role in the party's policymaking (García Lupato & Meloni, 2021). The second one is the Labour's "new bespoke digital organising system" (Dommett et al., 2020, p. 5), *Achieve*, launched in October 2018. The digital software is centrally designed to support different types of local activists' actions by specific tools and apps. Among them: *Organise*, a "volunteer management tool that replicates many of the functions previously provided by Nationbuilder" and *Promote*, a "platform for enabling targeted messaging on Facebook" (Dommett et al., 2020, p. 5). Moreover, *Achieve* is also the name of the Labour e-learning platform, which contains explanatory videos, allowing each member to create his/her own learning pathways.

2.4. Positionality, reflexivity and research ethic

The author of this thesis project approached the study's object as a junior researcher on democratic innovation and public participation at the Centre for Social Study of the University of Coimbra (Portugal), where is member of the research group DECIDe - Democracy, citizenship, law and justice. During the Ph.D., his research interests have been strengthened by the collaboration with the research projects EMPATIA (Enabling Multichannel PArticipation Through ICT Adaptations), with a particular refence to digital participation, with Participedia research network (https://participedia.net/) and PHOENIX project (The Rise of Citizens' Voices for a Greener Europe), with a particular refence to democratic innovations, and with other research projects, such as UNPOP (UNpacking POPulism) and Inova Juntos (Cooperação urbana triangular para inovação e sustentabilidade). The collaboration within European projects' activities included the

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[22] The National Policy Forum is a Labour representative body with the role of shaping the Labour Party's policy agenda. In particular, "NPF Representatives read and discuss submissions received via the Labour Policy Forum website, and discuss them in the relevant Policy Commissions" (Policiforum.labour.org, n.d.).

writings of two Horizon2020 projects and two Partnership for Cooperation in the field of Education and Training (Erasmus+ Programme). The author's university career in political science - international relations - provides the basis for analysis of party models and case studies. Moreover, the long internship at the University Complutense of Madrid - Departamento de Ciencia Política y de la Administración tutored by Prof. Fabio García Lupato - in addition to the support of the fieldwork in Spain - fortified in the field of political science, specifically party politics. However, the hybrid point of view of the author differs from those of the 'classical' political scientist, and remained a constant element of the research. The internship at the University of Westminster - Centre for the Study of Democracy in the School of Social Sciences directed by Prof. Graham Smith - in addition to the support of the UK fieldwork - which contributed to the methodological deepening of this stand-point, as well as the conferences and workshops where articles and working papers linked to the thesis have been presented. In 2021, the author published in *Parliamentary Affairs* the paper García Lupato, F., Meloni, M. (2021). Digital Intra-Party Democracy: An Exploratory Analysis of Podemos and the Labour Party. Among the others publications, he is one of the authors of the chapters Allegretti, G. Meloni, M., Dorronsoro, B. (2022), Civic Participation as a Travelling Ideoscape: Which Direction? In Makoni, S., Kaiper-Marquez, A. Mokwena, L. (Eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Language and the Global South/s*, and Meloni, M. Allegretti, G., Antunes, S. (2018), Participlaying: a reflection on gamification techniques from the standpoint of participatory budgeting, in Dias, N. (ed.) *Hope for Democracy - 30 Years of Participatory Budgeting Worldwide*. While, the paper Meloni, M., & García Lupato, F. (2022), Digital Innovations in Intra-Party Democracy: A Typology on the evolution of digital procedures in Podemos, is in the review process for the journal *Southern European Society and Politics*. Beyond the academia, the author has a history of political activism since school age. In this regard, considering the study's object, he has long collaborated with some parties of the Italian left-centre wing (Partito Democratico (PD), Sinistra Ecologia e Libertà and Possibile) and has been member of the PD for a year. During that year, he has been a representative in the regional committee, elected by a minority motion, before leaving the party due to political disagreements. In any case, the author declares no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this thesis. Declaring the positionality of the author is important for two reasons: the first is specific and it concerns the nature of the cases, i.e. political parties ideologically and politically lined up; the second is general and it refers to the awareness that there is no neutral or a fixed point of view(s).

In terms of reflexivity, the author's position took into account the interactivity in the production of knowledge (Breuer & Roth, 2003). The researcher interacted with people, groups and contexts in the fieldwork and this inevitably had a certain influence in the evidences. In this regard, the "epistemological model of reflection" that has been chosen is the "decentering" one by Raeithel (1998, in Breuer & Roth, 2003, p. 18), i.e. "by taking in an observer or meta-perspective with respect to the original situation one becomes aware of the subjective nature of the fundamental perspective in praxis. This constitutes a reflexive moment". Moreover, differently from other more vulnerable social groups, the political party communities tend to suffer less pressure and subjection during interviews, or if observed during their activities. Indeed, party members (particularly if they hold offices, within the party or the institutions) are used to making statements/speeches in the meetings or to the press, often pre-elaborating their political discourse influenced by the narrative of the party and/or factions/groups within it.

In conclusion, with regards to the research ethics, the privacy protection has been guaranteed at any level. This research involved people and analysed sensitive personal information. Any individual's personally identifiable information has not been disclosed. The participation to the research interviews has been voluntary and the participants had the opportunity to decline involvement or to opt-out of the research at any time. The participant observation has been open, i.e. informing about the observing role, in the large majority of the fieldwork activities, except for some public meeting and events in which the participation of the author has been concealed. The field notes did not include identifiable information of the participants if not official speakers of the meeting. While the recording has been limited to the interviews subject to the signature in in two copies of the declaration of Informed consent for interviews by all the participants in the interview: one given to the participant and the other kept by the author (model in Annex 4). The author is formally committed to respect the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) of European Union and the ethical principles and guidelines of the Centre for Social Studies and of the University of Coimbra.

2.5. Navigation troubles

Initially, this thesis project was titled "New technologies for Public Participation" and had a focus on new technologies within multichannel participatory systems, therefore more

oriented towards institutional participation rather than towards participation within political parties. Nevertheless, during the process of the thesis project's defence, the author, his supervisor and other precious advisors, jointly with the project's defence commission, decided to shift the thesis focus in order to include other research topics and questions that emerged. Indeed, they were linked with the initial ones but moved the focus on ongoing processes (at that time) within political parties in Spain and UK. So, the thesis project changed the title to the current "The role of participation in the new models of political party", with the fieldwork in Spain, supported by the Complutense University of Madrid, and UK, supported by the University of Westminster - Centre for the Study of Democracy in the School of Social Sciences.

Considering the object of study, the contexts selected and the contemporary time of the analysis, the author expected to deal with a series of research obstacles, such as difficulties in accessing the field, different level of openness according to political phases, and unstable political panorama. However, the reality exceeded the prevision. The case studies and all the political context taken into account have been embedded in an increasingly complex and changing historical-political contexts, both in Spain and UK. Despite the constant effort of the author, it strongly affected his case studies research and generated significative delays and troubles in accessing the field. On the one side, in the Spanish context of permanent electoral campaign has been extremely complicated obtaining in-deep interviews and participating in meetings (outside the electoral campaigns). Indeed, during the time frame of the research, four general elections have been called in Spain (two of them during the fieldwork phase), jointly with more the thirty regional elections (for the *Comunidades autónomas*), two round of *Elecciones municipales* (City Council election) in the whole country and a European Parliament election. Furthermore, the high level of internal conflict in Podemos and the elitisation of its leadership further limited the availability of key party figures in terms of scheduling interviews and their openness in the answers. On the other, in the UK context, the Brexit has been the absolute protagonist of the entire political season, eclipsing the other themes and complicating to obtain interviews on other topics, such as the role of the internal and external participation in political parties. Moreover, two general elections occurred in UK during the time frame of the research, and three leadership elections within the Labour Party (two of them won by Corbyn and the third one that marked the end of its leadership). Beyond the electoral campaigns (at internal and external level), the party was particularly fragmented, since that different groups were clashing supporting or

opposing the leadership. It led to difficulties in accessing the field and, during the interviews, in the limited openness in answering questions on politically sensitive issues on participation (with relevant exceptions). Overall, this implied various and deep rearrangements of the research design in the fields and the extension of the fieldwork periods in order to assure methodological solidity and in-depth analysis. Additionally, the global COVID pandemic inevitably had an impact on research; on the one hand, by limiting the participation promoted by the parties and its centrality of/in their agenda (with some exceptions, through the use of digital technologies), on the other hand, by forcibly stopping the author's fieldwork. Thus, the author had to deal with that complexity; and it prevented some of the possibilities that were hypostasised during the first phases of research planning, such as extending the case study research to more political parties.

3. THE ROLE OF PARTICIPATION IN PODEMOS:
IPD AND DIGITAL PARTY PROCEDURES

This chapter analyses the participation in Podemos as a single-case study through a three-fold approach including the party's ideology, the legal and organisation's framework and the implementation of the procedures. The first section introduces the case focusing on the party's foundation and history up to the time frame selected (2014-2020). While, the second section analyses the party documents and the research interviews, considering their parts related to the interpretation of participation for Podemos. The third section traces the legal and organisational framework of the party focusing on participation, mainly based on the party's documents. It includes a sub-section on membership as subject of the participation promoted by the party. The fourth section is divided into nine sub-sections to examine the main procedures for the members' participation as implemented by the party, including their formalisation, characteristics, uses and evolution. While, the fifth section analyses the interviews focusing on the digital participation in Podemos, exploring its uses, interpretations and criticalities. It also includes a sub-section on the Podemos digital platform *Participa*. The sixth section concludes the interviews analysis, considering the parts related to intraparty participation for studying the Podemos IPD. Lastly, the conclusion summarises the chapter, particularly focusing on the discussion of the hypothesis. The methodological triangulation of document analysis, interviews and data on the use of the procedures has been used for outlining the chapter so that the reader can be guided through different steps: from the general interpretation of the participation for Podemos, to the critical analysis of the use of participation, passing through the legal and organisational frameworks. Thus, the chapter has been designed to offer an analysis from the general (ideological and formal) to the particular (empirical) aspects.

3.1. Intro: genealogy and history of the party

> "*Esto no es un partido ni un nuevo producto, es una iniciativa que propone la participación de la gente. No buscamos concretamente sentarnos en el Parlamento Europeo, sino buscar un método de participación ciudadana*"[23] (Pablo Iglesias, in "Podemos", nuevo proyecto político, 2014).

Pablo Iglesias Turrión (hereinafter referred as Pablo Iglesias), political scientist and professor, said these words while presenting the political project Podemos in the Teatro de Barrio, in the Madrid district of Lavapiés, on January 17, 2014. The initiative was promoted

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[23] This is not a party or a new product, it is an initiative that proposes the participation of the people. We do not specifically seek to sit in the European Parliament, but rather to seek a method of citizen participation.

by three main groups that joined the foundation of the party: first, a group composed by Pablo Iglesias, Íñigo Errejón and other left-wing intellectuals, many of them affiliated or linked with the Complutense University of Madrid; second, the extra-parliamentary party Izquierda Anticapitalista – IA (Anticapitalist Left), founded from a split of the party Izquierda Unida - IU (Rodríguez-Teruel, Barrio & Barberà, 2016); and third, various social movement activists who were part of movements such as *Marea Blanca* (White mass/tide), aiming at the defence of public health, and *Marea Verde* (Green mass/tide), focusing on education (Lisi, 2019). Three days prior, the first move had been the publication of the manifesto "*Mover ficha: convertir la indignación en cambio politico*" (Making a move: turning indignation into political change, 2014), signed among others by the Juan Carlos Monedero, professor at the Complutense University of Madrid, Teresa Rodríguez high school teacher part of *Marea Verde* Andalusia, and Isabel Serra, social activist. The timing depended by the first electoral appointment that Podemos identified as a target: the European Elections of May 2014. The precondition for this candidacy that the promoters of the initiative have established was to reach a minimum popular support of 50,000 signatures, before February 8. They declared to have obtained these signatures in less than 24 hours (Pablo Iglesias consigue en un día los 50.000 apoyos, 2014).

The breaking electoral campaign for the 2014 European elections, the open primary elections and the participatory programme characterised the first Podemos candidacy (see Section 3.4.1). A few months after the foundation (legally dated 11 March 2014), Podemos were the fourth most voted party (7.98%) and obtained five seats in the European Parliament. This was an astonishing result in Spain, a country before that was previously characterised by a two-party system (with important regional political forces) at the national level. On the night of May 25, commenting on the results, Iglesias claimed: "*Lo que hemos hecho aquí se estudiará en las facultades de Política de todo el mundo*"[24] (Torreblanca, 2015, p. 2).

To explain the fast rise of Podemos as a nationwide political party (and its electoral results) is necessary to refer to the context in which it occurred. The effects of the 2008 Great Recession had a strong impact on the Spanish society and the economic crisis triggered a multilevel crisis that deeply involved party politics and overall politics (Ramiro & Gomez, 2017). Among the many European countries affected by the crisis, Spain has been one of the

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[24] What we have done here will be studied in political faculties all over the world.

worst hit of them experiencing serious effects. For instance, two data framed the gravity of the situation: in terms of GDP (gross domestic product), the country lost its 15% between 2008 and 2013 (The World Bank, 2014, in Ramiro & Gomez, 2017); in term of unemployment, the Spanish data passed from the 8.2% in 2007 to a peak of 26.2% in 2013, even more considering the young people for which (under 25) the unemployment in 2013 reached the 55.5% (Eurostat, 2015, in Ramiro & Gomez, 2017). The economic crisis fostered the democratic crisis already underway (see the concept of "democratic capitalism" by Streeck, 2011, and more in general Section 1.1. of this thesis). In particular, the two main parties of the bipolar Spanish party system at that time (PSOE - *Partido Socialista Obrero Español*, Spanish Socialist Workers' Party, and PP – Partido Popular, Popular Party) showed at that moment all their difficulties to dialogue and represent civil society, reinforcing the mutual withdrawal process that gradually converted them from social actors to state actors (Mair, 2013).

In 2011, the social repercussions of the crisis led to the outbreak of "*la mayor crisis política desde la confirmación de la democracia española en 1978*"[25] (Rodríguez, 2016, p. 15). On May 15, the protests in the main Spanish cities counted on a massive participation of citizens, called in with the digital appeal of *Democracia Real Ya* (Real Democracy Now) supported by hundreds of movements, associations and groups. The largest demonstration was in the capital, Madrid, where at the end of the march, a group of about 250 protestors decided to occupy the central square of the city, the *Puerta del Sol*, presiding over that space while waiting for the regional and municipal elections of 22 May (Hughes, 2011). The media coverage of that occupation and the attempts of police repression pushed thousands of people to take to the streets alongside the first protesters, and the demonstrators multiplied in Spain and beyond[26]. Between them emerged the participation of thousands of marginalised people: young people, students, unemployed and precarious workers. This new heterogeneous movement took the name of 15-M (May 15th) and played an important role in the Spanish political debate in the following years. Hughes (2011, p. 409) framed 15-M as "peaceful demonstration against the two-party political system, the venality of political and economic elites, widespread corruption and the politics of austerity". The protestors to describe

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[25] Greatest political crisis since the confirmation of Spanish democracy in 1978.
[26] From London to New York, from Istanbul to Bogotá, particularly organised by 'Spaniards' residents abroad.

themselves used the name of *Indignados* (Outraged), inspired by the Stephane Hessel's book titled *Indignez-vous* (2011), translated to English as "Time for Outrage!".

The 15-M has been a breeding ground for the outbreak of successive movements and mobilisations, such as 25S (called *Rodea el Congreso*, Surround the Congress, on September 25, 2012), *Marea Blanca* and *Marea Verde*. Between the initiatives and groups, in 2013 emerged also a party named Partido X (X Party) that tried to give representation to the *Indignados* demands and proposals, particularly through technopolitics solution with the lemma *Democracia y punto* (Democracy and that's it, full stop). However, the X Party has not been able to replicate the multiplier effect and the horizontality of the 15-M initiatives, stifling its diffusion and growth due to "*excesiva preocupación por la posible contaminación o desviación de la propuesta*"[27] of the party executive, called Kernel (as the coding lines for an operating system) (Rodríguez, 2016, p. 81).

The relationship between 15-M and Podemos is debated, in terms of individuals and groups involved, demands, claims and methodologies. Rejecting the oversimplification of the interpretation of Podemos as a direct emanation of the 15-M movement (i.e. electoral translation) - as erroneously often reported in the international press -, it could be argued that Podemos has been "*un partido montado sobre un movimiento*"[28] (Interviewee 18 – PS-NL, May 07, 2021). This definition particularly stresses on the role of the political entrepreneurs who organised the operation, similarly to the movement party theorised by Kitschelt (1988) and the challenger parties theorised by De Vries & Hobolt (2020). However, since its presentation in 2014 Podemos has been the proposal with the higher capacity of "*aprovechar, movilizar, y en cierta forma representar la oportunidad política que abrió el 15-M*"[29] (Rodríguez, 2016, p. 81). Indeed, what differentiated this attempt from others political projects in the recent Spanish history, some of which concomitant with it, has been the ability to convey the social energy and anger of the protests, offering an electoral projection to the citizens mobilised and politicised by the 15M-Movement. According with the Interviewee 1 (PIF-NL, May 16, 2018),' the big difference with 15M has been precisely the decision to move toward the institutions that "*obligaba a Podemos a tener una estructura*

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[27] Excessive concern for the possible contamination or diversion of the proposal.
[28] A party mounted on top of a movement.
[29] Exploiting, mobilising and in a certain way representing the political opportunity that 15-M opened.

de partido"[30]. Despite the party's formation path not being linear - it was characterised by the previous search for agreements to form a more traditional coalition that also included Izquierda Unida - IU (inspired by SYRIZA in Greece) - the result of the rejection by the left forces (excluding Izquierda Anticapitalista - IA) gave Podemos greater credibility towards citizens, as they used to say: "*ningún lastre, ninguna mochila*"[31] (Rodríguez, 2016, p. 83). On the basis of the legacy with that movement, jointly with other organisational features, Podemos has been categorised as movement party (Della Porta et al., 2017). In this direction, at least during the first phase, "political mobilisation" has been considered "a distinctive feature of Podemos' organisation" (Vittori, 2017, p. 151) and the party has been defined a "grass-roots democracy 'movement'" (Scarrow et al., 2017, p. 4).

To engage the citizens mobilised - or simply interested - and to rapidly grow, passing from a limited nucleus to a mass that was capable of supporting a party running for elections at the national level (Spanish college for the European Parliament), Podemos gave to participation a central role, in terms of both narrative and method. Even before the date of the official founding of the party, Podemos had already launched the primary elections process to select the candidates for the European Parliament and a deliberative digital platform to propose, discuss and vote programmatic proposals, named *Plaza Podemos* (Podemos Square)[32]. The democratic deepening manifest objectives and the strong anti-system claims, particularly toward the established parties led various authors to define Podemos as a (new and) challenger party (Hobolt & Tilley, 2016; Lavezzolo & Ramiro, 2017). Accordingly, this emphasis on the quality of democracy and representation, was mirrored in the objectives, aims and organisation of the new party, claiming to be more democratic, participatory, and transparent (Vittori, 2017; Scarrow et al., 2017).

The results of the first Podemos elections were surprising for such a recent political formation: obtaining 8% of the votes (corresponding to about 1.2 million voters) the party won 5 MEPs. From that moment onward, a new political entity broke into the Spanish political party system, questioning the two-party hegemony and generating chain reactions especially on the left; within both the PSOE and the IU, pushing them towards new leadership and claims (Rodríguez, 2016). Indeed, despite the claims of the party being

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[30] Forced Podemos to have a party structure.
[31] No ballast, no backpack.
[32] See the section 3.4.3. for a specific analysis of this tool.

initially addressed to a larger electorate that cross the line of the left-wing voters, Podemos is self-defined as a left-wing populist party, differently from other new and challenger parties, such as the 5 Stars Movement which opted for a valence populism (Zulianello, 2020), neither right nor left.

Meanwhile, other authors used the Podemos case to theorise other party models; focusing on different aspects. Bickerton and Accetti (2018) defined the party as techno-populist movement pointing out the bond between the populist genus of Podemos and its "distinctively 'technocratic' conception of politics" (p. 133). Indeed, they identified technocratic characteristics in different distinctive elements of Podemos. First of all, between the founders and main exponents of the party figures linked with Spanish universities, as researchers and professors, were essential in promoting the image of "*partido de profesores* (party of professors)" (Bickerton & Accetti, 2018, p. 141). This profile has been fostered by the use of pedagogical communication based on data and academic jargon, claiming for a more horizontal relation with the electorate that avoids its infantilisation. Secondly, Podemos representatives have often resorted to "common sense" to justify their positions, promoting a vision of "communing" of representative politics (Kiopkiolis 2016, 108). In this direction, political ideologies and professional politicians that go against common sense (the political *casta*) are an obstacle to solving the problems of the country. Thirdly, the party has presented its figures as "'competent' problem-solvers" (Bickerton & Accetti, 2018, p. 143) and its proposals as based on knowledge and expertise. As highlighted by the authors, the electoral manifestos could provide evidences in these assumptions, such as the 2015 manifesto for the general election, entitled *Queremos, Sabemos, Podemos* (We Want, We Know, We Can) (Podemos, 2015a), and the 2016 manifesto elaborated for the June elections taking inspiration from an IKEA catalogue offering clear and intuitive solutions through a mix of populist and technocratic styles (Podemos, 2016a). However, despite the compatibility between technocracy and populism as analysed and argued by various authors - such as Mudde (2004) and Caramani (2017) - and despite Podemos being an interesting case for studying this relation, the author of this thesis argues that Bickerton and Accetti (2018) have focused on the external communicative dimension which, although it includes technocratic elements, has predominantly remained purely populist. Instead, they did not take into consideration the internal organisational dimension where technocracy has been widely used to justify temporal limitations, reduction of participatory spaces and many decisions made.

In this context, the organisation has been often defined as a "*maquina de guerra electoral*" (electoral war machine) (Errejón Galván, 2014).

While, other authors categorised Podemos basing their definitions of a new model on technopolitical aspects. In an early stage of the party, Domínguez and Giménez (2014) developed the definition of Party-television to describe Podemos. This theorisation grounded on the communicative practice of developing and broadcasting television programs on community networks for disseminating ideas and discourse analysis. Indeed, the ultimate aim of a party-television is to compete for the hegemony through the television space, regarded as the main terrain of ideological production. In particular, Podemos has been supported from the beginning by the television program *La Tuerka* (from *tuerca* that in Spanish means screw), broadcasted from November 2010 to October 2017[33]. This talk-show was ideated by a group of people mainly linked to the Faculty of Political Sciences and Sociology of the Complutense University of Madrid. It was broadcast from Monday to Friday (initially only to Thursday) at 10:00 p.m. simultaneously by the different channels belonging to the Asociación de Televisiones Locales de la Comunidad de Madrid (Association of Local Televisions of the Community of Madrid) and online by Público TV. Pablo Iglesias, Facu Díaz and Juan Carlos Monedero have been the main presenters of the program. Thus, according to Domínguez and Giménez (2014) the element that most characterises Podemos is the use of audio-visual devices and products to develop and spread its political discourse. In this context, the media became a militant space, on a par with (or more than) political parties. In particular, the television contributed decisively to set up the conditions for the Podemos project and defined some of its main characteristics. Indeed, on the one hand the TV programs made Pablo Iglesias famous and converted him in a pop icon able to generate political identification through his discourse; on the other hand, the interviews, speeches and comments broadcasted construct new terms and keywords that have shaped the language of a community; their resonance obligated even their opponents to assume and use them in the political debate.

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[33] Previously and during this period, Iglesias also used to participate in other TV programs (often openly critical with its standings, such as 13TV), as a *tertuliano* (talk-show guest). It increased his visibility and celebrity even before the foundation of Podemos. Moreover, he used those programs as a space for testing the main ideas and discourse of the future political project.

However, the relation between Podemos and technology is broader than the strategic use of television, especially considering the stages following the launch of the political party. Between the authors who focused on the topic, Gerbaudo (2019; 2021) elaborated the model of digital party using Podemos as one of the case studies (see Section 1.4.1.). According to him, the identity of the party is characterised by the pursuit of digital democracy. Indeed, digital technology is presented as a tool for democratisation, addressing the democratic crisis with special reference to the limits of representation and the political mandate. The references that based the development of such model was a utopian vision of technology and the Operational model of the digital companies. Podemos being a digital parties delegated an important part of their decision-making to digital tools and platforms, in order to promote direct action (without mediation) of citizens in political decisions, along with transparency and accountability. In particular, the use of technology has been identified as a constitutive element in their quest of internal democracy (Raniolo & Tarditi, 2020). Despite the promise, Gerbaudo pointed out the limits and contradictions of digital parties that ends up promoting "reactive democracy" (2021, p. 739) within plebiscitary top-down processes. The section 3.5. of this chapter focuses specifically on the role of digital technologies in Podemos participation, following the analysis of the main party procedures for members participation including an important digital component (Section 3.4.).

Even if most of the literature that used Podemos as a case study to theorise new party models tend to consider the party in its first stage (between the foundation and the first congress mandate), that image represents only a part of a larger and more complex evolution that is important to mention (and to analyse in this chapter). After the presentation of the Podemos project and its first participation in the elections, the party faced the first definition and structuring phase, with the need to construct the organisation on the way, as Errejón used to say "*hay que ir caminando mientras nos atamos los cordones*"[34] (Interviewee 4 - PE-NL, June 12, 2018). The first key moment of this phase has been its first congress, *la primera Asamblea Ciudadana Estatal* (the first State Citizen Assembly), so-called Vistalegre I (because it was held in the congress palace of Palacio de Vistalegre, Madrid). On 18 and 19 October 2014 the constituent assembly of Podemos (around 7.000 people) met to structure and articulate the party, and to decide its strategy and objectives. The inaugural congress speech was given by Carolina Bescansa who described the congressional activities as an

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[34] We have to walk while tying our shoelaces.

effort to "*hacer el partido político más deliberativo de la historia*"[35] (Rodríguez, 2016, p. 92). The first party congress marked the first party change toward institutionalisation, moving from the identification period to the organisational one, during which the party increased their organisation routinising the internal mechanisms of control (Harmel & Svåsand, 1993). In particular, the *Asamblea Ciudadana* had the task of approving three documents: the Code of ethics, the Organisational model and the Political strategy.

The processes and tools for membership participation that shaped the party organisation in its first stage (in particular *Plaza Podemos*) supported the debate of the proposals and the formation of workgroups. Until then various visions of what Podemos was (and could be) had coexisted, in particular the differences in terms of organisational model formed the dividing line between the two motions of the first congress. On the one side, the party's founders and most popular figures (Pablo Iglesias, Íñigo Errejón, Juan Carlos Monedero, Carolina Bescansa) presented the organisational document *Claro que Podemos* (Sure We can/Podemos) (Podemos 2014a). The document translated their vision that was inclined to a centralised party. According to Rodríguez (2016, p. 93), they proposed a Jacobin model with full autonomy of the leadership, especially for organising the electoral war machine. On the other side, the alternative was represented by the document *Sumando Podemos* (Adding We can/Podemos) (Podemos 2014b), presented by the MEP Pablo Echenique and supported by Izquierda Anticapitalista. It proposed a model strongly based on territorial branches and delegates and on the link with the social movements, inspired by the old social democratic parties and the post-war Italian Communist Party. Differently, the radical proposals coming from the digital democracy perspective linked with the 15M technopolitics groups did not find space in the motions, except in a highly diluted form.

One of the most emblematic moment of Vistalegre I that disclosed the differences in the debate on the organisation model has been the Pablo Iglesias's speech as candidate for the secretariat during the *Asamblea Ciudadana* of Vistalegre I (first congress of the party) in October 2014 (Podemos, 2014h). In this speech, Iglesias used the metaphor of the Spanish Basketball Team to support and emphasise his candidacy and the political and organisational documents that he was representing and particularly to reject the *Sumando Podemos*' proposal of including a random-selection method among the militants to partially compose

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[35] To make the most deliberative political party in history.

some of the party organs. He compared two historic Olympic finals played by the Spanish Basketball Team against USA team: in the 1984 and in 2008. In the first match, the balance of power was clear and not controvertible, i.e. USA team was too strong for the Spanish one, so it was understandable and correct to give minutes to all the players, it was a sporting party for everyone. Instead, in the second final of 2008, the game was more balanced, and with great difficulty it was possible for Spain to win. The Spanish Basketball Team was close to the victory, and the strategy had to be different. Similarly, for Iglesias, Podemos was at that moment in a position in which victory was a real possibility, therefore it was necessary not to make a single mistake. Podemos, according to its leader, had to play the game with the best players not random militants. As expected, the *Claro que Podemos* motion and its 3 related documents won a large majority, with 80% of the votes. On November, the primary election for the first *Consejo Ciudadano Estatal* (State Citizen Council) confirmed that result with a landslide victory for Pablo Iglesias' team with the 96.87%.

After the 2014 European Elections, in the following Spanish local elections on May 2015 Podemos obtained important results. Between them, two coalitions linked with Podemos won the elections in the two main cities of Spain, electing the so-called *alcaldesas del cambio* (mayors of change): Manuela Carmena Castrillo for Madrid and Ada Colau Ballano for Barcelona (both within neomunicipalist coalition). In the wake of these results that expanded the moment of galvanization, Podemos presented its first candidacy for the General Elections in December 2015. In the 20D (December 20) Election, Podemos gained the 12,67% of the total votes, obtaining 42 deputies (Elecciones Generales 2015, n.d.), the 20,66% and 69 deputies considering the regional candidacies linked to Podemos, see Total España, 2015). While in the subsequent elections in June 2016, caused by the dissolution of the Cortes (the Spanish parliament)[36], the party decided to participate in a coalition (named Unidos Podemos) with Izquierda Unida and Equo and other left-wing groups. The decision has been opposed within the party by important sectors, including Errejón and his group. The coalition gained the 13,37% of the total votes, obtaining 45 deputies (Elecciones Generales 2016, n.d.). Considering regional candidacies linked to the coalition, the result reached the 21,1% (with 71 deputies) for a total of 5'189'333 votes, just 341'360 less than the PSOE (with 5.530.693 votes) (Total España, 2016). Nevertheless, the results were widely

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[36] The Congress of Deputies did not reach the necessary majority to elect the President of the Government of Spain in the two months after the first investiture vote, which imply the end of shortest legislature in the recent history of the country.

disappointing for both the parties (Podemos and IU) since they lost around 1.1 million votes (summing their separate results in 20D 2015 General Elections). Therefore, the criticism on the coalition's decision gained credit.

The *sorpasso* (overtaking) of the PSOE, which many members of the party and various polls expected, did not happen. However, the result of the elections affirmed Podemos as the third Spanish party competing for the role of the main opponent to the PP. Although both the election results were encouraging, the party's strategy was based on an all-in gamble particularly ambitious, the so-called *asalto al Cielo* (assault to the sky) (Riveiro, 2014). Therefore, the failure to achieve that goal led the leadership to question the Podemos' entire strategy, gradually orienting it to reach the government in coalition with the PSOE and renouncing the majority ambitions (Interviewee 16 - PFR-NL, June 17, 2021). This change involved a critical moment characterised by a greater centralism and less participatory openness within the party (or at least a replacement of many of the open digital processes with the empowerment of the party branches). This re-evaluation involved the primary goals of the party culminating the gradual shift from a democracy-seeking party (as in the early stage) to an office-seeking party with the primary goal of joining a government coalition (Harmel & Janda, 1994). This change started in Vistalegre I and has been concretised along the following years, marking the transition from the organisation stage to the stabilisation one, in which the party efforts are mainly directed at bolstering the party's credibility toward society and other parties (Harmel & Svåsand, 1993).

In a different season compared to the first two years of the party, in which internal divisions have expanded and deepened, Podemos called his second congress in February 2017, *la segunda Asamblea Ciudadana Estatal* (the second State Citizen Assembly), so-called Vistalegre II (held in the same location of the first congress). On this occasion, two internal currents of the party confronted each other, in addition to the historical group of Izquierda Anticapitalista: on the one hand, the leadership with the Pablo Iglesias' team, including Irene Montero, Juan Carlos Monedero and joined also by Pablo Echenique; on the other hand, the so-called *Errejónistas*, headed by Íñigo Errejón, who played the role of Iglesias' right arm during the first years of the party. While the primary elections to elect the party's Secretary General were easily won by Iglesias with 89.09% of the votes (without the alternative candidacy of Errejón), the animated debate centred on the organisational documents. The two main proposals were inclined to different structure models. On the one side, the *Mandar*

obedeciendo (Command obeying) document by Iglesias' team supported a strongly majoritarian principle in the party's bodies selection and an unmediated intervention of the members through direct elections and plebiscitarian mechanisms managed by the leadership (Podemos, 2017e). For instance, it proposed the adoption of a majoritarian principle for electing the *Consejo de Coordinación* (Coordination Council) and the direct election of the *Consejo Ciudadano* (Citizen Council), by all members. On the other side, the *Recuperar la ilusión* (Recover the illusion) document by the *Errejónistas* advocated for more proportional methods in the party bodies selection and claimed for a more collegial and deliberative decision-making processes within the party, in particular fostering the power-sharing mechanisms and the deliberative quality in the internal debates (Podemos, 2017f). For instance, their document opted for a two-thirds majority in the election of the Coordination Council and for a Citizen Council derived by the territorial and local party's structures (Lisi, 2019, p. 255).

Vistalegre II made public conflicts and divisions already known within the party and in the media. Beyond the different proposals in the congressional documents, establishing what were the real differences between the motions and the groups is complex. Personal and political conflicts were mixed and it is not possible to discern between proposals and power positions of their proponents. To what extent the awareness of being in a minority position did lead the *Errejónistas* to support proposals for opening the party? Have they managed their majority positions at the local level differently? (Interviewee 15 - PFE-NL, March 7, 2019). Answering questions like these is difficult and the answers are questionable. What is clear is that the Iglesias's team documents and candidatures prevailed in the congress. In particular, the leader declaration had an important impact a few days before the votes. Indeed, Iglesias affirmed that he would accept to remain secretary (in case of victory in the primary) only if his political and organisational documents had gained in the members' vote and if his list for the Citizen Council obtained the majority. Thus, the votes for the congress - where members were called to choose between different options for the secretary, for the *Consejo ciudadano estatal* delegates, and the political and organisational documents - were reduced to a single all-encompassing plebiscite on the leadership. The results in terms of *Consejo ciudadano estatal* delegates were even more overwhelming due to the change of the electoral system as used by Podemos. From that congress, the party applied the *DesBorda* (overflow) system, which has become the system used for all the subsequent primary elections. *DesBorda* is an electoral system with the possibility of voting for the individual

candidates of each list (or selecting them all together by lists) and with results obtained through a point system. Despite its presentation claiming for a system that facilitates alliances and representativeness, *DesBorda* has been harshly criticised because it tends to overrepresent the winning list, and does not guarantee representation to the smaller lists if they do not achieve considerable results.

After Vistalegre II, the leadership progressively assumed even more centrality in the narrative as well as with power within the party, outlining a sort of oligarchization of Podemos, which combines with a broader context of political parties oligarchization and individualisation (Gauja, 2015a). Two years later, in a deeply changed national political context[37], Podemos presented its candidacy in a renewed electoral coalition with IU and Equo, called Unidas Podemos[38], for two General Elections in the same year, on April and on November 2019. The close repetition was due to not having reached an agreement to elect the President of the Government. In April's elections the coalition gained the 11,06% of the votes that assigned to Podemos-IU 33 deputies (Ministerio del Interior, 2019a), 12 less than in the previous election for Podemos (42, considering the regional candidacies linked to the party that reached the 14,31% in total, 29 less than in the previous election, see Total España, 2019a). While, in November's elections the coalition gained the 9,82% of the votes that assigned to Podemos-IU 26 deputies (Ministerio del Interior, 2019b), the 42% less than Podemos in 2016 election (12,97% and 35 deputies, considering the regional candidacies linked to the party, about half of those obtained in the 2016 elections, see Total España, 2019b).

Despite the defeat in the elections in terms of numbers and seats in the Parliament, the impossibility to form the one-party government as the PSOE intended opened the doors of the government coalition to Podemos. From January 2020 Podemos is part of the Spanish government, in coalition with the PSOE, with two ministries: Pablo Iglesias at the Minister of Social Rights and 2030 Agenda and Irene María Montero Gil at the Minister of Equality (two ministers for IU). Iglesias was also assigned the role of Second Deputy Prime Minister.

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[37] In particular, for the change of government due to the *Moción de censura* (motion of censorship) - the first in gaining the majority in the Spanish democratic history - which replaced Mariano Rajoy (PP) with Pedro Sánchez (PSOE) as President of the Government; and for the entry into the national institutional arena of the far-right party Vox.

[38] The coalition is the result of an agreement signed between the two parties, which implies an alliance for elections at all institutional levels, except in case of different choices at local level (Interviewee 11 - PAO-LL, June 26, 2018).

Jointly with the other two ministries of the Unidas Podemos coalition, Alberto Garzón and Yolanda Díaz, their representatives in government are four. After 6 years since its foundation, Podemos overcame the electoral threshold (Sartori, 1976), including representation (at the local, regional, central, and European levels), influence and government (both in regional and central levels). Joining in a coalition government, the party culminated the transition from the second (organisation) to the third (stabilisation) stage (Harmel & Svåsand, 1993).

Shortly after the formation of the coalition government, Podemos called an extraordinary congress: *la tercera Asamblea Ciudadana Estatal* (the third State Citizen Assembly). Initially scheduled for March in Leganes (in the region of Madrid), the congress was held in May through an electronic vote, due to restrictions caused by the Corona Virus pandemic ("Podemos retoma su Tercera Asamblea Ciudadana", 2020). Iglesias and its team easily won the primary elections for the General Secretary and the Citizen Council, respectively with the 89,81% of the voters for the leader and grabbing all the 89 members of the Citizen Council. The third congress revealed the tendency toward the institutionalisation of the party, as in the case of the membership that passed from a liquid membership to a multi-speed model (Scarrow, 2015), recognizing as "full members or activists" only those who pay the party quota (Podemos, 2020a) (as analysed in the 3.4 section of this chapter). Indeed, the Podemos' discourse on internal democracy, the digital innovations and its concept of representation have changed under the influences and pressures of institutionalisation, especially when in government (see Kitschelt, 2006). These elements make analysing Podemos one of the most relevant cases for studying participation within new models of political parties and, its evolution over time.

3.2. Participation as ideology (how Podemos interprets participation)

> "*Algunos piensan que la política es cosa de los políticos, unos señores encorbatados que ganan mucho dinero y que encarnan los privilegios. Yo creo que si la gente normal no hace política, al final te la hacen otros, y eso es peligrosísimo. Decía Juan Carlos Monedero que toca mover fichas y es lo que vamos a intentar hacer aquí*"[39] (Pablo Iglesias, in Podemos, 2014g).

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[39] Someone thinks that politics is the thing of politicians, gentlemen in tie who earn a lot of money and who embody privileges. I believe that if normal people do not engage in politics, in the end others do, and this is very dangerous. Juan Carlos Monedero said that it is necessary to make a move and that is what we will try to do here.

Since the beginning, Podemos pinpointed participation as one of the principal features of its identity, and declared its commitment for citizen participation and democratic deepening, inside and outside the party. This topic and the linked promise of a new relationship between representatives and represented citizens have been central to the foundational declarations of the party. Indeed, these claims explicitly evoked the demands of the anti-austerity protest movement(s) arisen during the previous years. Particularly during the first phase, Podemos channelled an environment of enthusiasm and mobilisation still present in society after the protests. In this frame, the party activated different participatory processes to encourage militant engagement and commitment, particularly through open intra-party democracy processes.

These processes were characterised by the breaking of the inside-outside party boundaries, being participation opened to partisans, sympathisers and interested citizens. The strategy for facing the crisis of legitimisation of the parties towards members and citizens was based precisely in the concept of a new party open and functional to citizens. Indeed, Podemos claimed to be no longer a separate entity, as the other parties were perceived, rather to be a participatory method for changing all the political panorama and facing the political and economic crisis. According to the Iglesias' presentation of Podemos in 2014, the party were understood as "*un método participativo abierto a toda la ciudadanía*" (in Giménez San Miguel, 2014)[40]. Progressively, Podemos has bonded the populist nature of the party, with participation combining both digital and postmaterialist tendencies (Jacobs & Spierrings 2016, p. 100). In particular, it has been pursued through processes and tools designed for generating the interaction and the reaction of party's members, sympathisers and interested citizens (see the concept of "reactive democracy" by Gerbaudo, 2019). The main party innovations developed by the party are analysed in the section 3.4. of this chapter, while this section focuses on the ideological level by exploring the role of identity attributed to participation by Podemos (based on the fieldwork interviews).

In all the interviews conducted by the author, clearly emerged the centrality of participation for Podemos' narrative. Even the most critical interviewees tended to recognise its use in the party's storytelling, often recalling a first phase where participation had played a key role.

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[40] A participatory method, open to all citizens.

The greatest relevance to the ideological connection between Podemos and participation was expressed by party leaders or officers who were currently in office, or who remained an adherent active member of the party. For instance, quoting the Interviewee 6 (PE-LL, June 14, 2018): "*no se entiende Podemos sin el tipo de política participativa y hoy en día tampoco se entiende la política participativa sin Podemos*"[41]. While, the Interviewee 13 (PE-LL, September 18, 2018) argued that Podemos was "*una herramienta de participación ciudadana que intenta dar soluciones a los problemas de la gente*"[42]. In particular, people's participation used to be associated with the original movement spirit of the party. As argued by the same Interviewee 6 "*Somos un movimiento. No somos un partido que venga de créditos de los bancos, o un partido al que haya donaciones de grandes empresas: es un partido que se basa en la gente*"[43]. At this point a duality emerged in how the party conceives of participation. Indeed, Podemos' participation combines representation in institutions with assembly and street movement (Interviewee 2 - PE-LL, June 7, 2018). It explicitly refers to movement party model in which the party must maintain "*una pata en la calle y otra en la institución*"[44], since the movement participation foster the participation in the institutions and vice versa (Interviewee 13 - PE-LL, September 18, 2018). This double role, as amply argued by Kitschelt (2006), incorporated contradictions because it brought together two generally conflicting positions, i.e. protest and the institutional role (both forms of participation for Podemos). Interviewee 13 (PE-LL, September 18, 2018) told:

> "*Había veces que te ibas a la mani y te decían los movimientos sociales: 'Oye, que a mí me parece fenomenal compañera que tú estés en la mani, pero es qué te estamos reclamando a ti como institución'. O sea, que a parte de venir a comerte la pancarta, tú me tienes que dar una solución, desde la institución, porque es tu responsabilidad*"[45].

To offer a more complete and critical view, Table 3.1 outlines some of the main characteristics attributed to participation emerged during the interviews and shows their incidence among the various interviewees (considering the 16 non-academic interviews). In

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[41] It is not possible to understand Podemos without that type of participatory politics and nowadays it is not possible to understand participatory politics without Podemos.

[42] A tool for citizen participation that tries to provide solutions to people's problems.

[43] We are a movement. We are not a party that comes from bank loans, or a party that [receives] donations from big companies: it is a party that is based on people.

[44] one leg in the street and another in the institution.

[45] There were times when you went to the demonstration and the social movements said to you: 'Hey, it seems great to me that you are at the demonstration, but we are claiming you as an institution' In other words, apart from coming to hold up the banner, you must give me a solution, from the institution, because it is your responsibility.

particular, six characteristics have been identified by the author as the most relevant in qualitative terms and recurrent in the interviews aiming at pointing out the Podemos interpretation of participation and the main debates around it. These characteristics - divided in three categories ('General', 'Use' and 'Specific' ones) - have been previously examined in the Section 2.2.1. It includes the description of each characteristic and the concepts emerged during the interviews that the author clustered under these items (together with the categorisation of the interviewees and the interview design).

Table 3.1 – Characteristics of Podemos participation

Interviewee	Profile	Participation for Podemos					
		General		Use		Specific	
		Identity value / Founding principle	Instrumental value	Specific time & space	Reaffirmation / Reinforcing role	Unmediated / Direct	Controlled
1	Podemos founder and ideologist at the national level	X		X			X
2	Former Podemos general secretary at the local level	X				X	
3	Podemos founder and former party officer at the national and regional level		X	X	X	X	X
4	Former Podemos central officer at the national level	X			X		X
5	Officer of political projects linked to Podemos at the local level		X		X		
6	Podemos party body member at the local level	X					
7	Podemos representative at the regional level	X		X			
8	Podemos party body member at the local level	X			X	X	X
9	Podemos central officer at the national level	X			X	X	X
10	Podemos branch secretary at the local level	X			X		X

11	Officer of political projects linked to Podemos at the local level	X			X		
12	Podemos secretary at the local level	X		X			
13	Podemos secretary at the local level	X		X			
14	Local government representative and former Podemos collaborator	X					
15	Podemos founder and former party central officer at national level		X	X	X		X
16	Podemos founder and former party representative at national level	X		X	X		

Source: author's elaboration based on the interviews.

Participation is considered an identity value and/or a founding principle for Podemos by 13 out of 16 respondents. They generally recognised participation as a main pillar of the party following the participatory claims mentioned above. In particular, they often pointed out that Podemos participation responds to the crisis of representation and that "*romper la distancia que existía entre representantes y representados*"[46] has been a driving force for its foundation (Interviewee 9 - PE-NL, June 21, 2018). While the remaining three interviewees attributed an instrumental value to participation in Podemos, somehow denying the participatory drive. However, their critical view did not omit the narrative role of participation or its application (particularly in plebiscite form), but it focused on the Podemos use of the theme of participation as a tool to ride protest movements and gain support since the beginning. According to the Interviewee 15 (PFE-NL, March 7, 2019), "*nunca hubo una creencia real en la que la participación fuese como un valor positivo, en el que la democracia por si era como una especie de valor positivo a fomentar*"[47], since there was the belief that "*una decisión tomada por determinadas elites no tiene porqué ser peor que la tomada por cientos de miles de personas, en la que la participación en si no*

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[46] Breaking the distance that existed between representatives and represented.
[47] There has never been a real belief that participation was a positive value, that democracy itself was a kind of positive value to be promoted.

tiene por que llevarnos a hacer cosas bien"[48]. The two positions of the 'General' category, participation as identity or instrumental value, showed opposite views on this issue. Nevertheless, several of the interviewees who recognise participation as a founding principle mentioned a progressively change with respect to this spirit by linking it to the first phase of the party and referring to a fall off the path. Quoting the Interviewee 4 (PE-NL, June 12, 2018):

> "*La gente está ahora mismo mucho más desafectada políticamente que hace 4 años, porqué han sentido un doble engaño muchas personas, o sea primeros fue el 15-M y ahí un bajón y después es Podemos y otra vez me vuelve...no ha engañar, pero decepcionar, por lo menos*"[49].

Going in depth with the questions on the interpretation of the concept of participation and its role, the interviewees highlighted two other important aspects, included in the Use category. 7 of the interviewees stated that participation in Podemos is limited in time and space. Generally, it referred to the structural limits on the one hand of the communities and individuals' participation, on the other hand of the parties' role within representative democracy, rather than of Podemos itself. For instance, Interviewee 13 (PE-LL, September 18, 2018) affirmed "*Las organizaciones políticas están compuestas por personas, y tú no puedes estar como persona 24 horas, 365 días, toda tu vida, en un momento de tensión, eso no sería posible*"[50]. Similarly to other interviewees, she also compared the unsustainability (in vital terms) and the inefficiency and frustration (in political terms) of the 15-M assemblies to the participation in Podemos presented as more effective and sustainable. While, the Interviewee 1 (PIF-NL, May 16, 2018) considered the role of the party depending on the phase (including participation), arguing that "*es bastante probable que momentos de tensión electoral el partido se parezca más a cualquier partido, porque los partidos son los instrumentos básicos de la participación electoral*"[51]. He reinforced this argument through a metaphor:

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[48] A decision made by certain elites is not necessarily worse than that one made by hundreds of thousands of people, for which participation in itself does not have to lead us to do things well.

[49] People are much more politically disaffected right now than 4 years ago, because many people have felt a double deception: first it was the 15-M and there [they have suffered] a comedown, and then it is Podemos and again it comes back to...if not cheat, disappoint at least.

[50] Political organisations are made up of people, and you, as a person, cannot stay 24 hours, 365 days, all your life, in a tense moment, it would not be possible.

[51] It is quite probable that moments of electoral tension the party will be more like any other party, because the parties are the basic instruments of electoral participation.

> "*a la hora de comer la cuchara es más cuchara, que, a lo mejor, por la tarde o por la noche que igual puedes buscarle otro tipo de función, pero, a la hora de comer y hay sopa, la cuchara va a parecerse a lo que es: una cuchara*"[52]

On the contrary, the Interviewee 15 (PFE-NL, March 7, 2019) reported that the initial strategy of limitation (in terms of a specific time and space) then degenerated into a closure to participation in general. Quoting the Interviewee 15, "*no es qué se olvida que el 15-M pedía más participación y más democracía, pero no tenía que traducirse en una participación permanente*"[53], but then he added:

> "*lo que pasa es que esa reivindicación de más participación, o de más democracia, se tiende a derivarla hacia otros lugares, que no son la toma diaria de decisiones. [...] Fue como que nos pasamos de frenada: creamos una estructura que no pensamos que iba a llegar tan lejos en expulsar de la tomas de decisiones al grueso de la gente que participaba en Podemos*"[54].

While, in 9 interviews emerged the 'reaffirmation role' of participation in Podemos. According to those interviewees participation (concretely the participatory processes and tools) tended to be used by the majority (mainly the leadership) to reinforce its decisions and defend its positions. As Interviewee 9 (PE-NL, June 21, 2018) affirmed:

> "*orgánicamente dentro de Podemos es de mayoría, sirve realmente para reforzar las líneas principales, los mandatos principales del partido, o en caso de que quieran realizar algún tipo de cambio, que lo pueden hacer, reorientar la política*"[55]

However, two approaches to this issue were outlined in the interviews. On the one side, some interviewees justified the reaffirmation role of participation, particularly considering two aspects: the being constantly under media attack for the party, since its foundation, and the democratic legitimacy of the leadership, elected through primary elections. Interviewee 4

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[52] When eating the spoon is more spoon, while, perhaps, in the afternoon or at night you can find another type of function to it, but, at mealtime and there is soup, the spoon goes to look as what it is: a spoon.

[53] [Podemos] did not forget that the 15-M asked for more participation and more democracy, but it did not necessarily result in permanent participation.

[54] What happens is that this demand for more participation, or more democracy, tends to be diverted to other places, which are not daily decision-making. [...] It was like we fail to stop on time: we created a structure that we did not think that would go so far in expelling most of the people who participated in Podemos.

[55] Organically within Podemos it is of the majority, it really serves to reinforce the main lines, the main mandates of the party, or in case they want to make some kind of change, which they can do, to reorient the politics.

(PE-NL, June 12, 2018) also pointed out that "*la participación es una herramienta política, así funciona*"[56]. While, Interviewee 9 (PE-NL, June 21, 2018), speaking about digital participation, described a highly majoritarian system of participation, in which "*incluso las minorías necesitaría convertirse en una mayoría para reorientar, o intentar tener una incidencia grande*"[57]. In this line, the participation is interpreted as a tool at disposal of the majority for reaffirming their positions.

On the other side, the reaffirmation role of participation and its majoritarian characteristic has been criticised for two main reasons. The first is that the plebiscitarian nature of this type of participation tended to transforms every consultation in a binary consultation on the leadership, limiting the members' power and action range. In this regards, Interviewee 3 (PFE-NL, June 11, 2018) said "*consultas de m****a, cuándo para decidir lo fundamental, votaciones etc., o que hacemos en muchas decisiones política [no se vota]*. Therefore, he reported "*No hemos votado ni una sola ley, en todo este tiempo*"[58] and then "*Cualquier pregunta acababa igual: ¿Pablo* [Iglesias] *si o Pablo no? Eso es un problema*"[59]. The second is that using participation to reaffirm the leadership/majority positions the voice of the minority groups within Podemos tended to be silenced in the participatory processes and – according to some of the interviewees – ostracised in the party in general. Interviewee 4 (PE-NL, June 12, 2018) argued:

> "*lo que es peligroso es que en el momento en el que empiezas a utilizar estas herramientas para reafirmarte es muy difícil lograr el paso contrario, o sea te acomodas. Y creo que es lo que ha pasado, claramente. De hecho, las voces críticas en Podemos se han apagado*"[60].

Within the 'Specific' category, four of the interviewees pointed out another characteristic attributed to the concept of participation for Podemos, that is being direct, i.e. unmediated by intermediate bodies of the party or party keepers. The participatory processes and tools developed and implemented by the party tended to directly address the members, promoting

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[56] Participation is a political tool, that's how it works.
[57] Even minorities would need to become a majority to reorient, or to try to have a large impact.
[58] S**t consultations, when to decide on the fundamentals [issues], voting etc., or what we do in many political decisions... [we do not vote]. We have not voted a single law, in all this time.
[59] Any question ended on the same way: Pablo [Iglesias] yes or Pablo no? That is a problem.
[60] What is dangerous is that, when you start to use these tools to reaffirm yourself, to move in the opposite direction is very difficult, I mean you get comfortable. And I think that is what happened, clearly. In fact, critical voices in Podemos have faded. See Section 3.6. for a deeper understanding of the relation between leadership/majority and minority groups in the Podemos IPD.

a horizontal and liquid membership at the same time (although the phase of structuring of the Podemos branches and their link with the executive councils, the *Consejos Ciudadanos*, has partially changed this perspective). The direct and unmediated nature of participation has been interpreted in the interviews with a double meaning. On the one side, it was presented as a positive distinctive element of Podemos which leads to empower the role of members and counteract the elitisation of the party structure. Accordingly, the Interviewee 2 (PE-LL, June 7, 2018) described Podemos as *"una nueva visión de la izquierda mucho más liberal, en un sentido político de dar protagonismo directo, individual y no transferible, y no mediado por estructura/organización"*[61], and *"una nueva formación política que se caracteriza principalmente por un efectivo ejercicio de la participación política directa de sus escritos"*[62]. While, Interviewee 9 (PE-NL, June 21, 2018) explained *"teníamos que construir herramientas que hicieran que esa gente, que las/el ciudadanos de a pie que se interesara, pudiera participar de una forma directa en las decisiones internas del partido y en las decisiones institucionales"*[63]. On the other side, the direct and unmediated characteristics of participation are evoked as a strategic choice to bypass active militancy and its intermediate bodies, reducing their power and role. According to this position, as theorised by Gerbaudo (2019), the direct participation promoted by the "hyper-leadership" appeals to the "super-base" for legitimising the decisions without questioning them with the most active and aware part of the membership. Interviewee 3 (PFE-NL, June 11, 2018) outlined this participation mechanism/strategy identifying three levels: *"quién directamente está metido en el partido"*[64], *"quién participa en el Partido"*[65] and *"quién se siente cercano a el, simpatizante, etc."*[66]. According to him, *"Lo que se hizo fue apelar (de una forma muy abstracta), ese 'más allá', a los que faltan, para quitar poder al segundo grado y darle más al primero"*[67]. In the same line, Interviewee 8 (PE-LL, June 15, 2018) argued *"se produce un fortalecimiento muy fuerte de los que son las estructuras de dirección pero no de la voz, de los órganos intermedios y de los círculos, [que] se vacían un poco de contenido y de*

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[61] A new vision of the left-wing, much more liberal, in the political sense of giving direct, individual and non-transferable prominence, not mediated by structure/organisation.

[62] A new political project that is characterised mainly by an effective exercise of direct political participation of their members. See section 3.3.1. for a specific analysis on member categories.

[63] We had to build tools that would make these people, ordinary citizens who were interested, could participate in a direct way in the internal decisions of the party and in institutional decisions.

[64] Who is directly involved in the party.

[65] who participates in the party.

[66] Who feels close to it, sympathiser, etc.

[67] What have been done was to appeal (in a very abstracted way), that "beyond", those who are missing, to deprive power from the second level and give more to the first one.

función"[68]. Jointly with disintermediation, the dynamic described by these interviewees goes in line with another trend analysed in literature: the individualisation of participation within the parties (Gauja, 2015a), which implies the development of customised processes toward individual members, excluding the communities and groups within the party.

Lastly, the 44% of the interviewees (7 out of 16) argued that the control marked the participation in Podemos. Similarly to the direct feature, it has been mentioned according two different points of view. The first was associated with the need for participation being limited in time and space, specifically for allowing a more effective and inclusive participation of the members. This vision was based on a pragmatic approach to the structural necessity of participation within a political party, which - although claiming to be different - must deal with deadlines, phases, and limited availability of its membership and supporters' base. According to this view, the control of the participation in Podemos had the function of guaranteeing the fulfilment of the predetermined objectives of each process. In particular, this type of control has been carried out in the party through digital tools and processes of participation. Interviewee 9 (PE-NL, June 21, 2018) explained this choice in terms of potential of digital technologies in controlling the processes:

> "*muchas veces cuando abres los procesos de participación, se te van de las manos, tú puedes abrir una asamblea, pero tú no sabes cuál va a ser el final de la asamblea, ni si esa asamblea va a cumplir con los objetivos que tú querías que cumpliera. En cambio a nivel digital es mucho más fácil controlar eso, es mucho más fácil guiarlo, porque tienes un mundo virtual que te ofrece una serie de espacios, incluso de diseños, mucho más mejorados para que los usuarios puedan recorrer más o menos los caminos que tú quieras*"[69]

The second point of view on the control over Podemos participation has been markedly critical. In particular, the discourses in those interviews focused on the obsession of the party for the control of the organisation. The control of participation has been indicated as a means of prevention, avoiding that Podemos diverted from the path established by the leadership, which ended in an immediate closure of the real spaces of participation. The Interviewee 3

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[68] There is a very strong strengthening of the leadership structures but not of the voice, the intermediate bodies, and the branches, which have been deprive a bit of content and function.

[69] Many times, when you open the participation processes, they get 'out of hand', you can open an assembly, but you do not know what the end of the assembly will be, or if that assembly will fulfil the objectives that you wanted to achieve. While, at the digital level, to control that is much easier, to guide it is much easier, because you have a virtual world that offers you a series of spaces, including graphic design, much improved so that users can more or less walk the paths that you want.

(PFE-NL, June 11, 2018) expressed that view with these words:

> "*Ahí hay un poco de pánico a la gente. Eso es lo que se expresa en el primer Vistalegre, respecto a cómo controlamos toda la ola. [...] Esto ese el 'asalto al cielo' y el asalto al cielo solamente se hace con dirigentes que controlen absolutamente toda la estrategia. Hay un miedo increíble al desborde*"[70].

Thus accordingly, the top-down control of participation reveals the centralisation tendency of the Podemos intra-party participation, which tended to promote centralised processes decided by a single group or decision body (Scarrow, 2005).

How Podemos interpreted participation is a complex issue and the difference between critical voices and 'oficialist' positions is wide, as well as the variety of nuances in the intermediate positions. In this section, an overview on this has been presented based on the interviews conducted. One particular element emerged as a commonality: the centrality of participation for Podemos, in its principles, in the party's narrative, in the criticisms and so on. In conclusion, the evidence presented in this section confirmed the Hypothesis 1 on the promotion of participation as an identity and a distinctive element of the party, with references to its role in rekindling political parties' legitimacy in front of the electorate.

3.3. Legal and formal organisational framework

The centrality of the theme of participation in Podemos's ideology is widely reflected in the party's main documents. This is visible starting from the manifesto that presented the political platform on the basis of which Podemos would have been founded shortly after, *Mover ficha: convertir la indignación en cambio politico* (Making a move: turning indignation into political change, 2014). In 3 of the 10 points claimed in the document, reference is made to issues relating to civic participation. The first two mentioned the central role that citizens/people should have in democracy. The political project proposed was presented as "*Una candidatura por la recuperación de la soberanía popular: es la ciudadanía la que tiene que decidir, no la minoría egoísta que nos ha traído hasta aquí*"[71]

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[70] There is a bit of panic to people. That is what is expressed in the first Vistalegre, regarding how we control the entire wave. This is that the 'assault to the sky' and [for them] the assault to the sky can be possible only with leaders who absolutely control the entire strategy. There is an incredible fear of overflow (Section 3.6. analysed specifically the Podemos Intra-Party Democracy, including the topic of control over the party).

[71] A candidacy for the recovery of popular sovereignty: the citizenry must decide, not the selfish minority that has brought us here.

(Mover ficha, 2014, point 1). Similarly, in the following point was stated "*[u]na candidatura que, frente a unos gobiernos al servicio de la minoría del 1% reivindique una «democracia real» basada en la soberanía de los pueblos y en su derecho a decidir su futuro libre y solidariamente*"[72] (Mover ficha, 2014, point 2)[73]. While, point "10" of the same document focused on the role of participation (including transparency and accountability) within the elaboration of this new political proposal:

> "*Una candidatura que sea el resultado de un proceso participativo abierto a la ciudadanía, en la elaboración de su programa y en la composición de la lista paritaria, basada en los criterios de presencia de activistas sociales, políticos y culturales, con rotatividad de cargos e ingresos equivalentes al salario medio. Una candidatura con compromiso de transparencia y rendimiento de cuentas, cuyos recursos financieros sean independientes de la banca privada y de los 'lobbies'*"[74].

In the political document approved during the first congress Vistalegre I (in October 2014), i.e. *la primera Asamblea Ciudadana Estatal* (the first State Citizen Assembly), named *Principios Políticos* (Political Principles), Podemos is described as "*actor colectivo y la herramienta electoral*"[75] with the aim of achieving "*el cambio político y la construcción de la soberanía popular*"[76] (Podemos, 2014c, p. 5). Moreover, participation is mentioned as a first requirement to support 'municipalist' initiatives (at that moment the closest electoral horizon) (Podemos, 2014c, Annex, p. 15). While in the organisational document approved during the same congress, named *Principios Organizativos* (Organisational Principles), participation directly assumed a pivoting role in the party's first official structuring and organising phase. As stated in the opening of the Preamble "*En cuanto a los principios organizativos, resulta imprescindible mantener las señas de identidad que nos han traído hasta aquí: la apuesta por la participación ciudadana, el compromiso con la transparencia y las cuentas claras, y la exigencia de control democrático*"[77] (Podemos, 2014d, p. 7). In the section 1 of the Preamble, named precisely Participation, that concept is expanded affirming:

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[72] A candidacy that, facing the governments at the service of the 1% minority, claims a «real democracy» based on the sovereignty of the peoples and their right to decide their future freely and in solidarity.

[73] With particular reference to the Catalan case as expressed in the second part of point 2.

[74] A candidacy that is the result of a participatory process open to citizens, in developing its program and in the composition of the equal list, based on the criteria of presence of social, political and cultural activists, with rotation of offices and incomes equivalent to the average salary. A candidacy with a commitment to transparency and accountability, whose financial resources are independent from private banking and lobbyists.

[75] Collective actor and the electoral tool.

[76] The political change and the construction of popular sovereignty.

[77] Regarding the organisational principles, to maintain the hallmarks that have brought us here is essential: the commitment to citizen participation, the commitment to transparency and straight accounting, and the demand for democratic control.

Participation as a hallmark is widely recognizable in the Organisational Principles' articles as well, particularly in the Art. 1, 2 and 9 of the Title I (Podemos, 2014d, pp. 11-12). Art. 1 stated "*Podemos se organiza de manera democrática y fomenta el debate y la participación abierta, respetuosa y directa de todos sus miembros en la toma de decisiones de la organización*"[79]. Art. 2 affirmed "*Podemos utiliza todas las herramientas presenciales y telemáticas a su alcance para promover el empoderamiento ciudadano dentro y fuera de la organización y la participación directa de la gente en la toma de decisiones públicas y políticas*"[80]. While, Art. 9 focused on participation in the IPD of the party, as reported here in its entirety:

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[78] The commitment to participation and Democracy (speaking of true democracy is difficult without participation) necessarily implies a real redefinition of the role of the politician and of political organisations: from this conception, the politician becomes an agent of the participation of the citizenship within a permanent process of progressive empowerment. This does not imply a distinction between militants and citizens, between an inside and an outside of politics. We aspire, more and more, to include a greater number of citizens to the analysis, decision and management of the public [good].

[79] Podemos is organised in a democratic way and promotes debate and open, respectful and direct participation of all its members in the decision-making of the organisation.

[80] Podemos uses all the face-to-face and telematic tools at its disposal to promote citizen empowerment inside and outside the organisation and the direct participation of people in public and political decision-making.

[81] Podemos promotes the direct participation of all its members in decision-making processes that significantly affect the organisation, using all face-to-face and online tools that can expand and guarantee democratic political participation. Podemos will promote all face-to-face spaces for participation while relying on different digital tools to facilitate deliberation and decision-making among all. Through the actions promoted from all

(Podemos, 2014d, p. 12).

Furthermore, section 1 of the Preamble (Podemos, 2014d, pp. 7-8) briefly described some of the Podemos' participatory innovations that the party was recently implementing, mentioning in particular *Plaza Podemos*, *Bancos de Talentos* and *Appgree* (see Section 3.5. for a detailed analysis). In conclusion, the party affirmed the willingness to create territorial participation groups throughout the country to reduce the digital divide and promote widespread participation within the party structure. Consequently, from the first congress, Podemos established the *Área de participación estatal* (Participation area at the national level) with a twofold objective. As argued by Interviewee 4 (PE-NL, June 12, 2018) "*una pata era la parte de cómo abrir el partido y qué propuestas participativas proponíamos, innovadoras, dentro de nuestra formación, y por otra parte era como estructurar todo el organismo participativo a nivel estatal*"[82]. Starting from there, the party organised 17 territorial participation areas, one for each Spanish region (a system of 18 areas in total). Every area had a political director in charge with a structure that reproduced the Participation area at national level. The territorial participation areas had general objectives and assignments at the national level and own assignments depending on them. The general objectives were divided into three fields: "*[1] El ámbito de la brecha tecnológica, [2] el ámbito de la brecha rural, y por supesto [3] el ámbito de la brecha del voto de la mujer, la participación de la mujer en los espacios políticos*"[83] (Interviewee 4 - PE-NL, June 12, 2018).

The Figure 3.1 frames the structure of Podemos according to the first congress decisions (Podemos, 2014d).

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levels of the organisation and, especially, from the branches, mechanisms will be enabled to facilitate participation under equal conditions for those who may have greater difficulties in accessing the Internet.

[82] One pillar was the part of how to open the party and what innovative participatory proposals we proposed within our formation, and the other [pillar] was how to structure the entire participatory organism at the state level.

[83] [1] The area of the technological divide, [2] the area of the rural divide, and of course [3] the area of the women's vote divide, i.e. the participation of women in political spaces.

Figure 3.1 – Podemos structure at Vistalegre I
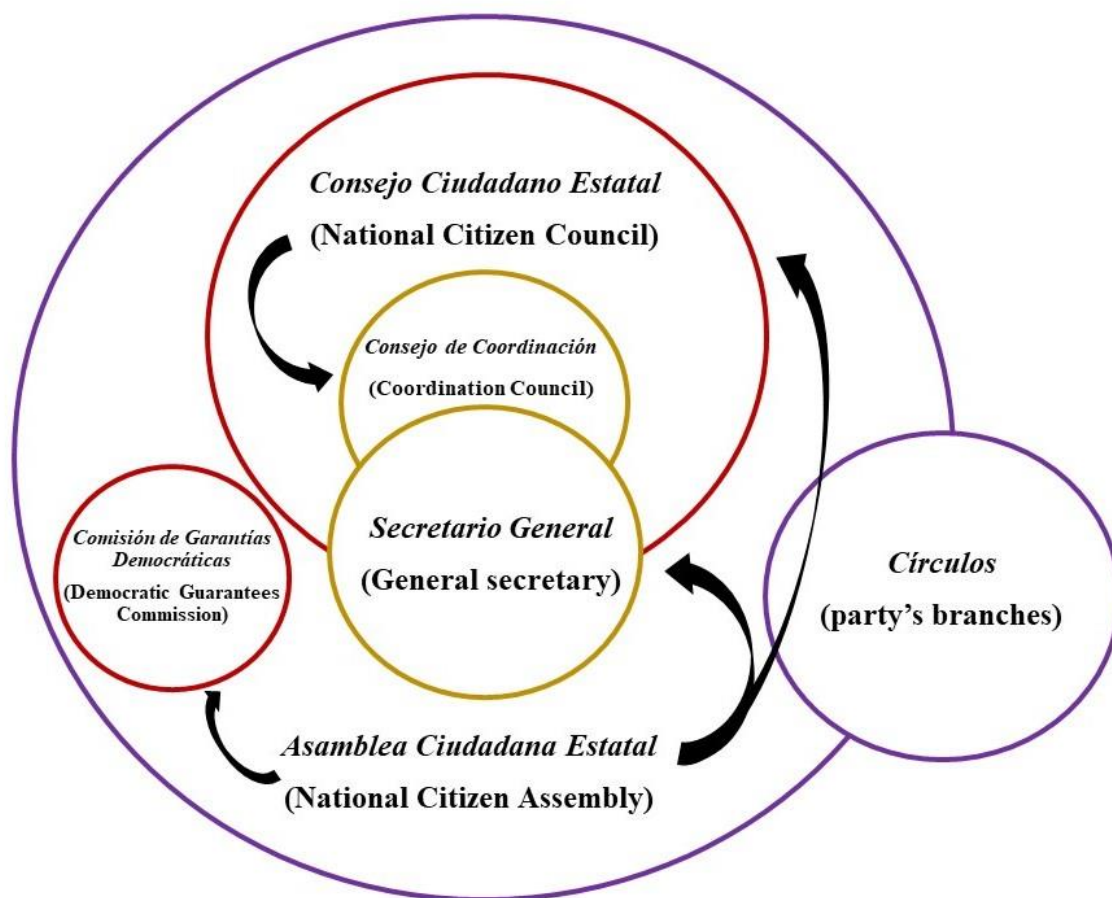
Source: author's elaboration based on the Organisational Principles document (Podemos, 2014d).

The *Asamblea Ciudadana Estatal* (National Citizen Assembly) is the permanent body of the party that includes all members with the right to speak and vote. In the Organisational Principles document has been defined as the "*máximo órgano de decision*"[84] that arbitrates all participatory processes and tools (Podemos, 2014d, Title II, Chapter 1. Art. 10, p. 13). The consultation of the Citizen Assembly on relevant decisions has been established as mandatory, such as "*fijar líneas estratégicas, componer listas electorales, elaborar programas, elegir o revocar a los miembros de los órganos, aprobar o rechazar cualquier tipo de pacto preelectoral o poselectoral, modificar los Estatutos, etcétera*"[85] (Podemos, 2014d, Title II, Chapter 1. Art. 10, p. 13). An Extraordinary Citizen Assembly could be called to rethink the structure of the organisation. As shown by Figure 3.2, the *Asamblea Ciudadana Estatal* elect and revoke by voting the *Secretario General* (General Secretary),

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[84] Highest decision-making body.
[85] Setting strategic lines, composing electoral lists, elaborating programs [manifestos], electing or revoking the members of the bodies, approving or rejecting any type of pre-electoral or post-electoral agreement, modifying the Statutes, etc.

the *Consejo Ciudadano Estatal* (National Citizen Council), including each of the individual members, and the *Comisión de Garantías Democráticas* (Democratic Guarantees Commission) (Podemos, 2014d, Title II, Chapter 1. Art. 13, p. 15). Figure 3.2 elaborated by the party shows the links and power relations of the Citizen Assembly according to the Podemos documents approved during the first congress.

Figure 3.2 – National Citizen Assembly at Vistalegre I
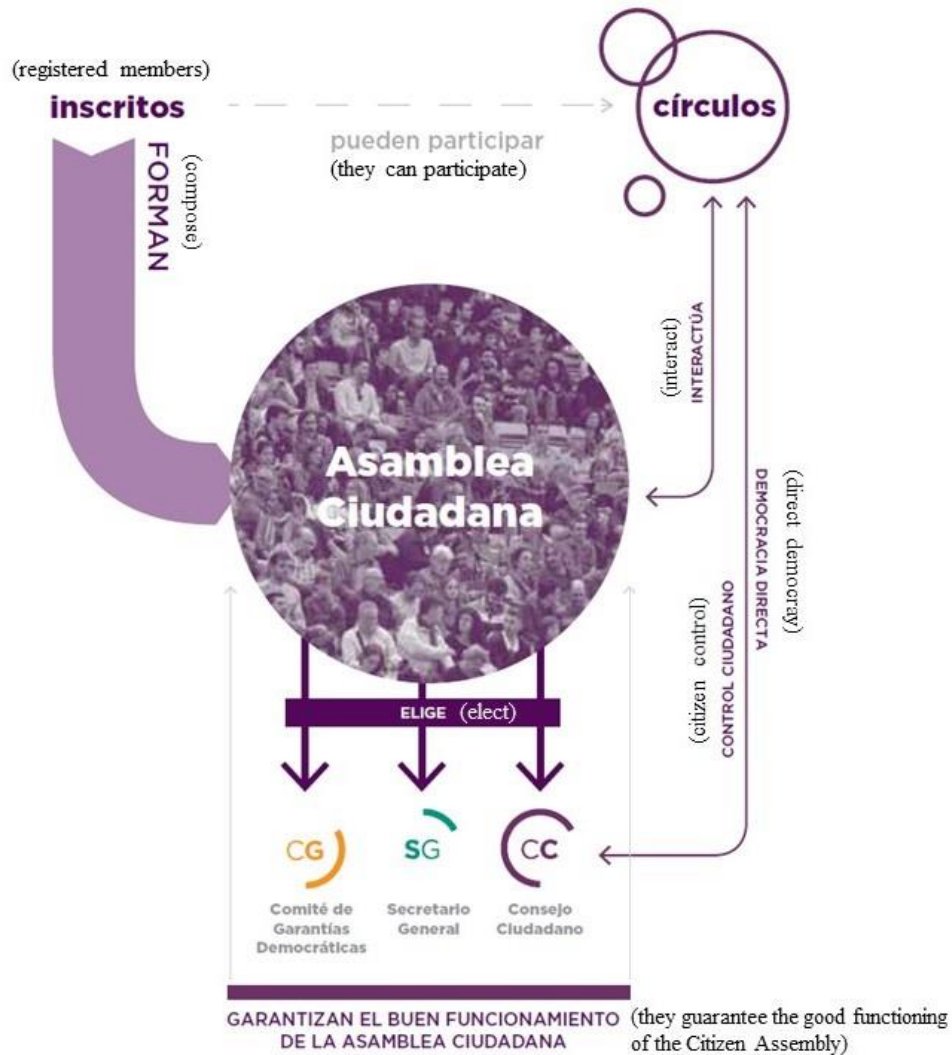
Source: Organisational Principles document (Podemos, 2014d, p. 14), translated by the author.

The Citizen Assembly, as a single and not a separate community, clearly predominated in this organisational structure over the party branches, in terms of competence and power. However, the Art. 22 of Title II, Chapter 3 and Art. 52 of Title VI, Chapter 2 (Podemos, 2014d, p. 21 and p. 32) established mechanism the party branches to call Citizen Assembly

consultations[86] and the entire Title IV focused on the party branches including recognition, competences organisational principles and categories (Territorial or sectoral branches) (Podemos, 2014d, pp. 30-38). Figure 3.3 as elaborated by the party shows the links and power relations of the party branches, in relation to the Podemos structure approved during the first congress.

Figure 3.3 – Podemos branches at Vistalegre I

Source: Organisational Principles document (Podemos, 2014d, p. 34), translated by the author[87].

Considering the competences assigned and the related power relations, the party branches in the first congress' structuring assumed a mainly consultative role over the organisation at the national level. Despite their importance being repeatedly claimed in the documents, in

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[86] See Section 3.5.2 on *Consulta Ciudadana* (Citizen Consultation).
[87] "*perceptivamente*" (perceptually) instead of "*preceptivamente*" (mandatory) has been considered by the author as a typo.

the first Podemos phase the classic organisational unit of a political party tend to be viewed with a certain distrust. Therefore, initially the party invested more on new channels and participation processes to engage the members, especially the younger ones. Interviewee 4 (PE-NL, June 12, 2018) reported that the branches "*se vacíaban de gente jóven, constantemente. Porque la gente jóven iba un día, veía que no se hacía nada, sino que se debatía, y se marchaban*"[88]. For this reason, Podemos developed channels beyond the branches aiming at "*hacer de gancho para que gente muy válida - que se desafectó en un primer momento, porque no le servía o no le era util el aprendizaje que obtenía en los círculos - pudiera tener una razón para volver*"[89].

As mentioned, the rest of the Podemos structure at the national level was composed by the National Citizen Council, the General secretary (jointly with the Coordination Council) and the Democratic Guarantees Commission. The *Consejo Ciudadano Estatal* (National Citizen Council) has been designed as the executive committee of the party, composed by 81 members: the general secretary (who presides over the meetings), the 17 regional secretaries, a member elected directly by the Podemos members residents abroad, and 62 members elected directly by the Citizen Assembly (Podemos, 2014d, Title II, Chapter 2, pp. 17-22). While, the *Secretario General* (General Secretary), has been conceived as the top representative of Podemos, assisted by the *Consejo de Coordinación* (Coordination Council), composed by 10-15 members proposed by the General Secretary and voted by the National Citizen Council. The Organisational Principles document (Podemos, 2014d, Title II, Chapter 3, Art. 23 p. 22), assigned to the General Secretary mainly coordination, representation and strategic competences. Lastly, the *Comisión de Garantías Democráticas* (Democratic Guarantees Commission) has been identified as the body in charge of monitoring and ensuring the respect for the rights of the Podemos members and the fundamental principles and rules of the organisation. It was composed by 5 full members and 5 substitutes, elected directly by the Citizen Assembly (Podemos, 2014d, Title II, Chapter 4, pp. 23-24). The structure at the national level was replicated at the territorial level in a similar way with the equivalent party bodies.

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[88] They were constantly emptying of young people. Because young people went one day, they saw that nothing was being done, [just] debating, and they left.
[89] Acting as a hook so that very valid people - who were disaffected at the beginning, because it was not useful for them, or the learning they obtained in branches was not useful for them - could have a reason to return.

The backbone of the Podemos structure as well as its general principles will remain almost the same over the years and the two subsequent party's congresses. In the *Estatutos de Podemos* (Podemos' Statutes) approved during the second congress (in February 2017), there has been a continuity in the centrality of participation as an identity value and a primary aim of the party. As stated in the Title I, Chapter 1, Art. 2 of the Statutes, the first party specific objective is:

> "*Promover la participación democrática de todas las personas en la decisión y ejecución de todas las políticas públicas. Podemos se organiza democráticamente y fomenta el debate y la participación abierta, respetuosa y directa de todos sus miembros en la toma de decisiones de la organización*"[90] (Podemos, 2017a, p. 6).

The Art. 2 of the Statutes and many other references to participation have been maintained in the 2020 Statutes version, approved during the third congress (in May 2020), without being altered. Differently, a significant change with respect to the centrality of participation is visible by comparing the Organisational Documents of the first two congresses with the same document of the third congress, also in narrative terms. In the Organisational Document of the second congress, the first section of the Preamble is titled "*Participación es organización*" (Participation is organisation), reaffirming participation as hallmark that differentiates Podemos from other parties, and as a principle that guides the entire organisation of the party (Podemos, 2017b, p. 6). On the contrary, in the Organisational Document of the third congress, the introductory part has been reduced and the mentions to participation have been largely limited and replaced by claims for a more solid and rooted organisation (Podemos, 2020b). Furthermore, after Vistalegre II congress, radical change occurred in the Participation Area of the party at national level in terms of political representatives and staff, especially considering that the area was generally associated with the *Errejónistas*.

However, beyond the narrative, pointing out some of the main structural updates and changes along the Podemos' congresses is particularly important. First, the Podemos membership regulation significantly changed twice; since the party foundation (as specifically analysed in the following Section 3.3.1.). It passed from a fluid membership including all the

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[90] To promote the democratic participation of all people in the decision and implementation of all public policies. Podemos is organised in democratic way and promotes debate and open, respectful and direct participation of all its members in the decision-making of the organisation.

registered members with any distinction (Deseriis & Vittori, 2019) in the first congress documents to a multi-speed membership model (Gomez & Ramiro, 2019) in the second congress documents, including three overlapping categories: full members or affiliates, activists and participant. While, in the new Podemos Statutes (2020a), approved in the third Congress (in May 2020), the membership categories have been modified into: enrolled, registered and verified members, and full members or activists, who for the first time in the party history were required to pay a party quota.

Second, National Citizen Assembly's regulation has been changed in terms of typologies and procedure for calling it along the three mentioned congresses. On the one hand, the category of *Asamblea Ciudadana Extraordinaria* (Extraordinary Citizen Assembly) has been removed since the Organisational Document was approved during the second congress. On the other hand, in the same document, the requirements for calling an Ordinary Citizen Assembly (after 18 months from the previous and before 4 years established as a maximum) has been fixed in the decision of: the General Secretariat or the Coordination Council, or a qualified majority of 3/5 of the Citizen Council, or a 25% of the members or a 30% of the active branches (the same requirements for calling an Extraordinary Citizen Assembly in Organisational Principles document, Podemos, 2014d). While, the requirements for calling a consultation to the so-called *Asamblea Ciudadana permanente* (Permanent Citizen Assembly) have been maintained the same in the two first congress' documents, which was the decision of: the general secretariat, the simple majority of the citizen council, a 10% of the members or a 20% of the active branches. Likewise, the requirements for calling a *Consulta Revocatoria* (Revocation Consultation) have been the same: a decision of the general secretary, an absolute majority of the State Citizen Council, a 20% of those registered and registered in Podemos or a 25% of the validated branches. Differently, in the Organisational Document of the third congress (2020b), the requirements have been meaningfully changed. Indeed, on the one side the branches have been deprived of the prerogative of calling a Citizen Assembly of any typology, on the other side the percentage of members needed to call an Ordinary Citizen Assembly or a consultation to the Permanent Citizen Assembly passed from 10% (for both in the first congress' Organisational Document) to 25% (equalising all Citizen Assembly to the highest percentage required for the Revocation Consultations)[91].

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[91] Section 3.4.2 specifically analysed the *Consulta Ciudadana* (Citizen Consultation) and its implementation.

Third, in the second congress' Organisational Document, the Coordination Council has been officialised as a part of the organic structure of Podemos. Indeed, this change recognised the shift (already implemented in fact) from a sort of supporting staff of the General Secretary to an executive body - that support the General Secretary and Citizen Council in political and coordination issues - organised in thematic secretariats (Podemos, 2017b, Title II, Art. 17, p. 28). While, in the third congress' Organisational Document, the Coordination Council section has integrated with its specific functions and powers (Podemos, 2020b, Title 1, Art. 16, pp. 20-21). Fourth, the three congresses documents marked a strategic shift in the role and importance of the party branches in the Podemos structure. As previously mentioned, the traditional political parties' unit played a secondary role during the first phase, with respect to direct participation mechanisms. Since the second congress' documents (at least in official terms) and especially in the third congress' documents, the party has assigned a greater role to the territorial branches, balancing with them a decrease of investment in direct participation, economic, organisational and narrative terms.

This resulted in the 2020 Podemos' Statutes and Organisational Document particularly in three aspects. Firstly, each Podemos member has been required to bind his/her affiliation to a territorial branch (Podemos, 2020a, Title I, Chapter 2, Art. 5, p. 7). Secondly, the *Círculos Sectoriales* (Sectorial Branches), focusing on specific topics or sectorial communities, have been transformed into specialized work groups, associated with a Citizen Council. It implied converting the territorial branches in the only Podemos branches typology (Podemos, 2020b, Title 6 pp. 65-66). Thirdly, the party's branch regulation sections have been expanded in the third Organisational Document, in terms of articles, competences and organisation details. For instance, each party branch has been called to elect an *Equipo Dinamizador* (Dynamizing Team) to support the secretary, composed by 3 people to coordinate three areas: organisation/finance, communication and feminism (Podemos, 2020b, Title 5, Art. 64 pp. 59-60). Moreover, the party have established the possibility of creating *Red de Círculos* (Network of Branches) for promoting coordinated actions and elaboration in the territories, with particular reference to the islands and region with more than one province networking and knowledge transfer (Podemos, 2020b, Title 3, pp. 39-43). Lastly, with an oversimplified but indicative comparison, in the third congress' Organisational Document the word *círculo/s* (branch/es) have been mentioned around 34% more than the same second congress document (despite the fact that the third document is 26 pages less).

Nevertheless, the fact these changes were reported in party documents does not mean that there has really been a greater political investment in decentralisation and branches by the party. The author found neither in the interviews at the local level nor in the participant observation such a trend. As analysed in the following sections, he considers that the narrative and organisational changes revealed on the one side a process of institutionalisation, in which the party passed through the organisational stage to the stabilisation stage[92] (Harmel & Svåsand, 1993); on the other side the necessity of replacing - at least in terms of narrative - the participatory processes and tools that the party eliminated, suspended or diverted in their objectives and implementation. The following sub-section focuses on the legal aspects of Podemos membership and on its evolution, considering it as a particularly significant element for this chapter, since the members have been the main subjects of participation promoted by the party.

3.3.1 Podemos' membership

Podemos membership has been one of the most cited cases of new party digital membership. The fluid nature (Deseriis & Vittori, 2019) characterised the first phase of registration to the party that generate the first Podemos members community and was ratified in the first congress document. It has been studied as an innovation to both the traditional and multi-speed membership models. Gerbaudo (2019, pp.17-18) defined it as an "open membership model" similar to the registration on social media as Facebook, having "minimal membership requirements" (Gomez & Ramiro, 2019, p. 536). The two initial characteristics of this model were: the very low entry barriers, i.e. a simple signing up on the party's website was the only requirement (e.g. no probation period or endorsement nor Spanish citizenship); and second was the separation of membership and financial contribution, as no membership fee was required to join the party. Interviewee 9 (PE-NL, June 21, 2018) endorsing the free membership argued:

> "*Hay muchos académicos que defienden que los sistemas de pago de la militancia no frenan la participación. Yo defiendo que sí que la frena. Porque al final, aunque*

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[92] The third congress is the first since Podemos jointed the government.

pagues 5€, tienes que pagar, es una acción más que tienes que dar"[93].

Differently from the multi-speed membership model (Scarrow, 2015), Podemos established just one form of affiliation that enabled participation in all the party activities and to the internal decision-making processes (Gomez & Ramiro, 2019, p. 537). This unique category has been named "*personas inscritas*" or simply "*inscrito/as*", translated as enrolled or registered members. In the Organisational Principles document (2014d) full rights are recognised to registered members as members of the Citizens' Assembly, in terms of participation "*con voz y voto*"[94] through face-to-face and telematic tools (Title II, Chapter 1, Art. 10, p. 13). The only three simple requirements for the registration were to be over 14 years old, to express the willingness to participate in Podemos and to obtain a permanent voting code (Title II, Chapter 1, Art. 12, p. 14). In this document - with no distinctions between membership types - the border between what is inside and outside the party was often challenged, in line with Kitschelt's movement party (2006, p. 280). However, the Podemos Statutes approved during the second congress (2017a), passed to further regulate membership in more detail, including three overlapping categories: "*miembros de pleno derecho o afiliados*" (full members or affiliates), who have personally or electronically verified his/her "*voluntad de pertenecer a Podemos*"[95]; "*militantes*" (activists), who actively participate in the party's activities, included in a specific census of activists; and "*participante*" (participant), registered member but without being legally affiliated to the party (with the right to vote only when expressly established by the party's electoral or consultations regulations). Additionally, a verification process has been required, by uploading an ID document (Spanish or foreign) to certify the identity of the member. All verified members were enabled to participate in all the decision-making processes of the party without distinction between affiliated members or activists (Podemos, 2017a, Title I, Chapter 2, Art. 5, p. 8). However, the changes in the Statutes decided in the second congresses have partially modified just one of the characteristics of the initial model, augmenting the entry barriers but keeping them quite low; as they have not impacted in the financial contribution, not requiring any membership fee.

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[93] There are many scholars who defend that membership payment systems do not limit participation. I argue that they do limit it. Because in the end, even if you pay €5, you must pay, it is an additional action that you must to take.

[94] With voice and vote.

[95] Willingness to be part of Podemos.

Differently, the Podemos Statutes (2020a), approved in the third Congress, marked a significant modification of the membership model. Indeed, the categories have been modified into: "*miembros de pleno derecho o militantes*" (full members or activists), defined as adults (i.e. at least 18 years old), mandatory registered to a party territorial branch, and especially, for the first time, up to date with the payment of the party quota; "*inscritas*" (enrolled), registered members who did not verified their identity; and "*inscritas en Podemos con capacidad de ejercer sufragio activo (votar) y pasivo (candidatura)*" (registered member with the capacity to exercise active suffrage (vote) and passive (candidacy), defined as registered and verified members, i.e. the registered members who provided the corresponding personal document (Podemos, 2020a, Title I, Chapter 2, Art. 5, p. 7). As mentioned, until then, the changes made to the requirements for membership and its differentiation were minimal and purely procedural. Rather, those modifications significantly changed the Podemos' membership, bringing it closer to a multi-speed model that differentiates between full members who financially contribute to the party periodically and other types of members with lower commitment (Scarrow, 2015). Therefore, one of the two main characteristics of the innovative Podemos membership model disappeared with the establishment of the party quota; while the second one, the low entry barriers, were partially modified by binding the right to vote to an identity verification and linking each membership to a territorial branch. Although at the moment any decision-making process of the party being limited to full members, the changes in the Statutes marked the choice of moving from a fluid model to a differentiated and demarcated membership with a financial link with the party (established in 2020 at € 3 per month).

The 2020 statutory modification resulted in the 2021 membership. Even if the time frame of this thesis ended in May 2020, Table 3.2 included the 2021 membership data to analyse the impact of the changes approved during the third Podemos congress (*la tercera Asamblea Ciudadana Estatal*). Indeed, in 2021 the numbers of members decreased, passing from a census of 516'492 general members in 2020 to 138'847 verified members in 2021 (Podemos abre este domingo la votación, 2021), of which 18'791 full members (Bocanegra, 2020). Since the data available on membership are linked to the party's consultations/primary elections, Table 3.2 related the numbers of members at the time of each vote, the participants in that vote and the percentage of participation considering the total census.

Table 3.2 - Evolution of party members through Podemos census
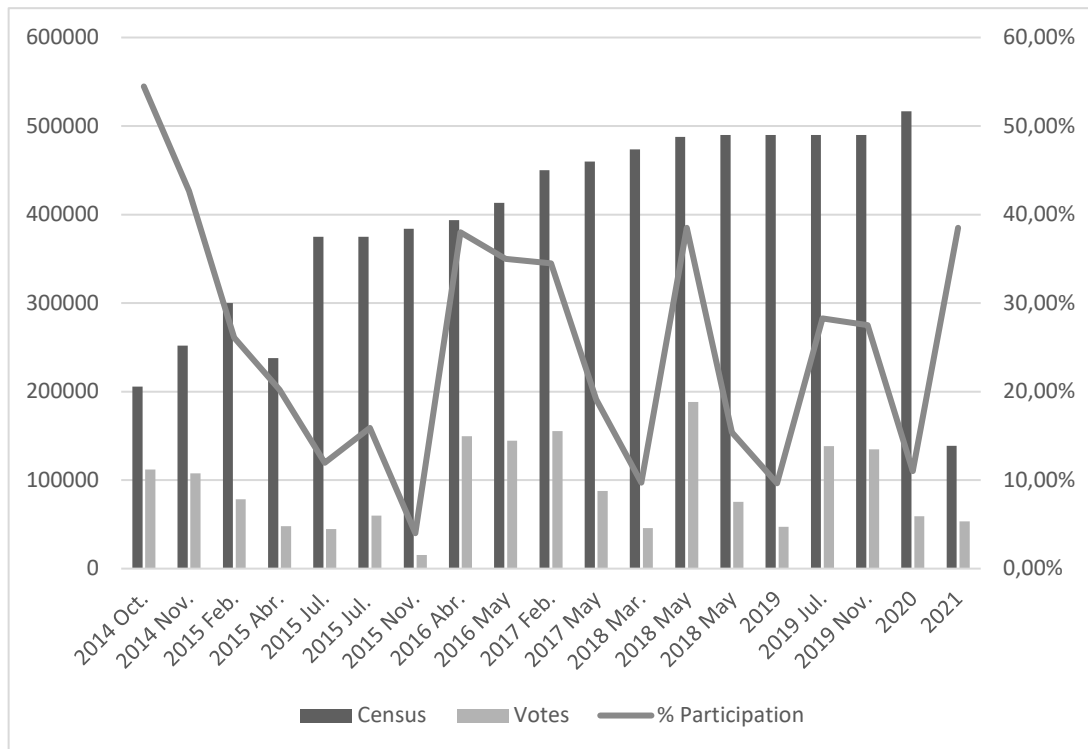
Source: Author's own elaboration based on primary and secondary sources.

The numbers pointed out two main elements: a large fluctuation in members participation in national-level consultations (including primary elections); and recently a deep reconfiguration in Podemos membership toward a more rooted and verifiable membership. The resulted census seems to adapt the regulation to the reality: as Gomez and Ramiro (2019) showed, even if with a fluid membership, the three classical circles of membership were already present in Podemos. Additionally, different members already paid a voluntary quota. In this sense, changes in the membership could also be related to a process of party institutionalisation and value-infusion (Randal & Svasand, 2002), with the party seeking to have a more clearly defined and active base, contrary to the more open and broader initial configuration. It could imply the choice to adopt a clear distinction between the inside and the outside the party, which was somehow blurred in the initial format of membership. However, beyond the considerations on the causes and consequences of this decline in terms of numbers (which could be also related to the party consensus), a significant change in the interpretation of the membership clearly emerged, changing one of Podemos' key features (see also Correa, Rodríguez-Teruel & Barberà, 2021, for the "polymorphic nature of party activism" in Spain).

3.4. Podemos' party procedures for members' participation (processes and tools)

The first Podemos participatory process has been the rudimentary collecting of 50,000 signatures that were established as the minimum popular support threshold to stand for the European Elections of May 2014. Thus, an open process of participation has been taken as a source of popular legitimacy for the foundation of the entire political project. As a follow up - in preparation of the same campaign - the electoral program has been developed in a participatory form (see Section 3.4.1.) with face-to-face meetings and online discussions on the new digital deliberative tool *Plaza Podemos* (Podemos Square), within the online platform Reddit (see Section 3.4.3).

Since that electoral campaign, many participative procedures have been developed within the party, most of them with a high level of innovation. Indeed, Podemos developed and implemented a series of "*herramientas para participación*"[96] (Interviewee 13 - PE-LL, September 18, 2018) that could be divided into two categories: aggregative procedures and non-aggregative ones. On the one side, the domain of the aggregative dimension has been widely studied in parties' procedures (see García Lupato & Meloni, 2021), referring to a dimension that relies on "a conception of democracy that sees the aggregation of individual preferences as the essence of democratic activity" (Invernizzi-Accetti, & Wolkenstein, 2017, p. 101). As analysed in the following sections, the aggregative procedures prominence in Podemos could be explained by their high potential for digitisation, which mainly favours low-cost processes, greater possibilities for leadership control and simplified communication. Between them, the *Consulta Ciudadana* (Citizen Consultations), internal referendums open to party members (see Section 3.4.2), emerged as the aggregative tool with a pivotal role, which for the party includes also the more traditional primary elections among the members of the party for the selection of all candidates at the different levels, both national and locals (analysed separately in this thesis, see Section 3.4.6.). These consultations have been the most participated processes with significantly higher numbers of participants than other initiatives of different natures. On the other side, beyond the aggregative dimension, Podemos launched other procedures, particularly involving deliberative and inclusive dimensions. However, those processes and tools struggled to affirm themselves in the Podemos decision-making process, along the years and they have

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[96] Tools for participation.

been the most subject to downsizing and elimination. According to Interviewee 9 (PE-NL, June 21, 2018), the non-aggregative processes were still limited due to the fact that "*no se liga, no se ve la importancia de eso, porque la gente no está acostumbrada a procesos tan complicados*"[97].

For this thesis, the author selected different programs and tools developed by Podemos since its foundation. The analysis in this section has been carried out by linking each Podemos party innovation to the five dimensions of (intra-party) democracy, i.e. participation, inclusiveness, de/centralisation and accountability (von dem Berge & Poguntke, 2017). According to them, the following tools and processes are taken into consideration: electoral democracy procedures, such as the online primaries (Section 3.4.6.); participatory tools, such as *Consultas Ciudadanas* (Citizens' Consultations) (Section 3.4.2.) and financial microcredits (Section 3.4.7.); deliberative procedures, such as *Plaza Podemos* (Podemos' Square) (Section 3.4.3.) and the participatory electoral manifestos (Section 3.4.1.); inclusive programs, such as *Banco de Talentos* (Bank of Talents) (Section 3.4.4.) and *IMPULSA* (Boost-up/Impulse) (Section 3.4.5.); and accountability initiatives, such as *Trasparencia Podemos* (Transparency Podemos) (Section 3.4.8.). Moreover, many of the municipalities administered by Podemos representatives have implemented participatory processes, e.g. Participatory Budgets, most of them supported by the open software platforms *CONSUL* and *Decidim* (see Section 3.4.9.). Other possible innovative initiatives of the party that are not directly connected with members' participation (such as the initial salary cap for all representatives) have been considered only in relation with the above-mentioned procedures. Indeed, the author considers that examining those participatory processes and tools - focusing on their characteristics, target use and evolution over time - is needed to frame and analyse the participation promoted by Podemos.

3.4.1. Participatory electoral manifestos

Responding to its movement party identity, Podemos interpreted its first electoral manifestos as citizens programs overcoming party boundaries. At the *Foro del Cambio* (Forum of Change) Rafael Mayoral, *Secretario de Relación con la Sociedad Civil y Movimientos*

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[97] It does not engage, the importance of that is not perceived, because people are not used to such complicated processes.

Sociales (Secretary for Relations with Civil Society and Social Movements) of Podemos, from November 2014, claimed:

> "*no queremos hacer un programa de Podemos, no nos interesa hacer un programa de Podemos, queremos construir un programa de la gente, un programa de la mayoría social* […] *un programa de la gente que tiene que empuñar en sus manos el cambio político*"[98] (Podemos, 2015g, min. 2:50, in Lupato García, 2021).

In the 2014 Organisational Principles document (Podemos, 2014d, Art. 7, p. 11) the party stated that *"[s]e abrirán siempre procesos de debate ciudadano sobre los contenidos de los programas*"[99]. Similarly, in the 2017 Podemos Organisational Document (Podemos, 2017b, Title I, p. 18) the Art. VI is titled "*Las decisiones importantes, en manos de militantes e inscritos*"[100] and affirmed that:

> "*La elaboración de las líneas estratégicas de Podemos, así como los programas electorales, se llevará a cabo de manera abierta a todas las personas que componen Podemos en el ámbito territorial correspondiente y que configuran la Asamblea Ciudadana de dicho territorio como máximo órgano permanente de decisión*".[101]

However, in both those documents, as well as in the other organisational document approved in the third Podemos congresses (2020b), there were no mention on methodology and process's steps for elaborating the electoral manifestos (except for a reference to the participatory ways without further detail). Therefore, how to elaborate the manifestos in participatory way depended on the organisational and political choices of each electoral campaign.

The first Podemos electoral manifesto has been developed to run for the 2014 European elections. In line with the wave of mobilisation that arose in the founding phase of the party, Podemos decided to elaborate it in participatory form and to collectively compose the electoral lists (Kioupkiolis, 2016). Indeed, the manifesto drafting process corresponded to

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[98] We don't want to do a Podemos program, we are not interested in making a Podemos program, we want to build a program of the people, a program of the social majority […] a program of the people who must wield political change in their hands.

[99] Citizen debate processes will always be opened on the contents of the programs.

[100] Important decisions, in the hands of activists and members.

[101] The development of the strategic lines of Podemos, as well as the electoral manifestos, will be carried out openly to all the people who make up Podemos in the corresponding territory and who make up the Citizen Assembly of that territory as the highest permanent decision-making body.

the first approach of Podemos towards all of citizens and society, i.e. the calling card of the new party in structuring. The *Programa Elecciones Europeas* (2014 electoral manifesto) described the process of its collaborative elaboration as "*método abierto y ciudadano en el que han participado miles de personas*"[102] (Podemos, 2014e, p.1). In particular, the process included three steps after the development of this first preliminary draft by the party's founding group. The first step has been the "*debate y aportaciones online a título individual*"[103], in which every registered citizen could give his/her individual contribution through face-to-face meetings or the deliberative tool *Plaza Podemos* (see Section 3.5.3). While, the second one has been the "*enmiendas colectivas de los Círculos Podemos*"[104], in which the party's branches recently established (or in the process) could propose its amendments. Lastly, the third step has been the "*referéndum online sobre las enmiendas*"[105] to finally approve the document (Podemos, 2014e, p.1). According to Rodríguez Teruel et al. (2016, p. 570), the 2014 manifesto has been supported by more than 90,000 individuals. The programmatic document resulted was composed of 36 pages and its content included many proposals close to other radical-left parties' manifestos, such as a 35-hour working week, a universal basic income system, nationalising some of the most important economic sectors and retirement at the age of 60 (Rodríguez-Teruel et al., 2016). The 2014 included also some of the main 15-M claims (Sabariego, 2016), such as new policies on housing and the *Plan de rescate ciudadano* (citizen recovery plan) aimed to facilitate the access to basic supplies. The short time frame for the electoral campaign and the simultaneous first phase of structuring the party required a great effort for Podemos. It resulted in a participatory drafting process based on voluntarism, which was quite chaotic (in terms of process and proposals); but that engaged a high number of participants.

Differently, the 2015 electoral manifesto was the result of a collaborative elaboration more structured and controlled that engaged less participants in terms of number but with a general deeper level of commitment. Indeed, the first Podemos program for the General Election, entitled *Queremos, Sabemos, Podemos* (We Want, We Know, We Can) (Podemos, 2015). counted in a hybrid process designed to coordinate the participants and manage their proposals and interactions. That elaboration was coordinated by Carolina Bescansa, as

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[102] Open and civic method in which thousands of people have participated.
[103] Debate and online individual contributions.
[104] Collective amendments by Podemos' branches.
[105] Online referendum on the amendments.

declared in the press conference to present the process on July 8, 2015. The manifesto design was divided in five major areas, composed by sub-areas, mirroring the structure of the document. Every area organised face-to-face and online meetings, while the proposals could by directly uploaded online by all the Podemos registered members via *Plaza Podemos* (at that time on Reddit, see Section 3.4.3.). As explained in the press conference, the proposals - uploaded and visualised in a specific digital space for each area - had to be considered if they reached the 100 votes (for individual proposals) or 70 votes (for party's branches proposals). Furthermore, there was a correction system to consider the most voted proposals during each week by each area, even in the case where they did not reach that numbers of votes. Simultaneously, the decentralised party bodies (e.g. branches and Territorial Citizen Assemblies) were required to call territorial assemblies to develop local and regional proposals. Furthermore, the process was complemented by meeting with civil society organisations to include their proposals (Lupato García, 2021). To present a proposal was requested to include an economic and a legal report, particularly for preventing the criticism of media and opponents. With this purpose, the 2015 manifesto included two specific sections: *Memoria Económica* (Economic Report) (pp. 264-281) and *Memoria Jurídica* (Legal Report) (pp. 282-308). As stated in the document (Podemos, 2015a, p. 265) the aim of the Economic Report was to present a "*marco explicativo de las principales partidas de gastos e ingresos contempladas en el programa, con la finalidad de concretar nuestra propuesta y mostrar su viabilidad económica*"[106]. Similarly, the Legal Report was composed by the entire list of laws and regulations that had to be repealed or amended.

The proposal elaboration process lasted 4 months with the deadline for submitting proposals fixed on October 18, while the voting was opened from October 28 to November 1 (Bescansa, 2015). Thus, that manifesto was the result of collaborative efforts of thousands, with experts and engaged citizens and more than 10,000 persons participating online in *Plaza Podemos* (see Section 3.4.3.) but also more than 3,000 face-to-face assemblies. In the final phase, more than 15'000 members have voted almost all the manifesto's proposals (Podemos, 2015a, p. 10). The voting phase was carried out allowing to vote for each point of the electoral manifesto. This process implied an innovative way of using digital technologies for electoral manifestos that was impossible not so long ago. In terms of content, the 2015 drafting process generated a manifesto with more detailed but also more

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[106] Explanatory framework of the main items of expenses and income contemplated in the program, in order to specify our proposal and show its economic viability.

moderated proposals. This was due to the coordination and control under the process in order to attract a broader audience of voters, particularly the PSOE voters (Rodríguez-Teruel et al., 2016).

At least until the 2020 Organisational Document (Podemos, 2020b, p. 13 & p. 24) the Art. 4 and 24 still assigned the competence on manifesto approval to the Citizen Assembly (at national or territorial level depending on the elections) "*tras un proceso de elaboración participative*"[107]. Nevertheless, the participatory elaboration of the party's manifesto and the related processes and digital tools have not been replicated for the subsequent electoral manifestos after the 2015 General elections. In the 2016 General elections (a repetition after just 6 months), understandably the content of the manifesto remained largely the same. However, its graphic and communicative style changed (Podemos, 2016a). As argued by Bickerton and Accetti (2018, p. 142) "[i]n place of the dense text of the 2015 manifesto, we find a document modelled on an Ikea catalogue". The restyling aimed particularly to increase the votes of women and middle-class voters, converting the manifesto in an electoral campaign tool. Furthermore, that catalogue has been a playful way to communicate within and outside the party in a time of maximum political tension (Lupato García, 2021).

Differently, for the following elections the elaboration of the party's manifesto has been carried out without systematic participatory processes. Although the 2019 manifesto (for both the April General Elections and their repetition on November, Podemos 2019) affirmed that the proposals within the 2016 electoral program are still valid, the institutionalisation tendency and a different approach to open participation (as analysed in many of the participatory innovation in this Section 3.5.) led Podemos to a more traditional elaboration of the party's manifestos within the party bodies and campaign teams. Indeed, the party limited the drafting process to some meeting open to all members and sympathisers in which the party declared to gather programmatic contributions by the participant, such as *En Marcha 2019* [Under way 2019] on April 7, 2018. During this initiative, the prevailing approach was campaign-oriented and the contributions emerged by the participant lacked adequate reporting by the party organisation (participant observation, April 7, 2018). However, the final vote on the electoral manifesto has been maintained for the 2019 election (on April, and considered valid for the repetition on November, since the manifesto did not

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[107] Following a participatory elaboration process.

change) through a Citizen Assembly consultation (see Section 3.4.2.). Nevertheless, unlike the 2015 voting, the vote was limited to a total approval or rejection of the program, without the possibility of voting differently on the single points. In conclusion, in terms of content, the 2019 manifesto (Podemos, 2019) seems to follow the moderation started with the 2015 manifesto. For instance, the attacks to the *casta* have tended to disappear, the claims to debt default or universal basic income have been tempered, revealing the party's necessity in reconciling "its image of political outsider with the negotiation of pacts to support left-wing governments" (Sola & Rendueles, 2018, p. 104).

3.4.2. Consultas Ciudadanas

The *Consultas Ciudadanas* (Citizens' Consultations) are binding consultations "*sobre asuntos de especial relevancia política*"[108] (Podemos Statute, 2020a, Art. 15) voted through the *Participa* platform by the Podemos registered members (who compose the *Asamblea Ciudadana*, Citizens' Assembly, see Section 3.3.). The party's regulation included a wide range of possibilities for consultation, launched by different collectives (not necessarily the party leadership) and, through their online platform, it potentially allows fast, numerous and cost-reduced uses (Deseriis & Vittori, 2019). The main objective of the *Consultas* is to overcome the time limitations of each ordinary Citizen Assembly (the party congress that is called between 18 and 48 months), by establishing a permanent Assembly, formed by all party members, that may position themselves on relevant and timely issues. The *Consultas* are a key feature of the Podemos decision-making process since its foundation. Along the various congresses, and in the party documents in force over the years, this tool has maintained its main formal characteristics, with the remarkable exception of the requirements for calling the vote.

As analysed in Section 3.3., the consultations of the *Asamblea Ciudadana permanente* (Permanent Citizen Assembly) maintained the following features: 1) Their definitions and declared objectives in relation to decision-making process on key issues for the party; 2) They can be called at three territorial level: national, regional and municipal ones; 3) They can be revocatory votes (*Consultas Revocatorias*), i.e. a no confidence vote against any representative of Podemos, in the party and in the institutions; 4) Three of the subjects

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[108] On matters of special political relevance.

entitled to call a consultation (General Secretary, the Citizen Council and a percentage of the registered members) have remained the same over the years. Nevertheless, from the Organisational Principles document (2014d) approved during the first party congress to the current regulation (Organisational Document, 2020b, Art. 3), the percentage of registered members required to call a consultation passed from 10% to 25%, and the possibility of consultations upon party branches' requests disappeared. Moreover, the connection between the *Consultas* and *Plaza Podemos* has been lost since the replacement of this digital deliberative tool (see Section 3.4.3.), as was previously established in the Organisational Principles document (Annex I, A), 2014d, p. 43). Thus, the *Plaza Podemos* replacement implied the lack of an established system designed to allow the party's base to elaborate shared proposals, to deliberate, and to foster the consensus around them. These changes seem to point out a centralisation tendency with growing power by the state-level's organisation (especially the leadership and Coordination Council), the limitation of power of intermediate/decentralised bodies and the lack of internal debate on the issues at stake, at least through online processes targeted to the entire community of members who are called to vote. The centralisation of the *Consultas* seems somehow respond to a push in institutionalisation, which tends to reduce the risks of losing control by the party's leadership.

In the 2014-2020 period, Podemos has organised 12 consultations at national level (excluding 5 *Consultas* used as primary elections' voting, for which see Section 3.4.6.)[109], all of them promoted by the General Secretary and/or the Citizen Council. Specifically, according to Interviewee 9 (PE-NL, June 21, 2018), the questions, including their wording and timing, used to be decided directly by the Organisation's Secretariat (part of the Coordination Council) jointly with the General Secretary. While, he argued that the *Consultas* have not been included into the competences of the Participation Area at the national level, since they are considered decisions with "*una carga y un componente politíco muy importante*"[110]. According to the use and objects of each consultation vote, we can distinguish different types of *Consultas* (see Table 3.3): a) *Organisational* (or internal), on matters regarding the party's organisation or following internal procedures (such as the approval of the party's manifesto); b) *Strategic*, that implies asking for the position of the

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[109] The analysis is based on author's own data, based on Podemos' official data and secondary sources for missing consultations, due to the absence of publication of an open access voting archive.
[110] A very important political burden and component.

party on external political issues, such as forming electoral or governmental coalitions; c) *parliamentary votes*, that is, deciding the direction of the vote of the parliamentary group in sensitive questions; and d) *plebiscitary votes*, confirming or denying the legitimacy of certain leaders. The least participated vote was the one on the 2015 electoral program (4%), the most participated was a call to action for the defence of the leadership's legitimacy (38.50%). The average participation has been the 24.29% of the registered members. Each consultation supported the leadership's position, with an overwhelming mean support of 87.75%.

Table 3.3 - *Citizens' consultations* in Podemos (excluding primary elections)

Subject	Type	Date	Census	Votes	% Particip.	% Yes / Option 1
Statutes' approval	Organisational	2014 Oct.	205.750	112.070	54,47%	80,71%
Territorial Alliances Strategy	Strategic	2015 Jul.	375.000	44.792	11,94%	84,63%
Electoral program for General elections 20-D*	Organisational	2015 Nov.	383.975	15.264	4%	76,21%
Government coalition: PSOE-Cs and PSOE-Podemos**	Strategic	2016 Abr.	393.538	149.513	38%	91,79%
Agreement with IU for general elections (so-called 26-J)	Strategic	2016 May	413.054	144.569	35%	98,00%
Motion of no confidence in Rajoy of presented by Iglesias	Parliamentary voting	2017 May	≈460.000	87.674	19,10%	97,44%
"Podemos" in electoral symbols	Strategic	2018 Mar.	473.678	45.817	9,70%	93,00%
Consultation on Pablo Iglesias and Irene Montero	Plebiscitary	2018 May	487.772	188.176	38,50%	68,42%
Motion of no confidence in Rajoy of presented by Sanchez	Parliamentary voting	2018 May	≈490.000	75.310	15,40%	98,94%
Electoral program for General elections (so-called 28-A)	Organisational	2019 Abr.	≈490.000	47.213	9,64%	97,86%
Consultation on the investiture of Sánchez	Strategic	2019 Jul.	≈490.000	138.488	28,26%	69,13%
Government coalition - pre-agreement	Strategic	2019 Nov.	≈490.000	134.760	27,50%	96,84%
				Total Mean	**24,29%**	**87,75%**

* The result indicated is an average of the single votes on all points of the program.

**2 questions in the same consultation, we selected the second one relating to Podemos

Source. Authors own elaboration based on primary and secondary sources.

The *Consultas* are designed to be very powerful tools for party members for expressing their position on relevant issues (both internal and external) between the ordinary party congresses. They have been, in that sense, an innovative participatory mechanism, made possible with certain frequency and diffusion thanks to the support of digital technology. However, analysing the data, the author of this thesis argues that there has been a discrepancy

between the original declared objectives of this consultation tool and its evolution and use (See Gerbaudo, 2021, on the discrepancy of digital democracy). Indeed, the use of the consultation frequently differed with the description provided by the Interviewee 13 (PE-LL, September 18, 2018) who argued that the Citizens Assembly and the *Consultas* are "*por encima de Pablo Iglesias y por encima de cualquier dirigente de este partido*"[111] and that "*[para] todas las consultas de decisiones importantes estamos obligados, desde todas las direcciones, a que se sometan a la Asamblea Ciudadana*"[112].

Two cases are especially relevant for showing this discrepancy. The first occurred in May 2018, when members were asked to vote on the "Consulta about Pablo Iglesias and Irene Montero"[113], at that moment respectively, the Podemos' secretary-general and the parliamentary spokesperson for Unidos Podemos, officially promoted as revocatory consultation on the leadership trust. The consultation arose from the controversy over their purchase of a cottage for more than € 600,000 (Cómo es el mercado inmobiliario, 2018). This choice has been politically criticised for incoherence with Podemos' ideals and its connection with the lower social classes of the population (Podemos: Iglesias y Montero, 2018). In fact, since its foundation, Podemos has claimed for "descriptive representation" (Pitkin, 1967; Mansbridge, 1999), aiming at being representatives not just close to the citizen they represented but embodying them. Participation was at its highest record in this process, and considering the mean percentage of approval of the *Consultas*, the result was quite divided, with 31,58% of negative votes[114]. High participation was interpreted as a legitimation for the party leadership, otherwise critical members would have abstained, as a way for delegitimising it (Interviewee 2 - PE-LL, June 07, 2018; Interviewee 6 - PE-LL, June 14, 2018). On the contrary, the consultation has been criticised in qualitative terms, claiming for an instrumentalization of the tool of the *Consulta Ciudadana* (Interviewee 3 - PFE-NL, June 11, 2018). Firstly, the choice to put such a private topic to a public vote was decided directly by the leadership that was questioned in the consultation (Interviewee 10 - PE-LL, June 23, 2018). Secondly, the question and its formulation (decided by the General

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[111] Above Pablo Iglesias and above any leader of this party.
[112] [For] all consultations on important decisions we are obliged, from all directions, to submit [them] to the Citizen Assembly.
[113] The question was: "*¿Consideras que Pablo Iglesias e Irene Montero deben seguir al frente de la Secretaría General y de la portavocía parlamentaria de Podemos?*" (Do you think that Pablo Iglesias and Irene Montero should remain at the head of the general secretariat of Podemos and the parliamentary spokesperson?). It was possible to respond positively, negatively or blank vote (see Podemos, n.d.a).
[114] The 0.35% of the total votes were blank (votes not counted as valid), equal to 652 registered members.

Secretary) led to a plebiscite on the parties' two principal figures, including even the legitimisation of a private choice. The question inevitably called for an emotional dimension of the members who were bonded with these two figures. Various members of the party publicly accused the General Secretary of appropriation of the participatory tool for the "*legitimación de sus caprichos*"[115], quoting the deputy of Podemos in the Assembly of Madrid Isidro López of the party-group of *Anticapitalistas* (Las duras críticas de un diputado, 2018).

A second example of a possibly diverted use was the *Consulta* on the vote of Podemos' MPs regarding the investiture vote of PSOE's leader Pedro Sánchez as Prime Minister in July 2019 (which finally failed and ended up with new elections in November). The issue was extremely relevant as Podemos could join or support the national government. Government negotiations were difficult because they could lead to the first ever coalition government at the national level, and within the PSOE (including Sánchez) there were heavy reluctances to form a government with Podemos and, especially, to recognise the role of Iglesias[116]. Thus, the problem with the Consulta was both over the timing and the types of options. The timing was particularly criticised by the socialists, as it was promptly called in the middle of the negotiations (see Sánchez declaration, in Carretero, 2019). While, the two proposed options, according to the socialist, did not consider the five different scenarios offered during the negotiations. Internal criticism also arose in Podemos. This is the case of Teresa Rodríguez, secretary general of Podemos in Andalucía at that time. In a tweet on the 12th July 2019, she explained the reasons why she was not going to vote in this Consulta. Among them, she argued that "*[l]as opciones son abiertamente tendenciosas*"[117] and they did include all the possible options, and the question is also "*abiertamente tendenciosa*"[118], concluding with "*es, lamentablemente, un verdadero insulto a la inteligencia*"[119] (Rodríguez, 2019).

Finally, it is worth noting that since Podemos joined the government (in January 2020, after the November 2019 elections), no *Consultas* have been promoted, despite the disagreements between PSOE and Podemos in government on relevant issues repeatedly occurred. Whether

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[115] Legitimisation of the whim of the leadership.
[116] See, for example, the chronology of the negotiations of the failed investiture (Cronología del desencuentro, 2019).
[117] The options are openly tendentious.
[118] Openly tendentious.
[119] It is, regrettably, a real insult to intelligence.

it makes sense that those decisions adopted (and negotiated) within the government limit the possibility of the *Consultas*, it seems that the tool may still be active but its uses may have changed, in terms of contents, proponents and frequency compared to their original formulation. The institutionalisation may imply a shift from a possible participatory tool to a more reactive and centralised one, which has a role for Podemos when it is in the opposition rather than in the government.

3.4.3. Plaza Podemos

Plaza Podemos (Podemos Square - and its second version "*2.0*") has been the Podemos digital deliberative tool (Vittori, 2017) from 2014 until July 2019. Initially, *Plaza Podemos* was born as the "*comunidad oficial de Podemos en Reddit*"[120], a well-known online platform that supports open discussions, information sharing and topic proposals (Fenoll & Sánchez Castillo, 2016, p. 25) (see https://www.reddit.com/). In 2014, the CEO of Reddit, Erik Martin, declared that Podemos was "*el primer partido político del mundo que utiliza de manera oficial esta plataforma para escuchar a los ciudadanos*"[121] (El Asri, 2014). In the first phase, the platform has been used for addressing the request for deliberative participation that characterised the foundation of the party. Accordingly, it was emphatically promoted through the party channels of communication and included in the main Podemos' documents. In the Organisational Principles document (2014d, Preamble, 1, p. 7), *Plaza Podemos* is presented as "*espacio de debate y deliberación*"[122] for collective decision-making and for co-creating "*las ideas, los proyectos y las propuestas que serán una pieza fundamental del cambio político*"[123]. The Annex I of the same document (2014d, p. 43) stated that the tool is "totalmente libre y abierto"[124] and that through it "*cualquiera puede proponer fácilmente, desde dentro o fuera de Podemos*"[125]. Following, the Annex I went into detail in the close connection with the Citizens' Assembly of the party, particularly with the *Consultas Ciudadanas* (see Section 3.4.2.). Indeed, through *Plaza Podemos, it* was possible to upload and debate on proposals, which were named *Podemos Citizen Initiatives* (ICP, in Spanish acronym). The proposals that were endorsed by a number of positive votes

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[120] Official community of Podemos on Reddit.
[121] The first party in the world that officially uses Reddit to listen to the citizens.
[122] A space for debate and deliberation.
[123] The ideas, projects and proposals that will be a fundamental piece of political change.
[124] Totally free and open.
[125] Anyone can easily propose, from inside or outside Podemos.

equivalent to the 0.2% of the party census should be uploaded to the Podemos web, starting the proposal dissemination and consensus search process, consisting of two further steps required (first the 2% approval of the census, and second the approval of the 10% of the census or the 20% of the branches) (2014d, Annex I, pp. 43-44).

On 31 October 2015, *Plaza Podemos* moved from Reddit to the open-source software CONSUL, inaugurating the *Plaza Podemos 2.0*, thus passing from an open network to an internal digital platform. The justifications provided for the decision have been mainly technical, focusing on the opportunity of an internal platform customised to the needs of the party (participant observation, May 17, 2018). This shift went towards the institutionalisation of the tools jointly with the party processes. It also allowed for greater control of the tool by the party and protected the leadership from the growing criticism in Reddit. *Plaza Podemos* was particularly criticised in regards to the moderation policy in the debates, according to Fenoll and Sánchez Castillo (2016, p. 25):

> "*Los participantes de Plaza Podemos no utilizan las herramientas de moderación para penalizar el incumplimiento de las normas de reddiqueta sino para censurar las opiniones discrepantes que contradicen el criterio ideológico de un grupo de usuarios de la comunidad*"[126]

Furthermore, in the *2.0* version the party introduced another participatory mechanism called *Escaño Abierto* (Open seat). This tool allowed to bring questions to the attention of the Podemos representatives and consequently to the parliamentary bodies, thus promoting vertical interactions, differently from *Plaza Podemos*'s deliberative purposes.

Analysing its use, the decline in participation numbers is highly relevant. Even if a part of the participation may have moved to *Escaño Abierto*, the introduction of this communication channel does not compensate for the decrease[127]. As shown in Table 3.4, participation has significantly decreased in quantitative terms over the years, passing from an average of 198,3 votes per proposal to an average of 17,6.

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[126] Plaza Podemos participants do not use moderation tools to penalize non-compliance with the rules of *Reddiquette*, instead they censor discrepant opinions that contradict the ideological criteria of an users' group of the community.

[127] Since its most supported items had a much lower number of votes than the most voted ICP proposals in the first year in the archive.

Table 3.4 - Use of Plaza Podemos 2.0 (2015-2018)

Period	Number of *Iniciativas Ciudadana Podemos*	Votes in total	Votes for proposal
from 31 October 2015 to 30 October 2016	1405	278'563	198,3
in 2018	407	7'177	17,6

Source: Authors' own elaboration, data collected from Plaza Podemos (n.d.).

The participation decrease could be connected to the lack of effectiveness of *Plaza Podemos* (even before the release of the *2.0* version) in terms of decision-making power. In fact, within the Podemos deliberative digital tool, none of the *ICP*s reached the voting phase, nor did other bottom-up vote proposals (see Consultas Ciudadanas in Section 3.4.2.). Without a clear and realistic goal, *Plaza Podemos* had gradually lost its appeal to the party members and sympathisers and, at the same time, the discussions within the tool have reduced their political content and the attractiveness in regards to constructive feedback and contributions. In this frame, Interviewee 9 (PE-NL, June 21, 2018) argued that "*si tú abres un proceso o un espacio de deliberación para la construcción de un proceso, tiene que tener un objetivo claro; cuando no tienen un objetivo claro esos espacios se contaminan, se retroalimentan*"[128].

After the first Podemos's congress, the mentions of *Plaza Podemos* disappeared from the main party's documents (approved in the second and third congresses) and in July 2019[129], it was replaced by the Territorial Support Office (Podemos, n.d.c). The logic and the implementation tools of this Office were completely different, as was a "one-stop shop" for asking questions to the party that was simply available to members, party officials and citizens in three traditional, top-down communication channels: an email, a phone number, and an online form. The official Podemos notice claimed to offer help or advice through the channels: in organisational, discursive, procedural or financial issues to all members of the organisation (Podemos, n.d.d). Consequently, the aims and the tools have completely

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[128] If you open a process, or a space for deliberation to build a process, it [the process] must have a clear objective; when those spaces do not have a clear objective, they become contaminated, they reproduce [these dynamics].

[129] *Plaza Podemos: ¡Sí se puede!* is still a community on Reddit (https://www.reddit.com/r/podemos/) , although not updated by Podemos and disconnected from the party's processes.

changed compared to *Plaza Podemos*, showing a substitution of one procedure with another completely different. Therefore, this replacement has been a relevant innovation setback in participatory terms (García Lupato & Meloni, 2021).

3.4.4. Bancos de talentos / Bank of Talents (BdT)

This initiative aimed to incorporate the know-how and experiences of volunteers, sympathisers, and society at large into the party. In the first phase of structuring the party, Podemos launched this digital initiative to connect volunteer citizens, who had declared their willingness to collaborate with the party at different levels (from branches to regional and national secretariats to other areas of the party). Hence, the Bank of Talents (BdT) was an initiative for opening the party to the society incorporating those profiles. On the other hand, each party branch or working group could use the BdT to seek the most suitable profiles for supporting (voluntary or paid) their initiatives, campaigns or structures. It was particularly developed to support the first phase of the foundation and the validation of the party's branches, in a non-institutionalised stage of the party (See Plaza Podemos: ¡Sí se puede!, 2014). The main objective of the tool was to promote the growth of the party through open and merit-based participation, "*sin pasar por mecanismos de exclusión*"[130] (Podemos, 2014d, p. 6). The BdT was managed directly by the Participation Area and it is included in some of the documents it produced, such as the calls of the three editions of *IMPULSA*, where the *Banco de Talentos* is offered as a non-economic support to project proposals (Podemos, 2015b; 2015c; 2016b). The BdT is also mentioned in the Organisational Principles (2014d) approved during the first Congress. Nevertheless, it did not appear in any further main party documents approved at Podemos congresses.

Despite being presented as one of the party's most important open tools in the first phase, the Bank of Talents disappeared without Podemos ever systematically using it. Indeed, the elimination of this innovation has primarily been a consequence of its non-use. Differently from other innovations analysed in this thesis, the BdT did not experience an evolution that impacted its usage. Instead, it seems to have encountered internal party dynamics, where loyalty has prevailed over the meritocracy that this initiative aimed to promote. At the local, regional, and national levels, the selection processes of the party's collaborators (for the

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[130] Without going through exclusion mechanisms.

different positions) did not use the BdT, with occasional exceptions in a first phase, since they tended to make personnel selection through "trusted people" (Interviewee 16 - PFR-NL, June 17, 2021). Therefore, the *Banco de talentos* has been eliminated by Podemos without any particular aftermath and only a few traces of it remained on the web. The innovative tool, which was linked to a party that is open to society and internal meritocracy, has not matched with an equally innovative usage in their selection processes.

3.4.5. IMPULSA

IMPULSA (Boost/Impulse) has been a Podemos initiative designed to support "*proyectos innovadores con proyección social*"[131] (Podemos, 2016c, webpage), presented by people or non-profit organisations (not necessarily linked to the party) and chosen by registered members through a participatory process (Podemos, 2015d). Indeed, it was an initiative that, as membership, blurred the boundaries between the party and civil society. This initiative was developed and regulated (in particular the eligibility and evaluation criteria) by Podemos' *Participatory Area*, which defined it as "*proyecto Estrella*"[132] (Interviewee 4 - PE-NL, June 12, 2018). Nevertheless, it was not included in any of the party's main documents as approved in the congresses. As reported by Interviewee 9 (PE-NL, June 21, 2018), *IMPULSA* has been inspired by the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), i.e. a self-regulating business model in which companies claim to be socially accountable. That model has been reinterpreted by the party in a participatory way. Its first edition was launched in April 2015 as a form to reinvest half of the surplus generated by the salary cap established for the Podemos' representatives (three times the minimum wage, which was around €1.900 per month in 2015)[133]. According to Interviewee 9, "*revertir todo los que nosotros ganamos, ese dinero, en la sociedad y aumentar el tejido social*"[134] forms part of Podemos DNA. This money was allocated to *IMPULSA* for financing projects within and beyond the party's activities/structure. Indeed, the initial role played by this program has been to link the party to its social-movements base and to give a clear sign of a democratic and social distinction with respect to traditional parties, in line with a movement party organisation. As argued by

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[131] Innovative projects with social projection.
[132] Star project.
[133] This commitment implied that Podemos' representatives and officials should limit their salary to three times the Spanish minimum wage (645 euros in 2014, then jumped to 900 € in 2019 with the Socialist-Podemos government).
[134] To return all that we earn, that money, in the society and increase the social fabric.

the Interviewee 4 (PE-NL, June 12, 2018) their idea was "*conseguir que la gente participe sin tener que doblegarse a las demandas del partido, sino con sus propias propuestas*"[135].

However, along the three editions carried out, the initiative has been modified to include different lines of financing. The first *IMPULSA* edition was launched when the party was just one year old and had only 5 MEPs and had a total budget of €52.000 divided in three categories: two at the regional level, one for projects "open to any actor" (except party branches) and one reserved exclusively for the party branches projects (both with a maximum of €1.000 per project); and another at the national level, for financing two projects among the proposal presented by any actor with the support of at least one party branch (with a maximum of €8.000 per project) (Podemos, 2015b). In the first edition, the members registered on the Podemos platform could vote on the projects through a two-phase voting system[136].

The second edition was launched a few months later and its budget increased to 300.000€[137]. It was equally divided in three categories: two of them evaluated by independent evaluators and voted by registered members, *IMPULSA tu país* (Boost your country), for financing projects at the national level (or at local level with national projection), and *IMPULSA tu entorno* (Boost your environment), for promoting local projects that could foster mobilisation and collective solutions in the local context; and *Podemos IMPULSA*, for supporting non-profit associations directly selected by party representatives (Podemos, 2015c). In this second edition, registered members could vote on the projects through the two-to-two comparisons system in a single phase.

In the third edition (2016-2017), Podemos invested the highest budget into the initiative; a total of €500.000 divided in three categories. Two of them - *IMPULSA tu país* and *Podemos IMPULSA* - were the same of the previous edition, while *IMPULSA tu entorno* was replaced by *Hacemos* (We make), a specific program for financing networks of projects within the party, which had the higher budget of €200.000 (Podemos, 2016b). This revealed a

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[135] To achieve people participation without that they must to bow to the demands of the party, [participating] with their own proposals instead.
[136] In the first phase, the voter could choose between two randomly selected projects, through a system called "two-to-two comparisons", for four rounds of voting. In the second phase the voter could directly vote for the projects that passed the first phase.
[137] At that time the party had 187 elected representatives, whose part of salary financed the initiative.

prioritisation of the investments within the party's structure, especially to the branches. As stated, the program aimed at constituting Podemos as a "*motor social*"[138] and at providing answers to the question "*¿Qué hace Podemos en mi barrio, en mi pueblo, en mi municipio?*"[139] (Podemos, 2016d). The relation between *IMPULSA* was seen as transitory, for supporting the *Hacemos* kick off while the party was working to transform it. Despite the shift from a financing category to a separate initiative being planned, this evolution never happened. In the third edition, the two-to-two comparisons voting system was replaced by a simple vote that allowed the registered members on the platform to select two proposals for each category.

In the three editions, associations and party branches could submit proposals and the members registered on the Podemos platform could vote on the projects' proposal. Nevertheless, the possibility of proposing and voting has been gradually reduced, tracing a separation between the inside and the offside the party, which *IMPULSA* initially aimed to challenge. Interviewee 4 (PE-NL, June 12, 2018) argued that "*se decidió que el dinero se iba a empezar a dar de manera discrecional a quién se considerara por una decisión política*"[140]. It pointed out a centralisation tendency that gradually pervaded the second and third editions. However, the total amount of funding for the initiative (including the various categories) has significantly increased in the three editions and it has not experienced a decline in participation. On the contrary, until 2016, *IMPULSA* has been one of the most participated and active initiatives of the party. According to Miguel Ardanuy, coordinator of the *Participation Area* at that time, it was "*La esencia de Podemos*"[141] (Podemos, 2017c).

IMPULSA (including *Hacemos*) has been suspended after the third edition (the last voting took place in January 2017) and is officially under revision. Furthermore, the source of the budget, the salary cap to three minimum wages (Podemos, 2017d), has been replaced by another system, with a salary limitation according to the different levels of responsibility, without overcoming the highest salary that each representative elected would have received if he/she had entered the public administration with his/her qualifications and titles (Podemos, 2020c). This will imply a drastic reduction in the budget that financed the

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[138] Social engine.
[139] What is Podemos doing in my neighbourhood, in my town, in my municipality?
[140] It was decided that the money was going to be given in a discretionary way to who was considered by a political decision.
[141] The essence of Podemos.

initiative, but its funding is not sufficient to explain the suspension of *IMPULSA*. On the one hand, the initiative on the salary cap (and the consequent funding of *IMPULSA*), did not work as expected, because there was a high saliency on media (and the party was exposed to criticism), regarding violations/exceptions of the Ethical Code, turning the initiative against the party despite its efforts (Interviewee 16 - PFR-NL, June 17, 2021). This indirectly affected *IMPULSA*, both in terms of budget and in terms of visibility. As Interviewee 4 (PE-NL, June 12, 2018) reported "*una de las grandes quejas que había de gente era que tenía poco rédito político, porque era mucho dinero invertido*"[142]. On the other hand, the suspension marks a modification in the will of the party that claimed to orient its investment, in terms of money and energy, towards its internal structuring and to allow responsive and quick decisions driven by political choices of the party's bodies. As mentioned, part of this trend was already visible in the changes over the three editions. According to Interviewee 9 (PE-NL, June 21, 2018), *IMPULSA* was ending up not respecting the timing of politics and demanding huge effort from the party. The suspension of *IMPULSA* could be interpreted as another driver of party institutionalisation. The choice has been criticised internally and externally, pointing out the decline of the relationship between Podemos and the social movements and organisations, which risks to distance Podemos from some of its founding principles (Interviewee 4 – PE-NL, June 12, 2018).

3.4.6. (Online) Primaries

Since its foundation, Podemos has always called open primary elections to select the elective offices within the party's organisation and the candidacies to represent the party in the elections at the European, national (general elections), regional and local levels. From a regulatory point of view, the party documents included two typologies of primary elections voted by the *Asamblea Ciudadana* (which includes all the registered members): the primaries to choose the party candidates in the elections, named *primarias*, and the votes to choose all the elective offices within the party (as reported in all party statutes, form Podemos, 2014f). Both types have a state (national level) and a territorial (regional and local level) dimension, depending on the elections and party bodies, and both are held mainly by electronic vote. In the Organisational Principles document (Podemos, 2014d, Art. 13), assigning this responsibility to the *Asamblea Ciudadana*, is stated that the elaboration of "*las*

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[142] One of the big complaints that people made was that it had little political benefit, because it was a lot of money invested.

listas electorales para optar a cargos públicos"[143] for state representative institutions must be carried out through "*un proceso de primarias abiertas y ciudadanas*"[144], "*desde el primer candidato de la lista hasta el último*"[145] (Podemos, 2014d, p. 15). Equally, Art. 33 assigned the responsibility of the list elaboration through primaries to the Regional *Asambleas Ciudadanas* "*para las instituciones de representación de su respectivo orden territorial*"[146] (Podemos, 2014d, p. 26). These articles have been kept almost identical in the Statute of Podemos of 2017 (congress of Vistalegre II, Podemos, 2017a, Art. 14) and the substance is maintained in the 2020 Statute (Podemos, 2020a, Art. 14). Furthermore, the *primarias* are regulated in detail by specific Primaries' regulation documents (Podemos, 2015e and 2018). Beyond the elements already discussed in reference to the Podemos membership (3.3.1.) and Citizens' Consultations (3.4.2.), the digital component emerged as a distinctive element in these documents and their application. The 2015 Primaries regulation document (Podemos, 2015e, Art. 13) stated that "*[e]l voto se emitirá telemáticamente a través de la web participa.podemos.info*"[147], providing the possibility of opening in person spaces for supporting citizens in electronic voting, if required in advance by the *Círculos* (branches) or party bodies. The 2018 Primaries regulation document (Podemos, 2018a, Art. 3) introduced for the primaries at the municipal level, a criterion that linked the electronic voting to population. According to this regulation, in cities or towns with over 200.000 inhabitants, primary elections must be carried out through electronic voting (mandatory). If a city or town has 50.000 to 200.000 inhabitants, then primary elections are held by default through electronic voting (with possible exceptions). If a city or town has under 50.000 inhabitants, primary elections are held by default through in person voting (with possible exceptions). Therefore, electronic voting largely remained the most in-use by Podemos for the *primarias*.

The primary elections to choose the offices within the party have the same digital characteristics, but unlike the *primarias* they are not linked to any institutional election, instead they constituted a key moment of the party congresses (at state, regional and local levels). However, their regulation and relative evolution has been specular to the candidates' primary elections. For instance, in 2017 during the II party congress, the electoral system used by Podemos was changed by introducing the *DesBorda* system, which has become the

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[143] The electoral lists to run for public office (from the first candidate on the list to the last.
[144] A process of open and civic primaries.
[145] From the first candidate on the list to the last.
[146] For the institutions of representation of their respective territorial order.
[147] Voting will be issued electronically through the web participa.podemos.info.

system used for all the subsequent primaries of the party. *DesBorda* is an electoral system with the possibility of voting for the individual candidates of each list (or selecting them all together by lists), with results obtained through a pointing system. Despite its presentation claiming for a system that facilitates alliances and representativeness, *DesBorda* has been harshly criticised because it tends to overrepresent the winning list and does not guarantee representation to the smaller lists if they do not achieve considerable results. Despite the criticisms, it is a democratic electoral system in the range of legitimate political choices (for a party as well as for a state institution). Indeed, the majority of the critics focused on the betrayal of expectations regarding Podemos' openness and participation claims more than on its validity (Interviewee 8 - PE-LL, June 15, 2018).

Table 3.5 includes the six primary elections held by Podemos at the state level from 2014 to 2020, focusing on the uninominal candidacies for the secretary of the party and for the party's candidate to the presidency of the government.

Table 3.5 - Primaries of Podemos (2014-2020)

	Primaries of Podemos (state level secretary/candidate)							
	Subject	**Date**	**census**	**votes**	**% Particip.**	**% winning candidate**	**% second candidate**	**Winner**
1	General secretary and *Consejo ciudadano* elections	2014 Nov.	251998	107488	42,65%	96.87%	1.01%	Pablo Iglesias
2	Primaries for General elections (so-called 20-D)*	2015 Jul.	380548	59723	15,69%	93,89%	3,56%	Pablo Iglesias
3	General secretary and *Consejo ciudadano* elections	2017 Feb.	450072	155275	34,50%	89,09%	10.91%	Pablo Iglesias
4	Primaries for General elections (so-called 28-A)*	2018 Dic.	498259	60038	12,05%	89,15%	None	Pablo Iglesias
5	General secretary and *Consejo ciudadano* elections	2020	516492	59201	11,46%	89,81%	7,80%	Pablo Iglesias
6	General secretary and *Consejo ciudadano* elections	2021	138847	53443	38,49%	88,69%	5,81%	Ione Belarra

* In the two repetitions of the general elections (2016 and 2019) the party decided not to repeat the primaries and to consider the results of the previous ones as valid.

Source. Authors' own elaboration based on primary and secondary sources.

Two elements particularly emerge from the data in Table 3.5. Firstly, none of Podemos' state-level primaries had the minimal levels of competition, and no alternative candidate came close to challenge the mainstream candidate (the closest had a 78.18% of difference

with the winner candidate)[148]. For the first six years since the foundation, this was the case for the 5 primaries that Pablo Iglesias won from 2014 to 2020[149]. Secondly, by observing the numbers of votes (more than the percentages related to the census), their gradual decrease is clear; starting from the second primary election after the first congress. Considerable exception was the primaries voting for the second congress of Vistalegre II, which recorded the highest participation in absolute numbers. In that case, although the percentage of the votes on the secretary shows it to a limited extent, there were levels of competition never experienced by Podemos (before and after). The rivalry and the different proposals promoted by two of the party's founders, the secretary Pablo Iglesias and Íñigo Errejón, generated high levels of political and personal confrontation but also debate and participation. Indeed, the data confirms the relation between competitiveness and participation to the primaries. Nevertheless, the second congress primary elections were criticised because of their divisive results within the party. The Interviewee 12 (PE-LL, June 26, 2018), argued:

> "*Los procesos de primarias tampoco conviene que los idealicemos demás, también generan muchas brechas a nivel de las organizaciones políticas. Son procesos muy intensos as veces, y nosotros en Podemos tenemos experiancias ya sobradas*"[150].

In conclusion, analysing this innovation as implemented by Podemos, two other relevant elements emerged. Firstly, the use of the primary elections to choose all party's bodies and candidates shows a routinisation of this tool for Podemos. No other instrument is contemplated, not even transitory[151]. Secondly, although the party's primaries are an innovation widely applied and studied before Podemos (see Sandri et al., 2015), the systematic use of the electronic vote and, overall, the digitalisation of the processes constitute a distinctive and innovative element of the Podemos online primaries that have been one of the main stability innovations of the party. Indeed, although the *DesBorda*'s

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[148] Although in the second congress of Podemos of Vistalegre II the main contention was in the voting of the congressional documents with the alternative proposals presented by the Íñigo Errejón group (e.g. their political document obtained the 33.71% of the votes).

[149] Similarly, the last primaries during the fourth congress had been won by Ione Belarra with 88,69% of the votes. Indeed, even after the charismatic leadership of Iglesias, the competitiveness has not increased and the candidate supported by the party's establishment prevailed with similar percentages.

[150] To idealise the primaries processes is not appropriate, they also generate many divisions at the level of political organisations. Sometimes they are very intense processes, and we at Podemos have plenty of experiences.

[151] For instance (although exceeding the time frame of this thesis), after the resignation of Iglesias as General Secretary, the party started the congress process few weeks later and it called the primaries, without any period of commissioner.

system may have affected some of the results, the Podemos primaries did not experience significant changes and remained a participatory tool for the members to select all the candidacies and the elective party offices.

3.4.7. Participatory financing and Microcredits

Since the very beginning, Podemos has innovated on its financing in a participatory way. Indeed, the party along the years applied an extensive approach to financing, interpreting it not just as a source of funds but also as an ideological and political tool. Financing has been particularly used as a tool for promoting a new way of doing politics, stressing the differences between new and traditional parties (or new vs. old politics), and claiming for a participative internal party democracy and a relation of proximity with members and sympathisers. Following this vision, the Podemos participatory financing is another way for changing Spanish politics and for differentiating Podemos from other Spanish parties, which are heavily in debt with banks, and with widespread scandals of corruption that have eroded citizens' trust[152]; as stated in the party's website (Podemos, n.d.b):

> "*En Podemos nos tomamos nuestros mecanismos de financiación y transparencia como una cuestión política de máxima importancia porque consideramos que la independencia financiera y la transparencia en los partidos es una condición necesaria para el correcto funcionamiento de la democracia*"[153].

Therefore, the Podemos claim of new politics and new representation is also embedded in the way the party is financed. Between the Podemos financing procedures the party salary cap, the crowdfunding and, especially, microcredits emerged as the most salient and innovative ones. As mentioned in Section 3.4.5. on *IMPULSA*, the salary cap has been applied to Podemos representatives and workers for 6 years since the third congress in 2020, limiting their salary to three times the Spanish "*salarios mínimos interprofesionales (SMI)*" (minimum wage) (with some possible exceptions). Limiting the salary responded to the idea

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[152] For example, from public data of 2019 (made available by the parties in their own websites, due to the Transparency Law), the Socialist declare more than 46 million euros in banking debt, the Popular Party almost 38 million euros, Ciudadanos almost 8 million euros and Podemos has no banking debt. Furthermore, with data from the Court of Audits, many smaller parties are in technical bankruptcy.

[153] At Podemos we take our financing and transparency mechanisms as a political issue of the utmost importance because we consider that financial independence and transparency in parties is a necessary condition for the proper functioning of democracy.

of descriptive representation (Pitkin, 1967), according to which the party's representative should be as close as possible to their constituents and, consequently, they should not have a much higher salary than the people they claimed to represent. In this sense, this limitation went in line with the idea of normal people doing politics against the "*Casta*" (the establishment). The generated surplus financed the party and its initiatives, particularly *IMPULSA*, since according to the Interviewee 4 (PE-NL, June 12, 2018), that money was considered public and not entirely a part of Podemos' budget[154]. The salary cap experienced numerous alterations until 2020, when it was replaced by a more traditional "party tax" (applying Ignazi & Fiorelli, 2021 terminology). In the 2020 Ethical Code (Podemos, 2020c, XII) the mentions to minimum wage disappeared and it has been replaced by a generic "*limitación salarial que se establezca con carácter general*"[155], specifying that the salary could not exceed the highest salary received by a public official with equal qualification at the moment of entering in the public administration (Podemos, 2020c, p. 7). While - especially during the first phase of the party's structuring - Podemos started different crowdfunding campaigns for financing various party initiatives. Political crowdfunding has been defined as "the process whereby many individuals donate small amounts of money to a political initiative, very often a political party, through predominantly digital means" (IDEA, 2018, p. 6). For instance, Podemos used this tool for raising money to develop their own internal political surveys or to rent buses for its Citizens Assembly meetings and so forth.

However, the most constant digital financing innovation promoted by Podemos were microcredits, which became a part of the party's identity. These are small civil loans ("*Préstamo Civil*" in Podemos, 2015f, p. 23) from registered members (from €50 to a maximum of €10.000), with zero interest rate, that the party use for expenses related to elections and returns once they receive the electoral subsidies from the State (around one year after). Therefore, members and sympathisers loans finance the campaigns, preventing the banks loans. Indeed, independence is a crucial element of the party narrative, *"[p]ara no cometer los errores del pasado*"[156], and "*no depender de los bancos ni de los poderes económicos*"[157] (Podemos, n.d.). In the first party's ethical code (Podemos, 2017), the

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[154] Since the Spanish law does not allow to return that money to the State, half of the total went to the party to finance its structure and half to *IMPULSA* budget (Interviewee 4 - PE-NL, June 12, 2018).
[155] Salary limitation that is established in general.
[156] For not making the mistakes of the past.
[157] Not depending on banks and economic powers.

commitment number ten stated: "*Impedir que Podemos participe de productos bancarios de deuda en lo relativo a su gestión económica. Por tanto, se excluye expresamente cualquier posibilidad de financiación bancaria*"[158]. Consequently, one of the party's priorities is to have a broad base of donors and collaborators, with the aim of depending on the crowd rather than a few big donors.

About six to eight weeks prior to every election, the microcredit web platform has been activated to allow people (sympathisers and members) to participate. The procedure has been almost totally digitalised via a specific platform within Podemos' website (Podemos, n.d.e), while the payment had been done through a transfer. In a four-step process, the lender (the registered member) could subscribe his/her loan to the party. In the first step he/she had to go to the specific website and click on "collaborate" for a specific microcredit campaign. Then, there were an "application form" that the participant must fulfil, where the amount of the microcredit had to be specified. The microcredit options varied, and there was a maximum number of microcredits per amount (for example, there were 295 microcredits left of 100 euros or six microcredits left of €5.000). Additionally, the registered user could subscribe a higher amount (up to €10.000), by including a desired quantity that will be achieved by subscribing to different microcredits until that specific amount is reached (that for example could be two microcredits of €5.000 each for an amount of €10.000). Finally, users had to include their banking accounts (where the money lent will be returned), and then declare (by clicking in specific boxes) that they were more than 18 years old, and that they accepted the subscription of a civil contract including the specific amount lent in the microcredit. There was also a link to the general conditions of the microcredit and the privacy policy.

After this first step of the process, the second was via email. The participant received an email with all the information for subscribing the microcredit attached, including the civil contract and a receipt. This receipt included all the necessary data for doing the transfer, such as the number to identify a specific microcredit that had to be included along with the specific microcredit campaign (regional or general election), and Podemos' bank account. The user had 48 hours to realise the payment. The third step was the actual transfer of money, where the lender had to enter his/her own bank account and to order the transfer, including

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[158] To prevent Podemos from participating in debt banking products in relation to their economic management. Therefore, any possibility of bank financing is expressly excluded.

the data provided in the receipt. This has been the less digitalised part of the process, at least at party level, in the sense that the lenders had to use their online banking account to make the actual transfer (due to electoral regulations). The final step was the loan repayment. Once the electoral subsidies have been received by the party, it transferred the money back to the lender, normally less than a year later. For instance, in the 2015 Annual Report (Podemos 2015f, p. 23), they stated that "*[se] estima que el plazo de devolución será inferior a 12 meses*"[159].

Even if they are credits, with a creditor and a debtor, Podemos does not pay any interest rates. This element reinforces the political purpose and commitment of the participants, but it may imply some problems for the legal requirements. Indeed, the Spanish electoral legislation states that financial institutions should grant credits with market-based conditions to political parties, not allowing them any special treatments. This rule aims at preventing a more favourable treatment for political parties in order to limit the political influence of the financial institutions. However, if applied to microcredits with a maximum limit (fixed by law) of 10.000 euros, the regulation appears not commensurate with the risk. In that case, the political influence seems less realistic for individuals who lent up to 10.000 euros to the party, much more if we consider that, normally, within 12 months the party will give back that money. Nevertheless, the lack of specific regulation concerning microcredits (and crowdfunding) makes this issue somehow problematic.

The microcredits procedure has been stable through time, since its creation in 2015[160]. Although, some minor changes have occurred (especially regarding technical and legal requirements), and the maximum amount per lender has increased from €1.000 to €10.000. In conclusion, they have helped the party to implement its participatory financing principles and also fostered its institutionalisation by reinforcing the party's autonomy (Barberà & Barrio, 2019, p. 266).

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[159] It is estimated that the return period will be less than 12 months.

[160] Even in Podemos' first ever election, the European elections of May 2014, the newly created (and broadly unknown) party, asked their sympathisers to donate for their campaign as to avoid banking financing.

3.4.8. Transparencia Podemos

Opposing traditional parties' corruption cases and 'politics as usual', Podemos included transparency between its identity principle. The Political principles document (Podemos, 2014c, p. 11) stated "*[v]enimos a terminar con el caciquismo, los enchufes y el secuestro de la democracia y a inaugurar la transparencia y la honestidad*"[161]. In this frame, Interviewee 15 (PFE-NL, March 7, 2019) argued that "*las lógicas de transparencia, y de rendir cuentas respecto a lo que se hace con el dinero, me parece una logíca muy 15-M y que tiene mucho que ver con la democracía*"[162]. Therefore, transparency has been seen by Podemos as one of the forms for responding to the 15-M movement's democratic instances. Indeed, transparency has been interpreted by the party as a democratic good that based on a double relation between the institutions (in this case the party) and the citizens (in this case mainly members), in which the first ones must to publish all the accounts in clear way and second ones must check and control them.

The Organisational Principles' document (2014d, Preamble, Chapter 2, p. 8) affirmed that the transparency within the party mirrored the transparency Podemos wanted for the public good's management:

> "*La transparencia, la rendición de cuentas y el escrutinio público de nuestra actividad como iniciativa política son el reflejo de los mecanismos que deben definir en el futuro inmediato a las administraciones públicas y a las distintas instituciones del Estado*"[163]

Transparency, accountability and public scrutiny of our activity as a political initiative are a reflection of the mechanisms that must define public administrations and the various State institutions in the immediate future). Therefore, transparency for Podemos had a "*potencial pedagógico hacia dentro y hacia fuera*"[164] (2014d, Module 2, p. 51). While, in the 2017 Organisational Document (Podemos, 2017b, Annex II, p. 83), the commitment to

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[161] We come to end the *caciquismo*, the nepotism and the kidnapping of democracy and to inaugurate transparency and honesty (system of dominance by local party bosses (*caciques*).

[162] the logic of transparency, and of being accountable for what is done with money, seems to me to be a very 15-M logic and that has a lot to do with democracy.

[163] The logic of transparency, and of being accountable for what is done with money, seems to me to be a very 15-M logic and that has a lot to do with democracy.

[164] Pedagogical potential inside and outside [the party].

transparency is reaffirmed; defining the party as "*punta de lanza en la reivindicación de la transparencia*"[165]. In the same document, Podemos claimed to be "*la primera organización política del país que publica sus cuentas de tal forma que la ciudadanía puede desgranar todos y cada uno de los gastos e ingresos*"[166] (2017b, Annex II, p. 83).

As reported in the party's website (Podemos, n.d.b), Podemos "participatory financing" principles includes innovation, independence, and transparency. In the transparency section of the commitment to this issue is claimed stating: "*En Podemos practicamos la transparencia que queremos ver en las instituciones. Nos obligamos a mostrar en qué nos gastamos hasta el último euro*"[167]. The commitment to transparency has been specifically applied through the development of the *Portal de Transparencia* (Transparency Portal) (see https://transparencia.podemos.info/). The portal is considered part of the Podemos' "*triple auditoria*" (triple audit) to guarantee transparency, jointly with the Tribunal de Cuentas (Court of Audits) and External Audit (Podemos, 2017b, Annex II, p. 83). Through the portal, the party aimed to respond to the commitment of publishing the party's accounts "*de forma trimestral*"[168] and to present them "*de forma accesible y comprensible*"[169] (Podemos, n.d.). Along the years, within the portal, Podemos published the data on the party's budgets, including funding, incomes and expenses. All financial expenses of the party and their related entities (including bills, invoices and other data on spending) were uploaded in the portal. The data has been divided in 5 sections within the portal: the party, the institutional groups, electoral campaigns, 25M foundation and donations. Moreover, until the third congress, it included a specific section for every elected representative who received any economic compensation for her/his office.

Nevertheless, the *Portal de Transparencia* also experienced some setbacks in its evolution. Firstly, sometimes the party's financial data wasn't promptly updated (García Lupato & Meloni, 2021). The purpose stated in the 2017 Organisational Document of "implementar nuevas herramientas informáticas y en recursos humanos para actualizar más rápidamente el

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[165] Spearhead in the demand for transparency.
[166] The first political organisation in the country that publishes its accounts in a way that citizens can analyse in detail each one of the expenses and income.
[167] In Podemos we practice the transparency that we want to see in the institutions. We are committed to show for what we spend every euro.
[168] On a quarterly basis.
[169] In an accessible and understandable way.

portal y facilitar aún más el acceso a la información"[170] has been partially disregarded. Therefore - particularly between 2018 and 2020 - the data have been updated with a significant delay. Second, the updating of the data in 2020 coincided with some changes in its publication by the party. Indeed, the Organisational Document approved during the third congress (Podemos, 2020b) partially change the Podemos commitment to transparency toward a "*[t]ransparencia responsible*"[171]. It implied a different approach oriented to a "*transparencia más global de la situación contable y de los gastos incurridos e ingresos obtenidos, poniendo más énfasis en el conjunto de la organización*"[172] (Podemos, 2020b, Art. 75, p. 69). This change resulted in the disappearance of the specific sections of the portal for Podemos elected representative data and in the data visualisation that tend to direct the user to a macro view of the party's accounts.

3.4.9. Civic participation

In many of the municipalities administered by Podemos representatives (one party government or coalitions), the local administration implemented participatory processes that were targeted to citizens. Particularly in the first phase of the party, those processes were considered "*herramientas fundamentales para la transformación, desarrollo y democratización de los municipios*"[173] and they were directly promoted by the party (Podemos, 2014c, Annex, c), p. 17). The Political principles' document (Podemos, 2014c, Annex, c), p. 17) indicated at least three participatory tools that the Podemos members engaged in municipal candidacy had to promote as "*un eje de trabajo prioritario para la acción de los miembros de Podemos en el ámbito local*"[174]. They were: (1) "*Auditoría ciudadana de la deuda municipal*"[175]; (2) "*Presupuestos municipales participativos*"[176]; and (3) "*Nuevo modelo de financiación municipal*"[177] (Podemos, 2014c, Annex, c), pp. 17-18). The first tool aimed to make the debt of the municipalities visible to citizens, and to promote its public auditing. While the third was the promotion of a new financing model based on

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[170] Implementing new digital and human resources tools to update the portal more quickly and further facilitate access to information.
[171] Responsible transparency.
[172] More global transparency of the accounting situation and the expenses incurred and income obtained, giving more emphasis to the entire organisation.
[173] Fundamental tools for the transformation, development and democratisation of the municipalities.
[174] A priority work axis for the action of the members of Podemos at the local level.
[175] Citizen audit of municipal debt.
[176] Municipal Participatory Budgeting.
[177] New municipal financing model.

social and a sustainable economy; prioritising local resources. Lastly, the Participatory Budgeting (PB) was promoted by Podemos to empower citizens in "*participar, votar y controlar los presupuestos*"[178], according to the principle of "*representar obedeciendo*"[179]. The PB is a decision-making process where citizens deliberate and directly decide how to spend a part of the public budget[180]. It is considered a part of the so-called Democratic Innovations (DI): a set of innovative processes aimed to deepen democracy by the citizen's participation, with a particular reference to the political decision-making process (Smith, 2009). Podemos indicated this tool also as a transparency promoter that "*actúa y frena los posibles casos de corrupción, favoritismo y clientelismo*"[181]. Furthermore, the party expressed the commitment to transform PB as a mandatory procedure for the municipalities (Podemos, 2014c, Annex, c), p. 18).

Between these tools, the PB have been the most implemented ones by the municipal coalition including Podemos, for example in Madrid (from 2016), Valencia (from 2016) and Barcelona from (2020-2021). Podemos - jointly with neo-municipalist coalition - rekindled a diffusion trend of PB in Spain initiated in 2001 by three municipalities of Andalusia in 2001 (Córdoba, Puente Genil and Cabezas de San Juan) (Ganuza, 2010) and later

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[178] Participate, vote and control budgets.

[179] To represent obeying.

[180] The most famous PB experience in large scale took place in Porto Alegre, Brazil, around 1989, established by the Brazilian Workers' Party PT (*Partido dos Trabalhadores*) as a practice of public discussion and decision-making process on city budget. Its subsequent adaptation to largely different contexts and the existence of numerous variants of it, do not allow us to recognise a univocal definition of PB. Instead, it is possible to identify the minimum criteria that a PB must satisfy. They are: 1) The explicit discussion of financial/budgetary processes. PB deals with scarce resources and addresses the question of "how a limited budget should be used" (Sintomer, Herzberg, Röcke & Allegretti, 2012, p. 2); 2) The centrality of the territorial context or target. The city level has been the most frequent scenario in which it has been implemented. However, a PB can also involve a decentralised district, a single institution or a specific target, as long as it has an elected assembly of reference with some power over public services and administration of resources (Allegretti, 2014); 3) The repetition of the process over years, excluding unique events such as single meetings or referendums on budgetary issues (Sintomer, Herzberg, Röcke & Allegretti, 2012); 4) The inclusion of certain forms of public deliberation within specific assemblies or fora. They must open "new public sphere", so it is not possible to consider the citizens' invitation in local councils or in parliaments as PB processes, neither to define PB processes that not imply discussion and relations between the participants (Sintomer, Herzberg, Röcke & Allegretti, 2012); 5) The accountability on the results by a specific follow-up process that provides feedback to the participants (Allegretti, 2014).

[181] Act and stop possible cases of corruption, favouritism and clientelism.

discontinued. They combined this municipal tradition with digital participation, developing hybrid PB in which a significant part of the process is supported by open software platforms. Two open-source software emerged as the most used and promoted: *CONSUL* (see https://consulproject.org/en/) and *Decidim* (see https://decidim.org/). *CONSUL* has been developed by the Municipality of Madrid, during the mandate of the mayor Manuela Carmena, supported by the coalition *Ahora Madrid* (Madrid Now) that included Podemos at that time, while *Decidim* counted on the support of the Municipality of Barcelona, during the two mandates of the mayor Ada Colau Ballano, supported by the coalition *Barcelona en Comú* (Barcelona in Common) that included *Podem* (Podemos in Catalonia). Within them, different municipal digital platforms have been developed to carry out the PB and other participatory processes, thus developing participatory systems, such as *Decide Madrid* in the Spanish capital and *DecidimVLC* in Valencia. The digital component has been an important element both in technical and communicative terms. On the one hand, the digital platform reduced the cost of the processes and broaden the audience of participants; on the other concretised the digital democracy and technopolitics claims within Podemos and previously in the 15-M (Interviewee 9 - PE-NL, June 21, 2018).

Nevertheless, after a first phase when Podemos and the neo-municipalist coalition were aligned (particularly when they elected the so-called "*alcaldesas del cambio*" (mayors of change) in Madrid and Barcelona), the party and many of the (digital) participation teams that developed and promoted the processes at the local level gradually separated their paths. It pointed out two different approaches to digital participation that emerged around these political experiences: on the one side, who defend the autonomy of the local political projects and their participatory process, aiming at a direct relations between individual citizens and institutions, up to predicting that direct democracy will overcome the representative one, particularly through digital tools (Interviewee 14 - PRC-LL, September 21, 2018); on the other side, who defend representative democracy and promote its reinterpretation without undermining the role of political parties (Interviewee 13 - PE-LL, September 18, 2018).

Beyond the municipalities, Podemos directly promoted other civic initiatives at the local level and some at the national level, especially during its first phase of structuring. Between them, the *Caravana rural* (Rural caravan) has been one of the most impacting initiatives. During the implementation of the project, the party collected the citizens demands through a caravan moving around Spain, passing by every small town. The *Caravana rural* project

has been also founded by European Union that recognised is public utility and relevance (Interviewee 4 - PE-NL, June 12, 2018).

3.5. The role of digital technologies in Podemos' participation

Podemos has been categorised as a digital party by Gerbaudo (2019), according to him the party interpreted digital technologies as tools for democratisation, according to a utopian vision of technology; also inspired by the Operational model of the digital companies. Similarly, Lioy et al. (2019) included it in the platform parties focusing on its use of web platforms (see Section 3.5.1). While, Raniolo & Tarditi (2020) identified in the Podemos use of technology as a constitutive element in the quest of internal democracy. Indeed, the literature pointed out that Podemos overcame the instrumental use of digital technologies considering them as part of its identity. The fieldwork conducted by the author confirmed the centrality of digital participation for the party narrative and the use of digital technologies to support most of its procedures for the participation of the membership. As affirmed by the Interviewee 4 (PE-NL, June 12, 2018) "*Podemos surge como partido absolutamente innovador en cuanto los usos de nuevas tecnologías*"[182]. According to Interviewee 9 (PE-NL, June 21, 2018), Podemos initially used digital participation as a tool for representing those who could not physically be there, thus including a portion of citizens who wanted participated but who wanted to participate but who were excluded by political spaces. However, the same interviewee affirmed that by using digital technologies as a tool, the party realised that it could develop new processes, enhancing and innovating its participation (as described below). Quoting him: "*las herramientas digitales abren un nuevo ámbito para desarrollar nuevos procesos de forma diferente [...] mucho más ágiles, controlados, ratificado*"[183]. According to this view, digital technologies allow for better control over the participatory processes, because guiding them (and setting their objectives) was easier within digital spaces. Furthermore, Interviewee 4 (PE-NL, June 12, 2018) argued that the Podemos' use of digital technologies for participation forced the entire political system to change in that direction. She affirmed "*no funcionó solo como punta de lanza, sino que fue motor, o sea obligó, o está obligando, los otros partidos a ponerse a ese nivel, para no quedarse*

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[182] Podemos arises as an absolutely innovative party in terms of the uses of new technologies.
[183] Digital tools open a new field to develop new processes in a different way [...] much more agile, controlled, ratified.

desfasados"[184].

While, the Interviewee 3 (PFE-NL, June 11, 2018) pointed out the role of digital technologies in offering a certain level of participation to all members, since that "*no todo el mundo puede participar de la misma manera*"[185]. In the same line, other interviewees differentiated two groups of members in the party (which could coincide for some members but which are often alternatives for the others), i.e. "*varios niveles de participación y de militancia*[186] (Interviewee 13 - PE-LL, September 18, 2018) or "*dos organizaciones en una*"[187] (Interviewee 2 - PE-LL, June 7, 2018). On the one hand, they identified the members who used to participate digitally, most of them young members. This group tended to prefer digital participation since who is part of that used to be "*más cómodos através de sus iphones, de sus telefonos smartphones*"[188], thus the party had to offer "*el espacio más adecuado para que un joven haga su acción política*"[189] (Interviewee 12 - PE-LL, June 26, 2018). Addressing this group, Podemos created a category of members named "*Activistas digitales*" (Digital activists), defined by Interviewee 13 (PE-LL, September 18, 2018) as:

> "*aquellos compañeros y compañeras que no van a ir nunca algún círculo, porque les parece un rollo estar ahí, pero que van a estar en redes, en Twitter, en Facebook, todo el rato apoyando, defendiendo al partido, metiendo línea política*"[190].

On the other hand, there were another group of members who participated in the party branches, most of them older people. They used to participate in physical meetings and make limited use of digital technologies for participation (especially for voting), since the "*círculos son analógicos, totalmente analógicos, o sea yo cuando voy al circulo a trabajar con la gente, charlas, te encuentras que el 80% tiene más de 50 años*"[191]. However, although many of the interviewees considered digital participation an added value and identified

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[184] It did not work just as a spearhead, but it was a driving force, that is, it forced, or is forcing, the other parties to get at that level, so as not to get out of date.

[185] Everyone cannot participate in the same way.

[186] Various levels of participation and activism.

[187] Two organisations in one.

[188] More comfortable through their iPhones, their smartphones.

[189] The most suitable space for a young member to carry out his/her political action.

[190] Those comrades who never go to a branch, because for them to be there is boring, but who are going to be active in social networks, on Twitter, on Facebook, all the time supporting, defending the party, placing a political line.

[191] The branches are analog, totally analog, that is, when I go to the branch to work with people, to meetings, you find that the 80% are over 50 years old.

digital technologies as the near future of politics, most of them also recognised general limitation within digital participation in the present. Among them, the digital divide was the most cited, particularly in relation to rural areas, and in generational terms (Interviewee 4 - PE-NL, June 12, 2018). While, Interviewee 3 (PFE-NL, June 11, 2018) pointed out the difficulties in carrying out deliberation digitally, due to lack of a properly democratic digital tool for it. Interviewee 9 (PE-NL, June 21, 2018) has been the most detailed on this topic. He identified three gaps within the digital participation, beyond the digital divide: "*la brecha generaciónal*" (the generation gap) described as "*la que sufren nuestros padres, los que pasan de un Windows 98 a de repente tener un iPhone en su bolsillo*"[192]; "*la brecha de género*" (the gender gap) based on the evidence that "*las mujeres participan muchísimo menos en los procesos tecnológicos, y de cyber-participación, que los hombres*"[193]; and lastly "*la brecha rural*" (the rural gap) for infrastructural deficit in the Spanish rural area, also combined with "*una brecha económica o de recursos*"[194] when the lack of internet connection or digital devices depends on economic reasons. Moreover, the same Interviewee 9 pointed out another complication generated by digital participation, it related to the individualization of participation. According to him, "*digitalmente es más difícil sentirte en comunidad, que presencialmente*"[195], and even in presence of digital communities "*muchas veces se generan comunidades que están cerradas, qué es lo que Ramón Cotarelo define como "cyber-guetos"*"[196], which tendentially "*aislan esos espacios digitales de la participación del resto de personas que quieran meterse*"[197]. For similar reasons, the Interviewee 13 (PE-LL, September 18, 2018) defended the Podemos hybrid participation strategy, avoiding the exclusion of both groups.

Analysing the Podemos participation since its foundation, it is evident that the party has made intensive use of digital technologies to support its participatory tools and processes. The digital technologies influences and uses impacted to the party's procedures at three different levels: facilitating, enhancing or innovating the participatory procedures (see Section 1.7.). Firstly, the facilitation of digital technologies allowed Podemos to develop its

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[192] The one suffered by our parents, those who go from Windows 98 to suddenly having an iPhone in their pocket.
[193] Women participate much less in technological processes, and cyber-participation, than men.
[194] An economic or resource gap.
[195] Digitally it is more difficult to feel in community, than in person.
[196] Many times, the communities generated are closed, which is what Ramón Cotarelo defines as "cyber-ghettos".
[197] Isolate those digital spaces from the participation of the rest of the people who want to get involved.

processes in a faster, cheaper and more inclusive way, reaching a huge number of militants and supporters. Therefore, even without a deep level of innovation, some of the party's procedures have been implemented more efficiently with reduced cost. Secondly, the case of enhancing digital technologies allowed Podemos to carry out the procedures in a more continuous, widespread and timely way, increasing the scale and scope of some initiatives. Indeed, some of the party procedures implemented relied on digital technologies to be replicated in terms of time and territorial diffusion, overcoming the limits imposed by the lack of time and rising costs. Thirdly, in terms of innovation, digital technologies supported Podemos in developing new procedures that were not possible (nor sustainable) through face-to-face processes.

As hypothesised (first part of H3: "The digitalisation tends to work better for aggregative Intra-Party Democracy processes and tools"), digital technologies had a major impact over the Podemos' aggregative procedures, particularly within the electoral[198] and the participatory[199] dimensions. Firstly, within the electoral dimension, all the processes for selecting the party's internal and external representatives - at the state, regional and local levels - have been organised through the party's digital platform *Participa* (Section 3.5.1.), with the only exception being for the primary elections in towns with under 50.000 inhabitants (see Section 3.4.6). In this case, the use of ICTs facilitated the selection of the party's representatives, reducing the party's logistic effort for the primary elections, in terms of cost and organisational energies. Furthermore, by applying it to all party and territorial levels, including the local ones, the digital tool overcame the technical aspect enhancing the selection procedure. Indeed, carrying out such a large number of primary elections and their capillarity would not have been sustainable for a new political party without digital technologies. Relying on the *Participa* platform, the party could establish that the primary elections must be carried out through electronic voting in the majority of cases (mandatory or by default, as stated in the 2018 Primaries regulation document, Podemos, 2018a, Art. 3). Secondly, within the participatory dimensions beyond electoral processes, the Podemos

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[198] In democratic theory terms, the main logic of this dimension is "making rulers responsive to citizens" (Coppedge et al., 2019, p. 39) and this is mainly achieved through electoral competition between two or more groups or leaders or parties for the electoral approval, in line with Schumpeter's postulates. This includes freedom of expression, information, secret vote, and all the aspects that guarantee free and fair elections.

[199] In democratic theory terms, this dimension emphasises the "active participation by citizens in all political processes, electoral and non-electoral" (Coppedge et al., p. 40). It counteracts the logic of electoral democracy and supposes a certain uneasiness with the idea of representation. Hence, direct rule is preferred, with direct democracy and subnational bodies playing a more relevant role.

decision-making counted on a digital aggregative procedure to call the members to vote on binding consultations, the *Consultas Ciudadanas* (Citizens' Consultations, Section 3.4.2.), voted through the *Participa* platform. They have been the party's most used tools within participatory dimensions, in terms of number of consultations and consistency. Digital technologies enhanced this procedure, allowing the party to extend the use of consultations. Indeed, Podemos has organised 12 consultations at the national level between 2014 and 2020, implementing an average of two consultations per year. Similarly to the primaries' case, without digital technologies, it would have required the party an unsustainable logistical and economic effort. Furthermore, within the participatory dimensions could be included also the Podemos microcredits (Section 3.4.7.) that has been facilitated and enhanced by digital technologies. Therefore, as already analysed, these processes have been mainly online, allowing all registered members to loan an amount of money for the Podemos campaigns via *Participa* platform. It deeply facilitated the first step of the process (i.e. the registration of the microcredits) and expanded their potential in term of diffusion and simplicity for the users.

However, digital technologies played an important role also in non-aggregative procedures of Podemos that involved other democratic dimensions. For the deliberative dimension, it is the case of *Plaza Podemos* and its *2.0* version (see Section 3.4.3.). As already analysed, this tool has been initially developed as a digital community on the online platform Reddit (defined as network of communities, Reddit, n.d.) and on 31 October 2015 it has been moved to the open-source software CONSUL. Although the shift from an open network to an internal digital platform marked an important decision of the party toward customisation and control, in both cases *Plaza Podemos* relied on digital technologies to exist as the Podemos digital deliberative tool. Indeed, this new procedure has been essentially digital, innovating the party's deliberation if compared to the face-to-face processes. In particular, *Plaza Podemos* through digital technologies made available the possibility for members localised throughout Spain and abroad (*Podemos exterior*) to propose, comment and interact permanently; without specific time and space limits. *Plaza Podemos* also supported the collaborative elaboration of the 2014 European manifesto (Podemos, 2014e) and 2015 General Election manifesto (Podemos, 2015a). For the latter the party estimated the online participation of 10,000 people via this tool. For the inclusion dimension, digital technologies facilitated and enhanced two procedures: *IMPULSA* and *Bancos de Talentos*. In both cases the processes have counted on the digital support particularly for the presentation of social

proposals or volunteer candidacies. It allowed the party to spread the information, as well as to collect digital data, evaluate and elaborate them. Moreover, in the case of *IMPULSA,* the digital voting system innovated the evaluation and selection processes of proposals in a participatory way, allowing every member to vote on them. Lastly, within the liber dimension, digital technologies played a significant role in the party's transparency. Indeed, Podemos published the party accounts, presenting them "*de forma accesible y comprensible*"[200] (Podemos, n.d.) through the online *Portal de Transparencia* (Transparency Portal). Thus, digital technologies facilitated the party's accountability; providing accessibility and visibility to data on the party's budgets - including funding, incomes and expenses - divided into sections and schematised through graphs. Furthermore, digital technologies had a huge impact in the party communication, both internally between members and externally on social media. On one side, Podemos chose *Telegram* as the Mobile Instant Messaging Services (MIMS) of reference for the party. Indeed, at all levels of the party *Telegram* has been the most used internal channel for communications (information, mobilisation, logistic issues), as affirmed by the Interviewee 6 (PE-LL, June 14, 2018) "*tiene muchas funciones que te sirven a la hora pues de generar, por ejemplo, una consulta, el tema de los enlaces y la facilidad para un doodle por ejemplo, o mil cosas, son muchisimos los canales*"[201]. On the other side, many of the members and especially the above-mentioned "*Activistas digitales*" (Digital activists) widely use social network to promote, defend or also criticise Podemos, especially via *Facebook* and *Twitter*. They used to have a totally digital relation with the party, also contacting the party's branches and representatives at different level via social media chat (Interviewee 6 - PE-LL, June 14, 2018).

The major impact of digital technologies over Podemos' aggregative procedures, in particular within the electoral and the participatory dimensions, has been reflected also in the evolution of the participatory processes and tools. Although with some changes in their regulation and usage, the online primary election, the Citizen Consultations and the microcredits have been maintained their digital characteristic and general consistency. Similarly, the role of digital within the liber dimension has been maintained via the online *Portal de Transparencia*. Nevertheless, on the one hand sometimes the party's financial data

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[200] In an accessible and understandable way.
[201] It has many functions that serve you when generating, for example, a query, in matter of links and the ease for [generating] a doodle for example, or a thousand things, there are many channels.

have not been promptly updated (García Lupato & Meloni, 2021), particularly between 2018 and 2020. On the other hand, in 2020, the party made some changes in the data publication - in particular eliminating some specific sections of the portal (e.g. elected representatives' sections) - and the data visualisation tended to direct the user to a macro view of the party's accounts. Differently, as hypothesised (second part of H3: "[The digitalisation] struggles for other dimensions such as inclusion or deliberative ones") the problems regarding digital participation have been more visible in the deliberative and inclusion dimensions over the years, affecting all the three digital procedures mentioned. As analysed in the Sections 3.4.3., 3.4.4. and 3.4.5., *Plaza Podemos*, *IMPULSA* and *Bancos de Talentos* disappeared along the party evolution (and institutionalisation process). Nevertheless, in any of these cases, the party's choice has been due to digital limitations or problems encountered in their usage, rather they have been eliminated or replaced for political reasons; responding to different priorities of the party (see Section 3.6.). In particular, the setback of digital procedures revealed tensions and conflicts that the deliberative tool and other non-aggregative initiatives generated toward the party's leadership, as well as towards the internal party's cohesion when they disclosed divergences from the official party line, or simply exposed limitations of party policy.

During the interviews different criticism emerged on the Podemos' use of digital technologies and on the development of digital tools and processes by the party. Firstly, Interviewee 3 (PFE-NL, June 11, 2018) and Interviewee 8 (PE-LL, June 15, 2018) focused on the plebiscitary use of digital technologies in relation to the ratification of the leadership's decisions, bypassing other party's local bodies and the active members and appealing directly to all individual members via digital tools (see Ignazi, 2020 for an explanation of this dynamic). Quoting the Interviewee 3 on the use of digital participation in Podemos:

> "*Hay tres niveles de participación: quién directamente está metido en el partido, quién participa en el partido y quién se siente cercano a el (simpatizante, etc.). Lo que se hizo fue apelar (de una forma muy abstracta), ese 'más allá', a los que faltan, para quitar poder al segundo grado y darle más al primero*"[202].

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[202] There are three levels of participation: who is directly involved in the party, who participates in the party and who feels close to him, sympathiser, etc. What has been done was to appeal (in a very abstracted way), that 'beyond' [members], those who are missing, to deprive power from the second level and give more to the first one.

In particular, according to him, the consultations used to be called for avoiding the internal debate, due to "*el miedo de tener debates*"[203]. While, Interviewee 8 argued that the digital model of participation approved during the first congress generated on purpose "*una base enorme y no articulada*"[204] leading to "*una relacción de tipo plebiscitario*"[205]; that empowered the leadership (as described by Gerbaudo, 2019 using the chemical metaphor of "super-base"). Secondly, according to the Interviewee 7 (PR-RL, June 14, 2018) the main point was not which participatory digital tool has been developed (neither its appropriateness) but the issues being discussed and voted on. That is, the problem of digital participation has been to focus on issues such as the Iglesias's chalet, rather than how to organise the party to build the change. Similarly, Interviewee 3 (Podemos founder and former party central officer at regional level, June 11, 2018) argued that all digital consultations has been gradually reduced to a binary referendum on the leadership: "*¿Pablo si o Pablo no?*"[206]. Thirdly, in more general terms, Interviewee 4 (PE-NL, June 12, 2018) reported that "*una de las grandes críticas que han hecho, sobre todos los inscrito y las inscritas de Podemos, fue que la participación se producía exclusivamente en la participación telemática*"[207]. Indeed, this criticism highlighted the prominence of digital participation in the Podemos' participation, which, according to the Interviewee 3 (PFE-NL, June 11, 2018) relegated the party participation to "*una minoría digitalizada, que acaban volviéndose núcleos autorreferenciales*"[208].

Finally, Interviewee 15 (PFE-NL, March 7, 2019) pointed out a difference between two types of digital procedures for participation. On the one hand, there were the procedures for supporting the plebiscitarian consultations that appealed to a new digital category of membership, the "*inscrito*" (registered member), which has been developed "*precisamente porque no queríamos llamarlo militante, no queríamos llamarlo afiliado*"[209]. Indeed, the digital technologies have been fundamental tools to engage this "*más suave*" (softer) category. Nevertheless, according to Interviewee 15, the digital registered members have never been considered a part of the real decision-making, limiting their intervention to

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[203] Fear of debates.
[204] A huge and non-articulated base.
[205] A plebiscitarian type of relationship.
[206] Pablo yes or Pablo no?
[207] One of the great criticisms that they have made, especially the members of Podemos, has been that participation occurred exclusively in telematic participation.
[208] A digitised minority, which end up becoming self-referential groups.
[209] Precisely because we didn't want to call him a militant, we didn't want to call him an affiliate.

specific consultations decided and elaborated by the party leadership (interpreted extensively). In this frame, the party did not consider digital technologies to be a form "*para experimentar una organización distinta, real*"[210], i.e. reinventing a new model of political party around them. On the other hand, Interviewee 15 argued that other digital tools, such as the deliberative and inclusive ones, have never been truly respected (except the Participation Area). Thus, the low consideration and investment implied their elimination or replacement since that "*nadie las ha ido poniendo en valor, porque nadie las utilizado realmente, con toda la potencialidad que podían haber tenido*"[211].

Overall, as expected (H3), Podemos' used digital technologies especially for aggregative procedures; maintaining processes and tools over the time, while the procedures related to other dimensions have been less developed, up to the point of their elimination in some of the most important cases. Evolution over time also showed the limits and internal conflicts that certain digital democratic procedures have disclosed in the party, for which the leadership has often reacted producing important setbacks that reduced the digital participation's possibilities for the membership.

3.5.1. The "Participa" platform

The digital participatory tools and process analysed in Section 3.5. have been supported for the voting phase by the Podemos' digital platform *Participa* since its development in the summer of 2014 (Podemos, 2015h), integrated until 2019 with the open-source voting software *Agora voting* (renamed *nVotes* in 2016). According to Deseriis and Vittori (2019, p. 5699), *Participa* is an Online Participation Platforms (OPPs) that "collaps[ing] the marginal costs of voting online" gave the possibility to Podemos of "expand[ing] the range and frequency of consultations". Initially, the development of *Participa* coexisted with external digital tools, such as in the case of Reddit for *Plaza Podemos* (Section 3.4.2.), the App *Appgree* (mentioned in Podemos, 2014d, pp. 7-8), which were accessible by the links in the party platform. Figure 3.4 shows the section *Herramientas de participación ciudadadana* (Citizen participation tools) *Participa* platform on May 9, 2015.

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[210] To experience a different real organisation.
[211] Nobody has valorised them, because nobody really used them, despite all the potentiality that they could have had.

Figure 3.4 - *Participa* Podemos' platform

Source: Releasing the code of Podemos' digital heart (Podemos, 2015h).

However, Podemos gradually replaced the external digital tools with internal tools developed by the party (or simply stopped to promote their use, as in the case of *Appgree*). This change allowed the party to better adapt the digital tools to the party objectives, but also to exercise total control over the processes; without interference from external entities. The characteristics of the platform that have been maintained over time responded to two main objectives of the party: "(1) allowing sympathisers to become party members via a relatively simple and cost-free online registration process", which also generate a database at disposal of the party; and "(2) allowing registered members to contribute to party decisions via the OPP" (Deseriis & Vittori, 2019, p. 5701). Indeed, differently from other party OPPs, e.g. the *Rousseau* platform by Five Stars Movement, *Participa* platform has been used to limited functions, especially after 2015, almost exclusively for voting and for supporting the microcredits system (Section 3.4.7.). Thus, despite the two open-source software *CONSUL* (see https://consulproject.org/en/) and *Decidim* (see https://decidim.org/) have been developed by municipalities government and developing teams close to Podemos, the party barely explored the possibility of expanding and diversifying the use of internal digital tools, in particular toward deliberation (Interviewee 14 - PRC-LL, September 21, 2018). In this

regard, the only significant exception has been *Plaza Podemos 2.0* which has been built on the *CONSUL* software, and has been active from October 2015 until its replacement in July 2019 (see Section 3.4.3.).

3.6. How Podemos use Intra-Party Democracy

As analysed in Section 1.5., Intra-Party Democracy (IPD) consists of the democratic level of the decision-making process of a party, including different democratic dimensions (von dem Berge & Poguntke, 2017). All the previous sections of this chapter intersected with the topic of IPD in Podemos, showing in particular the importance of focusing not just on the initial stage of the party's regulations, membership and procedures, with their uses and impacts, but also on their evolution throughout time. Referring to section 3.3. for the analysis of the legal and organisational framework that regulates Podemos and its IPD, this section focused on a general discussion on IPD toward members defined here as intra-party participation.

Table 3.6 outlines some of the main characteristics attributed to Podemos intra-party participation that emerged during the interviews; and it shows their incidence among the various interviewees (considering the 16 non-academic interviews). In particular, seven characteristics - embedded in four categories (General, Structural, Principle and Specific) - were identified by the author as the most relevant in qualitative terms and recurrent in the interviews aiming at examining the IPD of Podemos and the main debates that have risen around it (see Section 2.2.1. for an explanation of each characteristic).

Table 3.6 – Characteristics of Podemos intra-party participation

Interviewee	Profile	Intra-party participation in Podemos						
		General		Structural		Principle	Specific	
		Top-down	Bottom-up	Structured	Disconnected	Deliberative	Plebiscitary	Majoritarian
1	Podemos founder and ideologist at national the level	X	X			X		
2	Former Podemos general secretary at the local level	X	X	X				X
3	Podemos founder and former party officer at the national and regional level	X			X		X	X
4	Former Podemos central officer at the national level		X	X	X		X	X
5	Officer of political projects linked to Podemos at the local level						X	
6	Podemos party body member at the local level		X	X		X		X
7	Podemos representative at the regional level		X		X		X	
8	Podemos party body member at the local level	X					X	X
9	Podemos central officer at the national level	X	X	X				X
10	Podemos branch secretary at the local level	X			X			X
11	Officer of political projects linked to Podemos at the local level						X	
12	Podemos secretary at the local level	X	X					X
13	Podemos secretary at the local level		X	X				
14	Local government representative and former Podemos collaborator	X						
15	Podemos founder and former party central officer at national level	X		X	X		X	X
16	Podemos founder and former party representative at national level	X	X				X	X

Source: author's elaboration based on the interviews.

Intra-party participation has been considered top-down in Podemos IPD by 10 out of 16 respondents (63% of the total). Two types of interpretations particularly emerged in relation to the vertical dimension of participation within the party. On the one side, five of the interviewees who mentioned this characteristic pointed out the domain of the top (generally understood as leadership) over the party base (generally understood as members and

branches). Interviewee 3 (PFE-NL, June 11, 2018) summarised this assessment arguing that "*No se construye un partidos desde abajo, nunca, se construyen espacios para que los de abajo estén entretenidos mientras el partido se organiza desde arriba*"[212]. In particular, the strengthening of the top of the organisation and the resulting centralisation of decision-making may have occurred due to the fear of losing control during the phase of structuring and expanding the party, defined "*miedo al desborde*" (fear of overflow) by both Interviewee 8 (PE-LL, June 15, 2018) and Interviewee 3 (PFE-NL, June 11, 2018). Therefore, according to Interviewee 3, since the first Podemos congress, the top of the party developed "*pánico a la gente*" (panic to people) that led to the belief that "*sino la controlamos nosotros, tenemos una oportunidad histórica y esto se nos va a la m****a*"[213]. According to Interviewee 15 (PFE-NL, March 7, 2019), Podemos have never developed "*una estructura formal, permanente, en la que la participación fuese un plus para poder estar en esas estructuras*"[214], in which "*los militantes tuviesen espacios de deliberación, de discusión y de decisión y a traves de eso hubiese un ascensor dentro de la propia organización*"[215]. Therefore, as reported by Interviewee 15, the coexistence of a top-down organisation with plebiscitary procedures (see below) generated a "*contradicción permanente donde se movía como entendíamos la participación*"[216], promoting a soft version of participation without really opening the decision-making process of the party. Moreover, aiming at not "*perder el control de esa cosa tan increíble que se haya montado*"[217], the top maintained the power depriving "*de contenido y de función*"[218] the intermediate bodies of the party and the branches (Interviewee 8 - PE-LL, June 15, 2018).

Thus, the Podemos gradually formalised its *"piramidal"* (pyramid-shaped) structure with the General Secretary on the top, followed by the Citizen Council, without an organised and empowered basis, resulting in "*un partido que no es transversal*"[219], "*extremadamente vertical en muchas cosas*"[220] (Interviewee 10 - PE-LL, June 23, 2018). Beyond the individual participation, Interviewee 8 (PE-LL, June 15, 2018) and Interviewee 10 (PE-LL, June 23,

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[212] There is not a party built from below, never, spaces are built so that those below are entertained while the party is organised from above.

[213] If we don't control it, we have a historic opportunity and this is going to s**t.

[214] A formal, permanent structure, in which participation was a plus to be part of those structures.

[215] The members had spaces for deliberation, discussion and decision and through that would have an elevator within the organisation.

[216] Permanent contradiction in which as we understood participation fitted.

[217] Lose control of that incredible thing that has been built.

[218] Of content and function.

[219] A party that is not transversal.

[220] Extremely vertical in many things.

2018) reported a crisis of the party branches without independence from the "*cúpula*" (top of the party) and missing a proper function in the party's decision-making. According to Interviewee 10, it has been due to the fact that "*a veces el generar contra-poder irrita al poder*"[221]. Interviewee 3 (PFE-NL, June 11, 2018) reported a noteworthy affirmation within an organisational meeting:

> "*Nosotros lo que queremos es que Pablo, como Secretario General, pueda descolgar el telefono y llamar al secretario general de cualquier sitio y decirle que es lo que tiene que hacer o mandarle a la m****a porque ha hecho esto*"[222].

On the other side, five of the interviewees combined the top-down characteristics with the bottom-up one, referring to a tendentially positive tension between top and bases in the Podemos organisation. Interviewee 1 (PIF-NL, May 16, 2018) defined this dynamic as "*subsidiariedad de la política*" (subsidiarity of politics) According to him, "*la parte superior acompaña a la parte inferior, que le deje obrar, y solamente cuando fracase la parte inferior, ayude*"[223]. It has been part of the "*política maternal*" (maternal politics) that Interviewee 1 metaphorically explained as "*cuando mi madre me enseñaba a montar en bicicleta: si iba solo me dejaba, pero si me iba a caer, me agarraba*"[224].

Remarkable evidence could be provided to support the top-down characteristic of Podemos intra-party democracy and specifically members' participation. Indeed, centralisation plays an important role in Podemos. It has been one of the core conflicts within the party, and reflected in the tensions between the two most charismatic figures of the Party, Pablo Iglesias and Íñigo Errejón. Whether Iglesias won the second Congress (and some months later Errejón left the party and created a new one), vertical integration has been higher (Barberà & Barrio, 2019, p. 258), and different conflicts with regional coalitions arose (in Galicia, Catalonia or Andalusia, among others). Certain procedures have evolved towards centralisation, the Citizens' Consultations in particular. As analysed in Section 3.4.2., they have changed hampering the participation (and debate) between members and branches, and,

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[221] Sometimes generating counter-power irritates the power.

[222] What we want is that Pablo, as Secretary General, could pick up the phone and call the secretary general of any place and tell him/her what to do or send him/her to hell because he/she has done this.

[223] The upper part goes with the lower part, letting it act, and only when the lower part fails, [the upper part] helps.

[224] When my mother taught me to ride a bicycle: if I went alone, she would let me, but if I felt, she would grab me.

in practice, they have been called just by the executive branches (whether the Secretary General or the Citizens' Council). Indeed, the use of the *Consultas* revealed that for Podemos it has been mainly a strategic and leader-oriented tool with a mere reactive role for members. In this regard, Interviewee 15 (PFE-NL, March 7, 2019) attributed the non-approval of the protocol developed by the Participation Area for the consultations proposed by members to the veto of the Organisation Secretariat. Quoting him:

"Cada vez que [la Área de participación] nos ponía el protocolo encima de la mesa decíamos: que esto me lo pueden utilizar para poner cosas que yo no quiero que pongan. Entonces, a lo mejor, no hay que desarollarlo"[225].

In a similar, albeit different way, Podemos' landmark deliberation tools, *Plaza Podemos*, has been replaced by a more top-down initiative (see Section 3.4.3.).

Differently, nine interviewees attributed to Podemos intra-party participation a bottom-up characteristic. Five of them, as mentioned above, combined both top-down and bottom-up logics; referring to a balance between vertical and horizontal dimension. On the one hand there was the "*condición vertical, mediática, de maquinaria de guerra electoral*"[226], on the other hand there was the "*pata horizontal, deliberativa, espontánea de los círculos*"[227] (Interviewee 1 – PIF-NL, May 16, 2018). In this view, the participation played a regulation role within the organisation harmonising the two dimensions and solving the internal conflicts (Interviewee 2 - PE-LL, June 7, 2018). Similarly, Interviewee 12 (PE-LL, June 26, 2018) argued that Podemos has developed "*buenos mecanismo para subir demandas*"[228] from the party base, stressing in particular the two-way responsibility between the top and bottom and its pedagogical potential. Indeed, according to him, the branches used to ask for permanent debate without considering the political role of the representative party bodies that the members voted for. While, Interviewee 6 (PE-LL, June 14, 2018) and Interviewee 13 (PE-LL, September 18, 2018) focused on the central role of the members participation to the Podemos decision-making via the participatory tools developed by the party, both online and face-to-face at the branches level. Although recognising different moments in the party's

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[225] Every time [the Participation Area] put the protocol on the table, we said: they can use this for propose things that I don't want them to propose. So, probably, we do not must to develop it.
[226] Vertical, media, electoral war machine condition.
[227] Horizontal, deliberative, spontaneous side of the branches.
[228] Good mechanism to raise demands.

life with more or less active participants, due to both their lives and the political phase, they identified a growing trend of members participation within the party. Rather, Interviewee 7 (PR-RL, June 14, 2018) pointed out the subalternity of the representative in relation to the Podemos base. Indeed, according to him, Podemos differently from the traditional parties did not have a "*botón rojo*" (red button) to impose vertical choices on the party base and its representatives' role is limited to present the situation and propose. Nevertheless, Interviewee 7 reported that the Podemos representatives often failed in their role presenting an agenda focused on internal conflicts between the party factions that resulted in the contamination of the base.

The empirical evidence shows the bottom-up initial development of some of the main Podemos participatory procedures, such as *IMPULSA* and the Bank of Talents, as well as the first phase of branches structuring. For instance, Interviewee 4 (PE-NL, June 12, 2018) reported that *IMPULSA* achieved "*que la gente participe sin tener que doblegarse a las demandas del partido, sino con sus propias propuestas*"[229]. While, Interviewee 3 (PFE-NL, June 11, 2018) defined the Podemos branches at the initial phase "*organizaciones muy liquidas*"[230], describing them as:

> "*Una continuación de la nueva etapa que habían sido las asambleas del 15-M, espacios que no iban a ser de Partido, donde no se le pedí a nadie carnet , donde no se construya desde allí una gran identidad de partido, sino de participación como habías sido antes*"[231].

Nevertheless, as analysed, both *IMPULSA* and the Bank of Talents have been eliminated and the branches changed, particularly toward institutionalisation. However, certain internal and external dynamics also had an impact on those procedures. In the case of the Bank of Talents, internal dynamics have been particularly relevant. Indeed, loyalty was preferred to meritocracy at the moment of selecting the party teams, and attributing specific roles within the organisation (see Section 3.4.4.), as it typically is in political parties. While, in the case of the *IMPULSA* external dynamics have played an important role. The program was funded by the surplus of the party's representatives (see Section 3.4.5.) and the salary cap was a

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[229] That people participate without having to bend to the demands of the party, but with their own proposals.
[230] Very liquid organisations.
[231] A continuation of the new stage that had been the 15-M assemblies, spaces that were not going to be party [spaces], where no one was asked for a card, where, instead of a great party identity, a participation as it had been before was built from there.

very salient issue, as well as a source of media and other parties' attacks towards Podemos. The party had problems finding some possible candidates due to this limitation, and the media pointed out some incoherence and inconsistencies in its application. In a certain way, this initiative backfired the party and *IMPULSA* lost the funding for the projects. Even if other factors may be relevant, these dynamics must also be considered.

Six of the respondents pointed out the structured level of intra-party participation within Podemos' organisation. Indeed, Interviewee 2 (PE-LL, June 7, 2018) argued that "*en Podemos quién quiere tiene casi todas las formas de participación política posible*"[232] and this implied high structuring of it at organisational level. In this line, Interviewee 6 (PE-LL, June 14, 2018) combined participation and structural level of the party, describing a liquid party in movement but one with the ability of taking clear decisions and following them efficiently. Thus, according to him, the structure provided to participation the "*certeza de que puedes seguir avanzando en esa línea, sin estar discutiendolo todos los días*"[233]. While, according to Interviewee 13 (PE-LL, September 18, 2018) the party structure is the guarantee of democratic decision-making, which includes both members participation and the decision decide in the "*órganos que la gente ha elegido*"[234]. Rather, the Interviewee 15 (PFE-NL, March 7, 2019) argued that the 15-M claims for participation and democracy did not necessarily have to "*traducirse en una participación permanente*"[235]. On the contrary - according to him - other democratic element also had to be valuated, such as the transparency promoted by Podemos or the debates even if not linked to the decision-making. However, Interviewee 15 also recognised that the structure developed resulted too vertical and concluded: "*de la no toma decisiones de forma permanente, de forma diaria, hemos pasado a la no toma de decisiones, en la que la gente no toma decisions, en prácticamente nada*"[236].

Section 3.5., jointly with the Section 3.3., showed a complex and dense structure of participation. Although many participatory procedures have been eliminated or replaced (even if they are part of the Podemos path), some other has been consolidated and they are still part of the value-infusion of the party. Online primaries are particularly a part of

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[232] In Podemos who wants has [at disposal] almost all possible forms of political participation.
[233] Certainty that you can continue to advance in that line, without questioning it every day.
[234] Bodies that the people voted.
[235] To be translated into permanent participation.
[236] From [avoiding] an [open] decision-making permanently, on a daily basis, we passed to a non-decision-making, in which people do not take any decisions, on practically nothing.

Podemos' DNA, and they are embedded in the Statutes and go in line with a European trend (and also in Spain) of growing primaries (Hazan & Rahat, 2010; Sandri et al., 2015). Despite hardly being competitive at the national level (see Section 3.5.6), Podemos' primaries have been a constant participatory tool to select all the candidacies and the elective party offices by members. Microcredits are also embedded in the principles and values of Podemos (and in its Ethical codes), as analysed in Section 3.4.7. In both cases, they clearly match Podemos' values; it is a defining part of the party. Indeed, the electoral dimension of internal party democracy (as other aggregative procedures) favours party leadership and microcredits are ideological (the power of the many, not relying on banks, cheaper electoral campaigns), but also functional to the party funding. These procedures have worked well, favouring routinisation and autonomy in the party's institutionalisation (Barberà & Barrio, 2019, p. 266).

Following with the Podemos intra-party participation analysis, five of the interviewees mentioned the disconnection as one of its noteworthy features. This is linked to the disconnection between the leadership of the party (in an extensive way) and the base, both the party's branches and the individual members (as above analysed for the top-down and plebiscitary characteristics). Therefore, the disconnection has been reported to be a result of the type of participation promoted within Podemos, which generated "*dos movimientos completamente diferenciados*"[237]: on the one side "*el partido lo que de verdad era*"[238] composed of around 30 people that developed "*una burocracia muy ferrea y sin control*"[239]; and on the other side "*el partido lo que suponía o lo que se vendía a través de los círculos*"[240] that was completely marginalised from decision-making; with no relationship between them (Interviewee 3 - PFE-NL, June 11, 2018). Interviewee 10 (PE-LL, June 23, 2018) reported the lack of political control that branches had to exercise over the central organisation, as well as the decision-making deficit largely disconnected with the political debate in the branches and delivered with no attention to the consensus. According to Interviewee 10, this was often justified using the excuse of the rapidity and fluidity of political times. Furthermore, appealing directly to individual members and depriving the branches of specific functions, the branches tended to lose their initial openness and social porosity, and

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[237] Two completely different movements.
[238] The party what it really was.
[239] A very iron bureaucracy and without control.
[240] The party what it supposed [to be] or what was sold through the branches.

their active participants decreased. According to Interviewee 8 (PE-LL, June 15, 2018), the branches lost the activists who were more connected to social movements; maintaining a large part the "*más hooligans, hinchas, o sea la gente que es fe ciega*"[241].

Figure 3.5 were designed by the author to visually show the disconnection between deliberation by the party's base and the decision-making process over the years. The participation chain is interrupted, offering ample margin to take independent decisions by elected leadership. The base is recalled only during the voting phase as ratification or veto (which never happened at the state level as analysed in Section 3.4.2.).

Figure 3.5 - Podemos decision-making process
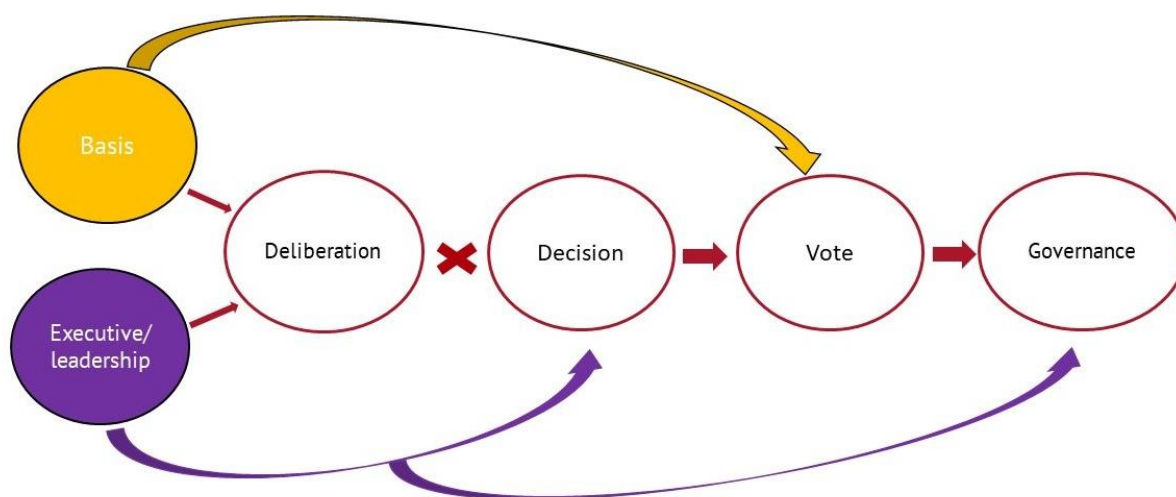
Source: author's elaboration based on the fieldwork.

Linked to that disconnection (between deliberation and decision-making), only two respondents identified the intra-party participation of Podemos as deliberative, both with reference to the party's branches. Interviewee 6 (PE-LL, June 14, 2018) particularly argued that Podemos implemented deliberation at all levels, directly linking the debate in the branches to the Citizen Council and to the different thematic secretariats. Quoting him:

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[241] More hooligans, fans, that is, people with blind faith.

"*Hay una relación directa dónde debatir y subir y bajar, hay una relación de debate, de establecimiento de ideas, y todo eso en todos esos niveles, de forma deliberativa también; y luego, hay una confluencia de todo eso y una elección*"[242].

Therefore Interviewee 6, together with Interviewee 1 (PIF-NL, May 16, 2018) with similar arguments, considered deliberation to be a fundamental first step of Podemos' decision-making, which could end with a voting phase. However, the decline and the subsequent replacement of *Plaza Podemos* (as analysed in Section 3.4.3.) reduced the Podemos deliberative potential at the general membership's level. Especially after the second congress, the deliberation has been delivered mainly at the branch level. It could be interpreted as a sign of institutionalisation of the party toward a more traditional IPD organisation.

While eight interviewees described the intra-party participation of Podemos as plebiscitary. According to them, participation in the party tended to be limited to ratify the leadership's (counting on the large majority of the Citizen Council) decisions and to reaffirm its positions. Interviewee 4 (PE-NL, June 12, 2018), described the origin of this use of participation with the necessity of defending the party's decisions facing the media's attacks against Podemos. However, as she argued, along the years "*lograr el paso contrario*" (going back) has been extremely difficult and it ended up consolidating the plebiscitary logic. This use implied a polarisation between the leadership that managed the procedures, with great visibility for its positions, and the party's base; composed by individual members with no possibility of opposing the decisions of the top, neither in voting since the possibility of campaigning was totally unbalanced (Interviewee 8 - PE-LL, June 15, 2018). Interviewee 15 (PFE-NL, March 7, 2019) defined the intra-party procedures open to members as "*procesos de aclamación*" (acclamation processes) used as "*un arma arrojadiza contra esa minoría*"[243], bypassing the branches through processes that directly appealed to all members (disconnected from the branches or other party bodies or communities).

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[242] There is a direct relationship where to debate and go up and down, there is a relationship of debate, of elaboration of ideas, and all that at all those levels, deliberatively as well; and then there's a confluence of all of that and a voting.

[243] A throwing weapon against that minority.

During the interviews, some other elements emerged on the plebiscitary use of intra-party participation. First, the leadership used consultations for legitimising difficult decision within the party and outside of it; towards society and the media. However, they counted on the real majority of party members. Therefore, despite the strategic use of the tool always favouring the leadership; it could not be considered unfair (Interviewee 15 - PFE-NL, March 7, 2019). Secondly, despite the initial claims for the "*empoderamiento ciudadano*" (citizen empowerment) and the principle at the basis of the participatory procedures developing, the proposals for voting have been gradually set up to outline a clear option of the "*equipo del aparato que se presentaba para que la gente lo ratificara*"[244], jeopardising every possibility for alternative proposals to win (Interviewee 3 - PFE-NL, June 11, 2018): "*empezamos a hacer trampas*"[245], quoting Interviewee 3. Third, the plebiscitary use of participation led the leadership and the Citizen Council to call self-referential consultations, not consulting the members on issues or political relevance (Interviewee 3 - PFE-NL, June 11, 2018). Four, the target of the plebiscitary intra-party procedures has been mainly "*el ciudadano de a pie*" (the ordinary citizen), i.e. the registered members who did not participate in the party branches or in other party spaces, and were therefore more easily influenced through the communication channels at disposal of the leadership (Interviewee 15 - PFE-NL, March 7, 2019). The plebiscitary characteristic clearly emerged studying the results of the *Consultas Ciudadanas* at the national level and on the Primary elections for the party's General Secretary or Prime Minister candidate. Indeed, as analysed in Section 3.4.2., in the 12 consultations organised by Podemos in the 2014-2020 period, the support of the leadership's position reached an overwhelming average of 87.75%. Moreover, all of them were promoted by the General Secretary and/or the Citizen Council. While, in the primary elections in the same time frame Iglesias passed from the 96.87% in 2014 to the 89,81% in 2020 (see Section 3.4.6.).

Lastly, Podemos intra-party participation has been considered mainly majoritarian by 10 out of 16 respondents (the 63% of them). This characteristic is directly linked to the domain of aggregative dimensions as analysed in Section 3.5. (in terms of digital participation within the party). Indeed, the voting has been identified as the key element of Podemos decision-making by many of the respondents, in particular interpreting it as the form for legitimising

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[244] Apparatus team that was presented for people for ratifying it.
[245] We started to cheat.

the power of the majority. Supporting this thesis, Interviewee 2 (PE-LL, June 7, 2018) argued:

> "*La negociación sólo se puede dar entre partidos, pero en el partido no puede haber negociación, tiene que haber debate y resolución. Esta resolución tiene que ser democrática y sólo se puede expresar mediante el voto*"[246].

The most consolidated intra-party procedures of Podemos based on this principle, promoting aggregative participation as in the case of primary elections and *Consultas Ciudadanas*. As reported by Interviewee 9 (PE-NL, June 21, 2018), the participation has been a majority matter in Podemos. Thus, it served for "*reforzar las líneas principales, los mandatos principales del partido, o en caso de que quieran realizar algún tipo de cambio, que lo pueden hacer, reorientar la política*"[247]. While, there has been not an organised minority that used participation procedures "*para llevar el partido de un lado al otro*"[248]. However, the majoritarian logic shaped the entire geography of the party and it led the most important decisions. According to Interviewee 15 (PFE-NL, March 7, 2019), Podemos participation has been marked by the construction of an "*enemigo interno*" (internal enemy), a sort of "*monstruo que no existía*"[249], which used to be an internal minority that was considered "*un fenómeno destructor que te podía desviar*"[250]. For many years it has been embodied by Izquierda Anticapitalista. Therefore, the existence of an organised group within the party has been used to justify control over the participatory processes and their limitation in terms of openness and power. "*No vaya a ser que de repente nos ganen*"[251] was the main fear (Interviewee 15 - PFE-NL, March 7, 2019). Similarly, during the second congress the *Errejonismo* has been used as "*una especie de chivo expiatorio a nivel interno*"[252]. Nevertheless, according to Interviewee 15, both Izquierda Anticapitalista and the *Errejonistas* replicated a similar dynamic when they have been majority at the local level. Therefore, the construction of the internal enemy has been transversally a part of Podemos, which "*no ha sabido asimilar la diferencia interna, y la ha tachado de deslealtad de manera*

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[246] Negotiation can only take place between parties, but within the party there cannot be negotiation, there must be debate and resolution. This resolution has to be democratic and can only be expressed by vote.
[247] Reinforce the main lines, the main mandates of the party, or in case they [the majority] want to make some kind of change, which they can do, reorient the policy.
[248] To carry the party from one side to another.
[249] Monster that did not exist.
[250] A destructive phenomenon that could divert you.
[251] What if they are going to suddenly win us.
[252] A kind of scapegoat at internal level.

permanente"[253]. In opposition to the internal enemy, the party tended to generate a large incoherent majority; promoting a sort of "*pensamiento único*" (Interviewee 3 - PFE-NL, June 11, 2018). Interviewee 8 (PE-LL, June 15, 2018) reported that, within this majority block, "*periódicamente se produce una ruptura muy traumática*"[254], until some of the groups abandoned, not only the majority but often the party. According to Interviewee 4 (PE-NL, June 12, 2018) it implied the disappearances of some of the main organised minorities within the party, "*han hecho el abrazo del oso*"[255], she said. On the contrary, other interviewees pointed out the minority's distortions, such as Interviewee 6 (PE-LL, June 14, 2018) who argued that, as in other social groups, between them "*hay gente que nunca está satisfecha*"[256]. While Interviewee 12 (PE-LL, June 26, 2018) reported the frustration also experienced by the majority especially during the second congress of the party.

In conclusion, different aspects have been highlighted in this section on the Podemos' IPD toward members and its evolution. In particular, the tensions between an initial organisation as a movement party and the institutionalisation process emerged as one of the most impactful factors. As Kitschelt (2006) argued regarding movement parties, critical elements of the original governance structure can be abandoned. It has been the case of several of Podemos' procedures of participation (as analysed in this chapter) that experienced relevant setbacks; specifically, those aimed to blur the distinction between the party and civil society (such as the fluid membership, *IMPULSA* or Bank of Talents). This could be explained by the need to build a stronger and more controlled organisation and by the shift of Podemos positions, which moved from representation to influence and government. However, on the one hand over the years the processes and tools belonging to the participatory and deliberative dimensions of IPD have been eliminated or limited, reducing the role of members in the party decision-making process. On the other hand, the fieldwork-particularly the interviews- pointed out a critical frame of the Podemos' IPD toward members. Therefore, the evidence presented led the author to tendentially confirm Hypothesis 2 of this thesis. Indeed, the Podemos procedures towards individual members - supported by digital technologies - tended to be used as a form of bypassing the party's

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[253] Has not been able to assimilate the internal difference, and has permanently branded it as disloyalty.
[254] Periodically occurs a very traumatic break.
[255] They have made the bear hug.
[256] There are people who are never satisfied.

branches, and activist promoting a disintermediated participation easily influenced by the leadership.

3.7. Conclusion

This chapter presented the case study of Podemos' participation, contextualising the case and analysing Podemos' members' participation at different levels. In the first section, the Podemos foundation and the history of the party has been traced, including its original path and evolution along the congresses. The second section analysed the participation as ideology of the party focusing on the Podemos interpretation(s) and the characteristics attributed to participation. While, the third section examined the legal and organisational level of Podemos members participation and how the party is organised, including a study of the party membership in its evolution and changes. The fourth section took into analysis one by one the main party procedures for members participation, dividing them in specific sub-sections including their legal framework, initial development, data on the use and evolution over time. In the fifth, the role of digital technologies in Podemos' participation has been specifically investigated. Lastly, the sixth section focused on the Intra-Party Democracy of Podemos, including the characteristics attributed to intra-party participation and a discussion on the topic. Along the sections, moving from the general (ideological and formal) to the particular (empirical) aspects, some elements emerged for their relevance. Firstly - despite different views- Podemos tendentially recognised participation (even if regulated and limited in time) as a fundamental value, confirming Hypothesis 1. Particularly following its movement party's foundational spirit, Podemos promoted participation as an element of the party's identity that differentiated it from other parties. The interviews analysis in Section 3.2., the legal and organisation framework (Section 3.3.) and the procedures for members participation examined in Section 3.4. demonstrated the promotion of participation (H1) at the ideological and formal levels. Nevertheless, the evolution of the legal and organisation framework and of the participatory procedures, jointly with many of the interviewees' standings, pointed out several setbacks in the regulation and organisation of participation, especially in two different moments: in the periods between 2016 and 2017 (formalised during the second party congress), which could be explained by a re-evaluation of the primary goals of the party, culminating the shift from a democracy-seeking party to an office-seeking party, in act since the first congress; and in 2020 (formalised during the third party congress), which could be explained by the party's transition from the second

(organisation) to the third (stabilisation) stage toward institutionalisation (Harmel & Svåsand, 1993). Secondly, the party's procedures for participation toward individual members have been mainly used by the leadership to reaffirm its position, bypassing other party levels through a disintermediated participation, mainly supported by digital technologies. This particularly emerged in sections 3.5. and 3.6., supported by the analysis of the use of the procedures (Section 3.4.), confirming Hypothesis 2. Thirdly, considering Podemos members participation, the digital technologies had a major impact on the aggregative dimension, particularly in terms of the consolidation of the procedures and their efficacy. On the contrary, digital technologies has been less used for supporting processes and tools involving other democratic dimensions such as inclusion or deliberative ones, and limited to the first phase of the party before its second congress. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 has also been confirmed, particularly by the analysis of the procedures for members participation in Section 3.4. and by several interviewees' considerations on this issue. In summary, the hypotheses 1, 2 and 3 have been confirmed for the case of Podemos in the time frame between 2014 and 2020.

In conclusion, the chapter pointed out a certain level of contradiction incorporated by Podemos participation, between an original narrative based on citizens' participation and its implementation (and evolution). Summarising the results of the case study's analysis to answer the main research question, Podemos went through several phases in relatively few years, experiencing profound differences in the participation in the territories. At the national level, the party ended up assigning to members' participation as the main role to reaffirm the leadership's positions and their legitimacy, often promoting participatory procedures disconnected from the real decision-making process.

> "*esta participación más cotidiana, abiertas, de diferentes formas, no solo digital pero también, creo que sí que podría haber oxigenado la organización, en todos los aspectos. Tener espacios de discusión real y de sensación de toma de decisión de forma un poco más horizontal hubiese ayudad a no desilusionar tanto, a que muchos cuadros no hubiesen abandonado rápido y hubiesen replegado a la nada*"[257] (Interviewee 15 - PFE-NL, March 7, 2019).

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[257] This more daily participation, open, in different ways, not only digital but also, I think it could have oxygenated the organisation, in all aspects. Having spaces for real discussion and a sensation of decision-making in a slightly more horizontal way would have helped not to disappoint so much, that many executives would not have abandoned quickly and would have retreated to nothing.

4. THE ROLE OF PARTICIPATION IN THE LABOUR PARTY: IPD, DEMOCRATIC REFORMS AND DIGITALISATION

This chapter analyses the participation in the British Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership as a single-case study, through a three-fold approach that includes the party's ideology, the legal and organisation framework, and the implementation of the procedures. In a mirror pattern with respect to the previous case, the first section introduces the case tracing a brief party history of the last decades. It particularly focuses on the time frame selected; corresponding to the Corbyn mandates (2015-2020), including the preconditions of his election. The second section analyses the interpretation of participation for the Labour Party during those years, based on party documents and the interviews carried out by the author. While, the third section focuses on the legal and organisational framework of the party that regulated or intersected participation, mainly basing on party documents analysis[258]. Two sub-sections are embedded there: 4.3.1. on the Labour membership, including their categories and trend of grow, and 4.3.2. on the members' organisation Momentum, considered one of the key actors for Corbyn's leadership. The fourth section is divided into six sub-sections for examining the main procedures for members' participation; promoted by the party beyond its structure (previously analysed), including their regulation, characteristics and use. Following, the fifth section analyses the digital participation in the Labour Party, focusing on the use of digital technologies promoted during Corbyn's leadership; relying on participatory observation, research interviews and literature analysis on the topic. It includes also two sub-sections: 4.5.1. on the Labour's digital platform *Achieve*, and 4.5.2. on the use of gaming within the Labour campaigns and activities. While, the sixth section analyses intra-party participation for studying the Labour's IPD, mainly examining the answers of the interviews related to this topic(s). Lastly, the conclusion summarises the chapter, particularly focusing on the discussion of the hypothesis. Overall, the methodological triangulation of document analysis, interviews and data on the use of the procedures (including participatory observation) have been used to outline both the empirical chapters of this thesis focusing on single-case studies. The purpose has been to guide the reader through different steps: from the general interpretation of the participation for the Labour, to the critical analysis of the use of participation under Corbyn leadership, passing through the legal and organisational framework. In general terms, the chapter has been

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[258] The 2019 and 2020 Rule Books have been analysed as reference documents for the Labour Party regulation under Corbyn's leadership, since that the 2019 version has been the last Rule Book approved during his leadership and the 2020 Rule Books included the "Rule changes approved at annual conference 2019" (Appendix 11). While, in the presence of significant differences with the previous versions, explicit mention will be made.

designed to offer an analysis starting from the general (ideological and formal) aspect reach the particular (empirical) level.

4.1. Intro: genealogy and history of the party under Corbyn's leadership

The British Labour Party is a traditional party, with a long political history and more than a century of political representation (its foundation dates back to 1900[259]). Historically, it had a central role in the UK's political system, which is essentially a two-party system at the state level, where the Labour Party and the Conservative Party (so-called Tory) compete for government. Within it, the Labour was a governmental party for 13 mandates, from 1924. It has been self-defined as a "democratic socialist party" (Labour, 2019, Chapter 1, Clause IV, p. 3); and, as its name implies, it aspires to be "the party of the working class in Britain", counting on a strong class identity (Interviewee 23 - L-NL, June 3, 2019). Quoting the Clause IV (Labour, 2019, Chapter 1, p. 3):

> "It believes that by the strength of our common endeavour we achieve more than we achieve alone, so as to create for each of us the means to realise our true potential and for all of us a community in which power, wealth and opportunity are in the hands of the many not the few"

Between its main commitments (jointly with A. Dynamic economy, B. A just society, D. A healthy environment) the party included:

> "C. An open democracy, in which government is held to account by the people, decisions are taken as far as practicable by the communities they affect and where fundamental human rights are guaranteed" (Labour, 2019, Clause IV).

The structure of the Labour Party has been historically based on the variable balance between different organisations: the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP), composed by the Labour members of Parliament; the affiliated trade unions, workers organisations which historically played important roles in the party since its foundation; members, organised in constituency Labour parties (CLPs); and a variety of socialist groups affiliated to the party, among them the Fabian Society (Webb, n.d.)[260] (see Section 4.3.). They are represented in the party bodies, including the national governing body, the National Executive Committee (NEC), and the

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[259] The date of the "inaugural meeting of the Labour Representation Committee at London's Memorial Hall in February 1900" (Labour, n.d.a).

[260] See section 4.3. for a more specific analysis of the Labour Party structure.

party conferences delegates. The power relations between those organisations changed along the decades and the political phases, as well as the numbers of their members and their influence. While, the formal structure has been maintained in its essence along the decades, although with gradual processes of changes in the rules.

Particularly due to the 'First Past The Post' electoral system[261], the Labour has been the only left/centre-left political option that could reach the government. It implied an extremely varied membership, which tended to be divided into factions throughout the history of the party. Thus, factionalism has marked Labour's history, mainly coming from ideological divisions (Finlayson, 2013) and different visions on party democracy (Dommett, 2020). On the one hand, the Labour's organisation as "a sort of federal party" (Mair, 2013, p. 80) fostered the multiplication of power centres within the party (or affiliated with) and diversified the members' relations with it, especially considering the role of the trade unions, local and national organisations and right- and left- wing organised factions. It could explain why the Labour "remained relatively weak in organisational terms" (Mair, 2013, p. 80), despite its long history. On the other hand, the Labour intra-party democracy has been traditionally linked with the type of ruling leadership; such as in the case of the shift from a formal model of membership to a model of supporters' networks (Avril, 2013), particularly promoted by Tony Blair's mandate.

As the long history of the Labour Party largely overcomes the time frame of this thesis, this section and the entire case study focused on the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn (September 2015 - April 2020), including its preconditions. Two elements emerged as particularly relevant for contextualising Corbyn's election: the "New Labour" and the Collins Review. Firstly, in the '90s, three party leaders leaded a process of party reforms, both in internal organisation and political terms: Neil Kinnock (1983-1992), John Smith (1992-94) and, especially, Tony Blair (1994–2007) (Webb, n.d.). Particularly from 1994, beginning of the Blair mandate, this period has been named "New Labour", which has been mentioned for the first time in the Blair's speech at the 1994 Labour Party Conference ("Our party - new Labour; our mission - new Britain. New Labour, new Britain", Blair, 1994). It is considered one of the most important moments of change of the party. Blair's discourse was centred on

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[261] First Past The Post is a voting system in which the candidate who wins the most votes in each constituency is elected. It is used in UK for the election of the House of Commons and for some local government elections (see Electoral Reform Society, n.d).

proposing a "third way" [262], between Thatcherism and traditional socialism (albeit incorporating elements of both, see Beresford, 2015), mainly based on liberalism. According to it, the New Labour leadership led the modification of the Clause IV of the Labour Party constitution, stating the "aims and values of the party" (Gani, 2015). In 1995, the Blair's proposal won a controversial vote between members to amend the clause, abandoning "the party's commitment to socialism" (Gani, 2015), toward a more centrist and liberal agenda, in which "the enterprise of the market and the rigour of competition" were mentioned as allied of the "forces of partnership and co-operation" in "a dynamic economy, serving the public interest" (Clause IV, in Labourcounts, n.d.). The results of the party referendum had been interpreted as "a green light for the Labour leader to modernise the party", aiming to attract the "'middle England' ahead of the 1997 general election" (Gani, 2015), especially to the detriment of the trade unions. In the 1997 UK General Election, Labour won the large majority of the seats (obtaining the 43.2%) and Blair became prime minister; after 18 years of Conservative Party government (Webb, n.d.). In 2001 and 2005 the Labour won the second and the third consecutive General Election (for the first time in its history). Although the New Labour agenda and a "highly professionalized political marketing" led to three Labour government, Blair was harshly criticised inside the party who defined his leadership style as "dictatorial" (Webb, n.d.). Among his most contested choices, his support for the U.S. in the Iraq war emerged (Interviewee 28 - LR-EL, June 17, 2019). In 2007, after 10 years of premiership, Blair resigned in favour of Gordon Brown, his chancellor of the Exchequer for the three mandates (Webb, n.d.). The judgment on New Labour has been extremely different within the party, and still it is. During this period and in the following years[263], a large part of the membership of the party (including former members who had left it or who had been expelled) developed a desire for internal changes, paving the way to a reverse trend (Interviewee 23 - L-NL, June 3, 2019).

Secondly, in the last decade, the Labour Party underwent political changes and internal reforms, including a lively debate on how the party should organise and be open to society. Between July 2013 and February 2014, Ray Collins coordinated the elaboration of a recommendation document toward an internal reform of the party, named "The Collins Review Into Labour Party Reform". On 1 March 2014, the Labour adopted some of the main recommendations included in the document during a special conference. In particular, The

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[262] Inspired by the sociologist Anthony Giddens (see Giddens 1998).
[263] Under the leadership of Brown (20072010) and Ed Miliband (2010-2015).

Collins Review included new procedures for selecting the party's leadership, applying the principle of 'One Person, One Vote' (One Member One Vote - OMOV) for the first time, and opening participation to supporters (Russell, 2016). The OMOV system replaced the Electoral College system previously in force (Labour, 2014). Moreover, other changes aimed at increasing the mass membership, such as the inclusion of another category of "registered supporters" (in addition to the full members and affiliated supporters, see Section 4.3.1.), i.e. "somebody who was not a full member of the party, but who could pay £3 to register as supporter and vote in the digital election"[264] (Interviewee 29 - LAO-NL, June 18, 2019). The recommendations explicitly echoed the Ed Miliband, incumbent leader of the party, and Peter Hain, "who oversaw the Refounding Labour reforms" positions. Since Miliband said "we must also widen our horizons to our supporters and the wider public. They must have their say in the future of our party too". And Hain affirmed "We want to open up our Party to those who won't join but will support. We have to build a peoples' movement for Labour; in our neighbourhoods, in our workplaces" (Labour, 2014, pp. 16-17). In the same line, Interviewee 24 (LR-NL, June 4, 2019) argued:

> "That was a way of saying that the Labour Party should be a party of mass membership and that would also balance alongside the trade unions, so that we had a broadly based mix of individual and collective through trade unions' membership".

The OMOV system has been used for the first time in the September 2015 leadership election, after the resignation of Miliband[265]. Both the new system and the category of registered supporter "played a huge role in that first 2015 campaign, because tens and tens of thousands of people registered as supporters to vote in the election" (Interviewee 29 - LAO-NL, June 18, 2019). Indeed, 422'664 people voted in the leadership's contest (including all the categories), the 76.3% of the 554,272 eligible members (Labour leadership results in full, 2015). Those number show a large increase when compared to the party's membership "in each year between 2010 and 2014", which "has held level at approximately 190,000 members" (Audickas et al., 2019, p. 11).

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[264] "To be a registered supporter, you have to support the aims and objectives of the Labour Party and not be a member of any other political party" (Interviewee 29 - LAO-NL, June 18, 2019).
[265] Subsequent to the 2015 election defeat, in which the Labour Party failed in capitalising the popular discontent with the Tories government, particularly linked to the cut of public services and public expenditure in response to the banking crisis (Interviewee 24 - LR-NL, June 4, 2019).

However, the change of rules can only partially explain this increase, although it has been one of its fundamental preconditions. A large part of the new registrations (and membership) has been linked to one of the candidates for the leadership of the party[266]. Indeed, among them, there was a candidate who represented the left-wing of the party with a markedly more radical proposal than the Labour tradition from Blair onwards, Jeremy Corbyn. Interviewee 24 (LR-NL, June 4, 2019) described him "by traditional Labour Party terms, a very left-wing leader", "kind of new, something that was seen as breaking free really, from the compromises of the last couple of decades". Along the party history, candidates with similar profiles (belonging to radical sectors of the left-wing of Labour) often did not even reach the candidacy, since it was necessary to gather at least 35 MPs' signatures of endorsement and the left-wing used to be under-represented in the party's parliamentary group. In the same way, Corbyn's candidacy would not have reached the number of MPs signatures needed, were it not for some right-wing MPs, who granted their signatures near the deadline. They declared "they would not vote for him" and explained that vote for allowing "a wide range of views to be represented in the contest" (Whiteley et al., 2019, p. 84) and "open[ing] up the debate", underestimating the potential of his candidature (Interviewee 23 - L-NL, June 3, 2019). According to Interviewee 24 (LR-NL, June 4, 2019) "in that sense, should be argued that it was slightly accidental, but clearly that is what the majority of members wanted". While, Interviewee 23 (L-NL, June 3, 2019) sustained that "sometimes accident, reflects necessity" and "if it hadn't been Corbyn, it would have been something like that". On the contrary, particularly the right-wingers of the party supported the changes in leadership elections, thinking that they would result in less power for trade unions in choosing the leader and they "would deliver a more right-wing leader". The same Interviewee 23 affirmed:

> "The irony is the right-wing did that thinking that everyone in the public was kind of Barack Obama and Tony Blair type of supporters and would come and vote for Blair-rights. But at the end, obviously, they misjudged the mood. It was the opposite".

Thus, contrary to expectations, Jeremy Corbyn won the September 2015 leadership election with the 59.5% of first-preference votes (Audickas et al., 2019, p. 11), markedly detaching

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[266] Fomenting the trend that led the party to become the "the biggest political party in Europe with 500,000 people" (Interviewee 23 - L-NL, June 3, 2019).

the other candidates[267]. Although the registered supporters massively contributed to that result with "energy and enthusiasm of all these new people getting involved" (Interviewee 29 - LAO-NL, June 18, 2019), Corbyn would win the majority even without counting the registered supporters' votes (of which the 83.8% vote for him). Indeed, he obtained the 49.6% of the full members' votes and the 57.6% of the affiliated supporters votes (Labour leadership results in full, 2015).

From the beginning, Jeremy Corbyn's leadership counted on the supports of large sectors of the membership that voted for him, creating a "movement beyond even the party", called Corbynism (Interviewee 23 - L-NL, June 3, 2019). In particular it was composed of recently-active single members, many of them young members, and trade unions members, in addition to the members who used to identify with the left-wing of the Labour. Among the organisations of the Labour members and internal factions, a new organisation called Momentum has emerged as the biggest and most active in coordinating and leading the Corbynites (see Section 4.3.2.). The legitimacy of Corbyn strengthened with the results of the 2016 leadership election, called as a consequence of the resignations of 21 members of the Shadow Cabinet (Chakrabarti, 2016) and the no confidence vote expressed by 172 Labour Party MPs (Stone, 2016)[268]. In particular, the unexpected victory of the Leave option in the "United Kingdom European Union membership referendum" (so-called Brexit referendum) on 23 June 2016 triggered the reaction of the Parliamentary Labour Party and of the party factions more hostile to the leadership. In an internal context already tense, Corbyn was especially criticised for his "weak campaign to remain" (The culpability of Jeremy Corbyn, 2016). Corbyn claimed that the ballot had "no constitutional legitimacy" and refused to resign (Pope, 2016). A mass demonstration in Parliament Square supported his position (Griffin, 2016), around 10'000 people "come out at 24-hours' notice to keep the opposition party leader in power" (Interviewee 23 - L-NL, June 3, 2019). Despite the protest, the second leadership election in two years has been took place from 22 August - 24 September 2016. Corbyn won the leadership contest with 313'209 votes (61.8%), while his opponent, Owen Smith, former Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary, gathered 193,229 votes (38.2%) (Pope, 2016b). Even

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[267] The Shadow Health Secretary Andy Burnham received the 19%, the Shadow Home Secretary Yvette Cooper the 18%, and Shadow Care Minister Liz Kendall the 4,5% (Labour leadership results in full, 2015).
[268] The chain of events began with Hilary Benn, at that moment the Shadow Foreign Secretary, declaration of no confidence in Corbyn that led to the decision of sacking her on 25 June 2016. It generated a massive resignation of Shadow Cabinet members between June 26-29 and a motion of no confidence in Corbyn as party leader held by the Parliamentary Labour Party on June 28.

in this case, the registered supporters' votes were not decisive in reaching the majority, since Corbyn obtained a large majority between both members and affiliated supporters. Therefore, that outright victory reaffirmed the support of Corbyn's leadership by the Labour members. While, the following 2017 General Election's upswing results contributed to further legitimise Corbyn's leadership toward the electorate. Indeed, most commentators inside and outside of the party initially considered Corbyn as "too left-wing and largely unelectable" (Hobolt, 2018, p. 41), some of them even questioning "whether the party would survive" (Mellon et. Al, 2018, p. 2). During the interview, Interviewee 21 (LS-NL, May 10, 2019) told a paradigmatic story in respect of the attitude of the party's national bureaucracy towards those elections.

> "The day after the general election, all of Jeremy Corbyn's staff turned up to their offices and they found that their key cards didn't work. Because the bureaucrats just deleted them, because they thought that the election was going to be a complete landslide for the Tories. They were like 'Right, that's the end of you'. Because that was the principle in which the kind of establishment of the Labour Party entered into the general election thinking 'Okay, this is a chance to basically rid ourselves of Jeremy Corbyn'. And, so, you can understand from there that they didn't make any effort to really do any campaigning".

Instead, the support for the Labour party under Corbyn steadily increased during the campaign, leading to results largely above expectations. The Labour obtained the 40% of the votes, detached of just 2.3% from the Conservative party, increasing the Labour results in 2015 General Election of 9.5% (Mellon et. Al, 2018, p. 2)[269]. The 2017 Labour Manifesto has been considered the "most left-wing in decades", including "bold positions" and eschewing "to dilute down its message to match some sort of mythical centre ground" (Interviewee 23 - L-NL, June 3, 2019). Despite the criticism for a "less cautious manifesto", also commentators critical with the leadership argued that it "proves the fact that having a more left-wing manifesto and more left-wing leadership does not in itself mean that the electorate won't accept you" (Interviewee 24 - LR-NL, June 4, 2019). However, major discrepancies emerged in attributing the electoral result to the Labour radical political proposal, particularly attributing it to the pro-Remain voters who identified in the Labour a political force "not wanting a hard crashing out of Europe" (Interviewee 24 - LR-NL, June 4, 2019).

The Corbynism's rhetoric strongly claimed for inclusion and participation, particularly

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[269] A greater polarisation due to the Brexit issue should also be considered in evaluating the results of both main parties at the national level.

recalling Tony Benn's thoughts (and the Bennism or Bennite movement he inspired)[270] (see Benn, 1979). Benn strongly influenced Corbyn's long political path, similarly to other prominent figures linked to its leadership, such as John McDonnell, Shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer under Corbyn. The legacy of Bennism often emerged in the leadership politics and positions, especially in the claims for the democratisation of the party (see Benn, 1981). Indeed, differently from Schattschneider (1942), the Bennism claims for the democracy within the parties (and not just between them).

> "The legacy of Bennism is that democratising society requires a democratic party, because the party is the institution that allows ordinary people to join and to have some sort of link to the decisions that actually affect the whole country" (Interviewee 26 - LAO-NL, June 5, 2019).

The appeal to "the ordinary people whose knowledge was allegedly devalued" emerges as a constant element of Corbyn discourse, opposed to the "median voter", usually mentioned in the New Labour tradition (Bennister, et al., p. 111). In this line, the Labour Party under Corbyn's famous motto has been "For the many not the few", which was used for the 2017 election campaign (including the manifesto title). As argued by Crines (2017, p. 27), "Corbyn's campaigning style connects directly with voters because he galvanises supporters through highly emotional campaign rhetoric". Corbyn discourse used to largely match the Momentum's communication[271], in a process of mutual influence.

In accordance with their main supporters and ideologies, Corbyn's leadership strengthened the shift of the IPD model, much more oriented towards party membership (García Lupato & Meloni, 2021). In particular, the role assigned to membership was to balance the power of the MPs and trade unions; supporting the leadership decisions and its proposals within party bodies and annual conferences (Interviewee 25 - LIE-NL, May 5, 2019). The processes and procedures for members participation implemented by the Labour Party under Corbyn aimed to concretise this objective (see Section 4.4.). However, especially after the first phase, Corbyn (supported by Momentum) oriented the democratic opening to the processes and spaces that already existed in the party (first of all, the annual conferences of the party) (Interviewee 26 -

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[270] Tony Ben was a Labour Party MP for 47 years, member of the Cabinet in two Labour governments and candidate for the party leadership in 1988. He is considered one of the most influent ideologists of the Labour-left, proponent of democratic socialism and Christian socialism (see also Britannica, n.d.).

[271] See, for example, this interview to Laura Parker, Momentum's National Coordinator, where she claimed that "Momentum brought the digital revolution to Labour. During the general election we used platform technology to mobilise tens of thousands to knock on doors in key marginals" (Waugh, 2018).

LAO-NL, June 5, 2019). The 4th of November 2017 the Labour Party launched the multichannel process Democracy Review aimed to democratise the party, as stated in the Labour website "looking at how our hugely expanded membership becomes a mass movement which can transform society" (see Section 4.4.2.). The process included various initiative as "local branch, Constituency Labour Party, Young Labour Group, Women's Forum, Ethnic Minority Forum, socialist society or affiliated trade union to discuss the issues and make a submission – or put in a response as an individual" (Labour, n.d.b). Nevertheless, the review partially disappointed in terms of outcomes the members and organisations committed to the democratic opening of the party, since "a number of things were postponed, in particular, the review of policy development" (Interviewee 25 - LIE-NL, May 5, 2019).

Despite the Labour confirmed being a party mainly based on physical participation even under Corbyn (Interviewee 20 - L-LL, May 8, 2019), some of the processes developed have been digital-driven, particularly seeking to attract and consolidate the young's membership, which tended to support the Corbyn leadership. Among them, two digital processes/tools emerged as the most relevant: the Labour Policy Forum, online process supported by a specific party platform aiming at developing and elaborating policy proposals (see Section 4.4.4.); and the digital organising system *Achieve* (see Section 4.5.1). Beyond the party's structure, Momentum played a key role in organising the members participation both at local level and at party conferences, in terms of information, training and coordination, particularly through their "huge contact list" (Interviewee 21 - LS-NL, May 10, 2019).

Corbyn's leadership and its strategy were considered to be a "part of a wider project looking at party renewal (Dommett et al., 2020, p. 4). However, the secular history of the party questions the possibility of defining the Labour under Corbyn a renewed model of political party on the basis of the new role of member participation. On the one hand, Corbyn mandates recalled other periods of the party's history. As argued by the Interviewee 22 (LI-NL, May 19, 2019) it could be seen as "a return to the pre-1914 socialist parties". On the other hand, although the renewal involved some key party processes and procedures, the leadership never had total control over the party to implement a systemic democratic reform. In particular, according to Interviewee 21 (LS-NL, May 10, 2019) "the party bureaucracy and the party MPs were not willing to do that. They were resistant in lots of different ways". Since the leadership "was not able to fight on various different fronts", the Corbynites mainly focused on the "media and mobilising the kind of expanded membership" to face the other party groups

aiming at the party's democratisation. Along with the mandates, Corbynites gradually took control over the bureaucracy, while their control over the Parliamentary Party remained "weak"[272]. The changes in candidate selection (see Section 4.4.1) responded to the twofold objective of democratising the procedure and favouring the election of MPs supportive of the leadership, jointly with the Momentum activities "to challenge existing sitting MPs and to train and elect new candidates" (Interviewee 21 - LS-NL, May 10, 2019).

Corbyn's leadership polarised the Labour's factions and the media. On the one side, Corbyn has been seen as "a sort of Mandela figure"; particularly for being "certainly a good mobiliser of enthusiastic young people" and to generate "enthusiastic" and "very emotional" reactions (Interviewee 20 - L-LL, May 8, 2019). On the other side, both his leadership and his person have been the subject of criticism on various fronts, inside and outside the party. The most denigrating accuses to discredit him have relied on particular on "a steady barrage of attacks on Corbyn as an anti-Semite, a misogynist enemy of women in politics, and of the British armed forces everywhere" (Markowitz, 2019). Differently, other less personal and disparaging criticisms based for instance on organisation, Brexit and electoral appeal. In particular, the Interviewee 24 (LR-NL, June 4, 2019) blamed "this new surge of membership and new leadership" for seeing "itself as a social movement, rather than a political party", which, according to her, resulted "unclear about what was meant by that". While, Interviewee 19 (LR-LL, April 30, 2019) supported a change in the leader due to the fact that "Jeremy' approval ratings unfortunately are quite low". According to him, even if "he is targeted by some people will never like what he said", "at the end of the day, that's politics and is dirty". Therefore, reaching the government "may require change the leader". Lastly, Interviewee 28 (LR-EL, June 17, 2019) focused his criticism on the Corbyn's "views on Europe", which he didn't see as "compatible with the Labour values", While, Interviewee 28 considered it majoritarian in the party, since "the vast majority of members want to stop Brexit, and that includes new members who joined because of Jeremy Corbyn".

The second General Elections under Corbyn leadership (2019, December 12), took place in a highly polarised context by the UK-EU confrontational talks on Brexit and a strengthened position of third-party political proposals, such as the Liberal Democrats and national parties

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[272] Similar tensions have been common within UK parties, as they are linked to the Westminster model. Indeed, many of the UK parties have developed as intra-parliamentary coalitions (to which Labour has been adapted), with great importance (and autonomy) of the parliamentary party.

such as the Scottish National Party. Differently from 2017, the Labour won only 203 seats (32.2% of the votes, see Results, 2019), losing 59 seats and obtaining "its worst national election performance since 1935" (Webb, n.d.). Following these results and the consequent increase in criticism against the leadership, Corbyn "announced he will step down as Labour leader before the next election", and he "will stay on for a 'period of reflection'" (Stone & Woodcock, 2019). The process for electing a new Labour leader occurred between February and April 2020, and the results were announced on 4 April 2020[273]. The member chose (by OMOV) between three candidates who obtained the nominations (Clause II, Rule Book 2019, Labour, 2019, see Section 4.3.): Keir Starmer, Rebecca Long-Bailey, and Lisa Nandy (see Who will be Labour's next leader?, 2020). Despite Long-Bailey was officially supported by Momentum (through a controversial member vote, see Bale, 2020), no candidate was endorsed by Corbyn or even considered as his direct successor in political terms. 490,731 people among members, registered supporters and affiliated supporters (62.58% of the total) voted in the election. Starmer, former Shadow Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union supported by large part of the Parliamentary Labour, won with 275,780 votes (the 56.2%) (Labour, n.d.c). The Starmer election formalise the end of Jeremy Corbyn's leadership and 'its Labour'.

4.2. Participation as ideology (how the Labour Party interprets participation)

> "What power have you got? Where did you get it from? In whose interests do you use it? To whom are you accountable? How do we get rid of you? Anyone who cannot answer the last of those questions does not live in a democratic system. Only democracy gives us that right. That is why no one with power likes democracy. And that is why every generation must struggle to win it and keep it - including you and me, here and now" (Tony Benn, in Nichols, 2014).

The Labour Party is a mass political organisation based on multilevel participation: members (or registered supporters in the cases established) within the party's structure, affiliated members within the trade unions and socialist groups, and electorate that vote and campaign for the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP). For some party procedures participation is on an individual basis (for example in the election of the party leader, post Collins Review), for others participation is based on lobbying through CLPs (and branches), affiliated

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[273] Alongside the Deputy leadership election, which has been triggered by the resignation of Tom Watson in November 2019; officially for personal reasons but harshly attacking the leadership (Hattenstone & Walker, 2019).

organisations and factions (groups or organisation)[274]. This implies a complex vision of participation in terms of actors, their roles, actions and balance, with elements of continuity but markedly dependent on the historical phase of the party. Indeed, according to Randall (2018) "Labour's ideology has shifted repeatedly throughout its history", and this consequently had an impact on the interpretation of the participation. The Labour under Corbyn leadership (case study of this thesis) has been characterised by the "emphasis on the value of the membership and activists" (Watts & Bale, 2019, p. 102). It recalled a historical claim of the Labour's left, in which Tony Benn emerged as main ideological referent for the democratisation of the party and the communities (see Seyd, 1987). The promotion of the centrality of the membership used to clash with the role and power of the PLP. In this regard, Benn argued that the "problem of a totally independent parliamentary leadership that got into power on the basis of the movement and then kicked away the ladder" (BBC, 1995, in Watts & Bale, 2019, p. 102). Most of the key figures in Corbyn's leadership (e.g. Corbyn himself, Jon Lansman, co-founder of Momentum, and John McDonnell, Shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer) had in the past steadily supported "campaigns for power for the party grassroots", particularly during the 1970s and 1980s (Watts & Bale, 2019, p. 102). Among the groups claiming for a more influent role of the members, Campaign for Labour Party Democracy emerged as one of the most active, especially during the annual conferences. Some of the protagonists of Corbyn's leadership were linked to that and similar groups and had been active in them for decades. Thus, the leadership interpreted the membership participation (and the reforms and initiatives linked) as a form of reconnecting a renewed party with a part of its past, as well as the members with the party itself. Indeed, the participation promoted by the party during Corbyn's mandates was counterposed to "a long process of hollowing out and disempowering members, and like professionalisation and centralisation", aiming at "filling the gaps of what was already there" (Interviewee 21 - LS-NL, May 10, 2019).

In this frame, participation has been promoted as a vehicle for achieving the party's goals, and the transformation of the party into a social movement (at least partially) as a way to facilitate and foster the process of engagement and involvement. The 2018 Democracy Review supported this argument stating:

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[274] See Section 4.3. for the analysis of the legal and formal organisational framework of participation within the Labour Party.

"We want our more than half-million members fully involved. The General Election showed what we can achieve when more members participate. But we need to do so much more to transform ourselves to become a social movement, a mass movement for the many not the few" (Labour, 2018b, p. 10).

Becoming a social movement led by the membership was the centre of the "democratic revolution" claimed by Corbyn in November 2015, for "opening up decision-making to the hundreds of thousands of new members and supporters that have joined us" (Labour, 2018b, p. 78). Linking democratic rights to the people involved in politics, the 2018 Democracy Review declared:

"It is completely acceptable for Labour to use democracy to build our movement. Our politics is about democracy in action. We therefore are actively looking at how we can encourage people to use their democratic rights to get involved in politics. If people feel that they will have power in the Labour Party if they join, they are more likely to get involved. We want to be their voice" (Labour, 2018b, p. 39).

Similarly, Corbyn affirmed:

"We need to be more open, more democratic, more respectful of all our members' knowledge and experience. We need to be less of a machine and more of a movement" (Corbyn, 2015 in Watts & Bale, 2019, p. 104).

The social movement model based on the members' participation tended to diverge from the model that characterised the Labour in the previous decades, which relied on the balance between the groups that composed the party (often being to the advantage of the PLP). The lexicon of democracy has been diffusely deployed by the leadership to support that shift and, according to Watts and Bale (2019, p. 101), also to "legitimise their position by presenting it as the one most connected to the concerns of the grassroots". Indeed, by promoting the empowering of members' role and claiming for their participation, Corbyn leadership used to attribute to membership virtuous features, opposed to the party's elite, matching their rhetoric with a "central populist binary" (Watts & Bale, 2019, p. 101). According to this argument, the "virtuous political past of Labour" has been recalled as the "heartland" (typical rhetorical device in populism) by the leadership. It has been jeopardised "but not destroyed by years of party modernisation by the right", and under Corbyn it has interpreted as the basis on which "building a new and emboldened activism in which its people could happily

exist once more" (Watts & Bale, 2019, p. 104). However, the ideological (and instrumental) interpretation of the members' participation and internal democracy coexisted, and did not replace other deeply rooted interpretations within the party's structure. In particular, the latter tended to be oriented to a more traditional vision of a political party, which aims to "ultimately to be the party of government and not just a campaign organisation, campaigning on a single issue" (Interviewee 19 – LR-LL, April 30, 2019). The difficulty of condensing the interpretation of participation for the Labour Party (and ultimately the contradiction of such operation) is well expressed by the words of Interviewee 19 (LR-LL, April 30, 2019):

> "Some people would claim there is too much democracy in the Labour party, some people claim not enough, some people say that everything should be decided by members, and some people think that is just not a particularly good idea or sensible way of getting Labour into government".

To offer a more complete and critical view, Table 4.1 outlines some of the main characteristics attributed to participation emerged during the interviews and shows their incidence among the various interviewees (considering the 12 interviews carried out). In particular, six characteristics has been identified by the author as the most relevant in qualitative terms and recurrent in the interviews aiming at pointing out the Labour Party's interpretation of participation and the main debates around it. These characteristics, divided into three categories ('General', 'Use' and 'Specific' ones), have been previously examined in the Section 2.2.1. It includes the description of each characteristic and the concepts emerged during the interviews that the author clustered under these items (together with the categorisation of the interviewees and the interview design).

Table 4.1 – Characteristics of the Labour Party participation

Interviewee	Profile	Participation for the Labour Party					
		General		Use		Specific	
		Identity value	Instrumental value	Specific time & space	Reinforcing	Lobbying	Balanced
19	Labour party representative at the local level		X	X	X	X	X
20	Labour party member and local organiser	X	X	X		X	
21	Labour party member and scholar on the topic		X	X	X		X
22	Labour ideologist at national-level	X	X	X	X		X
23	Labour party member and editor of a newspaper linked to the party	X	X		X		
24	Labour party representative at the national level	X				X	X
25	Labour ideologist and party body member at the national level	X			X	X	
26	Labour party member and central officer at the national level of an organisation affiliated to the party	X	X		X		X
27	Labour party member and organiser of national events linked to the party	X	X		X	X	
28	Labour party representative at the European level	X				X	
29	Labour party member and former central officer at the national level of an organisation affiliated to the party	X			X	X	
30	Labour party member and central officer at the national level of an organisation affiliated to the party	X			X		

Source: author's elaboration based on the interviews.

The incidence among the interviewees of the two 'General' characteristics of the participation within the Labour Party pointed out relevant elements of analysis. Participation

is considered an identity value for the party by 10 out of 12 respondents (the 83% of the sample). While, 7 out of 12 respondents (the 58% of the sample) identified the instrumental value of participation, with 5 overlapping respondents who mentioned both. Interviewee 26 (LAO-NL, June 5, 2019) has been one of that 5. In particular, she underlined three "different trends" in the interpretations of participation within the Labour factions and members that supported Corbyn's leadership. According to her, these trends became at the same time "clearer" and "more complex" since having the leader on their side. First, "people who are focused on democracy in an instrumental short-term sense" saw in the democratisation of the party an opportunity to gain the majority and grab as many seats as possible in the elected positions of members representatives.

> "We want to democratise election of leader and a future leadership election. Why? Because we want possibility on the left-wing has a chance when you're getting on the ballot" (Interviewee 26 - LAO-NL, June 5, 2019).

While the second trend has been a "middle and longer term but still instrumental perspectives" based on the assumption that "more democratisation stronger for the left, because strengthens the left position in the longer term". This trend is linked with the legacy of Bennism according to which "[If] you don't have democratic parties, then actually, the quality of the democracy is incredibly limited". Indeed, it considered that strengthening the Intra-Party Democracy and empowering the membership can counterbalance "the pressures of vested interests, media, financial sanctions". In order to do that, "mechanisms of countervailing power" are needed, and "having a democratic party is a key way of doing that". Lastly, the third trend was "the least instrumental part" that relied on the socialist identity value of participation. Following the Bennism legacy, the argument of this trend is:

> "Socialism requires building equal capacity. It requires ordinary people of developing their capacities to develop problems, to develop solutions to the problems themselves, collectively. […] That's the fundamental difference between the kind of the democratic socialist project and a lot of the projects that we've seen in the past. […] Anything that we want to build has to be developed based on developing people capacities. And you can't do that without like a democratic party and policies that encourage democratisation in other parts of society" (Interviewee 26 - LAO-NL, June 5, 2019).

These three trends coexisted among the supporters of Corbyn's leadership: in some an instrumental element prevailed in the interpretation of participation, in others a concept

based on the identity's value. Differently, the three interviewees categorised as critical members in relation to the party's leadership (Section 2.2.1) - representatives of the party in institutions - reported the presence of two separate levels in which participation assumes different roles and importance, both in terms of identity and instrumental values. According to Interviewee 19 (LR-LL, April 30, 2019), participation affected members internally, especially the new members, since they are joining the Labour Party because "they are the people that want to participate" ("that's why membership has increased so much"). While, outside the party, the electorate is not interested in participation, since "people vote based on outcomes, results, […] not even the policies, but the results of those policies are what they're interested in". Therefore, following his point of view, participation (including both those interpretations) mattered for the party membership, and not all of the members, mainly for those who joined the party to participate, being an instrument in their hand. Interviewee 24 (LR-NL, June 4, 2019) shared that differentiation between internal and external levels in term of relevance of participation. While she recognised the identity value of participation for the Labour, although respecting the structure and the balance within the party (which are necessarily different from those of a social movement.).

However, even among the adherent members different points of view emerged beyond the three trends mentioned above. In terms of identity value, Interviewee 27 (LAO-NL, June 14, 2019) described the Corbyn promise of "got lots of people into parliamentary politics" as fundamental for his leadership. While Interviewee 26 (LAO-NL, June 5, 2019) promoted an identity change for the Labour, aiming at becoming a party "more oriented towards a movement", with "more creative ways of engaging members and activists". According to her, the democratisation of the party is historically linked to the Labour left and its "theory about how a party should actually function", in which the fact that "members should have a voice is strongly interrelated with the survival and the viability of the left". Particularly, "because it means that to some extent democratisation of the party is quite embedded in the common sense of the movement". Similarly, Interviewee 29 (LAO-NL, June 18, 2019) assigned to the "left-wingers" the responsibility of developing an "articulated vision of what comes next, and what a more democratic participative form of internal culture and democratic culture within the Labour Party really looks like". Although "no one person or one group of people knows what that should look like", during the Corbyn leadership they were called to be "creative and envisaging a new way of using that position". In terms of instrumental value, Interviewee 22 (LI-NL, May 19, 2019) considered the participation

promoted by the party as a tool "to change the economy, change society". Since neither "the Labour Party can't do it. The MPs can't to do it", but "they can make the space for people to do it". Furthermore, according to him, being a member and participating in the party is the only way to influence the party which a person is voting for.

> "You're meant to be in the f*****g party you're voting for. What's the point of voting for a party you're not in? Some like going to a supermarket and choosing baked beans to buy. Is it? To put it bluntly. So, you're meant to be at the Party" (Interviewee 22 - LI-NL, May 19, 2019).

In the same line, Interviewee 26 (LAO-NL, June 5, 2019) argued that "democracy has meaning when it's linked to outcomes". Quoting her:

> "Ultimately, democracy is also about changing things. It's about achieving things. And attempts to build organisations that have some sort of perfect, idealistic democratic model, do not prosper, if it's not linked to some sort of like credible theory of change. Because actually, it's not that democratic. Because if you can't give people a good reason to get involved in that, we can't achieve this. That's fundamentally what motivates people in my view. So, any democratic innovations, they need to be linked up to that".

Following with the analysis of the interpretation of the concept of participation and its role for the Labour Party, the interviewees highlighted other important aspects. Four of the interviewees linked the instrumental value of participation to the characteristic of being limited to a specific time and space. However, this characteristic was attributed to participation from two different perspectives by those interviewees. On the one side, Interviewee 21 (LS-NL, May 10, 2019) pointed out the necessity of limiting the "democratic channels for participation", particularly when "the demand for democracy is low", since the risk was to otherwise "empower a bunch of people with very marginal views and very divisive strategies". Thus, according to him, channels for participation constantly open ended up "open[ing] the doors to these guys". On the other side, Interviewee 20 (L-LL, May 8, 2019) and Interviewee 22 (LI-NL, May 19, 2019) argued that participation was limited mainly in terms of time due to the intersection with people's lives. According to Interviewee 20, "people become active when they need to be", especially they "get active to prevent something happening", for the rest of the time "people have their lives to live". While, Interviewee 22 differentiated time and space of participation based on members age and their preferences and availability according to it. In particular, he said that involving and engaging

young members required to "give them something to do", such as canvassing, and encouraging "to get everybody out on the streets socialising". Differently, Interviewee 23 (L-NL, June 3, 2019) focused on the conditions for participating. Quoting him:

> "There is a long way to go in terms of genuinely democratizing society, and I think the Party suffer from that as well, because, again, to really involve the mass of ordinary people in politics, you need to give them time in the day. We need to lower the hours of the working week. We need to provide much more education within the Labour movement, rather than just get it from the media like this owned by Murdoch & Co".

He claimed that, until the "material barriers that stand in the way of people participating in politics" are not reduced, the specific time and space of participation "tends to be dominated by middle-class types, who have a bit more money, have a bit more time etc" (Interviewee 23 - L-NL, June 3, 2019).

Meanwhile, eight of the interviewees (the 67% of the sample) attributed to the concept of participation for the Labour the characteristic of 'reinforcing' the leadership positions and its decisions. It implied a strategic use of the participation with two main conflicting purposes, as highlighted by the interviewees. On the one hand, the interviewees more critical with the leadership pointed out "democratic centralism" tendencies in Corbynism ("back[ing] in another time of the Soviet Union") (Interviewee 19 – LR-LL, April 30, 2019). Indeed, Interviewee 19 reported that:

> "there are some decisions that are made by the party that would have been decided on before they ask the members what they want to do. So, you get the impression that there are meetings which go on between people where the real decisions are made, and then they fit the consultation of party members. They do that in a way that results in the outcome that they want. They say they listen and I'm not sure that they always do".

Following his argument, the participation promoted by Corbyn leadership often revealed a "*devenir* democracy, a fig-leaf of democracy", although recognising that "I'm not sure that at the same time, when you have a party of half million of members, I shouldn't really have much more influence than I have at the moment" (Interviewee 19 - LR-LL, April 30, 2019). On the other hand, the interviewees categorised as adherents to the leadership referred to the reinforcing role of participation mainly as a way to defend and support the reforms and the

democratisation of the party. It encouraged the creation of "structures that will allow members to have a strong say" from which the left of the party (closer to the membership) could benefit from (Interviewee 26 - LAO-NL, June 5, 2019). This position is linked to the previously mentioned second trend, according to which the participation within Labour (and the democratisation of the party) tended to strengthen the left-wing of the Labour. In this line, Interviewee 29 (LAO-NL, June 18, 2019) explained that the Labour left strategy "in terms of democratising the Labour Party, was about winning power in the existing structure". Indeed, through members participation (and their votes), it won positions and power within the structures (which the left of the party did not have before 2015).

> "In the first instance, really, it was about winning […] position whether that's on the National Executive Committee, the National Constitutional Committee, the Conference Arrangements Committee, and all these different committee positions. And then obviously, also at a local level, within the branches and CLPs. And then each year there's a conference and the delegates who are going to go to that conference, who then vote on policy. So, for the first couple of years, and still now, we're working on that, getting a handle on winning those positions" (Interviewee 29 - LAO-NL, June 18, 2019).

Interviewee 29 reported that the reinforcing strategy resulted in "huge gains" for the left: "most constituency parties send left-wing delegates to the conference, most are now run by people on the left, people supportive of the changes in the party in the last few years". He also argued that it was "phase one" and "not the end game", since "it's not just about winning the position of someone on the Labour Right, but it's about actually using that position to do something different".

Another characteristic associated with participation in the Labour by 7 out of 12 respondents (the 58% of the sample) has been its lobbying approach, i.e. a participation based on the influence of groups and/or factions on the decisions and actions. In particular, Interviewee 21 (LS-NL, May 10, 2019) identified the "campaign group" as the main tool for influencing the party, limiting the risk of Trotskyist strategies (by elite groups seeking to lead the party from minoritarian positions). While, Interviewee 19 (LR-LL, April 30, 2019) referred to participation as an opportunity of "influenc[ing] what others think, kind of trying to make a point and make my argument", without jeopardising the main objective of the entire work of the party: "getting Labour into government".

"How much influence their people have tends to depend on your prejudice, I suppose. So, if you not happy with the way the system is working at that time then you may sit to change by claiming that somebody has more influence than they should" (Interviewee 19 - LR-LL, April 30, 2019).

Lastly, 5 interviews attributed the characteristic of 'balanced' to the participation in the Labour Party. This was directly linked to the structure of the Labour, based on the union of different organisations (see Section 4.3.). As affirmed by the Interviewee 24 (LR-NL, June 4, 2019), "the centre, the grounding of the Labour Party, is the members, the trade unions and the electoral representatives", and they are "three sources of constitutional power" (Interviewee 21 - LS-NL, May 10, 2019). The relation between those three groups is mirrored in the participation within the party. Adherent and critical interviewees tended to disagree on which the leadership and left positions were in terms of that balance. Interviewee 21 (LS-NL, May 10, 2019) affirmed that "what Corbynism has done through the past two conferences is re-dress that balance between those three groups". According to him, it opposed both the "massive centralization" under Blair the members "hubristic" tendency of considering themselves "the only voice, the dominant voice in the conference", reaching a "much more balance system between these three sources of power". Similarly, Interviewee 26 (LAO-NL, June 5, 2019) recognised an important role to trade unions (and their members) participation, which in particular "play a bit of a balanced role, and a bit of a filtering role for what can go through conference". While, Interviewee 24 (LR-NL, June 4, 2019) and Interviewee 19 (LR-LL, April 30, 2019), although sharing similar position on the importance of balance, blamed the left and the leadership for some proposals aiming at "remov[ing] the influence of the trade unions in the Labour Party". They expressed their opposition to them, stressing on the importance of the "influence from all the different sections of the party" (Interviewee 19 - LR-LL, April 30, 2019). In particular, Interviewee 19 linked the risk of "unbalance[ing]" the participation and influence with the expertise in drafting policy proposals and ruling the party, which membership lacked. Indeed, according to him, listening "the people that know what they are doing", "somebody who is been doing for twenty years", was needed, both in terms of the quality of the "outcome" and "long lasting" vision. According to him, the balanced participation allowed the membership to participate in the party's decisions through: "send[ing] the constituency delegates in conference"; "vot[ing] for the leader of the party"; "vot[ing] for people that represent them on the National Executive Committee", on "the National Policy Forum", and "local campaigning forum". While, trade unions had "a large block-vote at the party conferences"

and "representative on Labour National Executive Committee", and thus had "still a very strong influence over the party".

> "If you look where the power comes from within the Labour party, there are always different groups of people who have power and they sometimes operate in the same direction entirely, not widely against each other" (Interviewee 19 - LR-LL, April 30, 2019).

In general terms, analysing the Labour Party under Corbyn's leadership's interpretation of participation showed a complex framework, inevitably based on the centenary tradition of the party and influenced by the historical left-wing claims brought into the leadership. In particular, the interviews pointed out differences between critical voices and supporters of the leadership, but also different positions within those groups in terms of participation value and use. In the conclusion of this section, as the author hypothesised (H1), the data pointed out that the Labour Party under Corbyn's leadership promoted membership participation as an identity and distinctive element of the party, renewing a historical bond between the party and the members and claiming to rebalance it in favour of the latter. In this frame, the membership surge and the promotion of their participation as a core value for the party had a double cause-and-effect relationship; mutually reinforcing. Therefore, the Labour case goes in line with the H1 expectations. Nevertheless, less evidence supported the participation role in term of rekindling political parties' legitimacy in front of the electorate (as hypothesised in the second part of the H1). Indeed, although references to the relationship with local communities were common, participation within the party seemed to be considered an internal factor, as well as its main impact.

4.3. Legal and formal organisational framework

> "Labour is a democratic socialist Party which believes that social change comes from a combination of progressive government at the centre and community action. We do not believe that social change can be delivered solely by a top-down approach. That means that we value the role of our members and our affiliated members as progressive campaigners, community activists and social entrepreneurs who forge positive change in their own neighbourhoods as well as shaping and promoting national policy. It is our members who can inspire and engage local people and communities" (Appendix 1 - NEC statement on the importance of our members, in Labour, 2019, p. 76).

In the 112 pages of the 2019 Rule Book, main annual document containing the overview of the party's regulations/structure, the term(s) participation/participate/participating were mentioned just 37 times (32/31 in its four previous versions[275]). While in the 2020 Rule Book - including the "Rule changes approved at annual conference 2019" (Appendix 11, Labour, 2020a, pp. 126-155) - the mention of the term(s) increased to 80 times in the 162 pages of the document (i.e. 50 more than in the previous one, considering also the double text: Current Wording and Amendment). Those Rule Book versions, in line with the Labour tradition, tended to evoke participation and democracy within the party in a functional way in relation to the structure. However, the Appendix 1 included in the Rule Book(s), titled "NEC statement on the importance of our members", specifically focused in the central role of the party members as party agents in the local communities, "activists in building" "electoral support" and "agent[s] for change locally, nationally, and internationally" (Labour, 2019, p. 76). Among the "the formal democratic rights of Party membership", the Appendix I mentioned "the right to participate in the formal process of the Party, vote at Party meetings, stand for Party office and elected office as stated within the rules" (Labour, 2019, p. 76). In particular, the Labour stated its commitment to:

> "Take action to encourage a greater level of representation and participation of groups of people in our society who are currently under-represented in our democratic institutions. In particular, the Party will introduce a scheme to seek to increase working class representation and select more candidates who reflect the full diversity of our society in terms of gender, race, sexual orientation and disability" (Labour, 2019, p. 76).

The same statement acknowledged the members for their activism in the party's activities and beyond, in relation with local communities, local leadership, membership and supporters. According to it, activism and its presence "will mean we stay in government and are always a contender for government". Furthermore, the appendix recognised to the Labour's supporters:

> "The ability to be informed, to join with us at election times to promote Labour candidates, to be invited to local and national events, to hear speakers and question government ministers, to engage at appropriate points with our policy-making processes" (Labour, 2019, p. 76).

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[275] For the accuracy, 32 in both the 2018 version (112 pages) and in the 2017 one (94 pages), 31 in both the 2016 version (91 pages) and in the 2015 (89 pages).

In addition, the Appendix 2 of the 2019 Rule Book (pp. 77-81), titled "NEC procedural guidelines on membership recruitment and retention", focused on members engagement, linking it to participation. In particular, the Art. 1, A, iii. stated:

"The Party is anxious to encourage the recruitment of new members and to ensure that new members are properly welcomed into the Party and opportunities offered to enable their full participation in all aspects of Party life" (Labour, 2019, p. 77)".

While, the Art. 1, A, iv. warned "individual or faction" against improper recruitment that "seek[s] to manipulate our democratic procedures" (Labour, 2019, p. 77). Similarly, Art. 1, A, v. aimed to prevent the "recruitment of large numbers of 'paper members', who have no wish to participate except at the behest of others in an attempt to manipulate Party processes", which "undermines" the "internal democracy and is unacceptable to the Party as a whole" (Labour, 2019, p. 77). In positive terms, the same article claimed:

"The health and democracy of the Party depends on the efforts and genuine participation of individuals who support the aims of the Party, wish to join the Party and get involved with our activities" (Labour, 2019, p. 77).

Beyond NEC's statements, the participation is regulated within the multilevel party structure, along the "three sources of constitutional power" (LS-NL, May 10, 2019): the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP), the affiliated trade unions and the membership, primarily organised in constituency Labour parties (CLPs), jointly to the affiliated socialist groups. Figure 4.1 frames the structure of the British Labour Party's mandate(s) as updated under Corbyn's leadership (Labour, 2020a).

Figure 4.1 – the Labour Party structure
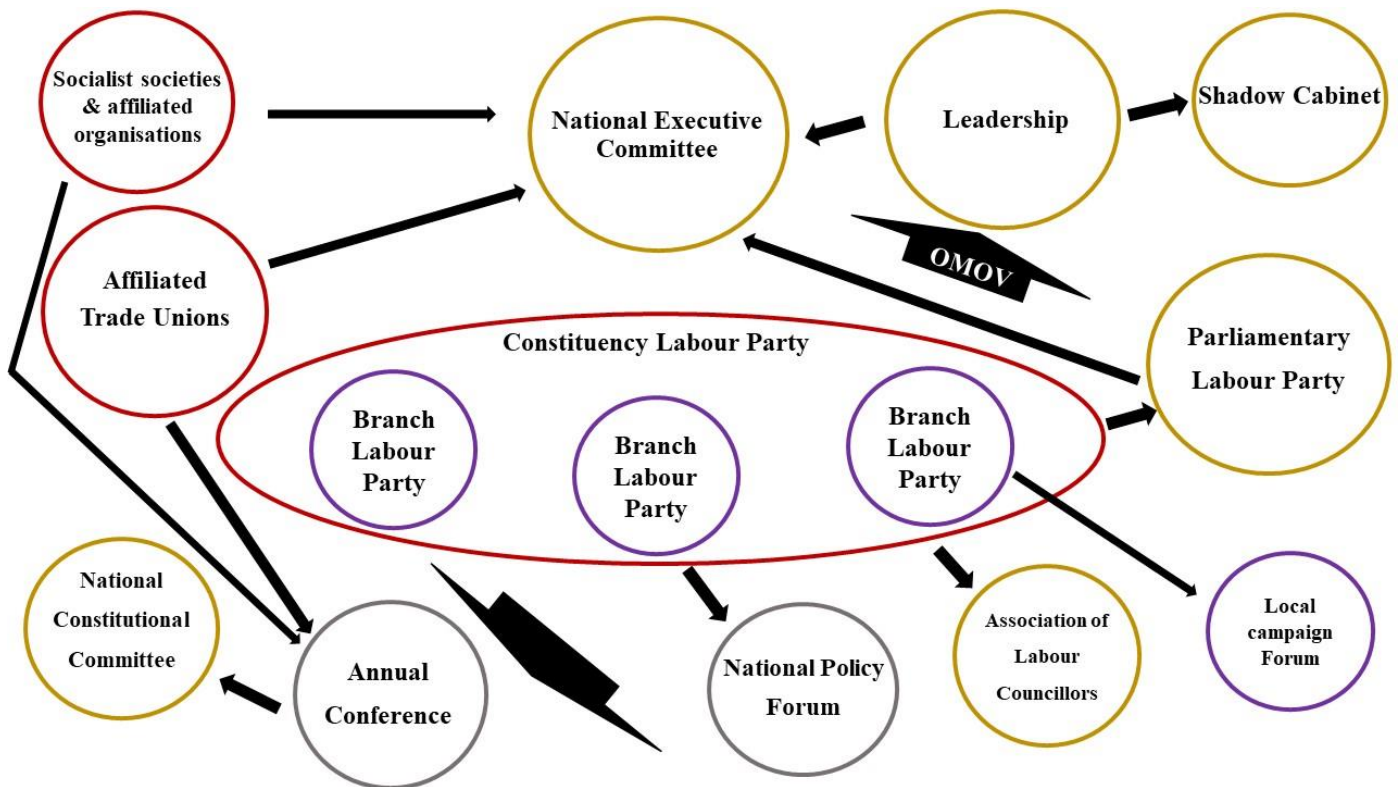
Source: author's elaboration based on the Labour Party Rule Book 2020 (Labour, 2020a).

Figure 4.1 shows, that the party's structure was complex and interconnected. The following nodes of the structure will be analysed to examine how participation has been regulated within them and what power was in the hands of the membership. Firstly, the National Executive Committee (NEC) has been defined as "the administrative authority of the Party" ("subject to the control and directions of Party conference") (Labour, 2019, Chapter 1, Clause II., p. 1). It has been described as "the governing body of the Labour Party, overseeing the overall direction of the party and the policy-making process" (Labour, n.d.d). The NEC was composed by 28 elected members divided in 5 Divisions[276], the leader and deputy leader of the Party, the leader of the EPLP (pre-Brexit), the treasurer of the Party, three frontbench Members of Parliament, one youth member, one BAME member, one Scottish Labour Party member, one Welsh Labour Party member, one disabled member (Labour, 2019, Chapter 1, Clause VIII., p. 6)[277]. Therefore, this consisted of a combination of elected members, nominated and ex-officio members (party offices and representatives), which represented

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[276] Div. I. Trade unions, Div. II. Socialist Societies, Div. III. CLPs, Div. IV. Labour Councillors, Div. V. PLP. The 2017 Annual Conference decided to add four additional NEC seats (to the previous 24): one more for the trade unions Division and three in the CLPs Division. They have not been elected until January 2018.

[277] The General Secretary of the Party "act as secretary to the NEC" (Labour, 2020a, Chapter 1, Clause VIII., p. 5).

the entire party's structure and its affiliated organisations. Among them, the nine CLP places were the only NEC members directly elected by One Member One Vote (OMOV) ballot of all members (jointly with the leader and deputy leader of the Party also elected by OMOV system) (Labour, 2018b, p. 15). This - together with its complex composition and decision-making - contributed to a detachment between membership and NEC. Indeed, according to the Democracy Review document, "[m]ost of Labour's membership have little knowledge of who is currently on Labour's NEC or what it does" (Labour, 2018b, p. 15). The same document stated "the overwhelming request in submissions from CLPs and members to increase the proportion of the NEC which are directly elected", linking this proposal to "the massively increased membership of the Labour Party" and the "commitment to deliver a 'members led' Party" by Corbyn (in both his elections) (Labour, 2018b, p. 16). The Chapter 1, Clause VIII of the Rule Book included in the "duties and powers of the NEC" the point E., stating:

> "To ensure that Party meetings and events shall be conducted in a friendly and orderly manner and organised in such a way as to maximize participation from members and that no member shall be precluded from attendance because they cannot gain access to the meeting place for any reason. Harassment or intimidation of any member is unacceptable as is any form of discrimination on the basis of gender, age, sexual orientation and gender identity, disability or race. The NEC shall from time to time, issue guidance and instructions on the conduct of meetings and guidance and instructions on the implementation of quotas for women's representation (Labour, 2019, p. 6)".

Thus, the NEC was officially committed to the inclusive, equal and respectful participation in all party meetings. While, Chapter 7, Clause VI., point 8., of the same document assigned to the NEC the promotion of "pilots of staggered meetings, electronic attendance, online voting and other methods of maximizing participation" implemented by the CLPs, incorporating "any resultant rules into this rule book" (Labour, 2019, p. 41).

Secondly, the leader and deputy leader have historically been the two apical party officers of the Labour. Both were "elected or re-elected from among common members of the PLP" (Labour, 2020a, Chapter 1, Clause VII., p. 4). The leader (extensively the leadership) represented and coordinated the party as a whole, while the deputy leader represented and coordinated the Parliamentary Labour Party. In particular, the leader had the responsibility "to promote understanding and co-operation between all sections of the Party" and to "report to Annual Conference on the work and state of the Party and its aspirations for the country

and make regular reports to the NEC, National Policy Forum and other Party bodies" (Labour, 2020a, Chapter 1, Clause VII., p. 4). Furthermore, the leader appointed the Cabinet ("[w]hen the Party is in Government") or the "MPs in the Shadow Cabinet" ([w]hen the Party is not in Government). Since 2015 leadership election (first one after the Collins Review, see Section 4.1.), the relationship between membership and the party's leader (and the deputy leader) has been strengthened by direct election through the OMOV (One Member One Vote) system. During Corbyn's leadership, the 2018 Party Conference (after the Democracy Review, see Section 4.4.2) changed the nomination requirements for the election of the leader and the deputy leader, including CPLs and trade unions in the process and lowering the percentage of MPs threshold. Indeed, since then, "[i]n the case of a vacancy for leader or deputy leader", each nomination had to be "supported by 15 per cent of the combined Commons members of the PLP and members of the EPLP" in order to be validated (considering "null and void" the nominations "not attaining this threshold") (Labour, 2017a, Chapter 4, Clause II., p. 14). This rule limited the nomination process exclusively to the PLP. In this regard, the Democracy Review suggested an extension of the process, to respond to the requests of who "believes that all parts of the movement should have a role in electing the Leader of the Labour Party", particularly empowering the CLPs and the affiliated trade unions. Accordingly, the 2018 Party Conference modified the point "B. Nomination" (Labour, 2019, Chapter 4, Clause II., p. 21) lowering to the 10% the threshold of the PLP (and EPLP) members support and adding another prerequisite. It consisted in fulfilling at least one of the following two requirements: "a) 5 per cent of CLPs; or b) At least 3 affiliates (at least 2 of which shall be trade union affiliates) compromising 5 per cent of affiliated membership"[278]. This change, together with the OMOV system aimed at a closer relation and dependence between the leadership and the membership (including the members active in the CLPs and the affiliated members). Giving the other side of the coin, those changes contributed to strengthen elite control over the party structures and affiliated organisations (Dommett et al., 2020, p. 4).

Thirdly, the Constituency Labour Party (CLP) has historically been the "unit of the Party", "established in any Westminster parliamentary constituency, Welsh Assembly constituency, or Scottish Parliamentary constituency" (Labour, 2019, Chapter 1, Clause II., p. 1). Each CLP ("[w]here practicable") has been organised in branches, which "number and area

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[278] In September 2021 (out of the time frame of this thesis, under Starmer's leadership), the NEC approved the increase of the MPs threshold, moving it to double: from 10% to 20% (Rodgers, 2021).

covered" were co-decided by the CPL and the NEC. The Branches have been "the smallest unit of Labour Party organisation" and generally they have "mirror[ed] the boundaries of council wards" (Dommett et al., 2020, p. 4). The joint of all branches was named Branch Labour Party (BLP). Together with the territorial branches, the point C., Chapter 1, Clause II., (Labour, 2019, p. 1) indicated the forums "may be established in each CLP". In particular they were a "women's forum", "consisting of all individual women members within that CLP", an "ethnic minorities forum", "consisting of all individual Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic (BAME) individual members within that CLP" and "[o]ther forums" considered "appropriate" ("with the approval of the NEC"). Among them, the Local campaign Forum emerged as "the committees that plan and organise election campaigning for different council areas" (Labour, n.d.e). At regional level, the "Regional parties are composed of multiple constituencies" (Dommett et al., 2020, p. 4), i.e. "Scotland, Wales and each of the English regions", including also "a Scottish, Welsh or regional women's committee and a regional BAME members' section" (Labour, 2019, Chapter 1, Clause II., p. 1).

Figure 4.2 - Visual communication of the Labour membership within the party

structure.

Source: Where do I fit in the Labour Party world? (Labour, n.d.f).

The CLPs (and their branches) were the units of the party structures closest to the members, involving and representing them (especially in party bodies and conferences which members are not elections through the OMOV system). Indeed, among the "Aims and values" of the CLPs is included the point D., stating:

> "To provide the opportunity for all individual members of the Party within the constituency to contribute to the development of the aims and policies by ensuring that a full range of Party activities are available to them, including local policy forums, and that they may participate fully in discussion to broaden the political education of members of the Party and to increase their influence over the formulation of the Party programme" (Labour, 2019, Chapter 7, Clause III., p. 39).

While, the 1. Article of the branches "Objects" recognised the branches' role in term of membership participation, policymaking process and campaigning.

> "The objects of this branch shall be to provide an opportunity for members to participate in the activities of the Party within its area with the approval of the Executive Committee of the CLP and in line with its agreed development action plan; to play their part in the Party's policymaking processes; to work together to run effective election and issue-based campaigns; to maximise the Party's engagement with organisations and individuals in the branch area and join with them in working for social justice. Work to meet these objectives shall always have priority in this branch's plans and meetings" (Labour, 2019, Chapter 8, Clause II., p. 46).

The "prime function" attributed to the CLPs (and their branches and forums) meetings was "to provide delegates and members with the opportunity to participate in Party activities through social contact, political debate and policy discussion", jointly with the function of "establish[ing] objectives for the Party in the area for campaigning, the development of Party organisation and the promotion of links with sympathetic individuals and bodies within the wider community" (Labour, 2019, Chapter 15, Clause I., p. 71). In terms of the meetings' (and events') methodologies, Chapter 15, Clause I., stated that they "shall be conducted in a friendly and orderly manner and organised in such a way as to maximise participation from members"; preventing "harassment or intimidation of any member" and "any form of discrimination on the basis of gender, age, sexual orientation and gender identity, disability or race" (Labour, 2019, p. 73). While Chapter 13, Clause II., focused on the participation in the "Labour groups [local government Labour groups on principal authorities]", affirming that they "shall conduct their business in a comradely fashion, in such a way as to maximise participation from all members and to facilitate debate on key policy and political matters". Participation in those meeting was considered "important to ensure all points of view are heard and a full internal discussion is possible" (Labour, 2019, p. 60). The same article added that the "content of internal discussion is not for communication outside the Party, and internal disputes that are aired in the public domain will be subject to disciplinary action"

(Labour, 2019, p. 60).

The Democracy Review analysed the CLPs decision-making and structures; it reported the prevalence of the "All Member meeting structures" over the "General Committee structures" (141 and 67 respectively, "[o]ut of the 208 CLP Survey returns") (Labour, 2018b, p. 33). The "delegate-based General Committee structures" was used by most CLPs in cities, while "outside cities most CLPs had an All Member structure" (Labour, 2018b, p. 33). However, the Review report observed that "the hugely increased membership more decisions are being taken by Executive Committees rather than at the CLP meeting" (Labour, 2018b, p. 36), pointing out criticism in terms of the democracy of their decision-making. Furthermore, the Review report mentioned the underfunding of CLPs and their requests "for more funding", judging the "current settlement" as not "reasonable". These claims have been particularly linked to the 2011 change in CLPs financing, passed from receiving "one third of the membership subscriptions which members paid" to "£1.50 per member", increased during the Corbyn mandate to "£2.50 per member" (Labour, 2018b, p. 37). The lack of funds has risked to compromise the democratic participation of CLPs in the party structure, for instance many CLPs have been "unable to fund delegates to Annual Conference" (Labour, 2018b, p. 38).

The fourth main node of the structure analysed in terms of participation were the two organisations of the party's representatives: the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) and the Association of Labour Councillors (ALC). In general terms, the party considered its candidate as "representative of our society", encouraging "a greater level of representation and participation of groups of people in our society who are currently under-represented in our democratic institutions" (Labour, 2019, Chapter 5, Clause I., p. 29). Accordingly, Art. 1, point F. of the Chapter 5, Clause I claimed for an "[i]nclusive processes".

> "Selection processes must enable the inclusion and involvement of all members on an equal basis and take into account the barriers to participation which underrepresented groups may face. One member one vote (OMOV) shall be adopted in all selections where reasonably practicable including those" (Labour, 2019, p. 29).

Once elected, the Labour MPs in parliament "shall be members of the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP)", "play[ing] their part in its work" (Labour, 2019, Chapter 5, Clause II., p. 30).

The PLP as a whole and the individual MPs (usually within factions) historically have been one of the most powerful force in the party (often dominant). Traditionally both the membership and the trade unions has been interpreted as the PLP counterpower and there have been many clashes, conflicts and mediations between them throughout the history of the party (such as the changing in the threshold for the nomination of the leader and deputy leader). Under Corbyn's leadership, the conflict between the majority of the PLP and the leadership has reached critical levels, such as in the case of the no confidence vote expressed against the leader by 172 Labour Party MPs (Stone, 2016) (see Section 4.1.). Meanwhile, the members on local authorities "shall be organised locally in Labour groups and nationally in the Association of Labour Councillors (ALC)" (Labour, 2019, Chapter 1, Clause II., p. 1).

The fifth node of the structure was the Labour Party Conference, the annual conference of the party where the delegates of the complex and vast structure of the party (and affiliated organisations) converged to exercise "the direction and control" over the "work of the Party" (being itself "subject to the constitution and standing orders of the Party"). It "shall meet regularly once in every year and also at such other times as it may be convened by the NEC" (Labour, 2020a, Chapter 1, Clause VI., p. 4). The party conference also has the responsibility of deciding "from time to time what specific proposals of legislative, financial or administrative reform shall be included in the Party programme", "by a majority of not less than two-thirds of the votes recorded on a card vote" (Labour, 2020a, Chapter 1, Clause V., p. 3). This process "shall be based on "the rolling programme of work of the National Policy Forum" (see below). Furthermore, the party conference was called to elect the "National Constitutional Committee of the Party ('the NCC')" with "duties and powers" in "disciplinary matters", determining them "by hearing", including the "sanction of expulsion or suspension" (Labour, 2020a, Chapter 1, Clause IX., p. 9). Chapter 3, Clause I. (Labour, 2020a) regulated the delegations of the participants to the Labour Party Conference, composed by: "ex-officio members" as representative of the party (in the party bodies and in the institutions, including candidates endorsed by the NEC); delegates "duly appointed by each affiliated trade union or other affiliated organisation" (calculated in "the number of one delegate for each 5,000 members"); delegates "duly appointed by CLPs" (calculated in "the number of one delegate for the first 749 individual members in the constituency", plus an "additional woman delegate", "[w]here the individual women's membership in a constituency is 100 or more" and "additional delegate under the age of 27", "[w] here the individual Young Labour membership in a constituency is 30 or more"); six delegates

"appointed by the ALC"; and two delegates "appointed by young Labour" (Labour, 2020a, Chapter 3, Clause I., p. 17). Among them, gender balance is encouraged with specific minimum quotas for female delegates. In addition to the delegates, other members could participate as "observers", without voting rights (Interviewee 20 - L-LL, May 8, 2019). In terms of delegates, the trade unions used to "have half of the votes of the conference", implying that they "dominate the conference" and that the "negotiation with those unions is incredibly important"[279] (Interviewee 25 - LIE-NL, May 5, 2019). During Corbyn's leadership, the conferences assumed particularly importance in terms of "reforming structures", reaffirming "the primacy of conference", and claiming for "a more participative guise" (Watts & Bale, 2019, p. 109). Interviewee 26 (LAO-NL, June 5, 2019) provided an example on the "symbolic power of conference", arguing that in the party, the incorrect assumption that "what conference agrees automatically becomes the policy" was widespread, as in the case of the conference' agreement on the Brexit position. While, according to her: "The leader can override it", reporting that "under Tony Blair, that's exactly what happened". However, she differentiated the Corbyn leadership, affirming that "it would be much harder for Jeremy Corbyn to do it, because his politics is based on members having a say", adding "but of course, if conference pass something that they thought was a suicidal, they could like override it". In this regard, she pointed out the "big role" of the trade unions, "particularly now with Jeremy Corbyn", which made the conference "a safer process", since they "share these concerns about passing unviable things". She defined this role in the conference as "a balanced role, and a bit of a filtering role for what can go through conference", providing "more stability to that process". Interviewee 25 (LIE-NL, May 5, 2019) reported an improvement in terms of debate and decision-making in the conferences under Corbyn's leadership ("a conference which is allowed to actually make decisions"). Although while recognising deep changes compared to the past when "anything that was controversial was effectively prevented from being discussed", he still defined the policy-making process within the conference as "not satisfactory", since "the process of compositing results in a kind of consensual approach" tended to "remove a lot of the areas for debate".

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[279] Interviewee 25 (LIE-NL, May 5, 2019) reported that "back in the '80s, there were almost a hundred trade unions affiliated to the Labour Party. Now, I think there are 10 or 11, because they are much bigger. Over time, although the Trade Unions' movement has lost membership, it has become more dominated by the biggest unions, particularly the ones that are affiliated to the Labour Party".

Lastly - in sixth node of the structure - this analysis examines the National Policy Forum (NPF), i.e. the body (and its processes) specifically in charge of the Labour's policy-making. It has been designed as part of a wider system composed by the party's conference, and other party bodies to fulfil the Art. 1 of the Chapter 1, Clause V., stating:

"At all levels the Party will ensure that members, elected representatives, affiliated organisations and, where practicable, the wider community are able to participate in the process of policy consideration and formulation" (Labour, 2019, p. 4).

The NPF was composed by members nominated in accordance to "14 divisions", among them "55 members to be nominated by CLPs and elected by a ballot conducted among all eligible individual members of the Party by means of a regionally based one-member-one-vote postal ballot (Division I)"[280]. The subdivision implied that the "members get to vote for only a third of representatives on the National Policy Forum" (Labour, 2018b, p. 79). Also for this reason, the NPF has been called to open its processes of policymaking to members' participation, such as the Labour Policy Forum (see Section 4.4.4.). However, the Democracy Review report described the "participatory policy making process which allows a deliberative development of policy and access to experts" (towards the 2019 party's manifesto) as just "on paper", which "has never really worked for members" and in which "the control of the process from the centre has led to a high level of cynicism" (Labour, 2018b, p. 79). Corbyn supporters tended to consider the NPF as the "old policy process", which "was introduced in the late '80s" to substitute the process "built around conference sovereignty", based on "motions and amendments" (allowing to "focus more on the more controversial aspects of policy") with "a much more lively debate" (Interviewee 25 - LIE-NL, May 5, 2019).

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[280] Together with: "30 members "nominated and elected by affiliated trade unions" (Division II), "22 representatives from the Scottish, Welsh and English regional conferences or regional policy forums" (Division III), 10 "Labour local government representatives" (Division IV), 4 "representatives of BAME Labour" (Division VI), 9 "representatives of Commons members of the PLP" (Division VII), 6 "members of the EPLP" (Division VIII), 1 "member to be nominated and elected by members of Labour Students" (Division IX), 2 "Labour members from the House of Lords to be nominated and elected by Labour peers (Division X), 2 "from Northern Ireland Labour Party" (Division XI), 1 "member from Labour International" (Division XII), 1 "member of LGBT Labour" (Division XIII), and 1 "member of the Labour Party Disabled Members Group" (Division XIV). In addition to them, the NPF also included: 4 "officers of the Welsh Policy Forum", 4 "officers of the Scottish Policy Forum", 8 "frontbench representatives" appointed by "the Cabinet or Shadow Cabinet in opposition", 2 representatives appointed by the Co-operative Party, and "ex-officio" the "General Secretary of the Co-operative Party" (Labour, 2019, Chapter 4, Clause III., pp. 27-28).

The Labour Party can be described with words that resonate those used by Interviewee 27 (LAO-NL, June 14, 2019) as "a bizarre construction", "massive" and "labyrinthine", with "different institutions plugged together". According to him, at the same time the "power within the party is very centralised and very unaccountable" and "there is no single centre of power", being "both centralised and decentralised simultaneously". In this frame, he recalled an "quote-unquote ultra-left critiques of Labour": "Not only is it a social democratic imperialist party, but it is like inherently an unreformable social democratic and imperialist" (Interviewee 27 - LAO-NL, June 14, 2019).

4.3.1. The Labour membership

The British Labour Party is a mass party that historically relied on its members for its financing, campaigning and organisation; incorporating them in a complex multi-level and multi-organisation structure. Since the beginning of the party's history, the Labour and affiliated trade unions membership coexisted and largely overlapped. However, particularly during and post- the New Labour, the membership shifted to a multi-speed model (Scarrow, 2015), aiming at moving "from a formal model of membership (where one pays a fee in exchange for which one is granted certain voting rights) to the much looser model of the 'Supporters Network'" (Avril, 2013, p. 103). The use of the term "netroots" described this attempt for a supporters' network "attracting supposedly younger, more versatile, and less-demanding voters" (Avril, 2013, p. 103). The New Labour structural changes inspired by the business world reduced the gap between members and non-members opening both to many of the party forums and processes (Avril, 2013). On the one hand, the development of an official supporters' network allowed and encouraged citizens "to 'join' the party in a reduced capacity free of charge or with a donation of their choice", which could be interpreted as "expressive action", "formalising their support" without "any commitment" (Gauja, 2015a, pp. 99-100). At the same time, the party aimed "to 'reach out' beyond the core membership, to create a wider base of people willing to mobilise and campaign for the party" (Gauja, 2015b, p. 241). On the other hand, according to Gauja (2015a, p. 100), the supporters' network also served "as a chance to replace mass memberships with mass networks of supporters in order to sustain the party both organisationally, and maintain its legitimacy in the eyes of the public". Among the changes adopted by the party in 2014 after the Collins Review, the creation of another category of "registered supporters" corroborated the

formalisation of the supporters' network and of the multi-speed membership model, including them in the voters for selecting the party's leadership (by OMOV system).

The Labour party multi-speed membership was composed of three categories: individual members of the Labour Party (full members), affiliated supporters and registered supporters. The firsts have been the pivot of the mass membership party model that has characterised Labour history (especially pre-New Labour). The requirement to be considered "individual members of the Labour Party" were: he/she "shall pay a subscription" to the party; he/she "shall be subjects/residents of The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland"[281]; being "not less than 14 years of age"; "subscribe to the conditions of membership"; and not being "members of political parties or organisations ancillary or subsidiary thereto" (Labour, 2019, Chapter 2, Clause I., p. 12). Each individual member was included in the CLP membership "(where one exists)", depending on "the address where she or he resides". The membership rate is "£4.17 per month standard rate"[282]. While, the membership category of affiliated supporter consisted of "individuals who are members of organisations that are part of the Labour family who want to make it official that they back Labour" (Support.labour.org, n.d.), such as trade unions or other affiliated organisations (e.g. Fabian Society)[283]. Within the party, the rights of the affiliated supporters were "almost exactly the same rights as full members, with the exception of voting at the party conference and representing the party" (Gauja, 2015b, p. 242). Among the affiliated organisations, the Labour included BAME Labour, which represented minorities such as Black and Asian, communities within the party[284]; LGBT+ Labour, which campaigned for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans Rights[285]; and Labour Women's Network, which supported Labour women within the party[286]. While the Young Labour was considered a section of the party, including "[a]ll individual members of the Party aged between 14 and 26 years inclusive",

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[281] Or "citizens of Eire or other persons resident in The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for more than one year". The party also provided for the possibility of becoming "individual overseas members of the Party" for "[s]ubjects of Great Britain or Northern Ireland or citizens of Eire, the Channel Islands and Isle of Man resident abroad" (Labour, 2019, Chapter 2, Clause I., p. 12).

[282] "£3 per year for those aged 14 to 19 years, students and armed forces" and "£2.09 per month reduced rate for those aged 20 to 26 years, retired members, unwaged, retired, part-time workers and affiliated trade unions" (Labour, 2018b, p. 38).

[283] Quoting Support.labour.org (n.d.), they are "organisations, including Trade Unions and Socialist Societies, which have decided to affiliate to the Labour Party. They share the Party's values and pay a political subscription to the Labour Party on behalf of their members".

[284] See https://www.bamelabour.org/

[285] See https://www.lgbtlabour.org.uk/

[286] See https://www.lwn.org.uk/

as well as Labour Students, which nationally organised the student members of the party (Labour, 2019, Chapter 1, Clause II., p. 1). The last category was the previously-mentioned registered supporters, i.e. individuals who were not considered full members of the party but who could participate in party processes (mainly digitally) and vote for important internal ballot, such as the leader selection. In order to be a registered supporter, they should "support the aims and objectives of the Labour Party and not be a member of any other political party" (Interviewee 29 - LAO-NL, June 18, 2019) and pay a reduced per year rate. In 2015, the NEC set their fee at £3 (Perry, 2019). According to Democracy Review report, the "£3 per year rate is less than the administration costs for the Party" (Labour, 2018b, p. 38).

Prior to the 2015 election, the Labour's membership consisted of 198,000 members (Whiteley et al., 2019, p. 81). This number massively increased "immediately following General Election 2015", reaching the "422,664 of people" who "voted in the September 2015 leadership contest, in which 59.5% voted for Jeremy Corbyn" (including all the categories, see also Section 4.1.). In December 2016, the membership (full members and affiliated supporters) rose to 544,000. The peak was reached in July 2017 with 575,000 members. While, the reported data have gradually decreased since December 2017 with 564,443 members, 518,569 members in December 2018, 512,000 in February 2019 and 485,000 in August 2019 (data in Audickas et al., 2019, pp. 10-11 mainly based on press reports). The "fall in membership" (90,000 in two years) has been explained by the party as "the result of members being in arrears, rather than an absolute fall" (Audickas et al., 2019, p. 11). According to Dommett et al. (2020, p. 4) the Labour "possesses the single largest membership in the UK (reported to be 580,000 in January 2020 (Perry, 2020)". Figure 4.3 graphically shows the membership trend of the main UK parties between 2002 and 2019.

Figure 4.3 – Party membership by party 2002-2019

Note: Labour party membership figures for 2015 and 2016 include party members and affiliated supporters, but exclude registered supporters.

Source: Audickas et al., 2019, p. 8.

During the first part of Corbyn's leadership (including the campaign for his election) membership massively increased. The 'Corbyn effect' explained a large part of it, with internal and external consequences. Indeed, according to Interviewee 23 (L-NL, June 3, 2019), "a lot of those people" felt identified "more with Corbyn than they do with the Labour party". Especially among young people, "they don't identify themselves as Labour members or Labour voters. They identify themselves as Corbyn supporters". Whiteley et al. (2019, p. 82) interpreted the surge in Labour Party's membership "with the assistance of relative deprivation theory[287]" (see Runciman, 1966). According to them the "shift to the left" associated with Corbyn's leadership and "the promise of a new style of politics" "ensured that feelings of relative deprivation mobilised new members to join the party who otherwise might have remained apathetic and uninvolved". Indeed, they argued that "Labour's new recruits were more likely to feel a sense of relative deprivation about their position in society than party members in general" (Whiteley et al., 2019, p. 82). Accordingly, it particularly generated interest among "graduates earning less than the average income", youngsters and women in general (Whiteley et al., 2019, p. 95). Differently, Watts and Bale (2019) focused on the role of the membership in the Corbyn discourse, applying the populist lent on it.

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[287] "This theory is based on the idea that individuals develop expectations as to how economic, political and social systems should treat them in relation to issues of equity and fairness" (Whiteley et al., 2019, p. 82).

According to them members tended to be mentioned "as a collective and homogeneous body" attributing to them "an ordinariness and a wisdom that put them in touch with an authentic moral plane" (p. 102). In the Corbynism's discourse, their "moral authority" and "truthful voice" used to be opposed to the Parliamentary Labour Party, in order to provide authority and support the leadership.

However, the Labour membership is not evenly distributed throughout the UK, some local parties have "many hundreds", others "only a handful" (Dommett et al., 2020, p. 7). According to Dommett et al. (2020, p. 7), their distribution reflects "factors such as geography and marginality" and "they have significant implications for practice on the ground". Interviewee 22 (LI-NL, May 19, 2019) argued that being a Labour member "allows you to meet your local community", especially at local level it multiplies the opportunity to stay in a multi-ethnic and working-class environment.

> "That's why it's called Labour Party, not a Socialist Party. He [Marx] was against calling them Socialists or Communists Parties. He always wanted a class party. Everyone's Christians, socialists, liberals, reformers, revolutionists. They should all be in one Party. I think that's actually a really good point" (Interviewee 22 - LI-NL, May 19, 2019).

While, according to Interviewee 24 (LR-NL, June 4, 2019), "the overwhelming majority of the party members don't take part in anything", since "most people join a political party as a statement of solidarity, not getting actively involved, as always has been a relatively minor proportion and that isn't any different now to what it was". Commenting on membership during Corbyn's leadership, she also argued that:

> "Political parties are not fixed entities. They are reflective of society, and they change over a long cycle. So, being in government for a long time tends to push their members slightly more to the extreme because they get fed up with the compromises. And then when you've been in opposition for quite a long time, it tends to have the opposite effect because people will be more ready to compromise because they can see the advantages of doing that in order to win power, which you have to" (Interviewee 24 - LR-NL, June 4, 2019).

4.3.2. Momentum

Among the organised factions and grassroots organisations linked to the British Labour Party, Momentum emerged as a fundamental actor for Corbyn's leadership since his first election as party leader, particularly in organising the Corbyn-supporting members within the Labour (Watts & Bale, 2019, p. 101). Momentum is a left-wing political organisation that has been specifically designed to support and "to protect" Corbyn's leadership after his election, combining two declared objectives "to keep him there" and "to change the Labour Party" into "a more democratic party" (Interviewee 25 - LIE-NL, May 5, 2019). Among the founders, there were some key figures on the Labour left, generally marginalised in the New Labour, as Jon Lansman, Adam Klug, Emma Rees and James Schneider (Gerbaudo, 2019). Momentum website stated:

> "Momentum is a people-powered, vibrant movement. We aim to transform the Labour Party, our communities and Britain in the interests of the many, not the few. [...] Using our collective power, our campaigning, networks and tech, we can transform society for the better" (Momentum, n.d.).

The initial phase of Momentum was made up by "local groups supporting Corbyn that sprung up all over the country, completely without [coordination]" during his first election's campaign (Interviewee 25 - LIE-NL, May 5, 2019). Interviewee 21 (LS-NL, May 10, 2019) reported that Momentum founders initially sought to simply create a "massive contact list, "aiming to get around 5,000 contacts", while by the end of the leadership's campaign they had "a hundred thousand"; since many "volunteers have come on board", completely changing the "vision of what Momentum would be". In 2019, Momentum reached the 40,000 full members (who pay the fee to Momentum) (Interviewee 23 - L-NL, June 3, 2019). The movement's organisational structure also characterised other phases of the organisation, although opted for mainly centralised decision-making. Interviewee 29 (LAO-NL, June 18, 2019) defined Momentum as "a movement organisation", consisting in "a network of members and local activist groups who are all committed to a shared set of objectives". Among them, Interviewee 29 identified "to transform the Labour Party, so that the government that's elected is capable of delivering a transformative agenda" as the main one. Similarly, Interviewee 23 (L-NL, June 3, 2019) considered Momentum "more a movement", which "should be a vehicle to transform the Labour Party completely", completing the "transformation that Corbyn has begun". Differently, Interviewee 21 (LS-NL, May 10, 2019)

criticised the definition of movement applied to Momentum, opting to term "faction", an "extra-part" of the party, with a "social movement gloss". This mix particularly aimed at bridging "the old Labour Party left tradition" and the "newer movement tradition". Similarly, Interviewee 26 (LAO-NL, June 5, 2019) described the organisation as "a faction" representing the "people who support Jeremy Corbyn on the members' side", most of them "left social democrats with socialist tendencies". The relation between the Momentum members and the Labour Party is binding, since "you have to be a member of the Labour Party to be a member of Momentum"[288] (Interviewee 29 - LAO-NL, June 18, 2019).

Among Momentum's actions, two emerged as the most relevant. On the one hand, Momentum organised the new (or recently active) Labour members (Interviewee 24 - LR-NL, June 4, 2019) and it advised them (jointly with all the other Momentum members) on "how to behave within the constituency party" how to "vote for changes of the rules" and in general how to act for influencing the party (Interviewee 20 - L-LL, May 8, 2019). This also included the coordination and implementation of campaigning activities, such as organising the "rotation of people" along the constituencies to particularly support the "marginal constituencies" in the campaigning "on the Election Day and for probably a week or 10 days before the election" (Interviewee 20 - L-LL, May 8, 2019). On the other hand, Momentum organised and trained left-wing candidates for positions within the party's bodies and in the institutions (Interviewee 21 - LS-NL, May 10, 2019), aiming at counterbalancing the right-wing representatives and becoming hegemonic in the Labour structure. According to Interviewee 25 (LIE-NL, May 5, 2019) those actions exercised a "constructive pressure" to the party, including the leadership.

According to Watts and Bale (2019, p. 101), Momentum played for Corbyn's leadership the role of "the 'ad hoc electoral vehicle[s]' often used by personalist populist leaders", providing tools and channels to spread his populist message among the membership and "outflanking more conventional campaigns". Interviewee 28 (LR-EL, June 17, 2019) argued that "groups like Momentum agitate and increase factionalism", although recognising its

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[288] In the first phase Momentum decided to applied the same requirements for being a Labour registered supporter, i.e. "to support the aims and objectives of the Labour Party and not be a member of any other political party" (Interviewee 29 - LAO-NL, June 18, 2019). While, especially "from 2016 onwards (after the attempt to remove the leadership campaign, an attempt to remove Jeremy)" Momentum "became very heavily focused on Labour Party specifically", considering "the impact of the fact that the right still maintained power in the party and almost all of the key structures" (Interviewee 26 - LAO-NL, June 5, 2019). This implied also the choice to require the Labour membership for being part of Momentum.

role in "energis[ing] members who are hungry for change and interested in politics". While, Interviewee 23 (L-NL, June 3, 2019) defined Momentum's coordination as "very top-down", reporting that "they don't take orders from anyone. There's no accountability. They're not elected to their positions". Interviewee 23 linked this behaviour to the "top-down" and "very bureaucratic" approach historically replicated by the trade unions and the left within the Labour party, opposing them but being "equally guilty of this kind of bureaucratic behaviour". In the same line, Interviewee 27 (LAO-NL, June 14, 2019) reported "a lot of quite legitimate areas of concern and criticism about how [internal democracy within Momentum] went", showing scarce effectiveness in democratic terms. Indeed, he claimed "we talk about democratising the party like a movement, we've not even sort of got the movement democratic". Moreover, Interviewee 26 (LAO-NL, June 5, 2019) reported two criticisms. Firstly, in the National Coordinating Group (NCG), governing body of Momentum, only 12 people (out of a maximum of 28) were "elected directly by members", including "4 Public office holders". It implied that, even if "Momentum social organisation representing members", "they don't have a clear guaranteed majority". Secondly, due to regional division of Momentum that divided in just three parts the entire UK, "there are regions which don't have a good level of representation" causing that "some members feel distance from the National Board meeting". However, Interviewee 23 (L-NL, June 3, 2019) also pointed out that the independent organisation at the local level "don't listen to what Jon Lansman has to say, or Laura Parker[289]", instead "they organise themselves" in order "to have left winger", to "go to Labour Party Conference as delegates", etc. In positive terms, Interviewee 25 (LIE-NL, May 5, 2019) argued:

> "I think that Momentum has actually avoid the separateness of the Momentum within the organisation, as an organisation over the grassroots. Even though Momentum itself is quite centralised, there are still a lot of autonomy, it's a quite horizontal organisation and local groups are also challenging us. So, there is tension between Momentum which is partially healthy actually, up to a point".

Interviewee 21 (LS-NL, May 10, 2019) criticised Momentum for limiting its action to advocating for "getting people to vote in the Labour Party's internal elections", lacking in the defence of Corbyn who were "under attack" (that was the reason why many people join the organisation).

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[289] Momentum's National Coordinator at that time.

In digital terms, Momentum stood out for its constant and effective use of social media, in a multichannel communication strategy. According to Interviewee 30 (LAO-NL, July 19, 2019), Momentum was a data-driven organisation, in which digital technologies were "central to lots of Momentum's core aims". In this frame, Momentum developed a participative platform named *MyMomentum*[290], an online platform based on *CONSUL* (Interviewee 21 - LS-NL, May 10, 2019; see also Section 3.4.9.), which aimed at consulting their basis and open space for digital deliberation and decision-making. Nevertheless, the use of *MyMomentum* has been limited to carry out some consultations in specific phases and not as a digital decision-making tool. In particular, *MyMomentum* hosted a digital process "to decide what Momentum was submitting" at the Democratic Review of the Labour Party in 2018 (Interviewee 26 - LAO-NL, June 5, 2019), through which the members "could make proposals and you could comment on proposals" (Interviewee 25 - LIE-NL, May 5, 2019). Previously, throughout the brief history of Momentum, the platform played an important role in both voting and justifying the changes in the internal structure of the organisation. Indeed, in October 2016 the steering committee of Momentum decided to adopt the OMOV system through digital ballots, replacing the delegate system. According to Interviewee 27 (LAO-NL, June 14, 2019), that decision aimed to marginalised the position of "little organised cliques of old Trotskyists" that were dominating the organisation bodies. Thus, digital democracy claims have been used in that occasion, but "then it just never really happens", despite "the Constitution Momentum is committed to having a digital democracy platform". Similarly, Interviewee 23 (L-NL, June 3, 2019) argued that the changes in the Momentum constitution responded to a "factional struggle", "going on within Momentum, between the kind of the hard-left and the kind of Lansman clique". He told that "Landsman just shut down all the Democracy overnight", "abolish[ing] the National Council" and "any kind of democratic structures within it". According to him, "they ended up just shutting the whole thing down. Ever since, there's been no democracy in the party at all, digital, or participatory or otherwise", revealing to be "just an email list with asking for donations mostly, to be honest". On the contrary, Interviewee 29 (LAO-NL, June 18, 2019) argued that the changes in the structure proposed to members and digitally voted by them have been necessary to contrast factionalism, and not to lose the "huge opportunity" of generating "a new kind of politics". Interviewee 21 (LS-NL, May 10, 2019), while recognising the reasons for "democratically" taking "the control of some of Momentum structures" opposing the

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[290] A previous version was called *MxV*.

"sectarians" group, reported that the platform "was used to get rid of the sectarians" and then largely abandoned, "because it was used in a kind of cynical way". Finally, Interviewee 25 (LIE-NL, May 5, 2019) explained that the OMOV system through electronic ballot has been inspired by Podemos' structure, as well as the entire national structure. So, nationally, Momentum structure was based on "a national one-member-one-vote structure to elect the body that made national decisions", without the "hierarchy of delegate bodies", while "on a local level, there was autonomy", thus "local groups do what they have to do locally (or not)". In this regard, Interviewee 25 also specified that "I would not have been happy with the structure of Podemos for a political party, but for Momentum, it made a lot of sense".

During Corbyn leadership's, Momentum represented a large part of the internal majority of the Labour Party (the most active one) and strongly influenced the leadership. For this reason and for their mobilisation's capacity, some of the Momentum digital processes and tools have been considered as forerunner for digital Labour processes and tools (influencing other sectors of the party besides Corbynism). Nevertheless, this contagion has been jeopardised with the end of the new leadership.

4.4. The Labour party's procedures for members' participation (processes and tools)

After analysing the main elements of Labour under Corbyn's leadership and the related interpretation of participation by the party, this sub-chapter focuses on different procedures, initiatives and tools developed (or reformed) by the Labour Party for members' participation since the first Corbyn election as party leader (beyond the party structure analysed in the previous section). The author selected them linking the procedures, initiatives and tools developed to the five dimensions of (intra-party) democracy, i.e. participation, inclusiveness, de/centralisation and accountability (von dem Berge & Poguntke, 2017). According to them, the following tools and processes have been taken into consideration: electoral democracy procedures, such as the candidate selection (Section 4.4.1.); participatory tools, such as the Democracy Review (Section 4.4.2.) and Party consultations (Section 4.4.3.); deliberative procedures, such as the Labour Policy Forum (Section 4.4.4); inclusive tools and initiatives, such as the *Achieve* eLearning platform (Section 4.4.5.). Moreover, the analysis included a participatory event linked to the Party conferences, named *The World Transformed*, promoted by an *ad hoc* organisation (Section 4.4.6.). Other possible innovative initiatives of the party that are not directly connected with members' participation (such as the party

conference decision-making by delegates) have been considered only in relation with the mentioned procedures. Indeed, the author considers that examining those participatory processes and tools - focusing on their characteristics, target use and evolution over time - is needed to frame and analyse the participation promoted by the Labour under Corbyn leadership.

4.4.1 Candidate selection

The selection of candidates and the role of membership in it has been historically debated in the British Labour Party, particularly over the selection of Westminster's parliamentary candidates (Interviewee 22 - LI-NL, May 19, 2019). Indeed, their selection (and deselection) has been a terrain of conflict between PLP and members in the CLPs, as well as the subject of historical claims by the left-wing Labour and organised groups such as Campaign for Labour Party Democracy[291]. Corbyn and several of the key figures in his leadership (among them John McDonnell and Jon Lansman) have supported claims and campaigns for open selections in the previous decades. Thus, the reform of the procedures for selecting candidates became a concrete possibility during Corbyn's leadership, supported by the surge of the membership claiming for a renewed centrality in the party decision-making, including candidates.

The preamble of Chapter 5 of the 2019 Rule Book stated:

> "A right of Labour Party membership includes the opportunity to select candidates for public office in an area where the NEC determines that a CLP shall be established, at every level – local, regional, national and European" (Labour, 2019, Chapter 5, Clause I., p. 29).

While the Clause I. of the same document declared that "[a]ll individual eligible members of the Party with continuous membership of at least six months (who reside in the electoral area concerned) are entitled to participate in selections" (Labour, 2019, Chapter 5, Clause I., p. 29). Therefore, the Labour claimed the membership leading role in the candidate selection at all level and its rights in it. Nevertheless, this partially clashed with the UK electoral system and political tradition, in which the MPs usually remain in office for multiple

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[291] Established in 1973, it historically claims "for more power for Labour's members and affiliates" (Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, n.d.).

mandates representing their constituency. The first past the post system UK electoral system allows this dynamic, since it fosters single-party predominance in the constituencies and high possibility of the incumber re-election within them. That is why, differently from other parliamentary system, the groups of the representatives of the party in Westminster Parliament tend to exercise a greater and longer lasting power (see also Section 4.1.).

The 2015 Rule Book, prior to Corbyn's election as leader, in Clause VI. "Selection of Westminster parliamentary candidates", Art. 5 "If a CLP is represented in Parliament by a member of the PLP", point A. and B., stated:

> "A. If the sitting MP wishes to stand for re-election, a trigger ballot will be carried out through Party units and affiliates according to NEC guidelines. If the MP wins the trigger ballot he/ she will, subject to NEC endorsement, be selected as the CLP's prospective parliamentary candidate.
> B. If the MP fails to win the trigger ballot, he/ she shall be eligible for nomination for selection as the prospective parliamentary candidate, and s/he shall be included in the shortlist of candidates from whom the selection shall be made" (Labour, 2015, Chapter 5, Clause VI., p. 22).

The first paragraph of Point A. of the article remained unchanged, even during Corbyn's mandates, as well as the other points (C., D. and E.). On the contrary, since 2019 Rule Book (resulted from the 2018 party conference, after the Democracy Review, see Section 4.4.2.), the second paragraph of the point A. has been removed and the point B. substituted with:

> "B. If either one third or more of Party branches, or one third or more of affiliated branches, indicate that they wish a selection to take place, a selection shall proceed. The MP shall be included in the shortlist of candidates from whom the selection shall be made. Where neither one third or more of the Party branches, nor one third or more of affiliated branches, indicate that they wish a selection to take place the MP will, subject to NEC endorsement, be selected as the CLPs prospective parliamentary candidate" (Labour, 2019, Chapter 5, Clause VI., p. 32).

That change procedural changes empowered the party (or affiliated) branches in the MPs selection (and deselection), giving them (reaching at least one third of the same branches within the constituency) the concrete right to ask and obtain a selection process among a shortlist of candidates, including the incumbent MP. Previously, the "process for removing MPs" required to reach "a majority of not only members branches but also Trade Union branches that were affiliated with them". Due to the huge number of trade unions' branches affiliated, getting the majority was extremely difficult, since they were used to "veto any

deselection" (Interviewee 25 - LIE-NL, May 5, 2019). Meanwhile, the new rules separated the unions and the members' branches, enabling both to deselect MPs, separately. Moreover, the threshold for the desolation passed from a simple majority to just a third of the branches (whether members or unions ones). These apparent little changes were at the centre of a great debate and the result of a complex mediation between the demands of the members in the CLPs (supported by the Democracy Review) and the PLP (jointly with other sectors of the party, especially those linked to the right wing). On the one side, the "local activists" were "really waiting for is the green light to be able to deselect" the MPs (Interviewee 23 - L-NL, June 3, 2019). In particular the new members were claiming for "more accountability of their MPs" (Interviewee 25 - LIE-NL, May 5, 2019). On the other side, the MPs "resist[ed] that change", particularly opposing open selection. In between the open selection demands (i.e. "to have a free choice of the MPs" and to "get rid of the current MPs") and the MPs defence of the *status quo*, a compromise emerged, particularly promoted by Lansman and Momentum. According to Interviewee 25 (LIE-NL, May 5, 2019), the result of the compromise has been the possibility to "in principle, reselect everybody every time", making "very much easy to remove MPs" and "very much easier to have a contest". Although he recognised that this was not as "having a free contest every time" (there were not full guarantees), Interviewee 25 calculated approximately "a contest in half the constituencies", considering that as "an enormous improvement". He also argued that the main impact was not the selection per se, but it was to "feel a bit threatened" the MPs, that means that "having the contest makes the MP a bit more likely to do what the membership want". Indeed, according to him, the relationship between MPs and active members has been generally close. The MP for the member is "who comes and speaks to your monthly meeting", who "go[es] knock on doors campaigning each weekend with"; the members "know their spouse or their kids" and "that makes it more personal". Therefore, Interviewee 25 claimed that "the theory behind mandatory selection or open selections" "was not that it allowed to sack them more", instead "what it did was, by having a contest, by forcing people to go through a contest, it made them more responsive". Thus "the effect on the people you didn't get rid of that was more important than the actual getting rid of people". However, not all the membership accepted the compromise. Interviewee 26 (LAO-NL, June 5, 2019) reported that "a lot of people on the left are very frustrated with the outcome of deselection, because they wanted open selection". While she still considered it "a big step forward". In this line, Interviewee 25 (LIE-NL, May 5, 2019) told that the leadership (particularly Corbyn and McDonnell) "have cold feet about open selections, because the MPs were determined to stop

an open selection". Therefore, considering this attitude and concern, he valued the compromise as extremely positive, as well as who finally proposed it. Indeed, despite it has been drafted by Lansman, the official proposal at the NEC was presented "by Tom Watson and Wendy Nichols", "who are the leaders of the right", accepting the compromise "to stop open selections".

4.4.2. Democracy Review

On the 4th November 2017 Labour launched the multichannel process Democracy Review presented as "the most comprehensive projects into Labour Party Democracy ever undertaken" (Labour, 2018b, p. 10), addressed to all the party structure, aiming at empowering the "hugely expanded membership" for becoming "a mass movement which can transform society" (Labour, 2017b).

> "Thousands have joined with hope for political change. We need to build better structures to allow more accountable representation and for our grassroots movement to influence national policy in a way that ordinary members can understand." (Cllr Taiba Yasseen, Rotherham Borough Council, in Labour, 2018b).

Among the declared objectives of the Review, linked to the general democratisation aim, some emerged as the most relevant. Firstly, "to reach into communities and to remove the barriers to getting involved to become a people powered movement for change (Labour, 2018b, p. 10)" focused on the structural obstacles for participation in a traditional party, at all levels, aiming to borrow the movement's model to overcame them. Secondly, "to build better structures to allow more accountable representation and for our grassroots movement to influence national policy in a way that ordinary members can understand" (Cllr Taiba Yasseen, Rotherham Borough Council, in Labour, 2018b) was particularly addressed to the "thousands of people to join the Labour Party" since the "opening-up of Labour's leadership elections" (Labour, 2018b, p. 10). Thirdly, "to really listen to local people and communities in all parts of the country, to involve all the members we have whether they have just joined or been with us for decades and get many more to join as we build a transformational movement" recalled the central role of the local communities in that "transformational process" (Labour, 2018b, p. 11). Fourthly, "to build the mass Party, the social movement which our hugely expanded membership gives us the potential to create" (Labour, 2018b, p.

33) expressed the objective of maximising the new membership surge, involving them through new methodologies and channels. Watts and Bale (2019, p. 110) interpreted the review as "consequence of an earlier emphasis that the leading lights of the left placed on finding a new settlement in which the true voices of Labour's people could be more directly linked to levers of power through greater direct involvement". According to them, the ultimate aim was "not just about enhancing input from the membership", but "instead about transforming Labour into a party where the wishes of members come out on top", configuring "a logical solution to a populist dynamic".

Calling for a review is a prerogative of the NEC leaded by the leader. The reviews characterised the Labour history, for instance before Corbyn, Ed Miliband called two of them: "Refounding Labour Project" and "Building a One Nation Labour Review" (following the Collins Review, see Section 4.1.). According to Interviewee 26 (LAO-NL, June 5, 2019), "neither of those reviews democratise the party that much". The Democracy Review process occurred between November 2017 and September 2018, when the report titled "Labour Party Democracy Review" (see Labour, 2018d) has been delivered to the party, although the process should also include the 2018 party conference, where some of the elaborated proposals were debated and decided on. The process has been led by Katy Clark (Interviewee 29 - LAO-NL, June 18, 2019), jointly with Andy Kerr, Claudia Webbe and Malcolm Powers (Labour, n.d.g). In terms of methodology, the process has been twofold. On the one hand, the report has been elaborated relying on physical meetings with "members of the Party from CLPs, affiliates, women's organisations, BAME groups, disabled members and LGBT+ activists at the branch level and through regional and national structures to the NEC, Leader's Office and Westminster MPs" (Labour, 2018b, p. 10). The organisers declared that "[t]housands of miles were travelled, and hundreds of meetings attended", listening "to what members have said" and basing the report on that (Labour, 2018b, p. 10). Interviewee 26 (LAO-NL, June 5, 2019) describe them as "events where ideas were written down and stuff got submitted". On the other hand, the process invited members, bodies and organisation of the party (or affiliated to) to submit proposals trough an online system. As results, the organisers declared they received a total of "11,425 submissions" ("[a]t the closing date") from "local Labour Parties, trade unions, socialist societies, Labour Party organisations and individual Labour Party members". The two methods were connected, since "[m]any of the submissions reflected hours of discussion at meetings held by local parties" specifically organised in collaboration with the Review staff or independently by the CLPs (Labour,

2018b, p. 10). After the submission phase, the "people overseeing the Democracy Review drafted" the report and delivered it to the NEC (Interviewee 26 - LAO-NL, June 5, 2019).

Among the proposals included in the report, many based on submissions claiming for "a members' led Party at every level" and for "a far higher level of transparency at all levels of the Party", and focusing on how "change the Party locally", in particular aiming at transforming the party into "a social movement, a movement for change", through opening-up its "structures to engage directly with local communities"[292] (Labour, 2018b, p. 31). Waugh (2018) analysed the proposals within the Review, pointing out among the most relevant: "to allow online ballots for annual conference, local constituencies and national policy formulation"; a "'people-powered policy process' to replace the National Policy Forum"; a "review of Parliamentary selections for MPs if Westminster boundary changes go ahead" (see Section 4.4.1.); "to get 'minimum rights' to attend meetings or be consulted online or offline" for members; to "[r]eview of current system of affiliation to local parties by unions and socialist societies"; "to get more time and say over leadership election" for registered supporters; and to extend "the rights for women, BAME, disabled, LGBT members". In many of those proposals the submissions promoted or coordinated by Momentum (see Section 4.3.2.) played a relevant role. Indeed, according to Interviewee 29 (LAO-NL, June 18, 2019), Momentum firstly proposed the Democracy Review during the 2017 party conference, influencing Corbyn's office and the NEC, and then took active part in the process, coordinated by Rachel Godfrey ("on behalf of Momentum"). In particular, the Momentum members were enabled to "submit proposals, amend them and make suggestions" via the online platform *MyMomentum*, which hosted also the voting on them (after being "consolidated down"). The process ended with the submission of the "Momentum's contribution to the Democracy Review".

The Democracy Review submissions have been partially debated during the 2018 party conference, where some of the proposals inspired by the report have been voted on. However, Interviewee 26 (LAO-NL, June 5, 2019) reported that "the report in itself did not become or actually went to conference" and "a lot of stuff got taken out" and "they got diluted through discussions between different stakeholders", since the NEC decided "which of the things would then go to conference to be passed there". Thus, before the conference

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[292] According to the report, "[t]hese points were made at almost every meeting we have attended with members" (Labour, 2018b, p. 31).

few selected proposals passed through a process of re-elaboration and mediation with the leader's office, the trade unions and the NEC, while many of them "didn't ever have a chance of getting through", especially those ones directly promoted by the members (Interviewee 27 - LAO-NL, June 14, 2019). Although many of the Corbynites "were reasonably happy with" the report, Interviewee 25 (LIE-NL, May 5, 2019) recognised that "a lot of it didn't actually come to immediate fruition" and the rule changes proposed occurred partially while "other things that were reserved for the future". Among the outcomes of the Review approved by the conference, Interviewee 26 (LAO-NL, June 5, 2019) identified the deselection as the "most significant", "even though deselection was not supposed to be in the Democracy Review" but "It's kind of associated with that".

The 2019 Rule Book integrated Chapter 1, Clause X., with the Article 6 "Democracy Review" stating that "all rule changes proposed by the NEC in order to give effect to the Democracy Review", "if passed by Annual Conference 2018", "have effect at the close of Annual Conference 2018 and be incorporated into this rule book". This also included "consequential amendments" authorised by the NEC "to give effect to the Democracy Review". Moreover, the same article assigned the NEC with the responsibility of reporting "to Annual Conference 2019 on its progress in implementing the recommendations of the Democracy Review" and the "temporary powers" to amend the rule book with that purpose, which "shall be reported to Annual Conference 2019". Lastly, the article stated that "[all bodies subject to this rule book shall without delay bring their rules and standing orders into compliance with rules created in order to give effect to the Democracy Review" (Labour, 2019, p. 10).

4.4.3. Party consultations

The British Labour Party has historically made limited use of consultations and distrusted the internal referendum, i.e. binding consultation for the party. In particular, the left-wing of the party tended to express criticism regarding the possibility of delegating part of the decision-making to this type of aggregation procedure. Indeed, "the one example of that type of referendum within the party" was promoted by Tony Blair, "before the 1997 election", putting to vote the manifesto between all members (gaining with an overwhelming majority) (Interviewee 26 - LAO-NL, June 5, 2019). During Corbyn's leadership, Brexit (and Corbyn position on it) provoked an intense debate on the possibility of calling a members'

referendum to decide the Labour's official position, mainly claimed by the Remain supporters. Interviewee 26 (LAO-NL, June 5, 2019) expressed her opposition based on the defence of the party's structure and balance (particularly between membership and trade unions), which a referendum would bypass. Differently, the party, even during Corbyn leadership, promoted consultations among members on political topics, which served as consultive opinion polls, both online and via face-to-face events. Among them, the annual National Policy Forum (NPF) policy consultations emerged as the most constant and capillary, which contributed to the NPF periodically reports, although the process by which this occurs is not clear. In this frame, the Democracy Review Report mentioned the "consultation on the National Education Service", reporting positive feedback from members who had attended the consultations". The consultation has been described as a twofold process made up by meetings in the UK between "the Shadow Education team" and "educational professionals and others" in order "to get feedback" and, by CLPs events organised on their own to provide other feedback. The results were "collated with a policy document drafted to be presented to Annual Conference" (Labour, 2018b, p. 80). However, Interviewee 26 (LAO-NL, June 5, 2019) told it's difficult to convince members that [consultations] really matter", since "historically consultations haven't always matter". Therefore, "often those consultations don't get the levels of support and engagement that people are looking for".

4.4.4. Labour Policy Forum

> "Shadow ministers and policy advisers do not have a monopoly on wisdom, so they
> must interact with party members and supporters. By making policy together we
> make better policy" (Jeremy Corbyn MP, June 2015, in Labour, 2018b, p. 78).

At the end of 2016, the Labour Party launched the Labour Policy Forum, an online consultative process supported by a deliberative party platform, aimed at engaging the members and the broader community ("our communities and voters across the whole of the country") in the "Labour's open and democratic policy making process" (Labour Policy Forum, n.d.a). Its declared objective was to "re-shape" the Labour "policy platform to win again" for "ensur[ing] a fairer Britain for all (Labour Policy Forum, n.d.a), particularly linking the policy proposals and ideas elaborated to the party's manifesto. Indeed, Labour Policy Forum could be framed within the Chapter 1, Clause V. of 2019 Rule Book, "Party

programme", which include at "all levels" the members and "where practicable, the wider community" in the process of policy consideration and formulation (Labour, 2019, p. 4). The Labour Policy Forum platform substituted the Your Britain website - active from November 2012 to September 2016 - and it was developed as a relaunch of that deliberative process scarcely used or considered within the party's policymaking. However, since 2003, the Labour launched consultations exercise with digital support. The first was named Big Conversation, followed by other similar initiatives: "Let's Talk", "Fresh Ideas" and "Your Britain" (Gauja, 2015a), all without notable results in terms of internal democratisation.

The Labour Policy Forum was open to Labour Party members, supporters and policy stakeholders, who could submit policy ideas, comment on them, reply to other proposals, and vote on them to show their support. Those proposals were submitted to the National Policy Forum (NPF, see Section 4.3.) - as party body delegated to decide the Labour's political line - and its eight Policy Commissions. The platform allowed people to also: 1) consult the documents published by the NPF; 2) Stay updated on the activity of the NPF's eight Policy Commissions and on other policy updates and consultation events; 3) access training webinars and online contents (Labour Policy Forum, n.d.a). Despite initial emphasis and enthusiasm for the new "online home of policy development and ideas" (Labour Policy Forum, n.d.a), the results have been scarce (Interviewee 25 - LIE-NL, May 5, 2019). On the one hand, the way this initiative was implemented discouraged deliberation. Indeed, it allowed short submissions, of up to 600 words, comments and facultative votes for each proposal that were not taken into account in the offline discussion and were conceived as "a way of sharing views with other users" (Labour Policy Forum, n.d.b). On the other hand, the process aroused limited interest in members and party bodies, starting with the NPF. For instance, in the NPF Report 2018, Labour Policy Forum was only mentioned 12 times, mostly to thank an unspecified contribution. Consequently, there is no evidence of the role of bottom-up inputs. Thus, the deliberative functions were limited and, instead, according to Gauja (2015a), the process seems to foster the individualisation of politics. In this regard, Interviewee 22 (LI-NL, May 19, 2019) and Interviewee 25 (LIE-NL, May 5, 2019) pointed out a critical attitude of the Corbynites towards the Labour Policy Forum, as well as its precursor digital process, particularly linked to Blair's leadership. Interviewee 25 argued that Blair developed this type of processes "as a way of closing down debate, not as a way of facilitating" and his processes and the following were "a sham". According to him, "everybody who participated in it felt that it was a sham" and "it used to produce very bland

policy statements, which are completely unexhaustive". Indeed, he reported that those processes "were not really where the policy development happened", while "it happened here in Blair's office", adding that "it still happens in Corbyn's office", which "inherit[ed] what was done, due to a bunker mentality (see also Section 4.6.). Similarly, Interviewee 22, considered the NPF (and its processes, including the Labour Policy Forum) as a stratagem "to bypass the Conference", since Blair's leadership. At the end of Corbyn's leadership, the new leadership of Starmer initially did not bring about significant changes to the Labour Policy Forum. However, at the time of writing this thesis (last version March, 2022) the observation of the platform showed a lack of updating and an abandonment of this tool. For instance, the homepage still shows the Labour National Policy Forum's video presentation from 2020.

4.4.5. The "Achieve" eLearning platform

In 2018, the Labour Party developed and launched the eLearning platform *Achieve*, which offered each member the possibility of creating his/her own learning pathways on topics linked to the party (activities and history), especially through short explanatory videos (García Lupato & Meloni, 2021, p. 13). *Achieve* supported the activities of the Labour training team that used to produce and disseminate the party learning materials and events. At the moments of the authors participatory observation of the platform, the contents were limited and they could only satisfy general/new members' requests, while they were too few and basic for advanced members. Moreover, the predominant focus of the e-learning contents was to provide skills and tools for election campaigns, especially canvassing and social media campaign. In this context, *Achieve* encouraged the sharing of best practices, including "an annual 'Best Digital Campaign Award' presented at the national party conference" (Dommett et al., 2020, pp. 5-6). The Democracy Review report highlighted the requests for "demystify[ing]" the party, particularly in reference to the party's structure and "how the Party works", since there was a lack in terms of recent publications of "simple booklets on-line, off-line and in other formats" by "the national Party. The report identified in *Achieve* a new and useful eLearning tool in developing phase, "designed to work on computers, tablets and phones" (Labour, 2018b, p. 31).

Figure 4.4 - *Achieve* eLearning platform homepage
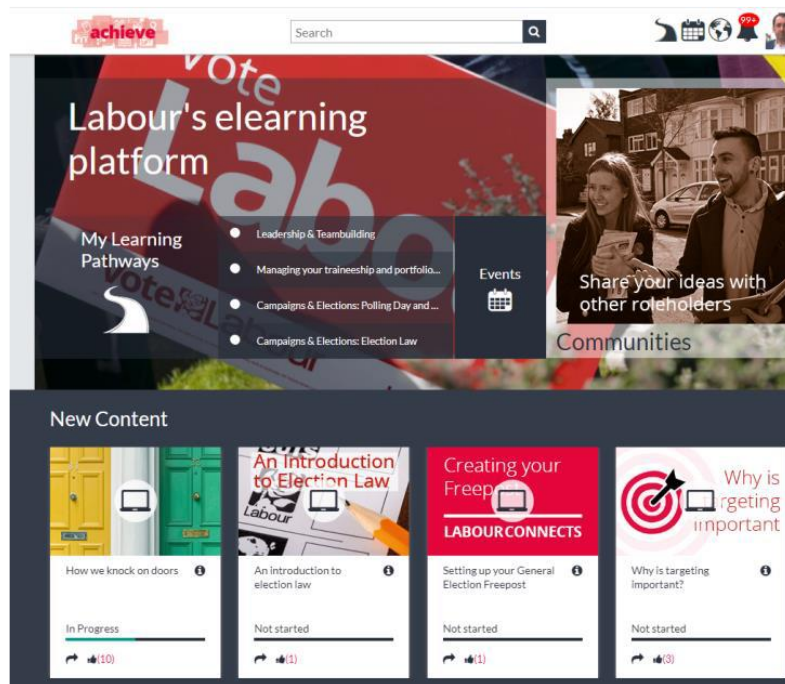
Source: Labour, 2020b.

4.4.6. "The World Transformed"

During Corbyn's leadership, many events and campaigns linked to the Labour party's democracy and community engagement were not organised directly by the party, instead by members' organisations, such as new organisations as Momentum and other left-wing organised factions and groups, both at local and national level. Among those initiatives, a festival organised "at the aside of the Labour conference", named *The World Transformed* (TWT), emerged in terms of participants involved and democratic challenge for the party structure. Initially, the festival was conceived within Momentum, which was exploring the possibility of organising "a big event alongside Labour Party conference". However, although maintaining the project "closely aligned politically and practically" with Momentum, the organisation team founded an "officially independent" organisation, as "a sort of spin-off" with "a separate team" (Interviewee 27 - LAO-NL, June 14, 2019). The first festival took place in 2016, with the declared "attempt to revitalise the left's presence at the Labour Party conference, bridge the gap between the parliamentary and social movement left, and develop a space for radical, participatory and creative political education" (The World Transformed, n.d.). Pushed by the wave of the enthusiasm for the first party's

conference of Corbyn leadership, the festival assembled a mix of people of different backgrounds: such "who had either never been involved in parliamentary politics or had been sort of disillusioned with it", especially "younger people from like the 2010/2011 student protests" and who "have been part of the extra parliamentary left". The organised groups that fed into TWT were mainly "former Trotskyists", "former anarchists" "alter-globalisation" organisations and informal groups, such as Brick Lane Debates, Plan C, and "student movement, particularly a group called National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts"[293] (Interviewee 27 - LAO-NL, June 14, 2019). The festival involved those people for catalysing the "democratic voice of the membership" that used to be "shut down" within the party's structure, including the conferences. Beyond the promotion of the "values and principles of Corbyn", the main idea of the festival was methodological, i.e. "to do something that shows we can do politics very differently". Accordingly, *The World Transformed* consisted in a "four-day festival of politics, culture and art", with many events aimed at "being a bridge between parliamentary politics and social movement politics" and at offering to the movement (Corbynism) "a space where" they "can actually discuss things", express "disagreements and work those through", and "come to a new understanding". In this frame, Interviewee 27 (LAO-NL, June 14, 2019) declared that the festival also focused on making "the discussions much more participatory".

> "It's not just like you come here to listen four people to tell you what, so more to give actually the broader membership and activist base a chance to have these conversations themselves and feed in directly. I certainly think if you [participant] are coming at democracy from a socialist perspective, rather than just like a formal liberal (that you turn up to vote in a general election once every few years)".

At the same time, the festival included "not just political discussions and panel talks, but also music nights, art exhibitions", putting together the "cultural side" of politics and the "political side" of culture. The name chosen was *The World Transformed* and it aspired to express the idea that "the left really needs to think big, and it needs to be focused not just on taking the existing system and making it a bit better and tinkering around the edges", instead looking for a "wholesale transformation" (Interviewee 27 - LAO-NL, June 14, 2019). After the 2016 festival, the organisation expanded its activities, converting TWT into an annual

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[293] "A sort of *millier* of activists with quite a conscious like radical, anti-capitalist, Marxist, anarchist, autonomist sorts of theoretical perspectives in forming it" (Interviewee 27 - LAO-NL, June 14, 2019).

appointment and organising "a series of smaller events" at local and regional level. In particular, in the first half of 2017 it organised "a series of regional events" for "support[ing] building capacity to run events at a local level", which were then scaled-up in a "network for political education events across the country". The "first local Transformed event" took place in the city of Derby in England, called Derby Transformed (Interviewee 29 - LAO-NL, June 18, 2019). Other "entirely self-organised regional events" within the network followed that example, among them Bristol Transformed, Southampton Transformed, Birmingham Transformed (Interviewee 27 - LAO-NL, June 14, 2019).

4.5. The role of digital technologies in the Labour Party's participation

> "Every member should have the right to take part in the Party wherever they live in the country. With new technology this should be more possible than it has ever been before" (Labour, 2018b, p. 41).

Digital democracy claims were a part of the democratisation and renewing process promoted by Corbyn's leadership. With that purpose, since 2015, the party activated a Digital Transformation Team to develop and promote "a raft of new digital tools", composed by party staff who tended to emphasise the "need 'to build our own' systems and expertise", since they were sceptical "about relying on 'existing commercial solution(s)'" (Dommett et al., 2020, pp. 5-6). In the summer of 2016, during Corbyn's second campaign for leadership, the Corbynites disseminated a manifesto titled "The Digital Democracy Manifesto" coordinated by Richard Barbrook, senior lecturer at the University of Westminster (Jeremy for Labour, n.d.). The 3 pages document promoted a series of political proposals relying on digital solutions[294], strengthening the links between Corbyn leadership (and candidacy) and digital democracy, particularly looking at the "techno-youth" or "digirati" members or supporters (Interviewee 22 - LI-NL, May 19, 2019). Within the party official document - among the proposal submitted to the Democracy Review and synthetised in its report (see Section 4.4.2.) - empowering membership through the use of digital tools emerged as one of the most relevant and recurring topics. Indeed, many of the recommendations included the

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[294] The proposals included "high speed broadband and mobile connectivity for every household, company and organisation in Britain", "publicly funded software and hardware to be released under an Open Source licence", "a digital bill of rights", and "online and offline meetings for individuals and communities to deliberate about pressing political issues and participate in devising new legislation" (Jeremy for Labour, n.d.).

use of technologies, particularly for their democratisation potentialities (in terms of Intra-Party Democracy). However, the digitalisation of the party's procedures and the development of new tools and processes clashed with the Labour party's traditional participation, which was based on physical spaces and face-to-face deliberation. According to Interviewee 20 (L-LL, May 8, 2019), the Labour always required "physical presence", since "you have to go to the meeting, you have to be there to vote" and "if you arrive five minutes late for the meeting", and "you haven't heard the discussion", "you're excluded, you can't vote", at all levels "from the local ward, and the branch, to the CLP right up to the conference". It could partially explain why the real implementation of these proposals has been slower and more partial than expected. Indeed, considering the growing trend in the use of ICT since Corbyn's election, the Labour under his leadership generally still adopted digital tools in a limited way.

Analysing the digital use according to the democratic dimensions[295] the following evidence emerged (see García Lupato & Meloni, 2021). In terms of the electoral dimension, the Labour registered a digital IPD gap, if compared with other European left-wing party using primary elections to select party bodies and candidates (such as Podemos, see Chapter 3., and PSOE in Spain, or Partito Democratico in Italy). A mixed-method (online and ballot paper) has been adopted for the leadership's election, while digital voting has been limited in other internal processes; such as MPs candidate selection[296] (see Section 4.4.1.) and party bodies members representing the membership. Overall, the use of digital tools characterised some of the party's processes in association with the deliberative and participative dimensions. Specifically, two digital uses emerged for their relevance in the Labour Party. The first one is the deliberative platform that supported an online process named Labour Policy Forum, analysed in Section 4.4.4. of this thesis. Indeed, the platform supported the online submission of policy ideas and proposals (up to 600 words), which could be commented, debated and 'voted' on to show support. The online participation is open to Labour Party members, supporters, and policy stakeholders. The submissions were delivered to the National Policy Forum (NPF) and its eight Policy Commissions, while comments and facultative votes did not pass the platform's discussion phase, since they were basically considered to be an exchange of views between members (Labour Policy Forum, n.d.b). This

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[295] See Section 1.6.3. on the democratic dimensions.
[296] Also due to the specific characteristics of the party and the British electoral system, which is organised in relatively small constituencies that foster the relations between representatives and voters.

implied a limited deliberative impact of the digital tool on the process. The digital procedure facilitated the gathering of the submissions, in a faster and cheaper way, if compared to an offline process, and it enhanced the whole process allowing continuity in time and opening the process to a wider community (beyond the membership of the party). Thus, the use of digital technologies increased the scale of the process and supported its implementation, while it did not innovate it significatively, compared to an offline equivalent[297]. The second relevant digital use has been at the organisational level through the Labour's "new bespoke digital organising system", *Achieve*, launched in 2018 (Dommett et al., 2020, p. 5), specifically analysed in the Section 4.5.1. The digital system significantly facilitated the organisation of several party activities, and enhanced them providing an efficient shared tool to organisers and participants. It allowed to promote and monitor process faster and on a larger scale, in a way that would have required a greater investment through offline procedure. The digital tools also innovated some of the party's procedures, on the one hand providing a platform for coordination and implementation of different processes at the same time, on the other hand some of the tools and apps developed in *Achieve* supported new activities that - being online - could not have occurred through offline procedures, such as "targeted messaging on Facebook" or digital data analysis (Dommett et al., 2020, p. 5). Moreover, *Achieve* is also the Labour eLearning platform, as analysed in the Section 4.4.5., which digitalised a part of the training activities promoted by the party, particularly through explanatory videos. However, The Labour only moderately uses digital tools associated to other democratic dimensions, mainly to facilitate procedures that are already ongoing in the party; such as the online registration process as a party member (or supporter), including the digital payment of the fee. In terms of the liberal dimension, the economic and financial transparency data of the party is published online on the institutional website of the Electoral Commission, as it is mandatory for all parties in the UK (Electoral Commission, n.d.). Basic data on party bodies and leaderships were published on the party's website, which included a search engine to find the contact of the closest Labour MP or candidate. In this regard, the demand is reduced, since in the UK the public platform *Write To Them* already offers at the institutional level a channel for every citizen to contact their representatives (Write To Them, n.d). While, the leadership activity was reported especially on social media, but there were not tools and channels to communicate directly with Corbyn or his staff. Lastly, regarding the egalitarian dimension, for the first time, at the 2019 annual conference, it was possible

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[297] See Section 1.7 for an analysis of the political parties' digital technologies use in terms of facilitating, enhancing and/or innovating their procedures.

to elect a disabled representative to the Conference Arrangements Committee (CAC), by online voting.

At the local level, the data from the Election Agent Survey in 2017 (in Dommett et al., 2020, p. 6) reported that "of the 333 Constituency Labour Parties (CLPs) who responded the adoption of public facing digital tools is by no means universal". Indeed, on the one side 3 out of 4 CLPs declared to have a "local website for either the candidate or local branch", and 9 of 10 "claimed to use social media in their campaigns", revealing a large majority in such digital uses but also another significant part of CLPs that do not use digital means in two of the most popular applications (website and social media). On the other side, only 38% of the CLPs reported to have "someone in a role that might be described as a 'computer officer'", and "less than a quarter of CLPs claimed to have any kind of website design or content assistance from party headquarters". According to Dommett et al. (2020, p. 6), a "unified central-party narrative" - based on the promotion of the party's digitalisation - "does not necessarily equate to uniform practice on the ground". Indeed, "digital adoption cannot be characterised simply by looking at elite intentions" (Dommett et al., 2020, pp. 15-16), especially in the Labour's case characterised by a complex structure and power balance between different organisations within or linked with the party. Momentum played a central role in supporting the party's digitalisation at the national level, in the conferences, in the Democracy Review and in the campaigning, and at the local level in the CLPs and branches. Jointly with the official party tools, the organisation developed "alternative systems of digital adoption" for the members, offering "external support and expertise around digital technology" (Dommett et al., 2020, p. 12). The Democracy Review report mentioned Momentum as an example of using "technology for a range of democratic purposes", which considered them "cheap and easy to use", implying "less work" for organising the voting and inform the members, basing on its experience (Labour, 2018b, p. 88).

Beyond the implemented digital procedures, the debate on new digital IPD initiatives was lively, showing its relevance for the party; especially among the membership and the Corbyn supporters. In particular, the Democracy Review report stated that its process "looked how" the party could "creatively use social media to build a mass movement" and how it could "use digital technology as part of [the] internal lay member democracy to transform [the] party (Labour, 2018b, p. 87). With this purpose, the document pointed out different proposals based on digital technologies that could impact all democratic principles. For instance,

regarding the electoral dimension, the document suggested that online voting should be gradually deployed for the selection of party bodies, starting with the NEC. In this frame, the report stated that the Labour should develop "secure online voting systems to make it easy and cheap to hold online ballots" (Labour, 2018b, p. 88). While, considering the liberal and the participatory dimensions, the report encouraged the development and use of "on-line platforms, live streaming and video-conferencing" for informing and involving members, especially at the local level (Labour, 2018, p. 35), as well as for promoting e-participation in national initiatives and conferences. Similarly, in terms of the egalitarian dimension, the Review promoted the digital participation in the party's meetings as a form of inclusion of "[c]arers, disabled members, shift workers, women and young members", ""who are least likely to have the time and resources to attend meetings" (Labour, 2018b, p. 87). Furthermore, the report stressed the accessibility of digital democracy, suggesting to the party measures for reducing the digital divide and simplifying digital participation, with particular attention to rural areas (Labour, 2018b, p. 41). Among those measures, the document mentioned "more training, support, materials and guidance from the Party nationally on social media", including "training in moderation for Facebook pages, video, live streaming" and how "enable on line meetings" (Labour, 2018b, p. 87). In respect to the deliberative dimension, the Review focused on the Labour's policy-making process, with a particular reference to the Annual Conference, recommending the use of technologies (Labour, 2018b, p. 87). However, the report also specified that those proposals "would not affect those who do not have access to the internet or would prefer not to use it", being "[t]his type of democratic activity" considered "as a supplement" of the current party structure (Labour, 2018b, p. 88).

In the analysis of the interviews - in their sections that refer to digital technologies and their uses in relation to members' participation - the author of this thesis adapted the categories theorised by Dommett et al. (2020) (see also Section 1.7.1.). Thus, they have been examined seeking in the positions expressed some analogies with them (i.e. "digital adherence", "entrepreneurship", "laggard", "renegade" or "refusenik"). Many of the answers during the interviews expressed points of view that could be associated with "entrepreneurship" or with "renegade" attitudes. The first tended to support the party's tools and digitalisation efforts, but he/she also demanded for further steps in the use of ICTs by the party, jointly with affirming the need to complement the digital tools offered by the central party with others. According to Dommett et al. (2020, p. 12), "Momentum and other non-party networks"

facilitated such "entrepreneurial behaviour". In this frame, Interviewee 28 (LR-EL, June 17, 2019) affirmed that the Labour "should stay more online", implementing initiatives like "web stream[ing] CLP meetings", including the training to do it or to participate online in it. Interviewee 20 (L-LL, May 8, 2019) focused on the "very traditional style campaigning" and the need to renovate it while "reaching all your supporters online", going beyond the tight circle made up by "bang[ing] on the doors of people who you know had voted for you previously". While, Interviewee 30 (LAO-NL, July 19, 2019) proposed a "party's digital platforms for campaigning, getting the party to launch on a democracy platform". He also claimed that "building a party, which acts and feels more like a social movement" implied that the party "functions in a more distributed way", including the use of digital technologies.

The second vision, associated with the "renegade" attitude, included critical concerns on the relation between digital technologies and democracy, although without excluding its use by the party and nor some of its potentials (differently from the category by Dommett et al., 2020). Within this adapted category the interviews pointed out two different points of view. On the one side, some of the interviewees claimed the primacy of face-to-face democracy. It recalled the legacy with left-wing criticism against the "transformation of the Labour Party from a social democratic political party into a marketing organization" precisely "through the adoption of change and process management techniques, in which new technologies have come to play a pivotal role" (Avril, 2013, p. 103), which were particularly linked with the New Labour use of technologies. Interviewee 23 (L-NL, June 3, 2019), although recognising the "very good job of utilizing social media", affirmed that the digital tools could not be "a substitute, in any way, for genuine and physical democratic involvement". According to him, the online engagement should be limited to share and discuss "about different options" and to "consultative votes"; while "the fundamental key of left-wing democracy has to be participation in the debate" excluding that "online forums are the best way to do that". In particular he defined the "keyboard warriors" as "the worst", since they are "person who has the most time at their hands gets to just sit at the keyboard for longest and has the last word on a Facebook thread". The party instead needed "to give ordinary people the time to participate physically". In this regard, Interviewee 23 argued:

> "if you sit at home by yourself, then the person who has the most influence over you is Rupert Murdoch, through the television, through the mass media. If you meet up and discuss politics and then you take a vote after a debate, then you actually have a challenge; you have different forces, different

ideas being able to be thrashed out. You actually come to a much more advanced conclusion, and an idea of what needs to happen to go forwards".

Interviewee 27 (LAO-NL, June 14, 2019), despite considered digital technologies "valuable and important", focused on the bad practices in the use of them for democratic processes. His criticism was particularly based on the individualisation of this type of participation in practice, without any process of deliberation, conversation and of people coming together and working out collectively on a common project. Furthermore, Interviewee 20 (L-LL, May 8, 2019) mentioned the "uncertainty about the security of the internet system", warning on the risk of infiltration, since the difficulties "with the digital age" in identifying "who join a party online, and then engage online" excluding who "planted inside the party to destabilise it".

On the other side, some interviewees expressed their concern on digital democratic procedures in term of the risk of distortion of the Labour's tradition of balance between the party groups and consensual decision-making, particularly referring to the possibility of an expansion of the digital dimension within the party. According to Interviewee 19 (LR-LL, April 30, 2019), democracy, especially through digital participation, tended to "exclude" "one section of an argument, just being better on mobilising than another". For this reason, he argued that to set a high quorum is needed for avoiding "the situations where people are just doing the same things that they did before but online". Moreover, he considered that the Labour already implemented many procedures online, e.g. voting for "representatives of different committees" and "leadership elections", "digital online consultations for different sections of the manifesto" and "members inputs on different policy", even if he doubted that it "makes any difference to what is decided". Concluding, Interviewee 19 claimed for a "huge opportunity for Labour to use technology in a way that increases participation and engagement" on which the party should focus "rather than on democracy". Dommett et al. (2020, p. 10) found similar positions in many of the local parties they analysed, which considered "digital adoption and activity as an optional extra that supplemented parties' day-to-day activities" rather than "as core to the activities of the party". While Interviewee 24 (LR-NL, June 4, 2019) opposed the use of digital referendum within the party, since politics "is always about compromising and balancing competing objectives" and to "click the button" to express preferences "doesn't work" because they "may all be mutually contradictory". Therefore, according to her, the party had "to be quite careful" in giving "the

impression with people that you have a series of votes and that those votes will then lead immediately to a position being taken by the poll", politics instead "has to be a process of trade off and compromise", and "often being together and hammering out those arguments is the way to do it. Not just having a yes/no digital [vote]".

Overall, the digital impact on the Labour Party IPD grew during Corbyn's leadership, supported by a leadership strategy for empowering the membership's role and transforming the party through a members-based legitimacy. Nevertheless, on the one hand, digital democracy within the party found "a lot of resistance" (Interviewee 22 - LI-NL, May 19, 2019); on the other hand, the promoted digital processes tended to make an advisory and organisational use of digital tools (García Lupato & Meloni, 2021). Therefore, the case of the Labour Party under Corbyn's leadership may not confirm Hypothesis 3, which hypothesised the predominance of aggregative Intra-Party Democracy processes and tools over the inclusion or deliberative procedures. Indeed, the Labour in those years mainly implemented non-aggregative digital processes, aiming to mobilise the members and catalysing their support and inputs, which did not include a voting phase, or just a limited consultative one (with the exception of the online voting for selecting some of the representatives of members in the party bodies). For instance, two of the most relevant uses of ICTs were associated with the deliberative (Labour Policy Forum) and participative dimensions (*Achieve*, for organising participation).

4.5.1. The "Achieve" platform

Since October 2018, the Labour equipped its organising teams and members with a "bespoke digital organising system" (Dommett et al., 2020, p. 5), called *Achieve*. The digital software has been centrally designed to support different types of local activists' actions by specific tools and apps, which were accessible only to members. *Achieve* included five new tools/apps/platform. One of them was named *Organise*, defined as "volunteer management tool that replicates many of the functions previously provided by Nationbuilder" (Dommett et al., 2020, p. 5). It included a tool for managing emailing and phone calling campaigns, a "Task Distribution manager" tool and a platform for volunteering. Among its objectives, Labour envisaged sharing "information easily", to "[d]istribute workload" and improving communications (Labour, 2020b). While, *Doorstep App* has been described as "app that allows canvassers to enter canvassing data in real time on mobile devices" (Dommett et al.,

2020, p. 5). It was considered among the campaign tech resources of the party, jointly with *Promote* and *Insight* (Labour, 2020b). According to Dommett et al., 2020 (p. 5), also "prompt[ed] activists to gather certain kinds of voter information when canvassing". Following, *Promote* was a "platform for enabling targeted messaging on Facebook" (Dommett et al., 2020, p. 5). It consisted in a "system to allow local activists to design and pay for adverts that could be targeted on the basis of Labour Party canvassing data and Facebook data". *Promote* accomplished with the dual objective of facilitating the campaigning but also maintaining the control over the publications in the social media, since the adverts were submitted to the "approval to the Regional Office before they were published online" (Dommett et al., 2020, p. 13). According to the research carried out by Dommett et al. (2020), on the one hand *Promote* system "was exceedingly complex" (e.g. with "a 100-page manual") (p. 13), on the other hand "activists circumvented official sign-off procedures and elite control by using the unofficial Facebook advert manager tool" (p. 15). Instead, *Insight* was a "platform for data analysis". Lastly, *WordPress Network* was a "website creation tool" (Dommett et al., 2020, p. 5). All of them complemented rather than substituted other existing party platform and tools, such as *Contact Creator*, *Campaign Creator* and *MemberCentre*.

4.5.2. Gaming

Among the digital activities explored by the Labour Party, the use of games emerged for its peculiarity in the context of political parties. In this frame, the most famous case has been the videogame *CorbynRun* (CorbynRun, n.d.), developed for the 2017 general election campaign by the game designers and tech activists' collective called *Games for the Many* (Waterson, 2017), under the coordination of Barbrook, commissioned by the party. Interviewee 22 (LI-NL, May 19, 2019) reported the development in a mixed team composed by the authors of The Digital Democracy Manifesto (see Section 4.5.) and "young millennials", and the general distrust of the Labour bureaucracy ("if it failed, I'm sure we probably would never get paid for it"). The game was launched a week before the elections, after only three weeks of development, achieving "150,000 downloads, 2 million impressions and international coverage that week" (Carbo-Mascarell, n.d.). Within the videogame, the users could play as Corbyn and 'run', "fighting to take money back from tax-dodging accountants, before activating Labour policies and taking on Conservative ministers" (Waterson, 2017). The objective of the game was continue running, launching

new policy pledges and bringing in more people. In the videogame appeared some of the most important conservative representatives, such as Theresa May, in a bus that the Corbyn character should overrun together with "the combined weight of student, cycle couriers, and parents", Boris Johnson "dangling from a zipwire and attacking Jeremy Corbyn with union jack flags", and Jeremy Hunt piloting an airplane to stop Corbyn progressing (Waterson, 2017).

Figure 4.5. – videogame *CorbynRun*

Source: Carbo-Mascarell, n.d.

Furthermore, following that experience, the Labour developed some training activities based on role-playing exercises, including a series of war games with different scenarios (UpVote 16, 2017). Nevertheless, according to Interviewee 22 (LI-NL, May 19, 2019), the party decided to stop the experimentation before it even began. They were instead used by the organisers in local authorities' activities. Interviewee 22 supported the use of games to improve the Labour members' education, since that "games are good because they have to do something", and they avoid staying in "meetings where you just have the same old people at the front and then you might get one question".

4.6. How the Labour Party use Intra-Party Democracy

All the previous sections of this chapter intersected with the topic of Intra-Party Democracy (IPD) in the Labour Party, since they analysed the party focusing on participation at different levels (i.e. historical, ideological, structural and digital). While this section specifically examined IPD as democratic level of the decision-making process of a party (von dem Berge & Poguntke, 2017, see Section 1.5.), particularly relying on the interviews carried out. Focusing on the IPD toward members, the author adapted the term IPD in reference to the membership's participation within the party's decision-making as intra-party participation.

The Corbyn leadership claimed to bring back the members in the party's decision-making process and some of the reforms proposed and procedures implemented went towards that direction, such as the changes in the MPs candidate selection (see Section 4.4.2.). Beyond the internal electoral dimension, many of the efforts focused on the democratisation of the party's policy-making, calling the membership to "shape the agenda of the party" (Crines, 2017, p. 29). It matched the members requests reported in Democracy Review, which asked for "a meaningful involvement in policy making at all levels of the Party" and "more dedicated discussion of policy at branch and CLP level which feeds directly into the policy making process" (Labour, 2018b, p. 78). In this frame, as stated in Democracy Review's report (e.g. Labour, 2018b, p. 39) and declared by Corbyn (e.g. Corbyn, 2015 in Watts & Bale, 2019, p. 104), the model used as a reference for the renewal has been the social movement model, based on fluid members participation. Indeed, Corbyn's leadership sought to empower the membership, prioritising individual members and balancing the other power groups within the party, first of all the Parliamentary Labour Party. This intent recalled a "a great tradition of Labour renewal" in a Labour left version (Crines, 2015, p. 7) and it has been supported by grassroot organisation such as Momentum (see Section 4.3.2.), which were particularly active in promoting movement activities within and outside the party.

However, in the literature, two other interpretations emerged researching the reason why Corbyn promoted a shift towards members in the Labour's decision-making process. On the one side, according to Crines (2017), the leadership shared "the conception of open (direct) democracy" with the "millennial generation", breaking with "more traditional forms of decision making" within the party. Thus, since the beginning, Corbyn promoted a "genuine democratic engagement and youth citizenship" aiming at fulfilling the promises made to new

members and making room for them within the party. Furthermore, "to involve others in decision making by ensuring their views are heard" accomplished a double objective, both empowering the members and "reshap[ing] how politics is conducted" (Crines, 2017, p. 29). This did not involve only the young/new members, while appealed "emotionally to the disaffected members of the left" too (Crines, 2015, p. 7). On the other side, Watts and Bale (2019) argued that "that Corbynism is an example of intra-party populism", which resorted to "key features of populism" such as "the pitting of a virtuous and homogeneous 'people' against a corrupt and collusive 'elite'" and consequently the claims of being "supremely democratic in their connection to and treatment of this 'authentic' people" (Watts & Bale, 2019, p. 100). According to them, his populism is an intra-party phenomenon (rather than an inter-party one), since it is specifically aimed at reinforcing the leadership positions and legitimising its power, particularly against "the apparently perfidious elite of the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) as MPs sought (unsuccessfully) to remove Jeremy Corbyn as leader" (Watts & Bale, 2019, p. 101). Accordingly, "the language of democracy" was hugely deployed by the Corbynites, claiming for the end of the "supposed subjugation of Labour's membership" (Watts & Bale, 2019, p. 101). It followed a "movement-based visions" that promoted a "sense of homogeneity among Labour's people", "a new activism" and a "new politics" (despite they claimed "the renaissance of an authentic left-wing and member-driven politics" recalling the Labour "old politics") (Watts & Bale, 2019, p. 104). Therefore, the authors affirmed that the "rhetoric advocating an unmediated, redemptive and member-led democracy" provided "an essential weapon for Corbynistas" (Watts & Bale, 2019, pp. 108-109). Both the interpretations mentioned based on the direct relation between the leadership and the membership, diverging on the purpose of it. However, beyond the aims level, the Corbyn's discourse and party changes proposed have been essentially reformist, avoiding "an anti-process and anti-institutional stance". On the contrary, they emphasised the ethos of the "rule-making and processual politics", in particular "restating the primacy of conference" (Watts & Bale, 2019, p. 109). The reformist approach together with the complex and fragmented Labour structure ended in a limited impact in terms of party changes if compared to the democratic claims and purposes declared by the leadership, also considering the early end of the mandate and three electoral campaigns in the middle (two leadership elections and the 2017 general election).

Table 4.2 outlines some of the main characteristics attributed to the Labour Party intra-party participation emerged during the interviews and shows their incidence among the 12

interviewees. In particular, seven characteristics - embedded in four categories ('General', 'Structural', 'Principle' and 'Specific') - have been identified by the author as the most relevant in qualitative terms and recurrent in the interviews aiming at examining the IPD of the Labour and the main debates risen around it (see Section 2.2.1. for an explanation of each characteristic).

Table 4.2 – Characteristics of the Labour Party intra-party participation

Interviewee	Profile	Intra-party participation in the Labour Party						
		General		Structural		Principle	Specific	
		Top-down	Bottom-up	Structured / Bureaucratised	Disconnected	Normative	Factionalist	Unclear
19	Labour party representative at the local level	X	X	X	X			
20	Labour party member and local organiser		X			X	X	
21	Labour party member and scholar on the topic	X	X	X			X	
22	Labour ideologist at the national level	X		X	X		X	
23	Labour party member and editor of a newspaper linked to the party	X	X	X			X	
24	Labour party representative at the national level	X	X			X	X	
25	Labour ideologist and party body member at the national-level	X	X		X	X		X
26	Labour party member and central officer at the national level of an organisation affiliated to the party		X	X	X	X		X
27	Labour party member and organiser of the national events linked to the party	X		X	X	X	X	X
28	Labour party representative at the European level	X			X		X	X
29	Labour party member and former central officer at the national level of an organisation affiliated to the party		X	X			X	
30	Labour party member and central officer at the national level of an organisation affiliated to the party		X			X		

Source: author's elaboration based on the interviews.

Within the general section, 8 out of 12 interviewees (the 67% of the sample) attributed a top-down characteristic to the Labour intra-party participation, while 9 out of 12 associated it with a bottom-up nature, with five overlapping cases. Firstly, the top-down approach tended to be identified by the Corbyn supporters as a failure to break with the authoritarian tradition of Labour's decision-making, especially from Blair onwards. In this frame, according to Interviewee 23 (L-NL, June 3, 2019), during the Corbyn's leadership the tension between "the bureaucracy of the top versus the desire for democracy from below" persisted, where the party was not doing "anything fundamentally different", and comparable to the "undemocratic way that [Blair] ran the party" that they criticised. Although then recognising that the party was "definitely getting more democratic", he claimed that there were "a long way to go in that respect". He particularly mentioned the need to discuss the proposals for democratic changes at the conference, rather than through reviews that used to "get a vague sound". While, Interviewee 25 (LIE-NL, May 5, 2019) described the attitude of the leadership as "bunker mentality", in which they were barricaded, in a context of "a commandment control structure" and under constant attacks from the more conservative sections of the party. Thus, according to him, despite Momentum and the members were "push[ing] for real grassroots democracy", the party was still lacking the democratic decision-making process, such as for the policy process (he affirmed "we still have no policy process"). He reported two illustrative cases. Firstly, the 2017 electoral manifesto "written by Andrew Fisher", which, although being a "good manifesto", "didn't emerge from the policy process", since there were no alternatives in terms of collective elaboration at disposal. Secondly, the 180 motions on Brexit in the 2018 party conference, coming "from around the country", which resulted in a single position (since "there was tremendous pressure to agree on a single position") that were not agreed "on the floor of conference, but outside conference, in negotiations between the leadership and the unions".

However, Interviewee 22 (LI-NL, May 19, 2019) and Interviewee 27 (LAO-NL, June 14, 2019) focused on the lack of "counterweight" to oppose the forces that who are preventing the democratisation of Labour from inside the party. In particular, Interviewee 22 argued that the leadership "is not very empowering people". Indeed, according to him, the "real resistance in the party bureaucracy" stopped the "proposals for participation" and the membership were not sufficiently mobilised to prevent it. He also reported a levelling behaviour at the top of the party, which tended to not trust the membership, going against the law of the party.

"It doesn't matter how much better your ideology is. Once you're in those positions, you start those fears with the members there" (Interviewee 22 - LI-NL, May 19, 2019).

In the same line, Interviewee 27 expressed his opposition to the overlapping between "the leadership of the party" and "the leadership of the movement", claiming for an external "counterweight of the organisation" aimed at "keep[ing] the focus and drive things through".

Among the interviewees who expressed critical positions toward the leadership, Interviewee 28 (LR-EL, June 17, 2019) argued that "Corbyn is supposed to represent a democratisation of the party", yet he substituted the previous incumbent group with his group, using as an argument for the replacement "because they don't have enough support from members". In this regard, he doubted "if there are any opportunities to test that support" and defined it as "the same old processes that allowed people who knew the right people to get into the right positions". In particular, he pointed out the polarisation linked to the Brexit topic that was used as discriminating factor rather than promoting a democratic debate and decision, following the thinking "if people are against our policy, they must be against Jeremy" and "therefore, they have to be defeated". Similarly, Watts and Bale (2019, p. 111) stated that "Corbyn's commitment to grassroots democracy stops short when it comes to EU policy".

Conversely, 9 out of 12 interviewees (the 75% of the sample) referred to the Labour intra-party participation as bottom-up (rarely opposing the top-down characteristic, while in five cases complementing them). For instance, Interviewee 23 (L-NL, June 3, 2019) defined the party as a "a very bottom-up organisation in general" with "a lot of local party democracy". According to him, it was a distinctive element of the party that differentiate Labour from other parties where the IPD is limited to the voting phase, since locally there was "a lot of local Labour party activism that goes on" (in which "the left" was "very organised under the banner of Momentum"). He particularly pointed out the differences between the "Blair right tradition" that used expelling people (including himself) and Corbyn's leadership, which is replacing the right-wing "full-time officials" with "more Corbyn on the left" officials with different attitude toward members, favouring the "coming back to the party" of the people pushed away in the previous years. In this frame, Interviewee 26 (LAO-NL, June 5, 2019) reported that during Corbyn's leadership, the Labour wanted "to come up with more creative ways of engaging members and engaging activists", providing a "community organising

unit" and hiring more than 30 "paid community organisers" with this purpose. Similarly, Interviewee 20 (L-LL, May 8, 2019) affirmed that "the party has changed its procedures" giving "much more authority to the members, as opposed to central committees in the Labour Party", especially "to either change the rules of the party, or to change or to chair particular lead, particular committees". While, Interviewee 27 (LAO-NL, June 14, 2019) envisaged the bottom-up characteristic as programmatic vision for the Corbyn leadership, still in progress. Indeed, according to him, the party under Corbyn should promote "reforms that allow more space for social movements to grow and to act", meanwhile investing in "a serious process of political education and cultural renewal" for "building hegemony" around "an active movement of politically conscious socialists at the grassroots level". He reported instead that "a lot of people who basically share the same analysis and the same strategy" lacked organisation "on that basis", since they were "just dotted around all these different institutions". Thus, according to him, "the problem" was the "no systematic organisation on that basis", which implied that "everyone thinks that we're in a weaker position than we are" and that "everyone thinks everyone else is opposed to it, but nobody knows who actually stands for what".

Associated to the structural section, seven interviewees made reference to the characteristic of 'structured' and/or 'bureaucratised' related to participation within the party. As analysed in Section 4.3., the Labour's structure matched with definition of "labyrinthine" provided by Interviewee 27 (LAO-NL, June 14, 2019). He described the party's structure as "different institutions plugged together", in which the trade unions and the affiliated societies" were "like external parties attached to a broader party". It made "both more complicated in terms of understanding how to change or what to change, as well as like making it possible", up to the point of being "more and more sort of resigned to the idea that fundamentally the party can't be transformed at the least in the mid-term". Thus, the level of bureaucratic complexity, jointly with the dogmatic belief that every change has to be a "weird compromise between different groups and organisations and factions", jeopardised both members participation and leadership democratisation intents. Indeed, according to the Interviewee 27, in the Labour Party was "difficult to change the direction", as "always the case in any big organisation", but even more considering that was "both centralised and decentralised simultaneously" and "tak[ing] over the leadership" was not enough for "chang[ing] everything". Instead, the leadership had "to balance all of these different concerns", such as "the parliamentary party threatening to leave", its "constant hostile stories in the press", and

"some of the unions that are not even on board with the project". Therefore, "all these different structural pressures" (embedded in the British Constitution that force "different political forces" to coexist "in one organisation") led him to state that "Labour is always going to be something of a slightly confused compromise". In this context, the Corbynites "have been sucked into" forgetting "how to organise" them, while they needed an "adequate organisation on an explicitly socialist and democratic basis within the Labour Party, coordinating their participation through "a central hub that connects to the different parts of the Labour institutions". While Interviewee 26 (LAO-NL, June 5, 2019) argued that the Labour had "more than enough procedures" and "more than enough institutions", of which "some of them are significant and change things, some of them are quite tokenistic". Thus, too many procedures and institutions within the party tended to generate tokenistic participation. For instance, she mentioned the policy discussions at the party's conference, which often resulted prosaic with little "possibility of changing".

In the structural frame, some of the interview focused on the trade unions' role in the party, particularly linked to the shift to the One Member One Vote system for the leadership's election (see Section 4.1.). According to Interviewee 22 (LI-NL, May 19, 2019), the aim of this reform was not the membership empowerment but "to get rid of the trade unions". For this reason, that choice provoked a big debate within the party, particularly in the left-wing sectors. Interviewee 22 told that he spoke in favour of it, because it allowed them to get rid of both the "worst" groups, which were the MPs, and the trade unions that he did not trust either. On the contrary, Interviewee 24 (LR-NL, June 4, 2019) affirmed her belief in the "trade unions involvement with the Labour Party", recalling the origins of the party linked with the trade unions. In this regard, she expressed shock for the unusual convergence between "people who are a bit more associated with the right" (precisely "more than Tony Blair himself, but some of the people around Blair") and "people on the extreme left of politics of the Labour Party" in wanting "to break the Trade Union link". Interviewee 19 (LR-LL, April 30, 2019) also reported the intent of "remov[ing] power from the trade unions", considered as "the regressive force". However, he argued that those who were "not happy with the way that One Member One Vote is working" (due to Corbyn's leadership) wanted to move back, giving "more power to the Trade Unions again" as a "more pragmatic force behind this". While, Interviewee 29 (LAO-NL, June 18, 2019) focused in the democratisation of the trade unions instead of reducing their power, especially considering that "the level of internal participation […] within their structures, it's low, it's much lower

than the Labour Party". Interviewee 29 also reported that in the "democratisation of the party" "some stuff just got blocked by trade unions", which aimed to "increase their influence in the Labour", similarly to the other groups within the party (such as Momentum that wanted "to increase the influence of members"). In particular, the NEC, composed by "the trade unions representatives and parliamentary representatives [and] members representatives", had "to agree to the package" of democratisation reforms before to present it to the conference. But, the majority ("trade unions plus the parliamentarians") removed "some of the more radical stuff"; leaving them "out of that package". Thus, according to him, the "internal push and pull" was undermining the democratisation process, even if there were "incremental" changes in place, such as the "increase of the number of members" representatives in the NEC, especially promoted by Momentum. Differently, Interviewee 21 (LS-NL, May 10, 2019) focused on the members role in the party conferences, criticising their "hubristic" attitude in considering themselves to be "the dominant voice in the conference". According to him, on the one hand, it has been "disrespectful of the trade unions" and of the MPs voice, on the other hand, it served the "massive centralization" promoted under Blair. While, under Corbyn leadership, the "three sources of power" reached a "much more balance system". The relevance of such debates highlighted the centrality of the structure in relation to the Labour IPD.

As a second characteristic of the 'Structural' section, half of the interviewees (6 out of 12) pointed out the concept of disconnection between the party's decision-makers and the members, as well as between decision-making and their participation. Interviewee 22 (LI-NL, May 19, 2019) defined the leadership's condition as "parliamentary bubble" (or "Westminster bubble"), in which they "never disagrees because there's a small group" of people and "they are all running around like a hamster". Even recognising that "they have to be in Parliament's where a lot of the power" he reported their disconnection with the party grassroots. Instead, they used to interact mainly on Twitter, which they mainly used for "just shouting at each other". In a more general way, Interviewee 27 (LAO-NL, June 14, 2019) argued that "the leadership, the bureaucracy, the formal structures of the party end up becoming disconnected from the base, from the membership and the mass movement from wider society". According to him, the party lacked "mediating structures and processes" aimed at a double objective: "both to make the leadership, whoever is, like sensitive and responsive to the membership and also to have some proper floats", i.e. avoiding that "the same people running the all-time". With this purpose, jointly with the accountability and

participatory processes, Interviewee 27 claimed that the party should empower the membership, "so the members can become leaders and that they're not just passive participants to this", being instead "actively involved in it, committed to it, understand it, feeding into the strategy". In this regard, he reported that it was "not even on the agenda" of the party. On the contrary, the party adopted the "mobilising model", ending up with:

> "a tightly organised central office that got a big mailing list and it says 'We've got this', 'This march is happening', or 'This protest is or this vote is happening', and 'We're going to mobilise everyone to come out and knock-on doors and whatever'. It's OK, it's being very important, very effective and done certain things, but it also ends up leading the organisation down a certain path. And it makes difficult to change the priorities, such that the priority is not on dialogue with the membership" (Interviewee 27 - LAO-NL, June 14, 2019).

Thus, according to Interviewee 27, the model applied lacked of "the lines of dialogue, the lines of communication", which implied that not even the leadership had at disposal "sufficient democratic sort of mechanisms" to dialogue with the membership, "no mechanisms, no infrastructure for letting the membership and activists and whatever, and no way of joining". Interviewee 26 (LAO-NL, June 5, 2019) reported the disconnection between policy making and members participation. Recognising that the "priority of the left" was "defending Jeremy Corbyn's position", she affirmed that it led to "allow his advisers to […] put in the policy proposals that we all wanted". Indeed, particularly for the 2017 Manifesto, the proposals "came from the policy advisers", they "didn't come from National Policy Forum or conference or anything like that". In this frame, she reported that the manifesto in the Labour was ultimately decided by the "Clause V meeting", "at the beginning of each election", attended by "people from NSC, shadow cabinet, trade unions", while the deliberation in conferences, National Policy Forum and Policy Forum was mainly consultative and lobbyist, without guarantees of influencing the decisions. According to her, the members "don't want to make life difficult for Jeremy Corbyn, but they want to have a say" on that. However, she also affirmed that the party was planning a "review of the policy making process" in that direction, in which she doubted "if there will be a future for the National Policy Forum".

Following with the analysis of the characteristics pointed out in the interviews; in six of them, a normative principle emerged in the intra-party participation of the Labour. It referred to the centrality of the party's norms in regards to the membership's participation, since one

of the main goals of the members was to reform them. According to Interviewee 26 (LAO-NL, June 5, 2019), the Labour "already got, very strong procedures, structures, conventions, rules", which "go back one hundred and twenty years" and "they have their flaws, they have their pros, but they are there". Thus "you can't just replace them with some new things" ("it has a consequence"), while supporting a reformation of them was possible. Accordingly, Corbyn's leadership as supported by the membership were "trying to change existing tools", rather than create new "tools like project". Differently, Interviewee 27 (LAO-NL, June 14, 2019) argued that they spent "too much worrying about the formal mechanisms"; particularly in reference to Momentum, he reported that it's "very good work" that was "done about democratising the party" and "has mainly been focused on the sort of formal" aspects, such as the MPs' selection. While, according to him, "there's more to democracy than just having a vote everyone on them", indeed "it's also about both having means of communication and means of discussion, and transparency, so about knowing who's doing what, about having the forums to discuss it". Some other interviewees indirectly highlighted the centrality of the formal mechanisms, particularly focusing their attention on the shift to the One Member One Vote system for the leadership's election (see Section 4.1.), considered as the main structural change of the last decades in the Labour Party in terms of democratisation. According to Interviewee 22 (LI-NL, May 19, 2019) the party "has democratised quite a bit" through this normative change, adding "I mean inadvertently by", since the aim of this reform was not the membership empowerment but "to get rid of the trade unions" (see above).

Two other specific characteristics emerged in the interviews as related to the Labour IPD: the factionalist approach of participation within decision-making and the general definition of 'unclear' referred to the party decision-making, which particularly undermined the members participation. Firstly, 8 out of 12 (the 67% of the sample) interviewees mentioned factionalism in reporting the relation between the groups within the party, which deeply impacted on participation within them. As mentioned in the Section 4.1. and 4.3., the history (within the British political system) and the structure of the Labour mutually influenced the fragmentation of the party into different groups that competed for the power. Both the adherent and critical categories of interviewees tended to refer to factionalism as a central element of the party's processes highlighting the negative aspects. Interviewee 28 (LR-EL, June 17, 2019) criticised the "fragmentation" of the party defining it as "factionalism", which promoted nepotism through a "closed network system" that "allowed people who knew the

right people to get into the right positions". Similarly, Interviewee 27 (LAO-NL, June 14, 2019) reported "individualistic basis" of the decision processes, particularly referring to the left of the party. In particular, he used the expression of "Chinese whispers" to defined the "elaborate circuit of different people, talking to different people, talking to different people", which often ended up with "lots and lots of friendly fire", mixing "personal issue", "logistical issue" and "serious political divide at stake" into the factional fights. While, Interviewee 20 (L-LL, May 8, 2019) reported that the "constant battle within the Labour Party about the right and the left" pushed away many activists ending up with "the same people" in "the local constituency forums, and agenda groups, and then youth groups, and all of those things", which became "almost tokenistic". Nevertheless, according to him, under Corbyn's leadership this was changing "because of the new membership", mainly "the left-wing Corbyn supporters have either joined or become active". However, many of the tensions between the groups remained and Interviewee 20 especially blamed "the right-wing Labour MPs" for them ("probably are Tories who are sort of undercover"), who were "attacking Corbyn constantly".

Interviewee 22 (LI-NL, May 19, 2019), although sharing similar accusations to the right Labour (which he described "terrified, because the last thing they want is democracy"), recognised that the Labour "should have centrist and right-wing because, otherwise, it'll just be a left-wing sect. It wouldn't work". Furthermore, he argued that at that moment (in 2019) the "real debate" was "within the Corbyn faction, because we're the dominant faction now". In this regard, Interviewee 23 (L-NL, June 3, 2019) identified the main problems in "the Corbyn movement" in the Corbyn-dependence, the "too defensive" approach and the lack of discussion and sharing of aims. Firstly, he reported that in Corbyn's movement meetings "you can't criticise Corbyn", since "there's no one else that has the trust of the activists", depicting a "Chavez-type figure". According to Interviewee 23, it was a "big danger" that generated a "football team mentality: you're either with Corbyn or you're against them". Conversely, the Corbynites should "have a space where you can say: actually, we think, Corbyn is making a mistake here", especially for preparing for "the idea that there is life after Corbyn as well". Indeed, although supporting Corbyn as leader, he affirmed that "you can't rely a movement on one figure", "you need to have a movement from the bottom up", in which "you need good leaders, but that's not a substitute for grassroots organisation". Secondly, Interviewee 23 described the reaction of the leadership and its supporters as "too defensive", in response to the "endless attacks basically against Corbyn from day one".

Indeed, "constantly accepting criticisms" caused "frustration" in the membership, since they opposed the Corbyn "attackers" while "the leadership that they've elected" was "constantly compromising and not taking a stand". Lastly, as a third problem, Interviewee 23 argued that there was a lack of discussion and sharing on the aims of the Corbyn movement and of left Labour, beyond the claim of "hold the line" ("what is the line?" he asked). According to him, staying united is not enough, until "you've not said exactly what we're united and if not had those conversations". Indeed, "suppress[ing] the political debate" implied that "people can't openly say things, because they don't want to undermine the leadership", assuming deep differences while there was "often a lot more common ground than people realise[d]". In particular, the lack of debate and shared aims led to actions being mainly based on "single-issue campaigns", while "everything else is just trapped in this sort of confused kind of social democratic fudge, where we never quite agree".

In conclusion, 4 out of 12 interviewees defined the decision-making of the party as unclear, along with the possibility of participating within it.

> "Who's making which decision? Why? What are the politics behind it? What should be the politics of the [party]? […] If nobody knows actually what is going on, who is making the decisions, why did this happen, why did this not happen, everyone is just like doing this weird Kremlinology trying to guess" (Interviewee 27 - LAO-NL, June 14, 2019).

Interviewee 27 linked the "democratic engagement" with the "transparency", arguing that the Labour did not have "the lines of communication" to provide any to a sufficient degree. Therefore, according to him, the party should involve the members by allowing them to "understand what they're doing" and "what they'll be committed to doing" in order to promote a political change "led by a mass movement". In this frame is affirmed that "the only way to like get people involved, to get them committed, to get them functioning effectively is to have some sort of system where they can feed into the democratic process, where they can feed into the strategy". He reported that in the Labour, the strategy of combining participation with communication was lacking, especially because "nobody is really in charge" of that. Although he also recognised that this mainly depended on the unexpected victory of Corbyn and the inexperience of many of their supporters ("doing it in completely chaotic process, with all this pressure, all these things to worry about"), Interviewee 27 argued that the strategy for setting a "functioning participatory model of

democracy" was still "not entirely clear". Referring to unclear process, Interviewee 28 (LR-EL, June 17, 2019) mentioned the National Policy Forum, describing it as an "opaque" system. Thus, he reported that it was "very hard for people to participate in that process", since it was not clear how the policy-making worked. Interviewee 26 (LAO-NL, June 5, 2019) described the NPF "a bit of a joke" that "most people just don't take it seriously at all". She told that "the engagement with it is very limited", despite "it looks like participatory" and it "appears to be, from the outside, […] the body that will allow members to really change the policies". While, she argued that "what people do take seriously is party conference". However, even in that case "the mechanism between policy change and party conference and how that affects actual party policy is not clear". For instance, "some people assume (or they think) that if conference changes something therefore that automatically will be like in the manifesto", which "is not the case in reality", even if "it's not insignificant either", since "the symbolic power of conference is significant". Indeed, "the engagement is significant" with the party's conference, "even known on the face of it, it's not on paper, it's not clear how it will change anything". In this regard, one of the submissions to the Democracy Review stated:

> "Members are concerned about the lack of clarity regarding how the detail of Labour Party policy is formulated and the shortage of opportunities to share views on policy between CLPs and between individual members" (Witney CLP Submission in Labour, 2018b, p. 78).

In conclusion, different aspects have been highlighted in this section on the Labour's IPD toward members and its characteristics. A complex frame emerged, where it was clear that there were tensions and divergences between the leadership - mainly supported by the membership - and other groups within the party. Their impact slowed the party's path towards reform and democratisation. The reform proposals were particularly oriented towards empowering the role of membership, opposing (or counterbalancing) the Parliamentary Labour Party, and trade unions up to a certain extent too. The evidence presented in this section (jointly with the others that intersected IPD topics) suggests the confirmation of a part of Hypothesis 2 of this thesis. Indeed, the Labour procedures towards individual members and its intra-party participation tended to promote a participation that deliberately supported the leadership's position and legitimised it. Nevertheless - although individualisation tendencies have been active in the party for decades (see Gauja, 2015a) -

the multi-centralised party structure (jointly with factionalism, bureaucratisation and reformism) still prevented disintermediated participation during Corbyn's leadership.

4.7. Conclusions

This chapter has analysed the case study of the British Labour Party's members' participation under Corbyn's leadership in its context, at different levels. In the first section, the Labour Party has been introduced, particularly touching on the New Labour period and Collins Review and focusing on the history of Corbyn's leadership, including its background. The second section examined participation at an ideological level, analysing the interpretation(s) and the characteristics attributed to participation under Corbyn's leadership. The third section presented the legal and organisational level of the Labour, focusing on how the party is organised in function of members' participation, including an analysis of the membership categories and trends and the reference to the grassroot organisation Momentum. The fourth section took into analysis the main party procedures for members' participation beyond the participation embedded in the party's structure. In the fifth section, the role of digital technologies in the Labour Party has been studied, researching their usage in participation as promoted by the party. Lastly, the sixth section focused on the Intra-Party Democracy of the Labour, focusing on the characteristics attributed to its intra-party participation.

Some elements emerged for their relevance (at ideological, formal and empirical level) along the sections, providing evidence to test the research's hypothesis for the Labour's case. Firstly, the interpretation of participation in the Labour Party under Corbyn's leadership relied both on the centenary tradition of the party and on the historically left-wing claims, outlining a relation of path-dependence. Despite the differences pointed out by some of the interviewees critical to the leadership and the different point of views within its supporters, the evidence suggested partially confirms Hypothesis 1. Indeed, under Corbyn, the Labour Party strengthened the centrality of members' participation in the party's discourse, interpreting it as an identity and a distinctive element of the party. In particular, during those years, the Labour sought to renew the historical bonds between the party and the members aiming at rebalancing the power relation within the organisation. Thus, the participation promoted by the party had a mainly internal value (in terms of identity and instrumental). This reduced the role of participation in term of rekindling political parties' legitimacy in

front of the electorate, as hypothesised by the last part of H1. Although the party used to make reference to the central role of the local communities, participation in the Labour seem to be mainly considered an internal factor.

Secondly, the members participation procedures promoted by the party and the democratic reforms proposed by the leadership and its supporters mainly aimed at empowering the role of membership, opposing (or counterbalancing) the influence of the Parliamentary Labour Party and (up to a certain extent) also of the trade unions. Although both procedures and reforms (including the Democratic Review) tended to have a limited impacted in the slow and troubled path of changing the Labour's party, they mainly promoted a participation that deliberately supported the leadership's position and legitimised it. Therefore, according to the evidence presented in the sections, the author considered to confirm Hypothesis 2 of this thesis in terms of relation between the participation procedures and promotion and the reinforcement of the leadership position. However, the research carried out did not no provided sufficient evidences to confirm the part of H2 related to disintermediated participation. Indeed, factors such as factionalism, bureaucratisation and reformism within a complex structure composed by different centres of power hindered relevant forms of disintermediation, although pointing out the disconnection between most of the possibility for members' participation and the decision-making process of the party.

Thirdly, the use of digital technologies increased in the Labour Party since Corbyn's leadership, both in terms of tools and impact on different democratic dimensions. Along with the conjunctural factors to support the use of new technologies in the XXI century - i.e. less expensive and capable of scaling-up processes - the ICTs have been a significant part of the leadership's strategy (especially supported by Momentum) for empowering the membership's role, and organising members' mobilisation, which tended to support the leadership. Nevertheless, this purpose clashed with the resistance within the party, in the bureaucracy but also among the leadership's supporters who associated digital participation to tokenistic and individualistic participation (remembering the Blair leadership). It resulted in processes and procedures that tended to make an advisory and organisational use of digital tools (see García Lupato & Meloni, 2021). Furthermore, they were mainly non-aggregative digital processes; oriented to mobilise membership and gather their inputs, but poorly and unclearly connected to the decision-making process (excluding a voting phase, or only

including a consultative one[298]). Therefore, the Labour Party use of digital technologies did not confirm Hypothesis 3, since the empirical evidence did not show a predominance of aggregative Intra-Party Democracy processes and tools over the inclusion or deliberative ones. In summary, hypotheses 1 and 2 have been partially confirmed for the case of the Labour Party in the timeframe 2015-2020 (during Corbyn's leadership), while hypothesis 3 has not been confirmed.

In conclusion, the chapter pointed out a high level of complexity in analysing the Labour Party case in general, and particularly over the role of participation in a reforming phase of that party. Summarising the empirical evidence and the analysis of this research for answering to the main research question, the Labour Party under Corbyn leadership tended to assign to members' participation the role of supporting the leadership and its proposal for reforming the party, while claiming for its democratisation.

> "A historical perspective is the key to democratic politics, which if denied can bury the real issues and confine news coverage to high-level gossip about the rich and the powerful, reducing us to the role of spectators of our fate, rather than active participants" (Tony Benn, in Nichols, 2014).

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[298] Except for the online voting for selecting some of the representatives of members in the party bodies.

5. THE ROLE OF MEMBERS PARTICIPATION, IPD AND DIGITAL PROCEDURES IN PODEMOS AND THE BRITISH LABOUR PARTY: MIRRORING THE TWO CASE STUDIES

"Probably a lot of those Podemos people, if they were in the UK they would be in Momentum and the Labour Party. And a lot of Momentum and Labour people, if they were in Spain, they would be in Podemos. Because I think the politics are the same, and the energy, the desire for change is very similar as well" (Interviewee 29 - LAO-NL, June 18, 2019).

Podemos (2014-2020) and the Labour Party (2015-2020) are two comparable but genetically different cases. On the one hand, Podemos is a new and challenger party (Hobolt & Tilley, 2016; Lavezzolo & Ramiro, 2017), categorised as a digital party (Gerbaudo, 2019). The party developed at the same time both its' structure at all level and participatory procedures, both moulded from scratch by the foundational group (particularly by the leadership). On the other hand, the Labour is a traditional party with more than a century of political history (including 13 governmental mandates from 1924). The party undertook reforms to empower the role of the membership since 2015, particularly promoted by the new leadership of Jeremy Corbyn. The leadership change marked a shift for the organisation, influenced by the legacy with the left-wing tradition of the Labour. However, the changes have been limited by the party's structure and the power balance between the party's groups, in particular with the opposition of a large part of the Parliamentary Labour Party.

Despite their differences (also in terms of contexts and political systems), the parties shared important similarities in their central roles; attributed to participation during the time frame of the research. Among them, both organisations implemented procedures and processes that addressed to members, publicly declaring a strong commitment to participation and Intra-Party Democracy. In this chapter, the analysis of the two cases in a comparative perspective follows the same scheme used in the chapters of the single-case studies. Therefore, the following sections focus firstly on the interpretation of members participation in the two cases (at an ideological level); secondly, on the procedures (processes and tools) embedded in the legal and organisational frameworks; thirdly on the role of digital technologies within the parties, and fourthly on their IPD and intra-party participation.

5.1. Participation as ideology: similarities and differences between the cases

The foundation of Podemos as a participatory method open to all citizens (Iglesias, in Giménez San Miguel, 2014) and the Labour's democratic reforms responded to both internal and external demands, which supported the rise of a new party and the party change within

an established one. Adapting Harmel and Janda (1994) model, endogenous and/or exogenous factors impacted in the trajectories of the two parties, either at an initial phase or a turning point. Podemos has been presented as new party seeking to distinguish its political proposal from the traditional parties affected by corruption scandals and accusations of bad government, particularly aiming at recovering the rooted lack of credibility in the electorate. Therefore, it configured an external stimulus linked to the political environment (see Harmel & Janda, 1994, pp. 267-268), which implied a systemic shock. In this frame, Podemos claimed for a new relationship between representatives and represented citizens, interpreting members participation as a way for breaking the boundaries between society and the party (recalling the demands of the anti-austerity protest movements arisen in the years preceding its foundation). Accordingly, since its foundation, Podemos identified participation as one of the principal features of its identity and declared its commitment for citizen participation and democratic deepening.

While, the Labour Party under Corbyn leadership sought to renew its traditional mass party model looking for a new role for its membership, aiming at reaffirming the historical bond between the party and the members and counterbalancing the power within the party, especially to the detriment of the Parliamentary Labour Party. In this case, the party change has been caused mainly by an internal factor, since it has been linked to the "leadership change" supported by the "change in dominant faction(s)", respectively the first and the second internal variables included in the Harmel and Janda model with an additive impact on the party (1994, pp. 266-267). Hence, differently from Podemos, the Labour tended to consider participation an internal factor for the party, since participation produced its main impact within the party supporting that change. However, also the external stimuli played an important role in the change within the Labour. On the one hand, the change of the leadership occurred after the resignation of the previous leader (Ed Miliband) due to the disappointing results in the 2015 general elections, mainly because the party failed in its primary goal of reaching the government in the essentially bipartisan UK system (as also analysed by Harmel & Janda, 1994). On the other hand, the election of a markedly more radical leader such as Corbyn - described "by traditional Labour Party terms, a very left-wing leader" (Interviewee 24 - LR-NL, June 4, 2019) - has also been linked to the broader context of party crisis. As analysed in Chapter 1., the principal-agent problems tended to foster the governing role of the parties to the detriment of the representative function (Mair, 2009). It generates the withdrawal of the parties from both the civil society and their members/voters, who develop

mistrust and indignation against parties; perceived as disconnected elites (particularly in context of economic systematic crisis). In this frame, the Corbyn political proposal called for a new role for the membership against the elites (power groups) that used to rule the party. It mirrored the external stimulus that prompted the foundation of Podemos, but mainly within the same party. Indeed, the Labour Party under Corbyn's leadership interpreted the membership's surge that supported the change of the leader (jointly with the promotion of their participation) as a core value for the party, with a double cause-and-effect relationship, mutually reinforcing.

Thus, the presented evidence pointed out that both parties (in the time frame of the study) recognised participation as a fundamental value, promoting it as an identity and distinctive element; as hypothesised in H1. In particular, two linked aims emerged in assigning centrality to members participation in both parties. First, the promotion of participation aimed at increasing membership, claiming for a new protagonist role for the members and/or sympathisers (in comparison to the other parties or to the same party during the previous years/decades). Those aims counteracted the declining membership trends (see van Biezen et al., 2012), broadening the base to legitimise the party, and attracting new members to increase its representativeness toward the voters.

Secondly, counting on a large and growing membership, both parties tended to seek members participation for fostering the leadership's legitimacy, supporting through participatory procedures and membership mobilisation its decisions and positions. In Podemos, evidence showed that the search for legitimacy through participation had a twofold target. Within the party, it was oriented to the search for direct support to the leadership (bypassing other internal levels of the party, such as the regional and local ones), along with the opposition towards the party's minorities (such as the *Anticapitalistas*, and the *Errejonistas* later). Towards society, the aim was to rekindle political parties' legitimacy in the electorate (as hypothesised in the last part of H1), particularly by differentiating Podemos from the other (traditional) parties. On the Labour Party side, the aims to promote participation were mainly addressed on an internal level, particularly focusing on the reallocation of power withing the different internal groups and on the defence of the party's leadership against its opponents, first of all the organised wide majority of the MPs, jointly with the pre-Corbyn party bureaucracy and the conservative sectors of the affiliated trade unions.

In term of how participation has been interpreted, Podemos and the Labour embedded a high level of complexity within the parties' positions and factions. In the time frame of this research, both were particularly divided into the supporters ('oficialists') and critics in relation to the parties' leaderships (with a variety of nuances in the intermediate positions). All those different positionings composed the "inclusive authorship" of the party, challenging or preserving the "party members' moral agency" in expressing the internal dissent (Bhatia & Wolkenstein, 2021, pp. 436-437). In particular, how participation has been conceptualised and assessed within the party largely depended on support (or lack thereof) to the party's leadership. The 'oficialist' positions tended to support the leadership's efforts for fostering participation; sharing its aims and strategies and being consequently less critical with the way it has been developed. However, analysing the interviews carried out for the two case studies, important differences along that division emerged between the two parties. In Podemos, the 'oficialists' tended to express a pragmatic vision of members' participation, emphasising its identity's value, but also limiting it in terms of action, decision-making, time and space, following the leadership's positions and decisions. While the critical voices blamed the leadership for breaking the participation promises and for promoting a diluted participation, especially aiming to reinforce its supremacy within the party. In the Labour Party, instead, the supporters of the leadership tended to claim for more members participation, often reproaching Corbyn for too moderate party reforms in this direction (although recognising the structural difficulties of undertaking them). While the critics of the leader expressed their concern for an instrumental use of members' participation, defending the historical balance among the party groups and constitutional sources, in which the membership represented just one of three pillars (together with the Parliamentary Labour Party and trade unions).

Examining those positions in the two parties, some analogies emerged between the critics of the leadership in Podemos and the Labour Party 'oficialists' in terms of demanding more participation for the members. On the contrary, the 'oficialists' in Podemos shared the role of 'participation keepers' (in terms of limiting it) with the critics to the Labour's leadership (albeit with profound differences). This could be explained by the different natures of the parties, particularly in terms of the role of the leadership and power balance, but also by different levels of leadership support within the two parties. Indeed, in Podemos the leadership has rarely been contested within the party (for instance, no real opponents

challenged Iglesias in the primary elections). Being a digital/movement party relying on a very strong (and symbolic) leader, the demand focuses on horizontal and structured participation, not directly opposing Iglesias' leadership. Whereas in the Labour Party, Corbyn's leadership has been severely contested by the Parliamentary Labour Party and other power groups since the beginning of the first mandate (interrupted after just one year calling a second leader election). Since their criticism and attacks were deliberately faced through membership support, the vision on members' participation has been markedly different between the 'oficialist' and the critical groups within the party. Table 5.1 shows the main characteristics (see Section 2.2.) attributed to participation in both parties.

Table 5.1 – Characteristics of Podemos and the Labour Party participation: interviewees' interpretations

	Participation for Podemos and the Labour Party							
	General		Use		Specific			
	Identity value	Instrumental value	Specific time & space	Reinforcing role	Unmediated / Direct	Controlled	Lobbying	Balanced
Podemos adherent interviewees (6)	6	0	3	1	2	2	/	/
Podemos critical interviewees (10)	7	3	4	8	2	5	/	/
Podemos total (16 interviewees)	81% (13)	19% (3)	44% (7)	56% (9)	25% (4)	44% (7)	/	/
Labour Party adherent interviewees (9)	8	6	3	8	/	/	4	3
Labour Party critical interviewees (3)	2	1	1	1	/	/	3	2
Labour Party total (12 interviewees)	83% (10)	58% (7)	33% (4)	75% (9)	/	/	58% (7)	42% (5)
Podemos & Labour Party total (28 interviewees)	82% (23)	36% (10)	39% (11)	64% (18)	-	-	-	-

Source: author's elaboration based on the interviews.[299]

As can be seen in the table, the interviews pointed out important similarities and some differences in interpretating how participation has been experienced in the two parties. Firstly, the identity value emerged in the vast majority of interviews (82% of the

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[299] See Section 2.2.1. for an explanation of the clusters of the characteristics and Annex 5 for the extended version of the table.

interviewees), with almost identical incidence between the two cases. It confirmed Hypothesis 1, remarking the centrality of participation in both parties' discourse. At the same time, the majority of the interviewees (64% in total) argued that participation has been mainly used to reinforce the leadership's position; often excluding the empowerment of minorities/opponents through participation. However, in Podemos the critical interviewees mainly reported this use (8 out of 10), generally criticising it as an exploitation of participation for individual purposes. Whereas in the Labour, 8 adherent interviewees (out of 9) supported the use of participation as a form of legitimising the leadership and its democratic reforms. The percentage of incidence of the instrumental value characteristic, instead, differed in the cases. 7 out of 12 (58%) of the Labour Party interviews attributed this characteristic to the participation in their party, identifying participation as a tool to reach the aims of the party and for the country more than an aim in itself. In particular, 6 of the adherent interviewees linked the instrumental value to support the renewing of the Labour led by Corbyn. On the contrary, just 3 interviewees (critical ones) expressed similar position in Podemos, mainly referring to a distortion of participation within the party.

In the 'Specific' section the characteristics has been identified separately, depending on what emerged in the interviews. Indeed, they pointed out two different elements. In Podemos' case, the control has been identified as a relevant characteristic of participation by 7 interviewees (44% of the total), who reported the controlled interaction between members and the leadership (or the party structure controlled by the leadership). This interpretation of participation has been strictly linked to a new party moulded by the leadership with a clear majority. Differently, the control did not characterise the Labour Party's participation, since the party rooted its structure and ideology on a centenary tradition, in which the historical left-wing has just been a part of the story, often minoritarian. While other two linked characteristics emerged in the interviews of the Labour case. The first was the slow reform processes, the highly bureaucratised party structure and the power of the PLP, led to a participation mainly based on lobbying; aiming to influence the party's bodies, leadership and conferences more than serving as a direct decision-making tool. The second was the power balance between the groups within the party impacting the role of membership exercised through participation, balancing between the aspiration to have greater power in hand of the members and the respect of the party's structure, forces and regulation.

5.2. Participation in Podemos and the Labour Party: from the legal and organisational frameworks to the parties' procedures

As examined in empirical terms, the legal and organisational framework had a significant impact on how the participation has been implemented within the two parties (or promoted by them). The analysis of the Podemos party' documents showed a strong centrality of participation, which has been declared a founding and distinctive element of the party. Since the pre-foundation manifesto that presented the political platform *Mover ficha: convertir la indignación en cambio politico* (Making a move: turning indignation into political change, 2014), the references to participation and democracy characterised all the party's documents, both political and organisational ones (see Section 3.3.). While, in the Labour Party Rule Book (2015-2020) - main annual document containing the overview of the party's regulations/structure – the mentions of participation and democracy tended to be linked to functional aspects in relation to the structure, although the references increased during the Corbyn leadership (especially in the 2020 Rule Book, Labour, 2020a). However, those documents included the Appendix 1 titled "NEC statement on the importance of our members", which specifically focused in the central role of the party members and their participation as party agents in the local communities (Labour, 2019, p. 76).

Comparing the main parties' documents of the two parties, the Podemos ones made a more political and programmatic use of the references to participation than in the Labour ones, where participation is mainly framed in organisational aspects. It may be explained by the different histories of the parties, since Podemos - being a new party, founded on the claims of participation - had the need to reaffirm its identity in the party's documents, while the Labour Party had a settled identity based on a 'minimum, common multiple' strategy developed in over a century of history by the various groups that composed it. Indeed, even in the presence of a new leadership aiming to promote greater participation and empowerment of membership, this was reflected in minimal (sometimes significant, more often marginal) changes in legal terms. In similar ways, on the one side, Podemos developed its structures and procedures (processes and tools) for members' participation with broad creative possibilities, implementing but also replacing or eliminating the procedures, and moulding the structure according to the leadership's vision (voted by members via primaries, jointly with some organisational consultations). On the other side, the Labour Party under Corbyn's leadership had to lead with an almost fixed structure and with a complex power

balance between different groups and organisations within or linked with the party. Therefore, it tended to promote specific reforms and to mainly foster already existing IPD procedures, predominantly giving consultative roles to new IPD processes.

Beyond the party structures, the discourses that supported the procedures implemented by the two parties in the time frame of the research highlighted different models of participation followed by Podemos and the Labour Party. Indeed, Podemos' discourse tended to evoke the "participatory model of democracy" (Teorell, 2006), considering participation as the act of taking part in the decision-making process, which requires "maximum input (participation)" linked to the outputs that include "not just policies (decisions) but also the development of the social and political capacities of each individual" (Pateman, 1970, p. 42). Whereas the Labour Party mainly relied on the "responsive model of democracy", which considers participation to be an "instrumental act through which citizens attempt to make the political system respond to their will" (Teorell, 2006, p. 789). Adapted to the party, this model aimed at collecting the preferences and needs of the members through their participation, defined in terms of "influencing attempts" (Verba & Nie, 1972, in Teorell, 2006). That model was complemented by the Labour with the deliberative model of participation, which interprets participation as a democratic process for overcoming the mere aggregation of interest "through arguing, demonstrating, expressing, and persuading" (Mansbridge et al., 2012, p. 19).

Those models of participation applied to the Podemos and the Labour Party decision-making reflected the two logics theorised by von dem Berge and Poguntke (2017, p. 138): the "direct (plebiscitary)" logic in Podemos and the "representative (assembly-based) decision-making" in the Labour. Accordingly, Podemos mainly developed and maintained over time aggregative procedures based on members voting between predetermined alternatives, claiming for the participation of the members in the decision making (even if - particularly in the first stage of the party - Podemos experimented procedures and tools along the different democratic dimensions). In this frame, the "direct (plebiscitary)" decision-making tended to not provide participatory mechanism for setting the agenda or either for elaborating or modifying the questions (or proposals) submitted to the members vote. Differently, the efforts of the Labour under Corbyn's leadership focused on empowering the membership role within the party supported by consultative processes to influence the party's bodies, jointly with deliberative processes. More specifically, the Labour tended to prioritised the

discussion within the party's meetings, representing and balancing the different interests of the groups within the party following the "representative (assembly-based)" logic (von dem Berge and Poguntke, 2017). However, this logic in the Labour Party has been often applied without a clear connection between the assembly-based phases and the decision-making, especially regarding the party's policy-making. The procedures and processes developed by both parties have been analysed in detail in the two single-case chapters (see Section 3.4 and 4.4.), Table 5.2 provides an overview linking them to the democratic dimension on which they were based.

Table 5.2 – Podemos and the Labour Party procedures and tools for members participation

Democratic dimensions	Podemos	Procedures & tools	Labour Party	Procedures & tools
Electoral	Members voting for selecting party leader, all candidates and bodies members was mandatory (mainly online via the Podemos platform *Participa*).	(Online) Primaries	Members voting for Leader, Deputy leader and the members' representatives in the party bodies (generally via mixed method: online/offline). The Parliamentary candidate selection has been reformed during the Corbyn mandates.	Candidate selection
Participatory	Procedures for opening the party decision-making to the registered members (mainly online, via OPP *Participa*). Only microcredits maintained its initial purpose, while the consultations have been essentially top-down.	Participatory electoral manifestos / *Consultas Ciudadanas* / Participatory financing & Microcredits	Consultative procedures (and single processes) mainly aiming at gathering members' inputs (generally not including a voting phase). From October 2018, digital and traditional activism promoted by the OPP *Achieve*.	Democracy Review / Party consultations
Deliberative	Online deliberative platform (October 2015 - July 2019), disconnected by the decision-making process. In 2019, it has been replaced by the Territorial Support Office.	*Plaza Podemos*	From 2016, online deliberative platform (substituting the Your Britain website), consultative and not clearly connected with the party policy-making.	Labour Policy Forum
Inclusive	Processes and tools for linking the party to organisations, volunteers, sympathisers, and society in	*Bancos de talentos* (BdT)	Training initiatives (offline and online) and support of *Achieve* platform.	*Achieve* eLearning platform

	general. BdT disappeared without Podemos ever systematically using it, while *IMPULSA* has been suspended after the third edition (January 2017).	*IMPULSA*		
Accountability	Specific and informative website (not always properly updated). Until July 2019, Open Seat section in *Plaza Podemos*.	*Transparencia Podemos*	Transparency data online on the institutional website of the Electoral Commission.	/
Extra	Democratic innovations promoted by the party (especially Participatory Budgeting).	Civic participation	Initiatives linked to the party conferences.	*The World Transformed*

Source: author's elaboration based on Section 3.4 and 4.4.

As Table 5.2 shows, Podemos has developed a greater number and more varied and systematic procedures for the participation of members in comparison with the Labour, especially when considering the temporal nature of Democracy Review and party consultations. Nevertheless, 4 out of the 8 Podemos procedures have been eliminated (or officially replaced) by the party after few years. In particular, they were the procedures linked to non-aggregative dimensions: deliberative (*Plaza Podemos*) and inclusive ones (*Bancos de talentos* and *IMPULSA*), jointly with the participatory electoral manifestos that combined the participatory and deliberative dimensions. Moreover, the use of *Consultas Ciudadanas* pointed out a discrepancy between the original declared objectives of this consultation tool and its evolution and uses (see Section 3.4.2.). Thus, the procedures that have been maintained over time mainly relied on aggregative dimensions: electoral (primaries), participatory including voting on referendums (*Consultas Ciudadanas*), jointly with the participatory financing (microcredits) and the accountability (*Transparencia Podemos*).

Differently, the Labour Party under Corbyn's leadership promoted 5 procedures, 4 of them non-aggregative, i.e. consultative (and deliberative) processes to gather inputs from the members and convey them within the party's bodies and the annual conferences. For instance, the changes in the MPs candidate selection were supported by the Democracy Review processes, increasing the role of members organised in Constituency Labour Parties in selecting the party representatives. Furthermore, the *Achieve* eLearning platform aimed at

training and empowering membership, especially for including them in the party structures and activities (first of all electoral campaigning). These procedures are more limited and less innovative in relation to the party structure, and have remained so over time; not experiencing significant variations. Thus, the analysis of both parties' procedures (tools and processes) showed evidence that may confirm Hypothesis 4, since Podemos (new party committed to participation) developed more procedures for members participation (with a higher level of innovation) in comparison to the Labour Party (traditional parties with the same commitment). At the same time, Podemos tended also to experience more setbacks in the members participation than the Labour, as also hypothesised in H4. Although this result based on an analysis limited to two cases and further research are needed, the lack of causal relation between number of procedures and their institutionalisation and quality matches with the "paradox of participation" theorised by Baiocchi and Ganuza (2016) to explain the global evolution of democratic innovations. Indeed, despite the spreading of Intra-Party Democracy initiatives, a high number of innovations did not correspond with the promises of opening and deepening democracy within political parties as many expected.

5.3. Digital participation: digital parties VS digitalisation of parties

Many of those procedures analysed in the Podemos and the Labour Party cases relied on digital technologies, either partially or entirely. Despite the expected results from the comparison of two parties with different origins and characteristics, both combined participation and digital, implementing digital IPD procedures. On the one side Podemos has been categorised as digital party by Gerbaudo (2019), which interpreted digital technologies as a tool for democratisation following a utopian vision of technology. In the same line, Raniolo & Tarditi (2020) defined the use of technology a constitutive element in the quest of internal democracy in Podemos. Thus, since the party's foundation, digital participation has been part of the Podemos DNA, in terms of narrative, party documents and usage (see Section 3.5.). On the other side, albeit the Labour Party historically based its activities on in-person participation and consequently digital democracy found "a lot of resistance" (Interviewee 22 - LI-NL, May 19, 2019), the democratisation and renewing process promoted by Corbyn's leadership relied on digital democracy's claims. For instance, the creation of a Digital Transformation Team at the beginning of his first mandate (Dommett et al., 2020) - or the publication of The Digital Democracy Manifesto (Jeremy for Labour, n.d.) supporting Corbyn's second campaign for the leader's election in 2016 - reinforced the

centrality of digital for the party leadership. While, in the party's official document, the Democracy Review's report (see Section 4.4.2.) included the empowering of membership through the use of ICTs among the most relevant and recurring topics. In this frame, many of the recommendations included the use of technologies, particularly for their democratisation potentials (in terms of Intra-Party Democracy).

Although with relevant differences, both parties claimed for the democratic potential offered by new technologies in terms of facilitating, enhancing or innovating the participation within the party (see Section 1.7.). Analysing the digital dimension of participation in the two parties, a complex scenario emerged. Indeed, the evidence showed that technologies were not neutral in their impact on democratic dimensions within the two cases. While aggregative procedures are highly salient and the most used to promote internal democracy, they are just one part of the story. Scholars studying digital parties have critically assessed the impact of technology on IPD, highlighting the difference between the claims and the reality of digital democracy (Gerbaudo 2019, p. 185); the continuing existence of the gap between voters and members despite new forms of membership (Gomez & Ramiro, 2019); and, even if adopting disruptive innovations, the limits for solving the erosion of legitimacy of parties (Raniolo & Tarditi, 2020). In continuation with this debate, the study of the cases of this thesis pointed out two relevant insights. Firstly, depending on the party, the digital technologies have different impacts on the democratic dimensions. In general term the non-aggregative dimensions are tendentially less developed by digital IPD, supporting a minimal definition of (internal) democracy to the detriment of more deliberative or egalitarian ones (García Lupato & Meloni, 2021), fostering in particular plebiscitary leadership tendencies (Ignazi, 2020, p. 16). It has been the case of Podemos where the internal democracy was mainly delegated to the members voting on representatives or top-down consultations. Indeed, as hypothesised (H3), Podemos especially used digital technologies for aggregative procedures, which was particularly visible in the evolution of the processes and tools over the time, since the party maintained the aggregative ones eliminating or replacing the procedures related to other dimensions. Differently, the Labour Party under the Corbyn leadership implemented mainly non-aggregative digital processes, aiming at mobilising the members and catalysing their support and their inputs, mainly impacting in the deliberative and participatory dimensions. They did not include a voting phase, or just a limited consultative one (with the exception of the online voting for selecting some of the representatives of members in the party bodies). Therefore, the Labour case did not provided

evidence for confirming Hypothesis 3, which hypothesised the predominance of aggregative Intra-Party Democracy processes and tools. It could be explained by the advisory and organisational usage of digital tools in the Labour ("as a supplement" of the current party structure, Labour, 2018b, p. 88), which albeit in a growing trend still did not have a significant impact on the party decision-making. More specifically, on the one hand the Labour tradition, structures and norms limited the real implementation of the proposals for the party's digitalisation; resulting in a slower and more partial process than the leadership expected (see Dommett et al., 2020). On the other hand, the Labour tended to show concern on the digital democracy, especially in terms of the limitations of digital aggregative procedures. As argued by Interviewee 24 (LR-NL, June 4, 2019), limited the decision-making to "click the button" generally "doesn't work" because the preferences expressed "may all be mutually contradictory".

Secondly, the comparison pointed out the existence of a digital convergence between the two different cases, showing a double movement. On the one hand, a digital party like Podemos increased the plebiscitary outcomes and takes steps back in terms of digital IPD. On the other hand, a traditional party like Labour developed (or discussed) new digital initiatives on various dimensions of democracy, with similar objectives to digital parties. Thus, the analysis of the evidence highlighted a trend that challenges the boundaries of the single categories based on the digital use, such as the digital party by Gerbaudo (2019). However, having (or lacking) diverse digital internal processes, did not automatically preclude that one party was more internally democratic than another. On the contrary, despite digital technologies providing new mechanisms for participation, deliberation, accountability, and so forth, they also reinforced same of the trends that characterise the crisis of the political parties. Among them, digital participation in Podemos and the Labour Party often fostered the individualisation of politics (Gauja, 2015a) and promoted "reactive democracy", calling the membership to react to external inputs generally to reinforce the leadership position or ratifying its decisions (Gerbaudo, 2019). Furthermore, the cases showed that, unlike core IPD processes that normally require congress approval for changing them, digital democratic procedures tended to be conceived more as tools rather than substantive procedures by both parties. This understanding facilitated the development of digital initiatives but also their elimination or marginalisation - especially the non-aggregative ones - without an internal debate or a formal process, particularly in Podemos' case.

"The technology is a site of struggle. Isn't it? We can push the technology one way or the other. But I don't think technology is the problem anyway" (Interviewee 22 - LI-NL, May 19, 2019).

5.4. Intra-party participation in Podemos and the Labour Party

All the sections of the empirical chapters intersected the topic of Intra-Party Democracy (IPD)[300]. Referring particularly to Section 3.3. and 3.4. for the analysis of the legal and organisational framework that regulates Podemos and the Labour Party IPD, at this point the comparison focused on a general discussion on IPD toward members, defined here as intra-party participation.

The analysis of the Podemos IPD pointed out the tensions between an initial organisation as a movement party and the institutionalisation process. It impacted in the party procedures that have been abandoned and on the hierarchisation of the original governance structure; experiencing relevant setbacks in terms of intra-party participation. Kitschelt (2006) examined similar trends studying the movement parties. Whereas with the Labour Party being characterised by a high level of institutionalisation, Corbyn's leadership has been inspired by the social movement's model of fluid members' participation. The reference to that model has been stated in the Democracy Review report (e.g. Labour, 2018b, p. 39) and declared by Corbyn (e.g. Corbyn, 2015 in Watts & Bale, 2019, p. 104). Accordingly, this narrative encouraged the promotion of some new procedures for members participation and reforms for empowering of the membership role. Whether the Podemos transition from movement to institutionalised party or the "movementisation" of the Labour Party (Avril & Béliard, 2018) converged toward institutionalised parties that made instrumental use of participation.

In this frame, author as Watts and Bale (2019, p. 101) studied populism as an intra-party phenomenon, their analysis mirrored the Labour Party's narrative on the role of members and their participation with the Podemos populistic claims. Similarly, Whiteley et al. (2019, p. 96) described the Labour under Corbyn leadership as a "powerful case study of the part

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[300] Defined as democratic level of the decision-making process of a party, including different democratic dimensions (von dem Berge & Poguntke, 2017), see Section 1.5.

played by the 'left behind' in explaining the growth of left-wing as well as right-wing populism". They linked the surge of membership and the "resurgence of grassroots political activism" to the "widespread distrust of existing political elites and articulating anti-corporate and anti-globalisation sentiments", catalysed by Corbynism within the Labour. The research carried out on the two cases confirmed some of the analogies pointed out by those authors in terms of populistic use of intra-party participation, but also presented evidence that differentiated them, particularly in terms of institutionalisation of the participation, aims for promoting it and contexts of applications. On the one hand, Podemos leadership led the institutionalisation of the party controlling participation and reinforcing its plebiscitarian nature that limited participation to ratification (at least at national level). On the other hand, the Labour Party's leadership sought to empower the membership's role as inspired by the movement model, aiming at balancing the other power groups within the party, especially to limit the influence of the Parliamentary Labour Party. More specifically, Corbyn's leadership pushed a shift in the *locus* of power, from the Parliamentary Labour Party to the party's leadership, through the participation of the individual members.

Despite the differences between the cases, the evidence presented in the single-case chapters may tendentially confirm Hypothesis 2 of this thesis. Indeed, in Podemos and the Labour Party under Corbyn's leadership, the party's procedures towards individual members tended to promote a members' participation that ends up favouring the leadership's position. On the one side, Podemos procedures towards individual members has been widely used as a form of bypassing the party's branches and activists promoting a disintermediated participation easily influenced by the leadership, particularly supported by digital technologies. On the other side the Labour procedures towards individual members and the intra-party participation promoted by the leadership tended to be deliberately aimed at supporting the leadership's position and legitimising it. Nevertheless, in the Labour case, despite the individualisation tendencies (Gauja, 2015a), the multi-centralised party structure (jointly with factionalism, bureaucratisation and reformism) still prevented disintermediated participation.

Furthermore, intersecting the data gathered in the fieldwork through the interviews, other relevant elements emerged from the comparison of the two cases. Table 5.3 aggregates the main characteristics attributed to intra-party participation by the interviewees, according to their perceptions (see Section 2.2.1.), and their incidence among the interviews of both

parties.

Table 5.3 – Characteristics of Podemos and the Labour intra-party participation: interviewees' interpretations

	Intra-party participation in Podemos and the Labour Party									
	General		Structural		Principle		Specific			
	Top-down	Bottom-up	Struct.	Disconnect.	Deliberative.	Normative	Plebiscitary	Majoritarian	Factionalist	Unclear
Podemos adherent interviewees (6)	4	6	4	0	2	/	0	4	/	/
Podemos critical interviewees (10)	6	3	2	5	0	/	8	6	/	/
Podemos total (16 interviewees)	63% (10)	56% (9)	38% (6)	31% (5)	13% (2)	/	50% (8)	63% (10)	/	/
Labour Party adherent interviewees (9)	5	7	6	4	/	5	/	/	6	1
Labour Party critical interviewees (3)	3	2	1	2	/	1	/	/	2	3
Labour Party total (12 interviewees)	67% (8)	75% (9)	58% (7)	50% (6)	/	50% (6)	/	/	67% (8)	33% (4)
Podemos & Labour Party total (30 interviewees)	60% (18)	60% (18)	43% (13)	37% (11)	-	-	-	-	-	-

Source: author's elaboration based on the interviews.[301]

As shown in Table 5.3, the 'General' categories reported the most relevant data, since the 60% of the interviewees (18 in total) defined the intra-party participation within their party as top-down and/or bottom-up. Despite some of the interviewees mentioning the two characteristics at the same time, their two identical results (above 50%) could point out a contradiction in the visions. Nevertheless, distinguishing between the interviewees' categories of adherent and critical toward the leadership, more consistent results emerged analysing the data. Indeed, in both parties the majority of the adherent interviewees attributed 'Bottom-up' characteristic, while the majority of the critical interviewees opted for describing the participation within the party as top-down. These results confirmed that the

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[301] See Section 2.2.1. for an explanation of the clusters of the characteristics and Annex 6 for the extended version of the table.

adherence/criticism categorisation has been a crucial variable in assessing the participation within both parties.

In the Podemos case, the interviewees who reported centralisation and top-down decision-making argued that it was mainly linked to the leadership's fear of losing control during the phase of structuring and expanding the party, defined as "*miedo al desborde*" (fear of overflow) (Interviewee 8 - PE-LL, June 15, 2018). It was based on "*pánico a la gente*" (panic to people) in relation to the risk of losing the "*oportunidad histórica*" (historic opportunity) of gaining the election and governing the country (Interviewee 3 - PFE-NL, June 11, 2018). Similarly, some of the Labour Party interviewees who identified the top-down characteristic pointed out the "bunker mentality" of the leadership (Interviewee 25 - LIE-NL, May 5, 2019). However, Podemos leadership has been mainly criticised for abusing of their top position against the uncontrolled members participation, while the Labour leadership for being barricaded for defending its position in "a commandment control structure" under constant attacks from the other power groups within the party. In this frame, some of the interviewees supporting the Labour leadership tended to identify Corbyn's failure in breaking with the authoritarian tradition of Labour's decision-making, especially from Blair onwards. On the contrary, the interviewees who expressed critical positions tended to report the instrumental use of members' support promoted by the leadership aiming to replace the previous incumbent power group with the Corbyn group in ruling the party from the top-down (Interviewee 28 - LR-EL, June 17, 2019).

Thus, both parties experimented the tension between "the bureaucracy of the top versus the desire for democracy from below" (Interviewee 23 - L-NL, June 3, 2019), differing on the role of the leadership in that dynamic. In Podemos, the leadership tended to centralise participation to control the party, especially facing the conflicts within it; particularly after the second Congress that was won by Iglesias (which made public the conflict with Errejón), vertical integration has been higher (Barberà & Barrio, 2019, p. 258). For instance, the Citizens' Consultations evolved towards centralisation (see Section 3.4.2.), since they have changed, hampering the participation between members and branches, and they have been called just by the executive branches (whether the Secretary General or the Citizens' Council). While, in the Labour Party, the leadership was unable to control the entire party (given the structural and historical condition), therefore it tended to mobilise the members promoting their participation with the aim of legitimising its position; opposing the other

power groups within the party, especially the PLP. For instance, the Democracy Review supported the party reforms promoted by the leadership in the party conference(s).

Conversely, the 60% of the total interviewees (18) referred to the intra-party participation of their party as bottom-up, among them, all of Podemos' adherent interviewees and 7 out of 9 of the adherent interviewees of the Labour's case. In general terms, the two bottom-up visions differed among the parties in the agents that promoted participation from the bottom, although if connected to one another. In Podemos, some of the interviewees pointed out the role of the participatory tools developed to involve members in the party's decision-making (Interviewee 6 - PE-LL, June 14, 2018; and Interviewee 13 - PE-LL, September 18, 2018). Similarly, Interviewee 7 (PR-RL, June 14, 2018) focused on the absence of mechanisms to impose the leadership's choices in the Podemos base, and he argued that the party's representatives' role was limited to present the situation and make proposals. Indeed, according to him, unlike the traditional parties, Podemos did not have a "*botón rojo*" (red button) to serve the top-down purpose. In empirical terms, the bottom-up approach was included in the initial development of some of the main party's procedures, such as *IMPULSA* (Section 3.4.5.) and the Bank of Talents (Section 3.4.4.), which have been both eliminated along the years. While in the Labour Party, some of the interviewees argued that the bottom-up approach was linked to the party's culture and decentralised structure based on local party democracy (Interviewee 23 - L-NL, June 3, 2019). Indeed, they identified the bottom-up approach as a party methodology beyond single procedures, differentiating Labour from other parties where the IPD is limited to the voting phase. The adherent interviewees particularly tended to recall the historical bond between the party and the members, which (according to them) has been jeopardised by the "Blair right tradition" and rekindled by Corbyn's leadership.

In conclusion, the research of this thesis on Podemos and the Labour Party under Corbyn's leadership confirmed that - in the periods analysed - both parties moved in the direction of strengthening and adapting their internal structures, involving members and supporters more intensively (see Ignazi, 2020). Despite framed around different party models, they converged in strategies aimed to bring back the citizens into the political arena, through participation and Intra-Party Democracy (see Scarrow, 1999). The evidence and its analysis presented in this chapter in comparative perspective (and separately in the two single-case chapters) supports the authors in providing an answer to the main research question of this thesis. The

common role that has been given to members' participation in the reshaping of Podemos' and the Labour Party's organisation at the national level tended to be the reaffirmation of the leadership's positions and its legitimacy, often promoting participatory procedures disconnected to the real decision-making process. In Podemos, the participation incorporated a certain level of contradiction between an original narrative based on citizens' participation and its implementation (and evolution[302]), pointing out a conflict of interest in the leadership that ruled the procedures for participation. In the Labour Party, instead, since the first leader election campaign won by Corbyn, the leadership widely claimed for the democratisation of the party; deliberately asking for the members' support in reforming the party, opposing the party's elite (PLP as well as the bureaucratic structure). Therefore, the instrumental use of participation by the party's leadership to strengthen their power (or at least to legitimate and conserve it) prevailed in both parties, but they differed in terms of communication of the strategy and relation with the membership.

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[302] Experiencing profound differences in the participation in the territories.

CONCLUSION

"L'altrove è uno specchio in negativo. Il viaggiatore riconosce il poco che è suo, scoprendo il molto che non ha avuto e che non avrà"[303] (Calvino, 1972 p. 379.)

The 'Western' democratic crisis is the context where (and in opposition to) new parties developed, and some traditional parties renewed their organisations. They sought to promote a different image of the institution of parties, relying on the support of the membership and sympathisers, expressed by their engagement and participation. Indeed, with this purpose, many parties - within the 'Western' party systems - assigned an important role to participation of the party's members, shaping or changing their structures and procedures towards Intra-Party Democracy (IPD) and other hybrid forms of citizen's engagement. This participative wave in political parties started in the '90s, but the phenomenon expanded in geographical terms during the last decades, and it counted on the development of new procedures and tools - especially digital ones - addressing more open targets compared to traditional procedures. Nevertheless, the spread of procedures, processes and tools did not match an equivalent quality trend, especially in terms of effectiveness and inclusion in decision-making. Similarly to the surge of democratic innovations within public institutions, it generated a "paradox of participation" (Baiocchi & Ganuza, 2016), widely dissatisfying the declared promises, which many expected. Hence, the participation promoted tended to respond to the leadership's quest for legitimisation and support, more than to the democratic opening and deepening in contrast to the crisis of representative democracy. In this frame, the digital technologies played a central role. Despite the expectations claiming the so-called "liberation technology" (Diamond, 2010) that also fomented the utopian vision of technology within political parties (Gerbaudo 2019, p. 3), the promises have not been fulfilled. Indeed, digital procedures tended to facilitate or enhance the procedures based on the aggregative dimension - often reinforcing the leadership's position - or to promote consultative processes disconnected from decision-making. Overall - despite innovative intents, party reforms and procedures for members participation - the results in terms of legitimacy and credibility are still insufficient. On the one hand, new parties - that claimed to be markedly different from the traditional ones - tended to face similar problems, getting close to the traditional parties in the collective imaginary. On the other, traditional parties in their reformation phase tended to struggle in renewing their structure and changing the decision-making toward a more open and inclusive process.

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[303] Elsewhere is a negative mirror. The traveller recognises the little that he/she owns [knows], discovering the much he/she has not had and will never have.

In this frame, the thesis focused on the role of members' participation in the reshaping of political parties' organisation; at the theoretical level, contextualising the crisis of political parties into a broader democratic crisis; and at the empirical level, analysing and comparing two case studies: the Spanish party Podemos (2014-2020), new digital party-movement; and the British Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership (2015-2020), long-standing party in reforming phase. In particular, the objects of study have been the procedures (processes and tools) for members participation implemented by the two parties at the national level, including in the analysis: (1) the parties' ideological interpretation of participation, (2) structures and legal framework, (3) the use of digital technologies, (4) IPD and intra-party participation. With this purpose, after the introduction of the topics and the research design, the thesis has been structured as follows.

Chapter 1. presented a review of the literature on the thesis' topics, starting from the broader context of the democratic crisis (Section 1.1.) and the parties as objects of study. Following, the analysis moved specifically to the literature on Intra-party democracy (IPD) (Section 1.6.), including digital IPD (Section 1.7.). The structure of the theoretical sections reflected the research's path, from the crisis of representative democracy to the reaction(s) to it by many parties; it aimed at showcasing to readers the keys to understand how the author framed the topics, and his reference in examining the empirical results of the research carried out. While Chapter 2 examined the thesis' methodology, in terms of the methodological choices (based on the literature) and research design. Hence, the chapter focused on the Case study's research methodology, relying on the indications of Merriam (1998), Stake (1995, 2006) and Yin (1994, 2014), among the others (Section 2.1.). It has been applied to the analysis and comparison of the two cases, for pointing out the characteristics, differences and similarities in the use of participation within the party. With this purpose, Section 2.2 developed the research's framework and design, including the four research hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): In parties that recognise participation (even if regulated and limited in time) as a fundamental value, it is promoted as an identity and a distinctive element of the party, in particular aiming at increasing the membership and rekindling political parties' legitimacy in front of the electorate.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): The party's procedures towards individual members (generally through digital technologies) tend to promote a disintermediated participation that ends up favouring

the leadership.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): The digitalisation tends to work better for aggregative Intra-Party Democracy processes and tools, while it struggles for other dimensions such as inclusion or deliberative ones.

Hypothesis 4 (H4): New parties committed to participation tend to develop more procedures for the members' participation (with a higher level of innovation) in comparison to traditional parties with the same commitment, but those new parties tend to also experience more setbacks in the members' participation than the traditional ones.

While Section 2.3. presented the case selection, including the description of the cases that based the selection. The second chapter also included the contextualisation of the author's positionality and reflexivity (Section 2.4.).

Chapter 3. opened the empirical part of the thesis, presenting the case study research on the role of participation in Podemos. The first section (3.1.) introduced the case framing the party through its history (since the foundation), main characteristics and ideological background. Dialoguing with the literature on Podemos, the party has been analysed relying on the models shaped on the party (or used for analysing it), among them, the movement party (Kitschelt, 1988), the digital party (Gerbaudo, 2019; 2021), the (new and) challenger party (Hobolt & Tilley, 2016; Lavezzolo & Ramiro, 2017) the techno-populist movement (Bickerton & Accetti, 2018) and the party-television (Domínguez & Giménez, 2014). The case study results have been divided into the sections according to four main axes. Firstly, Section 3.2. focused on the interpretation of participation for Podemos at ideological level, particularly in pointing out the recognition of participation as a fundamental value, promoted as an identity and distinctive element towards both membership and society, aiming at rekindling political parties' legitimacy within them (as hypothesised in H1). However, despite the democratic claims, the research indicated that members' participation tended to be mainly promoted to foster the leadership's legitimacy.

Secondly, Section 3.3. examined the legal and formal organisation framework of the participation within the party. While the main procedures for members participation beyond the party's structure have been analysed in Section 3.4., in separate sub-sections. Among them, the study focused on the use and evolution of aggregative procedures, such as *Consultas Ciudadanas* (Section 3.4.2.) and online primaries (Section 3.4.6.), and non-

aggregative ones, such as *Plaza Podemos* (Section 3.4.3.) and *IMPULSA* (Section 3.4.5.). Thirdly, the use of digital technologies and its impact within Podemos has been studied in Section 3.5., which resulted in a differential impact of the digital technologies in the democratic dimensions. Indeed, confirming Hypothesis 3, Podemos' used digital technologies especially for aggregative procedures; maintaining the aggregative processes and tools and eliminating or replacing the digital procedures related to other dimensions. Fourthly, Section 3.6. focused on the intra-party participation, connecting the analysis of IPD along the chapter with the interviews. Within a complex scenario, the evidence tended to support Hypothesis 2, since Podemos' procedures tended to promote a members' participation that supported and reaffirmed the leadership's position. Indeed, the participation has often been used to bypass the intermediate bodies of the party, promoting a disintermediated participation easily influenced by the leadership.

Chapter 4. replicated the same scheme of analysis to study the role of participation in the Labour Party. Hence, Section 4.1. presented this traditional party through its *genus*, main characteristics and ideological background. Since the party has a history of over a century, the analysis mainly focused on Jeremy Corbyn's leadership, including its preconditions. In particular, the section pointed out that Corbyn's leadership aimed at strengthening the shift of the IPD model, in a direction more oriented towards the party's membership (García Lupato & Meloni, 2021), balancing the power of the Parliamentary Labour Party and trade unions. In terms of legacy, the leadership claims and the procedures and reforms promoted recalled Bennism (inspired by Tony Benn's thought), especially in the quests for democratisation of the party (Benn, 1981). The case study's results have been distributed along four main axes, within five sections. Firstly, the Section 4.2. analysed at ideological level the interpretation of participation for the Labour. The evidence showed that - in the time frame of the study - the party identified participation as a fundamental value, promoting it as an identity and distinctive element; confirming Hypothesis H1. This interpretation tended to respond to two declared aims: on the one hand increasing the membership of the party, and on the other fostering the leadership's legitimacy through members' participation and mobilisation, which tended to support Corbyn's decisions and positions. Moreover, the analysis highlighted that the participation in the Labour Party was mainly interpreted as an internal factor, particularly serving the reallocation of power among the different internal groups and the defence of the party's leadership against its opponents.

Secondly, Section 4.3. traced the complex legal and formal organisational framework of the participation within the party, along a structure historically based on the variable balance between different organisations (i.e. the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP), the affiliated trade unions, the members, organised in constituency Labour parties (CLPs); and a variety of socialist groups affiliated to the party, Webb, n.d.). Beyond the party's structure, the party promoted a series of procedures for members' participation studied in separate sub-sections of Section 4.4. The procedures taken into examination mainly included non-aggregative processes and tools, such as the Democracy Review (Section 4.4.2.) and the Labour Policy Forum (Section 4.4.4); and just one aggregative procedure, i.e. the candidate selection (Section 4.4.1.).

Thirdly, Section 4.5. focused on the Labour's use of digital technologies, observing a growing trend but also its limits in terms of scarce impact on the party decision-making. Indeed, the party tended to opt for an advisory and organisational use of digital tools ("as a supplement" of the current party structure, Labour, 2018b, p. 88). Two main factors have been presented to explain this result, on the one hand the Labour tradition, structures and norms that often limited the party's digitalisation, and on the other hand the party's widely spread concern over digital democracy. Among the digital processes implemented, they mainly were non-aggregative, which primarily aimed at mobilising the members and catalysing their support and inputs (impacting on the deliberative and participatory dimensions). Therefore, according to the evidence, the Labour case did not confirm Hypothesis 3, i.e. the predominance of aggregative Intra-Party Democracy processes and tools. Fourthly, the intra-party participation (including reflexions on IPD) has been analysed in Section 3.6. Crossing the previously presented evidence and the interviews, the results partially confirmed Hypothesis 2, since that the Labour intra-party participation tended to be deliberately aimed at supporting the leadership position and legitimising it. Nevertheless, the multi-centralised party structure (jointly with factionalism, bureaucratisation and reformism) prevented disintermediated participation, not supporting that part of the hypothesis (H2).

Lastly, Chapter 5 mirrored the results and the analysis on the role of members participation developed for the two parties in the single-case chapters, replicating their structure: interpretation of participation (Section 5.1.); digital IPD (Section 5.2.), legal and organisational frameworks jointly with the parties' procedures (Section 5.3.); and intra-party participation (Section 5.4.). The comparative perspective offered insightful elements.

Among them, the evidence showed that Podemos has developed more procedures for the participation of members in comparison with the Labour, in terms of number but also systemic use and variety (including the impacts on different democratic dimensions). At the same time, 4 out of the 8 Podemos' procedures have been eliminated (or officially replaced) by the party, while the use of some of the remaining procedures experienced discrepancy between their original declared objectives and their evolution and use. On the contrary, the procedures promoted by the Labour Party under Corbyn's leadership (which have been more limited and less innovative in relation to the party's structure) remained over time. Thus, the comparison between Podemos and the Labour may confirm Hypothesis 4, since more participatory procedures corresponded also to more setbacks in the members participation.

The empirical research relied on qualitative methods, mainly semi-structured in-depth interviews, participatory observation, document analysis and press reviews, jointly with the study of the participatory procedures' data. The author opted to conduct a long fieldwork to reach a deep level of comprehension and analysis, particularly through the access of direct sources and ethnographic work. The ambitious methodological choices struggled in the complex context of political parties, often focused on electoral deadlines and worried about possible political fallout, additionally exacerbated by Brexit in the UK, electoral repetitions in Spain, and the global pandemic crisis (see Section 2.5.). The difficulties and challenges faced during the research strengthen the author's pedagogical experience, questioning the research questions and the hypotheses several times. Part of the reflections (and consequent changes) were applied in time to the thesis, others will be taken into a deeper consideration in the author's future research on similar issues. For instance, Hypothesis 1 may be redundant and scarcely ambitious, while it could focus more on the instrumentalisation of participation. Similarly, Hypothesis 4 may be too descriptive, and the overall comparison could be further exploited. However, despite the significant improvements that could have been made on the thesis (even by the author, *a posteriori*), he reaffirmed the relevance of studying participation within political parties in light of this research. Indeed, recognising the enduring centrality of party democracy, studies on how political parties interpret and implement members' participation are fundamental to understand what participation they will propose in institutions for citizens. Along with analysing their strategies to regain legitimacy and credibility to members and citizens, as it is significant in relation to the sustainability of representative democracy.

The two cases selected embedded relevant similarities and differences, which conveyed a certain level of representativeness to this research. Indeed, they offered the possibility of analysing: (1) a new and an established structure; (2) a digital party and a partially digitalised organisation; (3) a post-ideological populist left party-movement and a traditional left socialist party; (4) a party that broke the two-party hegemony in a multi-party system and a party in an essentially bipartisan system. Nevertheless, other parties' categories go far beyond this research on Podemos and the Labour Party. Firstly, both parties changed the leadership when the research time frame ended. What kind of participation will Podemos promote after Iglesias' leadership? To what extent is the new secretary Belarra searching for legitimacy through members' participation? Or, which participation procedures will the new leader Starmer promote in the Labour Party? How will they differ from the Corbyn's procedures? Is the membership that supported Corbyn still participating? Secondly, how do right-wing parties interpret the participation of members? How do they differ from left-wing parties in terms of participatory values and procedures? Specifically when considering the mobilisation promoted by far-right parties, are they pursuing similar goals? Are they also committed to participation? Are the positive values attributed to participation also valid for them? Further research is definitely needed.

However, although the empirical results based on a research study limited to two cases, some general conclusions could be extended to a general level; addressing the parties that are trying to strengthen their internal democracy through participation. Indeed, albeit with significative differences and nuances, the promotion of participation by political parties is experiencing deep problems and limitations. First of all, the procedures for participation (and the parties' structures that implement them) tend to directly respond to the quest for support and legitimisation of the leadership. Indeed, many of the participatory processes and tools lack of institutionalisation, since they are activated for specific issues in a timing established by the leadership (often instrumentally), rather than being systemically integrated within decision-making. It often results in consultative and top-down procedures, with high digital component that reinforced the political individualisation. Consequently, many of those procedures rely on the aggregative dimension, without involving the members in setting the processes and tools, while they marginalise other democratic dimensions, especially the deliberative dimension. Indeed, the parties tend to interpret participation as a competitive (and sclerotic) form of looking at democracy, as a series of ritual procedures merely aimed at producing majorities and minorities. It denies the possibility that participatory systems

thrive through the complementarity of different participatory methodologies, which can guarantee the "democratic goods" in different forms (e.g. transparency, informed judgment, inclusiveness and popular control) (see Graham Smith, 2009, inspired by Saward, 2003). The participation promoted so far, instead, has been far from the interconnected ecology of a participatory system, since it has been characterised by the disconnection: between the procedures and the party's structure, membership and decision-making power, and between the elite of the party and its members. The disconnection has been also been reflected by the failure in building collaborative relationships with other parties in relation to participation, including the sharing of best-practices and the co-development of tools and processes. Furthermore, the type of participation promoted also tends to flatten participation into its instrumental dimension, jeopardising the community building purpose and the epistemological component of the encounter and enrichment of knowledge(s). It generally implies that the participants (any actors of participation) go through the processes without being enriched (and even changed) by them, in contrast to the transformative aim of participation (see Freire, 2002). In this frame, the parties have often ignored the expectations generated by participation, provoking frustration in the membership; since they did not respond to the declared purposes in terms of effectiveness, inclusiveness, redistribution of power and transformative role in relation to the party and society. This has been the case of two left parties deliberately committed to participation with a membership particularly interested and attentive to democracy. What happens then in other political parties less committed to participation? To generalise, a worse situation can be expected.

In a parallel between IPD and the democratic institutional system, there is a lack of separation of powers, effectiveness of processes, and of inclusion of the various groups (majoritarian ones and minorities) in the constituent/legislative process, which establishes the rules of procedures and more generally of democracy internal. Many and significant attempts exist and they will probably further spread and innovate, pointing out a possible direction to overcome the systemic crisis of the parties. However, participation and intra-Party Democracy is still considered instrumental to consensus rather than a common ground for co-decision-making, deliberation, alternation of leadership, transparency and inclusion, toward the democratisation of the political parties. Is it a problem of political will, procedures and/or governance or is it a systemic limit reached by the pivoting organisations of representative democracy? This question opens wide research scenarios that deserve in-depth future analysis. In any case, at the moment, rethinking democracy necessarily includes

studying and questioning participation as promoted by political parties. With this Ph.D. thesis, the author sought to make his contribution to the debate; with both a critical and a constructive approach. There are many conjunctural difficulties in democratising such complex organisations; being aware of this is required. But there are many more systemic necessities and concerns on the responsibility and power entrusted to political parties by representative democracy; acting soon for their democratic deepening is urgent.

"I don't believe in political parties. They just exist" (Interviewee 22 - LI-NL, May 19, 2019).

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ANNEXES

Annex 1: Interview protocol (political-militancy section)

English:

General section:

1. Could you please briefly describe your role within the Party/relationship with the Party?

    How long have you been in your current position?

    How have you been engaged? Is it more a job or political activism/militancy?

2. In your opinion, what is the identity of the Party? What elements characterise it?

    Is it embodying a new model of political party (within an historical one)?

3. What is the role of participation in/for the Party?

4. How digital participation drives participatory processes promoted by/within the parties?

5. What is the digital participatory strategy of your Party?

    Is it working? Why or why not?

    (Do the new technologies used by the Party modify the participation quality? Are they giving digital tools to existing processes or allowing new/original processes?)

Political-Militancy section:

6. What is the benefit/advantage of promoting participation?

    Are there other motivations besides the more explicit ones?

7. Are your Party promoting intra-party democracy processes?

    Which ones?

    Do they work as the external participation ones?

8. Do you believe that the processes of internal democracy are used more by the majority(s) or by the minority groups within the Party?

9. Should internal democracy accompany all the phases/moments of the Party or are there phases/moments in which it is more/less appropriate?

10. At what stage is currently your Party?

    Is it capable of facing the challenges of the present?

11. How do you evaluate the participation in the Party?

12. What will be the impact of participation in your next electoral results?

Do you consider it fundamental to win? Or will other elements be more influential?

13. Who else could I interview on these topics? Would you please give me some contacts?

Additional information:

What is your degree of study and in what field?

How old are you?

Spanish:

General section:

1. Describa brevemente su función adentro del Partido/relación con el Partido

    ¿Cuánto tiempo llevas en su posición actual?

    ¿Cómo terminaste involucrad@ en esto? ¿Es más trabajo o militancia politica?

2. En su opinión, brevemente, ¿cuál es la identidad de su Partido? ¿Qué lo caracteriza?

    ¿Se trata de un nuevo modelo de partido?

3. ¿Cuál es el rol de la participación en el Partido?

4. Cómo la participación digital impulsa sus procesos participativos?

    ¿Cuál es la estrategia participativa digital del Partido?

    ¿Funciona? ¿Por qué o por qué no?

    (¿Las nuevas tecnologías que utiliza el Partido dan herramientas a procesos ya existentes o permiten nuevos procesos que de otro modo no serían posibles?)

Political-Militancy section:

5. ¿Cuál es la ventaja de promuover la participación?

    ¿Hay otras motivaciones además de las más explícitas?

6. ¿En qué etapa se encuentra actualmente su Partido?

7. ¿Usted cree que los procesos de democracia interna son utilizados más por la(s) mayoría(s) o por los grupos minoritarios dentro del Partido?

8. ¿Debe la democracia interna acompañar todas las fases/momentos del Partido o hay fases/momentos en los que es más/menos apropiada?

    En su Partido: ¿Es cómo se supone que debe ser?

9. ¿La participación l@s hará ganar? ¿O serán otros los elementos principales?

10. ¿Con quién más podría hablar? ¿Me darías algunos contactos?

Informaciónes adicionales:

¿Cuál es su grado de estudio y en que campo?
¿Cual es su etad?

Annex 1b: Interview protocol (political-militancy section modified for partner groups)

English:

General section:

1. Could you please briefly describe your relationship with the Party in question?

     Have you ever held political roles in the Party? In others?

     How have you been engaged? Is/was it more a job or political activism?

2. In your opinion, what is the identity of the Party? What elements characterise it?

     Is it embodying a new model of political party (within an historical one)?

3. What is the role of participation in the Party?

4. How digital participation drives participatory processes promoted by/within the parties?

5. Do you know what is the digital participatory strategy of the Party?

     Do you think that it working? Why yes or why not?

     (Do the new technologies used by the Party modify the participation quality? Are

     they giving digital tools to existing processes or allowing new/original processes?)

Political-Militancy section:

6. What is the benefit/advantage of promoting participation?

     Are there other motivations besides the more explicit ones?

7. Do you know if the Party is promoting intra-party democracy processes?

     Which ones?

     Do they work as the external participation ones?

8. Do you believe that the processes of internal democracy are used more by the

majority(s) or by the minority groups within the Party?

9. Should internal democracy accompany all the phases/moments of the Party or are there phases/moments in which it is more/less appropriate?

10. At what stage is currently the Party?

> Is it capable of facing the challenges of the present?

11. How do you evaluate the participation in the Party?

12. What will be the impact of participation in your next electoral results?

13. Who else could I interview on these topics? Would you please give me some contacts?

Additional information:

What is your degree of study and in what field?

How old are you?

Spanish:

General section:

1. Describa brevemente su grupo/movimiento/partido y la relación con el Partido en objecto

> ¿Cuál es su posición actual?

> ¿Cómo terminaste involucrad@ en esto? ¿Es más trabajo o militancia politica?

2. En su opinión, brevemente, ¿cuál es la identidad del Partido? ¿Qué lo caracteriza?

> ¿Se trata de un nuevo modelo de partido?

3. ¿Cuál es el rol de la participación en el Partido?

4. Cómo la participación digital impulsa sus procesos participativos?

> ¿Cuál es la estrategia participativa digital del Partido?

> ¿Funciona? ¿Por qué o por qué no?

> (¿Las nuevas tecnologías que utiliza el Partido dan herramientas a procesos ya existentes o permiten nuevos procesos que de otro modo no serían posibles?)

Political-Militancy section:

5. ¿Cuál es la ventaja de promuover la participación?

    ¿Hay otras motivaciones además de las más explícitas?

6. ¿En qué etapa se encuentran actualmente el Partido y vuestro grupo/movimiento/partido?

7. ¿Usted cree que los procesos de democracia interna son utilizados más por la(s) mayoría(s) o por los grupos minoritarios dentro del Partido? Y en la coalición?

8. ¿Debe la democracia interna acompañar todas las fases/momentos del Partido o hay fases/momentos en los que es más/menos apropiada?

    En el Partido: ¿Es cómo se supone que debe ser?

9. ¿Con quién más podría hablar? ¿Me darías algunos contactos?

Informaciónes adicionales:

¿Cuál es su grado de estudio y en que campo?
¿Cual es su etad?

Annex 2: Interview protocol (technical/digital section)

English:

General section:

1. Could you please briefly describe your role within the Party/relationship with the Party?

      How long have you been in your current position?

      How have you been engaged? Is it more a job or political activism/militancy?

2. In your opinion, what is the identity of the Party? What elements characterise it?

      Is it embodying a new model of political party (within an historical one)?

3. What is the role of participation in/for the Party?

4. How digital participation drives participatory processes promoted by/within the parties?

5. What is the digital participatory strategy of your Party?

      Is it working? Why or why not?

      (Do the new technologies used by the Party modify the participation quality? Are

      they giving digital tools to existing processes or allowing new/original processes?)

Technical/digital section:

5. What have you developed/What are you developing to support the participation?

      (platform, tools, processes...)

6. What is the policy governance of the platform code?

      (Assembly of programmers - open or closed; hierarchy; voting on the platform…)

7. How does the platform relate to pre-existing technologies?

      Do you choose integration or gradual replacement with internally developed digital

      tools? (Saas or Ckan? ... What identification system? ...)

8. How do you manage the data ownership? (and their relative protection)

9. How is/are financed the platform/s and its/their maintenance? By party resources or even other sources internal/external?

10. Do you integrate digital participation with presidential participatory processes?

      How do you do it?

11. In general terms, how do you evaluate the participation in the Party?

12. Who else could I interview on these topics? Would you please give me some contacts?

Spanish:

General section:

1. Describa brevemente su relación con el Partido

> ¿Cuánto tiempo llevas en tu posición actual?

> ¿Cómo terminaste involucrado en esto? ¿Es más trabajo o militancia politica?

2. En tu opinión, brevemente, ¿cuál es la identidad del Partido/movimiento? ¿Qué lo caracteriza?

> ¿Se trata de un nuevo modelo de partido?

3. ¿Cuál es el rol de la participación en el Partido?

4. Cómo la participación digital impulsa sus procesos participativos?

> ¿Cuál es la estrategia participativa digital del Partido?

> ¿Funciona? ¿Por qué o por qué no?

> (¿Las nuevas tecnologías que utiliza el Partido dan herramientas a procesos ya existentes o permiten nuevos procesos que de otro modo no serían posibles?)

Technical/digital section:

5. ¿Qué habéis desarrollado/Qué estáis desarrollando?

> (plataforma, herramientas, procesos...)

6. ¿Cuál es la política de governance del código de la plataforma?

> (Asamblea de desarrolladores – abierta o serrada; jerarquía; votación en la plataforma)

7. ¿Qué relación tiene la plataforma con las tecnologías preexistentes?

> ¿Integración o reemplazo gradual con herramientas desarrolladas internamente?

> (¿Saas o Ckan? ... ¿Qué sistema de identificación? ...)

8. ¿Cómo gestionais la propiedad de los datos? (y sus relativa protección)

9. ¿Cómo se logra la sostenibilidad económica de tales plataformas? ¿Inversión del partido o incluso otras fuentes de recursos?

10. ¿Está planificada la integración con procesos participativos presidenciales? ¿Cómo lo lograis?

11. ¿Con quién más podría hablar? ¿Me darías algunos contactos?

Informaciónes adicionales:

¿Cuál es tu grado de estudio y en que campo?
¿Cual es tu etad?

Annex 3: Interview protocol (academic section)

English:

General section:

1. Do you actually have a direct relation with the Party? Did you have it in the past?

    Have you ever held political roles in the Party?

    Are you an academic activist?

2. In your opinion, what is the identity of the Party? What elements characterise it?

    Is it embodying a new model of political party (within an historical one)?

3. What is the role of participation in/for the Party?

    How do you evaluate it?

4. How digital participation drives participatory processes promoted by/within the parties?

5. What is the digital participatory strategy of the Party?

    Is it working? Why yes or why not?

    (Do the new technologies used by the Party modify the participation quality? Are they giving digital tools to existing processes or allowing new/original processes?)

Academic section:

6. What do you think that are the benefit/advantage of promoting participation within parties?

    Are there other motivations besides the more explicit ones?

    Are there any risks?

7. At what stage is currently your Party?

    Is it capable of facing the challenges of the present?

    Is it more or less participative compared to the past?

8. How do you evaluate the intra-party democracy in the Party?

    Do you distinguish between internal and external participatory processes of the Party?

    Is there a risk of carrying out tokenistic participatory processes that do not generate real participation?

9. Does participation (in the Party) challenge or reinforce leadership?

    And in general terms?

10. Do you think that the Party is developing a new model of political party? Can participation (and/or its narrative) be the central element in this construction?

11. Who else could I interview on these topics? Would you please give me some contacts?

Spanish:

General section:

1. Describa brevemente su relación con el Partido

2. En tu opinión, brevemente, ¿cuál es la identidad de tu Partido? ¿Qué lo caracteriza?

    ¿Se trata de un nuevo modelo de partido?

3. ¿Cuál es el rol de la participación en el Partido?

    ¿Funciona? ¿Por qué o por qué no?

4. Cómo la participación digital impulsa sus procesos participativos?

    ¿Cuál es la estrategia participativa digital del Partido?

    ¿Las nuevas tecnologías que utiliza el Partido dan herramientas a procesos ya existentes o permiten nuevos procesos que de otro modo no serían posibles?

Academic section:

5. ¿Cuál es la ventaja de promuover la participación?

    ¿Hay otras motivaciones además de las más explícitas?

6. ¿En qué etapa se encuentra actualmente el Partido en cuestión?

7. ¿Existe el riesgo de llevar a cabo procesos participativos tokenisticos que no generan una participación real?

8. ¿La participación (en el Partido en cuestión) desafía el liderazgo o lo refuerza?

    Y en términos generales?

9. ¿Puede la participación ser el eje alrededor del cual se construye un nuevo modelo de partido político post-Cartel party?

10. ¿Con quién más podría hablar? ¿Me darías algunos contactos?

Annex 4: Informed consent for interviews

I, _____, agree to be interviewed for the thesis project entitled "The role of participation in the new models of political party" which is being produced by Marco Meloni of Centre for Social Studies (CES), University of Coimbra (PT).

I certify that I have been told of the confidentiality of information collected for this project; that I have been given satisfactory answers to my inquiries concerning project procedures and other matters; and that I have been advised that I am free to withdraw my consent and to discontinue participation in the project or activity at any time without prejudice.

I agree to participate in one or more <u>electronically recorded</u> interviews for this project. I understand that such interviews and related materials will be used exclusively for scientific research purposes, and that the results of this study may be published in an academic PhD thesis, journal or book.

I agree that any information obtained from this research may be used in any way thought best for this study.

_____ Date _____
Signature of Interviewee

If you cannot obtain satisfactory answers to your questions or have comments or complaints about your treatment in this study, contact:

marcomeloni@ces.uc.pt

giovanni.allegretti@ces.uc.pt (research supervisor)

Cc: signed copy to interview.

Annex 5 - Characteristics of Podemos and the Labour Party participation

Interviewee	Profile	Participation for Podemos and the Labour Party							
		General		Use		Specific			
		Identity value	Instrumental value	Specific time &	Reinforcing role	Unmediated / Direct	Controlled	Lobbying	Balanced
1	Podemos founder and ideologist at the national level	X		X			X		
2	Former Podemos general secretary at the local level	X				X			
3	Podemos founder and former party officer at the national and regional level		X	X	X	X	X		
4	Former Podemos central officer at the national level	X			X		X		
5	Officer of political projects linked to Podemos at the local level		X		X				
6	Podemos party body member at the local level	X							
7	Podemos representative at the regional level	X		X					
8	Podemos party body member at the local level	X			X	X	X		
9	Podemos central officer at the national level	X			X	X	X		
10	Podemos branch secretary at the local level	X			X		X		
11	Officer of political projects linked to Podemos at the local level	X			X				
12	Podemos secretary at the local level	X		X					
13	Podemos secretary at the local level	X		X					
14	Local government representative and former Podemos collaborator	X							
15	Podemos founder and former party central officer at the national level		X	X	X		X		
16	Podemos founder and former party representative at the national level	X		X	X				
17	Spanish scholar (linked to Podemos)	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
18	Spanish scholar (linked to Podemos in the past)	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
19	Labour party representative at the local level		X	X	X			X	X
20	Labour party member and local organiser	X	X	X				X	
21	Labour party member and scholar on the topic		X	X	X				X
22	Labour ideologist at the national-level	X	X	X	X				X

23	Labour party member and editor of a newspaper linked to the party	X	X		X				
24	Labour party representative at the national level	X						X	X
25	Labour ideologist and party body member at the national level	X			X			X	
26	Labour party member and central officer at the national level of an organisation affiliated to the party	X	X		X				X
27	Labour party member and organiser of national events linked to the party	X	X		X			X	
28	Labour party representative at the European level	X						X	
29	Labour party member and former central officer at the national level of an organisation affiliated to the party	X			X			X	
30	Labour party member and central officer at the national level of an organisation affiliated to the party	X			X				

Source: author's elaboration based on the interviews.

Annex 6 – Characteristics of Podemos and the Labour intra-party participation

| Interviewee | Profile | Intra-party participation in Podemos and the Labour Party | | | | | | | | | |
| | | General | | Structural | | Principle | | Specific | | | |
		Top-down	Bottom-up	Structural	Disconnected	Deliberative	Normative	Plebiscitary	Majoritarian	Factionalist	Unclear
1	Podemos founder and ideologist at the national level	X	X			X					
2	Former Podemos general secretary at the local level	X	X	X					X		
3	Podemos founder and former party officer at the national and regional level	X			X			X	X		
4	Former Podemos central officer at the national level		X	X	X			X	X		
5	Officer of political projects linked to Podemos at the local level							X			
6	Podemos party body member at the local level		X	X		X			X		
7	Podemos representative at the regional level		X		X			X			
8	Podemos party body member at the local level	X						X	X		
9	Podemos central officer at the national level	X	X	X					X		
10	Podemos branch secretary at the local level	X			X				X		
11	Officer of political projects linked to Podemos at the local level							X			
12	Podemos secretary at the local level	X	X						X		
13	Podemos secretary at the local level		X	X							
14	Local government representative and former Podemos collaborator	X									
15	Podemos founder and former party central officer at the national level	X		X	X			X	X		
16	Podemos founder and former party representative at the national level	X	X					X	X		
17	Spanish scholar (linked to Podemos)	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
18	Spanish scholar (linked to Podemos in the past)	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
19	Labour party representative at the local level	X	X	X	X						
20	Labour party member and local organiser		X				X			X	
21	Labour party member and scholar on the topic	X	X	X						X	

22	Labour ideologist at the national level	X		X	X					X	
23	Labour party member and editor of a newspaper linked to the party	X	X	X						X	
24	Labour party representative at the national level	X	X				X			X	
25	Labour ideologist and party body member at the national-level	X	X		X		X				X
26	Labour party member and central officer at the national level of an organisation affiliated to the party		X	X	X		X				X
27	Labour party member and organiser of national events linked to the party	X		X	X		X			X	X
28	Labour party representative at the European level	X			X					X	X
29	Labour party member and former central officer at the national level of an organisation affiliated to the party		X	X						X	
30	Labour party member and central officer at the national level of an organisation affiliated to the party		X				X				

Source: author's elaboration based on the interviews.