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CRAFTING AND DEVELOPING ALTERNATIVE ORGANIZATIONS: TEMPORAL WORK AND IDEOLOGY IN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates the emergence and evolution of alternative organizational forms within social movement contexts. Alternative organizations arise in juxtaposition to dominant organizational models, embodying specific values and practices. Often, their emergence stems from the identification of a societal issue for which they are proposed as a solution. Social movements play a critical role in creating and diffusing these alternative organizational forms, as they establish a shared system of meanings that legitimizes and promotes these new templates.

Two empirical studies aim to illuminate this process, particularly focusing on a key challenge faced by alternative organizations: their reliance on future expectations. The empirical analysis centers on the Platform Cooperativism movement, which seeks to promote democracy and equality in the digital economy through the establishment of alternative digital platforms. Data were collected from transcripts of video recordings of the movement's conferences and analyzed using a combination of computational and manual text analysis techniques.

Firstly, one study examines how social movements collectively craft these alternatives. This investigation reveals that actors engage in various forms of temporal work – the interpretation of past, present, and future scenarios – to shape both the perceived desirability and feasibility of alternative organizations. These efforts serve the double objective of mobilizing support for action and defining the characteristics of the proposed alternatives.

Secondly, the other study explores the evolution of the collective system of meanings that underpins the movement as the advocated alternatives begin to materialize. Findings illustrate that, at its inception, the movement had a solid ideological traction, aimed at defining its values, identity, and objectives. However, over time, this ideological emphasis gives way to a more practical orientation focused on grappling with the challenges of implementing the proposed alternative structures and practices.

Overall, these insights enhance our understanding of the processes by which social movements develop alternative organizational structures, thus paving the way for further research at the intersection of social movements and organizational studies.

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PREFACE

"If you assume that there is no hope, you guarantee that there will be no hope. If you assume that there is an instinct for freedom, that there are opportunities to change things, then there is a possibility that you can contribute to making a better world."

Noam Chomsky

The Oxford English Dictionary defines the word "*alternative*" as being "*of or characterizing any of various (hypothetical or imagined) realities, worlds, or realms of existence, differing from our own in trivial or fundamental ways*". Imagining alternative realities – be they utopias or dystopias – has for a long time been considered a powerful mechanism for motivating people to collectively act towards change or resist it. In the face of contemporary challenges, such as climate change, escalating inequalities, or pandemics, the discourse surrounding these alternative realities has taken center stage in public debates. Understanding how to make the imagined reality thus becomes a necessary step for facing these challenges.

With this objective, the present dissertation wishes to deepen our comprehension of how alternative ways of organizing are imagined and diffused. This interest stems from a double acknowledgment. On the one hand, that such a "*trivial and fundamental*" change is needed if we want to avoid the dystopic scenarios that forecasts and analysts more and more confront us with. On the other hand, that organizations are primary carriers of social and economic orders and, consequently, powerful tools for social change.

The dissertation unfolds across three distinct sections: an introductory segment, followed by two empirical works. In the introduction, an exploration of the concept of alternative organizations is undertaken to elucidate their significance as a crucial and timely object of inquiry. Serving as the theoretical framework for exploring this phenomenon, Social Movement Theory emerges as particularly fitted, especially for its contribution to the processes of creation and diffusion of new

organizational forms. A brief review of the relevant literature in this stream of research identifies two relatively unexplored areas, forming the foundation for the empirical studies' research objectives. First, the collective processes involved in conceiving and crafting alternative organizations. Second, the role of ideology – intended as the system of beliefs and values binding the movement together – and its evolution as the once-idealistic alternative organizations transition from conceptual ideals to tangible realities. The section advances to present the research context, the Platform Cooperativism movement, illustrating why it constitutes an ideal setting for a detailed study of processes related to alternative organizing. The primary goal of Platform Cooperativism is to advocate for an equitable and just digital economy. This advocacy is realized through the creation and diffusion of platform cooperatives, entities that integrate digital business models with the cooperative governance structure of firms. A comprehensive historical account of the movement's inception and evolution is provided, with the aim of clarifying its significance and purpose. Following is an illustration of the primary data source of this dissertation, namely transcriptions of the movement's conferences over six years. This is accompanied by a conceptualization of the implications associated with selecting this kind of setting. Specifics regarding data collection and methodology are expounded upon in subsequent sections, as each empirical study necessitates its own detailed specifications.

After establishing the theoretical grounding, objectives, and empirical setting, the subsequent sections of the dissertation consist of two empirical papers directed toward the previously identified research questions. The first paper seeks to comprehend the collective construction of visions for alternatives in the early stages of a movement. This kind of question requires a deeper understanding of the processes involved in imagining and bringing the new into existence. While extant research on alternative organizing has mainly relied on the motivational force of imagining futures that drastically differ from existing arrangements, literature on the creation of new ventures and the implementation of novel strategies within organizations has also highlighted the contextualization of the present and the past. This phenomenon has been conceptualized as "temporal work". In an attempt to integrate

these two perspectives, the paper investigates the role of temporal work in the collective crafting of alternatives. The analysis draws on data coming from the inaugural conference of the Platform Cooperativism movement in 2015, recognized as a crucial moment in the definition of the movement's struggle and the alternative vision proposed. Findings reveal that temporal work played an essential role in this process, primarily through the positive or negative interpretation of past, present, and future scenarios. Building momentum for action and defining the characteristics of the alternative vision emerged as the two main processes facilitated by the enactment of temporal work.

While the first paper's focus on a single event allowed to delve deep into the discursive mechanisms at play, the second paper adopts a longitudinal perspective. This approach enables the observation of the movement's discourse evolution as the organizational solutions it advocates are experimented with and implemented. To this purpose, the paper concentrates on investigating the movement's ideology, identified as the connecting element between the movement's values and beliefs and the practical solutions proposed. In this case, data analysis draws on the transcripts of four conferences, identified as belonging to two different phases. The first phase involves the construction of a symbolic system that guides the movement and binds its members together. In contrast, the second phase is characterized by increased structuration and agreement on practices. Conference transcripts were analyzed using topic modeling techniques, and the results served as the basis for a subsequent grounded theory approach. The movement's discourse was found to fulfill three functions related to its ideology: crafting ideology (ideological discourse), embedding it in alternative organizational practices (integrating discourse), and configuring alternative organizations (organizational discourse). The examination of its evolution over time revealed a significant reduction in ideological discourse, making way for the prominence of the organizational one. These findings shed light on the dynamic nature of the symbolic system steering the movement and raise questions about the factors contributing to the diminishing ideological traction over time.

In conclusion, this dissertation delves into the processes through which social movements craft and diffuse alternative organizations. It particularly highlights the dual challenge of crafting visions deeply rooted in the future while striving to translate these visions into tangible realities. Tensions and connections between the present reality and the imagined future – as well as the ideal and the concrete application of organizational practices and structures – permeate this endeavor and constitute the grounding for the presented inquiries. Hopefully, the evidence brough to light in this work will provide useful insights for further exploration on how social movements can spur social change through the creation of alternative organizational forms.

1. INTRODUCTION

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Alternative organizations as tools for social change

During the last decades, the pitfalls and drawbacks of the current economic system have become more and more evident (Ferraro, Etzion, & Gehman, 2015), pushing for the need for new social imaginaries to emerge (Zanoni, Contu, Healy, & Mir, 2017) and fuel alternative ways of organizing the economy at a whole (Battilana, Yen, Ferreras, & Ramarajan, 2022; Schiller-Merkens, 2020). In this process of social change, organizations can play a fundamental role. As vehicles through which social relations are configured and reproduced, the development and spread of new organizational forms can convey alternative models of economic order based on different goals and values (Schneiberg, 2002; Stinchcombe, 1965).

For this reason, scholarship has recently renovated its interest in the concept of *alternative organizations* as a distinct construct marked by specific characteristics. This definition is grounded in the assumption that there is a conventional model of economic organization, an "*organizational archetype*", which dominates the organizational landscape and has acquired the status of taken-for-granted (Mair & Rathert, 2021). Scholars of alternative organizing usually identify the capitalistic principle of capital accumulation as the foundation of this dominant organizational model (Zanoni et al., 2017), which manifests as prioritizing profit maximization, implementing hierarchical governance, and being guided by financial performance (Parker, Cheney, Fournier, & Land, 2014a). What is argued is that this model is often perceived as the sole realistic option, even when its detrimental impact on society and people's lives is acknowledged and there is a consensus regarding its negative externalities (Parker et al., 2014a). In contrast, alternative organizations are born and developed to countervail this hegemony and to carve out spaces where differentiation can thrive. At their core, these entities are dedicated to advancing and implementing unconventional practices and structures, posing a deliberate challenge to established norms by showing that they are not inevitable.

Yet, this broad characterization invites various interpretations and configurations, allowing these entities to manifest in diverse and nuanced forms and consequently posing challenges to their conceptualization and inquiry.

In trying to define when organizational forms can be considered alternative, the existing scholarly discourse has predominantly focused on three distinct strands, each offering a different perspective on what constitutes the main element of divergence (Dahlman, Mygind du Plessis, Husted, & Just, 2022). The first strand identifies the embedding of alternative *principles and values* as the essence of being alternative. According to this perspective, alternative organizations are guided by specific values, such as autonomy, solidarity, and responsibility (Parker, Cheney, Fournier, & Land, 2014b), which stand against and challenge the dominant ones (Daskalaki, Fotaki, & Sotiropoulou, 2019; Land & King, 2014). A second strand focuses on practices as the principal source of alternativity, considering organizations as alternative when implementing practices that diverge from traditional approaches, such as participatory decision-making (Schneiberg, 2013). To address the limitations of these two perspectives, Dahlman et al. (2022) propose a third viewpoint termed "alternativity as freedom," emphasizing that alternativity is an ongoing process of differentiation from the dominant order. This perspective highlights the dynamic nature of alternative organizational forms, which thrive in the space between challenging the established order and navigating within it, allowing for the recognition of diverse organizational forms as alternative based on their aspirations rather than predetermined characteristics (Dahlman et al., 2022).

Rather than mutually excluding each other, these perspectives highlight different aspects of the same phenomenon and, if taken together, offer a nuanced and complete picture of the nature of alternative organizations. First, they clarify their essence, locating it in the rejection of received forms of organizing, the resistance to dominant models (Rothschild-Whitt, 1979), and the creation of organizational arrangements that are "*novel, creative, untried, or untested, and perhaps radically different from those to which a group or part of society is accustomed*" (Cheney & Munshi, 2017, p.

1). Second, they are built on and aim to realize values and principles currently undermined or neglected (Schiller-Merkens, 2020). Third, the organization is a vehicle for the realization of these values, which are reflected in the practices and structures implemented (Daskalaki et al., 2019). In this sense, they have a prefigurative role (Schiller-Merkens, 2022), meaning that they "*model the new values, institutions and social relationships they aspire to in their present-day practice as part of their strategy to bring about change at the societal level*" (Reinecke, 2018).

For these reasons, such organizations are able to demonstrate that alternatives can be imagined and put into place (Gümüsay & Reinecke, 2022), challenging the diffused assumption that there is no other way to organize current social and economic relationships. This characteristic makes them a powerful tool for social change. In an age where the need to change and re-imagine our social and economic structures is made particularly urgent by grand challenges such as climate change and rising social inequalities, research on alternative forms of organizing has been called for since it can provide the basis for understanding how such changes – at times unimaginable or unthinkable – can become reality (Battilana et al., 2022; Gümüsay & Reinecke, 2022; Reedy, King, & Coupland, 2016).

Social movements and alternative organizations

Literature on alternative organizations has recognized the prominent role social movements can play in their development (Schiller-Merkens, 2020; Zanoni et al., 2017). A social movement constitutes a collective action system wherein mobilized networks of individuals, groups, and organizations, bound by a shared collective identity, work towards instigating or opposing social change, primarily through organized collective protest (McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly, 2001; Tilly, 1978). As "*loosely organized coalitions"* aimed at contesting established incumbent logics through sustained campaigns (Weber, Heinze, & Desoucey, 2008), what social movements indeed do is denounce the inequalities of current institutional arrangements and create space for their transformation (Zanoni et al., 2017).

Questions regarding the emergence, constitution, and institutionalization of alternative organizational forms have a longstanding tradition at the intersection between organization and social movement studies (Clemens, 2002; Daft & Lewin, 1993; Schneiberg, 2002; Stinchcombe, 1965). Such interest stems from the acknowledgment that introducing new forms inevitably implies higher costs and risks compared to the traditional, already institutionalized, and affirmed ones (Stinchcombe, 1965), necessitating compensation mechanisms or additional endeavors to allow for their realization and diffusion. Social movements are seen as capable of providing this supplementary effort, leveraging their ability to coordinate collective efforts toward a shared objective.

Initially focused on the study of collective behavior as irrational and spontaneous (Weber & King, 2014), since the 1990s, Social Movement research has progressively integrated with organization studies, shedding light on the various processes through which collectivities organize towards a common purpose (Davis, Morrill, Rao, & Soule, 2008; de Bakker, den Hond, King, & Weber, 2013; Soule, 2012; Weber & King, 2014). On the one hand, Social Movement Theory has enabled organization scholars to account for the role of agency and strategy in processes of social change (Walker, 2012), allowing them to explore how bottom-up change can be purposefully carried on within organizations, fields, or at the societal level (Weber & King, 2014). On the other hand, the application of organizational theories to the study of social movements has deepened the understanding of their emergence and evolution (Minkoff & McCarthy, 2006), shedding light on processes like resource mobilization (McCarthy & Zald, 1977) and recruitment of new members. Additionally, it has broadened the scope of the observed phenomenon, encompassing not only contestations to the state but also to other entities, including business firms (de Bakker et al., 2013).

The mechanisms enabling social movements to overcome difficulties inherent in establishing alternatives to the status quo relate to three overarching factors central to social movement studies: the presence of political opportunities, the creation of mobilizing structures, and the articulation of framing processes (McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 1996). Political opportunities refer to circumstances

external to the movement that can facilitate or constrain movement activities; mobilizing structures are the vehicles, such as groups, organizations, or networks, through which people engage in collective action; and framing processes refer to the discursive construction of a problem and its causes (*diagnostic framing*); the envision of a solution (*prognostic framing*) and a call to arms (*motivational framing*) (Benford & Snow, 2000).

This last aspect – the attention to framing processes – is a more recent development that emerged as part of the "cultural turn" in social movement studies toward the end of the 20th century (McAdam et al., 1996). Earlier studies were primarily interested in understanding the effects and impact of social movement activities either as arising from their resource mobilization capabilities (McCarthy & Zald, 1977) or as outcomes of the opportunities and constraints presented by the external context (Tilly, 1978). Recent inquiries have expanded these perspectives by introducing the notion that shared meanings and interpretations associated with a given situation play a crucial role in establishing a link between opportunities, resources, and action (McAdam et al., 1996) and that such meanings can be intentionally shaped by social movements to achieve their goals (Benford & Snow, 2000). In this perspective, there must be a collective perception of the situation as both unjust and open to change, and social movements can actively shape this perception through the formulation and dissemination of frames that resonate with individuals' emotions and experiences (Benford & Snow, 2000; Cornelissen & Werner, 2014; D. Snow & Benford, 1988). The struggles of social movements are thus viewed as occurring at the level of meaning rather than solely at the level of resources. As a result, culture, language, symbols, and identity have become central elements for comprehending social movements, highlighting the intricate interplay between the symbolic and material dimensions of collective action.

The symbolic dimension of social movements' activities plays a crucial role in shaping and diffusing new organizational forms. These organizations face the challenge of gaining legitimacy and acceptance within the established institutional environment, a process referred to as their

institutionalization project (P.J. DiMaggio, 1988). Its goal is to facilitate the integration of the new organization into the broader social and organizational landscape by presenting them as comprehensible and worthy of being adopted.

In this endeavor, social movements channel their grievances and contestations toward demonstrating the failure of existing organizational arrangements and the advancement of organizational solutions aligned with the movement's beliefs and values (Boone & Özcan, 2014). Their action aims to "*de-institutionalize existing beliefs, norms, and values embodied in extant forms, and establish new forms that instantiate new beliefs, norms and values*" (Rao, Morrill, & Zald, 2000, p. 238), thus providing definition and justification for the adoption of the new form. Imbuing such organizational forms with meaning is, therefore, a central element in the creation and diffusion of novel organizational models (Clemens, 1993; Rao, 1998).

Examining how social movements de-institutionalize the old and institutionalize the new, extant research has explored the creation of new markets (Carroll & Swaminathan, 2000; Weber et al., 2008), the structuration of organizational fields (Armstrong, 2005), the institutionalization of new practices (Lounsbury, Ventresca, & Hirsch, 2003) and the emergence of new organizational forms (Clemens, 1993; Greve, Pozner, & Rao, 2006). In some cases, these forms are intentionally constructed to provide alternatives to existing structures (Rao, 1998; Schneiberg, 2002, 2013; Schneiberg, King, & Smith, 2008; Sine & Lee, 2009; Weber et al., 2008). This dissertation seeks to contribute to the existing research in this field, starting with the identification of areas that require further exploration and depth. The following section outlines these areas and illustrates the resulting research objectives.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Inquiries into the creation and diffusion of new organizational forms by social movements are founded on the assumption that these novel forms are more challenging to establish and more prone

to failure compared to traditional ones (Clemens, 2002; Stinchcombe, 1965). This challenge is amplified when they advocate counter-system values (Schneiberg, 2002) and challenge existing interests (Boone & Özcan, 2014), as social movements usually do. Scholarly investigations have therefore centered on comprehending how social movements facilitate this process, emphasizing two key facets: the emergence and the dissemination of these organizations.

In terms of emergence, Clemence (1993) emphasizes how social movements construct them through bricolage, assembling elements from existing organizational repertoires to address the expressed needs of marginalized groups. The choice of organizational form is not merely a coordination mechanism but also an identity statement, with cultural and identity meanings attached. This emphasis on culture and meaning is echoed by Rao (1998), who underscores the pivotal role of social movement actors in framing novel organizations as necessary, valid, and appropriate. Subsequent research builds on this insight, emphasizing that alternative forms emerge as social movements articulate alternative logics in contrast to the dominant system (Carroll & Swaminathan, 2000; Greve et al., 2006; Weber et al., 2008). In these endeavors, the framing processes typical of social movements are directed toward presenting the organization as the solution to a specific societal problem.

On the other hand, in terms of diffusion, the role of support has been attributed to social movements. Schneiberg (2002; 2008; 2013), for example, has inquired how the cooperative movement in the US has sustained the diffusion of cooperative forms as carriers of alternative economic orders, identifying in social movements the ability to provide the needed political support. Similarly, recent research has explored how such support originates from the mobilization of cultural codes and processes of sensemaking, as it happened for the market niche of grass-fed meat (Weber et al., 2008) or in the wind energy sector (Sine & Lee, 2009).

In line with the “cultural turn” in social movements research, these studies highlight the role of the system of meaning developed and diffused by social movements. The articulation and diffusion

of frames that contrast with the dominant ones are seen as the engine for creating possibilities for alternative organizations to emerge and diffuse. The common thread running through this research is the understanding of alternative organizational forms as the tool through which social movements aim to achieve social change. These organizations are thus the result of social movements' contestations: their being in opposition with current arrangements is their core principle, and the articulation of an alternative system of meanings allows for their emergence and adoption.

Building on this insight, this dissertation aims to explore the challenges inherent in articulating and supporting such an alternative system of meanings. While extant research has already explained how this process occurs – namely through the mobilization of broad cultural codes (Weber et al., 2008) – the goal is to delve deeper into the struggles of crafting and developing what is alternative, divergent, and nonexistent. Particularly noteworthy is an aspect of alternative organizing that is gaining increasing interest in the academic community: the notion that alternative organizations, especially at their inception, are rooted in the future (Schiller-Merkens, 2022). Diverging from what already exists, especially at the very beginning, can only be imagined in the future (Augustine, Soderstrom, Milner, & Weber, 2019). While this "*ability to imagine that things might as well be different from what they actually are"* (C. Wright, Nyberg, De Cock, & Whiteman, 2013) is the premise to enact social change, acting on the basis of what does not yet exist can also be problematic for its uncertainty (Roux-Rosier, Azambuja, & Islam, 2018).

In addressing this aspect, this dissertation has a twofold objective. First, it seeks to understand how this orientation toward the future influences the way social movements craft alternative logics. Drawing on the recognition that motivating collective action necessitates not only appealing projections but also perceptions of feasibility, the inquiry focuses on the role that temporal work (Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013) plays in constructing alternative logics. This perspective considers not only future aspirations but also how the interpretation of the present and past contributes to the collective shaping of the alternative.

The second objective involves understanding how these visions evolve as alternative organizations initially projected into the future begin to materialize. To this end, an analysis is conducted on how the system of values and beliefs holding the movement together — its ideology — evolves over the years. While extant research has observed how a movement's ideology can sustain the diffusion of alternative organizations (Schneiberg, 2013; Soetens & Huybrechts, 2023), it has assumed such a system to remain constant over time. However, considering the crucial role that the future plays in alternative organizing, the progressive materialization of the envisioned future can influence what the movement pursues and how, making this area worthy of investigation.

To explore these questions, the inquiry focuses on Platform Cooperativism, a recently developed social movement aimed at developing alternative organizations in the digital platforms' domain. The following section will illustrate the movement and provide a brief overview of its evolution.

EMPIRICAL SETTING: PLATFORM COOPERATIVISM MOVEMENT

Platform cooperatives as alternative organizations

The Platform Cooperativism movement has arisen from the denunciation of the side effects caused by the rising pervasiveness of digital platforms in our social and economic life, gathering support from many who were starting to criticize the multiple negative externalities caused by these platforms, the exploitation of platform workers and several situations of injustice and inequality.

When digital platform models started to emerge, they were looked at with enthusiasm for their promise of enhancing economic, social, and environmental values (Acquier, Daudigeos, & Pinkse, 2017; Wruk, Oberg, Klutt, & Maurer, 2019): Their ability to enable and facilitate connections was seen as the basis for new forms of collaboration and solidarity and more sustainable use of resources. For this reason, many digital platform organizations started to be seen as promoters of the so-called "*sharing economy*", suggesting their inner working logics were far away from the capitalistic

assumptions of profit maximization and closer to the values of giving and collaboration. However, it soon became apparent that these expectations were not to be met and that such business models not only had profit as their primary objective but also allowed for the commodification of previously untouched social interactions (Morozov, 2013), to the point their business model was seen as leading to "*hyper-capitalism*" (Scholz, 2016). Instead of favoring community well-being and unselfish economic relationships, they have thus generated multiple controversies regarding their actual impact on markets, governments, workers, consumers, and the environment (Ahsan, 2020; Murillo, Buckland, & Val, 2017). What they have been accused of is fostering imbalances that disadvantage platform users in favor of owners (Cutolo & Kenney, 2020) through information asymmetries (Rosenblat & Stark, 2016), the externalization of costs and risks (Vallas & Schor, 2020), the circumvention of policy regulation (Edelman & Geradin, 2018; Schwarz, 2017) and a lack of consideration of the community overall (Dreyer, Lüdeke-Freund, Hamann, & Faccer, 2017). Besides, sharing economy platforms have been proven to implement different practices leading to digital discrimination, thus exacerbating the marginalization of already disadvantaged sectors of the population (Attri & Bapuji, 2021).

To countervail the hegemony of such principles, the Platform Cooperativism movement has emerged. What this movement argues for is that the promises of the sharing economy were disattended because digital platforms are managed and organized according to the shareholders' profit maximization and hierarchical governance, which lead to negative externalities and the exploitation of platform workers. To countervail this trend, the movement promotes the development and spread of *Platform Cooperatives* (Schneider & Scholz, 2016; Scholz, 2016), which present most of the characteristics of sharing economy business models but implement the ownership and governance of cooperative firms (Fuster Morell, Espelt, & Renau Cano, 2021; Schneider, 2018; Schneider & Scholz, 2016). In the digital economy landscape, platform cooperatives thus offer an alternative where the actors taking part in the platform activities also collectively own and manage the organization,

adopting a governance model inspired by the values that drive the International Cooperative Movement. According to these principles, "*cooperatives are people-centred enterprises jointly owned and democratically controlled by and for their members to realise their common socio-economic needs and aspirations. (…) Managed by producers, users or workers, cooperatives are run according to the 'one member, one vote' rule.*" (International Cooperative Alliance[1]). Platform cooperativism supporters claim that this way of organizing and managing the platform would guarantee that the value created is equally distributed to the same people that contribute to its creation, thus avoiding inequalities and releasing the potential of digital technologies to create social impact (Mannan & Pek, 2021; Qureshi, Pan, & Zheng, 2021).

According to these principles, platform workers are not simple users, but they are owners of the platform and able to take part in its collective governance. An example of a platform cooperative is The Drivers Cooperative[2], which offers the same ride services as Uber but where drivers own the platform and are able to share revenues and participate in decision-making processes. Similarly, Fairbnb.coop[3] follows Airbnb's accommodation-sharing model, but it is cooperatively managed, and it implements rules for creating positive externalities and supporting social projects in the local community. Such characteristics would guarantee that the value created is equally distributed and that the interests of all the stakeholders and the community overall are taken into consideration.

To sum up, the aim of the Platform Cooperativism movement is to offer an alternative to the mainstream way of organizing digital platforms (Foramitti, Varvarousis, & Kallis, 2020) and, more broadly, to re-think the management of digital tools in a way that enhances democracy and community well-being. For this reason, Platform Cooperativism has been identified as a fruitful setting for the exploration of alternative organizations (Battilana et al., 2022; Chen & Chen, 2021). In fact, it presents the main characteristics of alternative organizations that have been illustrated

[1] https://www.ica.coop/en
[2] https://drivers.coop/
[3] https://fairbnb.coop/

above. First, it originates from the contrast with the dominant system, and its struggles are characterized by this ongoing opposition. Second, it relies on values and principles antithetical to what is perceived as the mainstream. Third, in a prefigurative way, the practices and structures of these alternative organizations are constructed to represent such values in the organization's everyday activities.

Appendix 1A shows the aspects of reality depicted by the movement as no longer tolerable and the opposite values characterizing the new cooperative digital economy the movement aspires to achieve. These values are common good opposed to self-interest; collaboration opposed to competition; people centrality opposed to profit centrality; decent working conditions opposed to worker's exploitation; equality opposed to power imbalances; and self-determination opposed to subjugation. Specific organizational practices are suggested to instantiate such values and are represented in Appendix 1B. Here, elements pertaining to the cooperative world are called into play, as well as elements related to the digital platform landscape. For example, the value of self-determination can be promoted by the *co-design of technologies with the users* for the digital platform component, and by the *collective governance of data* for the cooperative component.

For all these reasons, Platform Cooperativism offers an ideal context for the observation of the processes concerning social movements and the creation and diffusion of alternative organizational forms.

Platform Cooperativism origins and evolution

In December 2014, Trebor Scholz, professor of media studies, published a blog post titled "*Platform Cooperativism vs. the Sharing Economy*", framing the concept that would have been at the center of the movement's claims for the first time. He argued that sharing economy platforms like Uber, Airbnb, or TaskRabbit were presenting themselves as fostering collaboration and solidarity while exploiting workers and users for the profit of platforms' owners and investors. His proposed solution

was simple: to reproduce these platforms with the ownership model of cooperatives, where all the workers are also owners and participate in the decision-making process (Scholz, 2014). A few weeks later, Nathan Schneider, a media studies professor, wrote another blog article (Schneider, 2014) mapping out ongoing initiatives to combine digital platforms and cooperative governance. These two articles have later come to be seen as the cornerstone of the platform cooperativism movement. After their publication, the two professors started working together to lay the ground for further developing and materializing their propositions. In their words: "*we discussed these ideas with interested platform-workers, labor advocates, techies, and luddites—many of whom, we found, were venturing into various forms of platform cooperativism already. We agreed it was time that they should meet each other*" (Schneider & Scholz, 2016).

For this purpose, in November 2015, a two-day conference was held at the New School in New York titled *"Platform Cooperativism: The Internet. Ownership. Democracy"*. The event achieved great resonance and gathered over a thousand people from different fields and interests (Sifry, 2016). The event has subsequently been recognized as a crucial moment in the development of the movement (Schneider & Scholz, 2016; Sifry, 2016). It helped to popularize the idea of platform cooperativism, leading to various experiments emerging in multiple corners of the globe and to the organization of similar events aimed at discussing and disseminating the movement's ideas. Moreover, it laid the groundwork for individuals to initiate collaborative efforts in establishing an infrastructure and ecosystem capable of supporting the growth of platform cooperativism.

In 2016, a second conference was organized, during which the Platform Cooperativism Consortium (PCC henceforth) was launched. Considered to be a landmark of the movement, the PCC is a hub of researchers and practitioners committed to supporting the development of platform cooperatives all around the world through the dissemination of information as well as the development of research and legal, financial, and technological advice. That same year, the foundational book of the movement was published, titled "*Ours to Hack and to Own: The Rise of*

Platform Cooperativism, a New Vision for the Future of Work and a Fairer Internet" (Schneider & Scholz, 2016), in which the basic definitions of what platform cooperativism should look like and how to create the conditions for its development were explained.

From that moment on, the movement began to grow and become more and more structured. Conferences became a regular annual event in which issues related to platform cooperativism and the democratization of the internet were discussed, and people belonging to the movement had the chance to meet and interact. While all the conferences in the early years were hosted by the New School in New York, conferences began to take place also in Asia (2018), Europe (2021), and South America (2022). Alongside, many experimentations were put into practice, following the core ideas of platform cooperativism and creating a community of practitioners tied to the movement.

Some concrete manifestations of this movement also started to take place. One of these was the creation of the "Institute for the Cooperative Digital Economy" at the New School in 2019, which created a space for research fellows working on the topic from all over the world to work together. That same year, the first edition of an online course resulting from a collaboration between the New School and Mondragon University in Spain was launched. The course is aimed at teaching the principles of platform coops and how to start them, and it has been in place since 2019. Another experimentation, which also took place in 2019, was the PCC's launch of the "Platform Co-op Development Kit," a three-year project aimed at providing resources to facilitate the creation of platform cooperatives.

Appendix 1C summarizes the principal steps in the movement's evolution from its origin to 2021, the year in which data for this research project started to be collected. The peculiarity of this evolution process is that the whole movement has developed around the idea of an alternative organization. We can see that, over time, this idea has started to become increasingly more concrete and that structures were established at the movement level to sustain its development. This unique context, where the organizational idea predates the movement itself and undergoes a progressive

materialization, presents an ideal setting for investigating the research questions proposed. Subsequent paragraphs delve into the specifics of data collection and the associated assumptions.

Platform Cooperativism conferences as venues for data collection

As mentioned above, every year, the Platform Cooperativism Consortium holds a conference. Such events constitute the main (and only) moments in which actors belonging to the movement have the chance to interact and share their experiences, expectations, and ideas about how to pursue the movement's objectives. Events such as annual conferences, ceremonies, or contests (among others) have been proven to be an insightful object of analysis for understanding fields' emergence and development, for which they are commonly recognized as "Field Configuring Events" (Garud, 2008; Lampel & Meyer, 2008). The peculiarity of these settings resides in their characteristic of offering multiple discursive spaces (Hardy & Maguire, 2010) in which actors belonging to a field have the chance to interact, allowing for shared cognitive sense-making processes to take place (Oliver & Montgomery, 2008). These processes result in the creation of a common meaning system that provides legitimacy in the eyes of the members and a template for mobilizing them towards a common purpose (Garud, 2008), as well as the establishment of structures, standards, and practices that regulate the field (Gross & Zilber, 2020).

Both products and drivers of field evolution, Field Configuring Events thus offer a privileged venue for directly observing the sense-making processes characterizing a movement in its different phases of development. For this reason, the empirical work of this dissertation takes as its primary source of data the video recordings of four conferences organized by the Platform Cooperativism Consortium (2015, 2016, 2019, 2021). The conferences have been manually transcribed in order to get accustomed to the context and to grasp the spirit of the conversations. This resulted in a corpus of text, which forms the foundation for the empirical analysis.

The analysis for the first empirical piece is centered on transcriptions of the inaugural conference held in 2015. As the objective is to deepen the process through which alternatives are

crafted, an in-depth analysis of this crucial event enables a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics involved in this process. Conversely, given the longitudinal approach taken in the second piece, here the analysis is carried out on the whole corpus of transcriptions. Two distinct phases are identified in the movement's evolution, facilitating the observation of shifts taking place between them.

This first section has laid the ground for the theoretical and empirical contextualization of the present dissertation. The motivation driving the interest in the phenomenon of alternative organizations has been explained, together with the theoretical reasoning that resulted in the definition of the research objectives. Finally, the empirical context has been presented in an attempt to elucidate the reasons why it was chosen for this particular research project. The following two sections are devoted to the presentation of the two empirical studies of which the dissertation is composed of.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1A[4]: Platform cooperativism's values

Value promoted by the movement	Opposite in the digital economy	Exemplar Quotes
Common good ⟷ *Expression:* attention to the community; working for everyone's wellbeing; sharing wealth	**Self-interest** *Expression:* disregard for negative externalities; primacy of one's own wellbeing	*"And I think that what it shows is that our currency is not money, our currency is solidarity. This is what we have as the main value that we can exchange."*
Collaboration ⟷ *Expression:* mutual help among different organizations; working together towards common objectives	**Competition** *Expression:* other organizations seen as enemies; objective of prevailing	*"Instead of treating what we learned both in terms of knowledge, but also the software, as intellectual property that we have to, you know, guard because it's our competitive advantage, we should engage as deeply as we can in the transfer of know-how. So, share the software, share the knowledge, do it on this basis of reciprocity, because this is how we kind of escape this commodification of knowledge and of data."*
People centrality ⟷ *Expression:* people's needs guide action; human life and sustainable living as the primary goal	**Profit centrality** *Expression:* maximizing profit as the only rationale for action	*"So most companies start with that thing: with capital and use it to buy everything else. We started with labor, and we had to somehow assemble the other resources."*
Decent working conditions ⟷ *Expression:* work as a source of dignity and sustainable living	**Workers' exploitation** *Expression:* work as a means to maximize shareholders' wealth	*"Unlike other house cleaners who use a typical tech platform, she is paid 25 an hour, which is a living wage. So, she is not exposed to this unpredictable algorithmic boss (…) that would change her pay or hours from under her feet, and that gives her family stability."*
Equality ⟷ *Expression:* redistribution of power among everyone; nobody prevailing on the others	**Power imbalances** *Expression:* objective to prevail	*"And another thing that makes them* [platform cooperatives] *different is that they give power to the people so that they scale equality, right?"*
Self-determination ⟷ *Expression:* the ability to make decisions regarding one's own life	**Subjugation** *Expression:* objective to gain control over the others	*"All around the country, the artists and culture bears who have been most harmed by our current system of neoliberal governance and racial capitalism are building this new system by practicing self-determination and community wealth."*

[4] This table is the result of a content analysis aimed at identifying the main values promoted by the Platform Cooperativism movement. The analysis was performed through the software NVivo on the transcriptions of the Platform Cooperativism conference held in Berlin in 2021. Exemplar quotes are excerpts of the participants' speeches.

APPENDIX 1B[5]: Platform cooperative's technological and governance features

Value	Technological Features	Exemplar Quotes	Governance Features	Exemplar Quotes
Common good	Use of open-source software Creation of data trusts Co-design the technology with the community Mechanisms for data sharing Donation of part of the revenue to the community	"*Our aim is to help this twofold, on the one hand, to help citizens manage, govern the data, and on the other hand at the same time making abundance of data for some sort of research, the research that we citizens want to take advantage that we find it provides a common good.*"	Multi-stakeholdership model	*"So the people who are here, they are part of projects that are challenging that, you know, from a more community-based, community ownership perspective, where the platforms that we use in our daily lives, (…) have not only accountability towards us but we also have a sense of ownership, of how they are governed and they are run as.. Is more most conducive to a decent life that we want to live."*
Collaboration	Use of open-source software and licenses Practices of knowledge sharing	*"We built our platform in a way that it's open to use to any other cooperative that shares exactly our license or other licenses, so as a community we can build data cooperatives with different interconnected objectives."*	Creating networks with other cooperatives Cooperatives of cooperatives	*"Instead of competing, we cooperate, so we build federations. And I'm not even thinking about federations as in social franchising, so horizontally, right? The same type of business just in different locations. I'm thinking about collaborations between different types, so that instead of competing for VC money, we start using interoperable services, and we start co-investing in each other"*

[5] This table is the result of a content analysis aimed at identifying how the organizational template of platform cooperatives reflects the main values promoted by the movement. The analysis was performed through the software NVivo on the transcriptions of the Platform Cooperativism conference held in Berlin in 2021. Exemplar quotes are excerpts of the participants' speeches.

Value	Technological Features	Exemplar Quotes	Governance Features	Exemplar Quotes
Centrality of people	Co-design the technology with the community	*"Our local communities can set specific policies that define how the technology works in their territories, so we are giving.. we are promoting the local sovereignty of the technology."* [Practictioner]	Facilitating bottom-up processes	*"People is at the center of our model, because we are a cooperative, we are currently evolving to a multi-stakeholder coop to engage all our stakeholders in the democracy."*
			Shared Ownership	
Right to decent working conditions			Providing security mechanisms by employing platform workers	*"Typical tech platforms take out a fee of 25 to 50 percent commission, right? Which is an exorbitant amount for immigrants who make up the majority of the gig economy workforce. So, platform co-ops take much less, so the women at Up&Go decided to take five percent so which is basically accounting for the running of the platform and for credit card fees. And that means that 95 go to the workers, right? Esmeralda can also earn more, because the company doesn't have a fiduciary duty to shareholders to maximize profit."*
			Lower fees and higher pays	
			Shared decision-making processes	
Equality	Distributed technologies	*"And they [cooperative platforms] scale democracy, because power can be decentralized through distributed ledgers or crypto networks."* [Researcher]	Ensure adequate pay	"*the cooperative as a model of organizing more democratically and share resources and have a better salary will be one of the key things to have more safety net, to grow with this gig economy*"
			Starting from people's needs	
			Shared ownership	
Self-determination	Mechanisms of data ownership	*"We should make sure that the initiatives that we set up through cooperativism espouse data practices that completely set aside social stratification that creates a moral hazard in the market in the form of this kind of abuse of data which undermines human rights."*	Shared ownership	*"We need a new way, which is really more about people controlling this data and controlling the critical infrastructure of our time."*
	Co-design the technology with the users		Collective government of data	

APPENDIX 1C: Platform cooperativism timeline

2014

- The concept of platform cooperative is framed for the first time in a blog article titled *Platform Cooperativism vs. the Sharing Economy* published by prof. Trebor Scholz.
- Prof. Nathan Schneider publishes a blog article mapping initiatives in line with the definition of platform cooperative.

2015

- The first conference is held in NYC, titled *Platform Cooperativism: The Internet. Ownership. Democracy*.

2016

- The foundational book of the movement is published, titled "*Ours to Hack and to Own: The Rise of Platform Cooperativism, a New Vision for the Future of Work and a Fairer Internet*" (Schneider & Scholz, 2016).
- At the second conference, titled *Platform Cooperativism: Building the Cooperative Internet,* the Platform Cooperativism Consortium is launched.

2017

- A third conference is organized, titled *The People's Disruption: Platform Coops for Global Challenges*

2018

- For the first time, a conference is organized in Asia (Hong Kong). The title is: *Sowing the Seeds: Platform Cooperativism for Asia*

2019

- The research centre "Institute for the Cooperative Digital Economy" is created at the New School in New York.
- An online university course about platform cooperatives is launched.
- The PCC launches the Platform Co-op Development Kit.
- A conference titled *Who Owns the World? The State of Platform Cooperativism* takes place in New York.

2021

- For the first time, a conference is organized in Europe (Berlin). The title is: *#TheNewCommonSense. Forging the Cooperative Digital Economy*

2. NOT ONLY ABOUT THE FUTURE: THE ROLE OF TEMPORAL WORK IN CRAFTING ALTERNATIVES[1]

Abstract

Imagining and articulating desirable futures has been researched as a critical aspect in organizing alternatives aimed at addressing the challenges that the present confronts us with. This study seeks to broaden this perspective by delving into the narrative construction of the feasibility of such alternatives. To achieve this, we applied the lens of temporal work, a conceptual framework that also considers how the past and present are interpreted in defining visions and paths of actions. Our analysis focused on the discourses presented during the inaugural conference of the platform cooperativism movement, which centered on advocating for alternative models in response to the prevailing digital economy. The findings reveal that temporal work, influenced by positive or negative connotations, engages in activities such as increasing desirability, enhancing feasibility, and questioning feasibility. In the phase of defining a shared vision, these mechanisms not only build momentum for action but also define the characteristics of alternative visions.

[1] A version of this paper is co-authored with Federica Bandini, Laura Toschi and Cristina Boari, from the Department of Management of the University of Bologna.
Previous versions of the paper have been presented at EGOS 2022, Sub-theme 04: *Movements, Markets, and Morality: Common Grounds and Unchartered Territories* (Vienna, July 2022) and at the University of Edinburgh Business School 10th Annual Writing Workshop (Edinburgh, March 2023).

INTRODUCTION

What if digital technologies were a tool for empowering communities rather than benefiting big corporations? What if digital workers could collectively own the platforms they work for? What if the Internet was a genuinely democratic and collaborative space? These are some of the questions people were asking each other at the first conference of the platform cooperativism movement, titled "*Platform Cooperativism: The Internet. Ownership. Democracy*". This three-day event hosted by the NY New School University in 2015 gathered over a thousand people eager to explore ways of creating alternatives to a digital economy dominated by big tech companies that exploit workers and personal data for their own profit. Instead, they advocated for a future where digital technologies serve communities' well-being and people's empowerment.

Platform cooperativism is gaining recognition as a promising field for exploring alternative organizational structures (Battilana et al., 2022; Chen & Chen, 2021). Its core proposition involves implementing the shared ownership and democratic governance commonly found in cooperative enterprises within digital platforms, offering alternatives to conventional models. As with other processes of alternative organizing, platform cooperativism shows two characteristic features. First, it is rooted in the future: The very basis of taking action lies in something that still has to be created (Schiller-Merkens, 2022). Second, the likelihood that this imagined future will become a reality depends on whether different parties can jointly act toward its concretization (Stjerne, Wenzel, & Svejenova, 2022). In such a context, how the future is imagined and communicated exerts a pivotal influence on the organizing process, ultimately determining which course of action will be undertaken and which type of future will materialize (Beckert, 2021; Mische, 2014; Rindova & Martins, 2022; Thompson & Byrne, 2022).

Research on how future-oriented discourses affect the organizing process can offer valuable insights for exploring alternative organizing. For instance, in the context of grand challenges, scholars have emphasized the power of envisioning futures that are both distant and markedly divergent from the present to stimulate collective action (Augustine et al., 2019; Beckert, 2013, p. 201). Referred to as "alternative futures," these visions possess high desirability because they deviate from the current state, presenting utopic visions of a society where major challenges have been effectively addressed for the better (Garland, Huising, & Struben, 2013; Gosling & Case, 2013). This perspective has emphasized imagining desirable futures as essential in organizing alternatives at the expense of considerations regarding their feasibility (Gümüsay & Reinecke, 2022). Consequently, examining how these alternative future projections grapple with issues related to their feasibility remains an area that warrants further exploration.

Conversely, studies focusing on entrepreneurial ventures or strategic change have stressed the relevance of such future-oriented discourses to mitigate the uncertainty inherent in future projections by fostering the plausibility of envisaged scenarios. According to this perspective, increasing the perceived feasibility of the future envisioned is a crucial prerequisite for involving actors in their realization (Ganzin, Islam, & Suddaby, 2020; Garud, Schildt, & Lant, 2014; Rindova & Martins, 2022). Instead of focusing primarily on the imagination of the future as radically different from the present, this line of inquiry has observed the impactful role of narratives that skillfully connect past, present, and future in a compelling and coherent manner in effectively organizing action. This process is referred to as *temporal work* (Bansal, Reinecke, Suddaby, & Langley, 2022; Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013). Grounded in the understanding that human action is temporally embedded, constantly influenced by past occurrences, constrained by present conditions, and oriented toward the future (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998), temporal work aims at influencing perceptions across these different temporal

dimensions. The objective is to mold the desirability and feasibility of specific paths of action and ultimately enable their realization (Alimadadi, Davies, & Tell, 2022).

We suggest that exploring how actors leverage temporal work in contexts of alternative organizing could deepen our comprehension of how these visions can be perceived as feasible beyond desirable. Conveying both desirability and feasibility is, in fact, essential for the "persuasive effectiveness" of representations of the future (Rindova & Martins, 2022) and, consequently, for organizing action to bring them to fruition. We thus ask: *How do actors employ temporal work in crafting alternatives?*

To answer this question, we analyzed the transcriptions of the first conference of the platform cooperativism movement. The event gathered people from different backgrounds, all interested in understanding how to organize action to make platform cooperatives a reality. These kinds of arenas are deemed ideal for empirically accessing and analyzing future-oriented narratives (Gümüsay & Reinecke, 2022) since they offer venues for openly debating different visions of the future and how to achieve them (Mische, 2014). Our analysis demonstrates that, alongside desirability, considerations about the feasibility of alternatives are consistently present in the definition phase of a shared vision and that temporal work plays a significant role in this process. By attaching positive or negative connotations to acts of temporal work, actors engage in three main activities: *increasing desirability*, *enhancing feasibility,* and *questioning feasibility* of the alternative vision. In terms of prompting action towards such an alternative future, these mechanisms allow both building momentum for action and delineating its characteristics.

These findings contribute to the study of alternative futures by expanding the focus on desirability to include considerations regarding feasibility. We demonstrate that shaping these two attributes – desirability and feasibility – is pivotal not just for motivating individuals to engage in collective action but also for delineating the features of such action. Moreover, by

uncovering how temporal work influences the way alternatives are presented and shaped, we were able to shed light on the processes through which alternative imaginaries arise in the first place (Gümüsay & Reinecke, 2022).

The paper unfolds as follows: first, we introduce our theoretical framework, illustrating why we believe the study of alternatives could gain insights from a temporal work perspective. Subsequently, we detail our context along with the data collection and analysis process. Then, we expound upon our findings and outline a model depicting how temporal work influences processes of alternative organizing. Finally, we draw on our findings to explain how this study contributes to existing literature and opens up new avenues for research.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Organizing toward alternative futures

During the last decades, the pitfalls and drawbacks of the current economic system have become more and more evident (Ferraro et al., 2015), pushing for the need for new social imaginaries to emerge (Zanoni et al., 2017) and fuel alternative ways of organizing the economy at a whole (Battilana et al., 2022; Schiller-Merkens, 2020). Recent scholarship has emerged to explore the possibilities of achieving such a radical change through what is known as *alternative organizing* (Schiller-Merkens, 2020). This definition assumes that there is a taken-for-granted model of economic organizing (Mair & Rathert, 2021), which embodies the principles of profit maximization, hierarchical governance, and financial performance. In contrast, alternative organizing allows the pursuit of multiple economic and social goals, gives primacy to moral values, fosters democratic forms of governance, and is attentive and responsive to social needs and the community in which people are embedded (Land & King, 2014; Mair & Rathert, 2021; Parker et al., 2014; Schiller-Merkens, 2020). This process not only builds on different principles and values, but its very purpose is to challenge the status quo and to demonstrate that alternative

forms of economic relationships are possible (Gümüsay & Reinecke, 2022; Reedy et al., 2016), prompting further research on the processes through which it comes to life, develops and spreads.

At the core of alternative organizing, there is the shared vision of a different future, where practices and structures are first imagined and then built according to a particular set of values (Daskalaki et al., 2019; Schiller-Merkens, 2022). Action is thus guided by the aspiration to a different system, which, for its very characteristic of diverging from what already exists, can only be imagined in the future. While this "*ability to imagine that things might as well be different from what they actually are"* (C. Wright et al., 2013) is the premise to move toward the creation of something new, acting based on what does not yet exist can also be problematic for its uncertainty (Roux-Rosier et al., 2018). In coping with this ambiguity, individuals engage in processes of prospective sensemaking (Gioia, Thomas, Clark, & Chittipeddi, 1994; Stigliani & Ravasi, 2012) aimed at figuring out how events could unfold and what actions are required to reach some desired state or prevent some unwanted one. In prospective sensemaking processes, a fundamental role has been recognized to the discourses through which the future is constructed, which create the links between present and future, and between cognition and action (Mische, 2009). Through discourses, the plausibility and desirability of different scenarios to materialize can be enhanced, thus influencing which possibilities for action are taken into account and which ones are eventually undertaken (Alimadadi et al., 2022).

Understanding how making sense of the future influences action has recently attracted increasing attention from organizational scholars (Wenzel, Krämer, Koch, & Reckwitz, 2020; C. Wright et al., 2013). Their research has centered on how the future is imagined and communicated (Comi & Whyte, 2018; Minkkinen, 2019; Mische, 2009, 2014) and how this affects decisions and achieving desired outcomes. This set of studies has indeed shown that specific visions of the future can orient action and foster commitment, whether it is at the

organizational (Beckert, 2021; Garud et al., 2014; Rindova & Martins, 2022) or collective level (Augustine et al., 2019; Stjerne et al., 2022). However, when unpacking the mechanisms through which these visions affect action, different streams of research have brought to light various features. Studies interested in understanding how to achieve transformative change, as in the case of grand challenges such as climate change, have stressed the motivational effect triggered by visions of a future that drastically diverge from the status quo (Beckert, 2013; Garland et al., 2013; Gosling & Case, 2013). The main focus in this stream of research has thus centered on the desirability inherent in imagining alternative futures as the critical factor in mobilizing action toward their fruition (Gümüsay & Reinecke, 2022). Nevertheless, it has also shown that such intangible and abstract visions are less helpful in defining concrete paths of action (Augustine et al., 2019), thus posing questions about how alternative scenarios can be ultimately realized.

In these terms, research in the areas of entrepreneurship and strategy-making has analyzed how narratives about the future can also affect the perception of its feasibility. Findings have emphasized the need for these visions to be anchored to objective experiences to increase the perception of their feasibility and plausibility and be able to engage different actors in making such imaginaries become reality (Alimadadi et al., 2022; Garud et al., 2014; Rindova & Martins, 2022). Here, the emphasis lies not only in envisioning what the future should look like but also in crafting future projections by interpreting past events and future conditions in a way that skilfully waves connections among these different temporal focuses. This process has been defined as temporal work, and several studies have examined its influence on the effectiveness of future projections in stimulating action (Alimadadi et al., 2022; Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013).

Table 2.1 summarizes the main differences in studying future projections according to these two research areas. We argue that both these perspectives play a role in alternative

organizing. While the critique of the current system demands audacious and ideal visions of the future, these must be reinforced by collective efforts from individuals convinced that their endeavors will not be futile. For this reason, focusing on how the feasibility of such visions is constructed could enrich our understanding of how alternatives are imagined and realized. In the following sections, we present these perspectives in more depth to elaborate on how integrating their insights could enhance the study of alternative organizing.

Characteristics of future projections analyzed	**Area of study**	
	Alternative Futures	**New ventures and strategic planning**
Relationship with the present	Discontinuity	Continuity
Focus	Desirability	Plausibility
Time frame	Distant	Close or distant
Objective	To express aspirations/values/ideals	To define paths of action
Ontology	Not necessarily true	Believed to be true
Roots	Lack of objective experiences	Built on objective experiences
Mechanisms of engagement	Hope	Legitimation
Temporal orientation	Future	Past/present/future
Projections defined through	Imagination	Temporal work
Level of analysis	Society	Organizations
Outcomes in terms of action	To motivate collective action	To engage different actors in the realization of new projects

Table 2.1: Differences in the focus of study between streams of research

Imagining a different world: alternative futures

When it comes to motivating action toward the construction of alternatives to the status quo, research emphasizes the collective ability to *imagine* as an emancipatory process, which allows to take the distance from the current reality by envisioning what is not yet existing (Gosling & Case, 2013; C. Wright et al., 2013). Through these acts of imagination, individuals can construct utopian narratives of the world, portraying reality as it ought to be rather than as it currently exists (Arjaliès, 2021; Garland et al., 2013; Grey & Garsten, 2002; Levitas, 2011). This, in turn, allows for reevaluating social relationships and practices in a manner that radically diverges

from present conditions (Gümüsay & Reinecke, 2022; Roux-Rosier et al., 2018). The act of "*daring to imagine*" (Fournier, 2002) opens up possibilities for new practices and imaginaries to emerge and establishes the conditions for alternatives to develop (Dey & Mason, 2018).

In these contexts, the future is narrated in a manner that emphasizes the discontinuity with present reality and assumes fictional qualities, implying that its credibility cannot be substantiated by objective and knowable facts (Beckert, 2013, 2021; Chen & Chen, 2021; Grimes & Vogus, 2021). Thus, future projections do not flow directly from past and present experiences but radically diverge from them. This is why the envisioned time frame for the materialization of such future projections is often a distant one, marked by ambiguity and a high level of abstractness (Augustine et al., 2019; Garland et al., 2013). The desirability of these future states is thus not driven by rational estimations but by the hope that things might one day be better (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Gosling & Case, 2013; Mische, 2009, 2014).

In recent times, scholars have increasingly focused on exploring alternative futures, driven by the pressing need to comprehend how these projections can steer organizational processes, mitigating the potentially catastrophic outcomes of issues like climate change and growing social inequalities (C. Wright et al., 2013). What has come to light is that the distinctive features of these visions, marked by a substantial departure from the present and inherent ambiguity, significantly contribute to their appeal (Augustine et al., 2019). Such visions are thus crafted to possess a high level of desirability (Gümüsay & Reinecke, 2022), which pertains to the attractiveness of an action's end-state (Liberman & Trope, 1998). Yet, a less-explored aspect pertains to how the feasibility of these transformative future scenarios is depicted concerning the ease or difficulty of attaining that end-state (Liberman & Trope, 1998). Alongside focusing on their desirability, presenting future visions as plausibly feasible is crucial in increasing their persuasive impact (Rindova & Martins, 2022) and, consequently, their ability

to engage diverse actors. We propose that examining the literature on new enterprises and strategic organizational change could offer valuable insights in this regard.

Making the future look plausible: the role of temporal work

The challenge of enhancing the feasibility of something that does not yet exist has been at the center of research focused on new entrepreneurial ventures (Cornelissen & Clarke, 2010; Ganzin et al., 2020; Garud et al., 2014) and strategic planning within organizations (Harmon, Rhee, & Cho, 2023; Pettit, Balogun, & Bennett, 2023; Stigliani & Ravasi, 2012). What differentiates this bunch of studies from the literature on alternative futures is a focus on the organizational level and on the agency of the actors involved, whose purpose is to engage others in the preferred path of action (Rindova & Martins, 2022). Within this framework, a common thread is the need to connect future projections to collective experiences, a process that helps convey the prospective sensemaking and enhance the comprehensibility and plausibility of the proposed visions (Gioia et al., 1994).

Thus, these assumptions have affected the analysis of how future projections are conceived and communicated in organizational settings: Instead of focusing on the discontinuity with present circumstances, constructing a sense of continuity with present and past states has been deemed relevant in coping with uncertainty and defining paths of action (Hernes & Schultz, 2020). For example, Gioia et al. have shown how organizational actors interpret past events and project them into the future to infer the potential outcomes of proposed actions (Gioia, Corley, & Fabbri, 2002; Gioia et al., 1994). Similarly, Stigliani and Ravasi (2012) demonstrated that collective prospective sensemaking happens through cycles of retrospective cognitive work. Alimadadi et al. (2022) revealed how referencing negative past experiences helps to depict an undesirable future that actors want to avoid.

The means through which actors build the links between past, present, and future has been acknowledged in the literature as *temporal work* (Granqvist & Gustafsson, 2016; Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013), which can be defined as *"any individual, collective or organizational effort to influence, sustain or redirect the temporal assumptions or patterns that shape strategic action"* (Bansal et al., 2022). This kind of work has been acknowledged to play a significant role in dealing with the challenges of formulating future projections (Thompson & Byrne, 2022), particularly for the agency it confers to the narrator. By combining different temporal orientations and trajectories, actors can mitigate uncertainty and establish coherent and compelling accounts of future scenarios (Rindova & Martins, 2022; Ybema, 2010). Recent research has also shown that an essential component of temporal work aimed at depicting the future lies in the qualitative connotations attached to different temporal orientations (Alimadadi et al., 2022; Suddaby, Israelsen, Robert Mitchell, & Lim, 2023). On this matter, Suddaby et al. (2023) have pointed out that the emotions (positive or negative) a narrator associates with their accounting of the past and the future influence the mechanisms involved in shaping perceptions of risk and uncertainty related to the future.

While the analysis of temporal work has provided valuable insights on its role in shaping the desirability and feasibility of new entrepreneurial ventures or strategic actions and how, in turn, these can help in involving different actors, it still has to engage with more transformative and alternative visions of the future. We believe such a perspective would allow us to shed light on how actors build feasibility in the context of alternative organizing, characterized by abstractness, ambiguity, and radical discontinuity with the present conditions. Exploring temporal work in contexts of alternative organizing would deepen our comprehension of the construction of alternative futures, encompassing both the envisioned end-state and the paths towards concretization.

METHODS

Empirical context: Platform Cooperativism

In December 2014, Trebor Scholz, professor of media studies, published a blog post titled "*Platform Cooperativism vs. the Sharing Economy*", framing the concept that would have been at the center of the movement's claims for the first time. He argued that sharing economy platforms like Uber, Airbnb, or TaskRabbit were presenting themselves as fostering collaboration and solidarity while exploiting workers and users for the profit of platforms' owners and investors. His proposed solution was simple: to reproduce these platforms with the ownership model of cooperatives, where all the workers are also owners and participate in the decision-making process (Scholz, 2014). A few weeks later, Nathan Schneider, a media studies professor, wrote another blog article (Schneider, 2014) mapping out ongoing initiatives to combine digital platforms and cooperative governance. These two articles have later come to be seen as the cornerstone of the platform cooperativism movement. After their publication, the two professors started working together to lay the ground for further developing and materializing their propositions. In their words: "*we discussed these ideas with interested platform-workers, labor advocates, techies, and luddites—many of whom, we found, were venturing into various forms of platform cooperativism already. We agreed it was time that they should meet each other*" (Schneider & Scholz, 2016).

To this purpose, in November 2015, a two-day conference was held at the New School in New York titled *"Platform Cooperativisms: The Internet. Ownership. Democracy"*. The event achieved great resonance and gathered over a thousand people from different fields and interests (Sifry, 2016). For two days, they discussed their ideas for building a more democratic digital economy through different formats: roundtables, keynote speeches, workshops, and artistic performances. The discussion involved reflections on the proposed organizational model of platform cooperatives, as well as broader themes such as platform regulation,

blockchain, and workers' rights. The event has subsequently been recognized as a crucial moment in the development of the movement (Schneider & Scholz, 2016; Sifry, 2016). It helped to popularize the idea of platform cooperativism, leading to various experiments emerging in multiple corners of the globe and to the organization of similar events aimed at discussing and disseminating the movement's ideas. Moreover, it laid the groundwork for individuals to initiate collaborative efforts in establishing an infrastructure and ecosystem capable of supporting the growth of platform cooperativism.

We identified this conference as an ideal setting for exploring the visions of the future involved in developing alternative organizations. Similarly to other research (Zilber, 2007, 2011), we centered our analysis on a single exploratory case study to better understand the dynamics at play. In research on future-oriented narratives, venues such as conferences have been labeled as "sites of hyper-projectivity" (Mische, 2014), since they provide discursive spaces not ordinarily available (Hardy & Maguire, 2010), in which reflection about the future is at the center of interaction. Through the identification of problems and the imagination of possible solutions, actors taking part in these kinds of arenas are thus involved in making these "*imagined futures visible and empirically accessible*" (Gümüsay & Reinecke, 2022) and in defining the path of actions that most fits the future they aspire to, thus offering a privileged venue for observing future-making projections. Further, such events have proven to give voice to several actors regardless of their centrality to the field and to host a multiplicity of visions and ideas (Hardy & Maguire, 2010; Haug, 2013; Zilber, 2011), thus allowing to examine differences and similarities among approaches.

Besides being an ideal setting for accessing future-oriented narratives, this particular conference seems especially well-suited for observing how participants shape a collective vision of the future. The movement is, in fact, in its early stages. Thus, goals will likely remain unclear and contested, and participants have no formalized roles or relationships (Haug, 2013).

What they share is an interest in the idea of an alternative way of organizing the digital economy; however, both the details of the vision and the path to reach it have yet to be defined. Thus, we expected participants to bring in their own ideas of how the future could and should unfold and how to collectively organize toward that future. This allowed us to observe the temporal work actors engaged in when building alternative-future narratives.

Data collection and analysis

For the analysis, we gathered various qualitative data concerning the event. The primary data source came from the video recordings of the sessions, which were subsequently transcribed to prepare them for textual analysis, resulting in 277 single-spaced pages of text[2]. The recordings have been transcribed by one of the authors, who thus had the chance to take notes about the setting and the spirit of the conversations. To complement the transcriptions, we included the conference program, consisting of a description of every session and the speaker's biographies. Lastly, several archival documents regarding Platform Cooperativism were collected and used to get a clearer view of the context and to familiarize ourselves with the issues discussed. These sources included books, online articles, and blog posts.

To set the stage for our analysis, we carefully read the conference program and the participants' short bios in order to get a clear picture of how the conference was organized and staged and who was invited to speak since these features largely influence what stories are told and how (Gross & Zilber, 2020). We thus identified different categories of speakers: researchers from both academic and independent research institutions; policymakers involved at various levels in the discussions about regulations and laws; practitioners directly involved in experimenting with various forms of alternative organizations; representatives of organizations

[2] The video recordings were retrieved form the Platform Cooperativism Consortium's webpage. A few recordings lacked the initial part of the session; nevertheless, we were able to have parts of speech for every speaker listed on the program. Furthermore, we reached data saturation before finishing to code all the sessions, suggesting that it is unlikely the missing segments have an impact on our results.

providing different kinds of services to the community; unionists; journalists; and activists. Speakers came from various backgrounds, mainly from the fields of IT, cooperation, and law. Moreover, the audience actively engaged in each session by posing questions and sharing their perspectives.

Regarding the agenda, the conference program comprised a total of 20 sessions. We noted mainly three kinds of sessions, different in format and kind of actor invited to speak. We thus identified keynote speeches, in which researchers or policymakers performed brief lectures about a specific topic or question; showcases, in which practitioners presented their activities; and roundtables, dedicated to discussion among different categories of actors around a given issue. Most sessions focused on exploring the organizational model for platform cooperatives, aiming to articulate their potential structure and tackle the legal, financial, and technical challenges associated with their implementation. Nevertheless, broader topics were also on the agenda, including discussions on matters pertaining to the platform economy, the dynamics of digital labor, the involvement of the state, and the capabilities of emerging technologies like blockchain. Appendix 2A illustrates some details of the conference, such as its title and description and its program.

Using the software NVivo, we performed an inductive analysis developed through different steps. We began by performing a first round of coding to detect the parts of speech in which actors expressed their temporal interpretations. In this phase, we used the categories of temporal work identified by Kaplan and Orlikowski (2013): *reimagining the future*, *rethinking the past*, and *reconsidering present concerns*. We soon realized that temporal interpretations differed not only according to their temporal focus – whether on the past, present, or future – but also according to a positive or negative connotation attached to them. This observation resonates with recent research on temporal work, which has emphasized the emotions associated with temporal interpretations (Alimadadi et al., 2022; Suddaby et al., 2023) and

allowed us to refine our initial codes. Drawing on Suddaby et al. (2023), we thus labeled "nostalgia", "postalgia," and "present opportunities" positive interpretations of the past, future, and present, respectively. Conversely, we labeled their relative negative counterparts as "dystoria", "dystopia", and "present concerns". Parts of speech coded as "nostalgia" depict past events and circumstances in a notably favorable light, at times suggesting superiority to the present situation. Similarly, text segments categorized as "postalgia" involve representations of an ideal future. Besides, we coded as "present opportunities" the parts of the text encompassing optimistic views of present conditions. On the other hand, we coded as "dystoria" segments of speech that sought to represent the past as degrading, emphasizing its negative aspects, and as "dystopia" the portrayal of a catastrophic and disastrous future. Similarly, we coded considerations of the present that highlight its negative and constraining aspects as "present concerns". Table 2.2 displays the different labels with respective representative quotes.

Temporal work	**Connotation**	**Label**	**Exemplar quotes**
Rethinking the past	Positive	Nostalgia	*"If you're European, like myself, you used to have a welfare system where you had public universal healthcare, free education, cheap public transportation, kind of good labor and environmental standards and social safety net (…). That is now compromised by these companies like Uber and Airbnb and the platform monopolies like Google and Facebook."*
	Negative	Dystoria	*"So the first thing to recognize is that if automation was dehumanizing and making a skilled person into an unskilled worker, we're now talking about the potential of robots to completely eliminate work there."*
Reconsidering present concerns	Positive	Present opportunities	*"We're actually seeing a kind of progression or convergence towards thinner and thinner platforms that take less and less out of the market and are actually beginning to create an environment which is almost inherently values based and ethical."*
	Negative	Present concerns	*"We live in a city with about 57,000 homeless families in our shelters tonight. 20,000 of those will be children who go to our public school. And we have about 12,000 on the street, homeless*

			people tonight. And we have more than that in Airbnb rentals available here around."
Reimagining the future	Positive	Postalgia	*"So perhaps then the future will not be actually dictated by centralized platform, centralized enterprises, but maybe the future will really be about protocols that enable peer-to-peer interactions."*
	Negative	Dystopia	*"Multinational corporations are on the way of increasing their power. There are very much on the way to, well, destroy the resources of our Planet and it's high time to really address that issue."*

Table .22: Different kinds of temporal interpretations

We then proceeded with a second round of coding to identify how different temporal interpretations were linked to the process of alternative organizing. For example, the objective of representing the future with a negative connotation (dystoria) could be coded either as "consider past failures of alternatives" or as "referring to a problematic past to avoid repeating it in the future". Similarly, the other temporal interpretations were associated with different codes according to their function in the discussion about alternative organizing. The resulting codes were subsequently aggregated to understand the mechanisms at play in building the desirability and the feasibility of alternative future visions. Three main categories emerged in this phase: enhancing feasibility, questioning feasibility, and increasing desirability.

The final step in our analysis involved a process of pattern recognition (Patton, 2014) aimed at identifying similarities in how the three mechanisms of enhancing feasibility, questioning feasibility, and increasing desirability impacted the crafting of alternative visions. In qualitative analysis, the identification of patterns involves deductions based on reason or logic to determine recurrent trends within a set of data (Ganzin et al., 2020; Patton, 2014; Reay & Jones, 2016). We thus returned to our initial coding to develop an understanding of the different patterns through which temporal work and the associated mechanisms influenced the

construction of alternatives. Appendix 2B shows examples of the pattern recognition analysis. This process enabled us to discern that the influence of temporal work on shaping desirability and feasibility could yield different outcomes in the collective formulation of alternatives. In particular, we detected two primary dynamics at play: building momentum and defining characteristics of the alternatives. The following section illustrates our findings.

FINDINGS

As anticipated, the analysis revealed the conference as a moment of intense future-oriented discussion. The underlying theme that permeated all the sessions centered on envisioning a more just digital economy guided by equality, cooperation, and social justice principles. Reasoning and thinking about the future were actively encouraged and embraced. A pervasive feeling of excitement and optimism regarding the collective action's future development was consistently present. Illustrative of this sentiment, one of the convenors invited reflections at the end of the first day, and someone in the audience shouted: "*We are our future!*". Moreover, the conference was perceived as a catalytic moment facilitating this collective endeavor. In the words of one of the speakers:

> *"I don't know about you, but I really feel like this conference is collecting the right people around the table, who are asking the right questions. And it might still feel like we're not coming up with concrete answers or solutions that are going to change the world in five seconds, but I think that's because it's really complicated."*

This quote also highlights the abstract and ambiguous nature of the visions discussed, which, as argued above, is typical of this kind of venue. Indeed, we aimed to observe how the different participants coped with this abstractness by focusing on how they engaged in processes of temporal work. The analysis first revealed that through their discourses, participants tried not only to reimagine the future but also to reassess the past and reconsider present conditions,

aiming to craft coherent and compelling connections among these temporal focuses and their assessment of the alternative vision. In doing that, they also attached a positive or negative connotation. We found that these different focuses allowed the speakers to shape the desirability and feasibility of alternatives through three main mechanisms: increasing desirability, enhancing feasibility, and questioning feasibility. Figure 2.1 illustrates our data structure and how we were able to identify these mechanisms. These are further explained in the following sections.

Figure 2.1: Data structure

Increasing desirability. Our findings align with research on alternative futures in showing that one of the main objectives of the discourses unfolding in sites of hyper-projectivity is to increase the desirability of a future scenario, fostering motivation and action towards its realization (Alimadadi et al., 2022; Augustine et al., 2019; Gümüsay & Reinecke, 2022; Mische, 2009; C. Wright et al., 2013). Various forms of temporal work may be employed for this purpose. In terms of reassessment of the past, this can be approached with a positive connotation by portraying an ideal past condition that has been compromised. In this case, the past is viewed nostalgically and is perceived as possessing superior qualities to the present. Examples of this point of view include recalling a past when technologies were not pervasive and human relations were more authentic or reflecting on the collaborative nature of the Internet and other digital technologies before large corporations co-opted them to extract financial value. Illustrative of this perspective, a participant stated:

> *"This* [New York City] *is the city that for decades has been a place of a profound social fabric for people to meet up with each other simply by going to local bodega or their friendly neighborhood barber, they knew their neighbors. We didn't have to have technology help us find each other. We found each other, their houses, and we actually knew each other in different ways."*

The call to action behind this kind of assessment is an invitation to reproduce that ideal past and to organize against what is perceived as the cause of its corruption.

Alternatively, the past could be rethought in a hostile and problematic way. In this scenario, the motivation to organize for alternative futures arises from the imperative to prevent such situations from recurring. Similarly, both the present conditions and future scenarios can be depicted as controversial, bearing severe consequences for people's lives and society as a whole. As in the words of one of the speakers:

"(…) This is after centuries of slavery, segregation, redlining, discrimination, harassment, violence. This is what we've created and not only do white households have 13 times more wealth than black households do in the US, the situation over the past 30 years has not gotten better. (…) We're moving in the wrong direction. So again, unless we change the rules of the game, now, soon, we're going to end up living with this injustice for the rest of our lives."

Speakers recurring to these negative representations of past, present, and future circumstances invoke the necessity to mobilize collective action to shape a reality that radically differs from what the past was, the present is, or the future will become without intervention. In delineating the outcomes of such action, an ideal future is often evoked. Reflecting the characteristics of utopian visions, the portrayal of such a desired future calls upon acts of imagination that allow one to depart from the familiar world (Fournier, 2002; Gümüsay & Reinecke, 2022). As articulated by a presenter:

"What if we could drive them? What if we could own them? What if we could govern them together? How would our debates about Uber drivers and Facebook terms of service change if we were in control? How would we think differently about surveillance if we wrote our own terms of service, or net neutrality if we owned our ISPS?"

We identified these acts of temporal work as directed toward enhancing the desirability of alternative organizational methods, as they render the actualization of such alternatives more appealing and deemed necessary. However, these narratives fail to address the issues related to translating such visions to reality and organizing effectively to bring them into existence. In other words, they do not consider the feasibility of these alternatives. We discovered that other uses of temporal work were aimed at tackling this challenge.

Enhancing feasibility. In contexts of hyper-projectivity, temporal work often aims to increase the perceived feasibility of implementing alternatives. Positive connotations attached to assessing past events, present conditions, and future projections are generally employed for this purpose.

Narrating past events in a positive light can be done with the aim of showing that transformative changes have occurred previously, thereby suggesting their attainability in the future. Exemplifying this, a participant stated:

> *"You know it's not about the app. It's really about the relationship between the businesses and the workers and this relationship, especially in those that we are most concerned about (...) is really as old as garment jobbers and farm labor contractors and other kinds of labor brokers. And we have regulated those folks in the past. We can do it again."*

Such depictions remove barriers to action by demonstrating that challenges akin to those existing today have been effectively addressed in the past. A favorable reconsideration of the present can elicit a similar effect, which depicts current conditions as holding possibilities for the organization of collective action toward transformative changes. Reflecting on this, a speaker said:

> *"so whenever people say: Uber brought us this, or Airbnb brought us this (...) Let's all remember that: no. It's about people, it's about the technologies behind it, but it's not about any particular firm. None of them are set in stone. They can be toppled, but to do so, we're going to need to have a lot of proactive egalitarian regulation in law."*

These two examples of temporal work highlight that positive depictions of past events and present conditions can be used to open up possibilities for alternative futures to be achieved, thus enhancing their feasibility. Another way to enhance feasibility through a positive

reassessment of the past and present consists of bringing about successful examples of both past and present organizations or organizing processes that have implemented alternative practices. Such examples are referred to not only to demonstrate the possibility of alternative organizing but also to utilize them as a blueprint for defining the vision. Here is an example of these instances:

> *"The whole places I find hope in are solidarity projects that are actually about people face to face, figuring out how they want to be in solidarity (...) There's a whole huge network of solidarity clinics in Greece and other parts of Europe where no one has jobs anymore and people don't have healthcare, so they're just all opening up these clinics and taking care of each other."*

Speakers here refer to what in literature has been defined as "real utopias" – examples of practices based on utopian visions of an ideal future, which show at a small scale that such alternative relationships are possible (Gümüsay & Reinecke, 2022; Schiller-Merkens, 2022; E. O. Wright, 2013). By referencing these exemplary models, it becomes possible to enhance the feasibility of alternative visions and gain a deeper understanding of the characteristics required, enriching them with practical and concrete features.

In the absence of such specific models, a similar objective can be achieved through the representation of an ideal future. However, in this scenario, the future is not portrayed in abstract and ambiguous terms; instead, details are disclosed to make it more comprehensible and attainable, as in the words of one of the speakers:

> *"Another imaginary app (...) is called allB&B and allB&B would entail residents to be paid a dividend from the profits of such rental platform (...). These apps are ultimately feasible to build and to implement, and they would allow cities to not only play a role in the regulation of the on demand economy, they would also be able to*

co-shape it."

As this quote illustrates, visions of the future can indeed contribute to enhancing feasibility. However, for this purpose, they require a certain grounding in present reality, as exemplified in this case by referencing the Airbnb model and illustrating how the alternative could operate. This discovery aligns with research on entrepreneurial ventures, emphasizing the significance of metaphors and analogies in bolstering the credibility of new projects (Cornelissen, 2005; Cornelissen, Holt, & Zundel, 2011).

Questioning feasibility. While we expected discourses to be aimed at increasing both the feasibility and desirability of alternative futures, we also found that temporal work could be directed at questioning this feasibility. In these cases, rather than illustrating the mechanisms and possibilities for change, participants seek to highlight the challenges that might emerge in the process, potentially impeding the realization of desired goals. These perspectives are presented as upholding a pragmatic view on the actual likelihood of success for alternative organizing—first to operate successfully and subsequently to challenge established entities. In contrast to the approaches focused on improving feasibility, this time, temporal work is predominantly associated with negative connotations.

In terms of reconsidering past events, examples of failures of attempted alternatives are recalled to shed light on the fact that things might not unfold as effortlessly as envisioned. As in the words of one of the participants in the audience:

"(...) our startup failed, but when we were operational, we were spending more than $1000 a month on Amazon Cloud to run 50 computers, 24 hours a day processing with the data. And I spent $8000 in legal fees to get the company set up and negotiate the license. And so on. (...) So there are huge technology, design, legal challenges

(...) So the big challenge for coops is to rise against these design and technology challenges which are fundamental, and you need to be talking more about that."

Focusing on the present has a similar function when, instead of focusing on the possibilities for action, it stresses the constraints and the difficulties inherent in current conditions. This perspective manifests both by pointing to ongoing efforts to create alternatives that prove ineffective or by illustrating how the existing system tends to support the persistence of traditional arrangements. In doing so, it underscores the unlikelihood of alternative realities succeeding under the same circumstances. As one of the speakers pointed out:

"It's also not clear that we can't just do the same as Uber. On the service side, on the consumer side, Uber has solved the problem. So a worker-owned Uber could in fact deliver the same reliable service for the workers? What is not solved, because Uber didn't need to solve it because it externalized risks to the producers, is how to create a reliable income flow from unreliable demand for the workers."

Finally, also referring to the future pessimistically could be directed toward questioning feasibility. In this case, the detailed and pragmatic projections used to explain why alternatives could succeed are used to detect potential pitfalls in their realization. The following quote is illustrative of this kind of stance:

"Private coop platforms are impossible, because more users require more resources. (...) how is emergency nanny going to scale if 500 million people start using it? Who's going to pay for it? The poor workers who need the service? So coop platforms are actually impossible (...) So it has to run end to end in order to be sustainable and scalable."

As previously discussed, one of the distinctive features of our context lies in its position at the inception of the movement, a phase wherein a shared interest unites the diverse

participants in the idea of an alternative way of organizing. However, during this stage, goals, actions, and the characteristics of the envisioned alternative are not yet collectively agreed upon. Consequently, it is more likely for a variety of ideas to surface and for contestations to be brought to the table. Nevertheless, we noticed that such contestations are unlikely to be inherently defeatist or intended to discourage the pursuit of action. On the contrary, their purpose is to draw attention to specific issues and to contribute to defining how alternative visions should be organized to prevent such issues from leading to failure.

Temporal work in crafting alternative futures

Once we identified how references to different temporal interpretations contribute to shaping the desirability and feasibility of alternative organizing, we furthered our analysis to understand the role of such mechanisms in crafting a collective vision of an alternative future. Through a process of pattern-recognition, we identified two key dynamics at play in defining the movement's vision—the first dynamic concerns creating the ground for taking action, which we call *building momentum*. The second dynamic involves defining more practical details of how such action should be structured; thus, we refer to it as *defining characteristics*. From our analysis, it emerged that the positive or negative connotation of the temporal work at play significantly impacts how it influences the crafting of a collective vision.

In building momentum, both increasing desirability and enhancing feasibility played a significant role (Figure 2.2). In this case, increasing desirability is obtained through a reassessment of the past, present, and future conditions in a negative light. Such representations make the necessity of a transformative change more compelling, either by referencing a decaying past that must be prevented from happening again, to present unbearable conditions, or by recalling a dystopic future that will materialize in the absence of action. Building momentum is thus achieved by advocating for the necessity to act for the creation of alternatives collectively. On the other hand, positive reworking of temporal interpretations contributes to

building momentum by enhancing the feasibility of such alternatives to be achieved. Proving that similar objectives have already been reached in the past, showcasing the existence of real utopias, and imagining the concrete configuration of alternative futures all open up possibilities for action.

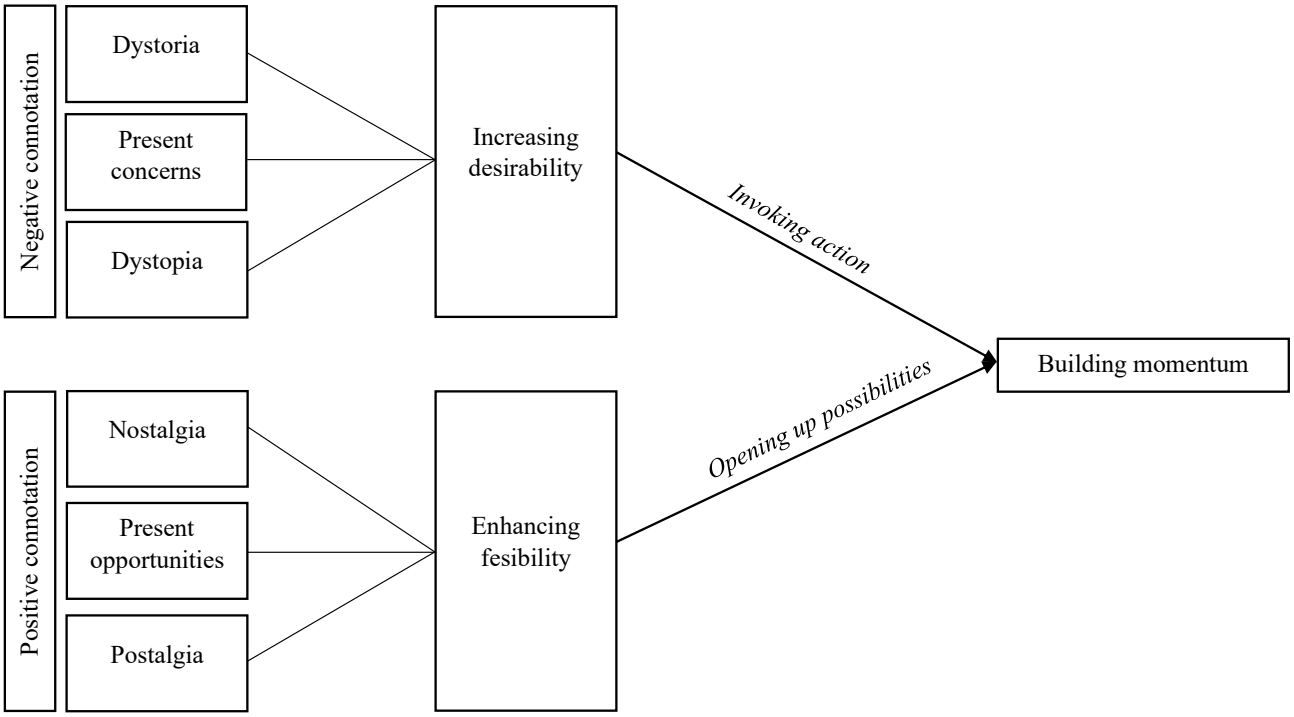

Figure 2.2: Building momentum

When it comes to defining the characteristics of the vision to be pursued, both questioning and enhancing feasibility are involved (Figure 2.3). As for building momentum, the positive or negative connotation attached to the temporal work significantly influences how characteristics are outlined. Feasibility is indeed questioned through negative temporal interpretations. This involves showcasing past failures, highlighting present practices that are ineffective or indicative of degrading conditions, and envisaging potential issues and challenges in bringing alternative solutions to fruition. All these efforts cast doubt on the proposed action's prospective success. However, as noted above, this questioning is not intended to dissuade action but rather to inform the definition of its characteristics by warning about how it should

not be configured. Characteristics of the collective vision are thus defined through their divergence from what is deemed unsuccessful or degrading. Conversely, temporal work characterized by a positive connotation, displayed with the intent of enhancing feasibility, contributes to defining characteristics through a process of imitation. What has been successful in the past, the practices currently carried on in real utopias, and the definition of the future potentialities of alternatives provide a blueprint to follow in the definition of the collective vision.

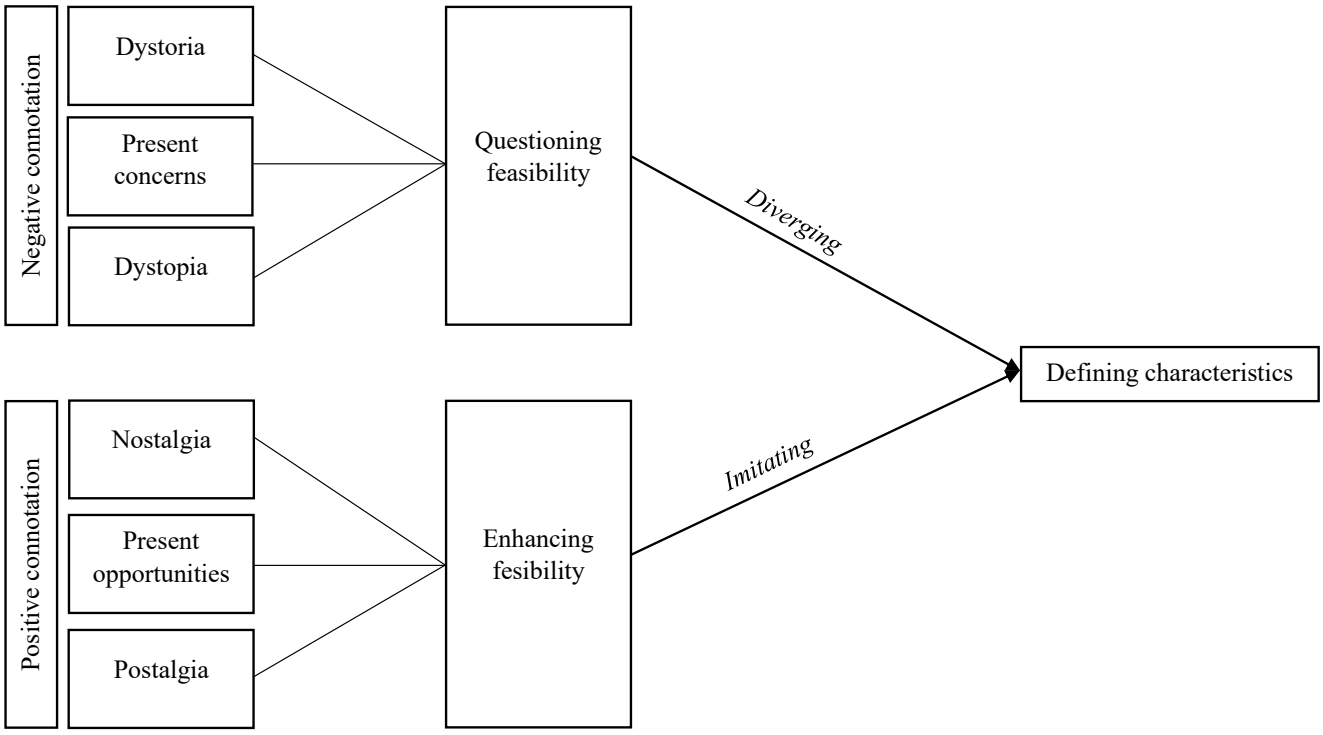

Figure 2.3: Defining characteristics

To summarize our findings, we drew a model defining how temporal work affects crafting a collective vision of alternative organizing (Figure 2.4). The model shows that the two central dynamics at play in this process are building momentum for action and defining the characteristics of the collective vision. Temporal work influences these dynamics in multiple ways, according to its positive or negative attitude. When employed in a positive light, temporal

work enhances the feasibility of the proposed alternative vision, which in turn contributes to building momentum by opening up possibilities and defining characteristics through the imitation of successful examples. Conversely, temporal work characterized by a negative connotation could either be directed at increasing the desirability or questioning the feasibility of alternative organizing. The increased desirability contributes to building momentum through the invocation of action. At the same time, the doubts regarding feasibility allow for the definition of characteristics of such action by diverging from what is deemed unsuccessful.

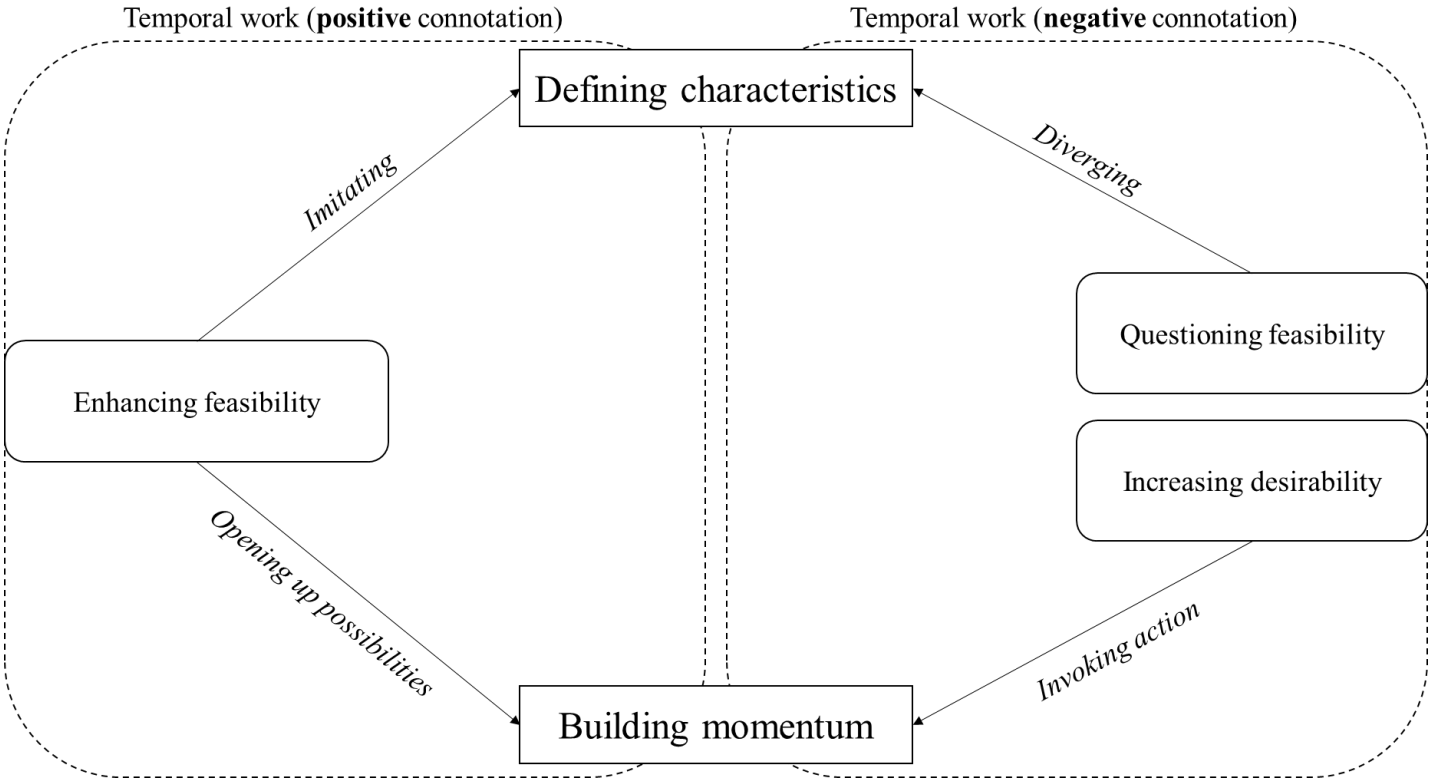

Figure 2.4: Temporal work in defining alternative organizing

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Our study aimed to explore the influence of temporal work in crafting alternatives. We discovered that temporal work could influence both the desirability and feasibility of proposed alternatives, which, in turn, can be directed at building momentum for action or defining

characteristics of the alternatives. Attaching a positive or negative connotation to the reassessment of the past, consideration of the present, and envisioning the future plays a crucial role in this process.

Our research makes three primary contributions to the study of alternative futures. First, while extant research has mainly focused on imagining different futures as the key catalyst for realizing alternatives (Gümüsay & Reinecke, 2022), we complement this perspective by highlighting the involvement of reassessments of both the past and the future in this process. While acknowledging the importance of imagining something radically different from the objective experience as a first essential step in transformative change (Fournier, 2002; Parker et al., 2014), our findings reveal that present conditions and past experiences are not solely considered elements to diverge from. On the contrary, alternative visions are also grounded in positive evaluations of past and present opportunities, which can open up possibilities for action and provide a blueprint for their practical configuration.

Second, our study expands our understanding of the attributes associated with narratives about alternative futures. Most of the attention has been directed towards desirability as the leading quality these visions should possess to effectively mobilize action (Alimadadi et al., 2022; Augustine et al., 2019). Our results show that in crafting these visions, actors devote considerable attention also to considering their feasibility. Similar to observations in other contexts (Bansal et al., 2022; Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013), we showed that temporal work also plays a significant role in alternative organizing when considering feasibility. Furthermore, we illustrate that whether temporal work is carried out with a positive or negative connotation substantially influences how it shapes desirability and feasibility.

Finally, our results provide insights into the processes involved in crafting alternatives, answering the call to investigate how alternative imaginaries arise (Gümüsay & Reinecke, 2022). Our context indeed allowed us to observe the very inception of a movement built around

the idea of creating alternative organizations, offering a unique perspective on how imaginaries of alternatives are introduced and negotiated. In these terms, we discovered that, by shaping both desirability and feasibility, temporal work can generate momentum for action and determine how this action should be configured. In building momentum, considerations of both desirability and feasibility play a role, either by emphasizing the necessity to act or by opening up possibilities for action. On the other hand, defining the characteristics of alternative visions is solely accomplished through feasibility considerations: when the objective is to enhance feasibility, characteristics are defined through imitation of organizational structures or practices; when the objective is to question feasibility, characteristics are defined through diversion. While it is not unexpected for alternative organizations to mold their practices and features by referencing models and differentiating from others (see Perkmann & Spicer, 2014), we enrich our understanding of this process by showing that decisions about what to imitate and what to diverge from can be achieved through temporal work.

While we perceive the uniqueness of our setting as an opportunity to make a robust contribution to the literature on alternative futures, we are mindful of its potential to limit the applicability of our findings. The peculiarities of the communities involved in discussing alternatives, together with the moment and place in which such discussions took place, may have influenced the way actors perform temporal work and the attributes they attach to alternative visions. Future research could employ the theoretical framework of temporal work in diverse contexts to examine its impact on narratives of transformative futures.

Furthermore, we acknowledge that although focusing on a single event allowed us to delve deeply into the analysis of the different narratives, it precludes exploration of which of these narratives are eventually adopted as constitutive of the alternative vision. We propose that future research adopt longitudinal approaches to discern the effectiveness of different forms of temporal work in shaping paths of action for alternative organizing.

In terms of research, we believe that our findings open the way for a more structured and deep examination of how feasibility is addressed in contexts of alternative organizing. This kind of analysis could investigate synergies or tensions between desirability and feasibility in presenting alternative futures, thereby advancing our comprehension of how collective action can be not only motivated but also structured and undertaken. A comprehensive study of future visions will contribute to a more informed and strategic approach in organizing for tackling the challenges of the present.

Additionally, our study's findings can inspire further exploration into how temporal work influences organizational dynamics, particularly in strategic decision-making for transformative change. Our research highlights the significance of considering feasibility not only when it's supported by organizational members but also when it's questioned. This emphasizes the need to identify alternative paths diverging from past failures or anticipated future setbacks. Investigating when and how feasibility is challenged in organizational processes can deepen our understanding of temporal dynamics. Moreover, such inquiries may provide insights into how organizations adapt and endure in dynamic contexts. Understanding these temporal dynamics is crucial for organizations striving to navigate complex and ever-changing environments effectively, as it enables them to anticipate and respond to challenges in a timely manner, ultimately fostering their long-term sustainability and success.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 2A: Conference details

Title: Platform cooperativism. The Internet. Ownership. Democracy.

Sub-title: A coming out party for the cooperative Internet.

Description:

The seeds are being planted for a new kind of online economy. For all the wonders the Internet brings us, it is dominated by an economics of monopoly, extraction, and surveillance. Ordinary users retain little control over their personal data, and the digital workplace is creeping into every corner of workers' lives. Online platforms often exploit and exacerbate existing inequalities in society, even while promising to be the great equalizers. Could the Internet be owned and governed differently? What if Uber drivers could set up their own platform, or if cities could control their own version of Airbnb? Can Silicon Alley do things more democratically than Silicon Valley? What are the prospects for platform cooperativism?

On November 13 and 14, the New School in New York City will host a coming-out party for the cooperative Internet, built of platforms owned and governed by the people who rely on them. The program will include discussion sessions, screenings, monologues, legal hacks, workshops, and dialogues, as well as a showcase of projects, both conceptual and actual, under the purview of celebrity judges. We'll learn from coders and worker cooperatives, scholars and designers. Together, we'll put their lessons to work as we work toward usable apps and structural economic change. This is your chance to get on the ground floor of the next Internet, and to help make it a reality.

Program:

Friday, November 13th

9.30 – 10.30 am	Opening Plenary
10.00 – 11.00 am	Unpacking Platform Cooperativism
11.00 – 12.50 am (parallel sessions)	Unpacking Platform Cooperativism
	Conditions of possibility
	Making it work
1.00 – 1.50 pm	Special lunch session with Richard Stallman
2.00 – 3.50 pm (parallel sessions)	Co-op development: Incubators and decelerators
	Policy and the Partner State
4.00 – 5.50 (parallel sessions)	Building new supports for the new workforce: The role of solidarity and new labor institutions
	Student Town Hall
6.00 – 8.30 pm (parallel sessions)	Owning is the new sharing: actually-existing platform co-ops
	Platform showcase: Apps

Saturday, November 14th

9.00 – 9.30 am	Taking Stock
9.30 – 10.50 am	Platform Showcase: Ecosystem infrastructure
11.00 – 12.50 am (parallel sessions)	Workers' voice
	Social infrastructure
1.00 – 1.50 pm	Special lunch session with Michel Bauwens
2.00 – 3.50 pm (parallel sessions)	Blockchained together
	Cooperative financing
4.00 – 5.45 pm (parallel sessions)	Organizing workers (and non-workers)
	The design for co-op Apps
6.00 – 7.30 pm	Cooperativism to come

APPENDIX 2B: Examples of patter recognition

Quote	Temporal focus	Role in crafting alternatives	Mechanism	Pattern
"I remember being in school and wondering how it was that court materials, which are public materials and they're the essence of being able to see what the precedent was and be able to figure out how that will apply to you. And that none of these were findable or searchable in any way. (...) So there really seem to be this privilege if you could pay for it, right? How much justice can you pay for? (...) So how Transformative would it be if we actually did have things in a way that people could see what was going on and why these fines were being assessed? and what the impacts might be if we're talking about socioeconomic class or racial issue? And really look at the impact of that. I think having transparency there would be enormous."	Dystoria (increasing desirability)	Building momentum	Invoking action	Dystoria (increasing desirability) ↓ Invoking action ↓ Building momentum
"there's actually a bigger problem that I started to realize, which is this: Wealth inequality sucks. (...) So you have this very small number of huge organizations who have a seat at the table with the wealthy patrons and the government officials and the foundation presidents. Well, a huge number of small and medium sized organizations scrambles like crazy to pick up some crumbs from the floor around that table. So the real challenge is not to build a better fundraising platform. It's actually to build a bigger table."	Present concerns (increasing desirability)	Building momentum	Invoking action	Present concerns (increasing desirability) ↓ Invoking action ↓ Building momentum
"If we are to create an economy that works for us people, then we have to aim at replacing or creating alternatives. Getting people to come over and then turning them off. (...) And it's my feeling that right now we are far, far away from this. It's going the wrong way. It's continuing.. multinational corporations are going are on the way of increasing their power. There are very much on the way to, well, destroy the resources of our Planet and it's high time to really address that issue."	Dystopia (increasing desirability)	Building momentum	Invoking action	Dystopia (increasing desirability) ↓ Invoking action ↓ Building momentum

"And if you think back to maybe the history of something like the radio spectrum, or the history of radio, that in that early stage have all these different imaginaries of what communication would look like. And I think in the same way, we could have a sort of a media archaeology of what we imagine cooperation or natural cooperation will look like through all these different proposals for the blockchain."	Nostalgia (enhancing feasibility)	Building momentum	Opening up possibilities	Nostalgia (enhancing feasibility) ↓ Opening up possibilities ↓ Building momentum
"We're not just consumers who are trying to, you know, use the prettiest, most convenient platforms. We're also change makers. We're also revolutionaries. And people go to a lot of great inconvenience to change the economic structures in their society like people have Violent revolutions in Oakland, people are taking to the streets and shutting down freeways and shutting down infrastructure to get attention to the problems that we're facing. And so I am willing to believe that people will inconvenience themselves, stop using the convenient platform. Start using one that's starting to gain traction, and if we can all agree to do that as a group, then we'll be able to have the resources to invest in those cooperative platforms and improve their design and make them actually usable for all of us."	Present opportunities (enhancing feasibility)	Building momentum	Opening up possibilities	Present opportunities (enhancing feasibility) ↓ Opening up possibilities ↓ Building momentum
"We can develop methods of automation that just are bent on replacing individuals, or we can develop methods of automation that respect them. For example, with doctors, some people say we should replace your dermatologist with an app that takes a picture of your hand and then diagnosis you. Other people say no, the model is to be clinical decision support that helps the doctor make better decisions, and I think that latter part that involves the doctors and medical professionals being part of the process of automation rather than just having it done to them, is a much better vision for the future to sort of build on highest points."	Postalgia (enhancing feasibility)	Building momentum	Opening up possibilities	Postalgia (enhancing feasibility) ↓ Opening up possibilities ↓ Building momentum

"So United was bought by its employee stock option plan (…). But none of the managerial hierarchy was changed. That didn't work. So the critical thing about cooperatives, as opposed to employee ownership, is a combined commitment, not only the ownership, but also to participation in management and governance"	Dystoria (questioning feasibility)	Defining characteristics	Diverging	Dystoria (questioning feasibility) ↓ Diverging ↓ Defining characteristics
"As it stands today, don't have the technology to access it, so even in the US and in Canada, people who potentially are underemployed or potentially disabled are unable to access either they don't own the right kind of computer. You cannot Turk, on a mobile phone. (…) So how to overcome those things? I think we need more resources and resources can be physical, so physical technology provided to people to give them the ability to crowd work, hopefully on ethical platforms, but also online resources of community."	Present concerns (questioning feasibility)	Defining characteristics	Diverging	Present concerns (questioning feasibility) ↓ Diverging ↓ Defining characteristics
"We can have all the loftiest and the wonderful greatest ideas in the world about the social relationships among the members of the Co-op and how we're going to support each other and really transform what democracy looks like in the economy. But if these are businesses, and if these don't function as businesses, then they're not going to function. And we're not going to have a transformation of the economy. So first for us is really getting a solid foundation for the business, making sure that the founders aren't killing each other in the process. And that they've got a very clear solid structure and foundation to be able to make their business a success and make it work for all of the members."	Dystopia (questioning feasibility)	Defining characteristics	Diverging	Dystopia (questioning feasibility) ↓ Diverging ↓ Defining characteristics

"So we've been thinking about: How do we introduce a bill of rights? (...) as part of the Post revolutionary settlement in 1689, they had a Bill of Rights, which was sort of basically liberal rights, what's often called civil and political rights. And the two obvious things, if you're doing an Internet bill of right, it's to reaffirm this. The first being obviously freedom of speech."	Nostalgia (enhancing feasibility)	Defining characteristics	Imitating	Nostalgia (enhancing feasibility) ↓ Imitating ↓ Defining characteristics
"we have to figure out better ways to run smart data intensive, algorithmic, public transportation, housing, health and education in cities for the public goods that are operated with a different economic logic than current platforms, based on solidarity, ecology, social cooperation and workers' rights. *So I don't have much time, but I just wanna mention there is a lot of activities around, for instance, data protection regulation, antitrust policies that are discussed now in Europe and beyond, which showed the importance of data as a policy issue."*	Present opportunities (enhancing feasibility)	Defining characteristics	Imitating	Present opportunities (enhancing feasibility) ↓ Imitating ↓ Defining characteristics
"And every business that hires you, no matter what your relationship to that business, even if you're a contractor, even if you're an Uber driver, that business would pay into this individual security account a certain amount of money prorated to the number of hours you work for that business. And then the money that goes into that individual security account would be used to purchase your safety nets, it'll go into things like Medicare, Social Security, injured worker, unemployment. So if you get injured on the job you're not completely shut out, like so it's happening to so many Uber drivers. By doing this, not only would we give you a safety net, but we would get rid of a big part of the incentive that employers have now to hire you as a contractor because they get out of that 30% of Labor costs and you remove that incentive, then, you know, it's basically creating legal parity between all these different classifications of workers. So I think that this is the way that the economy is going to have to go, some version of this."	Postalgia (enhancing feasibility)	Defining characteristics	Imitating	Postalgia (enhancing feasibility) ↓ Imitating ↓ Defining characteristics

3. FROM VISIONS OF A BETTER FUTURE TO PRACTICE: WHAT HAPPENS TO SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IDEOLOGY WHEN IT BEGINS TO TAKE PLACE[1]

Abstract

Ideologies have been considered central elements of social movement fields, helping to hold diverse actors together and guide action. What we know less about, however, is how ideologies shift over time in emerging fields. It is especially unclear how this may be intertwined with stages of change as social movement fields move from ideas to action and look to concretize their idealized visions. In order to investigate these questions further, we observe how the emerging field ideology evolves in the Platform Cooperativism movement, a movement aimed at challenging the inequalities and power dynamics of traditional platform businesses and envisioning a future of platforms built around the cooperative model and its associated ideals. Through a Structural Topic Modeling analysis of the discursive exchanges in four conferences held by the Platform Cooperativism movement between 2015 and 2021, we have identified three kinds of discourses: *ideological*, *organizational*, and *integrating*, the final one aimed at embedding the field's ideology into new structures and practices. By observing how these discourses unfold over time, we reveal how social movement field ideology evolves as the alternative organizations the movement supports begin to be implemented.

[1] A version of this paper is co-authored with Grace Augustine, from the University of Bath School of Management. Previous versions of the paper have been presented at the PDW in Organization and Management Studies (Palermo, April 2023); at EGOS 2023, Sub-theme 35: *Fields of Possibilities: Interstitial Spaces, Institutional Infrastructures, and the Social Topology of the Future* (Cagliari, July 2023); and at the PRME PWD at Bayes Business School (London, October 2023).

INTRODUCTION

Whether it concerns a greener lifestyle, a more just society, or a fairer economy, envisioning a different world is at the heart of the many movements trying to change the dominant institutional order for the better. Notably, such claims go beyond criticisms of what is not working to the advancement of solutions that, initially, can only be imagined and projected into the future (Augustine et al., 2019). How such projections gradually take shape and how initial claims and ideas can evolve accordingly have become pivotal questions for understanding how change toward a better future is collectively constructed through organizing endeavors (Gümüsay & Reinecke, 2022).

In these terms, the issues raised by social movements have the power to mobilize different actors, which then need to build the structures and practices for the ideas and solutions proposed to be concretized. Such organizing frameworks are identified as social movement fields (Zietsma, Groenewegen, Logue, & (Bob) Hinings, 2017), denoting the relational space where field members share common understandings of the world and organize their interactions and collective action (Hoffman, 1999; Leibel, Hallett, & Bechky, 2018; Scott, 1995).

In these endeavors, objectives and practices are set according to the field ideology (Hehenberger, Mair, & Metz, 2019), constituting the system of beliefs shared by field members (van Dijk, 2000). Ideology thus defines what is valued within the field and how its members should act, serving as the link between the symbolic system of abstract ideas related to the interpretation of the world and how it ought to be and the material practices to be implemented accordingly (Delmestri, 2009; Meyer, Sahlin, Ventresca, & Walgenbach, 2009). Rather than being fixed and static elements, extant research has shown that social movement field ideologies evolve over time, either to engage a broader range of actors (van Bommel & Spicer, 2011) or as a result of power-laden dynamics that impose specific ideas as more relevant than others (Hehenberger et al., 2019). Our objective is to further these perspectives by shedding light on

the evolution of ideology in the process through which a social movement field emerges and develops around the vision of an alternative organizational form but then moves beyond the purely theoretical stage and towards realizing it. This process encompasses the progressive implementation of the organizational practices the ideology prescribes. We thus ask: *How does a social movement field ideology evolve as the alternative organizational practices it supports begin to be implemented?*

To explore this process deeper, we analyze the case of the Platform Cooperativism movement, a social movement rooted in criticism of digital platforms operating in the so-called "sharing economy". While these types of businesses (such as Uber, Airbnb, or Task Rabbit) were initially seen as embodying the values of giving and collaboration, critics argue that instead of favoring community well-being and unselfish economic relationships, platform business models foster imbalances that disadvantage users in favor of owners through the externalization of costs and risks, the circumvention of policy regulation, and a lack of consideration of the community overall (Acquier et al., 2017). The Platform Cooperativism movement thus arose out of these critiques but also intending to create alternatives through new ways of organizing digital platforms: the platform cooperatives, which present most of the characteristics of digital platforms' business models but implement the ownership and governance of cooperative firms.

While it started as a set of ideals, the Platform Cooperativism movement has catalyzed a diverse range of actors who have jointly worked towards the realization of these alternative organizations. Applying a field perspective to the observation of the movement, this paper aims to explore how the field ideology has evolved alongside the development and changes within the movement toward its attempts to move from ideals to the realization of its envisioned change.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Ideology in social movement fields

Social movements are organizational collectives, or "*loosely organized coalitions*", aimed at contesting incumbent norms, values, and practices through sustained campaigns (Benford & Snow, 2000; Weber et al., 2008). These movements denounce the inequalities of existing institutional arrangements and create space for their transformation (Hargrave & Van De Ven, 2006; Zanoni et al., 2017). The settings where social movements' struggles can occur involve any aspect of our social life, including economic relationships and the relative organizational sphere (de Bakker et al., 2013). In this area, social movements can spur the emergence of new markets (Weber et al., 2008), specialist industry segments (Carroll & Swaminathan, 2000), or the introduction of new practices (Lounsbury, 2005), all centered around a claim of moral value attached to the proposed alternatives. Accordingly, the creation of new organizational forms, alternative to the dominant ones, can be among the objectives of social movements' efforts (de Bakker et al., 2013). In this case, the focal point of contention often revolves around existing organizational norms perceived as biased, unjust, or detrimental, juxtaposed with more ethically grounded alternatives.

Within organizational scholarship, most research on how social movements spur organizational forms' emergence adopts a population ecology perspective. This lens enables to gauge how such new forms can gain legitimacy (Rao et al., 2000) and, subsequently, how legitimation may cause their diffusion (Carroll & Swaminathan, 2000; Ruef, 2000). While this research is indeed informative about the mechanisms by which social movements catalyze institutional change, it tells us little about how such new organizational forms are conceived, why and how they get at the center of social movements' struggles, as well as the implications once they begin to gain traction.

To explore this process, they can be examined from a field perspective, which allows us to deepen our understanding of the organizing and organizational processes within social movements (Minkoff & McCarthy, 2006) as well as their paths of change and evolution (Hardy & Maguire, 2010; van Bommel & Spicer, 2011). Considering fields as groups of independent organizations that coalesce around a central issue (Hoffman, 1999), social movements can, in fact, be conceptualized as fields that "*exist to mobilize and coordinate actors and resources to further a specific agenda or extend an ideology*" (Zietsma, Groenewegen, Logue, & (Bob) Hinings, 2017; p. 399). If compared with other kinds of fields (e.g., industry or professional fields), social movement fields present more permeable boundaries and less hierarchical structures and are characterized by the centrality of ideology, which provides the rationale that brings actors together and constitutes the basis of shared identity and objectives (Zietsma et al., 2017). The exploration of social movement fields thus entails a deeper understanding of what ideology is and how it operates within the field.

The concept of ideology has been subject to different conceptualizations and interpretations across different disciplines and epistemologies (Meyer et al., 2009), hence being defined as a "contested concept" (Fine & Sandstrom, 1993). In an attempt to overcome such contestation and define a multidisciplinary analytical construct, van Dijk (2000) focuses on three dimensions characterizing ideology: the cognitive, the social, and the discursive. According to this perspective, ideologies are mental frameworks of beliefs concerning society (cognitive dimension) shared by the members of a group (social dimension) and are formed, changed, and reproduced through discourse and communication (discursive dimension). At the core of ideology lies the link between what *is* and what *ought to be*, for which particular beliefs or depictions of the world are connected to judgments about that depiction (Fine & Sandstrom, 1993). Together with this evaluative component, ideologies are also characterized by a

regulative component, which is aimed at defining behaviors and actions of the social group partaking in it (Delmestri, 2009; Fine & Sandstrom, 1993; van Dijk, 2000).

The role ideology plays in social movement contexts has been the objective of scholars' inquiries both form social movement and organizational studies. From a social movement perspective, ideology is regarded as fundamental to the essence of social movements, serving as the basis for either justifying or challenging prevailing social arrangements and conditions (Zald, 1996). In this area of study, the examination of ideology has primarily investigated its connection with mobilization (Platt & Williams, 2002), considering it the foundation that motivates individuals to join and participate in collective action (Benford & Snow, 2000; D. Snow & Benford, 1988). This perspective arises from the understanding that the activities of social movements revolve around a profound struggle over meaning and the diverse interpretations of reality (D. A. Snow, 2004; Turner, 1969). Ideology, serving as the composite system of meaning and beliefs, not only represents perceptions of reality but also delineates how it ought to be transformed. Therefore, it provides the foundational framework through which individuals perceive societal injustices, form collective identities, and are galvanized into action.

On the other hand, the interest in ideology in organizational studies has stemmed from its relationship with organizing processes (Barley & Kunda, 1992; Beyer, Dunbar, & Meyer, 1988; Brunsson, 1982; Weiss & Miller, 1987), for which ideology is seen as the "missing link" between material practices and symbolic constructions of reality (Delmestri, 2009). Ideologies, thus, are seen as resources for collective sense-making (Mees-Buss & Welch, 2019), in that they provide shared social representations able to define a group's identity, goals, values, and norms (van Dijk, 2000). In particular, in relation to organizational fields, the system of beliefs composing an ideology fulfills the function of constituting field-ordering mechanisms since they establish the "*relatively coherent system of ideas and beliefs*" which "*forms the cognitive*

and normative underbelly of institutional order and therefore shapes what is valued, considered appropriate, and eventually taken for granted in a field" (Hehenberger, Mair, & Metz, 2019, p. 1676). This perspective stresses the role ideology plays as constitutive of organizational settings and the influence it can have on the members of the group who share the social representations a particular ideology promotes. In these settings, thus, ideologies constitute a fundamental piece of the common meaning system partaken by field participants (Scott, 2014), assuming a pivotal importance in explaining what holds the field together.

Ideology evolution

While constraining and prescribing actions, ideology is also constructed by the same group of participants on which it acts upon (Meyer et al., 2009), a process which is identified as "*ideology reproduction*" (van Dijk, 2000). Rather than being a fixed and static element, the system of beliefs constituting a field ideology is thus highly dependent on the social practices enacted by individuals and consequently liable to adjustments and changes over time (Hehenberger et al., 2019). While extant research has shown the processes through which a field ideology is assembled (Hehenberger et al., 2019) or extended to engage a broader range of actors (van Bommel & Spicer, 2011), we still need to assess how ideology evolution happens in relation to the gradual implementation of the practices it prescribes – in our case the development and spread of an alternative organizational form.

While the kind of collective action perpetrated through social movement fields is recognized to be often guided by abstract visions of the future (Augustine et al., 2019), the process of making such intangible projects a reality may indeed not be free of difficulties. Grodal and O'Mahony (2017), for example, have shown how ambitious objectives set for tackling grand challenges are subsequently displaced in the process of translating them into concrete actions. Similarly, Hehenberger, Mair, & Metz (2019) have revealed that the configuration of the impact investing field, which emerged around the idea of supporting social

purpose organizations, has gradually shifted through traditional finance logics due to power-laden dynamics among actors that eventually establish what is valued in the field. These examples show that the process through which social movements shift from being ideal-typical solutions to becoming established realities may involve different challenges, and how the field ideology evolves accordingly is worthy of further investigation.

According to these premises, we aim to answer the following research question: *How does a social movement field ideology evolve as the alternative organizational practices it supports begin to be implemented?*

To answer this question regarding ideological shifts within social movements, we focus on the discourse at annual gatherings organized by the Platform Cooperativism movement. The motivation driving this choice is twofold. On the one hand, discourses have been recognized a special status in the reproduction of ideologies when compared to other communication practices since they allow the direct expression of beliefs and values (Platt & Williams, 2002; van Dijk, 2000). Additionally, events such as annual conferences, ceremonies, or contests (among others) have been shown to be insightful sites for understanding fields' emergence and development.

In the context of new or emerging fields especially, these types of events have been recognized as "Field Configuring Events" (FCEs) (Garud, 2008; Lampel & Meyer, 2008). The peculiarity of these settings resides in their characteristic of offering multiple discursive spaces (Hardy & Maguire, 2010) in which actors belonging to a field have the chance to interact, allowing for shared cognitive sense-making processes to take place (Oliver & Montgomery, 2008). These processes result in the creation of a common meaning system that provides a sense of belonging in the eyes of the members and a template for mobilizing them towards a common purpose (Garud, 2008), as well as the establishment of structures, standards, and practices that regulate the field (Gross & Zilber, 2020). Both products and drivers of field evolution, field

configuring events thus offer a privileged venue for directly observing changes in ideology within a field as it progresses through different phases of development: from its origin, when the field structure is still fragmented, to the point in which a more solid configuration is reached both at the structural and at the cognitive level (Lampel & Meyer, 2008).

All this considered, we decided to focus our analysis on conferences held by the Platform Cooperativism movement, looking at them as Field Configuring Events. In the following, we will present the movement and sketch a brief outline of its foundation and evolution, clarifying why we believe it constitutes an ideal setting for our investigation.

METHODS

Research context

The Platform Cooperativism movement was born in response to the negative externalities caused by the so-called "sharing economy" platforms, which encompass platforms such as Uber, Airbnb or Deliveroo. In particular, the Platform Cooperativism movement criticized these platforms as vehicles for workers' exploitation, the externalization of costs and risks on the community, and the circumvention of policy regulation (Acquier et al., 2017). Within this context, the concept of platform cooperatives has emerged as a central theme in discussions aiming to democratize the digital economy. These cooperatives advocate for harnessing the technological and relational potential of platform technologies while prioritizing a more equitable redistribution of power that safeguards the rights of workers.

The first promoters of this idea were two professors of Media Studies in the United States who, at the end of 2014, published two distinct but similar articles. On the one hand, Trebor Scholz, based at the New School in New York, wrote a blog article titled "*Platform Cooperativism vs. the Sharing Economy*" (Scholz, 2014), where he denounced the worker exploitation perpetuated by sharing economy platforms and argued that if they were collectively

owned and democratically controlled, their negative externalities would be prevented. Such platforms would become a tool of empowerment instead of degradation. Around the same time, Nathan Schneider, scholar-in-residence at the University of Colorado Boulder, published an article where he focused less on diagnosing the problem and more on discussing efforts at offering alternatives. He mapped out some cooperative efforts in the digital economy already underway in his article titled "*Owning is the new Sharing*" (Schneider, 2014).

The idea achieved great resonance with a variety of audiences, and less than a year later, in November 2015, Scholz and Schneider organized a conference at the New School, defined as the "*coming-out party for the cooperative Internet*"[2]. More than a thousand people with different backgrounds and coming from diverse sectors attended the event, driven by a shared criticism against the so-called sharing economy and by the hope of building viable alternatives. This conference offered the chance to create a network of actors engaged in developing the idea of platform cooperativism and building the institutional structures for their actualization.

In 2016, a second conference was organized, during which the Platform Cooperativism Consortium (PCC henceforth) was launched. Considered to be a landmark of the movement, the PCC is a hub of researchers and practitioners committed to supporting the development of platform cooperatives all around the world through the dissemination of information as well as the development of research and legal, financial, and technological advice. That same year, the foundational book of the movement was published, titled "*Ours to Hack and to Own: The Rise of Platform Cooperativism, a New Vision for the Future of Work and a Fairer Internet*" (Schneider & Scholz, 2016), in which the basic definitions of what platform cooperativism should look like and how to create the conditions for its development were explained.

[2] https://platform.coop/events/conference-2015/

From that moment on, the movement began to grow, and some elements of an institutional infrastructure started to emerge (Hinings, Logue, & Zietsma, 2017). Conferences became a regular annual event in which issues related to platform cooperativism and the democratization of the internet were discussed, and people belonging to the movement had the chance to meet and interact. While all the conferences in the early years were hosted by the New School in New York, conferences began to take place also in Asia (2018), Europe (2021), and South America (2022). Alongside, many experimentations were put into practice, following the core ideas of platform cooperativism and creating a community of practitioners tied to the movement.

One concrete manifestation of this movement was the creation of the "Institute for the Cooperative Digital Economy" at the New School in 2019, which created a space for research fellows working on the topic from all over the world to collaborate. That same year, the first edition of an online course resulting from a collaboration between the New School and Mondragon University in Spain was launched. The course is aimed at teaching the principles of platform coops and how to start them, and it has been in place from that moment on. Another experimentation, which also took place in 2019, was the PCC's launch of the "Platform Co-op Development Kit," a three-year project aimed at providing resources to facilitate the creation of platform cooperatives.

The launch of an academic course, together with a development kit and a dedicated research center, signifies the transition of the concept of platform cooperatives from theory to action. This transition involves the allocation of resources, collaboration among diverse institutional actors, and the formalization of relationships, structures, and organizations aligned with these principles. This decisive shift underscores the platform cooperativism context as an optimal environment for investigating the dynamics of field evolution and the influence of ideologies within it.

Data collection and analysis

We use the discourses taking place at the PCC conferences between 2015 and 2021 as our primary data source. We have focused our analyses on four conferences, which we identified as belonging to two different phases of the movement: a first phase, characterized by the creation of the basis for gathering in a community of different individuals and organizations, and a second phase, more focused on the field reinforcement and reproduction (Lampel & Meyer, 2008). As for the first phase, we chose as representatives the conferences held in 2015 and 2016. Based on our knowledge of the field and critical events, we consider 2016 to be when the signals of a more concrete structuration process appeared: the PCC was launched during this time, which gave purpose and direction to the various actors gathered around the concept of platform cooperativism. On the other hand, we considered the events that took place in 2019 (the creation of a dedicated research center and the launch of a development kit) to be representative of the beginning of a more structured phase. We thus examine the discourse from the conferences held in 2019 and 2021[3] as belonging to the second phase. After some years of activities, these two conferences had the stated objective of assessing the state of platform cooperativism and making "platform co-ops common sense", signaling that the movement leaders were explicitly aiming to achieve some taken-for-grantedness for their proposed new organizational form.

We thus collected the video recordings of the four conferences available on the PCC website, amounting to around 83 hours. We verbatim transcribed all the speeches, resulting in 772 single-spaced pages. To make sense of this amount of data and to accurately map the shifts in the platform cooperativism discourse, we recurred to computational linguistic techniques (Hannigan et al., 2019; Nelson, 2020). More precisely, we inductively distilled the main themes debated in the conferences through *structural topic modeling* (Roberts et al., 2014). Topic

[3] Due to the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions, no conference took place in 2020.

modeling is an unsupervised text analytical procedure increasingly used in social sciences and organizational studies (DiMaggio, Nag, & Blei, 2013; Hannigan et al., 2019; Schmiedel, Müller, & vom Brocke, 2019), which allows for extracting sets of consistently co-occurring words that represent the main themes (topics) within large textual corpora. Structural topic modeling (STM) extends this method by allowing the analyst to model the probabilistic process, giving rise to a textual corpus. By imposing covariates that may influence the content of individual units of text, it is possible to estimate how specific variables impact the prevalence and content of each topic.

In this case, we imposed as the only covariate a dummy variable corresponding to the phase to which the conference belonged, which we labeled as "Phase 1" and "Phase 2". This allowed us to analyze if specific topics debated in Phase 1 lost importance in Phase 2 or, *vice versa*, if topics that were irrelevant in Phase 1 became more discussed in Phase 2. Additionally, STM allows for analyzing whether a certain covariate determines differences in the vocabulary used in a specific topic.

To prepare the corpus of text for the analysis, we generated a text document for every intervention, defining an intervention as a speech given by one of the speakers without interruption. Consequently, questions posed by the audience or the session moderator were regarded as distinct interventions, along with their respective responses. Likewise, during a debate among multiple speakers in a roundtable discussion, each intervention was archived in an individual document. We decided to retain only the documents containing a minimum of 50 words in order to ensure that each text unit contains enough words to convey a coherent theme or topic. The final sample amounts to 1039 documents (approximately 669K words). The shortest text document contains 55 words, while the longest is made of 7800 words. Table 3.1 summarizes each conference's primary information and data.

Year	Venue	Conference Title	Video length	Transcriptions length	Number of documents
2015	N.Y. City	Platform cooperativism. The internet. Ownership. Democracy. *A coming-out party for the cooperative Internet*	1638 min.	221382 words	399
2016	N.Y. City	Platform Cooperativism: Building the Cooperative Internet	916 min.	131953 words	152
2019	N.Y. City	Who Owns the World? The State of Platform Cooperativism *Fire the Bosses, Democratize the Internet, and Own the Future*	1213 min.	157415 words	287
2021	Berlin	#TheNewCommonSense. Forging the Cooperative Digital Economy	1239 min.	158045 words	261
		TOT.	5006 min. (83.43 hours)	668795 words	1039

Table 3.3: Data collected

We subsequently performed some standard pre-processing procedures, including removing English stop words and punctuation. Furthermore, we collapsed certain expressions where words are likely to occur together to capture domain-specific terms. For instance, the terms "platform cooperative" were combined into a single token, resulting in "platformxcooperative." We limited this procedure to domain-specific expressions, which represent integral concepts that are better treated as single entities, selecting them based on our knowledge and understanding of the overall context (see Appendix 3A for a complete list of tokenized expressions). This approach helps preserve the semantic meaning of these composite expressions during subsequent analyses.

To identify the most appropriate number of topics, we started by considering diagnostic metrics measuring the semantic coherence and the exclusivity of topics (Roberts et al., 2014). These two measures are frequently used in topic modeling analysis to support the identification

of a model able to capture topics that are both internally coherent and sufficiently distinct to mutually exclude each other (Schmiedel et al., 2019). As Figure 3.1 illustrates, in our case, such models are likely to be comprised of between 35 and 55 topics since before this interval excludability is still too low, while, after this interval, coherence significantly drops.

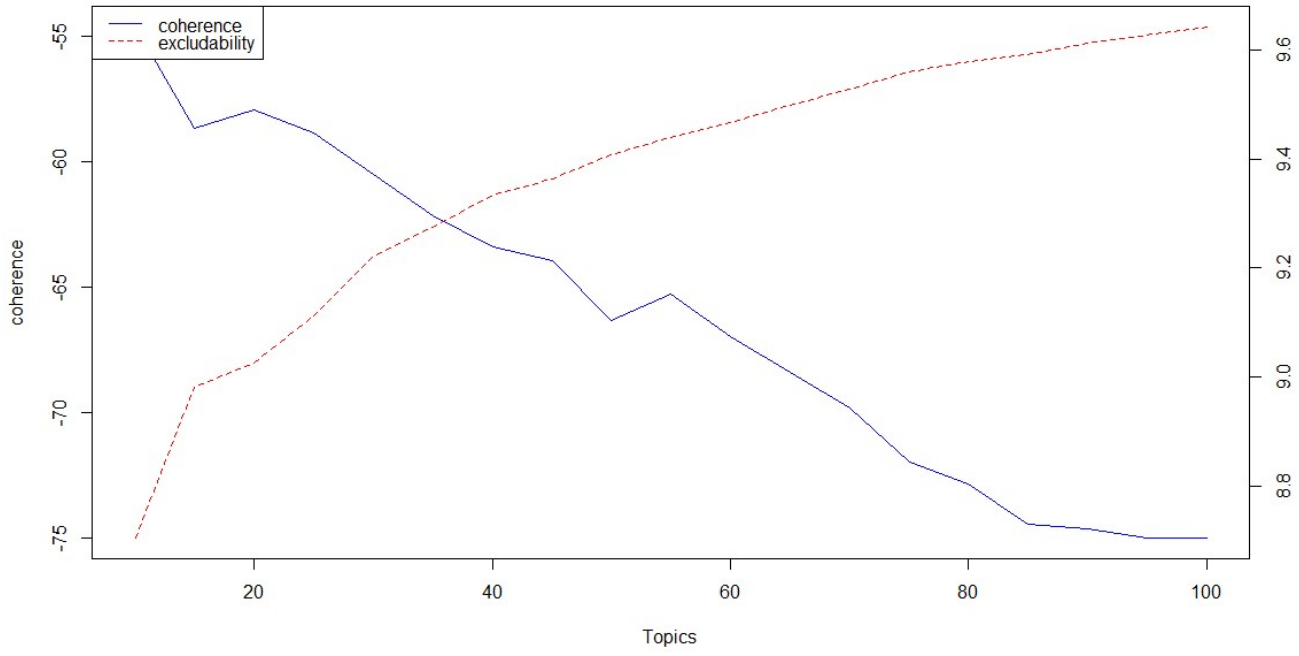

Figure 3.1: Average coherence and excludability of different topic models

We thus manually examined several models between a 35- and a 55-topics model in detail, based on our interpretability of the topics' content. We converged on a 40-topics model as the most fitting in terms of internal coherence and exclusivity. Our interpretation of the topics' content has been guided by our knowledge of the field's history gathered through supplemental data: one book; academic articles; blog posts published on the PCC webpage; research reports; observations of three online events organized by the Consortium; and interviews with four representatives of the sector, who also took part as speakers or organizers at the conferences.

We proceeded by first applying tentative labels to each topic based on the topic's wordlists. In this step, we considered both the words having the highest probability of being associated with a particular topic (Words per Topic Highest Probability) and a metric called FREX (Frequency and Exclusivity). While the words with the highest probability are the most representative of each topic, FREX is used to identify words that are both common and exclusive of that topic (Schmiedel et al., 2019). Subsequently, we progressively refined our interpretation by reading excerpts of the conferences' speeches that were representative of each topic (i.e., transcripts composed of a single topic for a proportion higher than 95%). In this phase, we decided to discard nine topics, either because the discourses they related to were too narrow in scope (e.g., referring only to a specific session or presentation) and thus not indicative of how the discourse developed at the movement or field level or because we were not able to assign an exact thematic meaning to them (Aranda, Sele, Etchanchu, Guyt, & Vaara, 2021). Appendix 3B contains a complete list of the topics, the most representative words for each of them, and their labels, including the ones we decided to exclude from our analysis.

The resulting list of 31 topics thus constituted the starting point for a qualitative analysis aimed at developing what Hannigan et al. (2019) define as the process of "rendering theoretical artifacts" by iterating between theory and topics. Following an inductive approach, we first proceeded with an additional refinement of the topics' content based on a thorough reading of the most representative documents. In so doing, we defined new labels that were more focused on the topic's function in the overall discourse. For example, the topic we initially defined as "Digital technology" was renamed as "Digital technology affordances" since the most representative excerpts of text indicated these speeches were aimed at defining what digital technologies could do and how they could be used for the movement's purposes.

Second, we considered these new labels as first-order codes (for a similar approach, see also Croidieu & Kim, 2018). We then grouped these themes in second-order codes. Since our

focus was on the expression of ideology and the construction of new organizational forms taking place at the events, we labeled these codes according to the role we thought the different discourses were playing in this process. So, for example, themes such as "Startup and development of platform coops" was considered as "Discussing alternative organizations development". Similarly, the theme of "Organizing digital workers" was grouped into the second-order code of "Setting the movement goals".

The last step of this analysis consisted of combining the second-order codes into aggregate dimensions to inform us about the relationship between the field ideology and the associated practices. Since the primary objective of the Platform Cooperativism movement is to foster the development of a new organizational form, this aspect stood as a pivotal tenet of the movement's ideology. We were able to aggregate the codes into three different objectives of the discourses that occurred at the conferences: crafting ideology; embedding ideology in alternative organizational practices; and configuring new organizational practices (Figure 3.2)[4]. These three discourses relate to field ideology in different ways. While the first (*crafting ideology*) is mainly focused on establishing the ends that should be valued, the latter (*configuring alternative organizations*) discusses the means identified to reach such ends. In the middle, we found a third kind of discourse (*embedding ideology in alternative organizational practices*) explicitly focused on reflecting on which means are more suitable to accomplish the movement's objectives[5].

[4] Data structure comprehensive of the original labels attached to topics is displayed in Appendix 3C.
[5] In this phase, we discarded two other topics, since they were not informative in terms of field ideology (Topic #16 and Topic #33). This topics related to reflections about the state of the movement itself, its achievements and possible challenges.

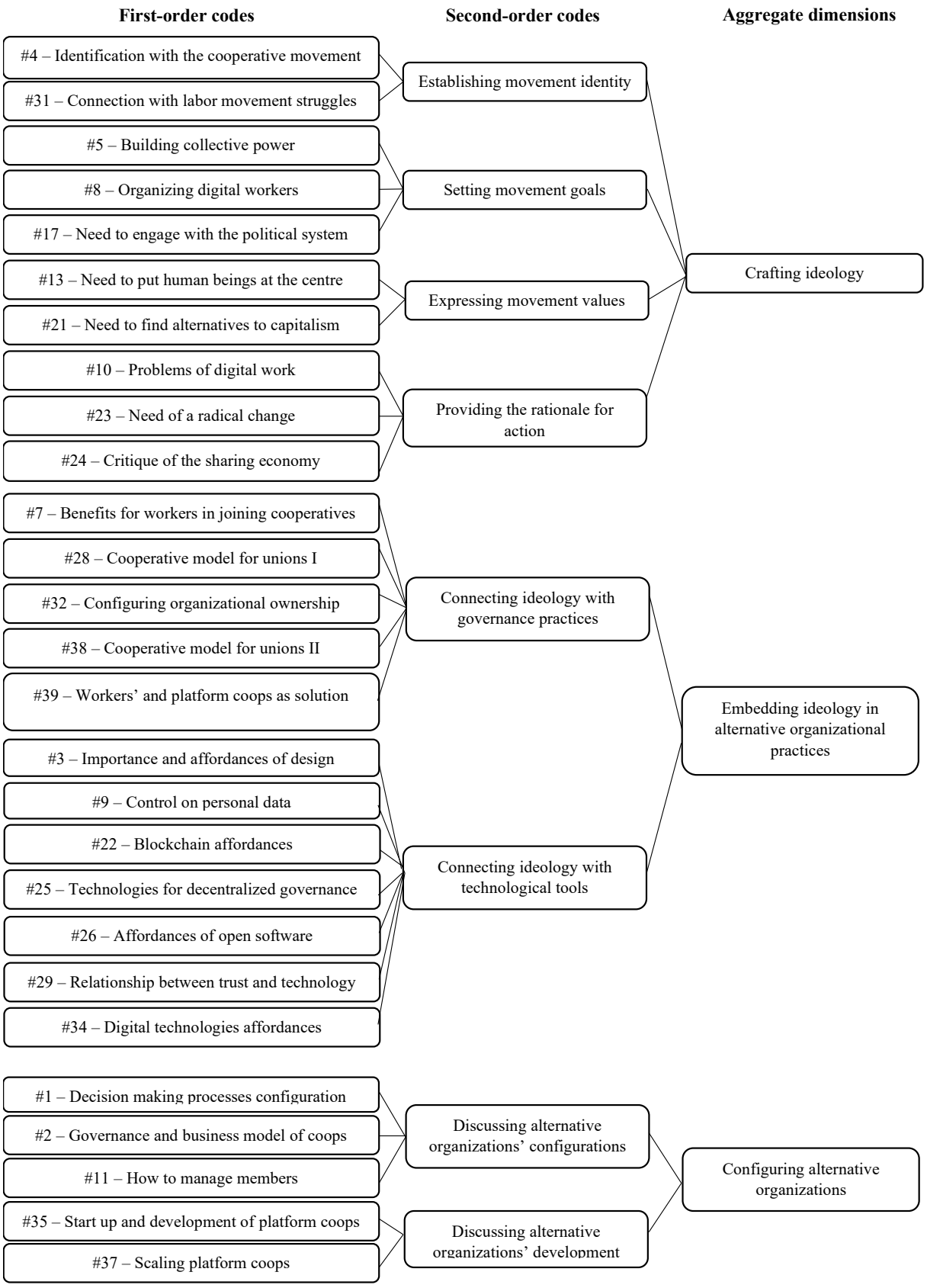

Figure 3.2: Data structure

This first part of the analysis allowed us to gain insights into how ideology is configured in the discourse of a field, which, in our case, emerges around the vision of new organizational forms that blend the ideals of techno-utopianism with worker liberation. We then wanted to understand whether and how the discourse evolved as such organizational forms started to take hold and the field gained a more robust alignment. STM analysis allowed us to explore differences in every topic proportion in the corpus between Phase 1 and Phase 2. To spot the main differences between these two phases, we thus focused only on the topics that were significantly affected by the covariate we imposed on the model, indicating that their presence in the discourse significantly increased or decreased over the years (see Appendix 3D). Overall, eight topics had this characteristic. We then distinguished between the topics whose proportion has increased and the ones which, on the contrary, have diminished their presence by labeling the first as *emerging* topics and the second as *declining* ones. By looking at the aggregated dimensions these topics belonged to, we were able to infer the most significant changes that took place in the discourse between the two phases.

FINDINGS

Our analysis revealed that the ideology-related activities unfolding in the emergent Platform Cooperativism social movement field revolve around three main discourses. First, an ideological one aimed at crafting the field ideology and thus assembling the system of beliefs and values according to which the field is structured, and goals and objectives are set. Second, a practice-oriented one, through which actors debate the organizational practices and structures characterizing the new alternative organizations. Third, an integrating one, which makes explicit connections between the ideology and specific organizational features. Below, we will give a brief overview of these discourses and how they have changed over the years.

Crafting ideology

The explicit expression of the field ideology unfolds through 10 topics, which illustrate the *raison-d'être* of the movement itself, set the values and beliefs underlying the field, and make claims about its identity. Following a pattern typical of social movements (Benford & Snow, 2000), this discourse is focused on diagnosing the aspects of reality responsible for the problem that needs to be addressed and showing how to tackle them. In this case, the identified problems related to the many negative externalities caused by the increasing pervasiveness of sharing economy platforms and were attributed to their reproduction and exacerbation of capitalist dynamics (topic #24). These externalities are depicted as falling back, in particular on digital workers, whose working conditions have deteriorated to a point where their rights are systematically neglected in the name of platform owners' profits (topic #10). In response to this scenario, a call for a radical shift is advocated (topic #23), aiming to be achieved through the development of alternative logics to capitalist structures (topic #21). These logics are found in the cooperative principles, grounded in democracy and shared ownership (topic #4) alongside unionism and its tenets (topic #31). Consequently, the overarching objectives of the movement center around the organization of digital workers (topic #8), engagement with the political system (topic #17), redistribution of power (topic #5), and prioritization of human well-being over profit (topic #13).

Four main mechanisms characterize the discourse through which the field ideology is expressed: providing the rationale for action, expressing movement values, setting movement goals, and establishing movement identity. The discourse aimed at *providing the rationale for action* predominantly highlights the unsustainability of the current situation and the imperative for change. The need to find alternatives able to challenge the status quo and shake the system at its roots strongly emerges from the topics belonging to this discourse, even if no clear solution

is displayed. The following quote is representative of the kind of call to action that arises from highlighting the fallacies of the current digital economy:

> "*I will ask If we have to continue to rely on digital infrastructures that are designed to extract profit for a very small number of platform owners and shareholders. I don't know about you, but when I stand here and for more and more people, it seems to me capitalism simply isn't working out anymore. (…) So why can't like-minded designers, workers, artists, investors, cooperatives, software developers, scholars, inventive unions, labor advocates, and policymakers, basically all of you, jointly strive toward a common vision of owning the Internet collectively?*" [Representative document of Topic #24 – 2015]

In this kind of discourse, solutions are still outlined in broad terms, with the objective being to encourage engagement rather than offering a precise action plan. Similarly, the discourse about *setting the movement goals* relates to achieving highly ambitious and intangible objectives, with little clue on how to reach that desired status. An example is the way participants discuss about the objective of building collective power from the grassroots level:

> "*It's important to keep this story about collective power in our minds today, both because it points us to some of the challenges that we face, but also to me, it's mostly a story of confidence. It's a reminder that when we build power through these kinds of structures, through our cooperatives, through our so-called kind of new economy, alternative economy, these forces have shaped our world in ways that often we don't appreciate, and they can once again shape the social contracts of the future.*" [Representative document Topic #5 – 2019]

Other aims pertaining to the ideological dimension concern, on the one hand, *establishing movement identity*, unfolding through the juxtaposition with more established and

history-filled movements, such as the cooperative and the labor one. These connections with other movements could serve the purpose, as in the following example, of building the identity of the movement through the use of familiar categories that are easily recognizable and understandable:

> *"Well, the lack of expertise is, I think, one of the silliest arguments, because of course we could develop that expertise as trade unions, or, you know, work with people who do have that expertise."* [Representative document of Topic #31 – 2019]

On the other hand, we can find *expressing movement values*, which is done through the opposition to the anti-values inherent in the current economic system. In this case, the discourse is aimed at presenting such values as the guidelines to follow in the construction of alternatives.

> *"What we need to think about is: What are the things that we need to be doing in the local economy that starts taking on the social imperatives of the people within it? Talking about what is the strategy for building housing, for education, for food (...) So our challenge is to be figuring out how do we start to build these kinds of organizations and ecosystems so that they can start to be independent and local all over the place."* [Representative document of Topic #13 - 2015]

These topics have been recognized as reflections of the movement's ideology due to their resonance with the definition that literature provides of the role of ideology within a certain group of people. Essentially, ideology functions as a mechanism for illustrating the collective identity of the movement, delineating its core beliefs and principles, and elucidating its relationships with other groups, particularly adversaries or opponents, perceived as those who oppose the movement's ideals, pose threats to its interests, and hinder its access to equitable shares of social resources and human rights (van Dijk, 2000).

Embedding ideology in alternative organizational practices

While the discourse aimed at crafting ideology expresses and shapes the belief system guiding the movement, we also have detected another kind of discourse, more focused on reflecting on the ways through which the bundle of ideas composing the field's ideology can be translated into tangible practices. The set of 13 topics pertaining to this discourse has thus an integrating function since their objective is to translate ideals into material practices by showing, on the one hand, the ends dictated by the movement's ideology and, on the other hand, how specific practices can accomplish these objectives. In the context of platform cooperatives, these practices are primarily focused on shaping organizational features and structures. This is because the movement's goal is to pioneer the development of a new organizational model centered around platform cooperatives. Furthermore, given that Platform Cooperativism lies at the intersection of cooperativism and Information Technology, the integrating discourse had the objective of making explicit connections between the movement ideology and *governance practices* on the one hand and *technological tools* on the other.

The discourse around which governance practices could better suit the movement ideology mainly focuses on showing how a cooperative model would resolve many challenges within the digital economy. Thanks to participation in the governance and democratic decision-making processes, a cooperative model would guarantee dignified workers' conditions and protect their rights (topics #7 and #39). Similarly, in contrast to the hierarchical arrangements prevalent in traditional digital platforms, the collective ownership inherent in cooperatives is viewed as a catalyst for fostering equality (topic #32). Conversations revolving around this aspect aim to illustrate how collective ownership can empower and liberate digital workers. In this scenario, discussions also explore potential synergies between the cooperative model and unions (topics #28 and #38), seeking to ascertain the role of unions within cooperative organizations and vice versa. These explorations delve into how such partnerships can mutually

reinforce the objectives of both entities, enriching the discourse on alternative governance structures in the digital realm.

On the other hand, different technological tools and related practices are seen as potentially valuable for translating the movement's ambitions into practice. For this reason, the discourse about technologies is aimed at understanding their specific limits and affordances (topic #34). While the movement seeks to harness the potential of digital technologies, it also strives to avoid viewing technology as the exclusive or guaranteed solution to social issues. An illustrative example of this discourse is the examination of how technological tools can either foster or hinder trust among individuals (topic #29). Moreover, particular attention is given to the role of specific technological tools. In this context, the reliance on free and open-source software emerges as crucial for constructing ethical technological infrastructures (topic #26). This preference is rooted in its capacity to facilitate transparency, collaboration, and user control. Similarly, emerging technologies like Distributed Autonomous Organizations (DAOs) and blockchain are explored as means to assert control over personal data and enable the shared governance characteristic of cooperatives (topics #9, #22, and #25). Finally, practices related to technology implementation are also considered. In these terms, an accurate platform design is deemed as a necessary practice for ending platform discrimination and inequality (Topic #3) since most of their societal consequences stem from design features.

The discussion surrounding these features, encompassing both governance models and technological tools, serves a critical purpose: to elucidate how best to embody the ideals and objectives of the movement. The following is an example of theorizing about the consequences and outcomes of adopting specific organizational structures:

> "*But platform co-ops combine the best of these two models: the successful almost 200-year-old model of cooperatives, with the much younger one of digital platforms. And here's what makes them different. So, they are different because they are made up of a*

group of people who each get a vote in decision making when it comes to how much worker should be paid or how much customers should be charged, and whether or not data should be collected and to whom they are sold. And another thing that makes them different is that they give power to the people, so that they scale equality." [Representative document of Topic #39 – 2021]

Similarly, this kind of theorizing affects the technological component of such new organizations, as for example the platform design:

"The question is this: APIs don't come to us from above, right? We create those APIs, they're human creations. So can we think about what would be as humans to design into those APIs? And I don't mean to say that the only thing we need to worry about is technology itself. There are a lot of values and a lot of affordances we can put into those technologies, but they by themselves they are not enough." [Representative document of Topic #3 – 2015]

This integrating discourse serves as a nexus where the evaluative and regulative components of the ideology converge, forging explicit connections between the two realms.

Configuring alternative organizations

Alongside the ideological and the integrating discourse, we have identified a third one that concentrates more on practical aspects. This one relates to developing a common understanding of how the envisioned new organizations should work, deepening various dimensions of the organizational process. Dealing with alternative practices lacks the organizational blueprints of already established fields (Logue & Grimes, 2020), thus requiring a continuous reflection on their appropriateness and functioning. This discourse aims to navigate this uncertainty and address the various challenges and opportunities that emerge as the organizational templates begin to be implemented.

This discourse encompasses five topics focused on clarifying the unique characteristics and challenges of implementing platform cooperatives stemming from their being at the intersection between cooperative firms and digital business models. Some of those aspects relate to exploring different possible *organizational configurations* in order to solve some of the challenges presented. Organizational practices and structures are at the core of these discussions. So, for example, different ways of organizing the participatory decision-making processes are discussed (topic #1), together with the cooperative business model (topic #2) and the members' management (topic #11). These features demand particular attention due to the unique complexities introduced by the digital platform element, which sets platform cooperatives apart from traditional cooperative organizations. In platform cooperatives, technological devices facilitate easier access, resulting in members being more geographically dispersed compared to their counterparts in traditional cooperatives. Consequently, this dispersion complicates the processes of shared governance and collective decision-making.

At the same time, the specific challenges posed by platform cooperatives' actualization in different phases of their development are also highlighted. This includes discussions on how to initiate platform cooperatives (Topic #35) and strategies for scaling them (Topic #37). Much like the discourse on organizational features, these discussions underscore the challenges and opportunities stemming from the novelty of these organizational forms. In terms of start-up processes, the main challenges revolve around securing financing for businesses with a predominant technological component without relying on traditional venture capital models. On the other hand, in terms of scaling, the problem relates to how to maintain actual democratic processes while simultaneously achieving the network effects required for digital platforms to remain competitive.

Contrarily to the previous discourses, this one is strongly practice-oriented, with speakers actively engaged in proposing and discussing specific practical challenges and relative

solutions. An example relates to how to implement decision-making processes in platform cooperatives:

> "*How do we make consensus decisions that don't require real time conversations that can sometimes take so long? But how do we also create that in a business structure that might be sustainable or should be sustainable, I should add. So we use Loomio for all of our decisions. It's the platform where we try and get all 250 people engaged.*" [Representative document of Topic #1 – 2016]

The same focus on concrete paths to action can be noted when discussing the development of the organizational form of platform cooperatives:

> *"But here's another type of scale that we rarely talk about, connecting the already existing cooperative membership across organizations even internationally. Lobbying has its utility, that we heard about at the conference too, but alternative organizations also need that solid social basis to survive, and really also the social movements to back them. (...) there's plenty more potential for that kind of cooperation of cooperatives, including the cross sector cooperation, and the mutual membership, and cross-financing"* [Representative document of Topic #39 – 2021]

The identification of a discourse centered on the practical implementation of the advocated practices sheds light on the behavioral component within ideological discourse. This aspect delves into how ideology translates into action, emphasizing the pragmatic challenges of realizing the principles and objectives espoused by the movement's ideology.

Discourse evolution analysis

Once we identified the different kinds of discourses unfolding at the conferences in relation to the field ideology, our purpose was to observe how such discourses have changed between the two phases considered. To this end, we deepened our focus on the topics whose proportion on the overall amount of text has significantly changed (8 topics), labeling the ones that decreased their prevalence as *declining* and the ones that gained relevance as *increasing* (Table 3.2). We thus assumed that shifts in the proportion with which topics were discussed could be informative of the development that took place at the field level between a phase in which the new organizations were still an idea to one in which they have more definite contours, and their implementation is already underway.

Topic	**Emerging/Declining**	**Category**
#3 – Importance and affordances of design	Declining	Integrating
#8 – Organizing digital workers	Declining	Ideological
#13 – Need to put human beings at the center	Declining	Ideological
#31 – Connection with labor movement struggles	Declining	Ideological
#35 – Startup and development of platform coops	Declining	Organizational
#37 – Scaling platform coops	Increasing	Organizational
#25 – Technologies for Decentralized Governance	Increasing	Organizational
#34 – Digital technology affordances	Increasing	Integrating
#9 – Control on personal data	Increasing	Integrating

Table 3.4: Emerging and declining topics

Overall, the change in discourse was characterized by five declining and four increasing topics. Among the declining topics, one of them belongs to the integrating discourse (topic #3), three to the ideological one (topics #8, #13, and #31), and one to the organizational one (topic #35). On the other hand, among the increasing topics, two pertain to the integrating discourse (topics #34 and #9) and two to the organizational one (topics #37 and #25).

We observe a reduction in the prominence of topics related to ideological discourse from Phase 1 to Phase 2. This trend suggests that, alongside the increasing structuring of the field, there has been a diminishing need to articulate the ideology underpinning the movement explicitly. Going more in-depth on which ideological topics lost relevance, topic #31 is aimed at establishing the movement's identity through the identification with labor movement struggles. At the inception of the field, this connection was strongly perceived due to the movement's emphasis on addressing digital workers' exploitation and neglect of rights. Its decreasing over time could signify a decreased identification with the labor movement in favor of a more comprehensive alignment with the cooperative one. Similarly, another diminishing ideological topic is the one advocating for the prioritization of human beings (topic #13). Initially intended to articulate the movement's values, this concept was relatively generic and less directly linked to critiquing specific organizational paradigms or templates. Possible explanations for the decline in relevance of these two topics could be that the arguments have acquired some taken-for-grantedness in the movement discourse. Alternatively, it is plausible that the focus has sharpened through the refinement or elimination of some of the initially presented ideas. Notably, the analysis reveals that no new ideological topics have emerged to replace the declining ones.

Conversely, two organizational topics have experienced an increase in discussion, while only one has decreased. The discourse surrounding scaling (Topic #37) has gained prominence, signaling a shift in focus from initiating alternative organizations to advancing their development. This shift is underscored by the decrease in discussion around starting platform cooperatives (Topic #35). This shift has spurred heightened discussion around technologies for decentralized governance (Topic #25), which enters the details of how to implement different organizational practices. This feature reflects the increased structuration of platform cooperatives, which have been developing more and more over the years through several

experimentations all around the world. This development nurtured the debate about what works and what, on the contrary, needs to be improved. In particular, scaling was initially discussed in more abstract terms, with the objective of understanding how to design business models capable of competing with capitalistic platforms such as Uber or Airbnb, thus offering a concrete alternative to the latter. However, as platform cooperatives evolved, the discourse shifted towards strategies for increasing membership and overcoming associated challenges, such as software development. In connection with this evolution and the growing number of members in platform cooperatives, the need to find the right technological tools to enable decentralized and collective governance emerged, a debate that over the years has been enhanced by the rise of new organizational structures like Decentralized Autonomous Organizations or Data Trusts.

Finally, the integrating discourse presents two increasing and one declining topics. It is interesting to notice that all these topics are aimed at showing the connections between ideology and technological tools, signaling that, on the contrary, the discourse connecting ideology to derived organizational practices has remained stable between the two phases. The declining topic (topic #3) relates to the design of the technological infrastructure of digital platforms. Its decrease in prominence may be attributed to an increased emphasis on the implementation of such technologies. Similar to the organizational discourse, this shift indicates a heightened interest in the developmental phase of platform cooperatives rather than their emergence. The two topics experiencing an increased focus revolve around establishing technological affordances (Topic #34) and debating the significance of gaining control over personal data and the tools to do so (Topic #9). This last topic shows a noteworthy increase between the two phases. From an ideological point of view, it refers to the importance of controlling personal data and the power that comes with it while at the same time discussing organizational practices that can help individuals take that power back, like, for example, data cooperatives. One

possible explanation for its growth could be increased attention to the topic from public opinion after the Cambridge Analytica scandal in 2018[6]. This would confirm the importance that social issues can have in affecting the repertoire of a social movement and in directing its struggle (Steinberg, 1999).

To sum up, the results show three trends in the field's ideological discourse evolution. First, there is a decline in the emphasis devoted to the expression of ideology. This trend is reflected in the reduced proportion of two ideological topics and the absence of any increase in such topics. Second, results evidence an increase in the discussion of organizational features and a clear shift in the organizational discourse from debating the emergence of alternative organizational forms to their development. Finally, there is a shift in the integrating discourse regarding the application of technological tools to embed the field's ideology. Also, this discourse evolves toward prioritizing features more prevalent in the development of platform cooperatives over practices related to their emergence.

Ideology evolution: the interplay between ideas and norms

The illustrated findings document how the social movement's field ideology is produced and reproduced by the movement's members. One key observation is how the expression of this ideology mirrors its dual components: the evaluative and the behavioral (Fine & Sandstrom, 1993). The evaluative aspect is aimed at providing an understanding of the world how it is and designing how it ought to be through the definition of principles, values, and objectives that are deemed morally superior and thus worth pursuing. On the other hand, the behavioral component offers a guide to action to realize the proposed vision and ideals. Scholars recognize this feature

[6] The Cambridge Analytica scandal refers to a controversy involving the unauthorized harvesting of personal data from millions of Facebook users by the British political consulting firm Cambridge Analytica. This data was allegedly used to create targeted political advertisements and influence voter behaviour.

of ideologies – tying together a cohesive set of ideas and beliefs with a directive for action – as their defining characteristic, concurring to its distinctiveness in comparison with similar constructs in the social sciences (Gerring, 1997; Oliver & Johnston, 2000). The analysis has focused on how these components are expressed, identifying three different discourses (ideological, integrating, and organizational) depending on whether their focus is on the ideal dimension, the behavioral one, or the connection between the two. Through the analysis of how the proportion of such discourses have changed over the years, we have been able to infer how the expression of ideology shifts alongside the implementation of the action plan it delineates.

For analytical clarity, the different topics that emerged inductively have been assigned to one specific kind of discourse, according to the prevailing objective expressed in the corresponding speeches. This approach enabled us to track the progression of the discourse from more ideal-oriented to more practical-oriented and to hypothesize the causes of this evolution in accordance with the evolution of the field and of the surrounding environment. But what do these findings tell us about the interplay between the different discourses and their evolution? To affirm that, over the year, the movement has lost its ideological traction to become solely focused on the definition of material practices would be over-simplifying and probably misleading. The organizational discourse, in fact, is not devoid of ideal elements: on the contrary, it explicitly expresses the behavioral component of ideology—an aspect that has been often considered to implicitly derive from the evaluative one (Fine & Sandstrom, 1993), but which our findings show to constitute a significant portion of ideological expression.

Therefore, the discourse evolution does not represent a diminished importance of the ideology in the structuration and governing of the social movement field, as much as a shift in its direct expression. In the initial stages of field formation, emphasis was mostly devoted to the ideological evaluative dimension, addressing the need of building a common understanding of the social world and the values according to which it had to be molded (Gerring, 1997). Over

the years, this necessity fades away, the reason being that consensus on the shared vision becomes increasingly assumed and no longer necessitates explicit discussion. On the contrary, discourse begins to serve the purposes of refining and sharpening the collective guides to action (Oliver & Johnston, 2000) derived from the shared ideological set of beliefs. This necessity comes from both the external environment, with technological developments and the rise of new global challenges, and internal field development, which both ask for a continuous adaptation of organizational practices defined, in order to remain faithful to movements values and ideals.

In conclusion, we can affirm that our findings do not question the centrality of ideology for social movement fields throughout their structuration process. Rather, we demonstrate that ideology remains pivotal at every stage, albeit its expression evolves to address varying needs and challenges presented by different phases of evolution.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The above analysis delineates how members of the social movement actively generate and sustain the ideology within the movement's field. Three main discourses are identified: the ideology expression, its embedding into alternative organizational structures and practices, and the assessment and refinement of such alternative structures and practices. Moreover, it has shown that how the ideology backing a social movement field is expressed may evolve as the envisioned future the movement promotes begins to take shape, in this case involving the constitution and implementation of alternative organizations in the digital economy. The evaluative ideological emphasis of the field is generally more substantial during the very initial debates. In contrast, later discussions revolve around more straightforward operational issues

needed to define the functioning and viability of such new organizations, always keeping values and ideals as guideline.

These findings enrich and contribute to the literature about ideology within organizational fields, a topic that has garnered renewed interest from organizational scholars (Hehenberger et al., 2019). Such interest reflects a recognition of the crucial role played by ideologies in providing the system of values and beliefs holding the field together, establishing its boundaries, and defining its practices and activities (Zietsma et al., 2017). It also prompts inquiries into how this abstract realm of ideology intersects with the tangible material practices evident in everyday organizational life (Meyer et al., 2009). In this study, we show how this problem is explicitly addressed through the discursive efforts of an emerging social movement. This is particularly evident in the *integrating* discourse, which appears to be central to the creation of the new organizational form. Building upon the understanding that ideologies comprise both evaluative elements, which depict the world as it is and as it should be, and regulative elements, which establish behavioral guidelines accordingly (van Dijk, 2000), our analysis reveals that within the discourse of the field, these two components are significantly mediated by discussions that scrutinize how concrete arrangements can remain faithful to the underlying ideology and how ideological assertions can be effectively translated into actionable practices.

Furthermore, through our analyses, we could accurately gauge how the social movement ideological evaluative discourses have, in time, diminished their prevalence while the organizational ones have increased. This finding advances our current understanding of field ideology by suggesting that ideologies evolve and stabilize not only through mechanisms of suppression (Hehenberger et al., 2019) or with the aim of attracting more members (van Bommel & Spicer, 2011) but also in response to the shifting priorities within the field – the origin of with can be either external or internal to the movement itself. Initially, a strong

emphasis on the evaluative component of ideology may serve as a primary motivator for participants, but as organizational concerns become more pressing, its centrality may diminish. This raises the intriguing question of whether the transition of the ideological dimension from the forefront to the background of field discourse signifies its increased taken-for-grantedness. In such a scenario, there may be a reduced need for ideology to serve as a sense-making resource for binding the field together and motivating action, as values, purpose, and identity are already firmly established among field members. Alternatively, it could indicate a weakening of participants' ideological fervor as the practices it advocates become progressively realized.

Finally, this study contributes to our understanding of the construction and implementation of ideologies. By adopting a field ideology perspective, we gain insight into how shifts in ideals occur not solely due to individual actors' personal interests (Grodal & O'Mahony, 2017) but also because field discursive activities start to respond to the needs of making such visions a reality. In these terms, our findings confirm Field Configuring Events (FCEs) as key in both establishing the field direction and mirroring its ideological and structural development. Specifically, regarding the establishment of the field direction, our findings underscore the dual function of ideological discourse at FCEs: it not only defines the ultimate goals or ends but also shapes the means or strategies through which these objectives are pursued. Conversely, in terms of mirroring the field's structural development, our analysis highlights the dynamic interplay between discourse evolution and changes occurring at the field level, in this case, the progressive implementation of alternative organizational forms. As these new organizational paradigms are gradually put into practice within the field, ideological discourse undergoes a corresponding evolution to reflect and adapt to these emergent realities. This iterative process of discourse evolution and field-level changes creates a feedback loop wherein the ideological and structural development of the field mutually influence and shape each other.

Some limitations of the present study should also be taken into consideration. The first concern pertains to the nature of the data analyzed. Discourses are considered a primary vehicle for the reproduction of ideology since they allow for the direct expression of abstract beliefs and systems of values. However, ideology can also be expressed and reproduced more indirectly through practices and semiotic expressions (van Dijk, 2000). To enhance the depth of our findings, future research could extend the insights gained here by integrating the analysis of field ideology with additional data sources, thereby offering a more comprehensive understanding of the ideological landscape within the field.

Second, our analysis of the evolution of the field's discourse relies on the proportion of the different topics on the overall text. While this approach offers valuable insights into the "quantity" of the identified discourses, it does not delve into shifts in the content or meaning of specific topics over time. Although this analysis aligns with our research objectives and facilitates an understanding of the changing prevalence of more ideological versus more organizational discourses, a more nuanced exploration of how the meaning evolved within individual topics could offer additional insights into the development of the underlying system of meaning within social movement fields.

Finally, a limit of the present study lies indeed in not taking into consideration the composition of field actors, whose dynamics could significantly influence the discourses emerging at conferences and the overall evolution of the field. It is well-established that the boundaries within social movement fields are often more fluid compared to other organizational fields (Zietsma et al., 2017). For this reason, the composition of actors belonging to the movement and taking part in its conferences is likely to change quickly. A fruitful direction for future research would involve investigating how sense-making activities not only evolve in response to changes in the field's development but also as the result of shifts in the composition of its participants.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 3A: Tokenized expressions

Expression	Token
platform cooperative	platformxcooperative
platform coop	platformxcoop
platform cooperatives	platformxcooperatives
platform coops	platformxcoops
platform cooperativism	platformxcooperativism
decentralized autonomous organizations	daos
exit to community	exitxtoxcommunity

APPENDIX 3B: List of topics

#	Prob	FREX	Label
1	person, people, enspiral, agree, decision, lot, work, member, letter, create, means, vote, thing, security, guess, consensus, things, make, time, representative	enspiral, letter, zealand, consensus, representative, aaron, agree, stewardship, person, loomio, decision, jose, ela, security, kagel, fbi, assembly, practitioner, vote, editors	Decision-making process
2	model, local, cooperative, people, create, service, work, lot, things, level, business, cooperatives, governance, coop, professionals, make, coops, basically, platform, structure	professionals, staff, fairmondo, marketplace, local, professional, promote, service, directors, model, bylaws, patronage, partners, tourism, national, loconomics, janelle, feedback, operations, elect	Cooperative governance
3	people, design, things, work, platforms, political, lot, time, social, systems, thing, create, thinking, human, important, part, care, make, platform, talking	design, designers, oil, designing, participatory, demands, reward, interaction, measure, edge, systems, humans, trillions, political, terrain, friedman, emerge, metrics, monitoring, earth	Design
4	cooperatives, cooperative, people, members, time, work, movement, kenya, belgium, economy, working, japan, workers, bank, lot, cooperators, worker, law, call, capital	kenya, japan, cooperators, belgium, coffee, bank, preston, sewa, guarantee, brazil, cooperatives, partago, nowadays, establish, mpesa, agricultural, registered, wave, banks, cooperative	Cooperative economy
5	power, system, political, people, cooperative, cooperatives, capital, tool, commons, economy, open, work, systems, based, tools, lot, things, social, build, bitcoin	bitcoin, element, tool, elements, communism, essential, monetary, capper, productive, volstead, political, glass, ceiling, commons, politics, flows, farmers, unicorn, power, citizens	Collective power
6	~~people, work, waste, building, community, app, catadores, organizing, collectors, things, cataki, platform, lot, groups, create, folks, group, time, power, brazil~~	~~catadores, cataki, waste, collectors, kataki, recycling, pimp, paulo, sao, maps, brazil, recycle, whatsapp, interviewed, carts, streets, auction, blah, recyclable, app~~	~~n/a~~
7	coops, coop, people, cooperative, smart, lot, members, work, services, sector, worker, time, business, platform, data, thing, things, states, grow, make	purchasing, smart, electric, coops, rural, enormous, austria, depot, sales, hell, grow, sector, evolved, freelancer, list, select, services, obstacles, sectors, belgium	Cooperative membership
8	information, workers, work, platforms, people, forms, platform, thing, working, things, class, bit, lot, control, attention, make, means, loomio, time, labor	vector, information, loyalty, loomio, surplus, forms, compensated, commodification, ruling, extracting, extraction, tactics, limits, neofascism, subordinate, natalia, ecology, abstraction, extract, attention	Organizing workers
9	data, people, public, cooperatives, rights, state, cooperative, infrastructure, make, capitalism, lot, social, platform, basically, research, understand, time, trust, model, europe	data, citizens, gdpr, welfare, privacy, personal, infrastructure, property, monopolies, collected, google, citizen, health, financialization, cloud, asset, analytics, sensors, abundance, privatized	Control on personal data
10	work, workers, people, platforms, platform, make, things, lot, working, job, labor, time, digital, conditions, economy, world, good, income, talking, paid	turk, mechanical, noncooperative, desire, certify, workerowned, spoke, costs, job, geography, bordeaux, embeddedness, reputation, criteria, selfdetermination, work, screaming, conditions, paid, driver	Digital work

11	members, class, platform, cooperative, work, cooperatives, membership, global, country, working, people, vote, idea, support, create, hong, management, resolution, bit, italy	resolution, amsterdam, branches, branch, hong, italy, kong, class, italian, docservizi, members, doc, membership, demonstrate, abroad, vote, stakeholder, quorum, management, mobility	Managing members
12	business, people, work, city, model, community, development, owned, council, businesses, coop, worker, support, lot, things, time, government, program, thing, good	zebras, council, photographers, unite, poverty, meetup, music, nathan, canvas, development, artist, business, hearing, forum, ben, businesses, tonight, city, chapters, exit	Platform cooperatives' business model
13	people, start, human, movement, things, lot, build, questions, work, thinking, problem, talking, love, open, local, rights, feel, conference, companies, make	human, ethical, swap, empathy, questions, coopcycle, love, reflection, occurring, centered, nurture, start, criteria, attractive, campaigning, movement, corporate, machines, planet, pattern	People-centered system
~~**14**~~	~~people, important, things, work, world, lot, thing, rights, trebor, state, ideas, book, talk, idea, years, school, thinking, make, time, war~~	~~turkers, museum, mondragon, war, nsa, trebor, pleasure, ended, framing, authorities, politicians, sprint, creativity, presentations, topics, marx, thatcher, elites, rights, france~~	~~n/a~~
~~**15**~~	~~guess, interested, people, content, interest, lot, media, curious, work, members, audience, news, time, journalism, communities, independent, cooperative, unions, narrative, make~~	~~journalism, content, guess, news, creator, curious, interested, builders, brilliant, logistical, grain, savings, grand, rooms, seats, audience, war, interest, tactics, logistics~~	~~n/a~~
16	platforms, cooperative, economy, platformxcoops, people, platform, cooperatives, digital, event, policy, platformxcooperativism, start, platformxcoop, ecosystem, work, time, today, lot, important, india	event, india, platformxcoops, events, platformxcooperativism, platforms, pandemic, session, debates, ecosystem, policy, berlin, barcelona, platformization, inigo, initiatives, german, workshop, cooperate, presentations	Platform cooperativism
17	people, trump, interesting, thing, conversation, media, lot, education, social, left, digital, book, good, things, work, thought, associations, win, time, donald	trump, donald, associations, win, apparatus, bias, globalist, conversation, memory, obama, hillary, college, education, bangs, left, clinton, occupy, justification, fill, invitation	Political system
~~**18**~~	~~question, cooperative, union, cooperatives, freelancers, people, legal, platform, work, worker, working, organizing, trade, business, terms, means, unions, process, rights, support~~	~~freelancers, indonesia, gender, question, certification, teach, criteria, trade, union, training, programs, equality, feminist, legal, teaching, organizing, formal, skills, accountability, sample~~	~~n/a~~
~~**19**~~	~~people, party, cooperative, members, basically, cooperatives, work, things, cars, platform, called, software, lot, mobility, network, sharing, thing, social, time, big~~	~~mobilitat, som, party, cars, mobility, eva, gay, blair, protocol, stigmergy, agents, labour, tony, corbyn, england, pledge, factory, portfolio, external, partago~~	~~n/a~~
~~**20**~~	~~people, world, time, ownership, hear, work, year, projects, thing, lot, things, coops, coop, economy, thoughts, platform, group, half, session, make~~	~~seedbloom, babysitting, thoughts, resonate, hoarding, session, recommend, hour, africa, half, victor, elite, extraordinary, hear, spitzbergen, greta, crowd, exploring, tokens, generosity~~	~~n/a~~
21	system, people, circles, cooperative, income, basic, money, years, things, economy, work, build, state, means, make, lot, production, good, idea, platform	circles, turkey, trucks, complementary, container, fake, income, basic, peer, facility, authority, madeline, system, economical, collapse, ports, facilities, accounts, mindset, cape	Alternative system

22	things, blockchain, people, question, lot, work, basically, thing, kinds, money, ownership, capital, form, decentralized, make, time, back, stuff, trust, system	blockchain, kelso, protocol, reputation, proof, menu, hackers, decentralized, gamblers, database, slightly, transactions, narratives, facts, fractal, corps, items, ledger, applications, kinds	Blockchain affordances
23	people, change, lot, cooperative, cooperatives, make, world, power, things, work, talk, movement, thinking, platforms, climate, money, artists, economy, back, platformxcoops	climate, scientists, emergency, artists, civic, chapter, zone, arts, change, wealth, dispossessed, rome, imagine, bottles, wave, indigenous, sea, dots, humble, loconomics	Radical change
24	economy, data, digital, people, work, big, sharing, social, workers, cities, platform, important, power, public, lot, make, city, economic, platforms, tech	australia, automation, sovereignty, digitization, cities, regulate, australian, commission, melbourne, crisis, economy, citizens, airbnb, regulations, sharing, regulation, rental, rent, productivity, transition	Digital economy
25	people, daos, debt, dao, governance, collective, lot, student, cooperative, strike, students, create, decentralized, time, based, work, system, thing, economic, cooperatives	dao, daos, debt, debts, student, debtors, loans, strike, disco, mortgage, tokens, targeting, target, students, sylvie, decentralized, collective, participatory, individually, governance	Technologies for decentralized governance
26	software, open, free, people, source, cooperative, question, make, users, government, cooperatives, work, freedom, things, program, lot, platform, thing, good, time	software, freedom, source, free, license, open, users, program, medallions, linux, capitalists, licensing, vehicles, api, goods, copy, freedoms, intellectual, government, civic	Open software
~~**27**~~	~~people, cooperative, care, work, lot, working, platform, members, worker, workers, things, patients, time, business, coop, coops, market, thing, make, cooperatives~~	~~patients, patient, cleaning, care, clients, coopify, virtual, marketing, childcare, stocksy, client, selfemployed, ronnie, robin, hood, women, rework, reproduction, professional, niche~~	~~n/a~~
28	labor, union, unions, workers, people, drivers, market, platform, taxi, work, economy, companies, uber, country, south, coops, korea, bargaining, collective, lot	korea, sweden, drivers, bargaining, south, labor, taxi, contractors, unions, union, exemption, regulated, precarious, tnc, employers, cab, antitrust, mines, discrimination, peoples	Unions and cooperatives
29	trust, people, technology, social, build, things, world, good, thing, system, work, ways, lot, tools, capitalism, society, make, time, power, democracy	trust, confidence, solar, contributors, suffering, profoundly, wondering, delegate, francisco, ethics, videos, metric, san, advanced, envision, pilots, homeless, agile, aware, transparent	Trust and technology
~~**30**~~	~~people, things, make, crowdfunding, ownership, lot, government, money, point, work, thing, stuff, good, public, country, back, time, world, tax, working~~	~~crowdfunding, bond, firm, tax, shoes, municipal, inefficient, crying, shoe, land, tour, bowl, chili, acquiescence, efficient, adult, republicans, government, ben, withheld~~	~~n/a~~
31	workers, union, unions, people, walmart, cooperatives, things, trade, worker, cooperative, work, money, organization, lot, working, thing, company, movement, amazon, good	walmart, metal, turkers, sugar, trade, daddy, anonymous, workplace, turker, requesters, dues, unions, employer, amazon, union, bargaining, forum, german, workers, mechanical	Unions

32	company, people, shares, investors, rights, work, companies, antitrust, years, legal, platform, things, back, thing, lot, fund, finance, make, time, law	antitrust, shares, investors, bezos, jeff, sherman, children, dividend, rockefeller, voting, company, finance, act, dominant, responsible, rights, sell, traction, fund, canada	Organizational ownership
33	people, years, world, cooperative, cooperatives, digital, ago, uber, work, things, italy, music, social, time, platform, platformxcoop, lot, thing, change, today	music, italy, eric, kong, hong, supermarkt, web, illegal, ago, visitors, uber, stream, jose, peers, years, fundraising, impressive, prefer, developments, photography	Platform cooperativism
34	digital, technology, people, european, europe, money, make, work, economy, case, creating, level, model, labor, platformxcoops, movement, technologies, media, workers, thing	european, fairbnb, digital, europe, intensive, technologies, Consortium, passive, technology, cell, invented, google, prove, taxation, historical, driverless, digitalize, fintech, firstly, acceleration	Digital technologies affordances
35	people, community, things, lot, work, build, important, platform, talk, time, design, software, cooperative, create, thing, working, model, social, started, make	artisans, codesign, startup, community, ampled, boston, developers, handmade, exitxtoxcommunity, zebras, lean, software, design, enterprises, centered, drupal, marketplace, <a>, templates, classical	Developing platform cooperatives
~~**36**~~	~~tech, people, lot, start, movement, work, create, money, cooperative, building, examples, tools, structures, question, years, time, power, things, community, book~~	~~tech, exitxtoxcommunity, douglas, editor, voluntarily, examples, chapter, decentralization, structures, zebra, jad, proven, fiscal, firing, students, tools, persons, mozilla, learning, bullies~~	~~n/a~~
37	cooperatives, cooperative, scaling, model, things, shares, coops, work, platform, instance, unions, discussion, point, power, scale, coop, terms, social, raised, people	scaling, shares, raised, instance, jonathan, commonwealth, points, <a>, discussion, viable, club, star, interoperability, hackers, cooperation, principle, football, runs, heart, membership	Scaling
38	coop, union, workers, people, worker, labor, work, coops, lot, unions, business, taxi, cooperative, things, owners, working, model, make, nurses, time	nurses, appointment, lvns, unionized, healthcare, california, union, taxi, lvn, appointments, hospital, staffing, bargaining, academy, employers, patient, owners, green, cwa, contractors	Unions and cooperatives
39	workers, people, work, drivers, platform, cooperatives, economy, worker, city, uber, china, coops, time, cooperative, things, york, working, lot, make, years	upgo, china, drivers, chinese, kong, hong, domestic, vietnam, gig, cleaning, taxi, driver, york, lyft, safety, los, uber, wage, workers, brooklyn	Cooperatives in the digital economy
40	~~coop, organize, spending, people, sake, critically, calculus, strikes, work, lot, things, recruit, manifest, distinction, chooses, cooperative, make, time, platform, thing~~	~~organize, critically, calculus, sake, spending, coop, strikes, chooses, manifest, recruit, distinction, peer, part, put, today, give, great, making, sense, real~~	~~n/a~~

APPENDIX 3C: Data structure

#	Topic Label	First -order codes	Second-order codes	Aggregate dimensions
4	Cooperative economy	Identification with cooperative movement	Establishing movement identity	Crafting ideology
31	Unions	Connection with the labor movement struggles		
5	Collective power	Building collective power	Setting movement goals	
8	Organizing workers	Organizing digital workers		
17	Political system	Need to engage with the political system		
13	People-centered system	Need to put human beings at the center	Expressing movement values	
21	Alternative system	Need to find alternatives to capitalism		
10	Digital work	Problems of digital work (and possible solutions)	Providing the rationale for action	
23	Radical change	Need for a radical change		
24	Digital economy	Critique of the sharing economy		
7	Cooperative membership	Benefits for workers in joining cooperatives	Connecting ideology with governance practices	Embedding ideology in material practices
28	Unions and cooperatives I	Cooperative model for unions I		
32	Organizational ownership	Configuring organizational ownership		
38	Unions and cooperatives II	Cooperative model for unions II		
39	Cooperatives in the digital economy	Workers' and platform cooperatives as solutions for the problems of the gig economy		
3	Design	Importance and affordances of platform design	Connecting ideology with technological tools	
9	Control on personal data	Control on personal data		
22	Blockchain affordances	Blockchain affordances		

25	Technologies for decentralized governance	Affordances and characteristics of Decentralized Autonomous Organizations		
26	Open Software	Affordances of Open Software		
29	Trust and technology	Relationship between trust and technology		
34	Digital technologies affordances	Digital technologies affordances		
1	Decision making processes	Decision-making processes configurations	Discussing organizational configurations	Configuring material practices
2	Cooperative governance	Governance and business model of cooperatives		
11	Managing members	How to manage members		
12	Platform cooperatives' business model	Business models for platform cooperatives		
35	Developing platform cooperatives	Start-up and development of platform cooperatives	Discussing development paths	
37	Scaling	Scaling platform cooperatives		
16	Platform cooperativism I	Platform Cooperativism development and achievement	Organizing the movement's action	n/a
33	Platform cooperativism II	Presentation of Platform Cooperativism		

APPENDIX 3D: Significance of difference in proportions

Signif. codes	
.	0.1
*	0.05
**	0.01
***	0.001

Topic #3
Coefficients:

	Estimate	Std. Error	t value	Pr(>|t|)	
(Intercept)	0.066290	0.013795	4.805	1.76e-06	***
phase	-0.024927	0.008405	-2.966	0.00308	**

Topic #8
Coefficients:

	Estimate	Std. Error	t value	Pr(>|t|)	
(Intercept)	0.048178	0.012054	3.997	6.84e-05	***
phase	-0.017697	0.007098	-2.493	0.0128	*

Topic #9
Coefficients:

	Estimate	Std. Error	t value	Pr(>|t|)	
(Intercept)	-0.03643	0.01813	-2.010	0.0447	*
phase	0.05915	0.01229	4.813	1.7e-06	***

Topic #13
Coefficients:

	Estimate	Std. Error	t value	Pr(>|t|)	
(Intercept)	0.076633	0.014571	5.259	1.74e-07	***
phase	-0.030936	0.008592	-3.601	0.000331	***

Topic #25
Coefficients:

	Estimate	Std. Error	t value	Pr(>|t|)	
(Intercept)	0.0007527	0.0128433	0.059	0.9533	
phase	0.0170089	0.0085029	2.000	0.0457	*

Topic #31
Coefficients:

	Estimate	Std. Error	t value	Pr(>|t|)	
(Intercept)	0.056513	0.012920	4.374	1.34e-05	***
phase	-0.021141	0.007893	-2.678	0.00751	**

Topic #34
Coefficients:

	Estimate	Std. Error	t value	Pr(>|t|)	
(Intercept)	0.000351	0.009607	0.037	0.971	
phase	0.010646	0.006370	1.671	0.095	.

Topic #35
Coefficients:

	Estimate	Std. Error	t value	Pr(>|t|)	
(Intercept)	0.061346	0.016257	3.774	0.00017	***
phase	-0.016604	0.009991	-1.662	0.09684	.

Topic #37
Coefficients:

	Estimate	Std. Error	t value	Pr(>|t|)	
(Intercept)	0.005602	0.012495	0.448	0.6540	
phase	0.014712	0.007990	1.841	0.0658	.

CONCLUSIONS

The research presented in this dissertation is aimed at contributing to our knowledge of the processes through which social movements create and develop alternative organizational forms. Grounded on the understanding that social movements engage in ongoing struggles over interpretations of reality, the system of meanings crafted and fostered by the Platform Cooperativism movement has been at the core of the investigation. Of particular interest is the inherent futurism of alternative organizations, which are rooted in visions of a different system guided by distinct values and principles. This research contributes to our comprehension of how social movements navigate the tension between present realities and future aspirations, as well as the gap between idealism and pragmatic action, in their pursuit of social change through the establishment of alternative organizational structures.

Contributions in these terms are twofold. The first one relates to the crafting of the vision that is promoted by the movement, while the second one concerns how such vision evolves when it begins to be put into practice. In terms of crafting alternative visions, the study demonstrates that questions regarding both the desirability and the feasibility of such alternatives are central to the movement's activities and that temporal work enables actors to deal with these issues. On the other hand, concerning the evolution of such visions, a shift in the movement's orientation has been documented from a predominantly ideological focus to a more practical, organizational one, which both reflects and shapes the development of alternative organizations.

These insights open up avenues for further research aimed at delving deeper into the factors influencing the observed process. One potential avenue for further inquiry could explore how the composition of actors within a social movement influences the crafting and evolution of the collective vision. While the present analysis considers the movement's discourse as a whole, future research could delve into how different actors within the movement contribute to shaping the envisioned future. When it comes to alternative organizing, individuals can indeed agree on the values to be promoted but not on how to reach them – in other words, they agree on the ends but not on the means

of the social change to be reached. Understanding these dynamics could elucidate the challenges that arise within movements and inform strategies for building a cohesive collective vision.

Additionally, future research could shift its perspective to investigate the process of alternative organization creation and diffusion from the standpoint of the organizations themselves. Incorporating data on the actual development and dissemination of alternative organizations could provide valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities encountered in translating visionary ideals into tangible organizational structures. By considering both the internal dynamics of social movements and the external realities faced by alternative organizations, future research can offer a comprehensive understanding of the complexities involved in fostering societal change through alternative organizing.