

**The European Left**  
**Democracy and Sovereignty in Italy, Spain, and Portugal**

**Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
(PhD)**

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**I certify that this thesis is my own work, based on my personal study and research and that I have accurately acknowledged all material and sources used in its preparations.**

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## **Abstract**

This dissertation is focused on the praxis of a group of European left parties in the 1990s and 2000s. This study proposes an original contribution to the investigation of the role of the ideas of democracy and sovereignty in the praxis of communist parties from Italy, Spain, and Portugal, and the Euro-parliamentary group GUE/NGL. The PRC, the PCE/IU, and the PCP alongside the GUE/NGL and the PEL constitutes the subjects of the European left in this dissertation. Based on an exclusive documental collection, interviews, and literature, this dissertation adopts a multimethod approach to discuss theoretical perspectives on the concepts of sovereignty and democracy in the European relation of political forces. The contemporary history of the European left is analysed in order to observe how these political parties were able to develop a transnational cooperation around the GUE/NGL after a succession of defeats, which indicates that ideological transformations preceded the praxis in the 1990s. In relation to the development of the EU, subaltern and late integration marked the ways Italy, Spain, and Portugal composed the single market. As argued by the main literature in the field, the European left is understood as a synthesis of multiple forces and an instance of cooperation in the European Union, what is not an excess of pragmatism in opposition to their theory, but to their constitutive praxis. From a Gramscian perspective, it is suggested that the lack of a hegemonic project was substituted by a neo-Keynesian approach at the national and transnational levels, and therefore universal democracy became the central strategy of the radical and the European left as part of a limited notion of the sovereignty of the capitalist state. Some radicalism was present when the 2008 crisis erupted in Europe, however the analysis of the praxis of these left-wing forces in the 2000s suggests that the institutional approach and the lack of a consistent strategy prevented the emergence of radical democratic transformations.

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## Abbreviations

CC	Central Committee
CDS/PP	Centro Democrático Social/Partido Popular
CDU	Coligação Democrática Unitária (PCP- PEV)
ECB	European Central Bank
EEC	European Economic Community
ESP	European Socialist Party
FP	Federación Progressista (Spain)
GUE/NGL	Gauche Unitaire Européenne – Nordic Green Left
IU	Izquierda Unida (United Left)
KKE	Greek Communist Party
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
MFA	Movimento das Forças Armadas
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
PASOC	Partido de Acción Socialista (Spain)
PCE	Partido Comunista de España
PCF	Parti Communiste Français
PCI	Partito Comunista Italiano
PCP	Partido Comunista Português
PCPE	Partido Comunista de los Pueblos de España
EP	European Parliament (EP)
PEL	Party of the European Left

PEV	Partido Ecologista “Os Verdes”
PPE-DE	European People's-Party and European Democrats
PRC	Partito della Rifondazione Comunista
PS	Partido Socialista (Portugal)
PSD	Partido Social Democrata (Portugal)
PSI	Partito Socialista Italiano
PSOE	Partido Socialista Obrero Español
PSP	Partido Socialista Português
RSDLP	Russian Social Democratic Labour Party
SCR	Sinistra Classe e Rivoluzione
USA	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

# Introduction

## Main Argument of the Thesis

The purpose of this dissertation is to analyse how European left-wing parties developed their praxis at the transnational level through the ideas of democracy and sovereignty in the 1990s and 2000s. The elected representatives of the European left on which this dissertation focuses are the *Partito della Rifondazione Comunista* (PRC), the *Partido Comunista Español/Izquierda Unida* (PCE/IU), the *Partido Comunista Português* (PCP), and their respective transnational instances at the European level: the *Gauche Unitaire Europeene/Nordic Green Left* (GUE/NGL) and the Party of the European Left (PEL). The concepts of democracy and sovereignty are central concepts in this dissertation due to their interconnection and importance in the political parties' actions on the national and transnational dimension in the everyday life in the European Union. Therefore, the core question of this investigation is to understand how two important concepts for communist parties, democracy and sovereignty, were treated and engaged in the national and transnational activities and strategies of a set of European left-wing parties.

In contrast to European integration and political party's studies that focus on the role of the state, here the perspective is focused on the relation of forces of the class struggle, as they were expressed within and shaped by transformations in the political parties' ideologies and organisation. For this reason, the concepts of democracy and sovereignty are regarded as important factors to be investigated, since the dimension and the character of the struggles carried out by the left-wing parties are related to changes in the structure of the EU. Moreover, the changes in the EU's development have been followed by changes in its component parts, for instance, in the European Parliament and in its representative members, the national political parties and transnational groups.

Amid so many political innovations in Europe with the transition from the European Community to the European Union, democracy apparently acquired a stable status within the parliamentary model of governance in Europe, while

liberalism was still questioned by left-wing forces. The question of power re-emerged on a new basis: the supranational and transnational powers of the EU were then seen as new *Leviathans* challenging the capacities of the *Prince*.

This dissertation is situated in the field of the studies of political parties. In this sense, to build a historical narrative, this research is focused on the praxis of left-wing political parties considering that those parties are an important part of a bigger political environment. The structure of the political parties, the role of the congresses, the purposes and decisions taken by the parties are assumed here as some of the main sources of discussion capable of observing the evolution of the European left in the 1990s and 2000s.

One of the original claims of this dissertation is that democracy became a central point in the strategy of the European left, i.e., the democratic transformation of society was the political program that European left-wing forces (PRC, PCE/IU, and PCP together with the GUE/NGL and the PEL) sought at national and also transnational levels. Such a transformation in the party's approach to revolution has implications for understanding the way in which the current literature comprehends the "radical" nature of these parties. While this dissertation generally adopts the commonly used term of "radical parties", it does so with certain limits and qualifications. The dissertation ultimately argues that radicalism was not in fact a predominant aspect of those parties' activities and strategies and that, instead, the use of the more neutral term "European left" might be a more appropriate way to characterize these formations.

In addition, the integration process was a fact that added more content to the political struggle of the European left, bringing radical parties to the (transnational) field of the debate about sovereignty. The strategic change was not abrupt, but a long process in which the idea of universal democracy as a path towards socialism was transformed, since there was no clear path in the political parties' programmes. In this sense, another original claim of this dissertation is that normal democracy is the notion that explains the praxis and strategic aims of these left-wing parties in the national and transnational contexts. Normal democracy is a concept elaborated in this dissertation based on Gramscian perspectives to explain the parliamentary life of a political party, its limits, and potentialities, and is referred to the everyday circumstances a political party faces within the limits of party-system activities.

Furthermore, this dissertation also offers an original analysis of the role of the notion of sovereignty in the transformations of these left wing parties. There was a contradiction between the national and transnational limits of the praxis of these parties, once the national domain was still conceived as the dominant terrain, and the transnational was relegated to the background, while in fact those were two intrinsically interconnected levels.

Despite the national tendency to internal splits, the transnational action of the European left seems, however, to have harmonized the pan-European left-wing perspectives around a common political “project”. Thus, to understand the European left, the GUE/NGL, it is necessary to consider not only its own transnational activity, but also the transnational activity of its national members. How the concepts of democracy and sovereignty appear in the strategy of the European left in two different levels (national and transnational) is a subject of discussion in this research. Both concepts are connected, and the respective positions of European left-wing parties have been contradictorily conservative to the extent that the attempts to reform the political regime were a strategic measure aimed at confronting the challenge of structural economic transformation. The crisis of democratic regimes is not merely an effect of the institutional limits of the political world, or the limits of the sovereign power, inasmuch as politics does not exist apart from economy, or any other sphere, and for this reason, democracy and sovereignty are understood as multi-layered concepts throughout this research. As a result, this dissertation claims that the so called radical left is not in fact radical in the fullest sense of the term. Rather, it is a set of progressivist political parties oriented by a notion of democracy that is not a socialist perspective, but a notion of democratic development oriented by the role of the state in implementing social measures. One significant consequence of this perspective is that it is necessary to reassess the relevance of the notion of ‘radical’ in the broad literature on European left-wing parties.

## **The literature and structure of the dissertation**

As indicated by March (2012), there is still a gap in the literature regarding the so-called radical left political parties in recent years. Most of the existing

scholarship focuses on centre-left, conservative, democratic, green and far-right political parties. Besides that, the nature of the research is also another concern, because access to the thought of European left-wing political parties requires a type of anthropological effort, or at least an effort to understand the “other” in its own words. There are only few publications regarding the general topic of radical left parties in Europe, and some of the main authors in the field are Luke March (2012), Isabelle Hertner (2018), Richard Dunphy (2004), Anna Bosco (2000), Marco Damiani (2016).<sup>1</sup> These studies have contributed to the description of the European left structure in several countries. Those authors provided an analysis of the European left’s electoral performances, structure, and ideologies in the national and European contexts. Due to the consistency and importance of those analysis in the field of studies of the European left, this research lies most of its basis in the main ideas proposed by those authors.

In the main literature in the field (Dunphy, 2004; Damiani, 2016; March, 2012; Freire, 2014; etc.) analyses have sometimes focused on the national aspect, but many of them are transnational overviews of the praxis of communist, socialist, and social-democratic parties of Europe from the 1970s to the 2000s (with the most recent work of Dunphy and March about the European Left Party in the 2010s). Those analyses contributed to build a general perspective of what has been the role of the left in Europe, particularly in the parliamentary context mostly based on comparative analysis. The European left is classified in this literature, particularly in the case of communist parties, as being radical in the last decades, due to the ideological background the sustain parties’ programmes, but mostly also due to the comparison with socialists, greens, and other parties of the spectrum of the left. In this sense, the comparison between sets or groups of left-wing parties from social-democrats to more conservative communists led to the characterization that the ideological framework of some parties (here including the parties that are the subject of this dissertation: PRC, PCE/IU, PCP, GUE/NGL, PEL) were among the most radical perspectives in Europe. Those analyses considered the transition from Eurocommunist to ‘Euro-left’ perspectives (such as: Dunphy, 2004). Next, the literature also agrees in

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to mention that the literature about these political parties are still dominated by a male presence. This problem is obviously not exclusive to left-wing parties, but this remains an important problem that the left has not solved yet.

considering the difficulties, almost the incapacity, of the European left in developing a coherent strategy.

This dissertation develops its analysis based on the existent literature in the first instance (and thus makes use of the problematical term of the “radical left” prominent in this literature), in order to investigate, through documental and interview analysis, the behaviour of these parties. In this sense, it is argued that the parties’ praxis did not correspond to their ideological background. Considering the Marxist legacy of communist parties as a fundamental theoretical perspective, it is argued that only a few aspects of this tradition remained in the parties’ discourses at a rhetorical level, while fundamental concepts were transformed in practice (e.g., social class for citizens, revolution for democratic development, socialism for developed democracy, and so on). Such transformations occurred over a long term, at least from the 1990s to the 2000s, in which different and new concepts emerged that corresponded to these parties’ activities in the field of normal democracy. These concepts corresponded to the ideology of the parliamentary-centred praxis of the parties.

An internal qualitative approach, based on a particular, inner, conceptual background, however, leads to the argument that this so-called radical left is, in fact, not genuinely radical, but instead progressivist and reformist. Such an inner approach is capable of acknowledging that there was still a potential for radical praxis, but that this was not realised in practice. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, the European left adopted the terrain of normal democracy (parliamentary life) as its main field of activities, which in turn became the main terrain of its ideology (the terrain of reforms in the sphere of the state). The contradictory aspect of such praxis is that the strategic limits were posed in the sphere of reforms and the progressive development of (liberal) democracy. This dissertation argues that this terrain is not favourable for the development of further, truly radical ideas of social transformation (beyond the limits of capitalism). As a result, those parties that compose the European left are no longer radical, in the Marxist left-wing sense, but progressivist and reformist organizations. Certainly, transformative questions were not fully abandoned, but the bridge between political and human emancipation was not made by parties.

Above all there is a lack of investigation into the fundamental concepts that guided the praxis of those parties in the recent past. For this reason, this

dissertation is based upon an original multimethod approach focusing on the dynamic of concepts inside those political organizations by investigating the importance of democracy and sovereignty on three different interconnected levels: the level of the party's structure and functioning, the national level, and the transnational level praxis of those political organizations. Moreover, electoral aspects and some comparisons will be considered in order to highlight practical achievements and some level of coordination of the European left strategy.

Another aspect of the debate in the existing scholarship regards its naming. New Left, Far or Extreme Left, and Radical Left are important general characterizations of the European left, since they provide practical and theoretical clarity regarding the objects of study. For the purposes of this dissertation, the European Left is understood as the general corpus of left-wing political parties and group of parties at the transnational level.

Moreover, the term radical left, discussed mainly by Richard Dunphy and Luke March, is applied in reference to national parties as a fraction of the European Left to indicate their positioning regarding left-wing organizations (such as social-democrats and socialists), but also to indicate their positions in relation to liberal-democracy. Nonetheless, another specific claim of this investigation is that being radical is not a question of positioning regarding the EU integration. Rather, the fundamentals of a left-wing organization's radicality resides in its programme and praxis, taken together as a reading of the social reality and the possibility of its transformation.

Being radical, communist, orthodox, and revolutionary, seemed to be more a result than a motivation of some political parties that survived the series of geopolitical/ideological/paradigmatic transformations during the final years of the short twentieth century, the century theorized by Eric Hobsbawm (1994). In its multiplicity, the left wing in Europe has been composed mainly by small political parties, with small electoral results as well. What is considered important here, however, is not the size or the quantitative data that can be expressed in elections – which are important and valuable information to the extent that numbers express part of reality – but the qualitative political history, the political program, the debate and praxis of those parties.

According to Lukács (2009) the totality perspective is, thus, crucial, and for this reason the relationship between singular left-wing organizations, such as the

PCP, the PCE/IU and the PRC, and general associations (the GUE/NGL and the PEL) can be useful for understanding the organization's meaning and praxis that historically had a critical approach regarding the capitalist system. A characterization based on a political party's praxis is one aspect through which it is possible to achieve knowledge of what the left is and, particularly, of what its own political organizations are. In the same way, the historical process and the debate of ideas are important features to be considered as we aim to provide a better characterization of such a party, beyond its electoral performances. Praxis is understood in this dissertation as the implementation of a political activity at a determined temporal perspective, however practical the activity may be (Vazquez, 2007). In this sense, the party's congresses are one of the main documental resources, since they were, and still are, the most important democratic organism of the parties. The role of the congress (constitutional and extraordinary, for instance) was not merely to decide leaderships and next paths, but it was the space in which internal contradictions and differences could emerge (not without conflict) and be collectively discussed. Moreover, congresses were the supreme space for collective decisions, therefore, a space in which the multi-class character of political parties might be expressed and find a synthesis.

Another source related to the task of characterizing left-wing parties is the existing scholarship. Regarding recent studies about the radical left in Europe, Luke March (2012) works with a definition that considers the ideological self-description of the parties, their strategies, and identities, but above all an analysis that consider the parties' ideological approach in practice to describe their ideologies as radical parties. From this perspective, there are seven types of political parties that belong to the left: conservative communists, reformist communists, democratic socialists, populist socialists, social populists, the radical left, and the extreme left. March's thesis is that the left was and still is oriented towards practical/governmental policies. According to March's classification, all the three political parties that are analysed in this dissertation belong to the radical sector/spectrum of the left wing, which achieved significant results in elections from 1990 to 2010. Moreover, if the radical left is the national dimension of this particular set of political parties, the term European left is used in this dissertation to indicate the transnational dimension of the national parties activities within the GUE/NGL and the PEL.

In fact, as it will be discussed in the dissertation, the role of European left-wing parties at the European (transnational) level is an important dimension to be considered, particularly because they are parties with an important ideological component and historical heritage that have some influence in a plural group of left-wing forces such as the GUE/NGL, and that were a dominant force in the creation of the left-wing European party, the PEL.

National parties of the European left are the subject of March's research, and he recognizes the problem in using the term *left* since it has been transformed over time due to its “adaptive capacity” (2012: 11). The term *left* changed because its real effectiveness was mutating. For instance, the “double-game” that some organizations played as being a radical party and at same time participating in governments resulted in a complicated situation and in internal and external losses. Overall, March (2012) indicates that the lack of coherence in the strategy was one of the main aspects of the defeats and problems of the left in the 1990s and 2000s. However, the apparent incoherence, or programmatic flexibility that was a result of both a plurality of internal perspectives in each political party and/or the lack of doctrinal principals, was also an aspect that allowed the European left to dialogue with organizations that were not necessarily guided by anti-systemic perspectives, particularly in the context of the GUE/NGL and PEL (2012: 210 – 213). March also highlights that another way of characterizing the so-called radical left is through observing how they were “to the left” rather than “on the left” of social democracy (2012b).

Another perspective is provided by Marco Damiani (2016), who defines the so-called radical left in terms of opposition to the neoliberal worldview, whatever the internal variations in its composition, as traditional, electoral, progressive, or movement-parties. Damiani's hypothesis is that the left is no longer anti-systemic, but anti-establishment, so the field of struggle is circumscribed by the democratic state. To use Gramscian terms, it is the field of small politics (2014: 1563). Furthermore, his classification is based on the organizations' self-identification as belonging to the left and based on the level of their representativeness.

Following March's approach, Damiani is concerned with the ideological-historical development of the so-called radical left (for him, it is a more appropriate term to describe communist and other radical organizations in contemporary Europe) in the recent decades, also with an eye to the political structure and

values defended by these parties. For this reason, individual freedom and peace are highlighted as the new values of the current European left (Damiani, 2016: 131).

Consequently, even though the GUE/NGL contains in itself anti-systemic and anti-establishment forces, Damiani does not characterize the group in the field of anti-systemic organizations; instead, the creation of GUE, and then GUE-NGL, represents a transformation in radical-left organizations, due to their new purposes and approaches. Nevertheless, the later creation of the PEL, in 2004, is seen by Damiani as a step forward in the construction of a more coherent left in Europe (2016: 222).

One first immediate aspect of the creation of the PEL was its role as a new centre of gravity for the movements of the European left at the transnational level. The history recounted by the European party itself indicates that its constitution process was initiated in the 1990s, and that the conclusion of the assembling process happened in 2004 during the first congress of the party in Rome. In the Manifesto of the Party of the European Left, of 2004, the indication is that capitalism had become socially and culturally retrogressive, and a new resistance was emerging within the transnational party (PEL, 2004).

With the experience of acting in the GUE/NGL and in the EU Parliament for many years, some national political parties gathered around the idea of creating a European political party composed by and of international forces with a more accurate strategy and program to act at the transnational level. In its foundation, the political program was based on the idea of making the economy correspond to people's needs, peace, respect for the environment, and "full democracy". Fausto Bertinotti was the first president of the transnational party, elected at the foundation congress in Rome in 2004.

Particularly interesting is Anna Bosco's research (2000) about the PCE, PCI and PCP in their processes of adhering to democratic regimes in the 1980s and 1990s – a period in which, she believes, those political parties went through significant mutations. Rather than seeking general, common aspects, Bosco is interested in discussing the transformation of political parties based on two different approaches, specifically an internal (dynamic approach) and external (typological approach) dimensions of political parties in relation to systemic competition and "intra-party" development. In both cases, she claims that it is

important to listen to the parties' voices.

Bosco indicates that it is with the fall of Berlin's Wall and the collapse of the USSR that communist parties began to undergo deeper transformations, even though they were already changing due to electoral challenges or internal mutations. In particular, she argues that communist organizations were changing due to internal reasons, such as the adaptation and integration in their national party-systems (2000: 41-43). In this dissertation, the second set of circumstances are given more priority, i.e., that communist parties changed due to internal or ideological conditions, rather than as a direct consequence of the collapse of the Soviet Union, even though the ideological role played by the collapsing Soviet Union certainly had effects also on the Western world.

However, rather than analysing the situation of the communist parties with the *anti-systemic* characterization, Bosco introduces the idea that those political parties were, instead, *anti-regime*. Bosco's discussion is interesting because after establishing that those parties were anti-regime organizations, her next argument is that mutations transformed them into pro-regime parties after a process of democratic adaptation that culminated in the legitimization of the parties in the system (2000: 54-56).

Bosco's discussion highlights the adaptation of the parties during their process of legitimization in the political system. The Italian and the Spanish Communist Parties are seen as the most transformed parties, with significant changes in their functioning, program, and structure, while the Portuguese party was the most limited in its transformations. Despite the continuous refusal of the PCP to adapt to the system, for Bosco (2000: 282) the PCP was integrated into the party system by the second half of the 1990s, after consolidating alliances with its former opponents in the Socialist Party. In fact, communist organizations underwent transformation during the 1980s and 1990s in a moment in which the position of the entire communist movement was changing in the world, changes that the European parties could not escape, even though the results were limited in electoral terms.

Another researcher in the field is Richard Dunphy (2004), who has studied the impact of the EU integration on left-wing parties. For Dunphy, the left wing consists of the "parties to the left of social democracy that have historically called for a transcendence of the capitalist economic system and that still voice such

aspirations” (2004: 2). Contextualizing the participation of European left organizations, such as the PCI, PCP, PCE, KKE, PCF, among others, Dunphy identifies the acting purposes of those left parties in the institutions of the EU in relation to themes such as respect for the environment, stronger regional policies, criticism of the free market, and criticism of a lack democracy in the EU, seen as predominantly the “elitist, top-down, bureaucratic and technocratic model of European integration” (2004: 170).

In general, from the perspective of the broad European scenario, communist parties, such as those that will be analysed here, can be classified as radical, or even extreme left-wing parties to the extent that they are organizations that propose ideas for social change, struggles against the establishment, and so forth, as part of the national and European efforts in elections (March, 2012; Taylor, 2009; van Hecke, 2012). In this dissertation, the idea of being radical is related to the praxis orientation of the political party in relation to a substantial and qualitative social change.

For this reason, it is necessary to understand to what extent those organized forces adopted a Marxist approach, for instance, regarding the concepts of democracy and sovereignty, and if their approach was rooted in a methodological comprehension of class struggles in society (Marx, 2005: 151). Certainly, there are contradictions between the form and the content, between the name and the praxis. The adoption of *communist* in the name of a socio-political organization cannot be simply made by assuming the historical legacy (and prejudices) that the *form* of the name had crystallized in its own history. Thus, it is not exclusively a problem of form, but also of content and how the content is absorbed and developed in particular conditions. Throughout the entire communist movement many forms of development of names, concepts, struggles, tactics and strategy can unify/reunite the singularities of each organization, of each experience, but it is through the category of *particularity* that the necessary mediations between the singular and the whole are made. The whole is also made by the history of the movement, but not as a simple reproduction of the past. The communist proposal is instead a proposal of historical movement and transformation, the *Aufhebung* (the dialectical

subsumption) of the state and civil society (Pogrebinschi, 2006: 548).<sup>2</sup> In this sense, this dissertation adopts the characterization of those political parties as European left, but at the same time this dissertation attempts to problematise this idea of being ‘radical’ in the light of the parties’ praxis in the 1990s and 2000s. It will be seen that one core achievement of this investigation is that the term “radical left” has its limits when considering the strategic approach of the parties towards revolutionary transformation of society.

Furthermore, the relation between sovereignty and democracy has not yet been studied in the light of the praxis of left-wing parties in the EU. Those two concepts gained more attention in the 1990s and 2000s, as a consequence of the integration process, due to general public promises of a modern democracy in Europe, and due to the questioning of the transformation of national sovereign power within the supranational institutions that determined general structural transformations in the country members of the EU. New forms of sovereignty have emerged with policy innovations in the EU and have reverberated in areas beyond politics, including transformations in the notions of human rights, citizenship, security, and economics. Despite the deep crisis that currently persists in European economies, there have been several attempts to transform the EU into a preliminary space of a global society, but the basis of this project is questionable: the hegemonic project of the European left regarding this problem is another fundamental question that is approached by this dissertation.

## **Structure**

This dissertation is divided into theoretical, historical-analytical and historical-political parts. In the Introduction it is discussed the definition of the idea of European left; thus, the aim is to argue that the concept cannot be designed from outside the movement. It is thus necessary to listen to what the so-called radical left-wing parties think about themselves. From this provisional definition, the dissertation turns to debate the idea of political party, which here appears

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<sup>2</sup> Pogrebinschi (2006), highlights Marx's plan to discuss the role of political parties and the struggle for the abolition (*Aufhebung*) of state and civil society: a plan of study that he established in 1844 but was not directly able to realize.

through a methodological apprehension of the figure of the Modern Prince, a Gramscian concept that, in fact, is not a simple individual figure, but a concept that better translates the ways in which the organization of subaltern perspectives can be conceived.

Chapter 1 outlines the methodological approach of the dissertation. The aim of this chapter is to build part of the methodological approach and methods adopted in this analysis. Multimethod research is the contemporary name for a type of research methodology that, we believe, has been conducted in the field of Marxist studies in the past, except that it was not conceived with this name and sometimes without explicit reflection on the methodological perspective. Studies based on multimethod research perspectives have, nevertheless, been important in the Marxist field – for instance, Engels’s *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, Marx’s *Capital*, or Gramsci’s *Prison Notebooks*, among others. In all of these works, different perspectives, approaches, sources, and methods were summoned in order to produce a totalising critical analysis.

Chapter 2 focuses on the discussion of some classical formulations of democracy and sovereignty, in an endeavour to revisit some of the main perspectives in the field of political sciences. The main focus of this chapter is to outline important theoretical formulations that will provide the conceptual core of the dissertation. Both concepts are discussed in the field of the Marxist tradition, once the left-wing emerged and contributed to build traditions in which communist parties and/or communist ideas played an important role in social transformation. Following the theoretical discussion, Chapter 3 aims to provide a historical analysis of the behaviour of the Southern political parties in their contexts of class struggles during the European integration process, suggesting the emergence of a common background for their praxis in the 1990s onwards.

Therefore, Chapter 4 aims to show the connection between the new face that the Left assumed in Europe in this period and the particular way in which European countries were integrated. In this sense, the European integration process is seen through the relation of forces between capital and labour, instead of the predominant statist perspective. The GUE/NGL construction and the European left praxis in the 1990s are the main subject of this chapter.

The next chapter, Chapter 5, aims to discuss the role of the GUE/NGL in the European Parliament, its purposes, ideology, and the concepts that

characterize the group as a left-wing organization. Thus, the interest of this chapter is to consider programmatic and practical aspects of the praxis of the European left, taking the GUE/NGL as a whole—even though it is not a single political party, but a group of political parties, and thus it is permeated by ideology and interests that impact on its parliamentary participation. In addition, the problem of hegemony is another fundamental focus in the discussion of this chapter, considering the sphere of parliamentary affairs and relations between states.

In Chapter 6, the focus is the actions taken by the European left in the new millennium, i.e., in the face of the consolidation of the EU. The transition to the new millennium was marked also by the transformation brought about by the implementation of the Euro in the EU. The Euro, as well as being an important factor in the strategical and tactical zig-zags of the European left, was also accepted as a universal value in the economic world, confirming the sovereign power of a fraction of the ruling European classes. In this sense, Chapter 7 aims to discuss the role of the European left in the light of the concepts of capitalist state, Keynesianism, and capital accumulation. The Group strategy was shaped by its institutional role in the parliament. The ways in which its political activity was reduced to the everyday parliamentary life of normal democracy is thus an important finding of this discussion.

Finally, Chapter 8 discusses important transformations in the European Left organization, particularly the creation of the new organism, the Party of the European Left and the praxis of national parties in relation to the new transnational organism. The relations among national political parties and transnational organizations are then studied in terms of their response to the advent of the world economic crisis of 2007/8. In conclusion, this chapter compares and contrasts the activities of GUE/NGL and the European left parties in the years of the socio-economic crisis to claims of the supposed radicalism of its praxis.

## Fieldwork

The fieldwork was a necessary part for the development of this dissertation and consisted of archive visits to access documents and to conduct interviews. These materials provided the original research embodied in this dissertation about the praxis of the European Left. The research was developed with the help of many people. During the months spent undertaking fieldwork it was possible to visit numerous historical archives, foundations, and institutes. The role played by those institutions is important to keep alive the material sources of historical and political documents. The fieldwork started within the help of GUE/NGL head office, which provided some (physical) documents about the activities of GUE/NGL in the European Parliament.

In Italy, the archival investigation started in Perugia and Milan, where some documents regarding the PRC were found. In Rome most of the documents were found at the *Fondazione Lelio e Lisli Basso*, which stores and organizes PRC documents in the *Fondo Maurizio Fabbri*. Maurizio Fabbri is a longstanding PRC member, who generously granted access to the documents. Another source of documents in Italy was the *Archivio di Stato*, also in Rome. In the PRC head office, the documents are still being processed: while this research was in its latest phase some documents of PRC were slowly being made available on the PRC website. It is worth mentioning the difficulties of the PRC as a result of the PCI split from which it emerged: the *Partito della Sinistra* that emerged from the PCI kept almost the whole PCI structure, which made the PRC journey a proper *refoundation* also in a material sense. The *Fondazione Antonio Gramsci* is the institution that kept much of the PCI documentation. Although these materials were consulted, those documents are indirectly used in this dissertation.

In Portugal, access to the PCP document collection occurred thanks to the help of the PCP itself, particularly the direction of PCP in Coimbra, which kindly provided the available documents in their library. Some PCP and Trade Union documents were also found in the CGTP (Confederação Geral dos Trabalhadores Portugueses) head office in Lisbon. Those documents were found in a very good condition and well organized. Besides that, some documents are available in the *Centro de Documentação 25 de Abril* in Coimbra, which is a traditionally important historical archive, particularly for its role in preserving the

documents of the Portuguese Revolution of 1974. The work undertaken by the *Centro* is impeccable, despite increasingly diminished public/state support for its activities.

The Spanish PCE and IU historical documents are easily found almost in their entirety at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid, in the city centre. The PCE/IU Archivo Historico is housed in the University Historical Archive. The organization and access to the documents is very easy and very well organized by the Archive workers.

In addition to document gathering and analysis, this dissertation is also based on interviews conducted during the field work. Interviews were made in the first semester of 2019, in São Paulo (Brasil); Milan, Roma, Perugia, Castiglione del Lago, Chiaravalle (Italy); Coimbra, Nazaré, Lisbon (Portugal); Madrid, Aranjuez (Spain).

## Chapter 1      **Multimethod and Political Parties**

The formulation of a strategy based on the necessity that social transformation must be a conscious act, rather than imposed by force, is a problem of knowledge that affects the communist movement, as well as the problem of alienation and class consciousness faced by left-wing forces in their everyday praxis. As an attempt to address these issues, this chapter is based on a multimethod approach, which is an effort to build a historical narrative regarding a *viventi* organism(s) through the adoption of documents, interviews, and literature review to discuss the construction of a piece of history of political parties' praxis, and contexts, from national to transnational dimensions, considering both the ideological conditions and the position in the relation of forces. The multimethod approach particularity resides in its ability to allow the use of different techniques (for instance the adoption of the discourse analysis for the interviews) from different outcomes. Here, different political parties in different countries, in two different levels (national and transnational). Moreover, it is suggested that Marxist approaches can be interpreted as a multimethod methodology. Following, this chapter also aims to discuss some fundamental perspectives regarding general aspects of a political parties' life: strategy, elections, and other themes and classical ideas that can contribute to the discussion about political parties.

### **1.1. Multimethod**

Given the complex nature of research in the social sciences, a group of researchers have recently been developing the idea of multimethod in political science research according to the multimethod boom in different fields of science, as noted by Jason Seawright (2016) and Gary Goertz (2017). A multimethod approach is a methodological domain that considers more than one type of source of data, combining it with different techniques in the analytical process, and adopting diverse theoretical traditions in order to produce an integrative multimethod research methodology.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Part of the field research was discussed based on the multimethod approach with Dr. Melani Cammett (Harvard University) in the 10<sup>th</sup> IPSA Summer School "Interviewing and Multi-Methods Research", in São

A multimethod approach is an integral part of this dissertation as an attempt to assemble different materials and techniques, and also as an attempt to include a Marxist approach in terms of a research methodology to consider the ideological perspectives of the political parties of the European left-wing, by taking into account the fact that those political organizations have historically contributed to produce militant and academic knowledge about society. In fact, their political praxis is dependent on an interpretative approach to social reality. The particularity of the multimethod approach of this dissertation is based on the Gramscian perspective that the political parties are living organisms with the function of re-connecting the ideological and material levels of the human existence.

As it might be expected, multimethod approaches are based on the combination of quantitative and qualitative data: statistics, process tracing, triangulation, constituting a set of methods used in social sciences. Although gathering quantitative data can be a difficult task, “numbers” provide a relation and measurement regarding a social phenomenon (Harrison, 2001: 16-25). Multimethod are more than a simple combination of a minimum of two different methods, or the combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches. The reason is that, differently from triangulation perspectives, multimethod is a way of providing an accurate and rigorous inference from different outcomes (Seawright, 2016: 43-48).

Usually, a multimethod approach posits case studies as its core due to its efficacy of providing causal inferences regarding an individual subject and its causal relations (Goertz, 2016: 7). In this sense, such type of investigation is not dissimilar to Marxist approaches, particularly when considered the category of totality as a necessary perspective of looking at a subject of research (Lukács, 2003).

In both *Thesis on Feuerbach* (1845) and *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859), Karl Marx discusses the notion that theoretical findings are based on empirical data and confirmed empirically. Moreover, another recurring discussion in Marx’s work is concerning the problem of social transformation, a discussion that persisted also in *Capital*, a work that can be

seen as a multimethod research project due to the presence of quantitative and qualitative sources (from statistics, politics, philosophy and history) with the objective of constituting an analytical interpretation of social reality that at the end resulted in a well-established theory. Similarly, the same can be said about Gramsci's *Quaderni del Carcere* (written between 1929 and 1935), and Friedrich Engels' *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845).

In this dissertation, multimethod are not seen as an innovative approach, but as a recent effort in the field of the social sciences to provide more data and evidence with an accurate procedure of analysis. Thus, it is important to highlight that multimethod is not a new approach, as it is possible to trace aspects of different sources, methods, and discussions in previous Marxist works, which suggests that the field of Marxism research was based upon multiple perspectives. Nevertheless, the recent (re)formulation of multimethod perspectives in the field of political science is an important and well-founded contribution.

## 1.2. Ideology and knowledge

As stated in the introduction, this dissertation was written based on a variety of sources, from literature review to theoretical debates and interviews. Thus, we strongly believe that there is an advantage of basing the research on a multiple range of resources, constituting a more grounded terrain for the next stage in the research, that is, the critical elaboration of materials, as argued by Stephen Gill (1994: 28). As Gramsci indicated, there is the need to consider the particularities of each case in the analytical process (2014: 1610), and at the same time the category of *totality* is as important as the dimension of the *particularity* to consider individual cases (Lukács, 2003). This dissertation considers the spectrum of the European left as its general case, mainly the activities developed by the GUE/NGL, and concurrently the generality is seen from the perspective of the particular activities of different national parties.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Gramsci argues that: "Here, from the way of writing the history of a political party, it is clear what concept of what a party is and should be. The sectarian will exalt himself in the internal facts, which will have an esoteric meaning for him and will fill him with mystical enthusiasm. A political-historian will give to these facts the importance they have in the general framework and will insist on the real efficiency of the party, on its decisive force, positive or negative, in having contributed to determining an event and also in

For Gramsci's, the analytical process is an important route that is marked by the transition from a singular economic perspective (or moment) to a broader comprehension of different levels of the totality of a social phenomenon. This process occurs as a result of a successive movement of reconstruction and refinement of concepts with data (Gramsci, 2014: 425; Gill, 1994: 28).

Differently from positivist approaches that wrongly advocate the existence of neutrality, in the field of Marxism, knowledge has a political and a hegemonic function (Semeraro, 2001). Following this, scientific elaboration is the interpretation of a practical activity that, in its turn, will be part of the ideological set of a social class (Robinson, 2005: 6; Vazquez, 2007).<sup>5</sup>

The merit of an integrated approach that considers different sources and the focus on the research question is the manner of keeping the coherence of the concept, as concepts derive from history, once theorization is directly related to reality (Lukács, 2003: 193; Kotic, 1995: 17).<sup>6</sup> Equally important, for Gramsci, theoretical elaboration is the idea that the relation between social production and (organic) intellectuals is mediated by the superstructures, i.e., the connection between the physical activity of material production of everyday life and the existence of a technique to understand such reality is influenced by the political relations of society. In this sense, the superstructures are not an ideal world detached from social relations, they are not an imaginary dimension, but instead they are an objective dimension of reality in which there is a direct linkage

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preventing it from happening". Original quotation: "Ecco che dal modo di scrivere la storia di un partito risulta quale concetto si abbia di ciò che un partito sia e debba essere. Il settario si esalterà nei fatterelli interni, che avranno per lui un significato esotérico e lo riempiranno di entusiasmo mistico. Uno storico-politico darà a questi fatti l'importanza che essi hanno nel quadro generale e insisterà sull'efficienza reale del partito, sulla sua forza determinante, positiva o negativa, nell'aver contribuito a determinare un evento e anche nell'averne impedito il compimento" (2014: 1135).

<sup>5</sup> Ricardo Antunes (2009), in his work *Os Sentidos do Trabalho*, proposes the idea of the "class that lives from labour" as a way of updating the concept of "working class" (which was already an updating the idea of the proletariat, or workers, etc.). The principle of such concept is the sale of labour power (thus encompassing both productive and unproductive workers), and therefore, wage earners in the broadest sense. This is the idea of a class-in-itself. Different is the perspective presented by Claudinei Cássio de Rezende (2010) in his work *Suicídio Revolucionário*, in which the centrality of the working class is seen in the proletariat, now subsumed in the figure of the "cutting edge technological agent". The class, however, constitutes itself with more features, beyond merely those of wage relations. The class is also made in struggles\*, and then the class-for-itself is a perspective that encompasses *also* the subjective conditions in the ontological process of negation. The flexibilization and development of new appearances of the working classes, for instance in the technological field, are important dimensions to be considered in the general characterization and configuration of social classes in society. For this reason, it is still appropriate to propose the classical perspective of distinguishing social classes by their relations in the field of production.

<sup>6</sup> As argued by Kotic "Understanding the thing means knowing its structure" (2002: 18). Moreover, according to Lukács, "this means for the theory of reflection that the thought, the conscience, must certainly be guided by reality, that the criterion of truth consists in meeting reality. However, this reality is by no means identical to the empirical and factual being. It is not, but it comes to be" (2003: 401).

between the material production of life and ideology. In the same way, ideology exists in its relation to material production (Gramsci, 2014: 1518; Bianchi, 2008).

Respecting concepts must be a constant effort. Therefore, this dissertation is trying to understand the historical meaning of concepts used as a foundation for actions.

A research project is not the effort to reduce the complex to the simple but it is an attempt to produce more intelligible and accessible knowledge (Geertz, 1993; Levi-Strauss, 2015). The option is to develop a discussion regarding ideas and concepts –the concepts of sovereignty and democracy – in order to evaluate the political parties' praxis through documents, interviews, and the existing bibliographical theoretical discussion.<sup>7</sup> This is justified by the fact that the option here is to preserve the particularities of the selected cases considering the coherence of the totality of the phenomenon with its parts (Lukács, 2003: 140).

### **1.3. *Storia vivente* – interviews and documents**

It is interesting to note that researching contemporary political parties is a complex journey due to their internal compositions and international affairs. Interesting is also their own heterogeneous discourses and documents, parliamentary performance, social praxis, etc., which is indicative of a plurality of views and perspectives that somehow managed to be brought to light as a whole and unique thing.<sup>8</sup> To access such plural and heterogeneous history and then

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<sup>7</sup> The interviews that constitute part of the material source of this research were conducted in 2019, with approval of the Ethics Committee of the Brunel University London, reference number: 11454-LR-Aug/2018- 13958-2. Those interviews were semi-structured, conducted in a face-to-face mode, recorded, and properly stored. They were further transcribed in their original languages, and will be presented here both in English and in the original version when possible.

<sup>8</sup> For Gramsci: "When one writes the history of a political party, one faces a whole series of problems. What will the history of a party be? Will it be the mere narrative of the internal life of a political organization, how it is born, the first groups that make it up, the ideological polemics through which its program and its conception of the world and of life are born? In this case, it would be the history of small intellectual groups and, sometimes, the political biography of a single personality. The picture will have to be broader: it will be the history of a certain mass of men who have followed those men, supported them with their trust, criticized "realistically" with their dispersions and passivity. But will this mass be made up solely of party members? Congresses, votes, etc., the whole set of ways of life with which a mass of the party manifests its will, will need to be followed; but will it be enough? It will obviously be necessary to take into account the social group of which the party is the expression and the most advanced part, and the history of a party cannot fail to be the history of a particular social group. But this group is not isolated in society, it has friends, partners, adversaries, enemies. Only from the complex picture of the whole social whole will the history of a particular party emerge, and therefore it can be said that writing the history of a party means writing the general history of a country from a monographic point of view, to highlight a

transform it into “data”, it was necessary to adopt expanding and diversifying methods and instruments of research, considering different ways of comprehending the totality (Kosik, 1995; Lukács, 2003: 141). At the same time, it was necessary to focus, for instance, on some particular dimensions of their praxis (in temporal, thematic, and geographical senses).

Some of the “outcomes” of this dissertation are the interviews that were conducted during the fieldwork period, which were a product of complementary sources that expanded the documental and bibliographical discussion about the European left’s praxis.<sup>9</sup> Interviews were conducted with members of the three political parties that are the subject of this dissertation, in order to understand a particular version of the European integration process and the role of the left-wing in the 1990s and 2000s in the formulation of particular versions of the idea of democracy and sovereignty. With this material, it becomes possible to present particular and personal visions of those who experienced the events, and are still involved with the European left-wing movement, ensuring information and arguments that are an alternative to institutional and official documents (Burnham, 2004; Edwards and Holland, 2013; Harrison, 2001; Junior, 2011).

In general, interviews express the meanings that the interviewee wants to give, and contain a precise personal meaning based on specific words about memories of living facts. In this sense, it is possible to indicate that an interview is a piece of a living history (*storia vivente*). The people interviewed were related

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characteristic appearance. A party will have had greater or lesser importance, greater or lesser significance to the extent that its particular activity will have had greater or lesser weight in determining the history of a country”. Original quotation: “Quando si scrive la storia di un partito, si affronta tutta una serie di problemi. Cosa sarà la storia di un partito? Sarà la mera narrazione della vita interna di una organizzazione politica, come essa nasce, i primi gruppi che la costituiscono, le polemiche ideologiche attraverso le quali nasce il suo programma e la sua concezione del mondo e della vita? Sarebbe, in tal caso, la storia di ristretti gruppi intellettuali e talvolta la biografia politica di una sola personalità. Il quadro dovrà essere più largo: sarà la storia di una determinata massa di uomini che avrà seguito quegli uomini, li avrà sorretti con la sua fiducia, criticati “realisticamente” con le sue dispersioni e le sue passività. Ma questa massa sarà solamente costituita dai soci del partito? Occorrerà seguire i congressi, le votazioni, ecc. tutto l’insieme di modi di vita con cui una massa di partito manifesta la sua volontà; ma sarà sufficiente? Bisognerà evidentemente tener conto del gruppo sociale di cui il partito è l’espressione e la parte più avanzata, e la storia di un partito non potrà non essere la storia di un determinato gruppo sociale. Ma questo gruppo non è isolato nella società, ha amici, affini, avversari, nemici. Solo dal complesso quadro di tutto l’insieme sociale risulterà la storia di un determinato partito, e pertanto si può dire che scrivere la storia di un partito significa scrivere la storia generale di un paese da un punto di vista monografico, per metterne in risalto un aspetto caratteristico. Un partito avrà avuto maggiore o minore importanza, maggiore o minore significato nella misura appunto in cui la sua particolare attività avrà avuto maggiore o minore peso nella determinazione nella storia di un paese” (2014: 1135).

<sup>9</sup> People who were or are directly involved in the political parties that are members of the GUE, and also some members of the PEL, were interviewed in different countries and cities.

to the collective construction of social organizations, such as the political parties of which they were (or still are) members for many years.

Considering that most of those “history makers” are still acting in the political world, and that their previous praxis was very organized, consciously prepared, discussed, and collectively theorized, it was important to include them as a source of this dissertation for two reasons: to give voice to social actors involved in the construction of the European left, and to listen to their own words about historical events in which they were active figures, and thus, to build a particular documental collection (Kapiszewisk, 2015; Cammett, 2017). Interviews are compatible with multimethod research, since the material produced were not merely “quotations” or illustration of social facts. Instead, interviews are a valuable source, even with their imperfections, as they can fill in gaps in documentation, can help to provide better insights on the internal affairs of political parties, and many other internal processes and relations (Harrison, 2001: 94-98; Pekkanen, 2013).<sup>10</sup>

Other dimensions of the *storia vivente* were accessed through historical documents. For the collection of documents produced by the European left, part of the field research was dedicated to the visits to some archives and institutions.<sup>11</sup> The documents collected were qualitatively treated, providing a basis for exploratory research oriented by the hypothesis and main concepts mentioned above.<sup>12</sup>

The documents collected correspond directly to the political parties and the conditions of their archives – in terms of access, preservation, organization, and existence of documents – to the extent that they are related to the contemporary material conditions of the political parties (Burnahm and Gilland 2004: 165). Documents from parties’ congresses were adopted in the dissertation

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<sup>10</sup> For Angelo Panebianco (1979: 513), there are important similarities that allowed communist parties to overcome their differences, which gives to those parties a special characteristic that differs them from other conventional parties. Yet according to Panebianco, it is not correct to start an analysis from what a political party says about itself, but rather it is necessary to analyse the “opportunity structure” as the communist parties of the post-Stalinist period became complex organisms with internal conflicts in relation to the environmental pressures (1979: 525-529).

<sup>11</sup> *Fondazione Lelio e Lisli Basso*, *Fondazione Antonio Gramsci*, in Italy, which contains documents of the PCI; the *Centro de Documentação 25 de Abril*, and the PCP Library in Coimbra, Portugal, where it was possible to find documents of the PCP; the *Archivo Historico del PCE*, in Spain, where it was possible to have contact with documents of PCE and IU. Moreover, documents from the GUE/NGL, the left-wing Group in the *European Parliament*, and others regarding European institutions in Belgium and Luxemburg were virtually and physically accessed.

<sup>12</sup> See the Appendix to this dissertation.

because they can be conceived as a synthesis of the multi-class composition of the parties, an instance where the differences could be expressed, thus, ideological differences could be expressed by groups and fractions inside the parties as a result of the class-position background of the group or fraction.<sup>13</sup>

In fact, the political parties that are the subject of this dissertation were not elite-based, but what Duverger (2012: 93-384) called mass-based organizations and in this sense their social production is important for the analysis of the European left, since they were social productions from complex organisms in which the common decision (or the statute) prevails over the individual.<sup>14</sup>

Documents have a more formal language, and often present a stronger and more consistent discourse, dated in time, which makes it possible to interpret them critically if considered in their own historical time (Seawright, 2016; Wodak and Meyer, 2007:15). When comparing documents and interviews, rather than basing the research only on scholarly literature, it was possible to find inconsistencies, transformations, and revisionisms. For this reason, it was possible to explore concepts and to develop some ideas about the particularities of those organizations in a determined historical context, which reveals important dimensions of political processes (Kapiszewisk, 2015).

In the same way, R. Wodak and M. Meyer (2007: 121-122) argue that a *critical discourse analysis* can be an approach or a method, more than a tool, to study power relationships, historical discourses (regarding culture, society, ideology, etc.), and the relationship between discourse and the context in which it was produced.<sup>15</sup> To achieve this, it was necessary to explore the material based

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<sup>13</sup> Another aspect in the documental collection is the existence of the *Manifesto Project*, a research project on political representation that is focused on electoral manifestos, funded by the German Science Foundation (DFG). The website of the Manifesto Project provides a significant number of documents and data related to party's manifestos on elections from a comparative analysis perspective. In fact, the role of the Manifesto Project is very significant in collecting, analysing, and publishing historical documents (the manifestos) and a range of analysis. Some of the documents that was not possible to be assessed in our field work were found in the Manifesto Project website, moreover, in the field work the aim was to focus on Congress documents, as Congresses are the superior instance of debate and decision for communist parties. In fact, the electoral manifestos provided by the Manifesto Project website are an important source of primary documents, that are complementary to the documents collected in the field work.

<sup>14</sup> For Duverger (2012: 93), the mass-based party is a characteristic of left-wing parties and can be distinguished from other types of political parties by its structure, rather than its size, which is marked by popular-mass participation (in terms of education, membership, voting and so forth). Moreover, the development of universal suffrage is another aspect that Duverger includes in its analysis to describe the emergence of mass-based parties, particularly socialist parties. On the other side, elite-based parties also had to change their structures, opening their membership up for mass participations (2012: 95-96).

<sup>15</sup> Accordingly: "is a theory or method which is in a dialogical relationship with other social theories and methods, which should engage with them in a 'transdisciplinary' rather than just an interdisciplinary way, meaning that the particular co-engagements on particular aspects of the social process may give rise to

on categories, or themes, to produce a systematic interpretation, what Bardin (1977: 31-69) called content analysis which establishes a relationship between the empirical and the theoretical levels allowing the verification of hypotheses throughout the obtained data. In this sense, the *N-Vivo* software was used as part of interview and documental analysis. Some analytical categories were thought in the use of the software in order to better distribute the topics treated in the interviews and the discussion present in the documents according to the research purposes. Thus, categories such as: Economy and euro; Democracy; Elections; European Integration; GUE/NGL; National and European Parliaments; Party of the European Left (PEL); History of PCP, PCE/IU, PRC; 2008 world crisis; Socialism and Strategy; Sovereignty.

Other than being critical, the challenge was to construct a meaning in the narrative, i.e., to build the correlation between form and function, between the structure and superstructure, as argued by J. P. Gee (2008), as the function of the language is social and, in different contexts, different meanings can be expressed. Therefore, discourse analysis is understood here as an approach that helps to situate political parties' discursive production (speeches, theories, conferences, strategies, slogans, etc.) in its social context, considering the common language that exists in the field of left-wing forces. In Gramsci's words: "language is a living thing and at the same time it is a museum of fossils from past life" (2014: 438). In fact, this is another aspect of the necessity of contextualizing ideas and facts, as *time* is not a linear category.

### **1.3.1. Interpretative approach**

In order to build the argumentation, in this dissertation, bibliographical review was not only an important step to conceptualize and contextualize the research, it was a necessary journey as most of the elaborations in the field focuses on the general praxis of the European left in the electoral sense. The theoretical debate is fundamental, for instance, to provide arguments regarding the current debate of the role developed by the European (and the radical) left,

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developments of theory and method which shift the boundaries between different theories and methods" (2007: 121).

for instance, in the parliamentary praxis and also regarding their own internal history. Furthermore, this dissertation will examine the concept of sovereignty as that idea, it is believed, was at the core of the strategy of the political parties and thus deserved a particular interpretative attention.

A remark about comparative methods: other researches are based on comparative methods to analyse the same subject, for instance the work of Richard Dunphy and Luke March (2020), in which at least two countries and two or more political parties are compared with some independent variables. Additionally, John Ishiyama's work (2001; 1995) on post-soviet political parties is a fundamental contribution in the field, especially in the analysis of how Eastern European parties emerged in the post-communist world. It offers a comparative perspective on party organization and political success, contributing to the establishment of democratic regimes by adapting themselves to the democratic competition.

Considering all the materials and approaches mentioned above, this is a qualitative research because of the methods through which they will be analysed, i.e., because of the production of a systematic analysis over theoretical discussion, and the establishment of its meanings according to the historical context of the events (Burnham and Gilland 2004; Harrison, 2001). Following Karel Kosik (1995), it is possible to affirm that this dissertation aims to operate a theoretical appropriation of the subject and its history, observing its development and investigating its internal coherence.

### **1.3.2. Gramsci and mainstream literature**

Gramsci contributed an important perspective on the nature and functioning of political parties, even though in his thought it is not possible to find a finished formula or fixed definition of it. It is instead Gramsci's general approach to the political party that is particularly productive. Political parties for Gramsci should be understood not just as organizations or institutions, but as "living organisms", the active development of a social oriented by a clear strategy. In this sense, a strategic perspective is not merely a theoretical tool deployed in congresses or elections, but has a social function in the party's life; it shapes the ways in which

a party is formed as a “collective individual”. This is not a usual manner of observing political parties, which tend to be studied in terms of their external relations or the effects they produce, and not their internal dynamics of development. The coherence of this approach is based its understanding of the history of a party and its contexts in order to elaborate in theory and practice an appropriate strategy for social transformation under certain circumstances. The circumstances, then, are an important feature considered by Gramsci, when he indicates its own idea of a party system in which hegemony functions as a key concept for the analysis of party relations.

The backstage of party relations are the circumstances of normal democracy, i.e., the context of national relations of forces in the limits of the parliament (also at the transnational level, as considered in this dissertation). It is in this field that Gramsci understands that a left-wing party must promote and disseminate its ideas of a new world. Mainstream literature on political parties (Mair, Sartori, Mainwaring, Ishiyama) produced a consistent theoretical elaboration regarding the terrain of normal democracy, the terrain of parliamentary affairs, but the Gramscian approach on the praxis of (left-wing) political parties in the party-system has the particularity of considering it as a complex organism of society that must test its values and ideas in the practical terrain of class struggle, moreover, it is consider as a laboratory of new and superior experiences of sociability, a laboratory for a new type of society, a state life school (*scuola della vita statale*) (Gramsci, 2014: 920).

To start with, the terrain that the European left acts is the party system in liberal democracies, as stated by Mair (2005), Sartori (2005), Panebianco (1979), Bosco (2000), Mair and Thomassen (2010), Mainwaring (1998). This terrain corresponds to the Gramscian elaboration of the field in which parties would adopt the strategy of war of position to resist bourgeois attacks and offer a plan of transformation. Many European left parties were willing to support the establishment of liberal democracies as an urgent alternative to dictatorial regimes throughout the twentieth century. Gramsci was in favour as well of a democratic terrain for exercise of the praxis of a political party, and he was also in favour of democracy inside party-relations.

Moreover, the party system characterization is important also to comprehend the forces in action in the class struggle. In fact, the rules, procedures, limits, and

requirements of the party system are crucial aspects in the life of a party, and that, to some extent, corresponded to part of the effort of communists to keep political parties alive: sometimes as the main motivation, sometimes as part of their strategies of parliamentary and governmental participation. As will be discussed in the dissertation, the party system was binding on communist parties, and from that perspective, mainstream theories provide important insight in to their “normal” functioning.

Further, there are different types of parties in the party system. Even though included in the party system, communists are well known to their characteristic of seeking a different identity regarding standard models of parties, such as in comparison to *catch-all* parties. Gramsci, as a party-member militant and one of the main communist authors in the XX century, advocated in favour of a clear ideological approach in the party, even in the parliamentary praxis (as his own discourses in the Italian parliament suggests). Such praxis remained important in the history of European communist parties as, in some cases, the struggle against dictatorships remained alive until the 1970s. In this sense, other than the historical, there is the organizational aspect of the parties to take into account in the analysis, following Sartori (2005). Thus, how is it possible to associate a strong historical and organizational structure with the challenges of new times, new aspects in society, or a new transnational structure? The Gramscian answer is that a revolutionary political party must be a laboratory of experiences, a living organism and leadership, a modern Prince that synthesizes social aspirations and creates the conditions for a new society. The triumph is possible, in the Gramscian conception, through the aspiration of obtaining the political (conscious) direction of society through consensus and hegemony, in opposition to right-wing forces.

To what extent those parties taken into consideration in this dissertation succeeded in being living organisms? One indication that emerges is the functionalist approach characterized by Sartori (2005) and the lack of clear strategy argued by Mair (1979) as problems in the life of communist parties. It is suggested by Anna Bosco (2000) that communist parties of Europe adopted a functionalist approach to the question of parliamentarism once they were accepted in the party-system by opponent forces and accepted the rules of the game. The transition from an anti-system to a functionalist approach was not

abrupt, or an act of counter-revolution. Communist parties still argued for the need of social change, but from a different point of reference. Participation in the electoral process, participation in parliaments and governments, and participation in policy making, are some points of reference that communist adopted and developed in their praxis in the 1990s and 2000s. From a Gramscian perspective, these mutations can be seen in the light of the idea of war of position. The Gramscian concept is rather complex, and will be discussed further, but from now it can be useful to indicate that the state structure can be used in favour of the communist aspiration of social change, as trenches that can be used to build hegemony.

Equally important, conversely, is the fact that this change can be resumed as an act of adaptation to the regime, or to the structures and ideas of the regime, derived from the problem of lack of strategy and absorption of the communists in the party-system. In that case, it would be a failure in the struggle of the communists to maintain their distinction from other conventional parties. In fact, the access to transnational politics in the EU brought further challenges to all political parties, as argued by Mair (2005). For the communists, one challenge was the establishment of alliances, or coalition, to access the transnational numerical threshold of the EP. Furthermore, it can be not only a quantitative, but also a qualitative (ideological) challenge once numbers can also translate an ideological condition. Regardless of the conditions that the communist encountered in their parliamentary praxis in the 1990s and 2000s, they were still a distinct type of party, not conventional ones and, for this reason, classical theories can again be considered together with a Gramscian approach. All in all, a Gramscian approach is distinct as it provides an inner perspective of looking at political parties, considering their history, internal movements, with a specific conceptual background that belongs to the field of left-wing forces.

## 1.4. Political Party, Strategy, elections and beyond

### 1.4.1. Strategy

Political parties are important components of governments and states, as well as are the link between civil and political societies. Political parties can also be laboratories of new political experiences. Historically, subaltern groups constructed its own organizations in order to hold a better position in class struggles, for instance, in the fight for better representative positions in national politics. In democratic regimes, political parties played a role in the fields of what Gramsci calls “great” and “small” politics (*grande* and *piccola politica*), i.e., political parties play a role in the relation of forces at different levels. In this sense, Gramsci indicates that the dualism existent in the idea of politics when differentiating great from small politics according to the social class position in society, for instance, the interest of dominants groups is to reduce great politics (questions related to the formation or conservation of states, the field of relations among states, etc.) to small politics (the everyday, normal parliamentary life of the political world) (Gramsci, 2014: 1563-1564).<sup>16</sup>

Despite the inherent feature of small politics in parliamentary life, its importance is not meaningless. On the contrary, left-wing parties have historically used this space as part of their strategies of social transformation (Lenin, 2009). In this dissertation the approach to political parties is theoretically based on the Gramscian elaboration of a collective organism inspired by and organized by a collective will be oriented toward the developing struggles for the implementation of its hegemonic project (Gramsci, 2014: 920 – 951).<sup>17</sup>

The debate over strategy is crucial in the life of a political party. As argued by Peter Mair (1979), the lack of discussion about what should be done by the revolutionary party is a historical problem of revolutionary organizations,

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<sup>16</sup> In Gramsci's words: “The same terms are represented in international politics: 1) great politics concerning the relative stature of the individual states in their reciprocal relations; 2) small politics in the diplomatic issues that arise within an already established equilibrium and which do not try to overcome the equilibrium itself to create new relationships”. Original quotation: “Gli stessi termini si rappresentano nella politica internazionale: 1) la grande politica nelle questioni che riguardano la statura relativa dei singoli Stati nei confronti reciproci; 2) la piccola politica nelle questioni diplomatiche che nascono nell'interno di un equilibrio già costituito e che non tentano di superare l'equilibrio stesso per creare nuovi rapporti” (Gramsci, 2014: 1564).

<sup>17</sup> The classical Gramscian formulation is: “The Modern Prince, the myth-Prince, cannot be a real person, a concrete individual. It can only be an organism, a social component in which a collective will – one that is recognized and, to some extent, has asserted itself in action – has already begun to take shape” (Gramsci, 2007: 247).

particularly regarding strategic adaptations necessary to the requirements of a liberal democracy.<sup>18</sup> Strategy is, in fact, a turning point in the praxis of political parties, and Peter Mair makes a relevant argument about the existent lack of strategy in contemporary political parties. In strategic debate, past, present, and future are condensed in the same envelope, as a set of analysis of historical process and structures, conjunctures, possibilities, and tendencies, particularly in the case of communist parties, even though they faced qualitative changes, they are still heirs of a revolutionary past and claimers to social change. One of the predominant strategies developed by the communist movement throughout its history was through *democratic and national revolution*, which was the general political orientation in some national revolutionary processes, for instance, in Portugal where this strategy was part of the struggle for socialism in the PCP program.<sup>19</sup>

In the development of the strategy for the national democratic revolution, it was considered that even though every political party was independent and sovereign in developing ideas about its national particularity, the control of the international communist movement was, nonetheless, fully under the Stalinist direction in 1924, when the idea of *socialism in a single country* was settled (Degras, 1959; Graziosi, 2010). In order to accomplish its internationalist role in its early years, the *Comintern* focused on liquidating different revolutionary concepts, which came to be known as Trotskyism (Lowy, 1998).<sup>20</sup> Additionally, the importance of the CPSU (Communist Party of Soviet Union) is understandable because it was considered the glorious Leninist party of

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<sup>18</sup> In Peter Mair's words: "In marked contrast to the many sophisticated Marxist analyzes in areas such as the role of the state, the laws of history and economics, theories of literature and aesthetics, etc., the Marxist revolutionary strategy remains surprisingly ignored. While texts and documents on the necessity of the socialist revolution abound, few are concerned with how this revolution should take place". "In marcato contrasto con le molte sofisticate analisi marxiste in settori quali il ruolo dello Stato, le leggi della storia e dell'economia, le teorie di letteratura ed estetica, ecc., la strategia rivoluzionaria marxista resta sorprendentemente ignorata. Mentre abbondano i testi e i documenti sulla necessita della rivoluzione socialista, pochi si occupano di come questa rivoluzione debba aver luogo" (1979: 468). Similarly, Ishiyama (1995: 147) argues that one of the reasons for the success of Eastern European Communist Parties in the post-soviet period was their capacity to adapt according to the environment.

<sup>19</sup> As mentioned in the PCP "*Programa do Partido Comunista Português*", a political program for the national revolution was established in 1965 to fight the fascist dictatorship and to establish the democratic regime, as it is noted in the "*Resolução do Comitê Central sobre a Situação Política*" of 4<sup>th</sup> May 1974.

<sup>20</sup> Theoretical and physical persecution were adopted to eliminate the opposition. N. Bukharin and L. Trotsky were some of the main leaders of the Russian Revolution of 1917 whose ideas were banned from the soviet space. As mentioned in the Comintern documents, *Trotskyism* was considered a petty-bourgeois deviation, which combined with the ideas of Zinoviev and Radek formed an opposition that would supposedly be in total disagreement with the ideas of Lenin (Degras, 1959: 374).

Bolsheviks (Degras, 1959: 408).<sup>21</sup> In order to assure its hegemonic position in the whole movement, the CPSU could not drive a transformative process against its own method of bureaucratization, once the party had constituted itself as an integrated, permanent and crystallized part of the Soviet state.

Following this, as the documented discussion and resolutions of the Comintern indicate, the persecution of the Trotskyist Opposition was one of the main activities of the international communist movement, not only based on the purpose of containing the opposition, but also of excluding them from the party in order to eliminate any possibility of influence over political forces in the movement. Yet, according to Degras (1959), beyond the perspective of socialism in a single country and the liquidation of Trotskyism, the Comintern also developed a theory of the nature of social-democracy: a direct enemy that was diminishing the influence of the communists among the working classes, and thus a counter-revolutionary force against the proletarian state.<sup>22</sup> As a consequence, the Comintern was conceived as the only Communist Party in the world, and the consequence of those deviations was the *degeneration* of the revolutionary process.<sup>23</sup>

Despite the strategic elaborations for national revolutions in colonial and semi-colonial countries and the zigzag policies in Europe in the name of the Soviet foreign policy, the European critical situation was then decided in the *Yalta, Teheran and Potsdam* Conferences, in which the perspective of internationalism was then redesigned.<sup>24</sup> The strategic problem of the international communist movement was still the lack of independent coordination and organization (Lowy, 1998: 101).<sup>25</sup> Without a broad revolutionary coordination, individual initiatives took place without necessarily being revolutionary or in accordance to USSR

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<sup>21</sup> Declaration made on the occasion of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the USSR, November, 1927.

<sup>22</sup> The extreme version of this policy was the elaboration of the *class against class* tactic in February 1928. The class against class tactic was the exclusion of any possibility of alliance within social-democratic forces (the end of the united front perspective), a politics of alliance that was crucial in the development of class struggles in the world. It led to a radicalization of the working class's approach to its allies – a tactic that went bankrupt shortly after.

<sup>23</sup> As mentioned in the *Statutes of the Communist International adopted at its Sixth Congress* (Degras, 1959). The control, pressure, and influence of the united and centralized Comintern, particularly the Soviet leadership, appeared in terms such as the invalidation of reassignment of any party without Comintern consent.

<sup>24</sup> One critical situation developed by communist forces was the *Partigiano* movement in Italy, which was responsible for stimulating general strikes and expelling Nazi forces from Italy (Spriano, 1975: 520).

<sup>25</sup> The Chinese revolutionary process was crucial for world experiences, as it was characterized by the *deformation* of the process as a result of the role of the bureaucratic leadership, while the process in the Soviet Union suffered *degeneration* to the extent that the process was born revolutionary but degenerated under the rise of the bureaucratic leadership.

general ideological determinations. The Italian Communist Party is a significant example of the strategic changes of the party and, consequently, the changing of the party's praxis.<sup>26</sup>

Strategy and coherence are important features in a political party's life, but as the scholarship in the field suggests, some western European political parties changed the discourse regarding socialism and democracy even before the end of the USSR function of ideological reference point in the communist movement (Anderson, 1994; Bosco, 2000; Dunphy, 2004; March, 2012; Panitch and Albo, 2012). So, how did political parties of the European left develop a strategic reformulation of social transformation?

In this sense, not only in the Western world, but also in the former Soviet republics, the complexity involving socialism and democracy was an ideological issue in the life of communist parties, that, through electoral opportunities, competition, and particularly the resolution of internal questions and conflicts, evolved in the democratic transition processes in Eastern Europe involving radical political parties of the left-wing (Ishiyama, 1995: 163).

#### **1.4.2. Elections**

Participation in elections might not be the main purpose of the European left, as elections, argues Peter Mair (1979), distinguish civil from political society in liberal democracies and that is (partially) refused by communist organizations. However, it seems this was not the case in the 1990s and onwards. The role of elections in the existence of communist parties is not of minor importance, and the communist parties face difficulties in maintaining their distinction from conventional parties (Mair, 1979: 483). Thus, it is noticeable in this analysis that elections occupied an important space in the praxis of the European left. In this sense, the difficulties may raise, as Charles Post (2012) argues, from the fact that social-democratic parties were no longer even pro-working class reforms.

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<sup>26</sup> As argued by C. Clausewitz (1979), strategic focus and clarity are important to any organization, such as the state, the government, or a military body. For Clausewitz, the strategic-tactical moment is crucial in the preparation of a plan; it is from this primitive stage of organization that victory can be achieved. For him, war/ non-conventional politics is a combination between art and science.

Instead, they were seeking a combination of neoliberalism and social justice (Post, in Panitch and Albo, 2012: 188).

Equally important was the position of the left-wing in the party-system. In the 1990s and 2000s, left-wing forces in Italy, Spain, and Portugal were secondary forces in the system. These were systems that were dominated by right-wing and social-democratic organizations. In Spain, European elections were historically dominated by the Partido Popular and PSOE, while in Portugal it was the Partido Socialista (PS) and the Centro Democrático Social - Partido Popular (CDS-PP). In Italy, the European elections were in the hands of Forza Italia and PDS, but electoral coalitions such as Uniti nell'Ulivo, Il Popolo della Libertà, Democratici di Sinistra played an important role in bringing small political parties into the system.

Despite the particularities of each country, communist parties were elected as third, fourth, sixth or even seventh forces. In more detail: in Italy, the percentage of votes received by the PRC shows that the party was located as the sixth force (or even fourth or eighth) in most of the European elections, but never exceeding 6% of votes, from 1994 to 2014.<sup>27</sup> In the same period, IU/PCE went from 13% in 1994 to 3% in 2009, ensuring the third and fourth places in Spain.<sup>28</sup> In Portugal, the PCP appeared as third and fourth force in European elections, with 11% in 1994, and 9% in 2004.<sup>29</sup>

In the same way, in the national electoral scenario, the IU remained the third political force from 1993 to 2011, with 9% of the votes, while in 1993 the PSOE was the first force with 38%, and PP the second with 34%. Although IU was the third force for some years, in 2008 its votes amounted to only 3% of the total. In Portugal, the PCP in the coalition with PVE wavered along the 1990s and 2000s from the third to the fourth place, reaching 6% their smallest number of votes in the 2002 elections, compared to 9% in 1999 its highest number. In Italy, the communists of Rifondazione fluctuated from the sixth place in 1996, with a sum of 6% of the votes, to the third place in 2008 with 3%. In Italy, another aspect was the complex scenario due to the presence of the media tycoon Silvio Berlusconi as an important force in the electoral system.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Source: Ministero dell'Interno, Italian Government: [www.interno.gov.it](http://www.interno.gov.it)

<sup>28</sup> Source: Ministerio del Interior, Spanish Government: [www.interior.gob.es](http://www.interior.gob.es)

<sup>29</sup> Source: Ministério da Administração Interna, Portuguese Government: [www.portugal.gov.pt](http://www.portugal.gov.pt)

<sup>30</sup> There was, in fact, a new political configuration in the country that was inaugurated after that the

Those results show not only the limits of the left wing as a movement capable of converting its ideas into electoral success, but also a difficulty to survive in the party system. For this reason, as it will be discussed later, some left-wing parties had to establish plural coalitions, reformulating their own strategies, in order to reach the minimum electoral threshold and to maintain its ideological existence. Moreover, electoral participation also had an impact on the general strategic perspective of the European left. On the other hand, hegemonic forces in the party system were new right-wing organizations, such as *Forza Italia* in Italy, which was sharing the parliament with PDS (later PD). In Spain, the PSOE and PP dominated the whole scene, while in Portugal, the PS continued to alternate the country's leadership with the PSD.

As Mair (2005) argues, in the EU the party system was the predominant element of politics as well as a factor of connection between the national and international (or transnational) levels, in which there were a series of problems compromising the functioning of democracy in Europe. The party system in the EU has a history composed of several mutations, just as the EU itself has experienced transformations, and has functioned as an important element of integration and social representation (Bieler, 2005; Grigoras, 2011; Maia, 2015; Mainwaring, 1998; Topaloff, 2012).

### **1.4.3. Beyond elections**

According to Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter (1986), democracy is a bet that depends on and holds the stability of the regime, grounded on the role played by the political parties in the process of keeping free and open elections as a necessary but not sufficient condition to maintain freedom and security of political institutions. Those authors also argue that the limits of the regimes inspired in the modern third wave of democratization that started in Portugal with the 1974 Revolution, consisted of narrow ideas of representativeness and popular participation.

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*Tangentopoli* system came out in the *Mani Pulite* investigation, putting an end to the so-called First Republic.

Samuel Huntington (1993), analysing the establishment of democratic regimes, indicated that the institutionalization of democracy (mainly through the continuity of elections) was crucial for the stability and continuity of capitalism. While Spain and Portugal were countries that belong to the new generation of democratic regimes, Italy was a country that had built its democracy in the post-Second World War. In fact, with the establishment of democracy as regime in Spain, Italy and Portugal, more stable relations of forces and regular elections occurred over the decades. Huntington is favourable to the form of democracy in which elections and institutions, in a functionalist perspective, allow the opposition to be in charge (and to exchange power), without threats to the regime, since stability is based on compromise, regular elections and non-violence.

On the other hand, Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter (1986) argue that there can also exist liberalization without democracy: liberalization would then be related to the transition period, with extension of rights, but without elections. Another example of regime analysis is provided by Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way (2002) who analyse the existence of elections without democracy, which they characterize as a case of competitive authoritarianism.

On the whole, there is a myriad of characterizations of regimes, such as hybrid, semi-democracy, virtual democracy, electoral democracy, pseudo democracy, liberal democracy, semi-authoritarianism, etc. Such characterizations are important because democracy prevailed as the general and fundamental aspect of the political regime in most European countries. The terrain of democracy is wider and depends also on the relation of forces in the field of production, i.e., it depends on the socio-economic relations among social classes (as it will be further discussed in Chapter 2).

For this reason, it is important to consider elections as an expression of the relations of forces and their corresponding material conditions, in which the social classes of a determined country co-exist according to the organized political power (Poulantzas, 1977). Following this, representation in Parliament is a result of a contradictory relation of power delegation, which is a demobilization of the people in general, and an artificial separation between the political and economic spheres (Gramsci, 2014; Poulantzas, 1977; Przeworski, 1995).

The ideological core of these relations is that one of the main aspects of what Gramsci conceived as 'great politics' consists precisely of hiding oneself

from the internal/national environment by reducing everything to small politics (Gramsci, 2014: 1564), i.e., despite the existent level of small politics, even greater political themes must be reduced to a level in which the methodological questioning of the *totality* is not possible by subaltern groups. This impossibility has its roots in the fragmentation in the field of production, in which social relations are reduced to the logic of private appropriation. Elections and parliamentary participation are part of the world of small politics, the politics of a fragmented everyday life and parliamentary affairs, even though the connection with great politics exists between the structures and superstructures of society.<sup>31</sup> The translation (*traduttilibità*) of this connection is the task of the political party, i.e., the realization of the necessary and concrete mediations between the world of small and great politics, between civil and political society, between political and human emancipation.

Moreover, the democratic exercise of popular sovereignty through vote is an important (but only one) part of a more complex system of relations in which the ideological role of political parties is expressed. The functioning of the entire system is bigger and more complex, thus, the relation between the structures and superstructures can be translated into terms of liberal democracy which is the background of class struggles in contemporary Europe.

#### **1.4.4. Conclusion**

This chapter approached the questions of multimethods, ideology, and the political party. The different methods used were discussed in the light of theory and the cases adopted in the dissertation. This qualitative research was a result of a combination of different methods and technical analysis of a variety of historical sources. One original contribution of this investigation are its sources (historical documents and interviews elaborated in the fieldwork phase of the research), that were systematically interpreted through content, thematic, and critical discourse analysis (within the use of Nvivo software). One theoretical

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<sup>31</sup> The differentiation between structures and superstructures does not correspond in the thought of Gramsci to two separated worlds, but rather it is relative to two dimensions of society. Similarly, the differentiation between civil and political society is a methodological approach to distinguish the political state affairs from the terrain of material, private relations.

comprehension that derived is that knowledge is not simply the reduction of reality to a complex formulation, but knowledge, particularly related to the praxis of political parties, is part of a living story capable of being interpreted. Moreover, this chapter constructed the idea that a political party must be capable of acting in the field of great and small politics based on a strategy. In this sense, the strategy of a political party is its hegemonic plan, and in terms of communist parties, this hegemonic plan is oriented to the transformation of (capitalist) society. Nevertheless, as suggested by the mainstream literature in the field, elections are also an important moment in the life of a party, an important part in the construction of hegemony in relation to other forces in the party system. The Gramscian approach suggests that the political party is best understood as a (collective) living organism endowed with a strategy, and as such must be capable of learning with history, and of collective innovation in the field of relation of forces in the class struggle, beyond the limits of elections and the formal party system.

## Chapter 2 Democracy and Sovereignty

Democracy is *human existence*, while in the other political forms man has only *legal* existence. That is the fundamental difference of democracy (Marx, 1970: 30).

The main objective of this chapter is to discuss the concepts of democracy and sovereignty based on classical perspectives in the field of political sciences, and in particular in the field of Marxism. This discussion is intended to be a theoretical background for the subsequent discussion present in the dissertation. Thus, the ideas of universal and normal democracy, the functioning of a transitional perspective towards socialism, the role of the capitalist state, the relations between hegemony and sovereignty (also in the EU), are some of the main interests of this chapter. This chapter seeks to establish the general theoretical perspective of universal democracy as a strategic orientation of the left wing, the practical terrain of normal democracy, and a perspective that sovereignty can be regarded as part of a subaltern search for hegemony (also in the practical theme of the EU).

### 2.1. Democracy as movement

Ellen Wood (1995: 215) argued that in some democratic developments the wealthy were the natural representatives of the people, in other words, the alienation of the exercise of political power was one established version of democracy.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, the late insertion of left-wing forces in the scene of democratic representation resulted in some gains in favour of the subaltern groups that they represented, such as the welfare state, civil and labour rights.

Accordingly, the historical participation of left-wing forces in democracy also contributed to the development of a particular and original concept of democracy in the work of Marx and Engels, as most of their thoughts derived

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<sup>32</sup> Ellen Wood discusses in her work *Democracy Against Capitalism* (1995) the development of the idea of democracy from its Greek version to the Roman, and its update in the American process, which then was used as a world model of a political regime.

from practical experiences: for instance, the development of some of Marx's works, such as his journalism in the *Rheinische Zeitung*, the debate *On the Jewish Question*, the positions present in the *Communist Manifesto*, or the *Class Struggle in France*, etc. The debate that emerged in Europe was also an important issue, decades later, in Soviet society, due to the type of democracy that was implemented by the 1905 Revolution and that acquired a socialist meaning in the 1917 revolution in Russia, as it is a particular theoretical appropriation and practical implementation of Marx's conception. While democracy was evolving as a regime, it was also a political form of social relations *inside* the communist movement, particularly with the formula of "democratic centralism".<sup>33</sup>

In fact, democracy was more than a formal relation between citizens and states. It included social development and social principles conceived by the people's movements, as argued by Alvaro Bianchi (2007). Accordingly, in the early works of Marx and Engels, democracy was the form, the content, and the purpose of the communist movement: it was a form of differentiation between the communist and liberal perspectives (2007: 121).

The democratic problem formulated over decades by Engels and Marx was related to the connection between the formal guarantees of the constitutions and the real conditions of social existence of the working classes, because even though formal rights could be assured by constitutions, there was still the real ground of social contradictions to be solved. As Marx formulated it in his *Theses on Feuerbach*, of 1845, the truth of a thing would not be a theoretical rather a practical question. To complement the connection between democracy and economic equality, Marx elaborated a conceptual differentiation between political and human emancipation. The problem was identified in the fact that states could be transformed without a corresponding material transformation of citizens life, which Marx characterized as *political emancipation*, a formal type of freedom of citizens, limited and circumscribed by general and legal aspects of a constitution, in Marx words:

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<sup>33</sup> The internal structure of the CPSU, for instance, was based on democratic centralism (Simon 2010).

The limit of political emancipation appears right away in the fact that the State can free itself from a barrier without man being really free of it, [in the fact that] the State can be a free State without man being a free man (Marx, 2009: 48).

On the other hand, the question of *human emancipation* was not a general abstract form of working-class emancipation, but the emancipation of all humanity and a full realization of democracy (beyond the limits of the state). Marx's formula was in favour of a social revolution led by the working classes, in particular the proletariat, as the social class that, due to its social condition in capitalist society, would be able to develop a social and radical transformation (Marx, 2005).

As argued by Bianchi (2007: 119), there was a time in history when the democratic movement was first conceived as the people itself, and the people fighting for full civil rights appeared as the total fulfilment of democracy. It was the maximum expression of the Chartist movement in which democracy was conceived as tool for further achievements of the peoples' movement. Such a conception is also present in the thought of F. Engels, who argued that the elevation of the subaltern classes to a position of political power would be a necessary condition for the democratic constitution of society. As a consequence, social equality was the condition for the further and simultaneous achievement of political equality, not the contrary. But the battles for political equality were also, and still are, the immediate appearance of the struggles for social equality. Yet, as argued by Bianchi (2007: 142) and Pogrebinschi (2006: 548), political emancipation is, in Marx and Engels's thought, a precarious form of emancipation that should be followed and accomplished by human emancipation. Political emancipation can be considered, then, as part, or a particular dimension, of human emancipation. The fact is that human emancipation is not a struggle carried out by the dominant class or as a state's act, but by the subaltern groups of society.

The immanent and latent normativity in Marx's theory culminates with the *Aufhebung*. After all, overcoming the state definitely implies revolution, emancipation and communism. The come-to-be finally is (Pogrebinschi, 2006: 548).

Thus, democracy can be considered from its movementist aspect, as a form of socio-political organization that is not sufficient in itself. The question that emerges is in relation to the applications of democracy in the real world of class struggles. Despite the limitations in time and space of people's conquest via the institutional path, democracy was a contradictory political terrain in which dominant classes exercise their power and under which the left wing could develop its praxis under some generally accepted, but contested, rules and procedures.

### **2.1.1. Democracy and the State**

Democracy is a concept of very comprehensive coverage. One possibility is to consider that it is about the form of state and civil society relationships, which can be a way of considering the relationship among social classes in the political sphere. Relations among social classes in the democratic regime are normally directed towards its representative bodies, the political parties. Hal Draper (1977) described democracy as the form of regime that best corresponded to the interests of the bourgeoisie. In this sense, it is a type of political regime in which the state is constituted as the political organ that assure class interests, control, and maintenance of liberal economy. Draper's approach agrees with Marx and Lenin's understanding that the state is the political form of individual authority that settle the internal disputes and antagonisms of society. In this sense, and similarly to the Gramscian analysis about passive revolution, Draper argues that democracy "was used as a means of containing popular pressures, not expressing them" (1977: 305).

Speaking about the coexistence of two different social systems during the Cold War, Macpherson argued that the liberal state was democratized, but within the limits of democracy as a class affair (1966: 12). Criticizing the type of state developed in the Soviet Union, Macpherson argues that a vanguard alone could not transform society (1966: 17). His analysis is based on the fact that working classes became strong enough to force the adoption of democracy in the sphere of the state, thus, taking part in the competition in the party system.

Within the inclusion of working classes in the political competition, rules and procedures related to the election of representatives and the functioning of institutions became an important aspect of what Macpherson called the double system of power, i.e., the fact that people are meant to do things, but also to refrain from doing others (1966: 4). Likewise, the problem of liberal democracy appears related to the limitation of democracy to develop its full potentiality. One of the forms that was generally presented to improve democracy in the field of the state and governments was the perspective that democratization should be a minimization of the executive power and a maximization of the representative system (Draper, 1977: 297).

The point here is that theories such as those formulated by Schumpeter (2003: 271) argue in favour of competition and participation as the main sources of democratic stimulation, and the political method based on free competition for a free vote in societies with a good amount of freedom.<sup>34</sup> In this competition, the general interest would be only resumed in the competition of particular interests, as a single general interest would not exist. In the same manner, the people would then “produce government” by the decision of the majority, and not based on the “people’s will”.

Indeed, democracy is not merely a relationship between people and the state through elections, non-violence, and political consensus. Democracy is connected to interpersonal relations, to the way in which decisions are made and applied in society. Thus, there is also a terrain dimension of the concept, linked to its general manifestation as a social regime. Some examples of democracy as a root-and-branch mode of relationship were the organization of councils in the Italian experience, or local assemblies in Portugal. Those molecular, maybe incipient, social organizations based on democratic principles became subjects of great importance in revolutionary processes.

The problem of democracy would then involve the struggle not only for positions in political society but would be essentially about the struggle against the dominant classes. The problem then would be how to overcome this form of

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<sup>34</sup> For Schumpeter (2003: 269): “the democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote. Defence and explanation of this idea will speedily show that, as to both plausibility of assumptions and tenability of propositions, it greatly improves the theory of the democratic process”. Moreover, Schumpeter admits that there are limits to the freedom of individuals in any society, and this amount of freedom is balanced by the possibility of free competition for political leadership (2003: 272).

social organization that is, in short, a combination of democracy, liberalism, class struggles, and state power.

### **2.1.2. Democracy, Eurocommunism, and socialist transition**

For thinkers of the left movement in the twentieth century, such as Rosa Luxemburg, Vladimir Lenin, Antonio Gramsci and Leon Trotsky, one dimension of the problem of the relationship between democracy and socialism was posed in the field of the political party, which should be the laboratory of advanced democratic experiences inside an organism oriented towards socialist transformation.<sup>35</sup> The debate between those thinkers was centred on the hierarchical relation between democratic centralism and democratic methods in organization, in particular, the problem of overlapping democratic centralism in the Bolshevik Party during the revolutionary years.<sup>36</sup> However, such process does not mean that democracy was fully implemented in Soviet society thanks to the internal regime of the Bolshevik party; instead, the process suggests that many contradictions that appeared in the deterioration of democracy in the social regime were also found inside the party, and vice-versa (Fausto, 2004; Trotsky, 1977).

The lack of democracy was also one of the reasons highlighted as an obstacle in the establishment of socialism, and a reason for the establishment of the Stalinist dictatorship (Anderson, 1983; Lowy, 1998; Varela, 2018, Trotsky, 1977). According to Luiz Motta (2014), since the Second International some Marxist intellectuals abandoned the thesis of rupture with the system, adopting instead the strategy of political and social reforms to achieve socialism. Neither reformism nor the two-stage strategy was successful.<sup>37</sup>

The consequences of the development of the USSR were not confined to the Soviet area. The problem of bureaucratization of relations in the sphere of the

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<sup>35</sup> The discussion of democracy is a great debate present in the works of those organic intellectuals of the communist movement. For example, in the *Transitional Program* of Trotsky (2008), in *The State and the Revolution* of Lenin (2009), in the *Reform or Revolution?* of Luxemburg (1999), and in the *Political Writings* of Gramsci (1978).

<sup>36</sup> For instance, according to Isabel Loureiro (1994), Rosa Luxemburg believed in the identity between democracy and the dictatorship of the proletariat, as a manner of implementing democracy, through the soviets, and the creation of public spaces of the proletariat.

<sup>37</sup> The text of Luiz Motta “*A respeito da questão da democracia no marxismo*” (2014) provides a good theoretical overview of the polemics involving those different strategic approaches.

state was, thus, also a problem in the capitalist world. In the Western part, democracy had its popularity affected by its reduction to voting and electoral relations (Keane, 1988).

(...) democratization – the ‘road to socialism’ - would mean attempting to maintain and to redefine the boundaries between civil society and the state through two interdependent and simultaneous process: the expansion of social equality and liberty, and the restructuring and democratizing of state institutions (Keane, 1988: 14).

Keane's view is in favour of an improvement of state and civil society relations as a necessary condition for the democratization of both, as expansion and restructuring are not directly subproducts of a human emancipation revolutionary process. Nicos Poulantzas (2014) and Adam Przeworski (1995) indicated that there was a structural contradiction in Europe, already in the second half of the twentieth century, which would allow the emergence of social transformation led by communist forces to operate the democratization of society from the socioeconomic and political dimensions.<sup>38</sup> Both authors argued that reforms are both a necessity and a path to the socialist transformation of capitalist society, and that participation and representation in the institutions (such as in the parliament) are social relations from which the movement cannot escape, which is a perspective that Motta called democratic socialism (2014: 26).

Robert Cox (1994) argues that there was an acceptance of capitalism by social-democratic forces, as part of the concession from bourgeois leadership. It is a perspective that led him to define the Gramscian concept of war of position in the Western world as a “long-range revolutionary strategy”, in the sense that the class struggles must be developed in the field of the civil society before going to the sphere of the state, where the assault “could achieve success” (1994: 53).<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Again, Luiz Motta's work contains a clear discussion about those positions, which, in his view, led Poulantzas to assume a *Eurocommunist* position regarding the European situation, and a position aligned to Rosa Luxemburg about the situation in the Soviet world (2014: 37). Motta highlights, however, that one contribution of Poulantzas was the description of the tendency to bureaucratization of the revolutionary political party and its fusion with the state.

<sup>39</sup> War of position as defined by Peter Thomas (2009) represents a realistic strategy from a subordinated position to respond to the mechanisms of confinement established by the hegemonic bourgeois class.

In this sense, it is important to mention what it may have been perhaps the last common strategy shared by some of the European left forces: *Eurocommunism* (Maia, 2017). It was the perspective that established the main discussion about democracy and socialism during the second part of the twentieth century among communist parties in Europe and beyond. The PCI was the precursor of Eurocommunism in Europe, where other communist parties, such as the PCF and the PCE adhered to the strategy assuming that each country would have its own path towards socialism. The adoption of the set of transformations that characterize the Eurocommunist strategy has its main argument regarding the idea of democracy (Barbagallo, 2004; Berlinguer, 2013; Braz, 2006).

We want to achieve here, in Western Europe, an economic, social, state, no longer capitalist, but that does not follow any model and does not repeat any of the socialist experiences achieved so far, and that, at the same time, does not reduce to exhume social democratic experiments, which have limited themselves to the management of capitalism. We are for the third solution, which is required precisely by the impossibility of calming down in today's world situation (Berlinguer, 2013: 107).

For instance, the indication of the need of democracy (full democracy, developed democracy, advanced democracy, etc.) in its strategic dimension was a way of modernizing political parties and maintaining their presence in society. On the whole, the tactical approach to democracy changed in the 1970s, and the concept gained a strategic dimension, which meant also the abandonment of some concepts, and the adoption of others. More precisely, it led to the abandonment of the dictatorship of the proletariat and social class concepts, and the adoption of the idea of citizenship and democracy as a camouflage for socialism. The perspective regarding the state also changed in Eurocommunism: reformism was now a possibility, because the idea of democracy was expanded and not seen in opposition to socialism. Law, institutions, the whole state apparatus were now regarded as useful instruments in the implementation of

democratic reforms towards the full achievement of democracy that would be equal to the fulfilment of socialism.

### **2.1.3. Normal and Universal Democracy – war for position**

The so-called young Marx was attracted by the idea of democracy, particularly a radical type of democracy, or *true democracy*, in which the political sphere was only one dimension of an intrinsic contradiction of capitalist society, once the state and democracy were not the same thing. As argued by Pogrebinschi (2006: 548), the contribution of the young Marx's elaborations is the distinctive normativity that does not conceive contemporary political theory in liberal terms, i.e., this is a contribution to emancipatory democratic perspectives that is opposed to existent dualisms, for instance, between liberalism and democracy. That was a particular elaboration of the idea of democracy in that time, a radical elaboration of democracy that was the foundation of what would later be the understanding of the irreconcilable political organization of society under the capitalist state which would thus require a further development of society in order to develop the idea of democracy.

From young Marx's elaborations of democracy and the role of the state attempts of updating the question of democracy in society, they have not always succeeded in maintaining the integrity of the idea of the class conflicting nature of the capitalist society (Coutinho, 1979: 35; Pogrebinschi, 2006: 544; Toledo, 1994).

Eurocommunism, for instance, was in some senses a perspective that sustained the idea of democracy as an essential social value and its wide development would be the core of the communist action. Inside this perspective, according to Motta (2014), there was a left-wing fraction of Eurocommunism, which associated the mass democratic struggles with the struggles within the state.<sup>40</sup> The repercussion of this debate was that democracy became, therefore, a *universal value*, since the socialist perspective of democracy was supposed to

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<sup>40</sup> That was Nicos Poulantzas's position, for instance, when adopting a more complex concept of the state, which was composed by the set of relations of forces of society, beyond than the state structure and apparatus. Thus, the combination of struggles inside and outside the state.

surpass liberal democracy, and this transformation would occur through a succession of reforms (Berlinguer, 2013; Coutinho, 1979; Del Maso, 2018).<sup>41</sup>

According to Carlos Nelson Coutinho (1979: 40), the key to understanding this perspective would be the Gramscian interpretation of the concept of hegemony. For Coutinho (1979), the question of hegemony was related to the central power of the state and, thus, a radical socialist idea of democracy should dialectically overcome the idea and the material existence of liberal democracy.<sup>42</sup> In this sense, the idea of universal democracy contained a perspective of social change.

Gramsci (2014: 1130) developed the discussion of hegemony also in the terrain of the culture, where the common sense would be determinant to the development of hegemony as part of its structure, part of the productive world, but also of the political world. Culture in Gramsci's thought assumes more importance as it is understood as a fundamental dimension in the process of every individual's development in the construction of a new human type according to the productive process.<sup>43</sup>

As democracy was constituted as a fundamental strategic purpose in the activity of political organizations of the European left (as it will be discussed in Chapter 3, the European left produced important elaborations on the idea of Eurocommunism, in which democracy was its core), such praxis can be seen

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<sup>41</sup> In 1977, in Moscow, Berlinguer declared that democracy was the terrain on which the opponents should be politically defeated, and the terrain that was also the value on which a new socialist society should be based (Coutinho, 1979: 34).

<sup>42</sup> In Coutinho's words: "It is in this sense that it is worth understanding, the lucid observation that according to which the "regulated society" (without classes) is that in which the state will be absorbed by the self-managed organisms of "civil society". We can conclude this quick outline by stating that the relationship between socialist democracy and liberal democracy is a relationship of dialectical overcoming (*Aufhebung*): the first eliminates, preserves and elevates the achievements of the second to a higher level". Original quotation: "É nesse sentido que cabe entender, a lúcida observação, segundo a qual a "sociedade regulada" (sem classes) é aquela na qual o Estado será absorvido pelos organismos autogeridos da "sociedade civil". Podemos concluir esse rápido esboço afirmando que a relação da democracia socialista com a democracia liberal é uma relação de superação dialética (*Aufhebung*): a primeira *elimina, conserva e eleva a nível superior* as conquistas da segunda" (Coutinho, 1979: 40).

<sup>43</sup> For Gramsci: "Since these preconditions existed, already rationalized by the historical development, it was relatively easy to rationalize production and work, skilfully combining force (destruction of territorially based workers' unionism) with persuasion (high wages, different social benefits, ideological propaganda and highly skilled policy) and obtaining the focus of the whole life of the country on production. Hegemony arises from the factory and needs only a minimal amount of professional intermediaries in politics and ideology to be exercised". Original quotation: "Poiché esistevano queste condizione preliminar, già razionalizzate dallo svolgimento storico, è stato relativamente facile razionalizzare la produzione e il lavoro, combinando abilmente la forza (distruzione del sindacalismo operaio a base territoriale) con la persuasione (alti salari, benefizi sociali diversi, propaganda ideológica e politica abilissima) e ottenendo di imperniare tutta la vita del paese sulla produzione. L'egemonia nasce dalla fabbrica e non ha bisogno per esercitarsi che di una quantità minima di intermediari professionali della politica e dell'ideologia" (2014: 2145-2146).

through the lens of the war of position in the context of passive revolution as an alternative to the strategy of the war of movement.<sup>44</sup> The strategy for the Western world, Gramsci argues, is the war of position, a type of modern resistance of the mass based on the collective will, or mass aspirations, with a strong moral and capable leadership to bring those aspirations to the political world (2014: 110 - 120).

More complex than a war, argues Alvaro Bianchi (2008: 200), for Gramsci the political war was a particular conception of an expression to an original answer to the objective demands of the general relations of forces in the class struggle. In other words, “the political action of the subaltern class, thus, should have as its purpose the disarticulation of the war of position of the ruling classes” (2008: 205). In fact, it was a paradigm change, as the military perspective of revolution (war of movement) was substituted by the political art of the war of position as the main strategy of the left wing in modern societies, but without abandoning the war of movement.

As argued by Bianchi (2019: 16), Gramsci conceived the crisis of the political parliamentary regime as the result of the separation between rulers and ruled. Such conception is still current in the contemporary political crisis in Europe, and the Gramscian conception that democracy would be the tendency to coincide rulers and ruled on the basis of consensus around the state is another contribution to the theorization of the crisis of hegemony of the ruling class (2019: 17). Moreover, the war of position, understood as a contingent and convenient strategy, does not exclude the *art of war* in the moment that precedes the conquest of the state, i.e., the moment of struggle for political power (Bianchi, 2008: 208).

For Gramsci, the war of position is a moment of preparation, the moment in which the collective position can be created to resist and face the state and its structure in the struggles on the terrain of civil society (Bianchi, 2008: 209).<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Gramsci argues that the passive revolution is the type of revolution that occurred in some countries of Europe, Italy for instance, in which the process is a typical top-down relation of forces, a process in which the modernization of the state occurs without the participation of the masses. The process of passive revolution, according to Gramsci, is different from classical revolutionary process that happened in France and England, in which the bourgeoisie ascended to power through revolutionary mass actions. In both cases, the idea of hegemony is fundamental, as those revolutionary process led to the moral and political establishment of dominant groups in society (Gramsci, 2014: 504-2033).

<sup>45</sup> Bianchi (2008: 209) argues that the terrain of the war of position, according to Gramsci, is civil society. This type of struggle, however, does not exclude the possibility of war of movement, argued by Bianchi as the struggle conducted on the terrain of political society. Thus, both strategic comprehensions of

Gramsci's concern regarding the structure of modern democracy (as state organization and its complex associations in civil society) is that it can function as trenches (*trincee*) in the war of position, i.e., a place to develop the political art (2014: 1567).

One of Gramsci's interpretations of democracy, following conceptions developed in the context of the Third International, was that liberal democracy and its representative system in the capitalist society was in fact bourgeois democracy. Characterizing the political regime, Gramsci understood that democracy was the set of relations under the circumstances of a certain balance of forces in society, in which hegemony would normally be exercised in the parliamentary regime, but in opposition to other forms, or conceptions, of democracy that would be based on the principles of socio-economic equality and common association of the people (Gramsci, 2014: 511 – 1625). In this sense, this dissertation will adopt the idea of *normal democracy* to indicate the *functioning of the parliamentary regime* in the contemporary capitalist society, such as those of Europe in the 1990s and 2000s, including normal electoral processes, in combination with forms of consensus and coercion in dealing with questions of small politics (even if questions of great politics are present in the everyday life of the political world). Normal democracy is based on the fact that the balance of forces is fundamental to the stability of the state and of the accumulation process. Thus, it is the dimension of the everyday development of democracy in which the struggles in the representative system are developed in order to maintain the material and spiritual capitalist world functioning.

It is, however, the idea of 'normal democracy' that Gramsci criticizes most emphatically, indicating that the system formed by coalitions, elections based upon general arguments, and the strict field of parliament relations is not the maximum of democracy, but one way of manifestation of social relations (2014: 929).

But the fact is that it is not true, in any way, that the number is the "supreme law", nor that the weight of the opinion of each voter is "exactly" the same. Numbers, also in this case,

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struggles are complementary conceived by Gramsci in the *integral state's* domain.

are a simple instrumental value that provide a measure and a relationship and nothing more. And what then is measured? It is measured the effectiveness and capacity for expansion and persuasion of the opinions of the few, of the active minorities, elites, avant-gardes, etc., etc... that is, their rationality or historicity or concrete functionality. That means that it is not true that the weight of the individual's opinion is "exactly" equal. Ideas and opinions do not arise spontaneously in the brain of each individual: they have a centre of formation, of radiation, of diffusion, of persuasion, a group of men or even a single individuality that has elaborated and presented them in the current political form. The numbering of "votes" is the final manifestation of a longer process in which the maximum influence belongs precisely to those who "dedicate their best forces to the State and the Nation" (when they are) (Gramsci, 2014: 1625).<sup>46</sup>

Gramsci, however, also distinguishes democracy, as relations in the political party, from democracy, as the political regime (2014: 234 – 511).

Democratic centralism offers an elastic formula, which lends itself to many incarnations; it lives insofar as it is continually interpreted and adapted to the needs: it consists in the critical search for what is equal in the apparent disformity and, in spite of this, distinct and even opposed in the apparent uniformity in order to organize and strictly connect what is similar, but in such a way that the organization and the connection appear to be a practical and "inductive" necessity, experimental, and not the result of a rationalistic, deductive, abstractionist process, that is, proper of pure intellectuals (or pure asses) (Gramsci, 2014: 1635).

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<sup>46</sup> Despite the great importance of Gramsci works in the English political sciences, the English version of the Prison Notebooks, edited by Joseph Buttigieg, is, unfortunately, incomplete, with translations from the Notebooks 1 to 8 only. For this reason, in this dissertation, Gramsci's quotations correspondent to the Notebooks 8 onwards are provided with my own English translation following the original Italian version of the *Quaderni del Carcere* a cura di Valentino Gerratana (2014).

Overall, democracy was not a universal value for Gramsci in any simple sense, who, on the contrary, advocated in favour of democratic centralism as an organic unity between theory and practice, between the intellectual stratum and the masses, a formula for the organization of subaltern groups connecting the national and transnational levels in a continuum effort to achieve a real, practical and historical progress. Moreover, comprehending democracy as an important mechanism, or method, of social relations, Gramscian perspective intended to present the possibility of developing a societal project capable of fully evolving democracy.

Gramsci was focused on the preparation of the instruments for the regime transition (collective will, hegemony, Modern Prince, war of position, etc.). For Gramsci, as it was for Lenin and other leaderships of revolutionary processes, the socialist transition would be marked by the seizure of the state by subaltern classes, and the subsequent process of withering away of political power, within a cultural act that would revolutionize relations of production (Del Roio, 2005: 41-91). When the subaltern organizations adopt another perspective that is limited to political emancipation, the consequences are a depoliticization of the people and the postponement of struggles for human emancipation.

## **2.2. Transnational Sovereignty**

Many interpretations were given to the concept of sovereignty, making it an untouchable power, or a power in dispute (Kritsch, 2002). Sovereignty can be subject to change when social order is questioned and, for instance, emergent groups or social classes demand the power back from the prince, inverting the relation of forces and threatening an assumed consolidated power, as the constituent power is the “encounter between the virtue and the occasion, between a prince and a people” (Del Lucchese, 2017: 14).

Another interpretation can be given to the European context, where the change of power seems to be developed not by emergent groups or its citizens, but by the ruling classes. For instance, in the European integration process, where the problem of sovereignty was and still is a paradox amongst national and transnational instances, arguments developed by Ernest Haas, J. Nye and R.

Keohane (2002) pointed out to the existence of material interests and influences that affected relations among countries in a hierarchical sense. Accordingly, the EU would be a special case of sovereignty that differs from other classical conceptions due to its *pooled sovereignty*, in which some aspects of legal authority are transferred from national states to the transnational level of the community, thus resulting in a paradoxical mutual interference (2002: 744 - 749).<sup>47</sup>

Contrasting with realist and liberal theories, critical debates were developed by Robert Cox (1994), Andrew Linklater (2007), Jurgen Habermas (2012), in relation to the democratic deficit of the EU in its integration process. The integration process brought to light the paradoxical problem of the existence of simultaneous national and transnational parliaments capable of discussing and addressing national and general matters. The conjuncture of this new form of sovereignty was part of the *globalization* process, in which a global organization of material production and a global regulation of the financial system occurred (Cox, 1994: 260).<sup>48</sup>

Within globalization, the state assumed an international contradictory role based on the need of protecting national economies from the decentralization and flexibility of productive capital and labour force.<sup>49</sup> The secret was that growth and globalization of the free market occurred in a context in which some states with neoliberal orientation assumed the lead in gaining foreign markets. In short, “globalization is generating a more complex multi-level world political system” (Cox, 1994: 263).<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Perry Anderson argues that: “The institutional upshot of European integration is thus a customs union with a quasi-executive of supranational cast, without any machinery to enforce its decisions; a quasi-legislature of inter-governmental ministerial sessions, shielded from any national oversight, operating as a kind of upper chamber; a quasi-supreme court that acts as it were the guardian of a constitution which does not exist; and a pseudo-legislative lower chamber, in the form of a largely impotent parliament that is nevertheless the only elective body, theoretically accountable to the peoples of Europe. All of this superimposed on a set of nation-states, determining their own fiscal, social, military and foreign policies. Up to the end of the eighties the sum of these arrangements, born under the sign of the interim and the makeshift, had nevertheless acquired a respectable aura of inertia” (2009: 23).

<sup>48</sup> Conversely, Hardt and Negri posited the possibility of the emergence of a new world order in their famous book *Empire*, updating their analysis to argue that the field of social production and governance are out of sync. After twenty years, Hardt and Negri (2019) indicated in the work “*Empire, twenty years on*” that a proper international political power did not emerge, but transnational institutions were instead ruling in the name of leading groups. “Across the surface of this sphere, the reins of rule are held primarily by the owners of the world below—captains of industry, financial barons, political elites and media tycoons” (Hardt and Negri, 2019: 69).

<sup>49</sup> As argued by Kosik “The alleged autonomy of the economy in capitalist society, an autonomy that did not exist in previous societies, is the autonomy of reified social relations, and therefore refers only to this specific historical form of the economy” (1995: 115).

<sup>50</sup> Regarding the financialization process in the past three decades and its social implications, Costas

Regarding such complex condition of the exercise of sovereign power, Linklater (2007) argues that the existence of new forms of sovereignty brought new features to society, such as international citizenship, common human rights, and what is the main aspect of the entire process: economic integration throughout a huge European market. In this sense, the limits of the transformation of sovereignty resides in its relationship with the economic dimension of the transnational structure that was in development.

Discussing the complexity of European society, Habermas advocated in favour of democratic development in supranational structures in a complex EU states-system. Contrasting the integration process and its form of dealing with sovereignty based on the dominance of the free market, Habermas argues in favour of a new form of exercising such power, in which “the higher level of sovereign can no longer decide in a really sovereign manner” (2015: 554).

Another contribution to the debate about the idea of transnational sovereignty in Europe was made by McCormick (1999), who identified a limitation in EU sovereign relations. A particular political situation could emerge given that there is no supranational state ruling under a constitution, in which a division of the sovereign power could exist, and in which sovereign states could agree on sharing power only regarding some particular subjects (McCormick, 1999; 2006). In this sense, the idea of a transnational sovereignty will be seen here through the lens of the concept of *hegemony* as related to the state power, but also according to a Gramscian sense above all, which is a concept related to a project of (class) leadership of society.

### **2.2.1. Sovereignty as a leadership project**

The idea that sovereignty acquired transnational dimensions, and thus it is multi-levelled, might be another aspect to understand the different ramifications of hegemony. In fact, multiple forms of power appeared in the EU political

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Lapavitsas argues that: “Financialization is posited as a systemic transformation of mature capitalist economies that comprises three fundamental elements: first, large non-financial corporations have reduced their reliance on bank loans and have acquired financial capacities; second, banks have expanded their mediating activities in financial markets as well as lending to households; third, households have become increasingly involved in the realm of finance both as debtors and as asset holders. The crisis of 2007–9 is directly related to these developments” (2011: 612).

structure, namely supranational institutions, such as the European Central Bank, the Court of Justice and the European Commission, as well as the intergovernmental power of the European Council, and the semi-legislative power (though still far from a federative one) of the European Parliament (a power that was and still is shared with the European Council) (Goebel, 2013). Despite the separation of rules and procedures, politics is the common term for those institutions, i.e., politics exercised through and by political parties that are present within all these institutions in different forms, whether by direct vote, indirect vote, or nominations. In this sense, it is possible to understand the persistent interest of political parties, including left-wing ones, in elections and occupying positions in EU institutions to represent their classes and group of classes.

Following this, it is pertinent to consider EU political parties and groups as transnational organizations. In the case of the groups in the EP, their national connections are given by their party-members which, in turn, access the transnational level through their groups. According to Stephen Gill (1994; 2001) there is a transnational historical bloc composed by political parties which supports the EU integration process throughout their actions at the national and transnational levels. In such complex and interconnected levels of governance, hegemony is even more difficult to be achieved and maintained, as it is not only the elementary prevalence of a singular state, but rather a continuum of struggles in the relation of forces.

The domestic dimension is the departure point of political parties' plans, but in the EU integration process the question of power exceeds the national border. Following Bieler and Morton's (2001) discussion regarding the transnational forms of organizations in European restructuring, political parties developed a transnational activity in order to adapt to the transformations of European society, and also as part of the set of efforts aimed at building a historical bloc. As indicated by Bastiaan van Apeldoorn (2001), the integration process is a struggle between "transnational social forces", where the competition for hegemony is involved with ideological debates (van Apeldoorn, in Bieler and Morton, 2001: 70).

### 2.2.2. The mutation of sovereignty

It is within the state that sovereignty is kept as a power that endorses class domination. One example of the logic of sovereignty is described by Gramsci (2014) in the argumentation about the implementation process, of what he called “Americanism” and “Fordism” in the context of the passive revolution, as a progressive development of productive forces in which the accumulation of capital was the main reason for social transformations.<sup>51</sup> Such a transformative process is described as determined from the top down, resulting in the rupture with old traditions, the emergence of new rules, and the transition of passive fractions of social classes to operate as functions of the capital. All in all, it is a transformative process that produces a new human type, a new mode of production in a new conjuncture (Gramsci, 2014: 1774, 2145). In Gramsci’s words:

It is possible to define conjuncture as the set of circumstances that determine the market in a given phase, if, however, these circumstances are conceived as in movement, that is, as a whole that gives rise to a process of ever new combinations, a process which is the economic cycle (Gramsci, 2014: 1774).

With this definition of a transformative process (Americanisation) and at the same time a definition of what conjuncture is, Gramsci indicates the dialectical process in which classes, the mode of production, and market are an interdependent whole with its parts interacting essentially at the level of the material production.

Even though new rules and practices in the field of production affect the set of classes in society, the position that each class occupies in this process remains particular. In other words, the material dimension of sovereignty affects each social class in different ways, according to the conjuncture. Additionally, the

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<sup>51</sup> As argued by Peter Thomas in *The Gramscian Moment* (2009), the passive revolution was a form of bourgeois engagement to preserve its established power, a process that was developed in different phases, such as in the cautious/defensive form, and with cautious attack. By assuring consent from other groups and classes, the bourgeoisie were able to effectuate its hegemonic strategy.

political reorganization of classes is part of the entire productive reorganization, and the state is the *corpus* in which it is concentrated.<sup>52</sup>

The historical unity of the ruling classes is accomplished through the State and their history is essentially the history of states and groups of states. But there is no need to believe that this unity is purely juridical and political, although this form of unity has also its importance and it is not only formally: the fundamental historical unity, for its concreteness, is the result of the organic relations between State or political society and “civil society”. The subaltern classes, by definition, are not unified and cannot unify themselves until they become “State”: their history, therefore, is intertwined with that of civil society, it is a “disrupted” and discontinuous function of the history of civil society and through this, the history of States or groups of States (Gramsci, 2014: 2288).

Sovereignty is the political relation that encompasses the relation of forces of social classes in the sphere of the political society. Therefore, sovereignty is an aspect of political power that in civil society appears historically in the form of hegemony of the ruling class.

### **2.2.3. Sovereignty, Democracy and Hegemony**

Relation of forces in the class struggle is thus a perspective for analysing the problem of sovereignty in terms of the possibility of its exercise by different social classes. At this point there are two different interdependent levels, one related to internal affairs, and the other to the international, or transnational, relations.

It is assumed in this dissertation that the sovereign power is not given or transferable without social contradiction, without imbalance in the relations of forces, and that a social crisis is thus part of the process of overcoming an

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<sup>52</sup> By and large, one of the forms of *trasformismo* can be seen as the transition of a political organization from radicalism to more moderate praxis, and another one is the molecular passage from individuals to the conservative “political class”. Gramsci draws attention to the transformative process in the Italian *Risorgimento*, in which those molecular processes of transformation of left-wing forces took place (Gramsci, 2014: 962).

established sovereign power. Thus, the sovereign power is subject to change. For Nicos Poulantzas (1977), power is constituted in the field of practices of social classes: relations between social classes are relations of power and are an effect of the structure over the classes. In addition, the concept of sovereignty also corresponds to the territorial dimension of the state, a relation that can be questioned in the conjuncture of globalization.

In fact, in the European area the reconfiguration of the sovereign power was something new and not limited to the territorial limits of national states. The transformation that was an engine and a product of the EU integration process did not mean the disappearance of the classical national sovereignty, but the transformation of the role of the national state, and the role of the bourgeoisie as a (national) social class according to its internal and external hegemonic projections.

In this sense, hegemony appears as a political project of the ruling classes in the conflict of private interests in civil society. The dominance of ruling classes, then, is managed through complementary dosages of coercion and consensus over the civil society, and for this reason the concepts of democracy and sovereignty are related to the concept of hegemony, consisting of a relation that expresses the class position and exercise of power. Thus, in the EU the question of democracy and sovereignty led to the problem of hegemony.

In this sense, the Gramscian approach to the question of transnationalism is argued by Bastiaan van Apeldoorn to be a perspective focused on the social relation of forces, and on ideas that constitutes the battleground of the EU disputes for hegemony. Yet, following this approach, state-centrism is abandoned in favour of the concept of class, without undervaluing the importance of institutions and the state apparatus. According to William Robinson: "We cannot speak of the hegemony of a state. Hegemony is exercised by social groups, by classes or class fractions, by a particular social configuration of these fractions and groups" (2005: 6). Robinson's argument is valuable to understand that hegemony, democracy, and sovereignty are political expressions of class relations in society *mediated* by the state and its apparatuses (through consensus and coercion), establishing webs of national and transnational "horizontal integration of classes and social forces" (2005: 4). In fact, democracy goes together with liberalism in capitalist society.

It is precisely from this contradiction of the private interest with the collective interest that the collective interest assumes, as a State, an autonomous form, separate from the real singular and general interests (...) it follows that every class that seeks domination (...) must first conquer political power, to present its interest as the general interest (Marx, 2007: 37).

When social movements claim the transformation of their own immediate situation (political revolution) one immediate feature that appears is the questioning of political power. In effect, here resides the linkage (*tradutibilità*) between democracy and sovereignty.<sup>53</sup> From a subaltern perspective, the search for democracy is part of the search for a hegemonic position in society. The conquest of political power is, in its turn, the recovery of a hypothetical power that in practice is exercised by dominant classes, in order to (fully) develop democratic relations in society. In this dissertation, the relation between democracy and sovereignty is located in the field of the relations of forces of the class struggle, which, in capitalist societies, has its heart in the alienation of workers from the means of production which is maintained by a structured political power.

Among the many meanings of democracy, the most realistic and concrete one, in my view, is the one that can bring into relief the connection between democracy and the concept of hegemony. In the hegemonic system, there is democracy between the leading group and the groups that are led to the extent that (the development of the economy and thus) the legislation (which is an expression of that development) favours the (molecular) transition from the groups that are led to the leading group (Gramsci, 2007: 345).

This realistic perspective of democracy is Gramsci's historical and methodological approach, who considers the relation of forces among the

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<sup>53</sup> *Tradutibilità* (Derek Boothman). Dicionário Gramsciano. Guido Liguori and Pasquale Vozza (Orgs). São Paulo: Boitempo, 2017. The idea of *tradutibilità* is an extended instrument of the philosophy of praxis, an international and interdisciplinary instrument (from economy, politics, culture, philosophy), to establish the reciprocity of different interpretations of realities (also the interpretation of national cultural realities and scientific and national languages).

fractions of dominant classes, and also the relation of forces in the hegemonic system. In this sense, democratic relations in the capitalist society are limited by the sovereign power, thus, the democracy itself.

#### **2.2.4. Conclusion**

In this chapter the concepts of democracy and sovereignty were approached in order to build the conceptual framework of the research. This theoretical “revisiting” was a fundamental effort to discuss both concepts in relation to the Gramscian idea of hegemony. This particular approach is important to establish the foundations for the comprehension of the role of democracy and sovereignty in the praxis of political parties. Democracy is conceived as a trench, a field of battles, a political regime under the balance of forces. “Normal democracy” is the concept that explains the terrain of the practices of the political parties in this dissertation. It is this terrain of normal democracy upon which the hegemonic project (if there is one) is developed. Next, the concept of sovereignty is another concept that is fundamental to the comprehension of what can be a hegemonic project, as it is the encounter of the Prince and the people, i.e., is a political position in society that can be transformed. Overall, this chapter also contributed to the understanding that the idea of sovereignty changed with European integration, assuming a transnational connotation; beyond the individual national states, there were now also specific transnational institutions protecting capital against labour. Thus, the interconnection between democracy and sovereignty appears here in the concept of hegemony, but now as a power exercised by a social class or fractions/groups of dominant classes.

## Chapter 3      The European left in Southern Europe

Considering that Spain, Portugal, and Italy shared many common features in their history during the twentieth century, in which fascism was a force that changed society and the defeat of fascism was a matter of survival for left-wing forces, this chapter is interested in understanding some aspects of the history of the European left that led to the establishment of democracy as a common and universal ground for their practices in the 1990s. From an analysis of practical, ideological, and political defeats, throughout the praxis of the PCI (later PRC), the PCE/IU, and the PCP, before the 1990s, this chapter presents some main background aspects that enabled the European left to cooperate at the transnational level.

### 3.1.    The Italian case - How the PCI was Refounded

Once democracy was settled as the political terrain in Italy after years of fascist dictatorship, the PCI agreed to collaborate by laying down the weapons of its organized partisan forces to support the construction of the new regime, after the eruption of subaltern groups in an *offensive struggle* against fascism and the bourgeoisie.<sup>54</sup> This shift is known as the *Svolta di Salerno*, which meant the conquest of an important strategic victory: the establishment of democracy as the necessary path to the progressive transition towards socialism (Maia, 2017: 32-34). The establishment of the democratic process was characterized by the participation of other national democratic forces, such as the Partito Socialista and Democrazia Cristiana. For the PCI, led by Palmiro Togliatti, institutional participation was a challenge that soon transformed the party's internal structure, enabling and adapting its participation in the electoral processes, and also assuming institutional roles in the inaugurated liberal democratic regime (Anderson 2009b; Agosti, 1999).

The PCI's strategy was directed towards acting within the democratic regime, focusing on parliamentary struggle and collaboration with other

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<sup>54</sup> This was a historical moment that is also characterized as *Resistance*, but it was in fact an independent military offensive action taken by the working classes of northern Italy that changed the relation of forces in society.

democratic forces to develop social consciousness about the problems in capitalist society and their effects (Berlinguer, 2013; Tortorella, 1998: 43). However, with regard to their democratic strategy, or even the existence of a supposed revolutionary perspective in the PCI, the praxis in democratic institutions resulted in an overall *practical defeat* for the communist organization, since the PCI could not assure its presence as an expressive social force to defend subaltern classes interests in the state's structures. The practical defeat is the isolation of the political party in the national context which, instead, allows other forces to assume the power. Such characterization of the PCI's defeat (and later on also regarding the PCE and the PCP) is based on Gramsci's discussion with Togliatti about the situation of the communists in Italy in the 1920s, which also included the discussion about the internal dynamic of the party likely to suffer a change of leadership in its crisis and disputes of projects that would culminate in a succession of internal problems with external consequences (Gramsci, 2004: 132).<sup>55</sup>

Accordingly, Peter Mair (1979: 489) argues that one of the main factors leading to the isolation in liberal democracies of an ideologically anti-system party is precisely its anti-systemic organizational forms and practices. In the case of PCI, however, its anti-systemic accent was lost soon after the end of the Second World War in the *Svolta* di Salerno, thus, in the liberal democratic competition, the party was surpassed by other parties.

Conversely, the PCI remained a strong organization in the party system in all the three senses indicated by Sartori (2005): historical, organizational, and functional. The PCI, in fact, was a mass party, spread over the country, and it was the biggest communist party in Western Europe (Maia, 2017: 256). As it might be expected, there was a set of national and international elaborations of new measures to redefine the participation in national life according to the balance of forces. One of the most important elaborations of PCI's leadership in the second half of the twentieth century was the idea of *Eurocomunismo*.

As seen before, Eurocommunism was a strategic combination of different political forces in Europe interested in social reforms and democratic

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<sup>55</sup> In a letter to Togliatti, Gramsci warns that "The opposition will *de facto* become the party's representative, and we will remain cut off. We will suffer a defeat in practice, one that is perhaps irremediable and that will undoubtedly mark the beginning of our disintegration as a group and of the defeat of our ideas and politics" (Gramsci, 1978: 140).

development. The transnational character of Eurocommunist ideas was the involvement of other forces such as the PCE and the PCF in a common European perspective of socialism; however, the national terrain was the main dimension of new ideological and practical approach that was essentially based on creating new alliances to “overcome divisions in the working classes” (Berlinguer, 2013: 73).<sup>56</sup> In the long term, Eurocommunism was not only a reformation or a differentiation of the movement, but a strategic perspective that settled a new approach to the question of the socialist transition (Berlinguer, 2013).

Democracy and peace were in the core of this new path. For instance, the PCI developed the ‘*historic compromise*’ with conservative democratic forces, in order to achieve normality in the country and guarantee the continuity of democratic and peaceful development. Another example is the *democratic alternative*, an attempt of broad collaboration with other democratic forces in the country. Such policies were part of the set of the Eurocommunist ideas that reinforced the general guidance of the PCI through an intensive period of collaboration and construction of coalitions with democratic forces (Berlinguer, 2013; Maia, 2017; Sartori 2005).<sup>57</sup>

However, the project of building up a working-class hegemony found its limits in the institutional approach. By and large, it was a stagnation of the party in the relation of forces that allowed the opposition to develop and implement their governmental political programs. In this sense, the set of particular derivations of the Eurocommunist perspective, such as the historical compromise and democratic alternative, constituted further *ideological defeats*, in the same Gramscian sense: it meant the ideological transformation of the political party’s ideas, entailing a step closer to reformism and pacifism, and the impossibility of fighting against the previous isolation (Braz, 2006: 282).

In the 1980s, the PCI experienced its most crucial period of transformations. There was the change in the party’s leadership after Enrico Berlinguer’s passing, the establishment of new values in the party’s strategy (the

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<sup>56</sup> As argued by Sartori (2005: 16), this is a characteristic of a legislative-electoral orientation of a political party.

<sup>57</sup> As argued by Perry Anderson (2009b: 9): “Just as it had diluted Gramsci’s notion of hegemony simply to its consensual moment, fixing it essentially in civil society, so under Togliatti the PCI reduced his conception of political strategy to a war of position only, the slow acquisition of influence in civil society, as if no war of manoeuvre – the ambush, sudden charge, rapidly wheeling attack, catching class enemies or the state by surprise – were any longer needed in the West”.

*nuovo corso*), and a new approach to left-wing historical themes, such as the Soviet Union, the Cold War, socialism, proletarian dictatorship, and Marxism (Del Roio, 1986). In addition, the national context was marked by corruption cases implicating the main political parties of the country. Altogether, those aspects were part of the motivations that led the PCI to experience a radical transformation (Liguori, 2009).

New features gained a prominent position in the political program of the PCI during its Congresses in the 1980s, such as the programmatic centrality of the fight for peace, for a sustainable environment, feminism, and youth. Considering itself more and more as a *modern reformative party*, the PCI was taking its distance from the perspective of transition towards socialism in its political program and practice to adopt an institutional approach to democratic questions, what was, on one hand, an update of contemporary strategic debates in the society but, on the other hand, at the cost of having to adopt such themes as its main strategic components.<sup>58</sup> The organization leadership launched the 'new course', associating the context of national structural reforms to transformations in the political organization.<sup>59</sup>

The transformations that qualitatively changed the party took place in the *svolta della Bolognina* (Bolognina turning point). It was a set of Congresses that characterized the first moment after the death of the red giant Star, the PCI. The final blow was at the Congress of Rimini, in 1991, and from the nebula created with the collapse of the PCI emerged the *Democratic Party of the Left* (PDS). That was the official transition of the biggest communist organization of the Western world to the field of (contemporary) social democracy, a spectrum that is not the main focus of this dissertation, but which represented an achievement of the already existent social-democratic fraction in the Party.<sup>60</sup>

Besides the formation of the PDS, another organization was born in the same nebula left by the historical communist party as an act of salvation of the

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<sup>58</sup> According to PCI's Congress document published in the *L'Unità* (10<sup>th</sup> April, 1986): "The PCI is, therefore, a party of program and struggle, governed by an internal regime of freedom and tending towards unity (which is not a need for a part, but a good for workers, democracy, the nation), contrary to both Stalinist and plebiscitary centralism. It makes no other choice than that of reforming, peaceful and progressive forces as an integral part of the European left; and it does not recognize for itself other "diversity" than that of believing in a world in which it is not fatal that the strongest always prevails, the-having-over-the-being (l'-avere-sull'-essere)".

<sup>59</sup> This was particularly associated to Achille Occhetto leadership, among others.

<sup>60</sup> In fact, the literature about the PCI's death is enormous, and there are many interpretations (Agosti, 1999; Guerra, 2005; Liguori, 2009; Pons, 2004; Tortorella, 1998; Vacca, 1997).

communist fraction in the party. The communist fraction of the PCI gave life to the Movement for the Communist Refoundation, which later became the *Partito della Rifondazione Comunista (PRC)*.<sup>61</sup>

The PRC is the Italian organization that represents the continuity of the communist tradition in Italy, as it was mainly composed by members of the PCI and included also new members from other traditions of the left, such as from small organizations and trade unions. At first, the PRC was constituted as a *movement* for the communist refoundation, since an important number of PCI's members did not agree with the proposal of the formation of the PDS. In 1991, the movement organized meetings and congresses to articulate the different ideological perspectives around the idea of creating a new and solid communist organization.

In the “*Il Congresso Movimento per la Rifondazione Comunista*”, in 1991, the birth of the PRC was based on the idea of rupture with the past (PCI), and the continuity with the idea of the particular Italian way towards socialism, what was translated into the purpose of creating an alternative organization based on *freedom* and *curiosity* (PRC, 1991).<sup>62</sup> In this formation process, Sergio Garavini and Armando Cossutta were both members of the Movement leadership at the foundation congress. At this congress they expressed some ideas regarding what was meant to be a communist at the time: “The ideals of the October revolution have not collapsed. Our ideas have moved men over the centuries and for these ideas we will found the party tomorrow” (PRC, 1991).<sup>63</sup>

In the foundation document of the Communist Refoundation Movement, Sergio Garavini's conclusion evoked the idea that Togliatti came back to Italy to lead the democratic struggle after the second World War, not to shout revolutionary words. Garavini's words were based on Togliatti's action to emphasize that the old PCI refused “rhetorical schematism and primitivism” (PRC, 1991), suggesting that despite the perspective of continuity with communism, the PRC would have a new approach regarding revolution. Thus, the values of freedom and curiosity were present as the innovative aspects of the

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<sup>61</sup> Among others, it emerged the organizations *Ecologia e Libertà* and *Associazione per il rinnovamento della sinistra (Ars)*.

<sup>62</sup> Document: *Il Congresso Movimento per la Rifondazione Comunista*, Liberazione, 21 dicembre, 1991

<sup>63</sup> Armando Cossutta stated: “Non sono crollati gli ideali della rivoluzioned'ottobre. Le nostre idee hanno mosso nei secoli gli uomini e per queste idee domani fondiamo il partito”.

new organism. Curiosity was presented as a form of inheriting left-wing aspirations according to communist ideas. The Congress highlighted the need for acting in the opposition regarding the Italian mainstream organizations.<sup>64</sup>

In effect, the European left was reformulated at the national level with the PRC, and in this way the European left would gain another member. Regardless of those changes, it seems relevant to wonder: to what extent the ideas of universal democracy were further developed in the new political party?

### 3.2. The Spanish situation – the PCE’s legal existence

If compared to the Italian and Portuguese cases, the transition from the dictatorship to the new regime in Spain was much less radical and had much less participation of the Communist Party in its process. In 1975, the monarchical regime returned with the proclamation of a constitution to guide the king after decades of an authoritarian regime led by the dictator Francisco Franco. Far from a revolutionary process, the transition was operated from the top down, through nominations of high-level leaders. Conflicts erupted throughout the country, with terroristic attacks, demonstrations and strikes accompanied by a terrible economic downturn in the background (Costa, 2002; Navarro, 2017; Ramiro, 2000).<sup>65</sup>

The power was in the hands of the army, the Catholic Church, and the nationalist group *Falange*. The Communists were in illegality at that time, even with a strong influence in the trade-unionist movement. The first strategic goal of the organization during the transition was thus to overthrow the dictatorship and establish the democratic regime in the country, and as consequence re-acquire

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<sup>64</sup> About the formation of the PRC and the relation with the PDS, the PRC ex-Senator Del Roio remembers in an interview on 25 January 2019 that: “It was a massacre, a massacre. The Refundação group that is born, is born without headquarter, without money, without any shit. Born without anything. Even because the maneuver was long, it took years; because they (PDS) changed their symbol but they kept the hammer and sickle, they were still the party of Gramsci and Berlinguer, so it was very difficult for the Refoundation, poor and broke, so there was a lot of confusion in people’s minds”. Original quotation: “Foi um massacre, um massacre. O grupo Refundação que nasce, nasce sem sede, sem dinheiro, sem porra nenhuma. Nasce sem nada. Até porque a manobra foi longa, demorou anos; porque eles mudaram de símbolo mas continuaram com a foice e o martelo, continuaram a ser o partido de Gramsci e Berlinguer, então era muito difícil para a Refundação, pobre e sem dinheiro, então tinha muita confusão na cabeça das pessoas.” (Del Roio, 2019).

<sup>65</sup> The most consolidated literature about democratic transition includes the Spanish case. Among others, the Spanish transition to democracy was discussed from the perspective of the role of political institutions by S. Huntignton (1994), G. O’Donnel (2011), N. Poulantzas (1975), A. Przeworski (1995).

its legal status (Navarro, 2017: 70). Yet, in the field of the left, the PSOE (Partido Socialista Obrero Espanol) was becoming a strong force in the transitional process, biasedly involved in the top-down agreement. Given the weak conditions of a revolutionary movement, the left-wing forces abandoned the idea of a socialist rupture during the transition in favour of a democratic regime.

The transitional pact also included the extreme right of the *Franquist* forces, the democrats and the army.

Spain's recent transition from dictatorship to liberal democracy represents a process unique in modern European politics. By contrast with post-war Germany and Italy, the creation of liberal-democratic institutions was not the result of military defeat or the subsequent intervention of foreign powers (Medhurst, 1984: 30).

There was a very limited Communist and Anarchist participation in the transition negotiations that started in 1976. There was then a consensus among the main social-political forces from the right to the left wing regarding the singular democratic nature of the Spanish transition and the necessity of maintaining some level of peace (Navarro, 2017: 324).<sup>66</sup>

Once the transition was assured and monarchical parliamentarism had been established, the PCE gained the desired legal status. Further, the first general election was organized for the year of 1977, and the Constitution approved by referendum in 1978. For the right wing, it was “a radical bet for reconciliation” after decades of dictatorship (Serrano, 1999: 109).

Already in the democratic regime, and acting from a more subaltern and defensive position, this first moment resulted in the isolation of the PCE in the national political scene, while the PSOE was elected to govern the country for many years, until the emergence of the PP as another national political force in the electoral scene in the 1990s.

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<sup>66</sup> Gregorio Navarro argues that: “The best fit of the Spanish Transition in this pattern, the consensus reached, the moderation shown and the good image that was transmitted of it, facilitated the appearance of this new current of Iberian influence in the reverse geographical sense. Influence that occurred mainly in all those political, economic and social sectors that, more or less openly –and with greater or lesser external schematization- sought to moderate the ideological debate, reform the Constitution towards more western forms, subordinate military power of revolutionary origin to the civil power, to apply the European model of parties, strengthen the market economy, and modify the trade union scheme.” (2017: 318). Despite the restoration of the monarchy, some regional divisions continued to exist, particularly in some territories such as the Basque Country, Catalonia, Valencia and Galicia.

The transition to democracy was a stage in the PCE's strategy process, but the stabilization of democracy was not a process in which the Communists or popular forces played a decisive role in the institutions. So, could the transition be considered a strategic step forward? The agreements among the main social forces of Spain settled democracy as the regime for the new moment, and undoubtedly it was a better terrain for the communists' praxis. Moreover, the situation was also difficult because the acceptance of liberal democracy with the monarch as head of state meant, in practice, limited room for manoeuvre for the European left. In short, the stabilization of the transition into a liberal democratic regime was a practical defeat for the PCE, from a revolutionary perspective of social transformation.

Moreover, the PCE participated in the elaboration and implementation of Eurocommunist ideas within French and Italian Communist parties. In the Eurocommunist approach, the anti-Stalinist aspect was a common political formula to differentiate European perspectives on socialism from the Soviet Union model. This search for autonomy and independence from the Soviet burden brought some parties of the European left to the terrain of the so called "third way".

The alternative, the Eurocommunist way, was a route also to a more amicable approach in relation to Europe and the integration process. In a similar manner, the Italian Communist Party was favourable to the European integration even before its other European partners, serving as an example to the PCE. In this sense, without an impressive resistance from the communists to the democratization and integration processes, Spain developed structural economic adaptations in accordance with the Treaty of Accession of 1985, to be integrated in the European Economic Community, at the same time as its neighbour, Portugal, its democratic regimes were then definitively recognized and integrated in Europe, assuring the no-return to old practices (Poulantzas, 1975; Serrano, 1999: 110).

Under a stabilized democratic regime, the PCE acted out its normal life inside the institutional framework by running in national, regional, and European elections. The scenario was not favourable to the PCE's existence as the party found itself in an isolated position, unable to reverse the practical isolation through elections. The ideological factor was then another problem that was

combined in this situation, since the choices made during the transition period forced the Communists to adapt their praxis to the functioning of formal institutions in the normal democratic regime.

Despite the practical isolation and the ideological detour, the PCE did not follow the PCI's example of dissolution and an open move to the terrain of social-democracy, instead the PCE with other left-wing forces of Spain developed an innovative approach. In this sense, the necessity of keeping the communist organization alive was the strongest option. Newspapers of the time frequently highlighted the debate over the end of the PCE, such as "El Independiente" of August 1991, "El Pais" August 1991, "El Mundo" August 1991.<sup>67</sup> In short: "Un partido de 71 años que se resiste a morir" (a 71-year-old party that resists to not die) said the newspaper "El Sol" on 18<sup>th</sup> December 1991.

The debate about a qualitative transformation of the historical communist organization was indicated through the possibility of its dissolution into a new organization. In the midst of some proposals for changing its name, symbols, and programme, Julio Anguita was elected to the leadership of the party.<sup>68</sup> The main attention of the time was given to the form of existence of the PCE, whether it would continue to be the same type of organization, or if it would be merged into another organism inside a long-term strategic alliance. Within other forces, such as the Pasoc, PCPe, Fp, and so forth, the PCE was integrated into the creation of the Izquierda Unida (IU), or United Left. At first, it was a political electoral coalition, and soon it became a structured political organism (almost-a-political party) to respond to the crisis of the Spanish left (Damiani, 2016; Ramiro, 2000).

The PCE was already a federal organism, including in itself many other small Communist parties and groups that agreed to cooperate in one unique party according to the principles of democratic centralism and to comply with the decisions taken at the federal Congresses (its main and superior instance of discussion and decision).<sup>69</sup> Izquierda Unida was, therefore, the federal organism created in the field of the left to include those political parties that were not in the PCE's direct zone of influence but were willing to cooperate in the field of left-wing forces in Spain.

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<sup>67</sup> The consulted material is available on the PCE Archive, "Archivo Historico del PCE", at Universidad Complutense de Madrid.

<sup>68</sup> Julio Anguita was the PCE General Secretary; founder and General Coordinator of IU, from 1989 to 2000.

<sup>69</sup> Document: Estatutos del Partido Comunista de España, 1991.

The main immediate ideological motivation behind the creation of the IU was the desire to block the implementation of PSOE's electoral program in the 1980s. Rather than social development, the PSOE's political program proposed, for instance, privatizations and the implementation of a referendum on participation in the NATO. As discussed in the first IU General Assembly, this new spectrum of the Spanish left was the "renovation and recomposition of a dynamic and transformative left" (IU, 1989, 8).<sup>70</sup>

The initial strategic purposes of the IU were triple: to build an alternative government as the IU aspired to win elections, to offer an alternative to the current state model with the implementation of a federal state, and to cooperate for an "alternative of society" with new ways of seeing relations between civil society and the state (IU, 1989).<sup>71</sup> Somehow, the IU proposals were related to the normal democratic life of an electoral party.

The 1991 PCE's Statute established the role of the IU, which was meant to be the mediation of the PCE and civil society in all terms of its political activities. Moreover, all the decisions taken by the IU would be binding on all PCE members (PCE, 1991).<sup>72</sup> The IU remained the main organism in the PCE's elaborations, as restated by the PCE's Congress in 1992. The discussion about the PCE's dissolution was still present in the media and public debates. However, it was a transformative moment in the PCE's history, and the communists kept themselves alive and acting on the terrain of normal democracy.

### **3.3. The perspective in Portugal – the PCP's stability and continuity**

The PCP was a strong organization that acted (illegally) against the last fascist dictatorship of Europe and emerged with a fundamental role in the 1974 Portuguese Carnation Revolution, a revolution which led the country toward a new regime and a new international approach based on democratic values

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<sup>70</sup> Document: I Asamblea General, Madrid, Febrero 1989.

<sup>71</sup> This is common in the PCE and the IU's discussions of the idea of "alternative of society" to indicate their views regarding the necessity of changing in the whole social body. Moreover, "alternative of society" is also present in the discussion of other parties to indicate the possibility or necessity of constructing a society different from the capitalist one, certainly oriented to the general idea of a socialist society, thus, the concept will be kept as such in this dissertation.

<sup>72</sup> Document: Estatutos del PCE, 1991.

(Secco, 2004; Varela, 2011). Given its socialist characteristics, the communist political program for the 1974 Carnation revolution was already prepared many years before the eruption of the events. The strategy presented in the PCP's political program was fully or partially supported by other forces involved in the revolutionary process. For instance, it was supported by the Movement of Captains (later the Movement of the Armed Forces - MFA) and by other small political parties and trade unions. In general, the revolutionary program for the defeat of dictatorship (and colonialism) and the implementation of a new political regime based on democracy was successful.

During the Carnation Revolution, social structures changed internally and externally. One of the main turning points was the end of Portuguese colonization in many countries, such as Mozambique, Angola, and Cape Verde. Moreover, the domestic Portuguese productive structure changed with nationalizations and, politically, attempts of dual political power which appeared in some regions of the country (Secco, 2004). The revolution was short in its duration and produced structural changes.<sup>73</sup>

As an important organization with a social basis, the PCP participated in the Provisional Government aiming at creating a basis to support its strategic purpose: the establishment of democracy as the political regime, in order to progressively build the socialist economy (Cunhal, 1994; Louçã, 1985; Varela, 2011).<sup>74</sup> Thus, the first strategic victory had been achieved (Cunhal, 1994).

Already in the path towards the establishment of a new socio-political regime, other forces started to gain ground in the provisional government. The PCP was still pursuing socialist measures, while the MFA withdrew from the provisional government, and the Socialist Party (PS) was being organized abroad with the support of many other social-democratic organizations of Europe to become the party that would lead the nation through the democratization process. Within a few years, the situation passed from the revolutionary moment to the implementation of a stable democracy, with institutions and constitutions characterizing the transition from a dual revolutionary power to the normality and

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<sup>73</sup> The work of Raquel Varela (2011) "*A História do PCP na Revolução dos Cravos*" is one of the main recent research in the field of revolutions and political parties, with a substantial historical description of the facts, and a strategic evaluation of the role developed by the PCP in the process.

<sup>74</sup> Francisco Louçã (1985: 161) argues that the PCP was vulnerable to the pressure from other organizations and ended up adapting to the dynamic that was imposed by other forces, assuming the compromise as its program in the Provisional Governments.

stability that are required in normal democracies. A long-term rivalry between the PCP and the PS was born (Arcary, 2004; Varela, 2011).

In the field of the European left, the PCP did not take part in the Eurocommunist experiment. Instead, the PCP's choice was to develop its own internal transformations according to the particularity of the national situation (Cunhal, 1994). In fact, the defence of national sovereignty remained one of the main aspects of the PCP. The strategy of democratic revolution, for instance, was conceived as a necessary step towards socialism. As argued by Lincoln Secco (2004: 152), differently from its European partners, those aspects can be understood when one considered that the PCP remained supportive of the Soviet Union and the Stalinist approach.

In the terrain of normal democracy, the PCP was also relegated to the background of the political institutional scenario in the successive Provisional and institutional governments

In order to destroy the democratic regime and its achievements enshrined in the Constitution, all the other major parties coalited in successive governments. They tried all possible coalitions between two parties: PS/CDS, CDS/PSD, PSD/PS. Disrespecting the Constitution and democratic legality, abusing power, using agency and repression, it triggered constant offensives. They tried new deadly coups against the democratic regime (Cunhal, 2013: 44).

The relation of forces in the democratic period was marked by the fact that the PCP was one of the targets in the battle of ideas. A battle that had practical and structural features, such as the reversion of nationalizations and the return of great private companies to the country. From this scenario, the virtual perspective of continuity of the democratic revolution towards socialism was even more distant in reality. Removed from the government by the relation of forces and finding itself in a complicated situation with its social basis, the PCP experienced a practical defeat. As we characterized it before, a defeat caused by the isolation in the national political context, rendering difficult the continuity of its strategy of gradual development towards socialism.

Soon afterwards, similar to Spain, Portugal was adjusting its social and economic basis according to the European parameters. The PS, PSD and CDS were interested in leading the next steps towards economic integration in the EEC. The integration of Portugal in the European economic zone was concluded in 1992.

That was a difficult situation for the communists of the PCP, as the party always defended national sovereignty against external interferences. In this context, the PCP started to create new arguments and updates in its strategic conceptions that brought the party to not only maintain communism as its main and farther purpose, but also to adopt the democratic development as a way and a goal. It went from the idea of “with Democracy, for Socialism” to the idea of “With Portugal, for democracy”, signing its partial adherence to the social-democratic field (PCP, 1988). Communism, however, remained as the final goal. Later, the new idea was expressed in the slogan “Portugal, an advanced democracy in the twenty-first century” (PCP, 1988).

The continuity of the isolation and successive transformations of ideas characterized an ideological displacement of the communist organization. It was the second defeat, an ideological one. In front of the incapacity to implement a new socialist strategy and to change the relation of forces, the PCP adaptation to the national situation confirmed the party isolation and the preventing the possibility of a revolutionary breakout. Moreover, according to Bosco (2000), the rigid approach of the Central Committee regarding proposals of innovation culminated in the fractioning of the leadership, with the persistence of Cunhal’s conservative positions, and the reinforcement of the party’s commitment to Marxist-Leninist values.

Conversely, the PCP arrived in the 1990s as a strong social force. This strength was due to its role in the Portuguese revolution and its work at the grass-roots level. As observed by one of PCP member, Vladimiro, in an interview on 21 March 2019:

So, the PCP, we have several historical peculiarities of the PCP and the history of Portugal, in particular the revolution of 1974 that changed the country as it helps to explain some political and social influence of the PCP. The PCP, even today,

is seen as a force, and that is what brought me to the PCP, an organized force that ran (survived) the 48 years of dictatorship, and well, it did not make the revolution alone, it was very important in the 25<sup>th</sup> April, even though people consider the 25<sup>th</sup> April to be an unfinished revolution, as it was a revolution because it allied a military coup with the masses, and the people joined, and there was indeed a change of the ruling classes. This helps to explain the political and social influence of the PCP in Portugal, and it also helps to explain that on 25<sup>th</sup> April it played an important role from the standpoint of the struggle, and also from the standpoint of the fight against monopolistic recovery that started as early as 76, and that we are still fighting against, and this helps to explain this influence of the 98-year-old PCP; this is its importance, and it has a heroic history of resistance. (Vladimiro, 2019).<sup>75</sup>

The PCP preserved internal unity and democratic centralism as a method of organization, which allowed the party to continue acting in the national relation of forces from a stable condition.

In fact, the alternative proposed in the XIII Congress of PCP was the restoration of democracy through the preservation of the progressive development started on the 25<sup>th</sup> April movement (PCP, 1987).<sup>76</sup> The revolutionary spirit of 1974 was still present in PCP's praxis during the 1990s. In this sense, Anna Bosco's (2000) research about the communist party's mutation indicates that practical and conceptual transformations occurred, and the PCP became integrated in the party-system.

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<sup>75</sup> "Pronto, o PCP, a gente tem várias particularidades históricas do PCP e da história de Portugal, em particular ter havido uma revolução em 74 mudou muito o país e ajuda a explicar alguma influência política e social do PCP. O PCP, ainda hoje, é visto como uma força, e isso é o que me trouxe para o PCP, uma força organizada que correu os 48 anos de ditadura, e pronto, não tendo feito a revolução sozinho, teve uma importância muito grande no 25 de Abril, apesar da gente considerar que o 25 de Abril foi uma revolução inacabada, na medida em que foi uma revolução porque aliou um golpe militar, depois com as massas e o povo aderiu, apoiou e inseriu-se no próximo, e houve ali de facto uma mudança de facto das classes dominantes. Isso ajuda explicar a influência política e social do PCP em Portugal, e ajuda também a explicar que no 25 de Abril teve um papel importante do ponto de vista da luta, e também do ponto de vista da luta contra a recuperação monopolista que logo em 76 começou, e que nós estamos ainda a combater, e isto ajuda a explicar essa influência do PCP, que tem 98 anos, tem esta importância, e tem uma história heróica de resistência." (Vladimiro, in an interview on 21 March 2019).

<sup>76</sup> Document: PCP, Factos e documentos. Portugal e a EEC, 1987.

### **3.4. The common background of the European left**

The left wing that survived the collapse of the Soviet Union is different from past left-wing organizations of Western Europe. The beginning of the second half of the twentieth century was marked by a common characteristic of the European left: the fight against fascist forces. Anti-fascism was not limited only to the military moment of fighting for national freedom during the Second World War. It was also a class struggle that included the effort to put countries and societies beyond the pre-fascist situation, by condemning fascism and by establishing a state capable of assuring workers' participation in democratic life (Anderson, 2009; Fresu, 2017).

In fact, it was the real threat to the regime of capitalist accumulation that put democracy as a political option in the post-war period. With this, the welfare state was assured as a social conquest against the freedom of accumulation by Europe's bourgeoisies.

Another common point during the second half of the twentieth century was the participation in the democratization processes. There was, then, a common strategy in the communist movement, and it was democracy as a political relation between civil and political societies. Against the idea that the state could not interfere in private affairs, the communists participated in the national constitutional processes, contesting the limits of liberal perspectives of democracy (Anderson, 1994; Fresu, 2017). In particular, the European left was concerned with ensuring that public systems, such as health, education, and pension systems, were guaranteed formally and in practice.

It was not new that the terrain of democracy was an ambivalent field to develop battles for both of them: to keep the conquests as such, and to push for more gains, for new forms of social relations. The democratic rules could assure the participation of different perspectives (interested in the rupture with the capitalist regime) in the political scene, but the relation of forces on the terrain of normal democracy was favourable for the dominant forces, which could control socio-political relations without democratizing socio-economic relations of production. The Italian, Spanish and Portuguese European left had to deal with

a world in which the state was already redesigned to operate according to a market-based logic through consensus and coercion if necessary.

Anna Bosco's (2000) research discusses the reasons for the communist parties' changes during the 1980s and 1990s from two different but interdependent approaches, the typological approach to indicate external reasons that implicate in the party's life, and the dynamic approach to argue how internal issues are a sort of influence in the general transformation of parties. In this sense, not only external events influenced the communist transformation, such as the collapse of the Soviet Union and corruption cases, but internal aspects were fundamental in leading the organizations to go through periods of transformations, or at least attempts at transformation. The conjunctural succession of defeats was the demonstration of the uncoordinated structure of the European left and, particularly, its radical wing, but a common situation of practical isolation in the parliamentary life, and ideological transformations to adapt the parties' ideas in accordance with the perspectives of universal democracy. Thus, this is the background in which the radical and European left emerged in the 1990s.

### **3.5. Conclusion**

Chapter 3 considered the Southern European left together in the light of some of their main national historical aspects. Some of the particularities of the PCI and PRC, the PCE and IU, and the PCP were discussed here. Eurocommunism and the insistence on national sovereignty were two important aspects of the general ideas that guided those parties in the roads that led to a full participation of the communist parties in the national party systems. In this way, the construction of national participation was also what contributed in great part to the transnational establishment of a European left alliance, as will be discussed further in Chapter 4. The destruction of the PCI, for instance, cleared the road to the emergence of the PRC and a reorganization on the transnational group. The creation of the electoral platform, IU, with the PCE as the political head, was the Spanish manner of surviving the pressures of the party system. The integration of the PCP in the national party system was another factor, as

the party was fully accepted, and the party itself accepted the roles and procedures of normal democracy. The Spanish and Portuguese cases differ from the Italian due to the particularity of their national contexts: violent dictatorships persisted in those countries until mid-1970s, what meant a difficult existence for the communists. The Italians had fought and defeated fascist forces, even though the problem still existed. The anti-fascist struggle was one essential characteristic of those parties. Moreover, their contribution to the stability of liberal democratic regimes is another common aspect. Not only the regime of normal democracy benefited from the communists' praxis, but also the communists themselves reaped some benefits. One of these was the stability of the parties in the regime. Another was the possibility of developing their ideas, and strategy, in this democratic scenario. In this way, the foundations for a transnational praxis were established.

## **Chapter 4      GUE/NGL and Relation of Forces**

In this chapter the interest is to analyse some aspects of the integration process, particularly regarding the integration of Italy, Spain, and Portugal. It is suggested that the establishment of the European Union was not a passive revolution, even though some possibilities of analogy would be possible. Instead, there was a subaltern and late integration process, depending on the context of each particular country, which was a result of the relation of forces at the European level, and that constituted a process of reconfiguration of dominant forces. Moreover, this chapter is also interested in the process that led to the formation of the GUE/NGL as the new transnational organism of the European left. Against the development of neoliberalism, the figure of the GUE emerged following the renewal/continuity of the southern European left (the PRC, the PCE, and the PCP) in the 1990s. Additionally, the GUE/NGL main goals in the European Parliament and its relations with its left-wing component is another topic for discussion here. This chapter also focuses on the documental and interview analysis of the PRC, the PCE/IU, the PCP, and the GUE/NGL, regarding their praxis at the national dimension in the 1990s as the starting point for their interventions on the transnational scene.

### **4.1. Subaltern and late integration process**

There are multiple analyses, data, and points of view regarding the integration process of the European economic zone, and also regarding the attempts to create a political community. The idea of integration was presented and developed during the mid-twentieth century, but it could possibly go back even further to discuss Lenin and Trotsky's ideas about a United States of Europe, envisioned as governed by workers.

Ernest Haas (1961) argued that there was a myth of integration that was composed of three elements: equality in exchanges to reduce antagonisms, acceptance of mediation by divergent parts, and accommodation on the basis of developing common interests. Haas's points of view suggests that the problem in

reality is about the disintegration rather than the (myth of) integration, because division was the historical dominant aspect of European countries.

To discuss the integration of European countries, the idea of the *capitalist state* is useful. In this sense, adopting one of Poulantzas's (1969) concepts, it is appropriate to designate the European political power in terms of *power bloc*, as there is not exactly a state in its modern conception ruling over Europe. The state apparatus is not only the government, but also a form of superimposition of multi-national fractions of the European ruling classes through transnational institutions.

The European institutions constructed through the integration process (Central Bank, Council and Commission, ECJ, bureaucratic apparatuses, Parliament, etc.) are not a state in its sovereign and modern version. But the state is a social relation, and in its unity the European Union has a political body concerned about important modifications in the relations of production across the continent. Following this, European institutions are capable of organizing the accumulation, or productive process in Europe, through the establishment of a bureaucracy that is supportive of this process, by means of the establishment of an appropriate European right that supports the idea of the Union and the ruling classes' leadership, constituting its power bloc based on liberal democracy.

The creation of the European economic area, a free trade zone, set countries in competition among themselves, to the extent that national states became important defenders of what rested of national groups and interests. On the one hand, the free trade zone improved the competition among big capitals, companies, and industries with limited state participation; on the other hand, determinant political relations continued to be decided by only single states and governments (Durand and Keucheyan, 2015; Bieler, 2005).

Andreas Bieler (2005) argues that analysis regarding the EU integration process has been dominated by neo-functionalist and inter-governmentalist perspectives in which there is the refusal of historical features, such as the character of social relations of production, perspectives that are based on a separation between states and economies. Bieler's position is supportive of an integration analysis that considers the competition among states seeking capitalist accumulation, and thus criticizes a separation between economy and politics in the analytical field due to its practical interconnexion. Additionally, Perry

Anderson (2009) maintains that after decades of integration process, a consistent pattern of institutional development that could put together distinct but convergent interests has emerged.<sup>77</sup> All in all, this is not merely an academic problem, but a problem of practical results.

The core of the Treaty is the commitment by the member-states, save England and Denmark, to introduce a single currency, under the authority of a single central bank, by 1999. This step means an irreversible move of the EU towards real federation. With it, national governments will lose the right either to issue money or to alter exchange rates, and will only be able to vary rates of interest and public borrowing within very narrow limits, on pain of heavy fines from the Commission if they break central bank directives. They may still tax at their discretion, but capital mobility in the single market can be expected to ensure increasingly common fiscal denominators. European monetary union spells the end of the most important attributes of national economic sovereignty (Anderson, 2009: 26).

The European Treaties are the connecting, formal points between the political and economic dimensions, as well as a theoretical elaboration and a practical proposal about the European society from the perspective of the European elites and institutions. With EU Treaties, such as those of Rome, the Single European Act of 1986, and particularly with the Maastricht Treaty, the freedom of movement for workers, goods and capital was established as the three pillars of the trading area - the three pillars for the creation of one of the biggest economic areas in the world.<sup>78</sup> With no illusion, “the intensification of

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<sup>77</sup> Perry Anderson, in its *The New Old World* argues: “For the first three decades after the war, then, the pattern was quite consistent. The two strongest continental powers, adjacent former enemies, led European institutional development, in pursuit of distinct but convergent interests. France, which retained military and diplomatic superiority throughout, was determined to attach Germany to a common economic order, capable of ensuring its own prosperity and security, and allowing Western Europe to escape from subservience to the United States. Germany, which enjoyed economic superiority already by the mid-fifties, needed not only Community-wide markets for its industries, but French support for its full reintegration into the Atlantic bloc and eventual reunification with the zone—still officially *Mitteldeutschland*—under the control of the Soviet Union. The dominant partner in this period was always France, whose functionaries conceived the original Coal and Steel Community and designed most of the institutional machinery of the Common Market. It was not until the deutschmark became the anchor of the European monetary zone for the first time that the balance between Paris and Bonn started to change” (2009: 11).

<sup>78</sup> The Single European Act of 1986 was a review of the Treaty of Rome, an act in which the EEC and the

exploitation of labour in order to secure the continuation of capitalist accumulation is identified as the social purpose visible in the revival of European integration” (Bieler, 2005: 515).

The integration process of European economies was a considerable part of the global reconfiguration of labour relations, also in ideological terms, for instance, due to the legal right established in the Union under the development of a particular conception of the European citizen as a universal and common individual who exists “independently” of its nationality (an effect that would be reversed with the 2008 crisis, as it will be discussed further in Chapter 7). The reinforcement of neoliberal perspectives was at the basis of the general guidelines of the Union. In fact, according to the Maastricht Treaty:

The common commercial policy shall be based on uniform principles, particularly in regard to changes in tariff rates, the conclusion of tariff and trade agreements, the achievement of uniformity in measures of liberalization, export policy and measures to protect trade such as those to be taken in the event of dumping or subsidies. (Maastricht Treaty, 1992: 27).

Even though the Treaty established some uniform precepts, there were two aspects that could not be fully determined by transnational treaties: the rule of each state to assure its role based on internal economic policies - thus, the loss of sovereignty was partial and voluntary, and therefore, reversible - and the freedom of competition, which was favourable to the strongest groups. In this sense, Max Haller understands the integration as a process made by and for the European elites (financial, intellectual, political, media), where “Owners and managers of large corporations and the leaders of agrarian and business interests’ groups have been most influential” (2008, 40).

In addition, in several European countries the population could not express its acceptance or refusal in referendums regarding the European treaties, as it happened in Belgium, Germany, Greece, Italy and Portugal, in which centre-right

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European Atomic Energy Community were established, other than a date for the conclusion of the economic integration process.

political parties were dominant, what might be understood as an indicative of the hegemonic power of the European elites.

From this point of view, the refusal to allow the citizens to decide themselves directly about the process of integration can be seen as a further example of the typical relation between political state authorities and citizens in Germany, which is characterized by a certain arrogance and patronizing among the former and subservience among the latter (Haller, 2008, p. 17).

Reforms undertaken in each country as necessary measures for the integration were steps towards the establishment of neoliberal relations of production, where the world of labour was the weakest link in the chain.

Following this, the process that marked the passage from the EEC to the EU was a generalization and deepening of neoliberal experiences in Europe in order to reorganize the field of production and, consequently, to reorganize the social structure around it. In this process, Italy was a *subaltern* country, while Spain and Portugal had the 'advantage' of experiencing a *late integration* because they were countries under dictatorships still in the 1970s.

The subaltern and the late integration aspects correspond to the forms in which the working classes were absorbed into the productive reorganization. Italy participated in this process from its genesis with a secondary role, while France and Germany were the dominant countries. Thus, Italy was subaltern in relation to the main political and economic determinations in the existing relation of forces within France and Germany. Spain and Portugal could only start to absorb the ideas and to implement the transformations of the already existing EEC in the 1980s and 1990s, when the rules and procedures experienced by other nations were already standardized. Thus, these situations represent cases of subaltern and late integration.

Nevertheless, could the integration process be theoretically characterized as a *passive revolution*?<sup>79</sup> In other words, was it a passive revolution in the sense

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<sup>79</sup> Gramsci discusses the concept of passive revolution particularly in relation to the development of liberalism during the nineteenth century and fascism in Italy as processes conducted by the country elite to avoid further crises in the economy. Such processes were performed without the participation of the working classes, and instead they were conducted by the dominant classes with methods of a war of position as a form of assuring its hegemony – a revolution without a revolution (Dicionário Gramsciano,

that there was a conservative approach to the accumulation process underway combined with a modernization of the state without a revolution of the ‘Jacobin’ type?<sup>80</sup> The analogy with the Gramscian concept is useful in the sense that the economic transformation, signalling the deepening of neoliberalism, was assumed as a measure of organization of the wide productive European space (a contradiction in terms of what would only later be verified along the impossibility of a further political integration, and the economic crisis).

The idea of passive revolution could be applied also to the transnational level, since molecular and fundamental changes in the integration were gradually brought about from above the superstructures of some countries participating in this process. Such participation was exercised through mechanisms and apparatuses of national states and transnational institutions, in the name of European elites for the unification of societies and economies.

However, the analogy limitations of the European integration process with the concept of passive revolution can be found in the fundamental principle that no social formation disappears until its forces are fully developed (Gramsci, 2014: 1774), in other words, the integration was not a passive revolution, but a particular form of hegemonic achievement developed by European ruling classes without the necessity (until now) of completed political integration. The integration process occurred according to the neoliberal reorganization of relation of forces in the European transnational space, affecting and evolving every national dominant classes in the process of an European hegemony reconfiguration in the globalized world.<sup>81</sup> This process was an answer to the production crisis of the capitalist regime, and even with the assumption of new superstructural aspects, it was not an exhaustion of preceding forms of productive forces.<sup>82</sup> For a while,

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2017: 1383-1388).

<sup>80</sup> As defined by Gramsci (2014: 504).

<sup>81</sup> As argued by Perry Anderson (2009), the federalist perspective of the EU was not pointed to the creation of a super state, but it was directed to the supranational power of the monetary union with less state.

<sup>82</sup> Claudio Bellotti (2019) affirmed in an interview that: “And those were the years in which we begin to talk about globalization, to use the term, and there was the theory that the nation state was disappearing, and that capital was a stateless capital or in any case tendentially above state power, and therefore what was decisive was no longer the state power but the supranational body, both the one like the European Union which has a political structure, and the more technocratic ones, such as the World Bank, WTO, Monetary Fund. And this was an important discussion for Rifondazione, because it is clear that it was adhering to this theory that was very much pushed by the ex-workerists in Italy, by Toni Negri”. Original quotation: “E quelli sono gli anni in cui si inizia a parlare di globalizzazione, ad usare questi termini, e c’è la teoria che lo Stato nazionale sta scomparendo, e che il capitale è un capitale apolide o comunque tendenzialmente al di sopra del potere Statale, e dunque quello che è decisivo non è più il potere Statale ma l’organismo sovranazionale, sia quello come l’Unione Europa che ha una struttura politica, sia quelli più tecnocratici, come la Banca Mondiale, WTO, Fondo Monetario. E questa è una discussione

the existent incomplete political form was not a qualitative change compared to the fragmented pre-existent form of European states, but the way ruling classes evolved to maintain the accumulation process in Europe.

#### **4.1.1. Relation of forces**

In Gramsci's elaborations, the concept of relation of forces is the guide for the analysis of circumstances in which the relation of forces inside a nation can be determined by the relation between the structures and superstructures of the nation (Gramsci, 2014: 455-459). The relation of forces is one dimension of the struggle for hegemony, i.e., to change and to maintain certain material structures of the superstructures. Additionally, the relation of forces is not related only to the structures, but it is the form of mediation between the structures and superstructures, even though each dimension is methodologically conceived in its particular dimension. The relation of forces can be empirically observed, and they have different levels, such as the international relation of forces among sovereign states, or at the level of production, or in the internal relations in a country (Gramsci, 2014: 1561).

In this sense, another critical theoretical contribution regarding the integration process is made by Bastiaan van Apeldoorn (2003), who recognizes the relations of power between the forces in action. The Apeldoorn's Marxist approach is based on the idea that the economic content of integration is a precondition for analysing the EU integration in its multiple aspects (national, supranational, subnational). For this reason, the European integration is viewed in this dissertation as a relation of forces between capital and labour, at different levels, from the local to the transnational and vice-versa.

It is also the absence of political and trade union organizations reflecting a workers' independent program that helps explain that so often the European social upheaval has ended in negotiations that in the medium term have turned out to be calamitous - the case of productive restructuring, which has

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importante per Rifondazione, perché è chiaro che stava aderendo a questa teoria che viene in Italia molto spinta dagli ex-operaisti, da Toni Negri”.

made it more flexible. The labour market using social assistance is one such example (Varela, 2018: 271).

One of the reasons for the unfavourable situation of labour in relation to capital is the performance of working-class political organizations that had their sovereignty threatened in the class relation of forces: co-opted trade unions opted for conciliation, rather than confrontation, as argued by Raquel Varela (2018).

Several European economic groups were among the most powerful in the world, at the same time that welfare-based living conditions deteriorated, and unemployment increased in the eurozone, in a clear step ahead of capital over labour. With it, the so-called two-speed Europe was established, with inequality of classes crossing different geographic-regional levels. Within this process, the Maastricht Treaty contributed to the establishment of neoliberalism as the main socio-economical approach in Europe, indicating the preponderance of the relation of forces on the side of the capital. Rather than a passive revolution, the integration process was a hegemonic reconfiguration of the dominant classes in Europe under the rules of neoliberalism. It was thus a further development of the war of position in which the state (national states) assumed the role of prioritising the accumulation process of big capitals.

#### **4.2. GUE/NGL- Collapse and new orbits of the European left**

The left-wing movement situation is another crucial part of the conjunctural circumstances because despite the predominance of the economic integration, the political world was also transformed. In the European Union, national parties were one of the main players during the integration process, and in spite of the creation of transnational structures of power, new forms of direct popular participation were not created. The national parties thus remained with their system-related functional approach (Sartori, 2005). The forms of political participation were the same as those existing in the national relations between civil and political societies but translated to the transnational level. They were directed to the maintenance of the social structure developed in the immediate post-War (for instance, the establishment of the supranational High Authority

named to control the industrial production of the “Inner six” country members under the power of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC)).

The European Parliament was (and still is) another form of an unfinished, hybrid and limited political power. At first, the European Parliament was indirectly elected with nominations by national parliaments, until 1979 when the first elections were held in the EEC countries to elect EP representatives. In 1979, there were two organized political parties *Groups*: Socialist and the Popular groups.

Finally, there is the European Parliament, formally the ‘popular element’ in this institutional complex, as its only elective body. However, in defiance of the Treaty of Rome, it possesses no common electoral system: no permanent home — wandering like a vagabond between Strasbourg, Luxembourg and Brussels; no power of taxation; no control over the purse — being confined to simple yes/no votes on the Community budget as a whole; no say over executive appointments, other than a threat in extremis to reject the whole Commission; no right to initiate legislation, merely the ability to amend or veto it. In all these respects, it functions less like a legislative than a ceremonial apparatus of government, providing a symbolic facade not altogether unlike, say, the monarchy in Britain (Anderson, 2009; 23).

In this sense, following Poulantzas (1977) and Anderson’s characterizations, universal suffrage at the transnational level, i.e., the elections for the EP, was a form of updating the dominance of the ruling class, now through institutional political representation. After 1979, the universal suffrage was then extended to all citizens of the developing European Union member states. One interesting perspective, as explained by Poulantzas (1977), is that suffrage can function as the enlargement of the political domination of the classes and fractions of classes. Certainly, the popular dissatisfaction with the limits of their representation in the indirectly elected EP was a transformative pressure point, increasing the role of political parties in the context of the democratic deficit crisis of European institutions. Nevertheless, the adoption of the suffrage occurred when some particular political forces were already consolidated and structured in

the EP. As it is argued by Mair and Thomassen (2010: 21) the party representation at the transnational level was limited, since it had almost no control over the executive power.

With ambition of participating in this limited, but important Union institution, the European left formulated its own transnational organisms. The reorganization of the communist movement was a necessity of the left wing to keep itself alive in the war of position, after the defeats that it had suffered (as seen in Chapter 3), and in opposition to the decree of the end of history. Together with the Greens, the Communists would begin a new debate and forge new alliances in Europe.<sup>83</sup> All in all, there was an internal demand to reconfigure and to refound communist organizations at both international and regional levels independently from the divisions and strategic differences, and ideological limits among Stalinists, social-democrat, ecologist, and other perspectives, and that process would be at the same time a reinforcement of the national strength of the parties (Lowy, 1998; Bosco, 2000).

In the EU, the transnational communist “refoundation” in the early 1990s was encouraged by some of the Southern communist parties.<sup>84</sup> Although it was not exactly a dense and consistent political party, the Gauche Unitaire Européene (GUE), which sooner became the GUE/NGL, was the new organisation, a sort of new-born binary star from a nebula of different national parties in which the European left-wing forces could update its role and develop its activities.

Social-democrats and Socialists were still the main groups and ideological perspectives in the European constellation in the 1990s, which was another motivation for the European left participation in the functioning of the European Parliament.<sup>85</sup> In this sense, the GUE/NGL was born with a clear functional approach of being an electoral organism of left-wing parties with a more leftist approach on social themes. According to Sartori (2005: 23), the functional

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<sup>83</sup> The emergence of Green parties, even though it is not the focus of this dissertation, was another main contribution for the reconfiguration of the European left.

<sup>84</sup> In many interviews conducted during the elaboration of this dissertation with members of the PCP, the PRC, and the PCE/IU, some level of satisfaction was expressed in the building process of the left at the European level.

<sup>85</sup> As argued by the former PRC Senator and GUE member, Jose Del Roio (2019) in an interview on 25 January 2019: “This was also a political and cultural battle, but the destruction of the Soviet Union prompted social-democratic parties to quickly join neoliberal globalization and to begin to destroy social welfare”. Original quotation: “Era essa uma batalha também político e cultural, mas a destruição da União Soviética fez os partidos socialdemocráticos, rapidamente, aderirem à globalização neoliberal e a começarem a destruição do bem-estar social”.

approach can be seen in terms of participation, electioneering integration, aggregation, conflict resolution, recruitment, policy-making. As it will be discussed, the European left group developed its role in all those categories.

The genesis and the praxis of the GUE was related to this functional generic character, its need to encompass different perspectives to aggregate forces around a general programme based on cooperation, democratic participation, and reforms of EU institutions.<sup>86</sup>

Before the creation of the GUE, some important processes occurred in the field of the left wing, for instance, communist parties had been acting in the EP through the *Communist and Allied Group* since 1973. This grouping was dismantled during the crisis of the communist movement in 1989 (as an ideological consequence of the collapse of the USSR, and fundamentally because of internal divergences between party-members), as it was not “an effective forum within which to pursue either an acceleration of the struggle for European union or a realignment of the European left” (Dunphy, 2004: 68).<sup>87</sup>

In fact, the centre-left was reorganized in the late 1980s, for instance, with the transition of some of the ex-PCI forces (PDS) to the field of the *Socialist Group* in the European Parliament, and of others to the field of the *International Socialist* grouping as well. The European left was still reformulating its ideas about the transformations in their own countries and the impact of those transformations upon their organizations. Until that moment, the role played by the national dimension in European left parties’ life had more importance in relation to the transnational gravitational power.

Another fact is that the GUE previously contributed to the re-orbiting of the European left-wing bodies. One group that resulted from the differences between French and Italian forces was the CGD (Coalition des Gauches), composed by the PCF, the PCP, and the KKE. The other formation was composed by the PCI, the PCE/IU, the Portuguese PS, and Synaspismos, in 1989, but its life was short, and it had an if ended in 1993 after the PCI’s destruction. In 1994, with the

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<sup>86</sup> As Confederal group in the EU Parliament, the GUE, as other groups/political parties, had the power to legislate (with the Council), to decide the EU budget (part of the expenditure, only), and to control other EU institutions.

<sup>87</sup> Despite the cooperation on Eurocommunist ideas, the PCI and the PCE had divergent positions about participating in EEC institutions: the PCI had favourable positions, while the French PCF was more attached to its national tasks and saw the EEC/EU as an imperialist effort of the USA and Germany to control the economy in Europe (Damiani, 2016).

incorporation of the IU/PCE in the transnational activities, there was a qualitative transformation in the composition of the European left, which changed its name, becoming the Gauche Unitaire Européenne (GUE), or European Unitarian Left. During the first years, its composition was the PCP/CDU, the IU/PCE, the PRC, the PCF, the KKE, and Synaspismos (March, 2012: 158).

The Gauche Unitaire Européenne, GUE, assumed a reformist position regarding the EU while the CGD demonstrated its opposition to European institutions (Damiani, 2016). The movement was still diverging on the problem of national question of socialism, and also concerning the lack of an international common dialogue/organization. Despite the persistent desire for autonomy, the left wing was then reorganized in 1994 (Ives Mény, 2009; March, 2012: 160). The two different dimensions of the European left-wing forces, the transnational and national radical levels, were finally reunited under the name of GUE.

The importance that the integration process (and the EP) acquired after the Maastricht Treaty, in 1992, is undoubtedly a key practical factor that contributed to this re-orbiting of the left. The spectrum of the left would then gain another fundamental space for its ideological formation with the adherence of the Nordic Green Left (NGL), in 1995, after the EU expansion in Northern Europe.

The group was made up of twenty-eight MEPs from all the parties previously affiliated to the GUE and the CGD, to which are added, among others, the elected representatives of the parties of the Austrian new left and those of Sweden and Finland, formerly gathered in the Nordic Green Left group (NGL). Thus, after the European elections of 1994, the parliamentary Eurogroup GUE-NGL was born (Damiani, 2016: 202).

The new group was composed, from 1994 to 1999, by 9 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) from Spain, 7 from France, 5 from Italy, 4 from Greece, and 3 from Portugal.<sup>88</sup> Theoretical perspectives such as social class, socialism, communism, social transformation, revolution, etc., were not present in its constitution. Instead, a new set of terminologies complemented such a constituent process of the European left. For instance, the focus on the duality between centre and periphery, human rights, citizens' rights, defence of the environment and peace, were the values adopted in the European context of the

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<sup>88</sup> Source: [europarl.europa.eu](http://europarl.europa.eu): European Election Results for 1994 and 1999 elections.

democratic deficit in the 1990s. Those new perspectives were an expression of how the European left would conduct political struggles in the decades to come.

Technical requirements for the participation in the EP were certainly a prominent factor in the union of different left-wing organizations in a group that, in general, was critical of the EU model established by Maastricht, although at the same time it was also favourable to the integration process, but in a different manner. The GUE/NGL ideological profile in the integration process of the left wing in Europe, as expressed by one of the IU members in an interview, was significant considering that the nature of the group was more ideological than organizational. The group had a different functioning structure than a political party, counting more on cooperation among its MEPs (through conferences, plenary sessions, and internal debates) and less on classic internal structure of debates (such as congress). Certainly, the group had a central role in the left rally in the EP. It was an attempt to assemble communist forces, but it was more representative than that, since the configuration of the European left was far bigger than its radical and communist fractions. Moreover, the left's articulation at the European level had an ideological dimension in the relation of forces. Franz Peres argued in an interview on 24 April 2019 that:

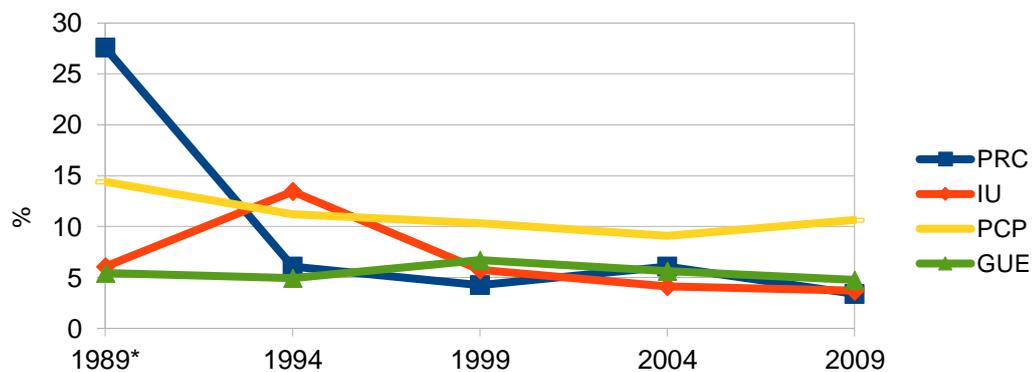
Well, because the left politics in Europe is configured in ideological groups, there was a certain ideological identification; on one hand there were several communist parties, ecologists, parties that had, let's say, very similar ideological sensibilities, and on the other hand, the need to articulate as a group; on one hand the social democratic parties and on the other popular parties of the right were also articulating - it was a political necessity to coordinate the initiatives, the complaints, the proposals, from a scope as coordinated as possible among countries - that was the origin of it all (Franz, 2019).<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Franz (2019) "Bueno, porque la política de la izquierda en europa se configura en grupos ideológicos, había una cierta identificación ideológica, habían por un lado varios partidos comunistas, ecologistas, partidos que tenían digamos sensibilidades ideológicas muy afines, y por otro lado la necesidad de articularse como grupo, puesto que por un lado los partidos social demócratas y por otro lado los partidos populares de la derecha se estaban articulando también - era una necesidad política coordinar las iniciativas, las denuncias, las propuestas, desde un ámbito lo más coordinado posible de países - eso fue la origen de todo eso".

One example of the ideological configuration of the left-wing group occurred in its early stages, when the Italians from the PDS (ex-PCI) decided to leave the GUE to move to the Socialist group. But later, the PRC integration marked a transition of the GUE to a more left-wing perspective. Next, the ideological configuration of a European parliamentary group should be translated into numbers in the elections, and part of the GUE/NGL's existence was obviously explained due to and focused on this activity. In fact, as suggested by Panebianco (1979), the quantitative dimension of the organisation is a fundamental characteristic to distinguish its existing and acting capacity in the party system. In fact, the transformation of the left in Italy was an important fact which impacted the national scene, with implication also in the configuration at the transnational level.

**Figure 1: European Elections**



Source: Europar

\*1989 PRC result is related to the PCI

In general, the GUE/NGL's presence in elections has been relatively stable for twenty years, even more than in the national realities of some of its members. Despite the departure of the PCI, during the 1994 elections, the GUE had 28 seats, and 4.94% of the votes. In the 1999 European elections, the GUE, now

with the NGL, had 42 seats corresponding to 6.71% of the votes. During the 2004 elections, the GUE/NGL gained 41 seats, corresponding to 5.60% of the votes.<sup>90</sup> The confederal nature of the GUE/NGL was due to its parliamentary existence but it assumed also an ideological importance in the group. More than its functioning, the GUE/NGL also assembled internal differences in a generic programme, as it was expressed in an interview on 7 February 2019 by one of the members that was present in this transformation process of the GUE, Paolo Ferrero:

So, at the European level I think that the positive thing about the GUE is that it is the aggregation of anti-liberals, and it certainly suffers a little from being excessively a number of national rooms, and therefore there are those who are for the EU, who are against the EU, who are for the euro, who are against. This is a weakness, but it is also the condition of being together (Ferrero, 2019).<sup>91</sup>

From the words of the current vice-President of the Party of the European Left (PEL) and PRC's former Secretary, Paolo Ferrero, it is possible to have a picture of the plural criteria that enabled different national political parties to occupy a place in the group. This was a point of strength in the group to the extent that a plurality of perspectives could act together, indicating somehow an overcoming of sectarian approaches. The European left face was, therefore, plural. As argued by Richard Dunphy, "such broad diversity has strengthened the group numerically within the EP, but has further weakened its internal cohesion" (2004: 172).

One of its strongest forces was its anti-liberal countenance and its confederal structure. For this reason, the PCP was one of the political parties that used a confederal organization to act in the EU Parliament. The confederal dimension was a fundamental criterion for the Portuguese participation, since

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<sup>90</sup> Election data results available at: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/>

<sup>91</sup> Ferrero (2019): "E quindi a livello europeo io penso che la cosa positiva del GUE è che è la aggregazione dei anti-liberisti, e certo patisce un pò di essere eccessivamente una somatoria di stanze nazionale, e quindi c'è l'ha chi è per l'UE, chi è contro l'UE, chi è per l'euro, chi è contro. Questa è una debolezza, però è anche la condizione di stare assieme"

national sovereignty, and the sovereignty of the PCP itself, should be preserved. In the words of a PCP member, Vladimiro Vale, in an interview on 21 March 2019:

The PCP was at the foundation of the GUE and it valued it; in fact there were forces that were converging from the left, and that it was necessary the existence of an instrument that had a confederal nature, that respected the independence of each one of the political forces that constitute it, and thus the confederal aspect, and therefore, for us it was also essential to take this step. Now, we continued to consider that the GUE respects this, that the main agenda of the struggle remains the national space (Vladimiro, 2019).<sup>92</sup>

The plurality, as it can be observed, was not only an advantage. Avoiding classical communist concepts, the GUE/NGL was establishing its ideology on the field of a left more-close-to-the-centre, both assuring the inclusion of different types of political parties, and also the absence of more radical and, thus, fundamental debates about its social structure. On one hand, there were many parts with their own perspectives composing the whole, and on the other hand the relation of the whole to the parts could not be other than a synthesis of the plurality. Thus, the relations between the whole and the parts are helpful to understand how independent national parties were in relation to the group since its foundation, which would be a favourable relation for organizations that were focused mainly on national matters.

#### **4.2.1. The GUE/NGL as the European Collective will?**

Was the formation of GUE/NGL an expression and/or a stimulation of a collective will? As the history of the GUE/NGL suggests, the formation of the group expressed the level of articulation between some left-wing parties of

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<sup>92</sup> Vladimiro (2019): “O PCP esteve na fundação do GUE e valorizou, de fato havia ali forças que haviam convergência, de esquerda e que precisavam ter ali um instrumento que tivesse uma natureza confederal, que respeitasse a independência de cada uma das forças políticas que o constituem, e aí o aspecto confederal, e portanto, para nós também era fundamental dar esse passo. Agora, nós continuamos a considerar que o GUE respeita isso, que a pauta principal da luta continua a ser o espaço nacional”

European countries. The building process was not essentially determined by popular participation. Rather, it was an action taken by the leaderships of political parties at the transnational level of international debates, negotiations, and forums.

In fact, the history of the GUE/NGL formation is part of the history of the European Parliament, therefore it is part of the democratic deficit problem faced by this European transnational institution. The democratic deficit was not restricted to the question of the proportional (non)representation of social classes in the parliament.<sup>93</sup> The problem of democracy was also located in socio-economic issues faced by the EU, such as unemployment and precarization as part of a general dismantling of the world of labour.

For instance, in an interview with José Del Roio on 25 January 2019 it was mentioned the situation created in Europe with the Maastricht Treaty:

Well, there we were, as we said, "for another globalization" and for another Europe. And then we opposed practically all treaties. But the basis of all this was Maastricht of 1992, the rest is a consequence of Maastricht (Del Roio, 2019).<sup>94</sup>

Denying and refusing Maastricht, then became one of the principal roles played by the European left, a superstructural struggle that would need national translations. As an ulterior consequence, the GUE/NGL action in the EP would be that of being and offering an alternative capable of overcoming the ideas and practices derived from the Maastricht Treaty.

The GUE/NGL distance from the terrain of production, due to its own transnational and superstructural nature, was in fact an impediment to develop direct multi-level actions, although it was still possible the creation of the ideological work. The European left field of action was ideology, the superstructures of European societies' structure, a dimension that Gramsci indicated as the level of consciousness of the corporative interests intrinsically

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<sup>93</sup> The meaning of Parliament, as Lenin (1996) characterized it in *The State and Revolution* as a bourgeois, class parliament, it is the anti-democratic representation of an anti-democratic social system in which a given class exercises hegemony.

<sup>94</sup> Del Roio (2019): "Bom, ai nós eramos, como a gente dizia "por uma outra globalização" e por uma outra europa. E ai nós nos opusemos praticamente a todos os tratados. Mas a base disso tudo é Maastricht de 1992, o resto é consequência de Maastricht"

connected to the material dimension of society, to the real people. Thus, without enough electoral forces to combat Maastricht in the transnational space, the alternative would be to support political debate through national parties.

The GUE/NGL was not a bottom-up construction in the sense of a possible emergence from the mass. The group was not exactly an expression of a collective will, instead, its creation was an expression of the capability of an inclusive dialogue of left-wing national forces. The enlargement of perspectives from communist to a broader anti-liberal position was condensed and entangled in the European left-wing group.<sup>95</sup> On the opposite side, whether the GUE/NGL promoted collective interests or not, deserves some more attention.

#### 4.2.2. GUE/NGL - The oxymoron?

In 1994, the GUE published its *Constituent Declaration*, in which it was expressed its position regarding the EU integration process and its acceptance of different perspectives in the field of the left. While declaring itself as an open political organization the Confederal group also declared its favourable position to the EU integration but under a different socio-political strategy and economic programme. In the words of the *Sinistra Classe e Rivoluzione*, leadership figure Claudio Bellotti (2019), ex-PRC member, in an interview on 14 February 2019:

The idea at that time was that the government was Europe and the national governments were like the regions, and the battle had to be fought there. But, it did not take three things into account. The first was the economic context. That area of reform was neither national nor international. And it did not take into account another thing that, although it is true that the European Union has produced greater integration, it has not abolished states, it has not abolished the differences among them; and the euro, more than a single currency, as it has been shown in the crisis, is a bit like a fixed exchange rate; but it did

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<sup>95</sup> The left wing is certainly bigger than the European left. The European left is thought in this dissertation to be the part of a left-wing organized body, thus, the GUE/NGL and the PEL (as it will be discussed in chapter 6 and 7) includes, among others, national forces of the radical left (the radical left that is classified as such by Richard Dunphy (2004), Luke March (2012), and Marco Damiani (2016)).

not disappear, so much as it was seen in the crisis, Italy was going one way and Germany another. Prices, wages and even the most strictly monetary aspects, namely public debt (Bellotti, 2019).<sup>96</sup>

The shift in the political battlefield from the national to the transnational level brought, therefore, separate left-wing organizations to accept the multicultural and multinational differences as a way of facing the new aspect of European politics, i.e., the necessity of occupying the transnational space reserved for the European left. In other words, there was more integration, and the transnational level of politics acquired a new importance, which national parties could not occupy alone.

First, the purpose of acting in the EP could not be achieved without gathering enough political parties, and second, the gathering was made in the name of structured cooperation that was not of minor importance. As mentioned by Bellotti in an interview on 14 February 2019, many important aspects of the EU integration were generally left aside without a deep discussion about regional differences, the role of the state, and the euro. In this sense, the lack of debates regarding the different aspects of the EU integration process can also be found in the process that led to the creation of the organism of the European left.

But that led to less discussion, because it was an initiative linked to the functioning of the European Parliament. For example, there were also financial aspects, to make a group you had to have a certain presence according to countries and numbers of deputies; agreements were made to manage this, even if there was no effective political commonality. Because then, as you know, in the European Parliament there is not a great voting discipline, perhaps the GUE is one of the most

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<sup>96</sup> Bellotti (2019): "Il GUE era una forza piú ampia, perché c'era la partecipazione di forze che anche non aderivano. L'idea è quella che ormai il governo era l'Europa e i governi nazionali erano come le regione e che la battaglia si dovesse fare lì. Questo non teneva conto di tre cose. La prima era un contesto economico, quello spazio di riforma non c'era né a livello nazionale né internazionale; e non teneva conto anche di una altra cosa che, anche se è vero che l'Unione europea há prodotto un integrazione maggiore, non há abolito gli Stati, non ha abolito le differenze tra questi; e anche l'euro, piú che una moneta unica, come si è dimostrato nella crisi, è un pó come un cambio fisso ma non è che sono scomparsi, tanto è che come si è visto nella crisi, l'Italia andava da una parte e Germania da un'altra. Prezzi, salari e anche gli aspetti piú strettamente monetari, cioè il debito pubblico. L'Unione Europea non esiste sotto il capitalismo"

homogeneous, also because it is smaller, and even in the vote you often see that there was differentiation, articulation, of different kind (Bellotti, 2019).<sup>97</sup>

As indicated by Bellotti, practical reasons were fundamental to the GUE initiative. One was the practical interest of the European left in taking up a seat in the EP, which was allowed by the acceptance of the plurality in theory, translated in practice into an abstract, undefined ideological debate. This uncertainty corresponded to the limited democratic conception of the European left aimed at making this cooperation possible, and vice versa, as the cooperation occurred due to the already conceptual transformation carried on by the national political parties. In general, the “enemy” was neoliberalism, and it was omnipresent.

As argued by Mair and Thomassen (2010: 23), one of the main electoral issues regarding the European democracy is related to the “second-order” conception of the European elections, once European people could not really express European issues about themselves, but mainly local or national, and thus the idea that democracy requires representation encountered some of its limits at the transnational level. In this sense, according to Mair and Thomassen (2010), European elections could be another space for national parties to dispute votes based on national issues.

Given the distinct circumstances whereby parties and elections are disconnected from governing at the European level, and given the distinct circumstances in which a notion of representative democracy is promoted in the absence of representative government, there is much less constraint on the representative role of parties at the Union level than there is at the national level. In other words, precisely because they don't govern, parties at the European level have a much greater capacity to act as representatives (Mair and Thomassen, 2010: 27).

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<sup>97</sup> Bellotti (2019): “Ma quello ha succitato meno discussione, perché era un iniziativa legata al funzionamento del Parlamento Europeo. Per esempio, c'erano aspetti anche finanziari, per far un gruppo si doveva avere una certa presenza per paesi e numeri di deputati, si facevano accordi per gestire questo, anche se non c'era un effettiva comunanza politica. Perché poi, come sai, nel Parlamento Europeo non c'è una grande disciplina di voto, forse il GUE è uno dei più omogenei, anche perché è più piccolo, e anche nelle votazione proprio spesso vedi che ci sono differenziazione, articolazione, di diversi genere”

The argument provided by Mair and Thomassen is that the European electorate can be considered a “single European electorate” due to their European similarities and national party systems, thus a perspective of totality. For this reason, the European system could be more effective for the development of grass-roots ideas than normally assumed (2010: 29-30).

Further, the GUE was committed to integration, in its own way:

The Confederal Group of the European United Left is firmly committed to European integration, although in a different form to the existing model. We want to see integration based on fully democratic institutions with a priority commitment to ensuring a new model of development aimed at tackling the most serious issues facing us (GUE, 1994).<sup>98</sup>

For the GUE/NGL, the commitment to act in the EP was based on the belief that the EU could be transformed into a fully democratic space where institutions would create social policies regarding employment, environment, and equal rights. In addition, GUE/NGL documents suggests that the engagement with European integration and transformation through the improvement of democratic institutions, the implementation of new models of development, and respect for the environment and solidarity were the strategic design (GUE, 1994).<sup>99</sup>

The leadership of the GUE/NGL at that time was in the hands of Alonso Puerta, from the Spanish IU. Because of his experience in the complex functioning of the IU, the mission in the GUE was to keep some rules as general and flexible (Damiani, 2016; Dunphy, 2004). In fact, some of the ideological perspectives found inside the group were radicals, reformists, anti-system, anti-establishment, and left-greens, which were an indication of a non-uniform strategy but also a bridge that helped overcome previous insurmountable differences that led to internal splits and fragmentation (March, 2008: 16). In this

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<sup>98</sup> GUE Constituent Declaration of July, 1994. Document available at: <https://www.guengl.eu/history/>.

<sup>99</sup> *ibid.*

sense, the group was able to be, in fact, an instrument of ideological dissemination of its members perspectives.

In the GUE manifesto there is an interest in developing a more democratic EU, surpassing the democratic deficit of institutions, establishing solidarity and promoting cooperation among EU countries. Accordingly, Richard Dunphy (2004) argues that the so-called radical left was transformative since it believed in transforming capitalism. The general appearance of this transformative approach was democratic, with elements of criticism of capitalism. As argued by the ex-PRC Senator Del Roio on an interview on 25 January 2019:

Well, it was a plurality of parties, but a defined plurality, they are anti-capitalist parties, so that already gives you a very definite trait. That is why we speak of the greens, but of the anti-capitalist greens. So, those who are against neoliberal globalization, those who are eventually in favour of a Europe, which we call 'of the people' within the European revolutionary tradition, and then as I say, each country has its own problems, which are very different: they do not speak the same language, they don't have the same religion, they don't have the same history, it's complicated (Del Roio, 2019).<sup>100</sup>

To some extent those differences were not of minor importance. Sooner or later the European left would assume a specific direction. Initially, it had the internal aim of "balance between everyone's concerns" (in relation to its party-members), as outlined in the Constituent Declaration. Thus, as a result of particular initiatives and perspectives from different left-wing political parties from different countries, the GUE sought a different type of integration, in which the Maastricht Treaty was seen as the primary external opponent.

To this end, it is possible to indicate with Sartori (2005: 23-24) that the GUE/NGL succeeded in being an electoral organism with critical purposes

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<sup>100</sup> Del Roio (2019): "Bom, era uma pluralidade de partidos, mas uma pluralidade com definição, são partidos anti-capitalistas, então isso já te dá um traço bastante definitivo. Por isso falamos dos verdes, mas dos verdes anti-capitalistas. Então, aqueles que são contra a globalização neoliberal, aqueles que são eventualmente por uma europa, que a gente chama, dos povos, dentro da tradição revolucionária europeia, e depois como digo, tem problemas de cada país serem muito diferentes: não falam a mesma língua, não tem a mesma religião, não tem a mesma história, é complicado".

regarding the EU's functioning, while also managing to act as a mediator for national left-wing forces bringing the particularisms into some cohesive and integrated transnational unity, even though its success in terms of governmental power was still far below from its expectations.

Its main purpose was to fight for a fully democratic EU through institutional transformations, a long-term goal if seen from the possibility of reforming the Union. A purpose that could not be considered closed in itself, as democracy is more than the institutional transformation of the EU, but it involves the relations with the parties, the functioning of the regime, and the relations of production. One result then is that the European left was, and still is, on the periphery of the EU policy making, and for this reason, their initial unclear transformative purposes were (and still are) far from being achieved in the parliamentary life, a fact that suggests the limits of its (clear) electoral-focused and institutional strategy. This approach is partially distinct from the motivation of social transformation that unified the group. Partially distinct because it suggests that the type of social transformation with a focused institutional/electoral approach would have to be constricted to the limits of the idea of political emancipation.

### **4.3. The parts and the whole: the European left in the 1990s**

The integration process produced two different speeds of socio-economic development in Europe as the integration introduced and produced more inequality with arrangements designed by the elites of the European institutions. The common-sense discourse that helped to promote the integration was based on the globalization conjuncture of modernity, democracy, technology, and aspirations for a better life (Del Roio, 1998; Morelli, 2011).

More evident of the economic focus of the European integration was the subsequent attempt of the Treaty of Amsterdam to establish a Union based on its citizens and on the transparency of its transnational institutions, but without great impact, maintaining instead the general direction of the Maastricht Treaty.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Regarding the Amsterdam Treaty, of 1997, Morelli (2011) argues that: "The working group in charge of preparing the documents for the intergovernmental conference indicated three main lines of reform, which certainly did not represent a novelty: the Europe of citizens (strengthening of democracy and transparency of institutions and policies); institutional consolidation (efficiency of the community bodies, in particular of the decision-making mechanism); the external identity of Europe (greater capacity for

In this context, as it was observed in Chapter 3, the European left developed an institutional approach and became an important force in national elections. Based on this situation, now the discussion will be developed regarding the praxis of the European left in the 1990s.

#### 4.3.1. PRC

In the 1990s, the integration process was an unavoidable reality in the countries analysed in this dissertation, but the ways through which the integration occurred generated some anguish in the left wing. In the Italian case, the PRC was favourable to an alternative integration process and another path of development for the country. For instance, in *Il Congresso Movimento per la Rifondazione Comunista* of 1991, the struggle for democratic participation and economic democracy was a high priority (PRC, 1991).<sup>102</sup> Yet, in its formative phase after the dismantling of the PCI, the PRC theoretically focused on bringing initiatives and struggles from the movement to the institutions at national and transnational levels. Mentioning the legacy of the revolutionary tradition, Armando Cossutta, a member of the PRC leadership, argued that “The ideals of the October revolution have not collapsed. Our ideas have moved men over the centuries and for these ideas we will found the Party tomorrow”.<sup>103</sup>

Yet, following a certain communist tradition that considered sovereignty as an important aspect of class struggles, the PRC argued, in the Second National Congress, in 1993, that the alternative to the Maastricht Treaty would be a “supranational cooperation” based on the “independence and sovereignty of the

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action in the field of international relations”. Original quotation: “Il gruppo di lavoro incaricato di predisporre i documenti per la conferenza intergovernativa indicava tre linee principali di riforma, che non rappresentavano certo una novità: l’Europa dei cittadini (rafforzamento della democrazia e trasparenza delle istituzioni e delle politiche); il consolidamento istituzionale (efficienza degli organi comunitari, in particolare del meccanismo decisionale); l’identità esterna dell’Europa (maggiore capacità d’azione nel campo delle relazioni internazionali)” (2011: 246). In general, based on Morelli, the Treaty was insignificant since the reforms established did not result in real changes in the EU’s practice.

<sup>102</sup> Document: *Il Congresso Movimento Rifondazione Comunista*, giornale *Liberazione*, 21 December, 1991. The *Liberazione* journal was available at Fondazione Lili e Lesli Basso. It was a newspaper publication of the PRC, whose website ceased its activities in 2014 due to difficulties in its maintenance.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

people” as complementary aspects of a European democratic project (*Liberazione*, 12 November 1993, p. 8).<sup>104</sup>

The supranational cooperation formula proposed by the PRC was related to the significant problems faced by the Italian communists within the integration process at the domestic level. The discussion about democracy in the party was in evidence during the debates of 1993, when its internal discussion for a Congress posed the problem of internal democracy and the relations between the leadership and the grassroots.<sup>105</sup>

In the document *Contributo per il dibattito Congressuale* (Contributions for the Congress Debate) internal divergences appeared as a problem that should be treated in the basis of democracy: “It must be clear that democracy is not a luxury or a concession” (PRC, 1993:1).<sup>106</sup> The proposal was to keep the transformation in the communist organization going, deepening its character, and trying something new. In this sense, the mission of regrouping the left was not limited to the PRC’s internal problems, and it seems the attempt to apply Gramsci’s idea of what the Modern Prince would be a laboratory of experiences.

The PRC was also debating how to involve the left wing (organized and individually) beyond the PRC to build a broader form of opposition. In fact, the characteristic of the Italian communist left at that time was the internal breakdown (increased by the referendum of 18<sup>th</sup> April). Thus, the PRC understood the reconstruction not as a problem of conjuncture, but a possibility of structural challenge in the political world, as a consequence of a democratic involvement of

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<sup>104</sup> In this II Congress, the PRC had already assumed the role of a political party, thus it was no longer a movement.

<sup>105</sup> To illustrate, Della Vecchia shared its memories in an interview on 19 February 2019 about that time: “At that time, I was a law student, passionate about constitutional law, and Binni took interventions in the Constituent Assembly, the most beautiful intervention saying that everyone (communists, socialists, workers, notaries, whites, blacks) could study, and they should have the right to study all together in the same school, but only if the school was public, otherwise there would have been the socialist, catholic, communist, notary, reach, and the poor school, and this could not give birth to a nation. I remember my speech, and the feeling was very strong, I remember my comrades and I all standing up, the feeling was for another Europe, for another world with the (social) movements, but also the defense of the constitution and its anti-fascist values”. Original quotation: “Io, in quell’epoca, ero studente di giurisprudenza, appassionato di diritto costituzionale, e Binni prese interventi nell’Assemblea costituente, l’intervento piú bello che diceva che tutti (comunisti, socialisti, operaio, notaio, bianchi, neri) potessero studiare e hanno il diritto di studiare tutti insieme nella stessa scuola, solo se la scuola era pubblica, altrimenti ci sarebbe stata la scuola socialista, catolica, comunista, del notaio, del rico, del povero, e questo non poteva far nascere una nazione. Io mi ricordo il mio intervento, e il sentimento era fortissimo, mi ricordo io e miei compagni tutti in piedi, il sentimento era di un’altra Europa, di altro mondo possibile con i movimenti, ma anche la difesa della costituzione e dei suoi valori antifascisti.” (Della Vecchia, in an interview on 19 February 2019).

<sup>106</sup> Document of PRC internal debate. Available at Fondazione Lisli e Lelio Basso, in Rome, in the *Fondo Maurizio Fabbri*.

forces around the party and the idea that democracy was a basic entity (1993: 4).<sup>107</sup>

In his introductory speech during the II National Congress of the PRC, in Rome in 1993, Lucio Magri indicated the challenge posed by electoral reform particularly regarding the existence of the PRC in the electoral scenario, since the party could be forced to make alliances to survive:

Decisive, however, is the fact that the Italian crisis has reached a breaking point. First of all, it is a political-institutional crisis. (...). Parties that have managed power for decades are now decomposing. Not some people - as even the Pope insists on saying - but entire ruling groups, an entire political class, are today engaged in a great battle for freedom: not political freedom, freedom from prison. Together with them, the state apparatus and institutions are overwhelmed: the leaders of the secret services were accused and charged for robberies, association with the mafia, attacks on the constitution; ministers of the Interior and of Justice, and of the Budget, perhaps accomplice (of the crimes), certainly tolerant. (...). In short, it is not the crisis of a government or a majority, it is the collapse of a regime (PRC, 1993: 2).

Magri's speech proceeds to discuss that the crisis was also on the socio-economic terrain, with hundreds of thousands of unemployed people, and bankrupt companies (including part of FIAT). Moreover, it was a crisis of national unity, "We are in the midst of one of those organic crises" (PRC, 1993: 2).

At that time, the Lega Nord party (today, Lega) was already an important far-right political organization in Northern Italy capable of threatening the functioning of normal democracy, and so the consequences of the organic crisis were considered in the PRC's analysis. Thus, the electoral scene was still part of a complex problem for the Italian Left.

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<sup>107</sup> Among other aspects, the referendum of 18<sup>th</sup> April of 1993 established a mixed electoral system, in which there was the threshold of 4% for the access to the Chamber of Deputies – the so-called "*sbarramento*". In fact, the methods used in Italian elections would be subject to change still for many years.

But since we Italian Communists, from Gramsci's time, consider the overcoming of the system, particularly in the West, not as a concentrated and sudden act of taking power, but as a historical-social process, construction of a hegemony, not a painless transformation but in stages, it is in politics and concrete struggles, in each historically determined phase, that this diversity of perspective is measured and expressed (PRC, 1993: 8).

The *stagism* constituted the heart of PRC's strategy. Gramsci's name - who did not deny revolutionary process - was claimed in support of this strategic perspective. The perspective of war of position, according to Gramsci, did not exclude the perspective of *Jacobinism* and the philosophy of praxis as its motor, in the sense that the war of position is a constant battle and preparation of the subaltern classes for the construction of the integral state. On the other hand, the strategic response formulated by the PRC was a perspective that denied the possibility of upheaval. In any case, there was a perspective of "construction of hegemony" interpreted according to PRC's previous experience, in which the Eurocommunist tradition was the main example of how the Italian left could develop its praxis.

"War of position" in Gramsci's conception, just as for Lenin and Trotsky, was not a programmatic strategy that he recommended to be adopted by the proletariat. Rather, he recognised it as a technique of nascent 'biopower' deployed by the bourgeoisie, and to which the proletariat, subalternly confined in bourgeois civil society, was constrained to respond with a realistic political strategy. (Thomas, 2009, p. 150)

Rather than interpreting the question of war of position as a condition in which the class struggle was developed, and thus requiring the best of the political art of the communists, there were more aspects of continuity in the PRC with its recent past rather than new or different features. Part of the old PCI strategy was also the progressive development of the party in the national relation

of forces. However, the gaining of positions in the relation of forces is a necessary but not a sufficient condition in the war of position for the socialist transition.

The situation can be observed in accordance with what was argued by Gramsci about the relation of war of position and the passive revolution, in the sense that a historical event can contain “*modificazione molecolari*” (molecular modifications) that can lead to other modifications in the structure of forces (Gramsci, 2014: 1767). In Gramsci’s words,

The political party, for all groups, is precisely the mechanism that in civil society performs the same function that the State, but in a broader and more synthetic way in the political society, that is, it procures the welding between organic intellectuals of a given group, that leading group, and traditional intellectuals, and the party precisely performs this role according to its fundamental function of elaborating its own components, elements of a social group born and developed as “economic”, until the point of making them become qualified political intellectuals, organizers of all activities and functions related to the organic development of an integral, civil, and political society (Gramsci, 2014: 1522).

Thus, Gramscian concern was about creating favourable conditions to develop a hegemonic project, therefore creating the political *mechanisms* in civil society (the party and its organic intellectuals) that would afterwards be qualified and interested in social change. In this sense, the PRC had to focus on internal problems that posed obstacles to its external praxis.

One of those problems was the composition (formation and education) of its own organic intellectuals as part of the constitution of the party as an important organism in civil society.<sup>108</sup> In the 1990s, the PRC had to deal with internal splits, due to its multiplicity of views and incapacity to reach a consensus among its

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<sup>108</sup> For Alessandro Valentini: “Rifondazione Comunista must be able to transform, in political times, the inertia of a set of militants, often orphans of the PCI, into leadership who are consciously clear about their tasks (...). It is necessary to form a leadership group that are holders of, in the words of Gramsci, “an intellectual and moral reform”. Original quotation: “Rifondazione Comunista deve saper trasformare, in tempi politici, l’inerzia di un insieme di militanti, spesso orfani del PCI, in quadri consapevolmente lucidi dei loro compiti (...). È necessario la formazione di un gruppo dirigente portatore, per dirla con Gramsci, di “una riforma intellettuale e morale” (2000: 156).

main dominant internal fractions. For instance, one of their main internal fractions endorsed Lucio Magri as one of its leaders. Some years after the PRC formation, Magri was part of another rupture in the party, a process that culminated in the formation of another small left-wing organization in Italy – the *Movimento dei Comunisti Unitari*.<sup>109</sup>

Between 1994 and 1995 another internal crisis struck the PRC, which since 1994 had Fausto Bertinotti's in the leadership.<sup>110</sup> The crisis was created when PRC's deputies voted to support the Dini Government against the Party's directives. In this same period, the Berlusconi government was elected, creating a very controversial situation in the country. For the communists, the result was another split of national and euro-deputies from the party.<sup>111</sup>

After the split caused by internal divergences among leadership and deputies, another internal problem occurred when the PRC was supportive of the Prodi Government in its first mandate, within the *L'Ulivo* coalition. Under Bertinotti and Cossutta's leadership, the PRC reached its historically highest number of votes in elections and, then, it had an important role in the parliament, which had the PDS in the leadership of the government. The support for the first Prodi Government was also a motivation for further internal splits and controversies.<sup>112</sup>

Thus, in the 1990s, the PRC had different moments of internal disagreements and reorganizations of its functioning, which on one hand produced more splits, but on the other hand, it can be seen as a necessary part of the constitution of the party's identity, or a process of molecular modifications that could improve the party' structure.<sup>113</sup>

If the splits were one aspect, another element of the praxis of the Italian communist left concerned the programmatic discussion regarding reality. In a debate about the political program of the party, in September 1996, the European

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<sup>109</sup> Years before the split, in a speech in the Italian parliament, in October 1992, Magri indicated that the PRC position was contrary to the Maastricht Treaty, and the party was in favour of a democratic Europe, but with its institutions aiming at solving social causes (Speech available in the PRC website of the Bergamo's branch: <http://www.PRCbergamo.it/2017/11/28/28-11-2017-lucio-magri-e-il-no-di-rifondazione-comunista-al-trattato-di-maastricht/>). However, Magri decided to abandon the formation process of the new group of Comunisti Unitari and returned instead to the journalistic activity.

<sup>110</sup> Bertinotti decided to follow the PDS after the collapse of the PCI, but a few years later he left the PDS to join the PRC to promote a radical and anti-capitalist political programme.

<sup>111</sup> According to Paolo Favilli (2011: 122), 13 deputies and 3 senators, 2 euro-deputies and 6 members of the leadership left the PRC in the 1995 split.

<sup>112</sup> One of the groups that left the PRC at this time formed another organization based on Marxist-Leninist and Maoist ideas.

<sup>113</sup> At that time the PRC counted 126.000 members, according to its date on 04 December 1996 (PRC, 1996: 4).

situation was taken into more consideration from a national perspective. The debate concerned the impact of years after the implementation of the Maastricht convergence parameters and the transnational possibilities in the national situation. In his intervention in this debate, Luigi Vinci argued that Maastricht was the front door for neoliberal reforms in each country and, as established in a meeting of the *European antagonist left* in Madrid, the perspective to reverse Maastricht that the PRC should defend would be the requirement for the realization of a referendum about the common currency, as a form of imposing positive social parameters in opposition to the anti-social development of integration (PRC, 1996: 64).<sup>114</sup>

Understanding the limits of institutional action, Vinci's speech proceeds to indicate the need of more power in the EP, and, therefore, to fight for a better national integration process and the European parliaments in a process of *redemocratizing* the political relations in Europe: "Appropriately, in this sense, the national Parliament should be committed to building areas of discussion and collaboration with the Italian representatives in the European Parliament" (1996: 66). The PRC's expectation was to contribute to the development of a favourable situation in the domestic environment with proposals regarding the reduction of working hours (thus, changing the unemployment rates), as well as the increase of welfare, the improvement of the situation in the *Mezzogiorno*, the question of the environment, socio-historical heritage, the reform of agriculture, and fiscal policy questions (PRC, 1996). In this sense, it is interesting to observe that regional differences were also a particular characteristic of Italy's subaltern integration in the EU: a process that despite the industrial development in the North of the country, the poverty of working classes in the South was still an unsolved problem.

These proposals contributed to the electoral activity of the party, and thus contributed to the PRC's experience in attempting to implement its pro-European ideas through the national parliament in a deep institutional and democratic approach. It was during this period that the *III Congresso Nazionale* was realized under the slogan "Renew politics to change society", as stated in the *Documenti Politici e Regolamento Congressuale*, Rome, 1996.

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<sup>114</sup> Document: *Ora è necessaria una svolta di politica economica e sociale. Atti della conferenza di programma del Partito della Rifondazione Comunista*. Roma, 14 Settembre, 1996.

The dates of these Congresses are important because they clearly mark, divide the phases. Because in 1996 it was the Congress that took place when Rifondazione was participating in the first government majority, in which Rifondazione gave parliamentary support, had no minister in the majority - and remained there until 1998 (Bellotti, 2019).<sup>115</sup>

From 1996 to 1998, the PRC had its most important experience in the institutional struggle as part of the national government. It was an experience that brought together the problematic connection between the internal set of perspectives that coexisted in the party, and the difficulties of a left-wing political party in dealing with a government interested in implementing the Maastricht rules. In fact, the final arrangements in the Italian economy to adapt the country to the Maastricht parameters were made by Prodi's Government.

The DPEF (Documento di Programmazione Economica e Finanziaria), a governmental project developed by taking into consideration plans for privatizations, cuts in public debts, and flexibility of labour, had no opposition from the PRC (that positioning was a catalyst in the problems faced by the PRC, given its important presence in the parliamentary majority and also as a member of the government). One possible reason for the PRC's support for the government's plans was the fact that the party had 26 deputies and 11 senators, being then an important force in the field of the left in the Parliament, and also that those deputies and senators could not uphold just a single general standpoint from within the PRC, but different perspectives regarding the institutional activity of the Italian left. Other aspects would be the heritage of practices from the PCI or their worry for keeping alive a centre-left government to prevent the emergence of a right-wing opposition. But, in one way or another, the PRC parliamentary activity was not coordinated or, at least, not guided by common principles in the party, producing ideological detours and practical deviations.

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<sup>115</sup> Bellotti in an interview on 14 February 2019: "Le date di questi Congressi sono importanti perché marcano chiaramente, dividono le fasi. Perché nel 1996 è stato il Congresso che si è fatto con la partecipazione alla prima maggioranza di governo, in cui Rifondazione dava un appoggio parlamentare, non aveva ministro nella maggioranza – e ci è rimasto fino il 1998".

Internal criticism because of the PRC's government participation was expressed through a motion in the congress's documents, for instance by the *Maitan* group inside the party, indicating that they had changed their route when they offered support for the Prodi Government. In opposition to the institutional routes taken by the party in the Italian government, the Maitan group was advocating for the path of the mass movement as the correct alternative for the anti-capitalistic struggle (PRC, 1996: 17-18).

Another issue in the 1990s involving Italian and European interests was the fight for the 35 hours working week. It was the PRC's interest to help pass the legislation that would change the world of labour, which would be a great political achievement for the communist movement and a social conquest for the Italian working classes. In fact, as argued by Ferrero in an interview on 7 February 2019,

With Prodi (government) we split a year later on the (question of) 35 hours, which if you want was a way of saying: okay, we won't make a mess about the monetary question (euro) because people agree on the single currency. (...). Prodi had signed a compromise document trying to pass the 35 hours by 1998. The minute after he signed that thing, and the crisis was resolved, it became clear that Prodi would never turn this into law, and therefore we were preparing the split (with the government). And by the end of the year, we would have broken up. And here the rupture began. And this favoured Prodi's crappy position, who was reassured by Cossutta, that he would have a majority in the parliamentary group (Ferrero, 2019).<sup>116</sup>

The contradictions were present again inside the Communist Party. The left-wing's belief was that it would be possible to reach some agreement or obtain reforms from a government that, despite being centre-left in its composition, was not oriented to collaborate with the reforms aimed by the PRC. On the other hand, according to Paolo Favilli (2011), the direct political support lent to the government by the PRC occurred during the rise of right-wing forces, such as the

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<sup>116</sup> Ferrero (2019): "Con Prodi rompiano un anno dopo sulle 35 ore, che se vuoi è un modo per dire: va bé, noi sulla moneta non facciamo casino, anche perché la gente era d'accordo sulla moneta unica. (...). Prodi ha fermato un compromesso di provare a far passare le 35 ore entro il 1998. Il minuto dopo che ferma quella cosa lì la crise si risolve, diventa chiaro che Prodi non farà mai la legge sulla cosa, e quindi noi ci prepariamo a come arrivare alla rottura. E alla fine dell'anno avremmo la rottura. E qui comincia la rottura. E questo favorisce la posizione schifosa di Prodi, che viene rassicurato da Cossutta sul fatto che Cossutta avrebbe una maggioranza al gruppo parlamentare". The brackets in the English quotation are indications of the questions involved in the context pointed out in the interview.

Lega Nord and other small organizations with fascist inspiration. Thus, agreements and alliances can also be considered as part of the relation of forces so as not to leave empty space to the opponents.

The government participation was seen as a possibility of achieving social transformation, with at least some perspectives of reforms that were important for the development of democracy. Thus, the participation of the PRC in Prodi's government was a form of bringing the left of the country to indirectly (maybe innocently) contribute to the Maastricht reforms, it was a practical form of bringing the communist left to the field of reformism. Bellotti argued in an interview on 14 February 2019 that:

What reformism historically says is: the state does not have a precise class role; it can be oriented through democracy to defend one's interest or another's. This is a thesis that I do not support, but it was the one of the Communist Party, at least after the war. And this is transferred to the European level (...). So, in autumn '98 there was a split, about 2/3 of the parliamentary group on the right and 1/3 on the left, that is 2/3 in the Italian Communist Party which remained in the D'Alema government, and 1/3 remained with Bertinotti in the break (Bellotti, 2019).<sup>117</sup>

Regarding the rupture with the government and with the majority in the national parliament, it was made in the following terms:

If the Prodi government is the government of concertation, of the entry into Europe of Maastricht and of the second Republic, since it performs this function for the great Italian bourgeoisie, the task of Rifondazione is to stay in the opposition (PRC, 1996: 14).

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<sup>117</sup> Bellotti (2019): "Il riformismo storicamente cosa dice: lo Stato non ha un preciso ruolo di classe, può essere orientato attraverso la democrazia a difendere un interesse o un altro. Questa è una tesi che io non sostengo, ma che però è stata la tesi del Partito Comunista, al meno nel dopo guerra. E questo viene trasferito sul piano europeo (...). Per cui nell'autunno 98 ce stata la scissione, circa 2/3 del gruppo parlamentare a destra e 1/3 a sinistra, cioè 2/3 nel Partito dei Comunisti Italiani che rimarra nel governo e stara nel governo D'Alema, 1/3 con Bertinotti nella rotura".

In this sense, the PRC's strategic approach to democracy was in accordance with a conception of gradual changes inside the normal democratic life, in which the struggles were reduced mainly to the dimension of small politics. In these circumstances, the struggles in the parliament were the main part of the PRC' fight for social change (in the sense of human emancipation), and the internal democracy in the party remained an unresolved issue. It was not clear what the connections between democracy and the socialist struggle were, but it was clear that the PRC's praxis was guided by stagism and obedience of the constitution, thus, a praxis constricted to the boundaries of the rules of the game.

However, at the level of strategy, those problems faced by the PRC have their roots in its ideological foundations, which indicate some weaknesses inside the organism that were reflected in its praxis. In fact, other splits that struck the party even later had the same root. As suggested by Alessandro Valentini, "The fragility of the PRC, like many other European communist parties, is, first of all, a theoretical fragility" (2000: 155).

Conversely, the rupture with the government in 1998 seems to have been inspired and later encouraged the PRC to approach national politics with a more radical standpoint, since they were situated in an antagonist position (i.e., not participating in the government anymore). Its *III Congress* indicates some initiatives against the privatization programme of the government, the financial programme, the flexibility of working hours, and an initiative to promote social conflict in order to reaffirm the mass movement as the central dimension of the party's praxis (PRC, 1996: 14).

The result was that the PRC pointed out in its analysis that it was unviable the decreased efficiency of Keynesianism (as a state approach on the maintenance of welfare, the restriction to public spending as a norm in the integration process, the difficulties imposed by global competition, and the maintenance of public welfare according to the interests of the ruling classes) (PRC, 1996: 18).

Thus, it was this controversial circumstance for adherence, participation, frustration, and rupture with the government that brought the Italian communists to experience reformism in practice and then going back to the field of opposition in the 1990s which compromised its image of a European left -wing party. Moreover, as a symptom of this situation, from the first PRC's Congress to their

third one, no direct mention was made about the praxis in the EP Groups, in the GUE/NGL. This indicated that the national dimension was the core strategic perspective in internal discussions, disregarding the fact that the globalization process of the European productive structure was due to the integration process, and as a result, it was producing a complex set of new international configurations of the world of labour that would request a multi-level response.

#### 4.3.2. PCE/IU

As seen in Chapter 3, once the three main purposes of the PCE were clearly established in its strategy (to create an alternative at the levels of government, state, and society) and the national democratic context became stabilized, the party was able to exercise leadership of the Spanish reunited left, the IU. In its *Estatutos del Partido Comunista de España*, of 1991, it was established that the party was committed to the creation of an alternative to capitalism (1991: 3).<sup>118</sup> In fact, Izquierda Unida was the organization that enabled their participation in elections. It had a democratic internal functioning, and as argued by Dunphy (2004: 125), the PCE was the main party among the members (which included Partido de Acción Socialista, Partido Socialista Unificado de Cataluña, Partido Comunista de los Pueblos de España, Federación Progressista).

For the European left in Spain, the strategy was clearly defined in the 1990s. In the *Información* of its XIII Congress, of 1992, the definition of socialism was linked to the strategy of the political party in the following words: “Socialism is democracy taken to its final consequences” (1992: 4).

In the first Congress, of 1989, both the IU and the PCE agreed that they needed an alternative government, an alternative model of the state, and an alternative to the model of society and its relations with the state (IU, 1989: 9).<sup>119</sup>

The democratization of the state with a parliament reinvigorated in its connection with the people, perfecting the State of Autonomies towards a federal horizon and with an

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<sup>118</sup> A great part of PCE's documents and discussions are present in its publication called *Información*.

<sup>119</sup> Document: Izquierda Unida. I Asamblea General, Madrid, 11 y 12 Febrero 1989.

administration that makes people feel that the public powers are really at their service and not vice versa. (IU, 1989: 16).<sup>120</sup>

If the PCE's strategy outlined a general perspective associating democracy with socialism, for the IU the practical lines of the same strategy were better defined, or translated, as the improved ideas of the state were according to peoples' interests, in which the concept of democracy had a practical motivation. It was practical because it was directly linked to the possibility of changing the features of the Spanish state, the Spanish government, and Spanish society through a process of "perfecting" the democratic regime. Supposedly, the immediate impression of this idea is that the deepening of normal democracy would culminate in true democracy.

While the institutional praxis of the European left was still in development, some other struggles faced by the PCE during the 1990s were related to its own existence, as from inside and outside the party there were calls for its dissolution, as it had occurred in the Italian case of the PCI. One of the proposals, for instance, was the dissolution of the PCE into the IU, transforming the confederal organization into a new political party. Conversely, the PCE decided to remain an integral organism inside the IU, mainly for its electoral capacity, but with the condition of not being a "vanguard-party" or a "Marxist-Leninist" organization, as argued by Party leader, Julio Anguita, in his *Resumen* in the XIII Congress of PCE in 1992.<sup>121</sup> Remedios argued in an interview on 26 April 2019 that:

So, when the IU was created it was decided that the PCE would not appear in the elections as such, but within the collaboration of the IU. And in the EU the same thing happens, we are present as IU of Spain, we go to the European Parliament and we join the group in the GUE (Remedios, 2019).<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> The State of Autonomies is the contemporary form of the Spanish State, in which different "Comunidades Autonomas" have relative political independence, thus, it is different from a federal form of state, and that was precisely the purpose of the IU.

<sup>121</sup> Document: Resumen de Julio Anguita, XIII Congreso del PCE. Source: Archivo Historico del PCE.

<sup>122</sup> Remedios (2019): "Entonces quando se creo IU se decidio que el PC non se va apresentar en las elecciones como tal, sino dentro de la colazion de IU. Y en la UE passa lo mismo, nosotros presentamos como IU de España, e vamos en el Parlamento Europeo e nos integramos nel grupo en el GUE"

Once the solution for the PCE's problems through a democratic perspective was found inside the IU, the focus was then placed on the European integration process and its consequences for Spain, and also on the reorganization of the European left. In the same document, *Resumen*, Anguita's speech outlined the leadership's position regarding how the PCE would view the Maastricht Treaty. The perspective was that the party should have a positive approach "without detracting from the slight progress made" (PCE, 1992: 19) in some areas, such as the promotion of social and economic cohesion, and the orientation for the democratization of European institutions. As seen before, Spain experienced a late integration in the EEC, and it was thus quickly absorbing what other countries had been able to accomplish over decades. For instance, Anguita outlined the PCE's perspective about the EU in the following terms:

The IU reiterates that its transformation in a democratic sense must be the objectives of our country in the EC, endowing the European Parliament with constituent powers and reducing the current prerogatives of the community executive bodies (IU, 1989: 17).

In this sense, the PCE discussion was directly related to the problem of the left in Europe, and the party advanced some proposals regarding how to address the problem. Thus, an EP with full constitutional powers would be capable of changing the relation of forces in the European leadership. In short, and similarly to the perspectives that guided the European left in the 1990s, the Spanish left adopted a reformist approach regarding EU institutions and, as seen previously, this approach was correspondent to the GUE/NGL's perspective.

One important aspect that makes the Spanish case a particular one is its early mention of the European left situation in its internal documents already at the end of the 1980s and also at the beginning of the 1990s. Discussing "*The need to build the European Left*", the PCE proposed the establishment of a common programme for the left in Europe that would not be necessarily based on stable alliances, but on programmatic agreements for a confederal European

left as a way of gaining more spaces, places, and seats in the war of position and, thus, being an alternative to the executive powers (PCE, 1992: 20).<sup>123</sup>

Such a perspective, linked to the reform of the EU, was a demonstration of dissatisfaction with the development of the integration process and a clear strategy of what should be the efforts of the European left., since “Social and economic cohesion, and the democratization of European institutions, appear as ‘companions’ of a logic determined by great economic interests” (1992: 20). Thus, in the discourses of the Spanish communist left it is noticeable some broader comprehension of the European struggle from a national dimension of the party’s discussion, in other words, the PCE/IU was translating its national model into the European left.

Regarding the national context in the early 1990s, the PCE indicated the transformations that Spain would soon experience due to the EU adjustments previously agreed on the Maastricht treaty and that would be developed by the PSOE government of Felipe Gonzalez (during the 1990s and 2000s, Spain was governed by the PSOE and the PP). In 1996, Felipe Gonzalez’s government was replaced by José Maria Aznar, from the PP and, in 2004, the PSOE was back in charge with José Zapatero. The integration process occurred in Spain between the PSOE and the PP governments.

The whole situation was seen by the PCE as a democratic problem, a violation of democracy, since they did not know how to indicate whether European integration was or was not a democratization process for Spain. Firstly, the theoretical idea of democracy of the IU and the PCE was based on popular participation, while in reality, individual benefits obtained from consumerism were a result of “the intensification of exploitation of labour in order to secure the continuation of capitalist accumulation” (Bieler, 2005: 515).<sup>124</sup> Moreover, one of the PCE leaders, Remedios, argued in an interview on 26 April 2019 about the transformation in the country that “it is true that joining the EU meant being part of the democratic world” (Remedios, 2019).<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> “Europa despues de Maastricht: Necesidad de construir la Izquierda Europea” (1992: 20).

<sup>124</sup> As mentioned by Remedios: “Before we have had a period of very good economic prosperity, with people who could buy their house with a mortgage, that could have a good salary, their car, and that then got focused into their lives and abandoned the struggles”. Original quotation: “Antes hemos tenido un período de prosperidade económica muy bueno, con la gente que comprava su casa con hipoteca, se tenia un buen salario, su coche, y se metieran en su vida e abandonaran las luchas” (2019).

<sup>125</sup> “Y es verdade que entrar en la UE significava formar parte del mundo en democracia”.

According to David Harvey, in *The Condition of Postmodernity* (1990), the end of the twentieth century was marked by a transformation in the accumulation process as the capitalist system became more flexible, by exploring particular niches and small-scale markets, combining temporal and spatial displacements. Entrepreneurship favoured individualism, which was, in its turn, a necessary condition for the flexible accumulation of the private sector. In this same sense, the nature and the effects of the transformations had multiple impacts on the general culture of the left-wing movement.

Reaffirming radical collective values at that moment seemed to be an important challenge. In 1995, the PCE reaffirmed itself as a communist party in its *Estatutos*, with revolutionary Marxism as the theoretical foundation of its praxis towards the goal of full democracy (PCE, 1995). A new fact was present in the *XIV Congress* discussion, of 1995, and it was the recognition that the criticism of the Maastricht Treaty was limited in the previous congress, arguing that neoliberalism was then being implemented in Spain through labour legislation reforms and through the participation of the PP in the government (PCE, 1995b: 45).<sup>126</sup>

Secondly, the party adopted the concept of *precariedad* (precariousness) to describe the situation of the working classes in the country (PCE, 1995: 55). In fact, as suggested by Istvan Mészáros (2008), it was a process of changes in labour legislation and in objective work conditions, with a profound impact on the different existent subjectivities in the EU. In the capital-labour relationship, the latter faced the conjuncture of financial globalization and deregulation of markets in Europe (Piketty, 2014). For all those reasons, the sense of the EU transformation was displacement and precariousness (Antunes, 2003; Singer, 2000).<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Document: Monografías. XIV Congreso del PCE. “Unir desde la Izquierda”, 1995b. “Neoliberalism develops because it has achieved that many of those myths, many of those values, and those concepts were assumed as ethical alternatives to the State. It is the problem of hegemony”. Original quotation: “El neoliberalismo avanza porque há conseguido que muchos de esos mitos, muchos de esos valores y de esos conceptos sean assumidos como alternativas éticas de Estado. Es el problema de la hegemonía” (1995: 45).

<sup>127</sup> By the end of the 1990s, the world was paying more attention to “great” politics, as many international conflicts were in development with the involvement of European countries in the Balkans, Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon. The end of the bipolar world did not stop NATO activities, instead there was a reallocation of the conflicts. It was also during the 1990s that World Bank, IMF, G7, WTO, etc., gained more space in international affairs. However, given the EP’s limited powers it can be considered that the discussion in this EU institution was reduced to small politics, rather than being an institution capable of confronting the dimension of great politics.

Accordingly, the subjective dimension of the material transformation could be observed in the reframing of the welfare structure that had been previously conceived as public by the introduction of a more individual dimension of a social organization based on market values. As argued by Jameson (1991), the weakening of historicity in social and in public relations was one of the symptoms of the multinational capitalism. In this dissertation, this transformation is seen in the context of relations of forces in which the initiative of fractions in ruling European classes reverberated in private agreement initiatives with governments. Within this framework of cultural, political, and economic transformation of capitalism, it is evident that the perspective of the left-wing was increasingly pushed into a defensive position. One important aspect that contributed to the position of the left wing in the defensive field is the dismantle of its (supposedly) working classes basis.

In these hegemonic battles, even if the Spanish centre and right wing were leading parties in the electoral system, the PCE faced accusations from the ruling parties of attempting to be hegemonic and coercive in the field of the left-wing forces in the country, particularly due to its presence in trade unions. Anguita, in his final speech during the XIV Congress, replied by evoking a Gramscian interpretation of the concept of hegemony according to the PCE's particularity, i.e., that the PCE was contributing to the creation of cultural and social contents as alternatives to the state (PCE, 1995: 58).

As the third electoral force, the PCE ran with the IU in the 1993 elections defending "*democracia plena*" (full democracy) to improve welfare for Spanish citizens, and to fight the crisis in industry and the abandonment of agriculture, in opposition to the policies implemented by the ruling parties in Spain (IU, 1993: 89).<sup>128</sup> In its *IV Asamblea Federal de Izquierda Unida* of 1994, the discussion about the integration process appeared to be more consistent and with a general reflection regarding the effects of the implementation of the Maastricht Treaty by the PSOE.

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<sup>128</sup> Document: IU, Sí. Programa Electoral. Legislativas 93. "Izquierda Unida, La alternativa necesaria", 1993. Moreover, the project of full democracy of the IU electoral programme also included the participation of social movements and local authorities in the negotiation processes in the public sphere as a form of developing direct democracy.

The transformative left, of which IU is part along with other political forces and social movements, has a European Union project that serves citizens and workers to solve their problems and to accommodate their direct and democratic participation in all processes of decision-making (IU, 1994: 26).<sup>129</sup>

Refusing the “democratic involution”, the IU argument was that Europe should be a Federalist Union based on a political union: a real, social, and economic integration in a common democratic space. Informed by the same sense of building a European political union, the IU argument was that the solution for the left-wing problems in Europe would be the creation of a union of progressive, transformative, green, and alternative forces, plus social movements and trade unions, to compose a “*bloque social alternativo*” (an alternative social bloc) to change Europe (IU, 1994: 27).

This social bloc, called *rojiverde*, was very similar to the spectrum of the GUE/NGL’s ideological perspectives. Red and Green (*rojiverde*) were the plural forces of the left-wing group in the EP as well, which in Spanish is named *Izquierda Unitaria Europea* (IU, 1994: 28-29). It was the first time that some mention was made in the IU Congress and Assembly documents regarding the European left-wing group. In fact, the first leader of the GUE was a member of the IU, Alonso Puerta, who was in charge from 1994 to 1999.<sup>130</sup>

There were more similarities between the GUE and IU programmes, particularly concerning the federalization of the Spanish state and the EU structure, with the EP advocating more power. Thus, the general perspective was: democratic socialism, a republican and federal state, and a gradualist transformation of society (IU, 1994: 5). As argued by Adam Przeworski (1980: 27), social democracy was the main force representing working classes, and as such, a force that was shaping the movement for socialism. As seen in chapter 3, the establishment of democratic regime was a strategic achievement for the Spanish left, particularly for the PCE. In Chapter 2 it was argued that since the Second International the abandonment of the idea of rupture was prevalent in the

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<sup>129</sup> Document: Materiales de la *IV Asamblea Federal* de Izquierda Unida, 1994.

<sup>130</sup> Alonso Puerta was an historical leader in the PASOC, the Party of Socialist Action, then a party member of the IU. Puerta was vice-president of the European Parliament between 1999 and 2002 and again from 2002 to 2004.

communist movement, a perspective that led to the reformist strategy. In the same way, the classic discussion about the suppression of the state was not present, in contrast to the revolutionary approaches claimed by the party (such as Gramsci and Marx) the perspective was that of exercising pressure upon the legislative and government powers inside the class relations structure (Przeworski, 1980: 29). For this reason, the perspective of a progressive development towards socialism was not a transitional programme, in the sense of human emancipation, but an abstract and progressivist perspective on social development *inside* capitalism.

In 1996, its strategy was apparently updated and refined:

Against the globalization of the economy and power, it is urgent to confront a globalization of citizen rebellion, in the fight for dignity for a new political ethic based on democratic culture (IU, 1996: 19).

It seemed a different programme with some new ideas, such as the citizen rebellion in the fight for a new political and democratic ethic, a new conceptual orientation with practical consequences. One updating aspect that deserves attention concerns the Spanish left-wing strategy, in adopting the *citizen* as the social actor of rebellion. In this sense, a possible scenario of social rebellion would involve no social class in its socialist sense but the transformation of society through an ethical and democratic cultural struggle under the action of the citizens, the individuals. Rebellion was not necessarily meant to be a social revolution.

#### **4.3.3. PCP**

The PCP's approach to the European integration and to national politics was linked to its conception about what a communist organization was supposed to be. After decades of a Stalinist approach, the party's Congress documents indicated some criticism regarding previous "dogmatic" and "simplistic" approaches, while it considered Marxism-Leninism a "critical and transformative

ideology” and not a “unilateral and simplistic” approach of the CPSU (PCP, 1990: 205).<sup>131</sup>

At the beginning of the 1990s, the PCP was still considered itself a Marxist-Leninist organization.<sup>132</sup> The XIII Congress of the PCP, in 1990, in Loures, was marked by the debate on the USSR’s dissolution, the neoliberal transformation in Portugal, and the communist identity of the party. In its *Programa e Estatutos*, of 1992, it considered the conjuncture a “monopoly capitalism” in which the public and non-capitalist sector was affected, particularly, by the selling of public companies to private capital. The restoration of capitalism in Eastern Europe (particularly the ex-USSR), as argued, was followed by the implementation of monopoly capitalism on the Western side through privatizations (PCP, 1992).

In those circumstances, the PCP sought to maintain its internal coherence, as its approach to the structural transformations in the country depended on its internal functioning. But in a country that had its productive basis transformed in the late integration process, the consequences for the political world were inescapable, as seen in the Spanish case regarding the emergence of the precariat. Miguel Viegas, a former PCP deputy in the EP argued in an interview on 20 March 2019 that:

Our electoral base has changed substantially, these companies have all been dismantled, they were industries that we had before the EU in terms of shipbuilding, steel, chemical complex, we had the industrial belt in Lisbon with thousands and thousands of workers, large companies and large concentrations, with a strong organization and all of a sudden all this disappeared, and this was reflected in our support base. This is a common phenomenon in Europe (Viegas, 2019).<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Document: XIII Congresso Extraordinário. PCP, “Um partido para o nosso tempo”, 1990.

<sup>132</sup> As argued by Dunphy (2004), the PCP was one of the most Stalinist organizations in Europe. However, Stalinist perspectives were not exclusive to the PCP, it was and still is present in many other parties, such as those other parties studied in this dissertation.

<sup>133</sup> Viegas (2019): “Nossa base eleitoral alterou-se substancialmente, essas empresas todas foram desmontadas, empresas de bases que tínhamos antes da UE a nível da construção naval, siderurgia, complexo químico, tínhamos a cintura indústrial em Lisboa com milhares e milhares de trabalhadores, grandes empresas e grandes concentrações, com uma forte organização e de repente tudo isso desapareceu, e isto repercutiu-se na nossa base de apoio. Esse é um fenómeno comum na Europa”

In fact, the PCP was very concerned about EEC policies and the ideological effects they were causing, and for this reason considered that it was necessary to take European elections very seriously.<sup>134</sup> In the same XIII Congress of 1990, under the headline “Um Partido para o nosso tempo” (A Party for our time), the PCP leadership argued in the *Congress Thesis* that

Portugal must fight both through the policy decided by its sovereign bodies, and through its intervention in the bodies of the EEC, so that the EEC’s policies and its supranational decisions do not harm the interests of the Portuguese people (PCP, 1990: 27).<sup>135</sup>

One particular transformation in the attitude of the PCP towards the EEC was the transition from the total refusal, to the partial criticism and acceptance of participation with the purpose of fighting for as much as possible to the benefit of the Portuguese working classes.<sup>136</sup> The conjuncture in Portugal was growing less favourable to a radical praxis, with the country governed by the PS and PSD during the 1980s and 1990s, a period in which the Maastricht parameters were being introduced in the country (a bipartisanship case that was similar to the Spanish situation). For a small country such as Portugal, dependent on particular sectors of production, the introduction of neoliberal policies in a short period of time culminated in, for instance, the decline in the affiliation of workers to trade unions, what is an indicator of the decline in productive capacity and organization of working classes in the country.<sup>137</sup>

At home, the PCP had to deal with the problem of bipartisanship inasmuch as the PCP had a very limited role in the stable political system in which two parties were alternating government (Duverger, 1964; Jalali, 2017). Jalali (2017)

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<sup>134</sup> Document: Alvaro Cunhal, *Diário Nacional*, 22/5/89 – CD25A. Part of the material about the PCP was consulted in the *Centro de Documentação 25 de Abril (CD25A)*, in Coimbra.

<sup>135</sup> “Portugal tem de bater «se tanto através da política decidida pelos seus órgãos de soberania, como através de sua intervenção nas instâncias da CEE, para que as políticas da CEE e suas decisões supranacionais não ofendam os interesses dos portugueses”.

<sup>136</sup> “Since Portugal is in the EEC, the right and duty of the Portuguese is to oppose anything that is detrimental to Portuguese national interests, and claim everything that might be favourable to those interests”. Original quotation: “Estando Portugal na CEE o direito e o dever dos portugueses é contrariar tudo quanto seja lesivo dos interesses nacionais portugueses. E reivindicar tudo quanto possa ser favorável a esses interesses” (PCP, 1990: 27).

<sup>137</sup> Tiago Fernandes (2017: 290) indicates that the level of unionization of the active population dropped from 32% in 1990 to 25,6% in 2000.

and Bosco (1999: 129) argue that while in the revolutionary period there was an “absence of compromise” from the PCP with institutional democracy in the revolutionary process, such approach changed over the subsequent years, but the acceptance of the institutional rules did not remove the PCP from the isolation.

In its *Projeto de Resolução Política*, published in December 1996 as a supplement of the party’s periodical *Avante!*, the PCP indicated that its social presence was not automatically translated into votes in the elections, and instead its role in society was based on the intellectual contribution and resistance against the discourses regarding the “end of ideologies”. In the same document, it was noted that the PCP was occupying a position of resistance in the party system in which the PS and the PSD were the dominant forces (PCP, 1996: 67).<sup>138</sup>

At the XV Congress of 1996, held in Porto, the analysis of the previous conjuncture was that the Maastricht Treaty had created a supranational Europe of great monopolies (PCP, 1996: 70), a scenario in which the party had its defensive response bounded by the national dimensions.<sup>139</sup>

In fact, the debate of ideas was the main practical activity of the party. The coherence that is present in their documents, interviews, discourses, pamphlets can be understood as an outcome of the internal discussions the party might have established among its members. In any case, the PCP also had its moments of breaches, contradictions and further development of ideas in the 1990s.

In particular, the PCP has a level of organizational integration far superior to that of other parties, traditionally demonstrating a greater capacity to convert voters into members in relation to other parties. However, it is also in this party that the crisis of internal militancy manifests itself more clearly, similar to what is happening in European democracies, where it is the parties that

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<sup>138</sup> According to Luís de Souza (2017), the levels of satisfaction with democracy were decreasing in Portugal, partly as consequence of decades of austerity and general impoverishment (2017: 213).

<sup>139</sup> Such a position was defended in the EP by the PCP deputy, Sergio Ribeiro, who presented during the same Congress a text indicating the national perspectives of the PCP, and the difficulties for many countries to implement the Maastricht criteria because there was already a differentiation between European countries due to monetary policies based on the German determinations (1996: 75). In this sense, the point raised by the PCP in its debates was that a European development of two speeds had been created.

are closest to the mass party model that suffer the most in terms of membership (Lisi, 2017: 244).

What was presented by the leadership of the PCP as its strongest point was, at the same time, an aspect of its internal conflicts and splits, the strongest coherence of ideas. The maintenance of a rigid internal regime, the high coherence of discourse, the attachment to the leadership, kept the party alive during decades after the Revolution of 1974. Nevertheless, in the beginning, the party was isolated from the mainstream of national politics, the PCP sought alliances and found one with the Greens of the PEV to create the CDU alliance for local, regional, legislative and European elections. This new moment was characterized as the “PCP's renewed communication capacity with Portuguese society” (PCP, 1996: 91).

In 1996, Alvaro Cunhal, who was still the main leader of the party, declared his position against demands for a radical modernization of the party. In an interview with the *Semanário* newspaper of 30<sup>th</sup> November 1996, Cunhal recognized that the party was being pressured to change its identity but maintained its own personal compromise with the party program.<sup>140</sup> In fact, for Cunhal: “Marxism-Leninism is, in essence, the theory that allows the Party to explain the world, the processes of social transformation, the objectives and paths for the liberation of workers” (Cunhal, 2013: 224).

However, the conjuncture was different from when the historical program of the 1974 revolution had been elaborated, now that there were no more colonial wars and dictatorship in the country. The presence of the historical leadership of Cunhal was still decisive for the strategic and internal relations in the party, a fact that would start to change only years later, as argued by Richard Dunphy (2004).

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<sup>140</sup> In the interview with Simões Ibharco, Cunhal (1996, w/n) who was 83 years old at that time said: “The question that arises corresponds to an immense pressure and external campaign by the ideologues and forces of capital in the sense that they wish the PCP ceases to be the Communist Party that it has always been and will continue to be. (...). For us, there are two forms of struggle: the one that takes place institutionally (in the Assembly of the Republic, in the municipal power, in the European Parliament and other institutions) and the mass struggle, that is, the one that citizens, Portuguese from different classes and social strata (...), develop in the exercise of rights and freedoms conferred on them by the Constitution”. Portuguese version: “A questão que se coloca corresponde a uma imensa pressão e campanha externa dos ideólogos e forças do capital no sentido de desejarem que o PCP deixe de ser o Partido Comunista que sempre foi e que continuará a ser. (...). Para nós, há duas formas de luta: a que se processa por via institucional (na Assembleia da República, no poder autárquico, no Parlamento Europeu e noutras instituições) e a luta de massas, ou seja, aquela que os cidadãos, portugueses de diversas classes e estratos sociais (...), desenvolvem no exercício de direitos e liberdades que lhe são conferidos pela Constituição” Document available at the Centro de Documentação 25 de Abril.

Carvalhas had succeeded the veteran Stalinist Alvaro Cunhal as General Secretary in 1992. A loyal member of the party leadership, he had cautiously taken his distance from Stalinism shortly after his election and, throughout the 1990s, he sought to edge the party forwards from the preoccupations of the Cunhal generation of veterans without any rupture with its revolutionary past (Dunphy, 2004: 119).

In fact, even though there had been a change in the General Secretary, Cunhal was still commanding the party, remaining its main living figure since the Revolution. If it was difficult the adoption of a radical public change of its identity, methods, and values, in the 1997 *Programas e Estatutos, advanced democracy* appeared as the main and immediate focus of the party's strategy, and the aim of this idea was described as a "progressive and democratic transformation of society" (PCP, 1997: 8). The progressive perspective, again, was seen in the light of a continuity with the 1974 Revolution and it was linked to the socialist purpose. The experiences that the PCP was going through in the European and national parliaments can be considered as part of such adoption of a gradualist strategy. The democratic regime proposed by the PCP had to be based on people's freedom to decide, and economic development based on a mixed economy, a social policy, cultural policies, and sovereignty (1997: 31).

A notable change of perspective regarding the PCP practices can be seen through the analysis of Raquel Varela (2011). Varela argues that the PCP was not interested in building up revolutionary organisms of self-organization during the revolution. Instead, the party collaborated with moderate forces to stabilize the revolution and the regime that became liberal democratic (2011: 47). The same perspective is shared by Francisco Louçã (1985: 156) and Lincoln Secco (2004), who consider that the PCP contributed to the stabilization of democracy, and a very important part of its revolutionary strategy was the achievement of the national democratic revolution.

Thus, the idea of further development of an advanced democracy in Portugal was not a revolutionary ambition, but the next step of the same old programme conceived for the Revolution of 1974 and carried on as the strategic

basis of the PCP' struggles in the 1990s. Those aspects of PCP's conception are important for two reasons, one is the importance that the very political party kept attributing to the 1974 process, and the other one is that it is controversial in the literature the role of the PCP in this revolution.

The democratic restructuring of the State and the deepening of democracy that the PCP defends (in contrast to the "reform of the political system" that the PS, PSD and PP advocate) are ends in themselves and, simultaneously, an instrument to realize rights, freedom and guarantees of citizens and to carry out other policies effectively and efficiently, namely those that influence the realization of economic, social and cultural rights. It is necessary to make representative democracy more genuine and defend proportional representation in converting votes into mandates. At the level of sovereign bodies, the principle of separation and interdependence must be fully realized. It is also important to strengthen the powers and legislative and supervisory role of the Assembly of the Republic, as well as to strengthen and improve the status of the opposition. The functions of other supervisory bodies must be strengthened, and their status of pluralism and independence fully ensured (PCP, 1997: 37).

Following the indications of Varela (2011), the focus of the PCP was put on the institutional struggle, one of the two fronts of its praxis in favour of democratization and proportional representation in elections. In fact, not only in Portugal but in many other EU countries, the electoral system was transformed during the 1990s to favour political majorities and to exclude small organizations. This was a fact that in part explains the European left wing necessity of seeking out electoral coalitions and developing important debates on the functioning of normal democracy.

Thus, the situation in the 1990s was mainly posed in terms of the relation of forces between the PCP and other national political parties in the institutional and electoral disputes. However, the context of war of movement (or the revolutionary situation) of the 1970s did not correspond to the institutional

approach and electoral disputes of the 1990s. Despite the problems faced by the PCP in the relation of forces, the communists were still the third force in the electoral scenario of the country in 1999, with 10% of the votes.

This analysis of the role played by national communist parties in the 1990s cannot be limited to the national dimension. The integration process not only established a new relationship between economies, countries, and political powers, but it also broke up the autonomy, or sovereignty, of nations, or at least imposed a shared sovereignty in important matters. The integration also created more regional inequalities, since the transformation of production meant the reorganization of the working classes in relation to the productive field; therefore, precarization was a central aspect of this process.

In some Mediterranean lands, agricultural production suffered an important decline that was also shared by small craft industries in the name of modernization. This was particularly the case in Spain and Portugal, which experienced a process of *late integration*, and Italy, which experienced a longer term but still *subaltern* role in the same process.

The radical and European left answered with an institutional approach, based on the strategies of democratic socialism and progressive/advanced democracy. It seems that there was a continuity in the democratic program from the 1970s and 1980s in the reality of the 1990s with a further insertion of the European left in the institutional life in their national contexts, and in a minor proportion also in the transnational. The transnational debate, the participation in the GUE/NGL, was not an essential (when rarely mentioned) part of the national Congress documents, programmes and internal debates of the European left in the 1990s, what suggests that in practice there was also a detachment between national and transnational activities. This situation suggests that the focus on normal democracy at the national level dominated the parties' activities. In any case, the activities of the GUE/NGL suggest a similar approach to transnational questions, thus, the perspective of democratization of EU institutions and focus on the electoral activity.

#### **4.3.4. Conclusion**

Chapter 4 dealt with the historical process out of which the GUE/NGL was born. As suggested by the main literature, the transnational group was a forum for cooperation, an important alliance for the European left in the class relation of forces. This transnational group, which included parties from Italy, Spain, and Portugal, was built in the 1990s, when the European integration process was being consolidated, particularly in economic terms. The Italian integration process is seen as a subaltern case, while the Spanish and Portuguese are late processes, but also subaltern due to the economic position of those countries in the European scene. The integration process, however, was not a passive revolutionary process. Instead, it was a further development of European relation of forces, with predominance of the financial fraction. It was the hegemonic achievement of such fraction without a really political transformation in the transnational structure and the character of national states. European elections were the fundamental way for political parties to access the transnational level of politics/representation, and as suggested by the literature, those elections are dominated by ruling classes. Thus, the praxis in the EP was and still limited. In this sense, the praxis in the transnational scene was limited, even though important.

This chapter discussed through documental analysis and interviews the praxis of the GUE/NGL in the 1990s, observing its democratic principles and functional approach. The functional approach of the GUE/NGL was seen in terms of cooperation, democratic participation, and aims of reforming the EU. One important contribution of this chapter, thus, is the indication of the reformist character of the GUE/NGL, from both a conceptual perspective guided by the disappearance of some concepts, such as social class, socialism, revolution, and the adoption of new ones (citizen, peace, reform), and also from a functional perspective, as it was a group aiming to reform the EU, not to qualitatively change it. Next, the ideological and practical aspects of the group were discussed in the light of the Gramscian idea of collective will, and it was observed that the group was not a collective will, or a popular will, but fundamentally a product of the component parties' leaderships. The consequences were the theoretical limits

within which the group conceived democracy (strictly on the terrain of normal democracy), while managing to keep together a plural myriad of forces with the adoption of the consensus method. Additionally, this chapter also discussed the praxis of the European left in the 1990s. The documental and interview analysis guided by the interest of discussing the concepts of sovereignty and democracy led to the conclusion that the participation of the communists (PRC, PCE/IU, and PCP) in their national parliaments contributed to the development of further reformist approaches: what the parties called a “democratic” or “progressivist” transformation of society.

## **Chapter 5      The encounter of theory and practice**

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss a supposed dilemma that is present in the praxis of left-wing organizations, concerning its guidance between the limits of ideology and pragmatism. It is suggested that this dilemma is in fact a conceptual problem of political program, as there is no political party without any kind of ideological approach. Based on literature review, documental analysis, and interviews, this chapter discusses the main general strategic perspectives of the national parties of the European left, and from this analysis it is suggested that the national terrain was still the dominant dimension of the praxis of the European left in the 1990s, while little attention was given to their transnational activities and perspectives. In this sense, the GUE/NGL was being constituted as the interlocutor of the European left (but not only) in the EU, and its activities will also be subject of discussion in this chapter. From the refusal to neoliberalism to the support of the idea of another Europe, the GUE/NGL was a synthesis of multiple internal perspectives, among which the radical or communist was not expressive or hegemonic. Moreover, the form and some contents of the GUE/NGL praxis from 1999 to 2004 are discussed in this chapter based on the group documents, and theoretical debate, indicating that despite the non-existence of a transitional hegemonic project, or program, there was the problem of hegemony, and it was faced by the GUE/NGL in the EP from the perspective of reinforcing national states and parliaments.

### **5.1. Pragmatism and Ideology**

Luke March (2012: 13) argued that the so-called radical left faced the dilemma of democratic socialism as a result of the failure of Marxist-Leninist models of ideology and organization, i.e., the dilemma of dealing with transformative ideas in a non-revolutionary moment. This was the problem of communist organization performing in democratic institutions, which would supposedly create a paradigm between pragmatism and ideology.

March argues that the domestic dimension was still central for the left praxis, but also that the international interest was intensified with the development

of stronger bilateral relationships among parties, and social movements (March, 2012: 205-207). Certainly, the dilemma between ideology and pragmatism is not an indication of a lack of ideology in practical activities at the transnational level, or an excess of interest at the national one, but it is an indication of the programmatic interest of political parties in small politics, i.e., in the development of the parliamentary activities oriented by their progressivist strategy.

According to Luke March (2012), the ideological nature of socialism after the end of the Soviet Union affected the functioning of the left-wing movement producing an existential crisis and steering political parties towards an emphasis on “pragmatism rather than ideology” that allowed the parties to participate in a “self-defeating” game (2012: 210). In this sense, it was possible to observe that the transformations of the GUE parties during the 1990s meant the deradicalization of socialist perspectives, but not its disappearance, as discussed in the previous chapter. Moreover, such transformations were not only a direct consequence of the collapse of Soviet Union, but mainly due to their internal (intra-party) and local (national) activities.

Anna Bosco (2000), observing the PCE, PCP and PCI’s history in the 1980s and 1990s, argued that their transformations during the period before the crisis of the communist movement (1990s) occurred towards the democratic adaptation. Bosco argues that one extreme situation was the PCI, which abandoned its communist identity, and the other one was the PCP, in which internal problems led to a moderate transformation within the predominance of the conservative sector in the Party, while the PCE occupied a middle position (2000: 274).

As noted in chapter 4, the praxis of the communist parties during the 1990s was permeated by an internal crisis, that put their identities and existences into question, and by the focus on their electoral performances. Contradictorily, the ideological dimension of the dilemma seems to be related to the focus on the national dimension, even though domestic problems were comprehended as part of the nature of the European integration and the adjustments from Maastricht. Bosco (2000) argues that the adaptation of the parties to the democratic game was based on the transformation of their programs. In fact, the transformation can be observed even decades before with the Eurocommunist perspectives, but in the sense that it was an update of the praxis according to the relation of forces

in each national context and according to the ideological context. The revision of praxis can be partially understood as a necessary response to the threatened existence of left-wing organizations in the neoliberal order – even though Eurocommunism was not a structured perspective in the 1990s and 2000s, some of its aspects remained alive.

Amplifying Bosco's perspective, Marco Damiani argues that the so-called radical left developed a different and sometimes autonomous political activity in relation to previous forms of transnational organization, as there were present socialist inspirations, and internal groups of feminists, pacifists, ecologist fractions, etc. (Damiani, 2016: 224). Rather than the revolutionary approach, the general purpose of the ex-communist left was, thus, the "pursuit of root-and-branch reforms (which aim, that is, to tackle the issues and the problems to be solved), with the explicit aim of shifting the axis of western democratic governments to the left" (2016: 225).

Another point of view is offered by Richard Dunphy, who argues that the integration process brought new approaches in relation to the supposed dilemma, but from a European level point of view (Dunphy, 2004: 2). As the program of those political parties were not revolutionary, but transformative (progressivist reformism), the EU integration and national adjustments had impact on the parties' policies. In this way, left-wing forces went from refusing the European integration to critically engaging in the European Parliament (2004: 89). At the national level, the passage from a sceptical position regarding the integration to a more favourable approach occurred already in the 1980s and 1990s, but it was in the 1990s that the transnational action took place and the European left engaged with a direct role in the construction of the EU. To some extent, the acceptance and cooperation with the EU was inevitable, as the integration process was in development independently of the position of the European left, but above all the participation in the EU became necessary and convenient due to the democratic stability of the Union.

Dunphy indicates that in general the ex-communist left was more involved in feminist and environmentalist debates, while part of it, such as the PCP and the Greek KKE, remained attached to a "workerist and statist tradition" (2004: 160). Another important ideological aspect in this regard is the relation established between the European left and the *Greens*. In fact, Green Parties

became the main partners of the communists from the 1990s onwards, in which the GUE/NGL is the biggest example. As Dunphy's comparative analysis explains:

All Greens were critical of Maastricht. In particular, they shared with many Left parties four main concerns: that Maastricht was driven by a free market, neo-liberal logic; that it said nothing about ecological sustainability; that it was undemocratic, taking powers away from national parliaments without transferring them to either the European Parliament or regional parliaments; and that it contained provision on defence and security which could see a European army emerge (Dunphy, 2004: 162).

The relationship between Greens and the European left was not simple, since this type of cooperation was beyond the ones inside the “radical” part of the group. The way regional and ideological differences were kept together inside the GUE/NGL was due to its flexible and general/abstract program. Therefore, as described by Dunphy, the formula to solve such “extreme heterogeneity” is the “issue-by-issue” way of dealing with questions that arise in the context of normal democracy, since both sides were cooperating around common parliamentary aspirations, even though all Greens were against Maastricht they were suspicious of the real intentions that brought each side together.<sup>141</sup>

On the whole, the literature considers that the praxis of the European left, in terms of whether there was a major focus on pragmatism or ideology, was a process that suffered important changes along decades and that led the parties to be contaminated by the parliamentary game. Although, even if the association of the European left with other ideological perspectives occurred in the parliamentary activity, there were, in fact, programmatic (congress) discussions which ideologically sustained their activities in the field of democratic institutions. The praxis of those parties was indeed less utopic and more realistic, as observed

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<sup>141</sup> In this matter of association between forces that were not only part of the European left of Marxist tradition, but also parties from different background, Isabelle Hertner (2018) in her analysis about centre-left parties in the EU, argues that the integration process was an external “top-down pressure” on national political parties, affecting their internal functioning, ideas, offices, and proposals.

in Chapter 4, but the supposed dilemma was not a real concern because the strategy of the parties was already (re)designed for the national and transnational institutional praxis.

### 5.1.1. Political program and strategy of the European left

*“There is an imaginary of the revolution” (Pierre Vilar).*

Most of the political programs which parties based on their praxis were produced in the main instance of the European left, i.e., in the general assemblies, or the Congresses. This same rule of the congress is still valid for the 1990s and 2000s in the cases discussed in this dissertation. The importance of the Congress for the parties' life is indicated in their statutes, as in all the cases aforementioned are not only the main arena of deliberation, but also the main arena for the democratic debate of ideas. In fact, it is through the documents of the parties' congresses that it was possible to access the generalities and the particularities of the internal debates, as well as the resolutions that emerged from the discussions and deliberations.

For instance, the PRC statute of 2013 established in the Article 33 that “The congress is, for every instance of the party, the highest deliberative organ”.<sup>142</sup> Similarly, the Congress was also an intra-party democratic organism, in which the program, the values, the identity of the party could be debated and redefined according to the wish of the majority of its members. In the *Programa e Estatutos do PCP*, of 1997, other than reaffirming that the Congress is the supreme organ of the party, it was established that the party had as its aim “freedom, democracy, social progress, national independency, peace, and socialism” (PCP, 1997: 98). In the PCE Statute of 1991 it is established that “The Federal Congress is the supreme organ of the PCE” (1991: 14).<sup>143</sup>

As it is a backward methodological procedure to access what the political program of the European left was, accessing what the current militancy's' thought considers about the history of the party, its purposes, values, how the questions of socialism were approached, is a valid procedure to understand features that

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<sup>142</sup> Document: *Statuto del Partito della Rifondazione Comunista*, 2013, approved in the IX National Congress of PRC, realized in Perugia.

<sup>143</sup> Document: *Estatutos del Partido Comunista de España*, XIII Congress, 1991.

were discussed in previous congress and that became reality in the praxis. As before, interviews are not deployed merely as illustrations of historical events. Interviews and interviewees/respondents appear in this dissertation through an interpretivist and discourse analysis approach, as an updated source of a living political program.

Regarding the PRC programmatic approach to the problem of socialism after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Claudio Bellotti, ex-PRC member/leader, current *Sinistra, Classe e Rivoluzione* member, argued in an interview on 14 February 2019 that:

The collapse of the Soviet Union was a discourse that it was hard to deal with, in the sense that Rifondazione was a heterogeneous party with a Soviet-Stalinist current, and they dreamed of going back in time. However, many other people arrived, Bertinotti came from the PCI but he was from the socialist left, which was a little different anyway; many arrived with a workerist formation, it was a cauldron, and there was never an ideological synthesis of this in history, it was something that was so well known that if we started to discuss it, we would fight. There were people of Trotskyist formation, as we are, even if we were not many, and for whom somewhat diplomatic formulations were always used (Bellotti, 2019).<sup>144</sup>

Despite the Eurocommunist affirmation of independency from the Soviet Union, a new debate was not fully developed after the collapse of the soviet world. The fact that the party was composed of a plurality of militant currents (Stalinism, Marxism, Trotskyism, labour, etc.) represented an evidence of a democratic gathering of forces, but it did not exclude the necessity of a critical balance, regarding the meaning of socialism in the world. Bellotti indicates that the transformation in the party was a consequence of that refusal to discuss,

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<sup>144</sup> Bellotti (2019): “Dopo il crollo della Unione Sovietica era un discorso che si faceva fatica d'affrontare, tanto che Rifondazione era un partito eterogeneo, aveva delle correnti filo sovietica, stalinista, e loro sognavano di tornare indietro. Però è arrivata tanta altra gente, Bertinotti veniva dal PCI ma lui era dalla sinistra socialista, che comunque era un po' diversa, sono arrivati tanti con formazione operaista, era un calderone e non è mai stata una sintesi ideologica su questo nella storia, era una cosa che tanto si sa che se ci mettiamo a discutere litighiamo. C'erano gente di formazione trockista come siamo noi, anche se non eravamo tantissimi, e per cui c'erano tutte delle formulazioni un po' diplomatiche”

producing a more flexible idea of the role of the party and the state in society. Such transformation meant, in Bellotti's words, that the question of political power, the question of the fight for hegemony, changed, becoming more *movimentista*, supported by different perspectives in the Congress of the party.

Another member of the PRC, Luciano Della Vecchia argues in an interview on 19 February 2019 that:

Rifondazione was an anti-capitalist (party), and it was theorized that Rifondazione was insufficiently inserted in a transformation process. We cannot be self-sufficient. An international strategic alliance was needed: we, pacifists, otherworldly movements, all movements. This unitary movement, we said it had to be a movement against neoliberalism and against war, because these two things marked the end of the 1900s. This was the opponent, and Rifondazione participated as an anti-capitalist force (Della Vecchia, 2019).<sup>145</sup>

Conserving the anti-capitalist accent, the PRC was “clearly identified as the only one recognized” as a member of the left wing by the people, according to the interview with Claudio Bellotti (2019), an aspect due also to the role of Bertinotti leadership and the heritage of the PCI.

The former Ministry of Social Solidarity in Prodi's Government, Paolo Ferrero, argued in an interview on 7 February 2019 that:

Rifondazione faced at some point this stuff regarding the single currency. Bertinotti, the secretary Bertinotti, who was mostly with Prodi, proposed to say: “no to Maastricht and yes to the single currency”. This position, in my opinion, is a demented position, a woodpecker, a lexical cleverness, because nobody can say “I am in favour of the single currency but against

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<sup>145</sup> Della Vecchia (2019): “Rifondazione era anti-capitalista, ma perché teorizzava che Rifondazione non era sufficiente in un processo di trasformazione. Non possiamo essere autosufficiente. Bisognava un'alleanza strategica internazionale: noi, movimenti pacifista, altromondista, tutti i movimenti. Questo movimento unitario, noi dicevamo che doveva essere un movimento contro il neoliberalismo e contro la guerra, perché queste due cose hanno segnato la fine del 900. Questo era l'avversario, e Rifondazione partecipava come una forza anche anti-capitalista”

Maastricht". It is actually a nonsense.

It is an oxymoron. This oxymoron was the political line of Rifondazione. Could it be expected that it would end as it did? Yes. This was the political error of Rifondazione. Why was it accepted then? Because somehow that didn't bother you much with the majority of government, and nobody understood that much about economics. And therefore, some were opposed; and therefore the mass of comrades understood nothing (about economy), me myself in the first place (Ferrero, 2019).<sup>146</sup>

Arguing at the strategic level, the leadership of the PRC points out the zigzag movements of the party. The example of the euro question (as it will be discussed further) is just an indicative of the approach that the party established in practice. Such praxis can only be seen as an expression of the party's program, a confusion that somehow was seen as beneficial to the party's purposes.

This example of tactical movements of the party was a form of connecting the everyday struggles with the strategy that was roughly guiding the general thought.<sup>147</sup> Theoretically, from a defensive position, a political party could seek to accumulate forces for the realization of immediate and intermediate purposes, but the level of the theoretical debate evidenced by Ferrero in an interview on 7 February 2019 raises the difficulties and limits faced by a political party in responding to social transformation with the elaboration of proper tactics in accordance with the strategy.

From a strategic perspective, alliances are usefully necessary to the praxis

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<sup>146</sup> Ferrero (2019): "Rifondazione si trova davanti a certo punto a questa roba della moneta unica. Bertinotti, il segretario Bertinotti, che è in maggioranza con Prodi, propone di dire "no a Maastricht e si alla moneta unica". Questa posizione, a mio parere, una posizione demente, un salta picchio, una furbizia lessicale, perché uno non può dire sono a favore della moneta unica ma contro Maastricht. In realtà è una scemenza.

È una scemenza, tecnicamente una scemenza, allora è una mediazione lessicale in cui a parola la puoi dire. Come che io sono non violento ma ti do un cazzoto. Lo puoi dire, è una scemenza. È un ossimoro. Questo ossimoro fu la linea politica di Rifondazione. Si poteva prevedere che andasse a finire come andò a finire? Sì. Questo fu l'errore politico di Rifondazione. Perché viene accettato allora? Perché era un modo che non ti rompeva troppo i coglioni con la maggioranza di governo, e nessuno ne capiva tanto di economia. E quindi alcuni furono contrari, e quindi la massa dei compagni non capivano niente, io per primo"

<sup>147</sup> As indicated by Leon Trotsky, "*On the United Front*" (1922), the question of tactics appears in the sense that it is the ability of the communist party to dispute the majority of the working class, it is the particular way the Party is implementing its praxis according to its general purposes to fight and spread its influence on society and to build alliances in this sense. Trotsky indicates that the Communist Party is an important, but not a hegemonic force on working classes, then the necessity of the *united front* is crucial. On the contrary, the organization that is not disposed to those performances, is merely a communist propaganda society, rather than a revolutionary organization.

of a political party. As mentioned by Della Vecchia in an interview on 19 February 2019, the political party cannot intend to be an exclusive force in the political process. Following this, the question of alliances was argued by Leon Trotsky in his article on *The Question of the United Front* (1922) to not be a warranty of a real unity among political forces but, in reality, the communists should have the autonomy to criticize reformist and opportunist actions participating in the alliance without dissolving themselves in it. Conversely, the interviews suggests that the opposite happened in the case of the PRC, i.e., the party dissolved itself in the alliances and was unable to develop a political program for its parliamentary praxis with the potential of developing a subaltern perspective. In fact, it is perceptible that the parliamentary life was a challenge which the party had difficulties to face in many aspects.<sup>148</sup>

With those changes, updates, and adaptations, some concepts remained, and others disappeared, as natural movements in updating the programme and strategy of the parties, demonstrating that programmatic transformations occurred in every party. The euro can operate again as an example of the conceptual framework, now in the case of the PCE/IU.

As argued by Francisco Franz in an interview on 24 April 2019 regarding the situation of the left in Spain at the completion moment of the EU integration around 2001:

There has been a debate on the euro, and there have been some parties that believe, for example, that we should reject the euro as a currency, that there should be a major rejection of the EU, and also a debate on whether it is better to participate in the EU or not. It is better to participate, since if you do not participate, you leave the terrain open to the neoliberals. But there are people who, with the excuse of rejection, believe that we will get into government, as the Greek example, that it

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<sup>148</sup> The former PRC Senator, José Del Roio (2019) argued in an interview on 25 January 2019 that: “That was the senate, it was that one vote that made us have that hellish life, it was very difficult. We were crushed, we didn’t really have an ally. I remember a phrase from D’Alema when I was pissed at him, he said: “there is no problem, dear, vote against it, you all will go home, I’ll stay here”. As it happened”. Original quotation: “O senado era isso, era aquele 1 voto que nos fazia ter aquela vida infernal, era muito difícil. A gente estava esmagado, a gente não tinha realmente aliado. Eu lembro uma frase do D’alema quando eu estava puto com ele, ele disse: “não tem problema, querido, vote contra, vocês vão todos pra casa, eu vou continuar aqui”. Tal como aconteceu”.

is possible to change Europe from within a national government - of course, it is a somewhat absurd point of view. If you are only a government of the alternative left it would be very difficult, everyone else will influence you. What you have to do is keep winning other governments to keep winning a majority, a more favourable correlation of forces, but that is difficult (Franz, 2019).<sup>149</sup>

The refusal or acceptance of the euro was part of a strategic debate regarding the positioning of the party in Europe. It was about the routes the party would take, the decisions the party would make in relation to important transformations occurring in the material and spiritual levels of society. The question of “gaining the majority” in elections was and still is one of the main concerns in the programmatic discussion, and how this topic appeared in reality was related to the dilemma of supporting or not the implementation of the euro (while at the same time it was a bigger question regarding the entire integration process). In this sense, the Spanish left also experienced the dilemma of supporting the integration, rejecting Maastricht, and accepting the euro.

In fact, the gain of parliamentary majority was not only a matter of numbers in the electoral process, but also a qualitative content that could express the support of the party’ social basis to proposals of social change. Franz argued in an interview on 24 April 2019 about the hard task of developing a left-wing government, as that would only be a first achievement of further conquests of other governments, thus a necessary quantitative dimension to be gradually located in a favourable position. On the same direction is the thought of a PCE’s militant, who argues that the political power was the aim, but that the route was not free of struggles. As argued by Daniel in an interview on 25 April 2019:

The struggles that we make apart from the elections are

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<sup>149</sup> Franz (2019): “Ha habido un debate sobre euro, e hai allí unos partidos que creen que por ejemplo deberíamos rechazar el euro como moneda, que debería haber un rechazo de la UE mayor, y también un debate de si es mejor participar en la UE o no participar. Es mejor participar, si no lo participas deja el terreno libre a los neoliberales. Pero hay gente que con la excusa del rechazo creen que se llegamos al gobierno, a ejemplo griego, que se es posible cambiar Europa desde un gobierno – claro, es una pregunta un poco absurda, si tu es solo un gobierno de izquierda alternativa es muy difícil, te van a condicionar todos los demás. Lo que tienes que hacer es seguir ganando otros gobiernos para seguir ganando una mayoría, una correlación de fuerzas mas favorable, pero eso es difícil”

meant to raise awareness. Well, it is clear that if we achieve political power, what they will not allow, but if one day we achieve it, everything will be easier because we can count on the institutions to create the historical bloc and make everything easier, so that people will understand that you cannot get up at 5 in the morning to work for 12 hours for only 800 euros (Daniel, 2019).<sup>150</sup>

The development of social consciousness appears also as an important issue for the party's achievement of power (parliamentary and governmental) in the institutional dimension of normal democracy. For the PCE and IU militancy this was not the ultimate purpose. In fact, it was present in their elaborations (documental and interviews) the importance of the political power as one of the main purposes that would be supportive of the reconfiguration of the balance of forces in the social struggles. That was a comprehension that the conquest of political power was in fact the achievement of positions in the government in order to sustain its own hegemonic position, what would shift the position of the left wing in the relation of forces from a defensive to a favourable condition. Such comprehension, therefore, is important to understand why the parties supported zigzag movement in their approaches regarding some important issues in the EU integration process.

Different, however, is the situation when a political party achieved its strategic purpose in a historical upheaval and somehow succeed in keeping alive such a historical memory in the strategic discourse, as it is the case of the PCP. Vladimiro argued, in an interview on 21 March 2019

The 25th of April happened only in Portugal, and that marks the country's history. Although they accuse us of having a Soviet model, we never said that, even before the 25th of April, that is, we want to build a socialist society, but we know the guidelines, how we have progressed. But there is no recipe,

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<sup>150</sup> Daniel (2019): "Las luchas que hacemos a parte las elecciones para poder llegar a conscienciar, bueno, esta claro que se conseguimos el poder politico, que non nos van dejar, pero se lo conseguimos algun dia todo sera mais facil porque poderemos contar con las instituciones para poder crear el bloco historico y conseguir que todos sea mais facil para que la gente entienda que non puede levantar-se a las 5 horas de la mañana e estar trabajando por 12 oras por 800 euros"

as each party has to decide the stages and the route. And we established for the 25th of April that it was the national democratic revolution, which had the 10 or 11 points where there was the question of popular and military uprising. We now have for this phase of the struggle the advanced democracy program “the values of April in the future of Portugal”. It starts from that base, from the values of the democratic regime that was founded on April 25, but which is not socialism, and therefore with the objective of always building socialism with intermediate stages. We have this notion, this is where we have been going (Vladimiro, 2019).<sup>151</sup>

The strategic-programmatic discussion in the PCP is particular. In fact, as seen in Chapter 3, the *Carnation Revolution* can be seen as one of the latest revolutions in the world that not only eliminated the fascist dictatorship, but also changed the relationship of an European country with the historic colonial exploitation, and that also succeed in implementing aspects of socialism in Portuguese society, in a revolutionary process in which even republicans, reformists and liberals temporarily adopted the socialist discourse to participate in the provisional governments (Secco, 2004). Fernando argued in an interview on 19 March 2019 that:

From the 25th of April (1974) until 1981 the fights that were fought were fights to win, to gain rights. From 1984 until now the fights that have been made, in rare cases, for the most part, were fights to not lose (positions and conquests). And what we have done over the years is this: the street fight; we are a Trade Union, so we belong to CGTP, the only central of workers. Then we have the UGT that was created by the

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<sup>151</sup> Vladimiro (2019): “O 25 de Abril aconteceu só em Portugal, e isso marca a história do país. Apesar de nos acusarem de termos um modelo soviético, nós nunca dissemos isso, nem antes do 25 de Abril, ou seja, queremos construir uma sociedade socialista, mas sabemos as linhas mestras, como é que avançamos. Mas não há uma receita, pois cada partido tem que decidir as etapas e o percurso. E nós estabelecemos para o 25 de Abril que era a revolução democrática nacional, que tinha os 10 ou 11 pontos onde tinha a questão do levantamento popular e militar. Temos agora para essa fase da luta o programa da democracia avançada “os valores de abril no futuro de Portugal”. Parte dessa base, dos valores do regime democrático que se fundou em 25 de Abril, mas que não é o socialismo, e portanto com o objetivo sempre da construção do socialismo com etapas entre-medias. Nós temos essa noção, é por aqui que a gente tem ido”

patronage in 1980/1981 to destroy the CGTP. And our fight has been for the defence of workers' rights, but since 84 the struggles that have been made are not to recover, but to try to stay with what we had gained as rights (Fernando, 2019).<sup>152</sup>

The strategy of PCP is still directly associated to the revolution of 1974, which has an important ideological function in the party. In the party's perspective their situation is located in an intermediate stage, between the realization of the democratic revolution and the attendance of the socialist transformation. But in practice, despite the theoretical view of the PCP, there was a particular one, since the concrete situation of the party was not entirely different from its other correspondents of the European left. In this sense, the PCP's strategy was clear, and its program in the 1990s and also 2000s was still coherent with the historical values of Marxism-Leninism of the party and the faith that it would be possible the development of a further stage of the 1974 revolution. The differentiation then was that in the updates of the communist strategy and programme, socialism was a stage that would be achieved through the development of an intermediate stage, the advanced democracy.

Thus, the program and strategies of the European left (PCP, PCE, and PRC) seems to be located mainly at the national dimension and oriented towards the question of political power in the government – a sort of updating, but essentially different, with respect to the Leninist perspective of seizing the state's power.

## **5.2. GUE/NGL - a synthesis of multiple determinations?**

Other than affecting the internal structure of society in terms of culture and economic relations, the integration process imposed a new weight in the class relation of forces: the European Parliament gained more power but remained with a limited co-decisive role, while Central Banks were made independent, and the

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<sup>152</sup> Fernando (2019): "Do 25 de Abril até 1981 as lutas que se fez foram lutas para ganhar, ganhar direitos, de 1984 pra cá as lutas que tem sido feitas, raros os casos, em grande parte tem sido uma luta para não perder. E o que a gente tem feito ao longo desses anos todos é isso, a luta de rua, somos uma Central portanto pertencemos a CGTP, única central dos trabalhadores. Depois temos a UGT que foi criada em 1980, 81, para destruir a CGTP, pelos patrões. E a nossa luta tem sido pela defesa dos direitos dos trabalhadores, mas desde 84 as lutas que tem sido feitas não é para reaver, mas para tentar permanecer com aquilo que tínhamos de direitos"

European Central Bank made sovereign over the common currency. From the European left position, what was the transnational *combination* aspect?

One possible perspective of looking at the left wing at the transnational level in Europe other than considering the parts that constitutes the GUE/NGL, is taking the general figure of the left wing in the EU Parliament as a whole. In fact, more than a sum of multiple parties, the GUE/NGL is a unique entity, a political body to the extent that there is a program that guide GUE/NGL praxis. On the other hand, the influence of its individual members cannot be denied in the constitution of the group, but the group itself is a totality and its praxis can be observed from the transnational perspective.

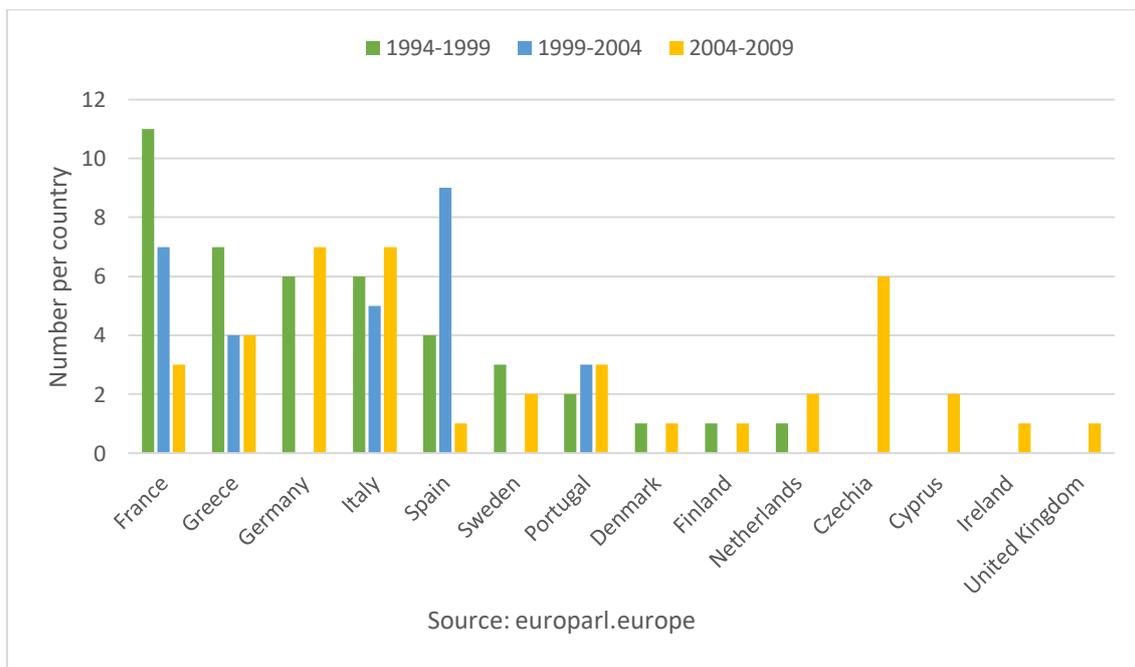
The document *GUE/NGL 1999-2004 Activity Report* presented the group's conception that *another Europe* was a possibility. The general balance of the group's activities is preceded by the verification of the gradual development of the internal identity based on a "triple agreement". The first one was the respect for the internal differences of each party member, what leads the group to seek very generic common points, regardless of it being a green, red or any other character in the spectrum. The second one was the struggle for an alternative European program while keeping the "involvement" "in the immediate combat" of the current Europe. And the third aspect of the agreement was seeking partnership with social movements (GUE/NGL, 2004).

It is clear that the GUE/NGL formulated an identity that was contrary to the neoliberal character of the EU, and for this reason, it gained the status of *the* left wing group in the EP. To begin with, based on the *Constituent Declaration*, of 1994, being against the neoliberal monetarist accent of the EU does not mean being against the EU integration, and in fact the group motivation was to cooperate in the construction of the Union (more different perspectives were expressed, for instance, by its national members, but at the transnational level it was clear the optimism regarding the Union). In the second place, this perspective logically led the group to be in favour of another Europe based on democratic institutions. Thus, the perspective of the GUE/NGL was to refuse the neoliberalist approach in the Union as it was the most coherent and clear ideological combination in relation to its European left and other national parties.

We are all different in terms of background, political culture, priorities, and, obviously, language. This could have led to chaos and a group with no real character. And yet, this did not happen. To begin with this is due to the fact that, beyond our differences, we are all progressives and we all want to see serious change in Europe. A sort of red/green thread runs through our group. (GUE/NGL, 2004: 5).

As suggested by the main literature in the area (Dunphy, 2004; March, 2012; Damiani, 2016), the multiplicity of perspectives in fact was the determinant factor for the political orientation of the group. Figure 2 presents this variety of composition of the group.

**Figure 2: Number of GUE/NGL MPEs Members from 1994 to 2009**



The group could successfully “combine respect for differences” in a “relatively” “sort of” “shared approach” (GUE/NGL, 2004: 5). The immediate consequence was that the group as a forum could not require more than *respect*,

despite the relative quantitative dominance of the parties from communist background (for instance, the communist parties of Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, and France).

Accordingly, the level of cooperation and ideological affinity in the development of the GUE/NGL program are central aspects that deserve some attention because the group was not unified around the possibility of building a common subaltern perspective of leadership, but it was unified based on something that previously existed among its members; for this reason, some activities and thematic position of the group related to transnational discussion will now be seen according to its documents and the programmatic/strategic thought expressed in them, as it might indicate whether and how there was in the GUE/NGL a synthesis of its multiple internal faces.

As indicated in the *Activities Report*, the GUE/NGL position regarding important themes, such as *agriculture*, was not internally consensual, but the majority of the group was in favour of an alternative reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which was contributing to create more inequalities in Europe due to the funding policy which distributed 80% of the CAP funds to 20% of the farmers (GUE/NGL, 2004: 16).<sup>153</sup> In general, the proposals developed in the EU about the reforms of agriculture were refused by the left-wing group, and what was approved in the parliament at the end resulted in “less negative [effects] than the initial proposals”. In this sense, the group not only had political parties with different perspectives, but parties from different national agricultural backgrounds that could not be simply assembled in one thematic proposal. In other words, similar to the theme of Agriculture, the group was reflecting the complexity of the European Union nature.

Subsequently, the GUE/NGL approach to the question of *employment* in Europe was based on the necessity of fighting for more investment in qualification and security, involving “industrial and social groups”. The group emphasized that the “functioning ‘from the top’ is neither, in principle, democratic or transparent. In international terms, the European Union was often content to be an actor in the mainstream of capitalist globalisation” (GUE/NGL, 2004: 11). At its turn, the proposals made by the group about employment were oriented to the creation of

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<sup>153</sup> The following discussion will be based on the same Gue/Ngl document.

eco-friendly/sustainable jobs, the strengthening of public services of the tertiary sector, and the field of voluntary economy, while conversely the guideline of the EU was to cut public expenditures and to implement more austerity measures within the job market flexibilization – measures oriented towards the preservation of profits in some dominant sectors. Moreover, another part of GUE/NGL proposals about employment relatively succeed in the EP bringing part of decisions about the job market to the field of national parliaments, where national left-wing parties had more presence (GUE/NGL, 2004: 28).

Activities of the group regarding the field of *culture*, for instance, were based on the defence of the idea that each state should create “their own cultural policy by developing aid mechanisms that would be recognized by the “compatible with the Internal Market” principle” (GUE/NGL, 2004: 23). Refusing the marketization of culture in the sense of free competition and commoditization, the GUE/NGL succeed in obtaining the EP support for cultural diversity according to the UNESCO framework. Other policies were made in the field of audio-visual and book-selling as well, always in the general field of culture and education. The group was focused on bringing to the sphere of the national states the responsibility for the cultural domain.

Oppositely, the group activity towards the theme of *development* was more consistent. Focusing on fighting against public cuts on the welfare structure and on the cooperation with developing countries, the GUE/NGL made some proposals on the EP, such as the assurance of food sovereignty, the abolition of external debts of developing countries, the taxation of financial transactions “to create a Fund for development”. The marketization of everything in Europe was an aspect approached by the group, which tried to place essential rights ahead of the mercantilist approach of the EU. On the same direction it was addressed the theme of *Structural Funds*: highlighting the worsening situation of regional economies as a results of the single market policy, and the GUE/NGL argued that the structural funds mitigated some regional differences, but that it was not enough to develop poorer regions toward an economic and social cohesion, as some strongest regions concentrated more economic activities. Thus, the group indicated the necessity of democratizing the funds management “by enhancing the role of regional elected representatives” (GUE/NGL, 2004: 59). The GUE/NGL action also pointed out the existent bureaucratic mechanisms in EU

that were resulting in “unnecessary accumulations” based on the criteria of free competition. Moreover, the expansion of the EU was singled out as another factor that was increasing socio-regional differences.<sup>154</sup>

At that time, the EU budget, according to the same *Report*, was about €100 billion per year, corresponding to €220 per person per year in the euro zone (2004: 18). With the EP co-decision power on the definition of the EU budget, the group offered its opposition to the Council prerogative power to decide the priorities based on “insufficient ‘financial perspectives’” in relation to the improvement of economic and social cohesions. For this reason, in 2001, the group rejected the budget, requesting the modification of the EU financial perspectives for a more equitable distribution, because even though almost 80% of the funds were directed to Structural Funds and Agriculture, “ten new countries” had an “average revenue” that was “less than half of the revenue of the 15 current Member States”, confirming that the EU focus was not on economic and social cohesion, but on competitiveness (2004: 18).<sup>155</sup>

In fact, other than the intergovernmental and the limited legislative power of the European Parliament, the EU was constituted by *supranational* institutions, such as the ECB, the *European Central Bank*, which has the monetary power over every state member of the EU. Even though the president of ECB delivered reports to EU institutions explaining its decisions, this was characterized only as an “appearance of democratic control”, as described by the left-wing group (2004: 31).

The ECB is a federal structure; it works totally independently of governments and parliaments. It does not take into account growth rates or the evolution of employment. Its obsession is to be “credible” in financial markets in order to attract capital. That is why the ECB exerts pressure to ration public and social spending in order to obtain a greater flexibility of the labour market and to ensure the pursuit of “wage

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<sup>154</sup> The *Activities Report* indicates that with the adhesion of new countries, the population of the EU would increase by 28%, while the GDP would only increase from 5 to 7% (Gue/Ngl, 2004: 59).

<sup>155</sup> Confronting the discretionary power of the EU Commission, the group stated that “The GUE/NGL is the only group to contest this boundless “free competition” principle. The Group endorses an industrial policy founded on the choice of the public and satisfying the – immediate and long term – collective needs that enable an enhancement of national and regional advantages” (Gue/Ngl, 2004: 21).

moderation”, always in the name of the fight against inflation (GUE/NGL, 2004: 31).

The group was opposed to the supranational character of the ECB, a “legal no man's land”. The GUE/NGL Report of 2004 points out that the ECB focus was to keep the price stability at any cost. However, price stability was a result of a deeper and central policy of ECB on economy, which was its participation in economic decisions of EU countries from a supranational position. In this sense, the ECB was at the heart of the contemporary form of capital accumulation, the form determined by the hegemony of the financial market. Moreover, the ECB was able and powerful to act over the labour force market of the continent through its economic policies and, undoubtedly, to influence the production.<sup>156</sup>

In fact, the legality of ECB practices was sustained by the Maastricht Treaty, and at that time it was in course of being reinforced by the project of the *European Constitution* which, for the GUE/NGL, would be the “constitutionalisation of the liberal model” (2004: 31). The group argued that the constitutional project was a text that could last for 50 years, perpetuating the liberal structure of the Maastricht. Moreover, for the majority of the GUE/NGL, the constitution project was ambiguous with respect to social themes and workers' rights, as well as to the role of NATO, other than its refusal of war as a form of ensuring European interests.

Furthermore, the relation of GUE/NGL with *social movements* around the world was based on the necessity of *peace* and *resistance* against capitalist globalization (2004: 16). From 1999 to 20004 there was the emergence of new organized movements around the world similarly motivated by resistance and peace, such as the World Social Forum. The movements that became known as belonging to the idea of *Alter-Globalization* were seen as a potential reflexion of the group resistance in Europe, confirming the thesis that “another Europe is possible”. In fact, the group was involved in the Seattle protests and in the World Social Forums, and contributed to the organization of the World Parliamentary Forums – actions that resulted in many other editions of those Forums with the

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<sup>156</sup> The field of action of the ECB is not secondary. Instead, ECB detains a sovereign, supranational power over each member state, controlling the mechanisms of capitalist society from the crucial perspective of political economy: the production, the distribution, the consume – particularly focusing on the price control, consequently the control of the profits according to the free-competition neoliberal conception.

perspective of a “new international order based on the United Nations charter” by condemning “Bush doctrine as well as terrorism in all its forms, including state terrorism” (2004: 16).

The perspective of resistance was also highlighted by the GUE/NGL in its transnational context based on the increasing abstention of people in the EU elections, as the democratic deficit was then the clear result of a top-down integration process.

For the GUE/NGL Group a thorough remake of community orientations, the democratisation of the development process of policies, in other words the construction of another Europe is only possible if political and parliamentary action is linked to the mobilisation and implication of social actors and civilians. This is why the group has given priority to cooperation with unions, associations, local and national MPs (GUE/NGL, 2004: 24).

Accordingly, *democracy* was the central aspect of GUE/NGL action at the transnational level. The group was acting accordingly to its perspectives to reinforce democracy in the EU structure, for instance, advocating the reinforcement of local and regional authorities’ power, the strengthening of the EU and National Parliaments, as well arguing in favour of the “necessity of a democratic and transparent decision-making process”.<sup>157</sup>

Conversely, the analysis of the conjuncture of liberal orientations in the EU was not seen by the group through the lens of the relation of forces, since the “resistance or the opposition to community policies is an exclusive result of disinformation or a lack of understanding” (2004: 24). Rather than an analysis that considered the class struggle as the specific propulsive force to revolutionize capitalist forces of production producing social change, a perspective that is suggested by Wood (1995: 140), the group judgement was that information and understanding would be the solutions that could be achieved in the instances of the EU and national institutions.

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<sup>157</sup> In fact, GUE/NGL contributed to bring to light some financial scandals that involved European affairs in the 2000s (2004: 19).

From the group's point of view, the reinforcement of the EU and National Parliaments would result in the democratization of the EU, while it would also increase the power of regional and local authorities, thus reinforcing local state sovereignty, at same time that was in favour of reducing or refusing the power of EU agencies (those that had the power to make technical decisions, such as the agencies of the Commission).

On the whole, the group presented some results of its praxis in the 1990s and the first part of the 2000s:

- inscription of the principle of subsidiary in the Treaty (without guaranteeing the respect of this principle)
- a noticeable reinforcement of the legislative and controlling power of the European Parliament
- installing Parliamentary Committees to investigate certain issues ('mad cow' crisis, Echelon system)
- introducing an independent European mediator, elected by the European Parliament, who will be in charge of handling civil complaints, draw up proposals to improve the functioning and the transparency of community institutions and improve public's access to documents
- improvement with regard to the consultation of the Economic and Social Committee of the Regions
- better regard of role of the National Parliaments in the Treaty and in the Member States (GUE/NGL, 2004: 24).

In fact, the group praxis succeeded in having pragmatic conquests, even if small, and that were in accordance with the strategic level established in its Constituent charter. Those transparency gains in the field of democracy were then critically seen by the group as a practical remark that the Commission was the real empowered political institution using its power for legislative initiatives to keep the primacy of competition, which ultimately was a problem of sovereignty faced by the left wing in Europe other than the economic power in the hands of the ECB (that had also sovereignty implications as well). Another aspect of the same problem were the ideas surrounding the Treaties that were in discussion at that moment (it was in course the discussion and preparations for the Treaty of

Nice, the Charter of Fundamental Rights, and the preparation for the referendums for the possible European Constitution), which continued to exclude citizens from the decision-making processes. For this reason, the group reaffirmed that: “A refoundation of the European construction is indeed necessary” (2004: 24).

Those problems led the GUE/NGL to analyse the deficit of democracy in EU institutions which was based on the strategy of reformulating the EU orientation through the refoundation of “European construction and its meaning”. Rather than the expression of particular regimes or contradictions that some countries might have had, the democratization of the EU was considered an international collective necessity to assure peace, human rights, and to reduce the gap between centre and periphery, bringing social movements’ participation to reinforce the GUE’s “coherent progressive identity” (GUE, 2004: 6).

Fulfilling its primary role as a group in a parliament through the synthesis of the multiplicity of the European left, it is possible to affirm that the GUE/NGL activities were developed at that time particularly under a praxis/perspective limited to the normal democracy and based on the aims of political emancipation inspired by the activities of its national members. In fact, the similarities of themes and approaches is not occasional. Even though the group can be seen as a whole, a totality, the role of its members is expressed through the groups’ policies in the EP, for instance the ideas that parliaments should reinforce, or the democratization process.

As a minority force in the EP, the group achieved some “significant results” in the period, as the group itself pointed out, but mostly from a pragmatic perspective, with limited ideological impact, for instance: “Defeat of liberalisation: rejection of the directive on the liberalisation of port services”, “Creation of a temporary committee on marine safety”, “voting rights for foreign residents in local and European elections”, “A directive against the concentration of the media”, “Prohibition of collective expulsion”, Western Sahara: support for the UN Peace Plan”, “For the Geneva Initiative”, “The European Parliament demands the suspension of the Association Agreement between the EU and Israel” (GUE/NGL. 2004: 69 – 71).

Moreover, the group also participated and organized many other meetings, conferences, discussions with extra-parliamentary forces, expressing its vicinity to social movements and more grounded activities. For instance, meetings with

trade unions and workers organizations from European industries, study days, conference-debates about the role of WTO, meetings with Palestinian delegate, participation in the World Social Forum, meetings with left-wing party's leaderships, meetings with non-EU representatives parliamentarians and popular leaderships, participation in the Forum of São Paulo, participation in the Genova gathering of social movement against the G8, many other meetings about peace, human rights and sustainable environment, collective meetings with trade unions from many EU countries about "Social Europe", meetings with national parliamentarians about "challenges set for the transforming left" and about the "convention on the future of Europe", participation on the European Social Forum, etc.<sup>158</sup>

### 5.2.1. GUE/NGL - form and content of the Another Voice

When debating the development of socialist perspectives in the context of the intense relation of forces in Europe, in 1848, Marx and Engels characterized some of the socialist perspectives from that time as the utopian socialism, the petty-bourgeois socialism, etc. Indicating the connection between the material production of life and their correspondent ideology, the *Manifesto's authors* of 1848 placed the development of socialist political perspectives in relation to the contradictions between the social classes in the capitalist system. For instance, they argued that the development of the French petty-bourgeois socialist perspective was a reactionary and utopian socialism. In the same way, the "true" socialism, or the socialism in Germany, was a result of the fights among the emergent bourgeoisie, the old feudal classes, and the influence of the French socialist literature, which was conceived through a translation: the defence of the

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<sup>158</sup> Regarding the events of Genova, the former Senator for PRC, José Del Roio argues in an interview on 25 January 2019 that: "The idea was so simple. The idea was always the same, to denounce the neoliberal globalization that would take the world to the hole, that would increase inequalities, increase wars; that is to say: in capitalist countries inequality and unemployment would increase. And in the so-called developing countries, it would be the blocking of this more or less harmonious development, would be the concentration of income, and the distribution of internal and external wars; everything that happened. What was our strength? None. It was a cultural as well as a political battle of trying to gather international forces to block, to put some sand on this globalization". Original quotation: "A ideia era tão simples. A ideia era sempre a mesma, denunciar a globalização neoliberal que levaria o mundo para o buraco, aumentaria as desigualdades, aumentaria as guerras; quer dizer, nos países capitalistas aumentaria a desigualdade e o desemprego. E nos países chamados em desenvolvimento, seria o bloqueio desse desenvolvimento mais ou menos harmônico, seria a concentração de renda, e a distribuição de guerras internas e externas; tudo o que aconteceu. Nossa força qual era? Nenhuma. Era uma batalha cultural e também política de tentar agrupar forças internacionais para bloquear, por areia nessa globalização" (Del Roio, 2019).

human essence instead of the class struggle was a characteristic of the French socialism. (Marx and Engels, 2002). Another perspective was the utopian and critical socialism.

The first direct attempts of the proletariat to attain its own ends, made in times of universal excitement, when feudal society was being overthrown, necessarily failed, owing to the then undeveloped state of the proletariat, as well as to the absence of the economic conditions for its emancipation, conditions that had yet to be produced, and could be produced by the impending bourgeois epoch alone (Marx and Engels, 1969: 32).

One contribution from Marx and Engels' analysis about the development of socialist ideas was the conception of workers as a social class. Later on, with the elaborations of Lenin and Trotsky during the Russian revolutions (of 1905 and 1917), the problem of the material existence of working classes was seen on another level, as the material development of the industry under capitalist society achieved a huge progress enabling the development of an organized production under social interests. The remaining problem was then not located in the material conditions, but in the world of ideas. Therefore, the recovery of classical analysis is important, as they continue to speak through history based on their original contributions (Bianchi, 2007a).

Even though revolutions are considered in the Marxist field as the engine of history, the moments of preparations are also fundamental periods for the praxis of working classes organizations. Thus, the everyday life is significant to the praxis of left-wing (radical or not) political parties.

Long periods of transformations or/and qualitative leaps are part of the class struggles in the (ab)normality of the capitalist development. Differently from the hypothesis of the end of history, the globalization process that was the milestone in the expansion of neoliberalism in the world was, instead, permeated by social conflicts and by the increase of social contradictions. Lenin's *Imperialism* (1999), in his analysis of capital accumulation, suggested that wars and revolutions would be present in this development. What would explain the

absence of an authentic revolutionary process in European countries along the 1990s and 2000s is the hegemony of the financial and big capital sector combined with the deconfiguration and weakening of left-wing organizations.

Moreover, the European constitution of supranational and intergovernmental forms of political and economic sovereignty did not entirely remove the political power from each state of its country members, even though new forms of power emerged, and new relations of forces were placed in a continent whose means of productions achieved an impressive level if compared to many other places in the world. Therefore, from the perspective of class struggles, the role that could be played by a European left-wing organization on national and transnational levels was not very different from many other historical experiences, i.e., the role of ideological preparations of working classes based on history and on the problems of the everyday life and oriented towards social transformation.

From the GUE/NGL activities developed between 1999 and 2004, the perspectives that guided the group were based on a defensive institutional approach according to the position occupied in the EP as a force of the minority and the opposition. The group did not adopt the perspective of class struggles in its praxis, even though they expressed criticism against institutions, the defence of basic rights and cooperation among its partners. The type of “socialist” perspective that appeared in those struggles, then, assumed a particular feature related to the European conjuncture, what was not a continuity of revolutionary left-wing traditions, but something closer to the set of reformist-socialist perspectives debated by Marx and Engels in the *Manifesto* that had progressivist contents (mainly regarding the defence of the welfare structure that was clearly under attack).

Not as an occasional result, the mobilization of working classes, especially in the 1990s, was situated out-side Europe (the group sought to participate and cooperate with those struggles).<sup>159</sup> Nevertheless, the defence of welfare and the search for more democratic reforms were situated in the perspective of left-wing fights, and here the connection between democracy and socialist strategies reappears, at least as a possibility, as the defensive approach to assure the

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<sup>159</sup> Markedly in Latin America.

welfare structure that was related to the defence of the working classes' struggling legacy and real life conditions, and *could be* the connection to a broader, more transnational, and innovative project of society.

Again, in the 2004 Report, the acting forces in the GUE/NGL were defined as *progressive*, and that was assumed in fact as the ideological content of the left-wing group. *Apparently*, the Group's actions were determined by the perspective of fighting for another development of Europe, but in its essence the reinforcement of democratic institutions, as conceived by the radical and European left, was not a truly proposal of another one, but the reform of the same EU. Other forces at the transnational level also claimed the desire of another Europe, and thus the GUE/NGL was not just another echoing voice. As pointed out by Hegel in its *Science of Logic* (2005), the *appearance* is the closest truth to the being, as well as the *phenomenon* is the manner that the being manifests its *essence*. Those categories can be useful here to guide the thought throughout the praxis of the group: "another Europe" was the appearance and manifestation of the struggle to add more democratic features to the EU structure. The democratization of the EU was the *universal* qualitative horizon, the strategic truth of the group existence, with the potentiality of being a bridge to a truer new world.

Following this, Draper (1977) argued that the maximization of the representative system is an idea that could led to the democratization of society, with the cost of reducing the executive power. Contrastively, what happened in the EU was the opposite, as the power was established mainly in the hands of the executive institutions (even with the existent co-decision power of the EP), thus, it resulted in the crisis of the representative system, the maximization of executive and bureaucratic powers.

Likewise, some technical aspects of the EP can be useful to understand the existential nature of the groups. Firstly, the electoral interest of national parties in participating into the EP groups is motivated by the access to Parliamentary budgets (both the budget for the use of the group and political parties, and the European Union budget), which is a fundamental material dimension to the life of any organization, particularly to left-wing parties which depend essentially on donations of its members and public funds (GUE/NGL,

2001).<sup>160</sup> Nevertheless, EP powers on budgetary matters was and still is not exclusive.<sup>161</sup> Accordingly, electoral participation was a confirmed motivation for political parties to strengthen their financial supports, and it was not different for the European left.

In the 1994 European elections, the GUE (not yet GUE/NGL formation) had 34 deputies, from 1999 to 2004 mandate; the PCE/IU, PRC, and PCP had together 12 deputies among the total of 55 in the GUE/NGL.<sup>162</sup> In the bureau of the GUE/NGL, Alonso Puerta (from IU) was the vice-president, and Francis Wurtz (from the PCF) the president of the group.<sup>163</sup> In fact, GUE/NGL was the fourth force in the EP, in 1994-1999 mandate with members from 5 out of 12 EU state members, while, historically, the PPE-DE (European People's-Party and European Democrats) group were the leading force, followed by the PSE (Party of European Socialists) (Ives Mény – European Parliament, 2009).<sup>164</sup>

In the period of 1999 to 2004, the GUE/NGL was constituted by 13 party members from 10 different countries, and other independent members. Moreover, party members of the GUE/NGL were from: Germany, Denmark, Spain, Finland, France, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, Cyprus, Latvia, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Luxembourg, Norway, Switzerland. In terms of elections, the results of the GUE/NGL can be considered stable, always counting from 33 to 42 members in the EP (March, 2012: 159).

No longer dominated by the twin poles of the PCF and PCI, it has become a far more diverse body (...). Furthermore, GUE/NGL has become an active forum for international

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<sup>160</sup> According to *GUE/NGL 2001 Financial Report* the budget of the group in that year was: €4.908.358,55. While in 2004 the budget was €1.381.516, 35. Available at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/groups/accounts\\_en.htm](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/groups/accounts_en.htm).

<sup>161</sup> The “Rules of Procedures of the European Parliament” and the “General Budget of the European Union” are documents that express the terms/rules for the access and use of the budget. Those documents, with its annual variations, are available among EU online publications. For instance, for the year of 1994, the available staff posts for EP to be shared among political Groups were 3249 for permanent staff, plus 541 for temporary, while in 1998 the number were 3490 and 620 respectively.

<sup>162</sup> For *Italy* the members of EU Parliament of GUE/Ngl were: Fausto Bertinotti (PRC), Giuseppe di Lello Finuoli (Prc), Luisa Morgantini (PRC -independent), Luigi Vinci (PRC). *Spain*: Maria Luisa Bergaz Conesa (IU), Laura Gonzalez Alvarez (IU), Salvador Jose Peres (IU), Pedro Marset Campos (IU), Alonso Jose Puerta (IU). *Portugal*: Ilda Figueiredo (PCP), Joaquim Miranda (PCP), Sergio Ribeiro (PCP).

<sup>163</sup> Data available at: <https://europarl.europa.eu/>

<sup>164</sup> For instance, while the GUE/NGL had 55 parliamentary seats in 1999-2004, corresponding to 6,98% of the votes; the EPP-ED - Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats had 295 seats, and the PSE (the Socialist Group) 232. Data available at: <https://europarl.europa.eu/>.

cooperation as the locus for frequent meetings between party leaders, receptions of national delegations and (in contrast to the situation before 1989) coherent policy statements on issues as diverse as labour legislation, US Missile Defence, EU-Palestine relations and climate change. (...) Nevertheless, GUE/NGL remains far from a unified actor; indeed its voting behaviour remains the least cohesive of any EP faction except the extreme right (March, 2012: 160).

As pointed out by Valeria Tarditi and Davide Vittori (2019), there was a plurality of transversal perspective concerning the EU inside the GUE/NGL, as Eurosceptics, reformists and supporters of the EU integration process who had space to cooperate with relevant topics inside the group. Due to this complex confluence of perspectives regarding the EU, one way of looking at the cooperation of those political parties, particularly regarding the performance of the communists, can be through past experiences in the history of the left wing.

In Lenin and Trotsky's thought the debate about the praxis in the parliament is developed in connection with the institutions' practice of developing forms of alliances within other democratic and left-wing forces as part of a higher hegemonic purpose.<sup>165</sup> For them, the parliament was a windmill of words, since democratic regimes settled parliaments as the democratic form of the bourgeoisie domination, but not an instance of minor importance. The question of participating in the "bourgeoisie parliament" is seen by the Russian revolutionaries as an opportunity to develop alliances among political forces and, mainly, to produce ideology (or class consciousness) in the struggle against the dominant classes.

All in all, the GUE/NGL members did not refuse to take their places in national and European parliaments – the anti-parliamentarism *infantile disorder* or Euroscepticism was not an unsurmountable problem, and the cooperation among the forces can be seen as a new moment of transnational action after the dismantling of the Soviet experiences. In fact, the political program for the praxis in the EP corresponded to the interests of the national parties inside the

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<sup>165</sup> The discussion about the parliamentary participation by communist organizations is developed in Lenin's "Left-Wing" Communism: An Infantile Disorder" and "State and Revolution", also in Trotsky's writings, such as in the "About the United Front" which discusses the question of political alliances.

GUE/NGL. The participation in the parliament is theoretically considered in this dissertation as a possibility of tactical activity that requires ability from the political party to adapt and combine, in the reality, its struggles for reforms (the minimum program) with the main strategic purposes (the maximum program).

From this perspective, the GUE/NGL was constituted *de facto* as *the* (main structured) space for national left-wing parties to establish alliances so as to act at the transnational level, due to the EP participation rules – the particularity of the European conditions for the left-wing praxis.

Finally, is the GUE/NGL a radical group? The rhetorical question has been answered by the group itself: The group is *progressive* at the transnational level, and also in its international alliances. Even the progressive perspective is limited to some field of activities that were concerned to the internal reforms of the EU. Once again, the group was also an expression of its members, nonetheless, they were more than the sum of their parts. If it is a planetary system of many national parties rotating around a binary star in a much vaster galaxy of political forces, or a carpark, or just a large alliance, they still were the main references in the field of the European left at the transnational level. Thus, the appearance of left-wing struggles developed in the EP was also a reflexive indication and reproduction of what was happening in the national contexts.

### **5.3. Dimensions of hegemony in the EU**

If on one hand, the activities of the European left do not exactly fit in the Marxist box, even if it contains many aspects of it, on the other hand the praxis can be observed from other theoretical perspectives. Classic definitions of democracy and sovereignty were also related to the essence and appearance of political power, other than the “pure” form of concept. Immanuel Kant was and still is a reference regarding the European integration process in the field of international relations, particularly for his arguments on the necessity of establishing an international republican civil society where the individual would be internationally accepted (Kant, 1995).<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Kant was in favour of a republican and international government. Such discussion might be more related to the development of the United Nations structure, but somehow the European integration process was

Another view regarding the integration process is that of Jurgen Habermas (2012), who argues that the European Union was in the direction of becoming a (example of) transnational democracy, but unfortunately the real accent still was in the national (mutilated) sovereignty. For Habermas, federalism was an empty word in Europe and the world should walk through the cosmopolitan community of states – not unexpectedly, his argument is grounded in the problem of human dignity as the source of all fundamental rights.<sup>167</sup> The discussion formulated by Habermas is focused on the European context, precisely on the geopolitical space where rationality is supposed to be the dominant term associated with the ideas of independency and mutual respect - moral values and civil rights that were also present in Kant's thought and that sustained the elaboration of transnational treaties.

Habermas did not conceive the state in its intrinsic relations with the ruling classes in the same way as Poulantzas or other Marxist authors, but he understood the importance of the economic liberal power that prevailed in Europe and that was developed until its limits without adopting a harmonic organization among its country members. The result of this type of development was the increase of inequality and insecurity combined with the increase of public debts. Considering the circumstances of economic crises and other European treaties proposals, Habermas was not favourable to the creation of a sovereign European political power, as it would just be a bureaucratic disguise to reinforce the technocratic power.<sup>168</sup> It is argued that the solution for this inner/structural contradiction resides in the necessity of listening the public opinion and in the use

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also illuminated by high dosages of idealism. Kant (1995), instead, was not in favour of democracy as the adequate format for this type of international organism; for him, the republicanism was settled in the creation of the legislative separately from the executive, while democracy was constituted by the executive power, which is a contradiction of the general will against itself and against freedom.

<sup>167</sup> In Habermas words: "Liberal rights related to freedoms, which crystallize around the integrity and free movement of people, the functioning of the free market and freedom of worship that serve to prevent state interventions in the private sphere, constitute together with democratic rights to participation, the package of so-called classic fundamental rights. But in reality, citizens can only use these rights on an equal footing if, at the same time, they are guaranteed sufficient independence in their private and economic existence and if they can both constitute and stabilize their identity in the cultural sphere that each of them wants". Original quotation: "Os direitos liberais relacionados com as liberdades, que se cristalizam em torno da integridade e da livre circulação de pessoas, do funcionamento do livre mercado e da liberdade de culto e servem para impedir intervenções do Estado na esfera privada, constituem, juntamente com os direitos democráticos à participação, o pacote dos chamados direitos fundamentais clássicos. Mas, na realidade, os cidadãos só podem usar estes direitos em pé de igualdade se, simultaneamente, lhes for garantida uma independência suficiente na sua existência privada e económica e se puderem tanto constituir como estabilizar a sua identidade no âmbito cultural que cada um deles deseja" (Habermas, 2012: 35).

<sup>168</sup> Particularly, Habermas is discussing the Lisbon Treaty, which among other features, was related to the European Constitution.

of reasonable arguments to convince people – a solution that highlights some necessary socio-political qualities for a change, but somehow does not point out to a substantial/structural change in the form of the political power already existent in the EU.

Two of these innovations explain how it is possible to transnationalize peoples' sovereignty in the form of a confederation of national states. On one hand, national states are subordinated to the law established at supranational level; on the other hand, all citizens of the Union share constituent power with a limited number of “constituent states” that receive a mandate from their populations to collaborate in the foundation of a supranational community (Habermas, 2012: 70).

Moreover, the role of the EU is not conceived by Habermas as closed in itself, instead, Kant is present in Habermas' thought influencing his point of view regarding the necessity of assuming human existence universally. The “shared sovereignty” appears, then, in its relation between individuals and people (multicultural people of Europe) co-existent under democratic rules. In this sense, for Habermas, the linkage between the state and people's sovereignties – with no prejudices for national identities – does not exclude their differences. The linkage exists in the constitutional regulation of both dimensions, while the differences are preserved once people's sovereignty is the *reverse* of that of the state. The innovation proposed by Habermas lies in the conception of prioritizing the supranational power over the national dimension based on “sufficiently democratic legalization” to assure its legitimacy (2012: 82).

Political elites would only find political cohesion with social cohesion: within the homogeneity of life conditions (2012: 114). Nevertheless, Habermas presents a generic transitional idea in which such transformations could occur, for instance, when evoking the idea of social communication as a measure to bring European citizens to feel how the EU has changed their lives as citizens of the Union.<sup>169</sup> In this sense, votes would have some importance if associated to the

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<sup>169</sup> Habermas discussion is not only related to the EU, his thought goes further to discuss the passage from the international community to the cosmopolitan community in a world perspective, where a democratic constitution of the world society would be the expression of the establishment of the idea of citizens of

public opinion *formed* in the communicative exchange.

Here we arrive at the problem of the *consciousness*. One perspective is related to the limits of the corporatist consciousness and how its limit can be transformed by the total comprehension of class relations, or, the class/socialist consciousness.<sup>170</sup>

Certain superstructures have a “material structure” but retain the character of the superstructure; their development is not “immanent” in their particular “material structure” but in the “material structure” of society. A class is formed on the basis of its function in the world of production: the growth of power, the struggle for power, and the struggle to preserve power create the superstructures that determine the formation of a “special material structure” for the diffusion, etc., of those same superstructures (Gramsci, 2007: 154).

The problem of consciousness can be also related to the practical struggle for real democracy, it is a struggle that starts in the productive world, what Habermas considered as the problem of homogeneity. In this sense, Gramsci’s (2014) analysis contributed with methodological approaches that are still important to the field of political sciences; one of them is the necessary differentiation between what is occasional and what is permanent in society. Accordingly, the EP is understood as an expression of the material production in the European society, thus a fundamental part of European superstructures.

Another dimension of the problem of hegemony in the EP is related to great politics, the dimension of the system of states relations to the conservation of the structure. In the transnational relation of forces the role played by the largest European economies is an important element that brings the European case to the international relation of forces, *imperialism*, which is the role played by Germany in the EU, for instance, as it has been the strongest and more stable

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the world – an idea that has been developed in the EU in terms of citizens and state’s cooperation.

<sup>170</sup> V. Lenin’s *What is to be Done*, discusses the problem of consciousness from two perspectives, the socialist and the trade-unionist. The polemic in the field of Marxism is around the affirmation that given the limits of the working classes struggles it would be only possible the development of the trade-unionist perspective. The further debate about the introduction of consciousness from outside of the working class is a problem, we understand, theoretically solved by the Gramscian formula of the *organic intellectual*.

economy in the Union for decades.<sup>171</sup> In fact, as argued by Durand and Keucheyan (2015), in the EU, hegemony is a power rooted in the financial sector of the economy, in which industrialist relations were financialized (constituting, therefore, the big bloc of financial and big capitals) big companies' interest of production was overtaken by the interest in accumulating, and in which EU institutions operate accordingly to the market functioning - the “money and financial” moment of production was predominant, which resulted in the submission of working classes to the Union.

The stability of political parties' relations at the transnational level, thus in the orbit of the GUE/NGL, was possible due to democracy been kept imprisoned in the every-day life in the sphere of the state and parliaments– a perspective that is closer to that presented by Habermas. Overall, the strategy of progressive democracy adopted by party-members of the left-wing Group in the EP can be considered as a strategy that insistently located the European left in a defensive position and did not present subaltern developments.

## **5.4. Conclusion**

The praxis of the European left can be discussed through the lens of “theory” and “practice”. This chapter suggested, however, that there is no real dilemma in the praxis – that is, the conjunction of theory and practice – of the European left. Instead, a succession of internal and external ideological transformations contributed to the establishment of the almost strategic interest of the parties in small politics. As a consequence, it was observed that the transformation of society, in the perspectives of the parties, would be a result of the “conquest of the power”, but in the sense of the conquest of majority in governments (essentially national governments). This strategical detour was not an exclusive concern of national parties; it was also the way the transnational group developed its praxis, but with more difficulties due to the complexity of its internal composition and due to its position in the EP. The group in fact was an advance in the organization of the European left, including historically different

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<sup>171</sup> Habermas (2012) points out that the EU recommendations reflect a political model that has the German signal.

currents, such as greens, socialists, and communists united around the perspective of reinforcing democracy. What instead was seen as a disadvantage was the internal method of discussion of the group, dominated by notions of consensus, as it was an obstacle to the emergence of radical perspectives, and ultimately benefited more social democratic and reformist approaches in the transnational level. The documental analysis led to the conclusion that the group's main interest was the defence of the welfare state, or what was still existing of welfare in times of neoliberal attacks on public structures. Equally important was the fact that the defence of welfare was not supported by a subaltern hegemonic project, and that was a fundamental limitation in the group praxis.

## Chapter 6      The Left in the new millennium

Following the previous discussion, the purpose of this chapter is to discuss some aspects related to the problem of sovereignty that the European left faced in the turn of the new millennium, in particular with the establishment of euro as a result of previous and more structural modifications. The long-lasting success of the European integration project meant the continuous reduction of Keynesian policies. It is suggested that the response of the radical and European left was the defence of neo-Keynesian policies, but as a strategic purpose and a permanent way of combating neoliberalism in the European Union, rather than a conjunctural perspective. The euro appears in this chapter as an important example of the fundamental contradictions in the praxis of the radical and European left, as they were against the Maastricht treaty, but they did not offer a coherent opposition to the euro implementation (what is indicated as the triumph of the financial fraction of the ruling classes).

### 6.1. Euro as universal value

In 2002 one of the biggest achievements of the European Union was finally completed: the *euro* became the common currency. With it, the freedom of capital reached new levels inside the Union, and as consequence the biggest financial groups could be more competitive. Total economic integration was another victory of the financial fraction of the European ruling classes over older national conceptions of national currencies and over the old left-wing historical refusal of the EU integration, a victory that benefited all big European capitals and hegemonic political groups.

Other than its economic-financial dimension, the euro was an important achievement of a more profound organization founded in the establishment of transnational centres of authority, such as the ECB. In this sense, the European ruling fraction could implement its desire for a monetary union with market protection sustaining the “primacy of global market forces and the freedom of transnational capital” (van Apeldoorn, 2001: 82).

The euro, then, reflects more substantial modifications in the European

zone. The European market, for instance, acquired its own general money-form for its general production of goods/commodities.<sup>172</sup> Another example was the intensification of precariousness as an important sector in the labour force.

Despite its common use and widespread acceptance, the euro was the confirmation that sovereignty was not a popular power and that its roots were not exclusively stuck in the state. In fact, the juridical-political superstructure of the euro is rooted in the relations of production and in a centralized autonomous power in the ECB. Sovereignty in this situation was a power exercised by a fraction of a social class that also had its roots stuck in the economic power. In parallel, national states did not lose their function, but the monetary control was assumed by a superior power. The liberalization of the European market (and labour) with a common currency and with the transformation of the meaning of its “borders” are the main aspects that were implemented by national powers (parliaments, governments, constitutional amendments), within EU institutions to create the transnational terrain of free competition on a continental scale. This was not only a physical but also a superstructural revision of the idea of sovereignty.<sup>173</sup>

The completion of the single market and the creation of the Euro resulted in a complete reversal of the hierarchy of structural forms with a shift from the post-war domination of the wage-labour nexus to a subsequent enhancement of competition and finally the hegemony of finance (Durand and Keucheyan, 2015: 130).

The space-time matrix transformation in the relation of forces in the fractions of capital, according to Durand and Keucheyan, was possible with the restructuring of *statehood*. As argued by Andreas Bieler’s (2005), analysis the EU

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<sup>172</sup> In the *Capital*, Marx argues that: “The exchange of commodities, therefore, first begins on the boundaries of such communities, at their points of contact with other similar communities, or with members of the latter. So soon, however, as products once become commodities in the external relations of a community, they also, by reaction, become so in its internal intercourse.” (1965: 61).

<sup>173</sup> In a Gramscian sense, the superstructures in this case can be considered as the trenches of the modern battles between social classes. Moreover, it is important to indicate that some of the superstructures correspond to material structures as an objective reality, for instance, the juridical aspects of European agreements and treaties are a superstructural form of organizing the material economic production (the structure). Thus, there are superstructures which are part of the material structure (Gramsci, 2014: 433-434).

integration has been dominated by neo-functionalist and intergovernmental perspectives, nonetheless it is still fundamental to avoid the separation between the state and economy. As Jo-Anne Pemberton (2009: 166) argued, the functioning of the EU is hybrid: supranationalism is superficial, and there is a complex intergovernmental organization based on a selective “pooling of sovereignty” (2009: 172). This transformation represented a transnationalization of state power with the creation of centres of authority (ECB, Council, Commission) based on the supremacy of the EU law, eliminating all the obstacles and opposition that could be offered by nation states.

Regardless of the relative autonomy of national states to decide internal economic policies, with the concentration of monetary power in the ECB and the flexibilization of labour legislation and market rules, the euro implementation reinforced the configuration of the hegemonic power bloc over national states, as national states became the sponsors (at the European level) of an enormous economic crisis (as it will be discussed further). The European particularity then, was that the accumulation process was structured to occur at the transnational level, under free competition rules, and with limited but important participation of national states protecting some economic sectors (Bieler, 2005).<sup>174</sup>

With this perspective, the question of sovereignty can be discussed on another basis. The general idea that sovereignty belongs to the people is well known, in spite of that, people are not a generalization of abstract relations. The methodological perspective of the social classes is an interesting instrument to understand the imbalances in the material and mental production and reproduction of life.<sup>175</sup> Sovereignty, thus, is not exercised by the people in general

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<sup>174</sup> Lenin's definition of imperialism seems appropriate to discuss the raise of the financial sector of the ruling classes not as something that happened in the last decades, but a historical construction in capitalist relationships: “If it were necessary to give the briefest possible definition of imperialism, we should have to say that imperialism is the monopoly stage of capitalism. Such a definition would include what is most important, for, on one hand, finance capital is the bank capital of a few very big monopolist banks, merged with the capital of the monopolist associations of industrialists; and, on the other hand, the division of the world is the transition from a colonial policy which has extended without hindrance to territories unseized by any capitalist power, to a colonial policy of monopolist possession of the territory of the world which has been completely divided up” (Lenin, 1999: 91).

<sup>175</sup> The limits of capitalist society are due to its class nature, the people in this society is an abstraction of its class composition, what is an approach that cannot help the analysis. The overcoming of class divisions in society is associated with the necessity of human emancipation. According to Gramsci: “That the philosophy of praxis conceives itself historically, that is, as a transitional phase of philosophic thought, as well as implicitly by its whole system, it appears explicitly from the well-known thesis that historical development will be characterized at a certain point by the passage from the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom”. Original quotation: “Che la filosofia della prassi concepisca se stessa storicamente, come cioè una fase transitoria del pensiero filosofico, oltre che implicitamente da tutto il suo sistema, appare esplicitamente dalla nota tesi che lo sviluppo storico sarà caratterizzato a un certo

as a universal figure, but by fractions of the dominant classes that represent the general interest and maintain the dominance of classes and fractions of classes in relation to the capitalist state, as argued by Poulantzas (1977: 137) and William Robinson (2005). In this sense, the euro was the monetary relation established over national states' powers to create the conditions for market and workers' integration under the hegemonic position of the European ruling classes combined with less state (van Apeldoorn, 2001: 74).

The consequences of such process are pointed out by Habermas (2015: 546) in terms of a negative integration that combined different societies in the free market. Moreover, Cedric Durand argues that the euro was one of the biggest catastrophes of modern economic history, as from 1999 to 2007 there was a period of imbalanced accumulations in the euro zone, such as the wage compression (2016: 113).

Nevertheless, the European left was favourable to integration, even in cases in which the discourse was not yet fully transformed into a pro-European approach, such was the PCP case. The more flexible approach regarding the EU can be partly understood as a result of the necessity of changing old perspectives, and partly as the natural change in the parties' conceptions.<sup>176</sup> The question that emerges is how those left-wing organizations replied to the spread of neoliberalism. Furthermore, it was with the euro implementation that the triad (production, distribution and consume) achieved a concrete transnational dimension, but the real common background was already established by the freedom(s) of movement (of workers, goods, and capital). Thus, the capital formula was completed: free labour-force, formal equality, and freedom of capital. With the euro, the idea of sovereignty in Europe had a further development, reaching a terrain level with the use of a common currency by all the people and all the social classes in the EU: it was indeed a universal value.<sup>177</sup>

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punto dal passaggio dal regno della necessità al regno della libertà" (2014: 1487).

<sup>176</sup> As argued by Anna Bosco (2000), in the 1980s and 1990s the communist parties, particularly PCI, PCE, PCP, went through a mutation process due to internal but also external reasons

<sup>177</sup> As indicated by the Lisbon European Council of 23 and 24<sup>th</sup> March, 2000, "Presidency Conclusions": "The euro has been successfully introduced and is delivering the expected benefits for the European economy. The internal market is largely complete and is yielding tangible benefits for consumers and businesses alike.". Document available on: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/lis1\\_en.htm](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/lis1_en.htm).

## 6.2. The European left and the integration process

### 6.2.1. PRC

If for the PCE/IU and PCP the discussion about the euro was associated with the general conjuncture as a problem of the financialization of the European economy, the discussion in the PRC was more complex. In its *III Congresso Nazionale*, of 1996, the internal discussion about the routes of the party in relation to the European Union appeared in a polemical way. For instance, one of the theses (presented in the *Maitan Document*) was that the PRC changed its route when it started to support Prodi's government, that supported the Maastricht and the liberal reforms that were required at the national level.<sup>178</sup>

The complexity of the PRC's position regarding the euro is also expressed in the memories of Paulo Ferrero in an interview on 7 February 2019:

It is a crazy idea on the level of economic science. The single currency, it is quite clear that it is not neutral with respect to the dynamics it defines, because it defines dynamics of moving resources from places with lower productivity to places with higher productivity. (...) And therefore saying yes to the money and not to Maastricht means saying yes to the money even knowing that the treaties do not oblige redistribution, and that is a moronic thing; it's like shooting yourself in the mouth (Ferrero, 2019).<sup>179</sup>

The given explanation in the interview for the party's choice is that it would be difficult to politically discuss the meaning of the common currency within the communist movement and the general social base of the party once it was already a burdensome to discuss the contradiction even inside the party. This situation raised by Ferrero is related to the debates inside the PRC during the

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<sup>178</sup> For instance, the DPEF (Documento di Programmazione Economica e Finanziaria) of the Prodi government considered privatizations, cuts in public funds, and flexibility of labour, in consonance with Maastricht, with no opposition from PRC.

<sup>179</sup> Ferrero (2019): "È un'idea pazzesca sul piano della scienza economica. La moneta unica, è del tutto evidente che non è neutra rispetto le dinamiche che definisce, perché definisce dinamiche di spostamento delle risorse dai posti a produttività più bassa ai posti a produttività più alta. (...) E quindi il dire di sì alla moneta e non a Maastricht significa dire sì alla moneta pur sapendo che i trattati non obbligano la redistribuzione, e che è una cosa da deficiente; è come spararsi in bocca".

implementation of the euro, particularly from 1996 to 2002. Unlike other parties, the PRC took a clear position regarding the euro that was not in consonance with its position about the Maastricht. Claudio Bellotti's view in an interview on 14 February 2019, an ex-PRC member, about the debate is:

It is very influenced by the question of Europe. The congress that took place in the autumn of 96, because there had already been the Treaty of Maastricht but the euro did not exist yet, but there was already a discussion about this. At that moment the position was, as before, a contradictory position, because there were criticisms on some of the concrete aspects of these policies, but there was no opposition to the foundations of the system. I remember very well the concept that was expressed in that congress: Bertinotti in particular, "we are both (favourable to) the euro and (contrary) to the Maastricht treaty"; and then what would be "both the favourable position regarding Europe and the refusal to the Lisbon Treaty and Schengen". And, therefore, the basic concept is that European integration, which is on a capitalist basis, can be oriented differently, so let's say a reformist policy applied on a European scale. But this had very specific consequences, because the (choice was) the euro and/or Maastricht, there was no other option on the table. There were many other contradictions. And this is a common thread that remained right up to 2012, which is precisely the concept of, if we can define a left-wing Europeanism, a type of reformism that was applied to these issues but that in fact was a historical reformism (Bellotti, 2019).<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> Bellotti (2019): "E li è molto condizionato dalla questione dell'Europa. Il congresso che si fa nell'autunno del '96, perché c'è già stato il trattato di Maastricht, ma l'euro ancora non è, e c'era già una discussione su questo, però in quel momento la posizione è, come già in precedenza, sempre una posizione contraddittoria, perché ci sono le critiche agli aspetti concreti di queste politiche, ma nell'impianto non c'è una opposizione. Io ricordo molto bene il concetto che si sprime in quel congresso: Bertinotti in particolare, "noi siamo sia l'euro che il no al trattato di Maastricht"; e poi quello che sarebbe "sia l'Europa che il no al trattato di Lisbona" e Schengen. E dunque il concetto di base è che l'integrazione Europea, che è su base capitalistica, può essere orientata diversamente, per cui diciamo una politica riformista applicata a scala Europea. Però questo ha delle conseguenze molto precise, perché sia l'euro sia Maastricht, perché non c'è un'altra opzione sul tavolo. Ci furono tante altre contraddizioni. E questo è un filo conduttore che rimane, fino al 2012 appunto, che è proprio il concetto di, se possiamo definire come un europeismo di sinistra, un riformismo applicato a queste questioni che in fondo è come il riformismo storico".

Again, the question of the euro is associated with the question of sovereignty. The theoretical accuracy of the concepts, then, is important to understand the apparently dialectical position taken by the PRC regarding the EU currency.<sup>181</sup> The fact is that while the PRC conserved Marxist currents in itself (especially if it is considered in terms of the plurality of perspectives inside the organization, including radicals, Marxists, Trotskyists, Maoists, etc.), the dominant perspective, in this case, was not guided by methodological rigour. It was a tactical choice when they faced the fact that the euro, almost like a supernatural force, had already become a universal value. Thus, the apparent dialectical approach was in fact a deeper problem of lack of strategic coherence that had immediate tactical impact, as it was important for the party to sustain its legitimacy with its militants and electorate – both confused regarding the euro implementation.

Criticism of the politics pursued by the PRC in the government was made in its 1999 IV Congress, in the *Ferrando* document named “*Per un Progetto Comunista*”. The Ferrando’s motion argued that the party participated in a government supporting measures against the working classes, but with no particular communist purpose accomplished. The rupture, then, was seen as the reestablishment of the party as a force of independent representation in the field of opposition (now, opposition to the D’Alema government).<sup>182</sup>

In the V Congress, of 2002, the feeling of social rupture was more present, particularly after the Genoa G-8 meeting and Seattle movements. The PRC’s analysis of the situation was that the party was operating a transformation of perspective, from a parliamentary oriented focus to a more socially oriented approach.<sup>183</sup> This shift of point of view is related to the break off with Prodi, but it is also attributed to the rupture with the old PCI leadership and with Stalinism. Thus, this provisional, pre-congress, document declared the moment of another

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<sup>181</sup> One of the reasons proposed by the PRC for the transition of the party from the government to the opposition was that Prodi’s government refused to withdraw the financial law, making it impossible for them to adopt a reformist approach (PRC, 1999). It is important to remember that in this rupture with the government, the PRC also suffered an important internal split that gave birth to the PdCI (Partito dei Comunisti Italiani), in 1998, after the decision of the *Cossutiani* group to maintain their support for the Government in order to avoid the return of the right-wing – while the majority of PRC supported the *Bertinotti* perspective of rupture with Prodi.

<sup>182</sup> At the beginning of 1998, the DS (Democratici di Sinistra) was created as a new political party, composed of PDS, Cristiano Sociali, Riformatori per l’Europa, Movimento dei Comunisti Unitari, etc. This party immediately adhered to the European PSE, under the leadership of Massimo D’Alema.

<sup>183</sup> Document: Partito della Rifondazione Comunista. V Congresso Nazionale. Documento preliminare alle tesi congressuali, 2002.

self-reform in the PRC.<sup>184</sup>

It is important to consider that already in 1992, Lucio Magri had indicated the opposition of the PRC to Maastricht and its consequences, since the supranational institutions of the EU were not a democratic power, but precisely a *pure* anti-democratic power that aimed at reducing the instruments of market control built up in the Keynesian period of post-World War II.<sup>185</sup> Magri's perspective was that it would be possible to assume another route for the EU integration process, far from its sectorial integration, and far from the consequences of a "two-speed Europe". The proposal was in favour of the establishment of a constituent power to build democratic institutions, and to change the economic orientation towards employment, environment, and expansion of the regional productive base.

### 6.2.2. PCE/IU

The PCE and IU, already in 1996, discussed the tendency of "central" countries to prevail over peripheral economies with supranational attacks on wages, and on mechanisms of income redistribution. In its *Programa – Elecciones Generales Marzo 1996*, the IU argued that the euro project was abandoning its initial promise of social and economic cohesion. The predicted result would be the "profundización de las debilidades de la economía Española". The conclusion was that:

Therefore, the central axis of the IU proposal is to point out the possibility that things can be different. In short, that citizenship makes it possible to advance in the construction of a

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<sup>184</sup> "The movement offers us a difficult task of reconstruction, on a practical and theoretical level, of the subject of transformation and, at the same time, it makes it possible and current again. We can learn, from the mistakes of our history, that its liberation does not come from the expansion and pervasiveness of work; that a new society may not come from the conquest of power and that it can even generate new oppressions; that a new quality of life does not come from productivism". Original quotation: "Il movimento ci propone un difficile lavoro di ricostruzione, sul piano pratico e teorico, del soggetto della trasformazione e, contemporaneamente, lo rende possibile e di nuovo attuale. Possiamo imparare, dagli errori della nostra storia, che dall'espansione e dalla pervasività del lavoro non viene la sua liberazione; che dalla conquista del potere può non venire una nuova società e che essa può persino generare nuove oppressioni; che dal produttivismo non viene una nuova qualità della vita" (Prc, 2002: 2).

<sup>185</sup> Document: *Atti Parlamentari. Camera dei Deputati, XI Legislatura – Discussioni – seduta del 29 Ottobre 1992. Page 5338 (Lucio Magri)*. Document available at: [http://legislature.camera.it/\\_dati/leg11/lavori/stenografici/stenografico/33696.pdf](http://legislature.camera.it/_dati/leg11/lavori/stenografici/stenografico/33696.pdf)

free, democratic and well-being society, with full employment, socially just, economically viable, ecologically founded and in solidarity with the peoples of impoverished countries. (IU, 1996: 11).

The measures taken by national governments to comply with the Maastricht rules were seen as a mechanism of unemployment creation. The IU clarified its position about the integration process on different perspectives in relation to the real development. The IU was favourable to a political union, based on democracy and citizens' participation, which would function as the basis for economic integration. Despite this *ideal* perspective, it also pointed out that it was possible to change the route of the European development and achieve true convergence. Therefore, the discussion was posed on the terrain of democracy (citizens' participation) and sovereignty (people's freedom of existence) (IU, 1996: 19).

Later, during the *VI Asamblea General*, of October 2000, the discussion about *Una Izquierda del Siglo XXI* (A Left of the XXI century) was followed by the perspective that in front of the predominance of financial capital in capitalist globalization, a strategy of resistance would be necessary, involving an accumulation of forces, internationalist perspective, and the reform of politics (*democracia participativa*) and institutions. In the IU's words, "a democratic Europe with effective control by national and European parliaments over the governing bodies of the Union" (IU, 2000: 20).

From the 2000 to the 2003 *Asambleas*, the IU was focused on internal problems with the rise of the PP in the national government, which was translated into populist attempts to dismantle the IU participation in national politics. The evaluation that the IU made about this process was that it was a mistake not to have built an alliance with the PSOE while the PP was in the government, a mistake that cost half of its votes and the loss of militants (IU, 2000: 59). In the 2003 congress, the IU argued that the Maastricht plans of convergence were, with the implementation of the euro, negative. An example of resistance to neoliberal doctrine is mentioned in the case of the Swedish rejection to the accession to the euro in a referendum, thus denying the ECB the ability to decide on monetary politics in Sweden.

The PCE's discussion about the euro was considered by the IU.<sup>186</sup> In the XV Congress, of 1998, the IMF, G7, World Bank, and WTO were considered the decision centres of the world. In the *Información del PCE - XV Congreso. Documentos Apobrados. Jan. 1999*, the euro is discussed in terms of national sovereignty:

The reason is none other than the entity of the competences that our country has ceded to management and enforcement bodies above the strictly Spanish spheres. (...) The transfer of sovereignty that the state parliaments have made to the European Union in very important contents of economic and social policy has not been to supranational entities of a political nature, but rather financial institutions independent of political power: the ECB (PCE, 1999: 39).

The argument of the PCE is that monetary union overcame the idea of a political and economic union, as the *Stability Pact* created more competition among EU states, and the enlargement of the EU once it included former Soviet bloc countries without a corresponding budget increase, which decreased the funds received by Spain from the EU. To face this problem, the party established some fronts of action: to defend democracy and the public sphere, to fight the power of capital, and to build new social relationships. The idea of "building the future" was the motto of the party at its 2002 Congress,<sup>187</sup> the XVI, in a context that was described as one of consumerism in Spanish society combined with precarity, market dictatorship, territorial imbalances and problems of national autonomies (separatism and terrorism), marginalization and income concentration. Basing its perspectives on the conjunctural rise of new social movements around the world, the communists' strategy in the fight for socialism was then presented in these terms: "the PCE states that socialism is equivalent to the deepening of democracy. Today, participatory democracy is the way to

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<sup>186</sup> In its 1998 Statutes, PCE expressed its main purpose as the full development of democracy in the economy, politics and in social-cultural relations, while the IU was the organism the PCE was submitted to – the important fact is that most of the discussions made, as PCE itself declares in its *Información - Documentos Apobrados*, of 1999, was about fortifying the IU, i.e., fortifying the PCE electoral organism. In the same Congress, Francisco Frutos was elected General Secretary of PCE.

<sup>187</sup> Congress realized after the 2001 events of the terrorist attack in the USA; and the US and European response on the same level in the Middle-East.

advance that democratic radicalism” (PCE, 2002: 31).<sup>188</sup>

### 6.2.3. PCP

The main aspect considered by the PCP regarding the particularity of the Portuguese integration process in the EU structure is the question of *sovereignty*. The focus of the party, described in its *Programas e Estatutos*, of 1997, was socialism and communism, but also freedom, democracy, and sovereignty, understood as a “process of democratic and progressive transformation of society” (PCP, 1997: 8). This perspective, which was dubbed “advanced democracy”, is followed by a critical assumption that the European integration was indeed a monopolist restoration conjuncture of capitalism in Europe that functioned as an external pressure on Portugal. Thus, at the same time that the PCP was opposed to any federalist powers of the EU, it also advocated the necessity of democratizing EU institutions (1997: 72).

In its *Resolução Política – XV Congresso do PCP*, of 1997, the party argued that a revision of Maastricht was necessary to prevent the development of a supranational Europe constituted of giant monopolies. It was argued that this could be achieved through the inclusion of the people in the process from a perspective of the necessity of economic and social cohesion. In the statutes of the PCP of 1997, this process of transformation was called “a democratic and progressive transformation of society” (1997a: 8). In practice, the party was defending what would be a weak and reduced sovereignty under the EU democracy. The idea of a revision of Maastricht was based on the criticism of monetary and neoliberal conceptions of Maastricht, and also on the aspiration to a democratic restructuring of the state and proportionality in the representative system (1997b: 22 - 37).<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> Document: *Información del Comité Federal del Partido Comunista de España. December, 2002. Documentos Aprobados por el XVI Congreso PCE.*

<sup>189</sup> According to the document: “The democratic restructuring of the State and the deepening of democracy that the PCP defends (in contrast to the “reform of the political system” that the PS, PSD and PP advocate) are ends in themselves and, simultaneously, an instrument to realize rights, freedom and guarantees of citizens and to carry out other policies effectively and efficiently, namely those that have an influence on the realization of economic, social and cultural rights. It is necessary to make representative democracy more genuine and defend proportional representation in converting votes into mandates. At the level of sovereign bodies, the principle of separation and interdependence must be fully realized. It is also important to reinforce the powers and legislative and supervisory role of the Assembly of the Republic, as well as to strengthen and improve the status of the opposition. The

Regarding the question of how the party was facing the struggles during the integration process, a PCP member, Viegas, indicated in an interview on 20 March 2019 that:

This neoliberal character was identified at the very outset, and in relation to the euro, we have documents from that time that pointed out to the consequences for our productive apparatus, because what economists say today that this is not a single currency zone, we already said it at that time. The very way in which the entry process was negotiated, which penalized our exports, we already predicted at the time, but unfortunately, we did not have the necessary force to exercise some pressure, and the option was to join the euro, and the euro has been, but it is not the only one, a strong element of constraint in our economy, through the exchange rate regime and interest rates; because the levels of development [across the Eurozone] are not the same. (Viegas, 2019).<sup>190</sup>

The loss of sovereignty was the main emphasis in the PCP's discussion about the euro. Not only was each country losing the right to decide its own priorities, but, as discussed in the *Teses - Projeto de Resolução Política, Documento para debate*, of December 2000, the financialization of the economy was predicted as the result of this process.<sup>191</sup> The EU was seen then as the

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functions of other supervisory bodies must be strengthened and their status of pluralism and independence fully ensured". Original quotation: "A reestruturação democrática do Estado e o aprofundamento da democracia que o PCP defende (ao contrário da "reforma do sistema político" que o PS, PSD e PP preconizam) constituem fins em si mesmos e, simultaneamente, um instrumento para concretizar direitos, liberdade e garantias dos cidadãos e para realizar eficaz e eficientemente outras políticas, designadamente as que têm influência na concretização dos direitos económicos, sociais e culturais. Impõe-se tornar a democracia representativa mais genuína e defender a representação proporcional na conversão de votos em mandatos. Ao nível dos órgãos de soberania, impõe-se realizar plenamente o princípio da separação e da interdependência. Importa igualmente reforçar os poderes e o papel legislativo e fiscalizador da Assembleia da República, bem como reforçar e melhorar o estatuto da oposição. As funções de outros órgãos de fiscalização devem ser reforçadas e o seu estatuto de pluralismo e independência plenamente assegurado". (PCP, 1997b: 37).

<sup>190</sup> Viegas (2019): "Esse carácter neoliberal foi identificado logo na primeira hora, e em relação ao euro nós temos documentos que apontam já na altura para as consequências que se iriam ter no nosso aparelho produtivo, porque aquilo que hoje os economistas dizem que isso não é uma zona monetária única, na altura já o dizíamos. A própria forma que o processo de entrada foi negociado, que penalizou nossas exportações, nós já o dissemos na altura, mas infelizmente nós não tínhamos a expressão necessária para pressionar, e a opção foi entrar para o euro, e o euro tem sido, não o único, mas um forte elemento de constrangimento da nossa economia, pelo regime cambial, taxas de juros; pois os níveis de desenvolvimento não são iguais. Eu trabalhei 20 anos na agricultura, sou veterinário"

<sup>191</sup> In an interview, the PCP member Vladimiro (2019) argued that: "Complying with many of these measures is an imposition of the European Union; there is a very strong pressure. We also do not want to excuse

instrument created in Europe to face competition with the USA and Japan; the debate also referred to the Amsterdam Treaty, which was a revision of Maastricht that resulted in the effective creation of the ECB and the Stability Pact.

#### 6.2.4. Conclusion

All in all, the fight against a neoliberal Europe was not matched by a tactical correspondence with the struggle over the implementation of the Euro. The European left thus was supportive of the euro for electoral reasons (for the maintenance of its basis by not offering a controversial debate regarding the deep meaning of the EU currency) and theoretical reasons (the belief in the power of the national and European Parliaments to control political economy), and also due to the recognition of its weak position in the relation of forces. Moreover, the role of the nation state in the neoliberalization of social relations in Europe was the emphasis on the debates among the GUE/NGL party members. Their general belief was that it was necessary to reform the state apparatuses to control the economy (to control the ECB), which was also translated into ideas such as the reform of the representative system and the revision of treaties. However, there was a lack of consideration regarding the type of state that existed in Europe. In this sense, the discussion about the capitalist state and Keynesianism is necessary to bring together the political and economic dimension of the parties' position in the European context.

This chapter was thus an further discussion of the theoretical and practical detours of the European left. The Euro was taken as one essential example of how contradictory the role of the European left in the integration process was: opposed to the Maastricht Treaty, the European left did not offer a coherent position regarding the Euro. Instead, due to internal limits and due to public

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(exclude) those who enforce policies here, but there is a relationship. And with that, we lost instruments that allowed us to decide, since the question of monetary policy was a strong instrument that was lost that prevents the country from managing its monetary policy, and this influences a set of options that can be taken. It has to do with the EU's options, and the fact that we don't have sovereignty to manage our imports and exports". Original quotation: "Cumprir muitas dessas medidas são imposições da União Europeia; há uma pressão muito forte. Também não queremos desculpabilizar quem aqui executam as políticas, mas há uma relação. E com isso a gente perdeu instrumentos que nos permitiam decidir, desde logo a questão da política monetária foi um instrumento forte que se perdeu que impede o país de gerir sua política monetária, e isso influencia um conjunto de opções que se pode tomar. Tem a ver com as opções da UE, e com o fato da gente não ter soberania para gerir nossas importações e exportações".

opinion, the road was left open to the triumph of the financial fraction. In this negative integration, in which there was exclusion of the people, the European left could only elaborate more reformist and progressivist ideas of democratization of EU institutions, respect for national sovereignty, and contradictory participation in national parliaments and governments. Through the interviews and documents, it was possible to verify that there were contradictions in the PRC positions that led to internal conflicts and prevented an ulterior discussion on EU matters. The PCE based its praxis in the idea of citizen as a way of building democracy and solidarity, and the PCP was still focused on national sovereignty as a form of defending welfare against the liberal market. It was found that the formula of “democratizing EU institutions” was the common aspect of those parties in fighting against the neoliberal market.

## Chapter 7      The European Left and the State

The main objective of this chapter is to discuss the perspectives of the PRC, the PCE/IU, and the PCP concerning the capitalist state and Keynesian policies in the 2000s, in order to observe possible changes in their previously verified progressivist approach. The previous approach of the European left in respect of the European integration will be seen now from a systemic perspective considering the state and the capital accumulation. As a result, it is factual that the radical and European left conception was aimed at developing a favourable conjuncture in which it would be possible to control the capital under democratic rules. In the 2000s, Europe had already gained more importance in their discourses.

### 7.1.    Capitalist State, Keynesianism, Capital Accumulation

The triumph of the financialization (even of the big industrial capital) in the EU did not occur outside the sphere of influence of the state. Governments and national institutions of the EU member states remained part of this achievement.<sup>192</sup>

In fact, the state apparatuses were involved in the mission of bringing together social and cultural particularities in the name of an integration of the European people under a form of constituted sovereign power (Linklater, 2007: 92). As argued by Poulantzas (1969; 1977), in political analysis it is necessary to characterize the form of the state, and accordingly to that perspective, the European national states that conducted the integration process can only be seen as *capitalist states*. The capitalist state is a state with class hegemonic *direction*, that organizes the bourgeoisie domination, (for this reason the concept of hegemony corresponds not to the state itself, but to the dominant classes, in the enlarged reproduction of capitalist production).<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> As argued by Draper (1977: 255 - 263) the state goes beyond the monopoly of the use of violence and, according to the Gramscian perspective, the ruling class's position in society is also maintained by the instrument of the states' apparatuses of consent.

<sup>193</sup> For Gramsci (2014: 1590) it is in the relation between the civil society and the state that can emerge the integral state, a methodological perspective to observe the development of the concept of hegemony. In the Gramscian Dictionary: "The most concrete concept of the political theory of G., that is, the concept of "integral state" (political society + civil society, coercion + consensus, dictatorship + hegemony, etc.),

The particularity of this analysis is that, in relation to the EU's political and economic power, the hegemony of dominant classes was as a power bloc, structurally beyond the economic (and contradictory) limits of dominant classes' interests. The rule of the law is not of minor importance, in fact, the transnational right established the formal equality of an unequal reality.

Jo-Anne Pemberton (2009: 169) characterized this transnational structure situation as a problem of sovereignty in which states could enjoy the monopoly of power, but at the same time it was selective at the transnational level, as the EP could legislate freely, but had to share its power with the Commission. In this matter, the role bequeathed to national states was not secondary. Less state was not the disappearance of the state. National states had reduced their capacity to implement usual policies that, for decades, were the warranty of social peace, namely, welfare policy, although this did not mean that things were implemented without control.

Keynesian measures that were part of the establishment of national developments after the Second World War, were then transformed – at least, reduced, in the integration process as a shift in the general perspective of the Community. Keynesian policies were dormant but were still present in the menu of options for possible moments of crisis. This conceptual transformation with direct consequences for European welfare policies was one dimension that contributed to the *structural crisis of capital* (Antunes, 2009).<sup>194</sup>

In the structural crisis, the state's insertion into the capital-labour relationship was fundamental for the maintenance of the structure of production - not only in relation to its economic aspects, but also fundamentally in relation to the ideological-juridical condition of existence of large-scale private property – as it used its hegemonic direction to undertake (consensus) *restructuring*, or the set of neoliberal reforms that Ricardo Antunes (2013: 37) characterizes as the

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has all its determinations - among others: as it is governed, why it is obeyed, etc. - already contained in that first abstract element, that is, in the relationship between governors and governed". Original quotation: "O conceito mais concreto da teoria política de G., isto é, o conceito de "Estado integral" (sociedade política + sociedade civil, coerção + consenso, ditadura + hegemonia etc.), tem todas as suas determinações – entre outras: como se governa, porque se obedece etc. – já contidas nesse primeiro elemento abstrato, ou seja, na relação entre governantes e governados" (Dicionário Gramsciano, 2017: 223).

<sup>194</sup> As argued by Ricardo Antunes in the *Sentidos do Trabalho* (2009), after the 1970s the structural crisis of capital is characterized by: the falling in profit rates; the exhaustion of the Fordist-Taylorist model; hypertrophy of the financial sphere; a greater concentration of capital; welfare crisis; increase in privatizations; and the flexibilization and deregulation of the world of work.

*deepening of flexible accumulation.*

Guglielmo Carchedi (2006) argues that neoliberal policies failed at macroscopic level, causing a return of politicians to the patterns of Keynesian ideas. Carchedi's analysis is based on Marx's theory of value, arguing that the ability of big capital (as a social relation) is to re-emerge on an expanding scale after collapsing an entire chain of relations (i.e., in a moment of economic crisis). The question Carchedi (2006: 70) raises is whether Keynesian policies are labour-friendly.

First, measures based on Keynesian ideas were taken by national states as anticyclical, aimed at mobilizing productive forces in a moment of crisis.<sup>195</sup> (One fundamental aspect of Keynesianism for the left wing is the redistributive character of the policies that this perspective provides: through demand stimulation, which in fact is a temporary palliative for the reproduction of the capitalist system). Second, Keynesian policies have a class nature. The state cannot guarantee that the measures taken over by appropriating or borrowing idle capital are sufficient to provide a recovery from the crisis and/or to avoid others. One of the state's options, and in this fact some illusions can be found in the left-wing perspectives after decades of social peace constructed under Keynesianism in Europe, it is the capital-financed policies that are an immediate measure to restart the economy, even with the social cost of intensifying labour exploitation, as it also undermines free private competition. This is the classical alternative that is supported also by the European left (the anticyclical measures of mobilizing productive resources).

Another option is what Guglielmo Carchedi indicates as the labour-financed policies in which the state intervention can decrease unemployment at the expense of impoverishing the labour force. Carchedi distinguishes civil and military Keynesian policies, expanding the examples to cases in which the state buys and destroys or degrades commodities, and those in which it produces weapons (a form of destroying value in times of peace).

All in all, if *civil* or *military* Keynesian measures are not fully enough to reset the economy, the alternative is war. Therefore, Carchedi concludes that

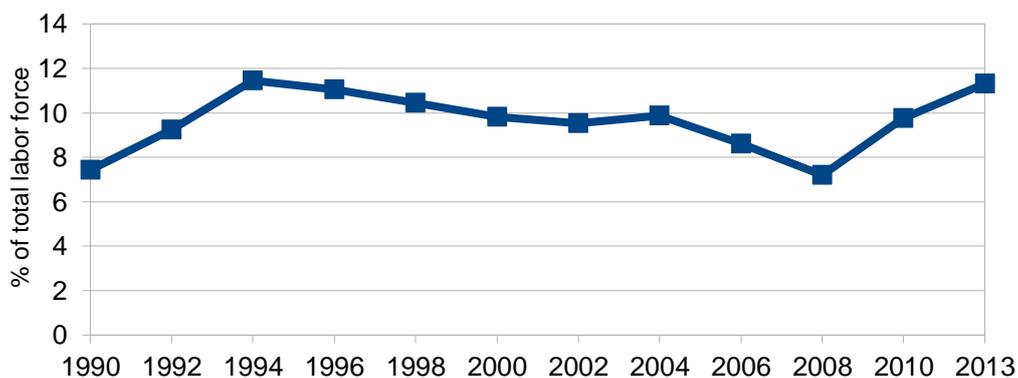
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<sup>195</sup> Through the mobilization of idle capital and labour forces, the state usually took Keynesian measures to divert idle capital that was circulating unproductively towards the production of value (Carchedi, 2006: 70).

“neoliberalism is a direct consequence of Keynesian policies” (2006: 76). So, the question is whether Keynesianism is an efficacious strategic perspective for the defence of labour against capital from a subaltern position. The limits of Keynesianism do not reside in the quantity or quality of the measures taken by the state, but they are posed instead in terms of its class nature, either capital-financed or labour-financed, and in terms of its palliative character, even though those can be effective palliative measures to stimulate the economy and buy some social peace (2006: 80).

Those limits are part of the hegemonic crisis of the ruling class; they are also symptoms of the socio-structural submission of labour to capital and the inner antagonistic nature of this relation. In this relation, for instance, chronic unemployment has become the rule.

**Figure 3: EU Unemployment**



Source: World Bank

According to István Mészáros (2011), the capitalist productive and ideologic capacity in Europe is not focused on the resolution of chronic social problems, but grounded in many other aspects, such as consumerism, increasing profits, and the constant effort to keep the different classes of society in a state

of apathetic ignorance. To the rates of unemployment and the precarious condition of part of the working classes, it is possible to add an even more dramatic fact, the percentage of the population living at risk of poverty or social exclusion, which in Italy was 26% in 2005; in Portugal, it was 26%, and in Spain, 24%.<sup>196</sup> André Freire suggests that constitutional revisions, the transformation of public education and health systems, among other examples, were indicative of the tendency to increase social inequality (2014: 113).<sup>197</sup>

The precarization of working-class living conditions was not exclusively a fact due to the nation state failing its own populations. In fact, MacPherson (1966) long ago pointed out that liberal democracy and capitalism go together, arguing that “what was established was a system whereby the government was put in a sort of market situation” (1966: 8).

With this, it is important to consider how the communist parties, as part of the European left, perceived those transformations on the terrain of democracy from concrete state policies. In other words, it is necessary to observe the conception of those political parties, if they had one, of the molecular passage of subaltern groups towards a dominant position in the state.

### 7.1.1. PRC

The relation of the Italian communists with the state is even closer when compared to the role developed by the PCP in the state apparatus. As seen before, the PRC was a member of the government until 1998. Thus, it was a party that dedicated its efforts to putting its policies forward through the state. Nonetheless, the question of “35 hours”, i.e., the reduction of the working day, was a struggle that the PRC lost. The participation of the PRC in the government was a clear reformist action undertaken by the party, and the consequences were later fiercely debated.

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<sup>196</sup> Source: Eurostat: People at risk of poverty or social exclusion - % of total population.

<sup>197</sup> “The novelty of the present crisis results, in particular, from two factors: it is located at the heart of the financial system and highlights the problems linked to the deregulation of capital markets (the brand image of neoliberal capitalism in which we have lived since the 1980ths)”. Original quotation: “A novidade da presente crise resulta, designadamente, de dois factores: situa-se no âmago do sistema financeiro e põe em evidência os problemas ligados à desregulação dos mercados de capitais (imagem de marca do capitalismo neoliberal em que vivemos desde os anos 1980)” (Freire, 2014: 119).

In 1999, for instance, the *Manifestazione Europea* took place on the 29<sup>th</sup> May, against “unemployment, precariousness, exclusion and racism - for a Europe and a world of solidarity and freedom”.<sup>198</sup> The analysis that the struggles were becoming Europeanised, i.e., they were acquiring a transnational dimension, was an aspect of a change of direction inside the PRC. As seen previously in Ferrando’s motion for the Congress, there was the call for rupture with reformism, and the transnational dimension of this demonstration was a new feature not directly related to the previous parliamentary life of the party.

In fact, the PRC had presented itself in the elections as the party that would fight to block every measure in favour of Maastricht but ended up voting in favour of the financial laws of 1996 and 1997, the *Pacchetto Treu* which established the *precariat* in Italy in the name of updating labour legislation.

The general situation was discussed at the *IV Congresso Nazionale* in 1999, in which the main reason given for the PRC’s transition from pro-government to opposition was the refusal of Prodi’s government to withdraw the 1998 financial law, which meant the government refusal to adopt a reformist approach.<sup>199</sup> In this sense, the turning point that brought the PRC to the terrain of the opposition, and also of the democratic movement, was partially the refusal of the Italian government itself to implement the PRC’s ideas, and also its internal perspectives that highlighted the limits of the participation in government. As a result, this was a decision taken by the leadership after the outbreak of an internal crisis, but before being rejected by the government. Another consequence of the transition to opposition was the split in the party that gave birth to another communist party in Italy, the PdCI.<sup>200</sup> Moreover, the same congress indicated that it was a problematic moment in capitalist globalization, with problems in the financial sector, and in the decline of democracy because of the *Americanization* of relations (PRC, 1999).

A PRC group composed by Bertinotti, Ferrero, Aurelio Cripa, Graziela Mascia, and others, proposed ideas in a motion for the 1999 Congress, arguing in favour of an opposition and resistance to neoliberalism, and calling the forces

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<sup>198</sup> The demonstration took place in Cologne, Germany, involving social and political movements from Europe and other parts of the world.

<sup>199</sup> IV Congresso Nazionale, Rimini, 1999. *Una alternativa di Società*,

<sup>200</sup> In an Internal Bulletin of March, n-27, 1999, entitled “Una Alternativa di Società”, the number of militants is presented, and from 1998 to 1999, PRC lost 44.544 members, passing from 117.137 to 72.593. (page 12 of the Bulletin)

of the *sinistra* (the left) to debate and build a program of alternatives to neoliberalism, despite the strategic differences among them. Regarding this situation, the proposals of the party were aimed to the necessity of popular participation, rather than delegation – a proposal in accordance with the idea of an “alternative of society”. In the same month of the congress, the *Direzione* of the party released an internal bulletin to discuss the idea of “an alternative society” against a defined “dramatic situation” for the party, the country, and democracy. In the internal bulletin of the PRC leadership of March 1999, the discussion was synthesized in these words:

What is our goal? An alternative society, we said. Not the design of a future society freed from the dominion of capital, which still remains the constitutive and founding reason for the Communist Refoundation, but the social and political perspective that can be opened by an effective battle against neoliberalism: by a clear change in politics and in society, in relaunching a true reforming perspective, in economic and social choices, in the strength and quality of development. Between the American model - proposed today by British Prime Minister Blair for the whole of Europe, and supported in Italy by D'Alema and Prodi - and a neo-Keynesian proposal - capable of reconstructing together a strong “public actor” and a new dialectic between “Rulers” and ruled” - there is no third way (PRC, 1999: 1).

With these words, the PRC leadership was indicating the transformative perspective of the party into a party of the masses, embracing (neo)Keynesianism to deny neoliberalism, and to seek an amplification of its social basis. This transformation in the internal discussion of the party leadership was a further formalization of a reformist process that had been underway since at least their participation in Prodi’s government. The criticism towards reformism is not in relation to the necessity of offering opposition to neoliberalism, but the simple disconnection between the “immediate” struggle and the “design of a future society”.

### 7.1.2. PCE/IU

Since 1995 the PCE was facing challenges regarding its hegemony in the IU. The discussion of the role of the PCE in the confederation of parties, IU, was based on Gramsci's ideas that communist hegemony was due to its capacity of creating ethical, cultural and social contents as an alternative to the state.<sup>201</sup> The discussion was similar to that conducted with the PRC regarding the creation of an alternative (PCE, 1995: 58). As well as the PCP, the Spanish communists were looking for an alternative, something new, after many failed attempts. In 1998, the PCE elaborated its own formula of democracy - in opposition to the national circumstances of "degraded democracy" - that covered culture, economy, and politics: the development of *full democracy* in all instances.

While the problems of the IU weaknesses in elections persisted, the question about the loss of sovereignty due to the concession of power from national instances to the supranational organisms of the EU/UE was also another discussion that took place in the general context outside intra-party debates. As highlighted in the XV Congress, the problem of sovereignty was not a result of the transference of sovereignty from the national state to supranational institutions, but from the national state to the financial system.<sup>202</sup>

In 2001, as discussed in the *Información, guiones para el debate, July 2001, 1ª Fase XVI Congress of PCE*, the full democratic alternative was proposed in 10 key points:

1. Recognize that this process is the result of social confrontation and that therefore it is possible to intervene against it.
2. This intervention must be of a global nature.
3. The central objective is the conquest of democracy and socialism.
4. The need to unite a wide range of forces given the plural

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<sup>201</sup> Document: Información, 1995, XIV Congreso.

<sup>202</sup> Document: Información del PCE. XV Congreso. Documentos Apobrados. Jan 1999. "The transfer of sovereignty that the state's parliaments have made to the European Union in very important contents of economic and social policy has not been made to supranational entities of political character, but to financial institutions independent of from the political power: the ECB". Original quotation: "La cesión de soberanía que los parlamentos estatales han echo a la Union Europea en importantissimos contenidos de politica economica y social no há sido a entidades supranacionales de carater politico, sino instituciones financieras e independientes del poder politico: el BCE" (Pce, 1999: 39).

character of the revolutionary subject. 5. Recognize the need for alliances with all those who find themselves holding back neoliberalism, even if they do not intend to overcome capitalism. 6. The need to develop global and concrete alternatives. 7. Create the conditions to combine and coordinate global struggles with concrete ones. 8. The need to consolidate an international democratic legality based on respect for human rights and democratic, political and social freedoms. 9. A new way of doing politics that involves citizens in the construction of a better world. 10. Construction of a different ethical reference to current consumerism (PCE, 2001: 6-7).

Alongside overcoming capitalism through an internationalist approach, the application of this general democratic purpose was indicated as a possible project, even though with a simplistic manner of characterizing Spain as “primer mundo”, based on the defence of democracy and the public, the fight against capital, and based on the emergence of new forms of social relations (PCE, 2001: 9).<sup>203</sup> With the criticism of private appropriation of the social production, the PCE called itself an *anticapitalistic* party oriented toward the construction of socialism: “We want to build socialism from the most consistent democracy, now marginalized and used by the financial and political market” (2001: 19).

After this preliminary first phase of discussions of the XVI Congreso, the *Documentos Aprobados por el XVI Congreso del PCE*, under the Secretary of Francisco Frutos, points out, for instance, the replacement, or the update, of item 3: “The central objective is the conquest of democracy and socialism” by the idea that “3. The central objective is the democratic conquest of socialism” (PCE, 2002: 8).

The transformation of the main aspect in the discussions indicated that, in the approved documents, the purpose of the party was the democratic conquest of socialism. The doubts regarding *how* the party conceived such transformation is explained in the same documents by the contested necessity of bringing

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<sup>203</sup> This perspective was still present in the discussions in this first phase of the congress regarding the differentiation of the PCE regarding the Soviet Union model of socialism; the Spanish communists were instead proposing a particular and independent road towards socialism (2001: 14). Moreover, the PCE was constant in its discourse about the necessity of fighting consumerism in society, associated with imminent environmental disasters. The struggle was thus located in the subjective limitations imposed by the capitalist systematic mode of objective reproduction and exploitation.

socialism to a public discussion, involving citizens in a participative democracy, again, as “socialism equals the deepening of democracy” (2002: 31).

Moreover, another aspect of this particular road towards socialism was:

The construction of a democratic Europe (based on a European Constitution that enshrines the full legislative role of the European Parliament and the rights of European citizenship, including those included in the European Social Charter) would help, under today's conditions, the social and national liberation of the global South. This type of Europe that we are betting on would develop the conditions for a more multipolar world, limiting the power of the United States and promoting an alternative regionalization of the countries of the South. Likewise, redistributive mechanisms and control of the financial system would be possible, such as the Tobin Tax applied to the economic recovery of impoverished countries and the practice of economic policies differentiated from neoliberalism. For all of which a transformative alternative is necessary that leads to the social Europe of peoples (PCE, 2002: 11).

This was not a perspective of rupture, but of democratic development inside capitalist state superstructures. On the whole, the debate about the capitalist state and the limits and class nature of state measures of social redistribution were absent, despite the momentary progress that Keynesian measures would have for some limited part of the working classes in a moment of crisis.

In this sense, recognizing the failure of its previous attempts, Izquierda Unida was debating its limits in the 2000: “IU has not been able to adapt its strategy to influence the situation from moral tension, from its transformative ideology” (IU, 2000: 23).<sup>204</sup> But, in view of the new events, the IU position indicated that democratic ideas were compatible with socialist perspectives.

It is about making socialism again a contemporary historical alternative, with the credibility and the necessary

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<sup>204</sup> Document: *VI Asamblea Federal Izquierda Unida, 2000. Para una Izquierda del siglo XXI.*

political, programmatic, and social force. For this, it is essential to unite and identify socialism and democracy, so that fighting for more democracy implies more socialism, and more socialism is equivalent to fighting for more democracy, to take concrete steps and to expend energy in the fight for a more just society. Free, more egalitarian, more care and peace on a habitable Earth (IU, 2000: 25).

The IU's perspective was not disruptive when compared to the PCE since they were the organism capable of translating into a more intelligible language the PCE hegemonic perspective. The identification between democracy and socialism was the formula that kept the confederal organism with one foot in the struggles of the left, and with the other in the contradictory field of the liberal democracy. The equalization of democracy and socialism seemed to be a further step, or a totally different one, regarding the Eurocommunist strategy, it was the equivalence between the present and an aim to the future.

### **7.1.3. PCP**

Since 1997, the PCP's general praxis was guided by the idea of a democratic and progressive development of society. Moreover, it also developed a new conception about private property, which now could be "mixed and diversified", respected and supported by the state, based on the idea of the submission of the economy to political power (PCP, 1997: 47).<sup>205</sup>

In contrast, the reform defended by the PCP was the democratic restructuring of the state, and with it, the deepening of democracy. Therefore, a position that was entirely similar to what was conceived in all other parties and the groups analysed in this dissertation. In fact, this type of reform defended by the PCP was much broader when compared to ideas that restricted the scope of reform to the political system, as defended by other national forces, such as the PS.

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<sup>205</sup> The idea of a mixed economic organization with respect to its own dynamics is present in the *Programas e Estatutos do PCP, 1997*.

Further, in the party's analysis in 2000, there was the characterization of the conjuncture as a moment of crisis in the capitalist system, due to the extreme competition and centralization of capital, with direct consequences for the state sovereignty. Despite the engagement of the party in the defence of the state, the situation was also thought as a moment of resistance and accumulation of forces.

The perspectives of the PCP regarding the state and social transformation, which are ways of struggle for social improvements or transformations, appear close to the previously discussed Keynesianism, but with the additional attention to social transformations beyond the limits of the idea of universal democracy and practice in the terrain of normal democracy.

In the new millennium, the PCP was still connected to a particular thought of socialism, proposing progressive ideas for the representative system (proportionalism). Evidence of this can be found in its focus on the struggle to maintain and increase national sovereignty (in the state), recognizing the power of capital in the EU, while fortifying the capitalist state. Back in 1997 the party affirmed that "The PCP refuses federalist Eurocracies that reduce national sovereignty and impoverish democracy" (1997, 70).

By and large, the identification of democracy and socialism, the disconnection between today's and tomorrow's struggles, and the mixed conception of private property were national characteristics of the European left activities in a broader sense with respect to the question of the state and capital accumulation.

## **7.2. GUE/NGL Praxis in the 2000s**

The development of the GUE/NGL position regarding the European integration process became more contradictory than a simple *yes* or *no* position. It was not merely a matter of opinion of the communist parties regarding a process that was occurring independently of their words.

The GUE/NGL formulated an idea about what was "An alternative project and immediate battles" in the *Activity report* of 2004. It noted that the EU concentrated, at that time, one quarter of the wealth produced in the world, and

because of the positions the EU occupied in some international institutions and organizations, it was believed that it would be possible to challenge the US leadership in the WTO, World Bank, IMF in an attempt of producing a different international approach (GUE/NGL, 2004: 6). Thus, the view was that Europe was a necessary actor, but should have new foundations. For instance, economic institutions, such as the ECB, should focus on society, on “employment and training for all”.

To give an example, introduction of access rights to goods and public services – energy, transport systems, means of communication, water, housing, credit, health, education, culture... - as a fundamental objective of the Union, a corner stone for a new “European Social Model” whose creation requires the questioning of the omnipresent “open market economy with free competition”. To give an example, the recognition of new rights encouraging the involvement of social actors in the drawing up of European policies – collective rights to information, consultation, assessment and therefore the right to suspend a procedure if the results of assessment call for contradictory debate (GUE/NGL, 2004: 7).

In general, these were defensive measures of the social meaning of public services, in the name of a general civic use of public goods. The interpretation of the group about these proposals is crucial to conceive the ideological aspect behind the practice: “This would represent a revolution in a Union which is traditionally constructed “from the top” and far from public pressure” (2004: 7). First, the GUE/NGL was able to recognize the social cleavage on the European construction which kept part of the entire population away from consumption and access to goods and services. In this particular sense, assuring people’s access to goods and public services would represent a qualitative transformation of the entire productive structure. But, secondarily, this is the heart of the contradiction, because the European project was supposedly structured as to have its populations included in the general consumption, and such inclusion was not part of the neoliberal conjuncture. To change such project would not necessarily occur

through a *revolution* in Europe, but through at least a transformation in the manner in which accumulation occurs, with more redistributive practices.

Following this, the proper themes that express the type of struggle of the GUE/NGL were put, in their own words, as follows: “construction of a more democratic, social, unified and peaceful Europe” (2004: 11). The same struggle appears with different interpretations, and here the concepts of political and human emancipation are important to differentiate what is the immediate struggle that can be posed within the limits of capitalism, and what is posed on the sphere of a further social development beyond the relations of capital. The duality of reality did not go unnoticed by the group, in fact, the themes that interested the group the most were related to a long-term struggle that left-wing forces carried on their programs. In the theme of *public services*, the group conceived its dual conceptual nature, one related to the liberal Europe in which the financial sector is one of the main dominant fractions, and the other in relation to the social character of an interdependent Europe of nations (2004: 47). The defence of public services was at the root of left-wing ideas, and it is a central aspect in the praxis of the GUE/NGL in the EP.

It is because they form points of resistance to liberal policies and because they function as a support for social and democratic concepts of society, that they have been subject to violent attacks throughout the whole process of European construction, but especially since the implementation of the Maastricht Treaty based on “the principle of an open market economy where there is free competition” (GUE/NGL, 2004: 47).

The class nature of the capitalist state, or European institutions in this particular case, are taken into consideration by the group, and its neoliberal principle is a matter of criticism. The refusal of the neoliberal measures that are intrinsic to the EU is made in terms of the defence of social and democratic instances that can be found in public services, as an opposition to the private dimension of the open market economy which was the maximum range of the strategy of the European left.

Social imbalances persisted in the euro zone and increased with the 1997 *Stability Pact*, which took the Maastricht basilar control of public deficit, debit and inflation into rules that forced states to comply with the criteria. The direct application of the Pact was the exercise of a permanent *austerity* approach “with pressure on salaries and large cuts in their health, education or research budgets” (2004: 58).

The GUE/NGL Group has been at the forefront of debates on the Stability Pact. But it has never succeeded in modifying the very “orthodox” position of the European Parliament on strict compliance with the stability pact and the rejection of all attempts to weaken it, going even as far as to demand that the fundamental principles of the pact “be inscribed in the future Treaty in order that they are firmly established and altogether credible”. (...) It is essential to challenge the domination of the financial markets and the current concept of the euro. Money must firstly serve investment for employment and training. A process of reappraisal of the exclusively financial criteria must be undertaken in the short term, with the participation of the European Parliament, national parliaments and key players in society (GUE/NGL, 2004: 58).

The development of this Group perspective on fighting the financial sector was also present in the defence of the implementation of the *Tobin Tax*,<sup>206</sup> which was a proposal to tax the movement of speculative capital. The taxation of capital was then later discussed by Thomas Piketty (2014), to indicate some contradictions in capitalism’s functioning. A very similar analysis had already been done by Marx in *Capital* (2011) who discusses different aspects of the structural functioning of capitalist society in the XIX century. Piketty’s advantage was his access to substantial data analysis, but the directions highlighted by both perspectives are different. While Piketty’s proposals were based on the creation of a social state through the reversal of the accumulation and concentration process with the creation of a global tax on capital, Marx’s approach was focused

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<sup>206</sup> A proposal of taxation of short-term movement of capital, inspired in the ideas of the Nobel prize winner of economy James Tobin.

on the ontological contradiction between capital and labour proposing the overcoming of capitalist society. The threat of private capital to democracy is one argument that led Piketty to argue, first, that the normal view about growth rates should be abandoned and that to assure control over capitalism it is necessary to invest in democracy; second, based on a high level of integration among societies, a progressive taxation on capital should be adopted long-termly to limit the growth of inequality, as it was demonstrated to be a capital development that could (can) not be sustained, once the source of inequality is private property and not entrepreneurship.<sup>207</sup>

One simple question that derives from Piketty's enormous analysis is the following: if control over capital can, somehow, be exercised, why can it not develop a new type of sociability? This question is tangential to the class limits of Keynesian policies, to immediate taxation of capital, and even to the proposal of total control of capital. Piketty, however, expresses such ideas indicating that the level of integration and the role of the national state on this effort, for instance, as it is expressed in the EU, would be fundamental. The answer to such a simple question is anticipated by Piketty, who indicates, rightly, that this can all be only a question of illusion.

In the same sense, the history lessons are claimed to be the main source of knowledge, and within other fields of knowledge, other than economy, the terrain must not be abandoned. Accordingly, one of Piketty's main arguments is that the problem of inequality is also a political problem, one that weighs on different forces in dispute over wealth distribution, and it is also a problem of knowledge that can find its answers by the diffusion of "investment in training and skills" (2014: 21). However, the presupposition that knowledge and skills were the main forces of equality did not match another presupposition that one cannot predict the future, as the history of wealth is chaotic. Conversely, one possible answer to this paradox is given by Piketty himself:

In studying the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries it is possible to think that the evolution of prices and wages, or

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<sup>207</sup> In Piketty words: "The right solution is a progressive annual tax on capital. This will make it possible to avoid an endless inegalitarian spiral while preserving competition and incentives for new instances of primitive accumulation" (2014: 572).

incomes and wealth, obeys an autonomous economic logic having little or nothing to do with the logic of politics or culture. When one studies the twentieth century, however, such an illusion falls apart immediately. A quick glance at the curves describing income and wealth inequality or the capital/income ratio is enough to show that politics is ubiquitous and that economic and political changes are inextricably intertwined and must be studied together (Piketty, 2014: 577).

### 7.3. European left with or against the EU?

The GUE/NGL proposal regarding capital taxation was similar to what was argued by Piketty. But capital is a *social relation*, therefore the problem is not about the control of capital as a thing, but about changing social relations of production, the relations that create *value*.

An IU member, in an interview on 24 April 2019, argued that:

We from the GUE always made a criticism of neoliberal Europe. This was the main one, after Maastricht, we very vociferously criticised the privatization of public services, and we campaigned against the European Constitution, because we thought that it was a neoliberal constitution, even though part of it was progressive, they were very nice formulations on human rights, but then the economic part was very hard. For example, we have been very critical of the ECB, which is a bank that is not under any public control, or of the European Parliament; it is an autonomous bank that runs the economy (Franz, 2019).<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> Franz (2019): “Nosotros sempre hicimos una critica desde el GUE a la Europa neoliberal, esto fue el principal, desde Maastricht, hicimos una critica muy dura contra la privatizacion de los servicios publicos, fumos muy criticos, y hicimos una campanha contra la Constituición Europea, porque pensavamos que era ja una constituición neoliberal, aún que habia una parte de su articulado que era progressista, eran formulaciones de derechos humanos muy bonitas, pero, luego la parte economica era muy dura. Por ejemplo, con el BCE hemos sido muy criticos, que es un banco que non tiene un controle publico de nadie, ni del Parlamento Europeo, y és un banco autonomo que dirige la economia”

The criticism then was directed against the character of the Union, based on the practical impoverishment of the public system, and thus the deterioration of the state's role in relation to services used by part of society. Another dimension of the integration process, which is also related to the relative social peace that was built over decades, is indicated by José Del Roio in an interview on 25 January 2019:

Our problem was not to be against the European Union, after all the first major European Union proposal was from Trotsky, in Brest-Litovsk. It was right for you to create a structure that would guarantee peace in a Europe that did not know how to do anything in life but war (Del Roio, 2019).<sup>209</sup>

The relative internal peace was not a guarantee of the end of class struggles, far from it - the conflict was developed in other terms, also in other geographical areas of the world. In this sense, the displacement of productive forces is a central aspect of the neoliberal reorganization of the international division of labour.

Next, the political meaning of the GUE/NGL's existence and its relationship with the productive forces is expressed in an interview on 25 April 2019 by another member of the European left as follows:

I think that it is simply the excuse of being able to build an alternative to the wrecked left. Now you have to see that if this new left is able to build the emancipation of the working class, or if it is simply interested in the balance of the capitalist production, in a way that not only the owners of the means of production can have so much power, but the workers as well. We have a structure, and through this structure we look for the theme of Europe, with which we have no relationship, but our party is working in this left bloc in Europe. (Daniel, 2019).<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> Del Roio (2019): "Nosso problema não era ser contra a União Europeia, afinal de contas a primeira grande proposta de União Europeia era de Trotsky, em Brest-Litovsky. Era justo você criar uma estrutura que garantisse a paz numa Europa que não sabia fazer outra coisa na vida a não ser guerra".

<sup>210</sup> Daniel (2019): "Creo que simplemente es la excusa de poder construir una alternativa a la izquierda que ha naufragado, ahora tiene que decir se essa nueva izquierda sirve para construir la emancipacion de la classe obrera, o simplemente para equilibrar la balancia, entre la forma capitalista de produccion,

As the EU itself appeared to be distant in many ways in relation to popular participation, there was the reflection of such an approach also inside the left-wing structure, since the EU-related discussions were mainly conducted in the field of the EP, and, therefore, by its MEPs, a minority inside the parties. Such a symptomatic distant relationship is notorious within the documents, despite the deteriorated role of the EU and its measures on local relations.

Furthermore, the *construction* of the transnational role of the left-wing forces was an internal dispute within the GUE/NGL. One of the main leaders of the European left, Paolo Ferrero, reflects in an interview on 7 February 2019 on the origins of the GUE/NGL and observed the problem of having liberal forces within it.

This Fausto had the right idea about the question of European centrality, and therefore we were the builders of the European Left Party (PEL), and founders and co-founders of the GUE, then the European Left (PEL) had been born in Rome, was not by chance. And the GUE is an older, wider-meshed construction, let's say, that the Party of the European Left (PEL), and obviously both stand on the fate that there is not a definition of political direction too stringent. Because in my opinion, a political party ultimately serves something. If it can tell where it should go. If it is a bivouac, a car park, it doesn't take much. Then, on a European level, the fate of being quite a car park, of being a container, had a positive function. I think that on the European level, as on the Italian one, the problem is the plural aggregation of forces, including liberal forces (Ferrero, 2019).<sup>211</sup>

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que non tenga solo tanto poder los propietarios de los medios de producción, sino los trabajadores también. Nosotros tenemos una estructura, y a través de esta estructura buscamos nosotros el tema de la Europa, que no tenemos relación, pero, nuestro partido sí, están trabajando en este bloque de izquierdas en Europa”.

<sup>211</sup> Ferrero (2019): “Questo Fausto c'è un'idea molto giusta sulla centralità Europea, e quindi siamo costruttore del Partito della Sinistra Europea, e fondatori e cofondatori del GUE, poi la Sinistra Europea nasce a Roma, non a caso. E il GUE è una costruzione più vecchia, più a maglie larghe, diciamo così che il Partito della Sinistra Europea, e ovviamente entrambi stanno in piedi sul fatto che non c'è una definizione di indirizzo politico troppo stringente. Perché secondo me, un partito politico alla fine serve a qualcosa. Se è in grado di dire dove deve andare. Se è un bivacco, un parcheggio, non serve molto. Allora, sul piano europeo, il fatto di essere abbastanza un parcheggio, di essere un contenitore, ha avuto una funzione positiva. Io penso che sul piano europeo, come su quello italiano, il problema sia la aggregazione plurale di forze anche liberiste”.

Within the development of the euro and the further steps of the Union, the centrality of Europe in everyday life of the European left in the European group gained a new dimension. The efforts were then directed to the development of further political initiatives at the transnational level. As it will be seen further, the construction of the Party of the European Left emerged from the efforts of some GUE/NGL members, such as the PRC. However, prior to the creation of the transnational Party, the Group was the main transnational basis of the European left. Inside the group, the widely diverging ideological background was the ambivalent aspect in the formulation of policies.

Luke March (2012) divides some parties of the European *radical left* into different groups in terms of their ideologies. The PRC and PCE are classified as “Reform Communists” in the field of the so-called radical left, and the PCP in the “Conservative Communist” sub-group of the extreme left. Some others GUE/NGL members are located in the field of Democratic Socialists, and some others in the Social Populist sub-group.<sup>212</sup> Those four sub-divisions of the parties are an interesting manner to organize them schematically according to the ideological aspects of their praxis. In fact, the complexity of the GUE is expressed by those sub-divisions, and the results are expressed in the general positions of the Group.

In this sense, strategic limitations were also due to the impotence of the European left forces to develop their proposals inside the transnational group. The communists were an important but not a hegemonic force inside the group, since its plural aspect based on respect for the differences was the internal rule to maintain a coexistence of ideologically distant perspectives despite their divergences in view of crucial themes, such as those aspects regarding Keynesianism and the state. Nor was the idea of democracy well defined in the Group, being in practice a general perspective closer to “universal democracy” rather than to “true democracy”.

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<sup>212</sup> Based on Luke March (2012) sub-divisions, it is possible to indicate the ideological characterization of some of the parties that composed the GUE from 1999 to 2004: the *Conservative communists*: Kommunistiko Komma Elladas (KKE), Partido Comunista Portugues (PCP), Parti Communiste Français (PCF). The *Reform Communists*: Partido Comunista Español (PCE), Partito della Rifondazione Comunista (PRC), Partito dei Comunisti Itlaiani (PdCI); *Democratic Socialists*: Finland Left Alliance (VAS), Bloco de Esquerda (BE), Vansterpartiet (V), Socialistische Partij (SP), Socialistisk Folkeparti (SF), Synaspismos, People's Movement against the EU (Denmark); *Social Populists*: Sinn Féin, Die Link.

## 7.4. Conclusion

The defence of social achievements was the main programmatic aspect of the praxis of the European left in relation to the state, but these organizations had a limited perspective regarding the role of the state in society, as well as limits in its praxis of fighting the liberal market. Instead, a set of new concepts, perspectives and interpretations were elaborated to justify their praxis. Neoliberalism is a fruit of Keynesianism, its result and negation. Therefore, the negation of neoliberalism by the left in Europe was at the same time a logical and clearly conscious attempt to rebuild (neo)Keynesianism. Because of the class nature of Keynesianism, its immediate defence can be a negation of neoliberalism, but it was found that it was not a dialectical step forward. It was a position that was strongly present in the communist fraction of the group. Following this, the GUE/NGL may have been in fact located in the field of the left-wing forces, but its policies regarding democracy and sovereignty were not based on the radical foundations of the political-economy critique of capitalism. Thus there is a problem of characterization of the group that deserves some attention. The transnational essence and appearance of the European left were coherent at that time, to the extent that its own members were not revolutionary forces, but, at most, progressivist anti-neoliberal organizations that tried to find forms of improving the relations between capital and labour in favour of the latter. The working classes, proletariat, or even the class-that-lives-from-labour, gave way to the *citizen* in the parties' vocabulary. Thus, the defence of welfare based on neo-Keynesian policies was coherent with the theoretical limits presented by these organizations, what was not a radical perspective of social transformation. Finally, this chapter also indicated that in the parties' conception more democracy was theoretically equated with socialism.

## **Chapter 8      The left beyond the left**

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the impact of the creation of the Party of the European Left (PEL) in the praxis of the radical and the European left on the edge of the 2008 world crisis. Thus, based on the existent literature in the field, and documental analysis, the creation of the PEL is debated, followed by the analysis of the praxis of the European left after 2004, and the GUE/NGL perspectives when the world crisis started to briskly agitate the relation of forces in Europe. It is suggested that after decades of a reformist, sometimes progressivist, strategy, the European left assumed a radical discourse towards the European Union and arrived at the point of indicating the necessity of a system rupture, while the European left only assumed some aspects of radicalism in its discourses without transcending its institutional limits. As the public systems were affected, a return to the national sovereignty was assumed as part of the perspectives built by the European left at this moment. The lack of a consistent strategy seems to be one of the fundamentals that explains the limits of the praxis of the European left spectrum in a conjuncture of crisis.

### **8.1. Party of the European Left (PEL)**

If the transnational action in the European group of the left-wing forces resulted in a limited space for the development of more radical ideas rooted in the classics of Marxism, for instance, then the first part of the 2000s would be the most adequate moment for the creation of another new organism of the European left.

The first impression is that the European left would start shining at its brightest in the transnational spectrum, and also that criticism of reformism and liberal conceptions would have space in a new transnational organism, once in the GUE/NGL there was less space for criticism (as its now clear that the formula was a polite cooperation rather than political debate of ideas and program, and democratic centralism). The result was not the confluence of each portion of the left-wing spectrum to shine equally between extreme, radicals, greens, reformists and populist perspectives, but the predominance of forces with limited criticism

of the *capital* (as a social relation), thus, the result was the prevalence of some spectral perspectives over others, in fact, non-Marxist and non-revolutionary perspectives.

If the GUE/NGL was a continuum from previous forms of participation in the EP to its old formats (as seen in chapter 4 regarding the formation process of the GUE/NGL), now the European left could adjust its transnational orbiting by creating a new instrument for the reality observation and intervention, thus a chance of developing a proper transnational organization which would allow the emission of a different, autonomous, ideological wavelength in the spectroscopy of the left-wing: The new organism was the Party of the European Left (PEL).

To consider that the PEL could have exercised some pragmatic attractive force at the transnational level is in fact one way of looking at the new left-wing organization, but it is also necessary to observe if it was able to cause a significant distortion in the space-time around itself, in other words, it is important to observe if the PEL was able to produce an intense ideological dilation in the field of the left wing.

The praxis at the transnational level, even if considered with less importance, demonstrated to be crucial to the real development of politics in Europe: it is not by chance that the debates on the loss of sovereignty and the threat to democracy were reported at the European level by the 2000s. As suggested by Luke March (2012), the usual forums of the left wing suffered a decline in its role along the 1990s and the communist movement became permeated by a complex set of small groups.<sup>213</sup>

As suggested by the PEL, the EU was a space in which class struggles were present and, therefore, it was an opportunity to defend workers' needs, interests, and democracy "through the European society with its organizations

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<sup>213</sup> Conversely, Trotskyist perspectives have survived the systematic attacks from the historically Stalinist hegemonic leaderships and from many others dogmatic approaches. In this sense, those groups are not considered here with a zero impact or are not seen as groupuscules – instead, with many limitations, those groups are ideologically consistent and they have theoretically developed many elaborations regarding reality and the history of the movement itself, particularly outside the United Kingdom, where the plurality in the movement is due, perhaps, to the failure of the hegemonic fractions of the left-wing movement. This is an aspect that, following Duverger (2012: 256) is also related to the structure of the party system of each country (for instance, Portugal is markedly a bipartisan country, where the left wing has its reference in the PCP, while in Italy the spread forces after many splits resulted in a very diverse and multiple-perspectives left) – but a plurality that still need to find a common point of action. It is worth mentioning that some critical perspectives with roots in Marxism had already overcome the negationism of Gramscian and Trotskyists' contributions, despite their small numerical expression.

and institutions, including the European Parliament” (PEL, 2019). Besides that, they also defended that they:

[...] cannot trace the same traditional path as in the 20th century which brought great achievements but also great defeats and tragedies to the forces with a revolutionary inspiration. To change society we have to widen our action. In Europe the construction of an alternative, radical, environmentalist and feminist left is a challenge for the new cycle which is now opening (PEL, 2004: 2).

One characteristic of the new formation was that, from one hand, the PEL was a left-wing political party with clear socialist purposes and, on the other hand, due to its complexity, it also had not included “democratic centralism” as its method of internal decisions, instead, its methodological approach was based on reaching a *consensus* with majority and minorities. The adoption of consensus in decision-making is a symptomatic aspect of a non-democratic method which, otherwise, could be based on the adoption of internal debate and decisions without eliminating the differences, but bringing them to the democratic debate.<sup>214</sup> If in the methodological field, choosing was not the classical left-wing approach, but the same exact experience developed inside the GUE/NGL, in the conceptual field the PEL included some classical left-wing concepts, such as social classes, class struggle, human emancipation, and socialism, which in theory were correspondent to another idea of democracy in Europe, and an indication of some proximity to Marxist and radical ideas of full democracy. Moreover, the party also adopted the congress structure as its main instance of decisions. Its first congress was held in Athens, in 2005, under the motto “Yes, we can change Europe!”, followed by the II Congress in Prague, 2007, and the III Congress in Paris, 2010 under the idea of “Continuing mobilisations to stop austerity, to change economic policies, and to impose an Action plan against poverty in Europe”.<sup>215</sup>

Therefore, another ideological aspect of the party was settled as: “Our aim is human emancipation, liberation of men and women from any form of

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<sup>214</sup> Statutes of the PEL, available at: <https://www.european-left.org/statute/>.

<sup>215</sup> One another particularity of the PEL is the attempt of gender equality in its functioning. Congress documents are available at <https://www.european-left.org/congress/>.

oppression, exploitation and exclusion” (PEL, 2004).<sup>216</sup>

In fact, Marx’s formulation about human emancipation is one of the main aspects that is directly related to the idea of *revolution*.<sup>217</sup> Thus, to what extent was the PEL a revolutionary Party?

The PEL’s *Manifesto* indicates that their values are rooted in the perspectives of socialism, communism, labour, and in contemporary social movements. Additionally, social movements were thought to be capable of contributing to shape a broader political alliance in Europe in order to offer concrete alternatives for the transformation of capitalist society, which would be effectively made through radical policy change.

The plural nature of movements can be crisscrossed by this new political force because we want to build a new relationship between society and politics. (...). Faced with the recession and the growth of unemployment, the “stability pact” and the European Central Bank orientations must be challenged so as to work towards another economic and social policy and social priorities in favour of full employment and training, public services and a bold investment policy, for the environment. The taxation of capital flows must be imposed. Priorities must be changed — in favour of human beings, not money (PEL, 2004).

Spreading their alliances was a fundamental practice to obtain better positions in the struggles, and in fact the involvement with other political forces, with different perspectives, was a lesson from the European left participation in the GUE/NGL. The work of March and Dunphy (2020) “*The European Left Party*” is a recent and important contribution in the field, and in this work the analysis of PEL documents (such as Manifestos, and Congress thesis) led the authors to

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<sup>216</sup> Against the contemporary wars (Balcans, Afeganistan, Iraq), the PEL believed that the solution resided in the extension of democracy at all levels: “in working place and in economic life”.

<sup>217</sup> The work of Livia Cotrim “*Marx: Política e Emancipação Humana 1848-1871*” is a fundamental contribution to the analysis of the concept. One aspect that Livia Cotrim (2007) indicates from Marx’ analysis of the 1848 revolutionary events in Europe is that the organized political representation of the working classes appeared as an independent organism in the transformative scene. The results of such first experiences were the defeat of the working class in the relation of forces, but a relative defeat, once that from then the organisms of the subaltern groups were constituted and had its first experiences in the political struggle.

suggest that “its networking structure offers the possibility of broader, if necessarily less stable and more tenuous, links with organizations that have eschewed links with established political parties” (2020: 157). Such possibility is argued to be a result of the strengthening of social movements (including trade unions with broader perspectives on global justice). However, March and Dunphy (2020: 160) argue that one of the main concerns of the new left-wing party was its reduced real potential to establish alliances with extra-parliamentary forces.

Another mechanism conceived to spread the action, another lesson learned from the Group but also an expression of its national members’ programmes, indicated the reinforcement of the EP and national parliaments (representative instances), because democracy was conceived as the heart of EU problems.

All in all, Luke March indicates that although “the manifesto’s contents remained somewhat long on generalities and short on specifics, they were nevertheless a coherent distillation of RLP (Radical Left Party) demands” (2012: 162). But it is important, according to March, to notice that some relevant organizations decided to stay out of the formation of the new European Party, such as the PCP and the KKP, and also many other small parties, other than the “NGL” part of the GUE/NGL.<sup>218</sup>

As indicated by Marco Damiani (2016) in its analysis about the formation process and the first years of the PEL’s praxis, one aspect that was located above PEL’s determinations was the historical limits of political parties in the EP, given its submission (or co-decision) in relation to other EU institutions; in this sense, transnational parties were still suffering the effects of the democratic deficit. In practice, the role developed by the PEL was yet submitted to the action inside the GUE/NGL in the EP and, as it might be expected, the European left parties could organize themselves, but the transnational praxis was still dominated by the progressive ideas in the group (as observed regarding the GUE/NGL praxis in the 2000s).

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<sup>218</sup> From the Maastricht Treaty there was present an article establishing political parties as a fundamental feature in the integration process. Within Nice clearer features were added to this article, thus the role of a political party increased in the EU. Since 2004 the European Parliament regulation for transnational parties, included the financing of party activities - in 2003, the article 191 of the Treaty of Nice started to be implemented regarding European political parties funding.

### 8.1.1. The European left and the Transnational Party

While in Italy and Spain the importance of the EU in the national scenario became to be interpreted by the European left as crucial and decisive for the country, nonetheless, in Portugal the conception was somehow different regarding the further reorganization of the left at the transnational level.

The PCP is opposed to the creation of “European parties” or other forms of organization with supranational characteristics, which in some cases appears abusively imposed by power, and in others as a “way out” to avoid the difficulty of establishing roots in the concrete realities of different countries and delays in the internationalist cooperation (PCP, 2000: 17).<sup>219</sup>

The PCP conception about the PEL formation was clear and simple, based on its experience of diversity in the GUE/NGL, in spite of that, a possible adherence to the new party was refused by the PCP due to the transnational nature of the new organism many years before its real foundation, already in the marks of the debates in the field of the NELF that started in 1998. The proposal that was discussed as a thesis in its XVI Congress was the conception that remained valid for the party- It was argued by Valdimiro, in an interview on 21 March 2019

Exactly, the PCP did not adhere exactly because of this, that is, we believe that there must be a relationship between political forces that are different, that they must have their independence, that they must have their own analysis, that they are not diluted, because they come from different realities. And therefore, not underestimating, but valuing cooperation and solidarity between parties, with common spaces for convergence. Now, the step that seemed to had been taken was the creation of a supranational structure that for us does not

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<sup>219</sup> Document: *XVI Congresso, Democracia e Socialismo, um projeto para o século XXI – Projeto de Resolução Política – teses. 2000.*

correspond to the conception that we have that the national space continues to be the main stage for the workers' struggle (Vladimiro, 2019).<sup>220</sup>

The respect for the differences was then a formula invoked by the PCP not only to act in the GUE/NGL but also to indicate its reason for staying out of this transnational left-wing organization. The differentiation between national and European, then, was not taking into consideration the interconnection of struggles, but implied moving away from the *federal* aspect of the transnational party, even though the functioning methods of the PEL were not the same as those employed by political parties with *Bolshevik* inspirations (democratic centralism).<sup>221</sup> Conversely, despite the fact the PEL was a political party, and not a European Group, the respect for the differences, through “consensus” was a common formula for the internal cooperation in both organizations of the European left, what suggest a new general methodological behaviour of left-wing forces in Europe. Most profound, in fact, was the ideological reason of the PCP refusal to participate in the transnational party, i.e., the risk of crystallizing the party in the EU structure would offer difficulties to the PCP's purpose of building another EU – a purpose that the PCP shared with the GUE/NGL. Miguel Viegas argued in an interview on 20 March 2019 that:

The PEL, for now, canalize all energies towards something that is not of interest from our point of view, it brings nothing in relation to the workers' struggle and the struggle for another Europe, on the contrary, it feeds the idea that we can aim at the transformation of the EU within its own institutions and within the rules that are determined by the institutions

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<sup>220</sup> Vladimiro (2019): “Exatamente, o PCP não aderiu exatamente por causa disso, ou seja, consideramos que tem que haver uma relação entre forças políticas que são diferentes, que tem que ter sua independência, que tem sua própria análise, que não se diluem, porque são realidades também diferentes. E, portanto, não subestimando, antes valorizando a cooperação e a solidariedade entre partidos, e havendo espaços de convergência e comuns. Agora, o passo que parecia a ser dado era dum criação de uma estrutura supranacional que para nós não corresponde à concepção que a gente tem de que o espaço nacional continua a ser o palco principal para a luta dos trabalhadores”.

<sup>221</sup> Gramsci theorized that the *democratic centralism* is the critical research to connect theory and reality, to connect the mass and the intellectuals, avoiding any rational/deductive/abstract process – it is an elastic formula that is according to the necessity of adequacy to the real movement; different from the *bureaucratic centralism* which is present on the sphere of the state and is related to the suffocation of the birth of the new (2014: 1634- 1635).

themselves. In this sense, we will not go to the game, we do not want to be part of this theatre which, in practice, makes it difficult. In this sense, it removes what is central to us, which is the idea that this is an irreformable European Union. And we look back and ask what did the PEL do? Nothing (Viegas, 2019).<sup>222</sup>

The maintenance of the PCP's idea of a sovereign and independent EU was also an idea applied to the party itself and its relations. After years of PEL experiences, the PCP political balance of choosing not to non-participate in the European party was correct, as the PEL was not the true instance for the real struggles that the Portuguese communists were driving their efforts forward, and that there was still the risk of losing (its own) sovereignty. There is also the criticism of the PCP regarding the GUE/NGL functioning, even though the participation is seen as viable due to its more plural configuration of methods and ideas, with no party ties.

However, if the PCP was contrary to the European confederal left-wing organism, in Spain, the Izquierda Unida was debating the necessity of creating a European organism for the left wing one year before the foundation congress of the PEL.

It does not seem too utopian to think that, in such a defined context, the creation of a transformative and anti-capitalist European political subject of the left (the name is the least) would be useful to organize an alternative project to neoliberal Europe and, what is more importantly, a way or the way out of an extremely delicate situation (IU, 2003: 21).<sup>223</sup>

This IU debate was related to the conjunctural conception that the context

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<sup>222</sup> Viegas (2019): "O PEL, pra já, canaliza todas as energias para uma coisa que não tem interesse do nosso ponto de vista, que não traz nada em relação a luta dos trabalhadores e a luta por uma outra Europa, antes, ao contrario, é uma via que alimenta uma ideia de podermos almejar transformar a UE no seio de suas próprias instituições e com as regras que são determinadas pelas próprias instituições. Neste sentido, nós não vamos ao jogo, não queremos fazer parte deste teatro que na prática dificulta, neste sentido, afasta aquilo que pra nós é central que é a ideia de que esta é uma União Europeia irreformável. E olhamos para trás e perguntamos o que o PEL fez, nada".

<sup>223</sup> Document: *Tesis para la Asamblea. Asamblea Federal de Izquierda Unida, 2003.*

of globalization required the intervention of the left at the European level with a political organization capable of democratically coordinating the plurality of social movements, trade unions, political parties, and other members, and assuring a democratic and plural functioning, to define an autonomous project in the European Union.

In addition to the IU participation in the foundation of the transnational party, the idea was also supported by the PCE, which also faced some problems in participating in the PEL due to the top-down formation process, but it was one of the political parties that contributed to the formation of the organism and which was indicating the necessity of spreading the participation from the bottom. In its XVII Congress of 2005, the PCE was discussing the emergence of new social movements on a global scale, which was seen as an impulse for the struggles in Spain.

The Party of the European Left holds its first congress in October. The decisions made in the direction of EI for the congress are in line with the elaboration of a political proposal that will make us a significant element of the new political stage that has just begun. The PEL, due to objective difficulties and due to internal discrepancies, was born from above, in a top-down way. It is time to strengthen and expand the PEL from below participation, debate, and organizational and political relaunch, maintaining and developing relations with other communist and left-wing parties, which are not in the PEL but who defend complementary political positions and or convergent with those of the PEL and which are part of the European transformative left (PCE, 2005: 7).

An example of the emergence of social movements claiming transformation out of the political parties' range of reach was the campaign for the refusal of the EU Constitutional Referendum in France and Netherlands, in 2005. In this situation, the PCE celebrated the PEL's position in the referendum: "The Party of the European Left was the only one that, in its totality, defended the

NO” (PCE, 2005: 5).<sup>224</sup> Therefore, due to its achievement in the referendum, the PCE highlighted the real possibility of constructing Europe from the left-wing perspective.<sup>225</sup>

Furthermore, the perspective of the PEL construction in relation to the lessons learned from the GUE/NGL experience is described by an IU member in an interview on 24 April 2019:

I believe that the GUE arises because the European Parliament arises and you have to be there, and once inside, blocs are organized to coordinate institutional policies, and when the years go by, I believe, that the PEL is born as a necessity of that parties, let's say more on the left, which have an organic relationship at the European level, and a series of formative debates, debates to clarify strategies, objectives, and analyse the European political reality, because the European political reality of the Mediterranean is not the same as the Nordic. So how can you coordinate policies knowing what is happening in each place, you need to make an analysis of reality, common, collective, to be able to elaborate strategies, objectives and techniques. I believe that this was a necessity for this, to meet these objectives (Franz , 2019).<sup>226</sup>

A transnational organic relationship with an ideological perspective was

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<sup>224</sup> Document: *Informe al XVII Congreso del PCE*, 2005. “El Partido de la Izquierda Europea ha sido el único que, en su totalidad, ha defendido el NO”.

<sup>225</sup> “A new European attitude has been born. Europe has entered a situation which can go one way or the other. The main European leaders of each country or of the Commission have not learned their lesson. Or perhaps they have learned it very well. They do not accept the defeat and intend to continue the ratification process, although they postponed the pending referendums. They say they accept the democratic verdict, for that of the sovereign decision, but they prepare new offensives”. Original quotation: “Há nacido una nueva actitud europea. Europa há entrada en una situación, que puede decantarse en un sentido o en outro. Los principales dirigentes europeos de ada país o de la Comisión no han aprendido la lección. O quizás la hayan aprendido muy bien. No aceptan la derrota y pretenden continuar el processo de ratificación, aunque aplazan los referêndum pendientes. Dicen aceptar el veredicto democrático, por aquello de la decisión soberana, pero preparan nuevas ofensivas” (PCE, 2005: 6).

<sup>226</sup> Franz (2019): “Yo creo que el GUE surge porque surge el parlamento Europeo y hay que estar allí, y una vez dentro se va articulando bloques (blocos) para coordinar políticas institucionales, y quando pasan lo anos, yo creo, que el PEL nasce como una necesidad de que los partidos, digamos mas de izquierdas, tengan a nivel Europeo una relacion organica, tengan una serie de debates formativos, de debates para aclarar estrategias, objetivos, y analizar la realidad política Europea, porque la realidad política Europea del mediterraneo non es la misma que la nórdica. Entonces como puedes coordinar las políticas sabendo lo que se pasa en cada lugar, necessitas hacer una analise de la realidad, comun, coletivo, para poder elaborar estrategias, objetivos e taticas. Yo creo que esta fuera una necesidad de esto, para atender eses objetivos”

the fundamental motivation for the creation of the transnational coordination in the view of the Spanish left.<sup>227</sup>

Equally important was the perspective of the PRC about the creation of the PEL as a new instrument of the European left. Among a plurality of perspectives about the PEL creation, the view of Bertinotti as leadership of the PRC was that:

The birth of the Party of the European Left, in this regard, is the new fact of European politics in which Rifondazione Comunista has invested and will increasingly invest an essential part of its work and its identity: precisely because the unification of alternative subjects and subjectivities, which operate in Europe, is essential both to defeat the Americanization of the old continent and to build an institutional reality that is capable of a strong interlocution with the entire alter-globalist movement (PRC, 2005: 2).<sup>228</sup>

In his Congress motion, Bertinotti illustrated the fundamental idea of the transnational party, i.e., the creation of an institutional alternative for alternate subjectivities as a result of *Altermondist* movements with their demands absorbed into the communist party programs in the 2000s. From background policies, democratic demands of social movements gained a central space in the fight for another world. The PEL was considered by the PRC as a result of the emergence of social movements around the world, therefore, it was the European connection of left-wing parties in the fight for a European Union of peace, hospitality, solidarity, universal citizenship, secular democracy (PRC, 2005).<sup>229</sup>

Nevertheless, another perspective, present in the Congress motion suggests that there was a lack of class approach and anti-capitalistic features,

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<sup>227</sup> In 1905, Lenin was debating in the “*Two tactics of the social-democracy in the democratic revolution*”, the question of the democratic premises in the struggles for political emancipation as a necessary process that should be carried on until its latest consequences. In this sense, the creation of proper organisms that would work as instruments to take the process *beyond* the limits of normal democracy was the central tactical discussion about the possibilities of the democratic revolution.

<sup>228</sup> Document: *VI Congresso Nazionale. 2005. Congress Documents – 5 Mozione - Mozione 1: Bertinotti.*

<sup>229</sup> As indicated in the PRC website, there was an internal problematic involving the role of the PRC in the construction of the new transnational party, i.e. the lack of participation of PRC militancy in such process, what led the party to approve the construction of the PEL within 21 votes favourable and 17 contrary in the *Direzione* of the party, and 67 favourable and 53 contrary in the *Comitato Politico*. <http://web.rifondazione.it/home/index.php/73-partito-contenuti/27-profilo-storico>

which were an indication that the PEL was another generic organization in the field of the left.<sup>230</sup> Similarly, the general perspective presented in the motion signed by Claudio Bellotti, was even far more critical towards the PRC praxis at that time.<sup>231</sup> Considering that the democratic alliance was a mortal cage, Bellotti analysis indicates that the PRC was moving away from the workers movement, and that would characterize an attempt of revisionism.

The dream that European unification can create those economic sufficient spaces for a policy of reform is shattered against the harsh reality of the facts: the process of European integration, as far as it proceeds, is made up exclusively of anti-worker and reactionary policies both on the internal (stability pact, liberalization, privatization, attack on pensions, etc.), both internationally (European army, anti-immigration laws, etc.). The construction of the Party of the European left was based precisely on the hypothesis that the process of unification of capitalist Europe could create margins for a reform policy. This is the content of the slogan of “social Europe” now adopted also by the sectors of the so-called alternative and radical left (for example the French LCR). This position is completely utopian, as it does not take into account the class content of Europeanism. The only possible capitalist Europe is an imperialist Europe outside and anti-worker inside. Claiming to be the true Europeanists means contributing to beautify the anti-social and reactionary policies dictated by Brussels (PRC, 2005: 34).

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<sup>230</sup> The second motion of the VI Congresso of the PRC, signed by Claudio Grassi, is entitled “Essere Comunisti”, and indicates that: “The platform on which the Party of the European Left was formed lacks a class and anti-capitalist connotation; it proposes a generically left-wing identity and design profile. Our concerns were and are regarding the insufficient aggregative capacity of the new subject, to which numerous Communist and anti-capitalist left parties have not joined. There remains the need to overcome these limits that have characterized the construction of the Party of the European Left”. Original quotation: “La piattaforma su cui si é costituito il Partito della Sinistra europea manca di una connotazione di classe e anticapitalista; essa propone un profilo identitario e progettuale genericamente di sinistra. Le nostre riserve erano e sono dettate dalla preoccupazione per la insufficiente capacità aggregativa del nuovo soggetto, al quale infatti non hanno aderito numerosi Partiti comunisti e di sinistra anticapitalistica. Resta l’esigenza di superare questi limiti che hanno contraddistinto la costruzione del Partito della Sinistra Europea”.

<sup>231</sup> Bellotti’s motion, the fifth of the VI Congress, was entitled “Breaking with Prodi, Preparing the worker alternative”. “Rompere con Prodi, Preparare l’alternativa operaia”.

Bellotti's perspective is not then posed on the creation of the new organism, but in the premises of political reforms, what was an indicative of the absence of a perspective of class struggles. In fact, there was an amalgam of perspectives between the PEL and the GUE/NGL, a mixture that was also expressed through concepts that acquired new interpretations inside the left-wing praxis and a mixture in their practices.

In short, the creation of the PEL was directly stimulated by the emergence of new movements contesting neoliberalism around the globe, but its creation was not a consensus from many perspectives. The PCP decided to keep its participation located in the field of the GUE/NGL; inside the PRC, an analysis which considered the transnational party multiplicity, from the supporters and creators of the PEL as it was, and others pointed out fundamental limits of the new organism. In any case, the creation of a transnational organism of the European left marked a new moment in the European politics, and in the reconfiguration of the left-wing movement during a structural crisis of capitalism.

### **8.1.2. PEL - The transnational Radical Party?**

Some responsibilities emerged with the PEL, according to Dunphy and March (year), in relation to the co-ordination and the establishment of a channel for information exchange between national parties and EU elites; Moreover, the PEL was also considered an instance for the left-wing policy-making, for instance, with the elaboration of *Manifestos* for EP elections (Dunphy and March, 2020).

The PEL then redefined a first positive transformation of the European left approach towards the EU in terms of transnational praxis, because it was the European left transnational party. However, as demonstrated by Dunphy and March (2020), the party was permeated by internal contradictions, besides that, the relation with the GUE/NGL did not improve because of the pluralities of perspectives inside both organisms (2020: 116). About the Groups in the EP, those authors indicated that:

Thus in institutional terms, they remain more important and visible actors than the TNPs (transnational parties), above

all because parliamentary groups are the principals that have generally taken the lead, alongside national parties, in developing the TNPs as their 'agents' – there has been no case where the reverse is true, with greater co-ordination being successfully imposed by a TNP against the wishes of national parties or the EP group (Dunphy and March, 2020: 181).

The relationship among PEL and GUE/NGL had been complicated since its beginning. First, since its creation, the PEL has been unable to establish an independent strategy and a plan of action, as its attachment and dependence on the EP group was a question of life or death.

The group remained not only more important than the transnational party, as suggested also by March and Dunphy (2020), but they were also bigger and possessed more funds (a situation that partially explain the PCP's decision).<sup>232</sup> Nevertheless, the ideologic perspective created around the PEL's was not so different from the GUE/NGL, as previously observed, the ideological framework developed by the European left had great correspondence to the thought of the GUE/NGL, what can be considered as a mutual creation, and despite the innovative meaning of the PEL, it was an organism that emerged in this context. In general, the transnational party succeed in regrouping the European left, but it could not go beyond the limits of the group, and thus remained focused on the electoral action.

## **8.2. Us and Them – Praxis of the European left after the PEL**

### **8.2.1. PRC**

For the PRC, the perspective of creating a plural left was present in its 2001 manifesto for the national elections. Based on a criticism of neoliberalism, the party was claiming the construction of an alternative and plural left wing. In fact, and it apply to all parties analysed in this dissertation, electoral programs

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<sup>232</sup> According to the GUE/NGL Activities Report of 2004, the budget consisted of "15% of the credits that were foreseen to this end is divided in equal parts between the European parties and 85% in proportion to the number of elected members of each of these parties to the European Parliament" (GUE/NGL, 2004: 32).

were not essentially a disruptive instrument, rather, elections served as a moment of gathering support, amplifying the presence in the social classes, and announcing the party's perspectives. For this reason, electoral documents are complementary to the congresses' documents.<sup>233</sup>

In 2003, Romano Prodi proposed the conformation of the "L'Ulivo" alliance for the 2004 EP elections. Even though not participating in the L'Ulivo from the beginning, in 2005, the PRC approved its support in the case of victory of a left-wing government in the elections. L'Ulivo was then confirmed as the *Grande Alleanza Democratica* (GAD). The 2005 Congress of the PRC brought five different perspectives in its thesis for the debate. Other than the discussion about the transnational party, the context that the PRC was facing in 2005 was characterized internationally by the need of peace in Iraq, the presence of Bush in the USA government, and the problems with the EU Constitutional Treaty. Since its 2002 Congress, the PRC assumed the position of "no to war and no to neoliberalism", and in 2005 Bertinotti's motion speech to the congress claimed that the party should be focused on the class struggles rather than in the institutional action, in other words, "the construction of democracy of participation and conflict" to give birth to an alternative government to represent a rupture with Berlusconi's ideas (PRC, 2005: 4).

Other positions raised in the Congress, for instance, from the Trotskyist sector of the party highlighted that the alliances made with the centre were contributing to the victories of the right-wing in the country. And, in fact, because of the alliances or not, the political conjuncture was favourable to the right wing in the country. Instead of fight right-wing conceptions, Trotskyists were making proposals: all precarious contracts would become permanent, a new salary scale and a minimum salary in the country should be created; it should be implemented and guaranteed: a free education system for all, the renationalisation of companies, the right of housing, heavy taxation of great fortunes, the elaboration of an economic plan, full democratic rights for immigrants; actions for female self-determination; a position against the Maastricht idea of Europe and against NATO actions in the world (PRC, 2005: 34). In this congress, the radicalization of the discourse was present in all the

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<sup>233</sup> Document: PRC, Programma Politico, 2001. Source: *Manifesto Project*

thesis prepared for the debate, but the majority choice of the party was in favour of the Bertinotti's perspective, which also included some aspects of radicalization and self-criticism.

The victorious perspective present in the 2005 Congress was then tested in practice in the 2006 elections, in which the PRC obtained 5,8% of the election results, while the *L'Ulivo* alliance 31%, leading Prodi to its second government, but with a clear national division in the results with Berlusconi being the second strongest force. Romano Prodi's second term of government started after 5 years of continuous Berlusconi presence in the power. In 2006, Bertinotti left his position of secretary of the PRC, after having been in charge since 1994, to assume the presidency of the deputies' chamber.

In the same Prodi's second term government, the PRC was an important member of the government, thus, part of the majority in the chambers of deputies and senators, also with roles in some ministries. In February 2008, Prodi's second Government term was almost at the end of its mandate, and Bertinotti affirmed, according to Paolo Favilli (2011: 194), that it was again an *illusion* the idea of participating in a government with hopes that social movements would influence the top of the national political scenario from its basis. The experience of supporting Prodi again produced some other splits in the party, for instance, with the rupture of the Marco Ferrando's group on what was called the *deriva governista* (governist drift) of the PRC.

After Prodi's government, Berlusconi returned as Prime Minister in 2008, and another test for the PRC occurred in 2008, when the *Sinistra Arcobaleno* (Rainbow Left) alliance was made for the political elections.<sup>234</sup> The alliance that received the name of *Rainbow Left* due to the Greens participation, did not gain seats in the chambers.

The Rainbow Left was born from above as an elite agreement between political forces. It was not a federation, which would have asked for clear democratic rules, a process of participation, the involvement not only of the leaders of the parties but of all the stakeholders. None of this has happened.

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<sup>234</sup> The program of the alliance was based on: Equality, justice, freedom, peace, civility, value of labour and knowledge, centrality of environment, state secularity, criticism of patriarchal model and chauvinism.

The expropriation of discussion and collective decision has inflicted a wound on our political community. A wound made more bitter by the lack of clarity in the political proposal, by its presentation on the media (PRC, 2008: 15).<sup>235</sup>

As discussed in the *Documenti Congressuali (5 Mozione)* for the Congress of the PRC in Chianciano Terme, July 2008, the Arcobaleno alliance and the participation in the government was a failure in which the PRC submitted itself. The experience of a stricter left-wing alliance at the national level was evaluated as a failure due to inexistence of strategy in this project built from a top-down perspective. The same thesis of the Congress points to the need of building a terrain for a new praxis to conjugate representativeness and direct political participation to rediscover the connection with people, as there would not be parliamentary action for the next years of Berlusconi Government. Without participation in the national parliament, parliamentary struggles were then on the EP.

Also in view of the imminent electoral deadline of the European elections, it is necessary to reaffirm our position within the framework of the forces that together with us are part of the European Left and the Gue-Ngl group in the European Parliament: alternative forces and parties to the neoliberal, technocratic and oligarchic underlying the stability pact and the Lisbon Treaty (PRC, 2008: 25).

Another motion was signed by Bertinotti and Nichi Vendola, indicating that it was a favourable moment for right-wing forces due to their success in intercepting social discontent with regressive ideologies, and the failure of the *Partito Democratico* in shifting the debate to the centre in the elections. From the experience in Prodi's Government, this congressional thesis indicates that the attempt to participate was motivate by the idea of producing another left-wing approach, which caused the government failure, the fracture with subaltern classes, and changes in the common sense. This congressional thesis states

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<sup>235</sup> Thesis presented by Fabio Amato, Maurizio Acerbo, Alessandro Favilli, Aurelio Cripa, Gianni Fresu, Paolo Ferrero, Alberto Burgio, Eleonora Forenza etc.

that:

The failure of our government challenge, which was in fact sanctioned by the protocol of 23 July 2007 on welfare and by the impediment to modify it in the parliamentary seat with the imposition of the vote of confidence, lies first of all in strengthening the role of the patronal organization, Confindustria, the real winner in this political-social phase. In many cases, Confindustria knew and was able to set the political agenda; it obtained concrete support from the government without compensation - as happened with the reduction of the tax wedge; he was thus able to prepare the ground for attacking the national employment contract, for calling into question the right to strike, for returning to office against article 18 of the Workers' Rights Statute. Our ability to resist was too weak. The lack of roots in the workplace and in the local area weighed heavily. Despite the efforts made, we have proved ineffective in the government and in parliament and hardly present in the places where work has taken on the thousand ancient and modern forms of exploitation (PRC 2008: 20).

In fact, the main aspect raised by the congressional thesis was the absence of the PRC in the basis of the Italian working classes. The rise of the PRC and the centre-left in the government occurred after years that Berlusconi was in charge, i.e., a result of the failures of the right wing that brought the left in the context of normal democracy back to the parliamentary life. The PRC choice was then to support the normal democratic life, and the result was the return of the right wing, again with Berlusconi. The PRC militants that presented this thesis in the congress also discussed in the document the meaning of the democratic crisis that Italy was suffering, conceiving the necessity of re-discussing the role of production in society in the context of the *crisis of globalization*, and re-discussing the role of normal democratic institutions in order to “revive the democratic system” with the development of direct forms of participation combined with classical institutions.

Another position was presented in the thesis “Una svolta operaia per una nuova Rifondazione comunista” (A worker’s turn for a new Communist Refoundation), signed by Claudio Bellotti, Alessandro Giardiello, Simona Bolelli, Jacopo Renda, Serena Capodicasa, etc. This congressional thesis suggests that the beginning of the failure was the Congress made in Venice, 2005, in which the majority of the PRC approved the idea of being a government force. This Congress marked the defeat of PRC strategy as it forced the rupture between the party leadership and its basis, starting a process of adaptation and transformation of the leadership.

Before that split, a long series of failures, adaptations, disguises of reality, had already worn down and undermined the relationship between the party and its social base. The 2007 budget presented as a turning point, the vote on military missions, on the 9<sup>th</sup> June 2007 with opposing squares during Bush's visit, the increase in military spending, tax relief for businesses, the refusal to cancel Berlusconi's shameful laws, the government's refusal to listen to the No Dal Molin movement, the refusal of the commission of inquiry on the G8 in Genoa, the absolute impermeability of the government in the face of any claim that came from below... (PRC, 2008: 32).

The profound criticism from this congressional thesis, pointed out that the solution for those problems was not a question of elections, but a problem that is related to the PRC continuous position in the horizon of the International Socialist. The criticism was necessary, according to Bellotti’s thesis, because the PRC was still the main left-wing organism in Italy, thus, a re-launch of the party was necessary from another sovereign conception, not based on the power of leadership groups, but on the elaboration of policies, program, and organization, challenging the ideology and the dominant system to build an antagonist battle.<sup>236</sup> In the same sense it was discussed the experience with the European Left, in

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<sup>236</sup> Some immediate measures pointed out by the defenders of the thesis were: inter-categorical minimum wage, abolition of precarization, job security, fight against war with withdrawal of missions, residence permit for everyone, social housing, welfare state with school and public services, women's rights, against large speculative works such as Expo Milan, more financing for public education, egalitarian public pension.

which the sovereignty of the PRC was in the hands of a small group (internal in the PRC) that had already proved its limits with the Arcobaleno experience.

Following this, the PRC was a party in which the majority of its members was following the leadership, but they shared different perspectives within themselves, thus, there was the space for a clear and divergent political program for social transformation with distinctive approaches and based on different concepts likely to triumph in the party. Thus, there were perspectives that belonged to the strategy of reformism, as there were perspectives from revolutionary Marxism. The "labour breakthrough" would be the relaunch of the PRC with a new debate about the political program within the participation of the party basis and workers, against the ideological review that refuses the centrality of class struggles.<sup>237</sup>

### 8.2.2. PCE/IU

With the transnational party now in the field of the left wing, the idea that "otro mundo es urgente" (another world is urgent) gained another impulse. The XVII Congress of the PCE, in 2005, evidenced that the chosen alternative was *democracia y socialismo*. Previously, the PCE Congresses were based on other different general slogans such as "with the left, building the future" in 2002, "For the European Left: the red-green pole" in 1995, "Always to the left" in 1992, "Democracy, social justice, solidarity – left heritage" in 1991. Thus, after the creation of the PEL, the PCE retook the idea of socialism. In the same congress, the creation of the PEL from a top-down perspective was justified by the arguments of the objective difficulties and internal discrepancies in the left-wing world.

The constitution of the Party of the European Left in May 2004, of which the PCE is a founding party, expresses this fundamental orientation that tries to overcome deficits existing in the European left itself and the need to build a political

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<sup>237</sup> Other references for a political program, particularly related to transitional demands, the thesis highlighted: nationalizations, workers control of production, public property, respect for the plurality based on the construction of an organized militancy.

benchmark, an alternative political pole, capable of contesting the hegemony of the neoliberal forces today dominant and of an increasingly subaltern social-democracy incapable of defining an autonomous project (PCE, 2005: 23).<sup>238</sup>

Two main aspects were raised in the debates of the 2005 Congress. One was the European and international situation, the other the internal situation of the country and the party. Regarding the international situation and Europe, the PCE was indicating the rising of a preventive counter-revolution with international measures against emancipatory movements, particularly from the USA within Bush's election and the development of wars after the 11<sup>th</sup> September attacks. The discussed measure was that the PCE would fight for a democratic and social impulse in the European integration, fight for a Parliament with full legislative power and respect to peoples wishes.

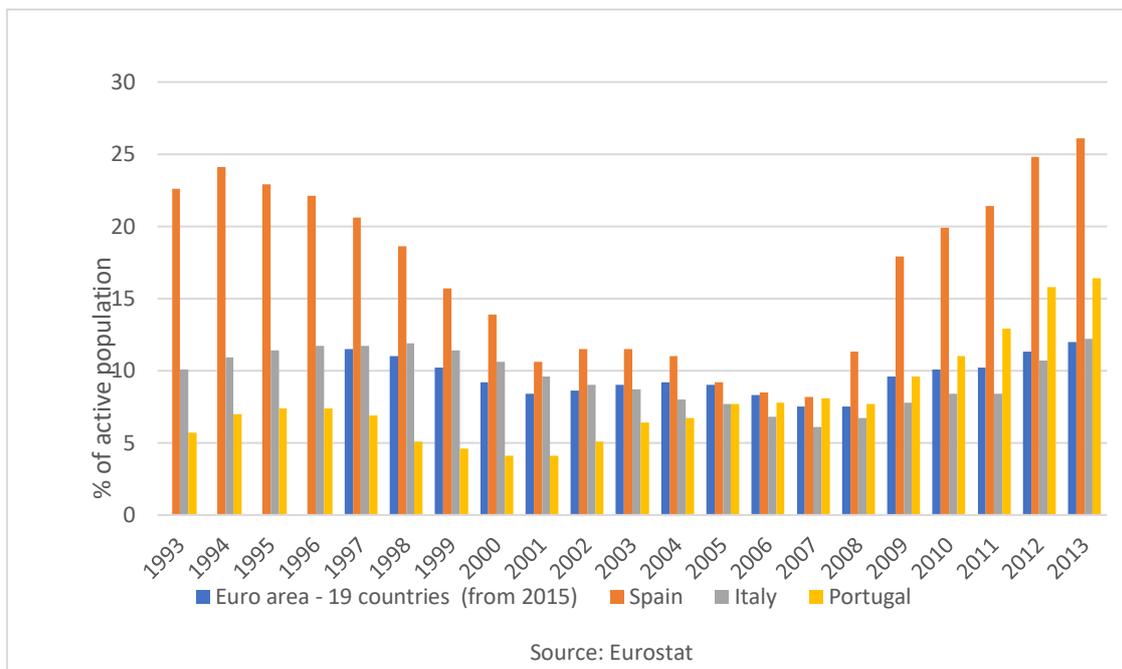
At the same time, general data was indicating that moment as one with the lowest rates of unemployment in Spain in decades (Figure 4), the PCE was indicating that the average of precarious jobs in Spain was around 31% of the working force, while in Europe the average was 13% (PCE, 2005: 8).<sup>239</sup> The relationship between unemployment and precarity has been a paradoxical discussion in the world of labour. The apparent contradiction in the numbers is the manner through which the essence of the neoliberal moment of capitalism presents itself, increasing the flexibility of contracts, manipulating numbers with formal contracts that reduce workers' rights to zero, while presenting reduced rates of unemployment.

#### **Figure 4: Unemployment in Italy, Spain, and Portugal**

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<sup>238</sup> Document: *Información, XVII Congreso del PCE. June 2005.*

<sup>239</sup> Document: *Informe al XVII Congreso del PCE, 2005.*



The political answer debated in the Congress regarding the national and international situation was the necessity of developing popular participation to defend popular sovereignty: “For this, it is necessary to reform parliamentary institutions, advance forms of direct democracy and ensure the primacy of civil power and popular sovereignty over any other State institution.” (PCE, 2005: 44).

Additionally, the PCE congress also pointed out the social-democratization process in the IU praxis. The criticism was direct towards the inadequacy of the IU discourse about the real situation and the possibilities of change that the PCE was defending, because it was considered that despite the correct strategy, the IU was acting based on “radical verbal borders and without a solid political and organizational concreteness” (2005: 16). In this sense, it is clear that after the constitution of the PEL as a new instance of the European left, another impulse took place in the national praxis of the PCE, with space also for criticism directed towards its main electoral instance, the IU, and the indication of popular sovereignty based on people’s interests, even if under concepts related to the establishment of an institutional civil power.<sup>240</sup>

The radicalization of the PCE discourse would find a further motivation:

<sup>240</sup> Further on, in the Congress realized in 2009, two particular aspects gained more expression on this matter. One was the recognition of the necessity of boosting woman participation, another was the spread of territorial works, due to the multiple-nation characteristic of the country.

the 2008 world crisis. Within the eruption of the crisis in the financial market spreading to other fields – thus evidencing the structural dimension of the crisis of capital – some social effects were felt.<sup>241</sup>

The response to the crisis was, as argued by Gareth Dale and Nadine El-Enany (2013: 614), a “lack of democratic method and a commitment to a neoliberal (or ordoliberal) doctrine”. The role of the state, after decades of neoliberalism, was again in the centre of the debates, due to its capacity to save economy, for instance, by assuming debits, operating momentaneous nationalizations of companies – since it was exercising the sovereign power again. Moreover, as discussed previously, the state is not an a-historic political figure.

In this scenario, the PCE recovered some classical debates of the European left, and the radicalization of the party’s discourse reached a point of self-criticism and the conception of social change proposals. In its *Informe final sobre el Manifiesto-Programa*, of May 2009, the PCE presented the necessity of transforming capitalism functioning, and, for that, a transformation of the party itself. The party change should be oriented, according to the document, to its establishment as a moral reference for young people, for the left, encouraging its militancy to consciously fight capitalist problems, and to recover the IU as a sovereign organisation. Even though regarding the transnational dimension the discussion was generic, the GUE/NGL and the PEL were claimed to be the space for an engaged action. In November of the same year, Spanish media was indicating that the PCE was rehearsing its reinvention while their XVIII Congress was in development.

In the 2009 Congress, the general characterization was the need for fighting neoliberalism to change the relation of forces, thus, a fight aimed at changing the system (PCE: 2009: 19). The question that followed such statement was concerned about the left-wing actor that should be involved, and the project of a socialism in the XXI century was then conceived as a struggle carried on by the left on the basis of a great democratic agreement for a full development of democracy, overcoming the limits imposed by capitalism (2009: 20). Observing

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<sup>241</sup> Costas Lapavitsas argues that: “The crisis of 2007–9 emanated in the sphere of finance and spread to production partly through financial mechanisms. Its global character was largely due to securitization which encouraged adoption of investment banking practices among commercial banks” (2011: 613).

that the solutions for the crisis were placed on wage and pension compression to save banks and financial capital, some thesis of the Congress advocated a program for democratic solution for the crisis with the creation of an alternative financial system to serve a new model based on public bank, the progressive increase of tax. Another thesis indicated however that:

[...] more resources are not enough, a deep democratization of the State and its structures is necessary at all levels through the introduction of forms of participatory democracy and citizen control, since otherwise, more resources for the State mean more resources for the oligarchies (PCE, 2009: 27).

Accordingly, the democratization of the state was discussed in the context of the Spanish state defending the idea of the establishment of the Federal Socialist Republic with radical democracy and popular participation, a process associated to the constitutional reform (also regarding the question of Monarchy or Republic in the country). Moreover, regarding the internationalist perspective of the PCE in the construction of socialism in the XXI century, the thesis indicated that:

This Congress ratifies the claim that socialism is an advanced form of democracy; it arises from a tradition of democratic ideas and also from a democratic experience. Democracy is a necessary part of any definition of socialism, understood in its contemporary sense of power of the People or of the majority, and not in the restrictive vision of 19th century liberalism. (PCE, 2009: 48).

Thus, in 2005 the PCE presented a radicalization in its positions about the IU and about internal politics, but a criticism limited to the institutionalization of struggles and the reform of parliaments (national and EP). In the XVIII Congress of 2009, based on the damages caused by the world crisis in Europe and particularly in Spain, the thesis seen there was an expression of plural perspectives in the party in which from one hand, emphasized the necessity of

radicalizing the discourse and praxis, and from the other hand, presented conceptual and political detours, which confined the initiatives to the reform and democratization of the state.

Moreover, the discussion about socialism and democracy was not based on a qualitative differentiation of what democracy and sovereignty were under capitalism and what they could be under a different social system with the popular control of material production and another form of social power.

Later, during the IU 2003 Congress, the VII Asamblea General de Izquierda Unida, the organization of the electoral organism was based on the plurality of emancipatory forces: “Una izquierda unida roja, verde, violeta y pacifista: todos los colores de la emancipación” (IU, 2003: 10). Looking for an alternative to neoliberalism, the IU position about the PEL was that:

The political subject, a new political formation or Party of the European transformative left, should serve to coordinate the struggles, related to the social movements and the unions and specify an institutional policy, being able to define an autonomous project of the right and of social democracy. Likewise, it should go beyond a simple party coordinator, allowing individual and collective adhesion as well as being open to the inclusion of organized political forces, regardless of the country, guaranteeing a democratic and plural functioning. (IU, 2003: 21).

As it was in process within the PCE, the IU was also considering this moment as a new beginning in relation to the new social movements and demands of the upcoming millennium. The federal organism was facing a critical moment in its electoral role because of the progressive drop in results. For this reason, the next Asamblea Federal, of 2008, discussed in two main thesis some possible solutions for the problems. Celebrating new movements, especially in Latin America, one thesis recalled the main values of the French and the Bolshevik Revolutions to localize the left-wing past in the history as a source of inspirations to the necessity of reclaiming lost spaces in previous battles. Furthermore, the thesis insisted that another Europe was possible, and for this

reason, it criticised the PEL's activities and role in the previous years:

At the European level, the Anticapitalist Conference has ceased to be a significant benchmark and the ELP (PEL) continues not to exceed the stage of coordination between forces, even though we have the challenge of promoting it as a reference for the unitary left and European alternative (IU, 2008: 18).

Over the initial years, after the PEL construction, the criticism was directed towards the role of PEL as being strictly attached to the transnational coordination of left-wing parties, a verified limitation of the new party. The 2008 world crisis would put in evidence this structural limit.

The other thesis of the 2008 Congress indicated the limits of the IU in relation to the PSOE government and the bipartidism in the country, claiming the refoundation of the Spanish left-wing organization. Likewise, the congress thesis indicated that the GUE/NGL was the unique parliamentary group capable of offering a real opposition to the Lisbon treaty, which was part of the idea of offering an alternative to the Lisbon Treaty (an update of the neoliberal Constitutional Treaty refused in referendums), an alternative that was thought to be the one of a democratic Europe based on solidarity, peace, and social rights (IU, 2008: 46).

### **8.2.3. PCP**

The PCP, because of its participation in revolutionary process in the late XX century, also remained a particular and distinctive party due to its ideas. The slogans for its Congresses are an example of the variation of the party's ideas in the 1990s and 2000s. In 1992 the PCP's theme was "Within the PCP for an advanced democracy in the XXI century", in 1996 "A stronger Party, a new way for Portugal", in 2000 it was "Democracy and Socialism, a project for the XXI century", in 2004 "Within the PCP – Democracy and Socialism, a Portugal with Future", and in 2009 the theme for the electoral campaign was "A patriotic and left-wing program of rupture. A compromise with workers, people, and the

country”.

This general transformation from an abstract to a clear perspective of confrontation cannot be seen separately from the class struggles in the real conjuncture. If in 1997 the PCP was indicating the “democratic and progressive transformation of society”, this perspective changed with the completion of the EU integration process, the rise of social movements, and the deterioration of working classes living condition. For instance, in 2000, the party indicated that the integration process was a direct attack on the sovereignty of national states and that this violation was simultaneously an attack on democracy (PCP, 2000).<sup>242</sup>

Contrary to the creation of European parties, due to its conception of sovereignty, the PCP reinforced the role of the GUE/NGL for its promotion of left-wing values in the EP. To this end, the PCP understood that there were more divergent than common aspects within the new organization, thus the conclusion of remaining out of the PEL and reaffirming its previous decisions. In 2004, the PCP was still adopting the Marxist-Leninist approach to discuss the role of the state and supranational institutions in the process of centralization and concentration of capital over national constitutions. From the same perspective, it criticized the federalist approach of the recent organized political party of the Portuguese left-wing, the *Bloco de Esquerda* (BE): “devaluing and underestimating the central importance of preserving national sovereignty as a guarantee of democracy and an essential foundation for the country's development” (PCP, 2004: 23).<sup>243</sup> The “another Europe” that the PCP was predicting was one made by a free association of sovereign states.

In the XVII Congress of the party, realized in December 2008, the economic and financial crisis was the background of the world situation. In this scenario, the possibility of an outbreak of revolutionary movements was evaluated by the party in accordance to the necessity of building an international cooperation and constructing the vanguard of the revolutionary party (PCP, 2008: 5).<sup>244</sup>

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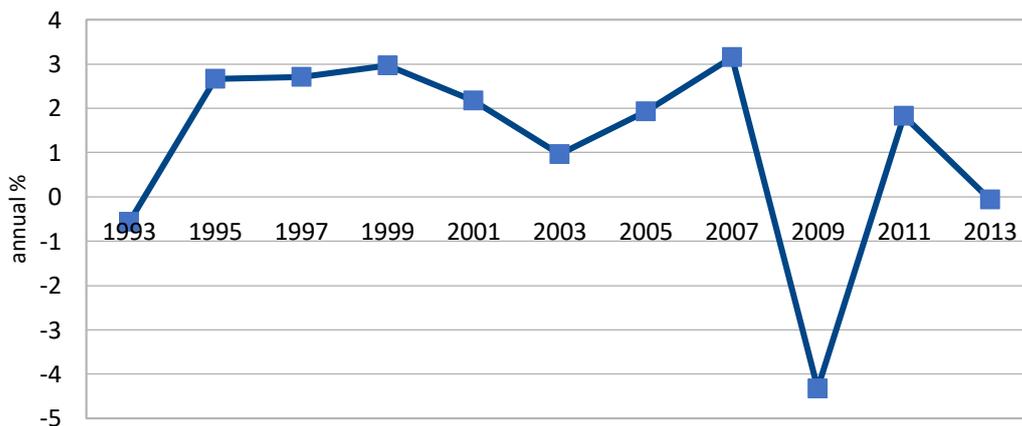
<sup>242</sup> Document: *Teses. Projeto de Resolução Política. Documento para debate. Dezembro, 2000 Lisboa. Resolução Política. XVI Congresso do PCP, dezembro, 2000 Lisboa.*

<sup>243</sup> Document: *XVII Congresso do PCP. Resolução Política. Almada, novembro 2004.*

<sup>244</sup> Document: *XVIII Congresso do PCP. Resolução Política, Lisboa, 2008.*

The crisis was understood as being structural and systemic, and the process of governments assuming the financial crisis in the form of public debts was identified as a common tendency in Europe as an attempt to transfer the financial crisis debts partially to the working classes (as shown in Figure 3). In Portugal, the situation was the same under the PS government. In 2008, the crisis was not only a relation among financial, big capitals, states, and governments, it was in fact a systemic structural crisis with serious consequences for the working classes. One of the direct and immediate results was the sudden decline in national GDPs (Figure 5), what would impact public systems.

**Figure 5: GDP growth – EU**



Source: [worldbank.org](http://worldbank.org)

As the PRC experiences in some Italian governments might have served as an example, the state could not fully control the capital. The PCP was correct in indicating the increase of attacks on international rights and national sovereignties from a class struggle perspective of the European integration process, but most of the measures taken to save big capital and financial institutions passed through the instances of the national state.

The PCP conceived the state by its class nature, and thus the struggle was driven from two directions, the national and the transnational. The transnational level, then, was not only related to the practice of political organizations, because

other institutions of the EU created the space for the circulation of transnational capital, keeping the national state as a unique instrument whereas a supranational unified power was still inexistent.

In view of the European Union's integration process, national sovereignty is a non-negotiable starting point and a central and decisive issue for the affirmation of the interests of Portugal and the Portuguese people. The defence and affirmation of national sovereignty requires the institutional consecration of the possibility of reversibility and amendment of agreements and treaties that govern European integration, adjusting the status of each country to the will of its people and its real situation, including the right to decision sovereignty over untying the EU (PCP, 2008: 24).

Unquestionably, the formulation of the PCP is consistent to its history and less liable to zig-zags if compared to other communist parties, a huge level of autonomy was still a priority of the party. The history of the PCP, once again, is then the secret for this very stable formula, because the core of PCP's strategy was the defence of national sovereignty under an abstract idea of the state, an idea supported by the 1974 Revolution success and the unrealistic hope of continuity of this revolution (then the idea of a progressive democracy in the XXI century or the idea of a progressive development of the Portuguese society).

Even though the PCP did not have a strong parliamentary life, the party historically claimed the state sovereignty. Certainly, the claim is not theoretically wrong, and it was not a minor aspect in the PCP activities and elaborations. In fact, the dependency of Portugal on European countries was a historical national aspect; what changed was the position of Portuguese elites in the international relations, now submitted and associated to the European relation of forces. The PCP itself indicates this fact:

The extraordinary dimension of the current economic power of these capitalist and monopoly groups is consolidated and developed in permanent articulation, complicity and promiscuity with the political power and the parties they have

exercised since 1976 - PS, PSD and CDS-PP. (...). The use of the State, namely its legislative component, as an instrument to reinforce the dominance of monopoly groups and transnational capital, explains the wide legislative production of the Assembly of the Republic and governments, aimed at consecrating their class interests (PCP, 2008: 27).

The role of socialdemocracy in Portugal was determinant to the development of the revolution, which, without disregarding the role of the PCP, was contained and reoriented to the liberal-democratic development of the struggles under constitutional rules. The PS, PSD and CDS-PP constituted the government *in fact* in Portugal, not only suffocating the revolutionary process, but also delegating a limited role to the PCP (at its maximum) in the legislative power. The PCP itself proceeded almost alone in its alliances, with exception of the Greens, now with a strong criticism of the BE about its progressive social-democratization and anti-communist praxis, and that was and still is one of the main concerns about the PCP approach to left-wing forces since the revolutionary period. The difficulties of the party in assuming another approach with the left, and also strategically overcoming the fact that the revolution of 1974 is now in the past are some of the barriers of the party in the contemporary world.

In any case, the PCP was a party that kept its word in respect of the constitution and the state, and also of its own ideas, and in 2008 this compromise was reaffirmed with the radicalization of the discourse in times of world crisis. In this sense, its praxis was in consonance with the ideas reproduced by the GUE/NGL about another Europe, but with a dissociative accent with the insistence on national sovereignty. Certainly, behind the proposals of the “State as a promoter of social development” and a “policy in compliance with the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic” there was the attempt of establishing a dialogue with different social basis, other than the communist militancy and its inner working class circles, but the claimed rupture with the existing state of affairs was a rupture with the fraction of class that was in charge in the government which would be replaced by another project – the national democratic revolution.

In 2009, the party presented an electoral program based on the idea of

rupture. Within the world crisis that struck Europe (Figure 5), the Portuguese situation was not different and then the PCP established an electoral program for a patriotic rupture with right-wing policies. The discussion of the PCP was based on the fact that big groups and companies had accumulated huge profits in the previous years, while unemployment, public debt, and social inequality were still rising. They claimed:

Rupture with the domination of monopoly capital;  
Rupture with the devaluation of work and workers; Rupture with the mutilation and subversion of social policies; Rupture with the reconfiguration of the State at the service of big capital; Rupture with the European capitalist integration process; Rupture with the subversion of the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic and the democratic regime (PCP, 2009: 17).

Other than the rupture program, the PCP electoral program was proposing a recovering agenda based on the boosting of the internal market, promotion of public investment, a response to companies' financial imbalances, and the adoption of another credit policy (2009: 20). In general, the party had the opportunity of assuming more clearly its anti-system identity, but despite the consistently radical program, there was still the lack of broad alliances and cooperation at the national and transnational levels that could result in substantial conquests for the Portuguese and European working classes.

### **8.3. GUE/NGL perspectives in the transnational crisis**

In its *Review of Activities 2009-2011*, the GUE/NGL discussed the economic and financial crisis initiated in 2007 and that affected the whole functioning of the EU and its country members in social and economic senses. The Report main position/suggestion regarding EU measures to contain the crisis was a "call for a different policy for Europe, one that will guarantee a fairer European Union based on greater solidarity and, more generally, a fairer and better world" (GUE/NGL, 2012: 2).

The crisis was attributed to the government and heads of government's failure to contain the root causes of the crisis. In this sense, GUE/NGL understood that the incident led to a crisis of democracy in which, for instance, Italy was a case in which technocrat unelected group was ruling the measures established by the European Commission, the IMF and the ECB. The group *Report* presents its efforts to halt privatizations and the deregulation of workers' rights and public services. In fact, the 2009 EP elections were marked by an increase in abstentions and a rise of a more conservative parliament. Other than the gender imbalance (only 35% of women were elected for the EP), the abstention increased in 57%. The left-wing group received only 4.57% of the votes, counting 35 MEPs, while the ALDE (Liberals and Democrats for Europe) had 10.83%, the EPP (Christian Democrats) summed 35.77%, the ECP (Conservative and Reformists) 7.44%, and the EFD (Freedom and Democracy) 4.05%.<sup>245</sup>

Acting in such a conservative EP that was insisting on the neoliberal plan of the *Lisbon Strategy* and under the introduction of the new (old) rules of the *Treaty of Lisbon*, the GUE/NGL followed part of the radicalization of some of its members of the European left, for instance, insisting that a radical change in EU policies was needed in order to avoid that the solution for the crisis was achieved at the expenses of citizens. The group was absorbing some radicality in this moment of crisis, following the tendency of the streets and that was partially present in the communist perspectives of its members, while was also interpreting in a more critical way the social conflict, but not fully in terms of the class struggle. In this sense, the role of the entire capitalist state structure/apparatuses, and the accountability of the ruling classes were not taken as the core of their fighting strategy. On the contrary, the reinforcement of some institutions and neo-Keynesian perspectives were what the European left could offer. Those were the limits of the GUE/NGL as a left-wing Group representing the generic category of *citizens*, which since Hegel is a sort of a lost individual in the bourgeois civil society.

New reforms, rescue plans, and the configuration of the EP indicated the continuity of neoliberalism as the core orientation of the EU (from the institutionalization of the ECB and the European Council as EU institutions to the

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<sup>245</sup> European Parliament data: <https://europarl.europa.eu/>

abandonment of the unanimity vote in the Council of Ministers). The structure for the austerity authority was settled. Moreover, the previous idea of European citizens lost part of its motivation with the discrepancies established among European states and its own national citizens.

The idea that “Another Europe is possible” remained the consolidated slogan of the group during the crisis. For that, the group was contrary to the continuity of the European Commission under José Manuel Barroso leadership, and contrary to the strategies adopted, which in fact were a “way for an even greater concentration of wealth” (GUE/NGL, 2012: 3).

GUE/NGL proposals include: a Pact for human and environment development, employment, social progress and against poverty, accompanied by an investment plan for social and industrial policies requiring that pensions, industrial relations, public services, especially social services and health care, are excluded from any budgetary austerity plans (GUE/NGL, 2012: 4).

The parliamentary praxis of the GUE/NGL was also focused on controlling the financial sector, the main responsible for the world crisis, with the creation of taxes, such as the Tobin tax and the establishment of a democratic control of transactions and rating agencies. Those measures were suggested by the European left in a moment which the impoverishment of the population was the EU manner of dealing with austerity, since the plans to save economy were clearly based on a class character and regionally focused (Portugal, Ireland, Italy, Greece and Spain).

Moreover, the group supported demonstration across Europe, some of which gave birth to another wide-spread movement, the *Indignados*, in Spain. “Make them pay for their crisis!” raised then in the European Social Forum as a slogan to fight poverty (2012: 8).

The GUE/NGL participation in social movements activities was a significant part of its praxis, what can also be considered as a radicalization of its activities, from the participation in trade-unionists’ demonstrations, strikes, international cooperation with social forums and discussions, involvement in

central contemporary discussions (such as the question of gender equality, environment, and health). Additionally, the *Arab Spring* was another international aspect that increased the conjuncture of social struggles and was taken aboard by the group. Thus, the element *conjuncture*, the practical economic-political moment, was the key to understand the praxis of the GUE/NGL in times of world crisis. Certainly, the group did not reach the ideological point of rupture with the EU or with the EP, as a result of its nature as an EP group; neither the working classes appeared as the *subject* in its concepts and conjuncture characterizations. But its action over the transnational structure reflected some of the particularities of social struggles.

#### **8.4. Conclusion**

This chapter discussed how the conflict for another Europe did not overcome the questioning of the whole social class relations, remaining instead in the limits of the political parties' struggle for political emancipation, even though with an enormous potential to go beyond. The control of capital for a better redistributive system and the questioning of neoliberalism were directly based on the impoverishment of working and middle classes, based on the defence of a public system, and general rights. Those were immediate aspects that even though part of the terrain of normal democratic struggles did not appear ultimately in a strategical emancipatory level. In fact, rather than social classes, the previous established framework of the European left was based on the concept of citizens, which once again in this chapter, based on the documents and interviews analysed, can be characterized as a fragmented nebula of individuals who lost their rights in this crisis. In this sense, as the GUE/NGL was focusing its performance strictly to the field of "normal democracy", in the project of democratic reforms that guided the praxis of GUE/NGL during the 2008 world crisis, *revolution* was a limited and fragmented concept, which corresponded to the succession of different democratic reforms conducted under the sovereignty of the national state; in short, a process not thought in relation to the theme of genuinely popular sovereignty. The hopes of a transnational action were limited to the institutional struggle in the EP. The radical limits persisted despite the

creation of the PEL. The new transnational party adopted the consensus method as its form of dealing with internal debates, and it was a complex organization with many internal differences (but less than the GUE/NGL) that could not agree a revolutionary hegemonic program.

The general values that were defended by the group and the transnational party were found to be, unquestionably, in those related to the whole civilization and in consonance with immediate purposes that are part of a broader conception of human emancipation, and most of them appeared in the very pragmatic daily-job of the group in the EP. Thus, there was in the EP the defence of the minimum conditions of existence of the most affected social sectors. Moreover, this chapter indicated the institutional submission of the PEL to the GUE/NGL.

Dunphy (2004: 173) does not believe that the GUE/NGL can be seen as a Group that was representing or could represent the party of a European radical and democratic left. Perhaps this is true to the extent that the European left could not express itself in the GUE/NGL, because a united transnational group with a common project did also not exist. But, in fairness to what was observed in the research, there were small groups inside the European left discussing historical and strategic perspectives for another Europe, and for this reason it is important to consider that the perspective of another Europe is in fact viable if associated (“translated”, in a Gramscian sense) to the development of a strategy capable of being the centre of gravity for the European left, the organizations themselves, but fundamentally for the European working classes. When the 2008 world crisis became a real problem at all levels, the European left was unable to provide an efficient program, or efficient forms of defending working classes from austerity. Some attempts of radicalism were verified, but the process of social democratization of the European left was an important aspect in the limitation of the calls for a “radical change of Europe”, being too late to try a sudden change of route.

## Conclusions

This thesis contributed an analysis of the European left praxis in the 1990s and 2000s through an original documental and interviews analysis, focused on the concepts of democracy and sovereignty. The originality, other than the sources, is also posed in the conceptual focus of the research: the adoption of a Gramscian approach allowed an inner discussion of the ideas and activities of a set of political parties of the European left-wing (PRC, PCE/IU, PCP, GUE/NGL, PEL). In this sense, from this inner perspective, this thesis suggests that the European left is in fact not really radical at all, but instead a progressivist and reformist left. From an analysis that considered the functionalist approach of national parties and transnational group of parties, it was found that those parties were essentially worried about occupying positions on the terrain of normal democracy. Therefore, the so called European left did not represent a hegemonic project of social change, but a long term effort of reforming capitalism. In this sense, the concepts of sovereignty and democracy are two important dimensions that contributed to a particular way of understanding the concept of hegemony at the internal level of the praxis of those political organizations: progressive democracy was equivalent to socialism in the parties' conception, and there was a limited notion of the sovereign role of the state in society. All in all, neo-Keynesian thoughts drove the European left praxis at national and transnational levels. When the economic conjuncture changed with the 2008 crisis, the call for radicalism arrived too late and too vaguely.

The immanent nature of national, and at same time, European political parties rooted in their own countries and acting at the transnational level demanded the consideration of multiple levels and materials for the analytical process. For this reason, this research employed a multimethod approach. The multimethod approach focused on left-wing political parties allowed the development of a particular analysis of the praxis of left-wing forces. The presence of historical documents and interviews appeared in this dissertation as a fundamental source of debate, more than an illustration of facts, to discuss a broad set of left-wing organizations and their praxis in relation to the national and transnational scenario. Special attention was given to documents elaborated in

the parties' congresses, as well as their reports of activities. In addition, interviews were conducted to provide further material and were regarded as a direct primary source to approach the history of political parties. The construction of a historical narrative was made possible through a content analysis and a critical interpretative approach of the documents. In addition, interviews, the discussion with the existent literature in the field, and the consideration of Marxist theoretical perspectives historically claimed by those parties constituted the general methodological approach of this dissertation.

In the 1990s, the interest in the occupation of positions in the EP was the first main reason that brought together national left-wing forces to cooperate in the construction of the GUE/NGL. The continuity resided precisely in material and organizational reformulation of the left wing, which occurred through the maintenance of some previous ideas, namely Eurocommunism, associated with the creation of the PRC from the PCI, the reorganization of the Spanish left around the Izquierda Unida, the ideological reformulation of the PCP, and the transnational presence of the GUE/NGL and the PEL in the European Parliament. As part of the metabolism of the parties, a succession of internal ruptures, connections and a transnational conjuncture were constant aspects that contributed to the creation of a common background and a common ideological approach for the praxis of the European left.

All the three national political parties taken into consideration in this dissertation suffered an intense process of questioning of their identities, particularly on the use of the "communist" name and approach. None of them abandoned the idea of communism, but this strategic purpose was relocated to a much further place in their priorities. This common aspect is intrinsically linked to the maintenance of their existence as political organizations: their insertion into the party-system was permeated by the engagement with parliamentary life. Thus, the most unifying point is that the PCP, the PRC, and the PCE/IU all assumed democracy as the core of their strategies in the sense that democracy was understood to be equivalent to socialism. In terms of organization, democratic centralism was still an important idea to all those parties, and the leadership was not superior to party-congresses.

On the other hand, those three national parties also maintained their particularities. Some examples are the particularity of the internal debate,

national interests, independency in relation to other national communist parties, and limits in the transnational participation. The PCP was the most singular case in this sense; the party refused to adhere to the new left formation, the PEL, due to fears that this might impact negatively upon its sovereignty as a party. Moreover, the PCE and PRC were parties that assumed a line of continuity with Eurocommunism, but with updates occurring in the 1990s when both parties redesigned their national and transnational approaches.

Transnational activity was not the focus of national parties, but the transnational group succeeded in making the European left collaborate with different perspectives through the consensus method, which was a modification of internal relations between the whole and the (plural) parts. The immediate result of such methods was the neutralization of radical perspectives and the predominance of progressivist ideas in the internal relation of forces at the transnational level.

As seen in Chapter 2 and 5, the electoral performance was essential for the diffusion of the parties' ideology and existences. Parliamentary elections became the practical focus of the parties on all levels of their activities, a praxis that, despite not being a real dilemma, was a complex and contradictory set of attempts at theoretical and ideological formulations.

Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, the transnational strategic debate advanced a few steps ahead in organizational terms with the GUE/NGL, which remained the meeting place for different perspectives, as observed in Chapter 4. As suggested by March and Dunphy (2020), the network established by the GUE/NGL (and later by the PEL) brought part of the European left to dialogue and to act, to some extent, together at the transnational level, a level which the national ideas had to meet a common ground and a common debate.

The common aspect of the political programmes of the three national parties analysed here was the generality of how the EU was treated. The transnational praxis was a conjunctural need for the European left, not a desire. It was based on the necessity of achieving or reaching new (representative) structures of the European political power to guarantee and improve their limited national existence, as discussed in Chapter 3, in electoral terms. EU was generally conceived liable to be democratically reformable. In this sense, the question of democracy and sovereignty led to the problem of hegemony.

The reformable character of the EU was present in the strategic perspectives of the PCE and the PRC, while the PCP took part in this journey believing that the EU could not be changed but used in a favourable way. Besides the late and subaltern position, the integration of each country was particular, and this fact was taken into account in the general critical perspectives of the national parties regarding the EU integration process.

Based on the methodological approach adopted in this work that corresponds to the parties' own theoretical framework, and according to previously analysed facts and perspectives, the characterization of the 'radical left' in relation to the general spectrum of political forces in Europe raised some questions along this dissertation. The term 'radical' might be adequate if it is considered the role of the national parties, such as the PRC, the PCP, and the PCE/IU, in relation to the whole spectrum of the European left in the 1990s and 2000s, as the work of Damiani, March, Dunphy suggest. However, if the praxis of the 'radical left' is observed from the perspective of the construction of a subaltern hegemony, another characterization is possible, because the focus on normal democracy at the national level dominated the parties' activities and limited the development of a hegemonic leadership project. This distinctive characterization was possible because of the immanent consideration of the theoretical framework of those parties and the documental analysis.

Normal democracy was considered in the dissertation as the everyday terrain of parliamentary relations, which in the cases of the PRC, the PCE/IU, and the PCP was predominant. Thus, because of the focus on electoral and parliamentary activities, the European left was rather a *progressivist* set of political parties acting within the limits of legal existence. An immediate consequence was related to the problem of hegemony, as the political parties' approach to the question was essentially parliamentary, even though the intertwinement with social movements and other democratic forces was another existent field of activities.

Consequently, this dissertation suggests that further discussions on the concept would contribute to a better development of theoretical readings, as it might be more adequate the use of the idea of European left for the general set of left-wing parties belonging to the GUE/NGL and PEL, and the acknowledgement that the radicalism predicted by the parties (for instance, after

the 2008 crisis) is related to democracy and not to socialist perspectives. In the 1990s and 2000s socialism was directly associated to the development of democracy, at least socialism was understood as the deepening of democracy. In other words, the radicalism expressed by the parties and the group was not essentially oriented by socialist principles, but rather by a universal democratic perspective of progressivist transformations inside the structure of the capitalist state. Therefore, another type of sovereignty could not emerge.

The GUE/NGL was a plural and progressivist set of organizations of left-wing forces with the aim of democratizing the European Union from its neoliberal accent by reforming its apparatuses to control the economy. Accordingly, the praxis in the transnational field was also located inside the limits of normal democracy even after the creation of the PEL, which followed the GUE/NGL method of functioning (consensus) and ideological background, suggesting that the limits of the communist strategy were not exclusively located at the transnational level, but was a multilevel condition of the European left.

When the world crisis imposed a new conjuncture in the relation of forces of the class struggle, it was verified that struggles were much more an immediate response to the circumstances, a provisional answer to conjunctural factors without a structural reading of the situation, which indicate the limits of the strategy established in the previous moment. At this stage, democracy was equivalent to socialism in the set of the European left thought, as discussed in Chapter 6 and 7, therefore democracy became a universal value for the European left. In this sense, the European left activities were located on the level of political emancipation. As the documental and interview analysis made possible to observe, the congresses debates, the parliamentary praxis, and the results of such praxis developed along the 1990s and 2000s were not bounded by the purposes of human emancipation, but the potentiality for such approach existed. Rather, the limits of normal democracy corresponded to the limits of the political emancipation perspective that in fact guided the strategy of the parties by focusing on the reinforcement of national parliaments as a way of developing democracy and sovereignty. The state was the limit and maximum range of the strategy.

Therefore, it is possible to suggest that the lack of a clear revolutionary strategy was replaced by a lower ideological level of activities, more focused on

achievable goals, which was a practice (*tradutibilità*) guided by progressivist values. The replacement of the abandoned perspective of a qualitative radical transformation of the relation of forces was made possible by the electoral and institutional participation. While the Eurocommunist perspective was an elegant transformation of the strategy of some European communist parties (that only indirectly affected the PCP), the perspectives in the 1990s and 2000s were less theoretically elaborated. The situation did not change substantially when the PEL emerged from the efforts of the communist fraction, as seen in Chapter 8, as the transnational party was essentially dependent on the GUE/NGL practices and rules. Examples of the persistence of some progressivist perspectives were the fight against neoliberalism that, at first sight, was a struggle based on the (neo)Keynesian *defence* of the legacy of the welfare state.

During the 2008 crisis, as it was observed throughout the discourse analysis of interviews and congresses' documents, the European left discourse became more rigid, with a clear call to rupture in national contexts. A call for rupture with neoliberalism that was a consequence of the conjuncture. Contrastingly, as it was possible to generalize about the set of radical parties of the European left according to the documental analysis, the strategy of rupture was not systemic, and the same perspective of struggles can be extended to the praxis of the national political parties, the GUE/NGL and the PEL. Thus, it prevailed the minimum existent political program, i.e., the program of democratic reforms in the long term with discrete variances of radicalism. The real boundaries of the European left remained in the sphere of the sovereignty of the state and in the terrain of normal democracy, preventing an ulterior theoretical and practical development of the concept of human emancipation.

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## **Interviews**

Jose Luis Del Roio (PRC). Interview 1 (25 January 2019). São Paulo.  
mp3.1h30min

Paolo Ferrero (PRC). Interview 2 (7 February 2019). Chiaravalle. mp3.1h08min

Claudio Bellotti (SCR). Interview 3 (14 February 2019). Milano. mp3.1h59min

Oscar Monaco (PRC). Interview 4 (16 February 2019). Castiglione del Lago.  
mp3.1h38min

Luciano della Vecchia (PRC). Interview 5 (19 February 2019). Perugia.  
mp3.1h01min

Maurizio Fabbri (PRC). Interview 6 (26 February 2019). Roma. mp3.59min

Fernando H. Pedro Rodrigues (PCP). Interview 7 (19 March 2019). Lisboa.  
mp3.39min

Miguel Viegas (PCP). Interview 8 (20 March 2019). Coimbra. mp3.58min

José do Nascimento Dias (PCP). Interview 9 (25 March 2019). Coimbra.  
mp3.43min

Vladimiro Vale (PCP). Interview 10 (21 March 2019). Coimbra. mp3.43min

Franz Pérez (IU). Interview 11 (24 April 2019). Madrid. mp3.35min

Daniel Moreno (PCE). Interview 12 (25 April 2019). Aranjuez. mp3.30min

Remedios Garcia Albert (PCE). Interview 13 (26 April 2019). Madrid.  
mp3.1h24min

## **List of Historical Documents**

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## Appendix

### 1. NVivo Software

In accordance with the multimethod approach of this research, the conceptual and historical debate of this dissertation was made also with the use of the NVivo software, in order to organize and access the information produced for this dissertation. The interview transcription was made, and documents were also chronologically and thematically organized and analysed with the use of NVivo. Some conceptual *nodes* were created to codify the whole content of documents and interviews, as follow:

#### NVivo Nodes

- i. 2008 World Crisis and Economy, Euro
- ii. Democracy
- iii. Elections and Parliaments (National and EP)
- iv. EU Integration
- v. GUE/NGL, PEL
- vi. History of IU/PCE, PRC, PCP
- vii. Socialism and Strategy
- viii. Sovereignty

## **2. Interviews (semi-structured sample)**

- i. When did you start participating in the party?
- ii. How was it to be part of a national and transnational political party?
- iii. Considering the 1994 Elections (as the first one during the new EU political rules and new context for the left), what were the main purposes of the party by acting in the EU structure?
- iv. How were the relations among the members of the EU political group (GUE) in the first years? What brought different organizations to be part of the same group?
- v. How do you see the relation between EU and national interests?
- vi. How the Party dealt with the reforms in the EU structure during the 90s? And with those from the EU to national contexts in the 2000s.
- vii. Regarding elections, how was the preparation and importance of running in EU elections (1994, 1999, 2004, 2009).
- viii. Acting in the EU contributed to the Party rethink its own perspectives? Why?
- ix. How was the relation with the new movements that emerged during the 2000s and other national political forces?
- x. Regarding the economic and financial integration, how the GUE/your party saw the implementation of the euro?
- xi. How the party faced the 2008 crisis? In which sense was thought this period of social transformations?