redigim
redistributive imaginaries

Working Paper 1

Researching redistributive imaginaries: emerging methodological reflections

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Introduction

This is the first in a series of working papers produced by members of the consortium as part of the Redistributive Imaginaries (ReDigIm) project. This paper focuses on the concept of 'imaginaries' and its role in the project's methodology as well as its epistemological underpinnings. The first part of the paper explains why we have chosen to adopt the concept of imaginaries and how it serves our inquiry into redistributive practices and social meaning-making. It sets out our conceptualisation of imaginaries and the theoretical frameworks that we think are most relevant to our investigation. The second part of the paper considers various methodological challenges associated with research on imaginaries and identifies the specific methods we have selected to implement the ReDigIm project.

In focusing on theory and method, we are not seeking to systematize imaginaries research or to lay down general principles. The value of the imaginaries concept seems to us to derive from its openness, and to the possibility of implementing a range of methods and approaches. However, we do think that the paper makes a valuable contribution to an emergent scholarly discussion about the appropriate methods for implementing research on economic and socio-technical imaginaries.

Why 'imaginaries'?

ReDigIm examines how the redistribution of economic resources is understood and practiced in Europe in the context of rapid digitalization. We are working with a broad definition of redistribution: we are interested in classical definitions (derived from social policy, for example) which tend to prioritise the role of the state, central planning and public finance, and to assume that taxation is the key mechanism for redistributing income from richer to poorer households, but we are equally interested in voluntary transfers through social mechanisms such as charity or mutual aid. In a context in which redistribution via the state has declined for almost all OECD countries since the mid-1990s (Causa, Browne and Vindics 2019), it is necessary to acknowledge the diversity of social mechanisms through which transfers may be taking place. ReDigIm innovates in exploring the interrelationship

between these different mechanisms and the social meaning-making that supports subjects' engagement with them.

A useful support for our approach can be found in Gibson-Graham's (2006) diverse economies paradigm, which aims to facilitate critical thinking about economies by decentering capitalist enterprise. One of the tools they present is the diagram reproduced below (Fig. 1), in which the kind of redistributive practices we are interested in studying are grouped together as 'non-market transactions'. This framework provides us with a way of thinking state appropriations (i.e. taxation) and gift giving (e.g. donations) together. It also enables us to clarify our focus on *transactions* as opposed to *labour*, and specifically on transactions that happen outside of formal 'market' systems (even if they are at risk of being incorporated into such systems).

An example of the kind of development that we are interested in is the phenomenon of medical crowdfunding. This is widespread in the US context, where access to healthcare is privatised, but it is also increasingly common in countries including the UK (Coutrot et al. 2020; Goodier 2023) where the National Health Service no longer provides the kind of care that people need or expect. Digital platforms like crowdfunding sites provide a new mechanism through which people can make voluntary transfers to others in need, addressing a perceived 'gap' in the welfare safety net. Crowdfunding by the grassroots activist organisation Black Lives Matter UK provides a different example. BLMUK received 1.2 million in donations in the wake of the murder of George Floyd, which they collected via GoFundMe. These funds have subsequently been 'redistributed' to black-led organisations and campaign groups across the UK (Mohdin 2023). Although BLMUK effectively operate as fundraisers, they are not able to register as a charity because of the political nature of the organisation's work.

Transactions	Labor	Enterprise
MARKET	WAGE	CAPITALIST
ALTERNATIVE MARKET *Sale of public goods* *Ethical 'fair-trade' markets* *Local trading systems* *Alternative currencies* *Underground market* *Co-op exchange* *Barter* *Informal market*	*ALTERNATIVE PAID* *Self-employed* *Cooperative* *Indentured* *Reciprocal labor* *In kind* *Work for welfare*	*ALTERNATIVE CAPITALIST* *State enterprise* *Green capitalist* *Socially responsible firm* *Non-profit*
NON-MARKET *Household flows* *Gift giving* *Indigenous exchange* *State allocations* *State appropriations* *Gleaning* *Hunting, fishing, gathering* *Theft, poaching*	*UNPAID* *Housework* *Family care* *Neighborhood work* *Volunteer* *Self-provisioning labor* *Slave labor*	*NON-CAPITALIST* *Communal* *Independent* *Feudal* *Slave*

Fig. 1. The diverse economy. From Gibson-Graham (2006).

How do individuals make sense of these different redistributive mechanisms? Would they prefer that more revenue was collected in taxation so that collective projects could be better funded? Or do they think that alternative social mechanisms redistribute funds in a more effective way? And what role do digital technologies play in producing everyday understandings of redistribution?

We contend that citizens make sense of redistribution by drawing on collective, common-sense understandings of the relationship between economic contribution and social solidarity, and we think that the concept of imaginaries will support our enquiry into these collective understandings.

Defining imaginaries
While we were designing this project we felt that the concept of imaginaries would support our enquiry, because of the immediate challenge that it poses to the idea of a disembedded 'economy' that is separate from other domains of life. As John Clarke has observed, inserting the word 'imagined' or 'imaginary' into our thinking about economics opens up 'a small space for thought' (2020: 19). As we have deepened our understanding of existing research on imaginaries and considered how to position our project, we are particularly drawn to the productive interchange between two theoretical contributions.

On the one hand there is the concept of economic imaginaries as it has been elaborated in (broadly) Marxist approaches to the production of social meaning. The key intervention here is Bob Jessop's (2010) theorization of imaginaries from a cultural political economy perspective. Jessop defines imaginaries as 'semiotic systems that frame individual subjects' lived experience of an inordinately complex world and/or inform collective calculation about that world' (2010: 344). He takes the economic field as an example of a domain of such complexity, and he goes on to define an economic imaginary as 'a semiotic system that gives meaning and shape' to that field. Semiosis reduces complexity and enables the subject to 'go on' (to navigate or proceed) in the world.

On the other hand, we are also interested in the concept of socio-technical imaginaries, which emerges from science and technology studies (STS). Sheila Jasanoff (2015: 4) defines socio-technical imaginaries as 'collectively held, institutionally stabilized, and publicly performed visions of desirable futures, animated by shared understandings of forms of social life and social order attainable through, and supportive of, advances in science and technology.' Jasanoff's definition has supported strands of work on energy imaginaries (Birch 2016), as well as on blockchain, algorithmic decision-making, and data governance (Jacobetty and Orton-Johnson 2022; Kaun 2022; Guay and Birch 2022).

We propose to set these two theoretical contributions in dialogue with Gibson-Graham's diverse economies paradigm and other theoretical reference points in order to develop our theoretical framework for analysing redistributive imaginaries. We will touch on three analytical challenges which the concept of imaginaries may help us navigate: the balance between structure and agency; the interface between discourses and technologies; and questions relating to the constitution, emergence and manifestation of social meaning.

Structure and agency
Beginning with the balance between structure and agency, it is helpful to note that both of these theoretical contributions have been construed as offering a corrective to actor network theory (ANT) and its tendency to offer rich description of the interplay between actants in an assemblage at the expense of giving adequate attention to overarching ideological narratives and projects (O'Connor 2015: 375). As Jasanoff puts it, ANT gives 'attention to more forms of agency, more pathways of change, and more narratives of causation', but it risks 'a kind of moral nihilism, making all actions and agents seem equally empowered, or disempowered' (2015: 16). At the other extreme are forms of analysis that approach social meanings as 'entrenched and immoveable' (2015: 20). A focus on imaginaries rebalances

the structure-agency relationship, Jasanoff claims, enabling a 'better balance […] to be struck between the theoretical poles of abstract idealism and deterministic materialism' (2015: 22).

Scholars who employ the concept of economic imaginaries similarly recognise its value in attending to agency and to the importance of cognitive frames, without overlooking structural conditions (Caterina 2022). In practice, there is a tendency in this body of work to place significant emphasis on structural factors. Jessop seeks to avoid a social determinism that would 'reduce agents and actions to passive bearers […] of social structures' (339). However, his commitment to critical realism is evident in his robust assertion of an 'actually existing economy' that is distinguished from the imaginatively narrated economy. Imaginaries are construed as partially or selectively describing 'actually existing' economic (material) relations (345), and extra-discursive real-world conditions limit the extent to which 'discursive construals' translate into social construction (339). While Jessop acknowledges that every social practice is semiotic (388) and that ideas may have a 'performative, constitutive force' (344), individual subjects seem to have limited room to manoeuvre, and are cast as adopting or reproducing discourses rather than as playing an active role in social meaning-making and (therefore) social construction.

Although the emphasis is ultimately different, Jessop and Jasanoff's approaches to imaginaries research share a commitment to restoring analysis of the 'topographies of power' (Jasanoff 2015: 22), and to the ways in which institutions of power work to consolidate certain discourses and imaginaries, and this priority will also be important in our enquiry. As Orr and Bennet (2021: 4) argue, one of the key strengths of research on social imaginaries is 'its critical power', since 'it is a problematizing concept that may be used to re-examine the politics and power relations in social formations'. Our project aims to map the discursive resources that produce meaning about redistributive mechanisms. We want to be able to describe how people activate these discursive resources in order to make meaning about the transactions that they choose to engage in, the tax that they pay, and the money that they decide to donate. This is clearly a domain of our socio-economic lives in which institutions of power – including global crowdfunding platforms, governments and media institutions – have a significant interest, so we appreciate the way in which these theoretical frameworks will help to sensitize us to their role in generating and consolidating redistributive imaginaries.

At the same time, we are keen to avoid an analysis which overstates the dominance of overarching structures – and specifically neoliberal capitalism – in processes of social meaning making. Here, we are indebted to Gibson-Graham's critique of capitalocentric theory (2006) in which they argue that the affirmation of capitalist hegemony makes it difficult, indeed almost impossible, 'to entertain a vision of the prevalence and vitality of noncapitalist economic forms'. Their 'diverse economies' paradigm, which supports a project of creating a 'world of economic difference', aims to enable critical thinking about economies and allow 'an anticapitalist imaginary to develop unrestricted' (2006: 3). As others have also explored (Clarke 2014a: 96), the diverse economies paradigm supplements the concept of imaginaries through its refusal of a 'real' or 'fundamental' economy that should be the ultimate reference point of any analysis. The diverse economies paradigm also allows us to construe the interpretative dimension of research on imaginaries as a 'performative ontological project' (Gibson-Graham 2008: 613) – a point we will return to in a moment.

Research in fiscal anthropology provides a final supplement to the theorization of structure and agency in imaginaries research. In this emerging body of work, and particularly in

Miranda Shield Johansson's (2020) research on understandings of taxation in Bolivia, a concept of imaginaries supports the disclosure of alternative logics within citizens' negotiation of fiscal systems, complicating the assumption that they can be subsumed to a state-centred logic of reciprocity. Like Gibson-Graham, such contributions seek to emphasize multiple logics of exchange and the production of diverse forms of 'economic citizenship' (Roitman in Shield Johansson 2020: 25).

Technologies
The second analytical challenge that we want to touch on is the interface between discourses and technologies. In this project, we want to understand how advances in science and technology in the form of the project of 'digitalization' might be interacting with the discursive resources that support the production of meaning about redistribution. How does the increasing prevalence of payment apps, for example, shape subjects' understanding of the possibilities of redistributing economic resources in different ways? We need a framework that can account for the role of digital technologies in the production of social meaning – without straying into technological determinism.

This imperative is central to the theorization of socio-technical imaginaries. In fact, as Jasanoff's definition makes plain, researchers in the STS tradition are *only* concerned with imaginaries in so far as they pertain to advances in science and technology. This is not true of our project: while we expect to find that redistributive imaginaries incorporate or even lean heavily on ideas about technological development, we won't be looking *exclusively* at collective understandings underpinned by technology in this way. We anticipate that while some of the imaginaries that are mapped in our research are socio-technical (or techno-economic) in the sense that Jasanoff and others have pursued, others may be more cultural, social, or economic in nature.

At the same time, the theorization of socio-technical imaginaries provides a rich vocabulary for the analysis of technologies and their role in social meaning-making. Jasanoff suggests that scientific knowledge and its materialization can generate and 'anchor' imaginaries (8); that technologies can operate as 'performative scripts' that materialize imaginaries and make them tangible (12); and that imaginaries can be 'encoded' in material technologies. For Jasanoff et al., it is this *materializing* function of technologies that renders imaginaries 'collective, durable, [and] capable of being performed' (19), by contrast with ideas that are little more than rhetorical flourishes or passing preferences.

Scholars working in this area also have a sophisticated and expanded sense of how technologies should be construed, which could be valuable for our project. For example, in her analysis of blockchain imaginaries, Lana Swartz approaches money as a technological arrangement which 'performs a relation between people in a moment of transaction as well as relations between individuals and the larger imaginaries we call "society", "the state", and "the economy"' (2018: 623). While we have already identified some of the digital tools we want to study, we may want to think about their interplay with broader 'technological arrangements', including money systems.

In our project it will be particularly important to think about technologies and their affordances in the context of their insertion in specific social and cultural formations in the countries we are studying. Platforms like Gofundme.com are typically developed in the US in Silicon Valley and have ideologically-informed design choices, preferences and intentions built into their affordances, which are then globally dispersed. Yet their adoption in diverse national settings, with different welfare state models and philanthropic traditions, is by no

means assured, as the uneven take up of donation-based crowdfunding across Europe demonstrates (GoFundMe 2020).

Emergence
The concept of imaginaries will also help us navigate a third problematic, and that is our project's focus on emergent social meaning. In formulating our approach to imaginaries we draw on the influential distinction between the dominant, residual and the emergent proposed by Raymond Williams (1977). This distinction has been reactivated within the analysis of imaginaries by John Clarke (2014a) as a means of drawing focus away from an assumed dominant ('neoliberal capitalism') and of 'making other imagined economies visible' as a resource for thinking about alternative futures'.

This approach resonates with our effort to avoid a capitalocentric analysis of redistributive imaginaries through adoption of the diverse economies paradigm. As we mentioned earlier, this paradigm encourages us to construe our research as a 'performative ontological project' (Gibson-Graham 2008: 613). We're interested in the work of interpretation that is integral to the analysis of social meaning. Discourses must be mapped, posited, proposed, advanced: in this sense, analysis describes what is dominant, but it can also participate in discursive emergence through the foregrounding of resources that are marginal, contradictory or potentially resistant. This is particularly important for our project because it has a knowledge exchange dimension, and we will be sharing the outcomes with social actors who have the capacity to amplify and act on our analysis.

Here, research informed by Jasanoff's theorization of socio-technical imaginaries again proves a valuable resource. Jasanoff's concept focuses on the orientation of social meaning-making toward possible futures. Researchers including Rob Guay and Kean Birch (2022; see also Hodson et al 2021) investigate these possible futures by examining policy discourse, noting that 'socio-technical imaginaries are often performatively manifested in policy narratives and frameworks' (Guay and Birch 2022: 3). Strengers et al. (2022) take this observation a step further by seeking to intervene in the production (and potential disruption) of those policy frameworks, through an innovative scenario method. This intervention will inform our approach to engaging with policy actors in the knowledge exchange phase of our project.

We have drawn attention to three areas of analytical challenge which will be well supported in our project by the concept of imaginaries, and in particular by productive interchange between the concepts of economic and socio-technical imaginaries. Set in dialogue with the diverse economies paradigm and other theoretical reference points, these theoretical resources provide a rich framework for the analysis of contemporary social meaning-making about redistribution.

Challenges of method
The second part of this paper is devoted to methods, and it is organised around the discussion of methodological challenges. We will draw directly on other scholars who have tackled the analysis of imaginaries and explain how we plan to implement such an analysis in our project. Although only a few scholars have directly addressed the methodological challenges arising from the investigation of imaginaries (notably Bollman 2022), a review of the literature indicates certain precedents and tendencies which provide a valuable context for our work.

Evidence and data

When it comes to researching imaginaries, the primary methodological challenge is the question of where to look for evidence of the imaginary concerned. The value of the imaginaries concept is that enables researchers to posit and interrogate collective understandings which enable individuals to 'go on' in the world. Imaginaries research is associated with the cultural or hermeneutic turn in the analysis of the economy, politics and technology (Caterina, 2022; Jessop and Oosterlynck, 2008): it 'stresses the semiotic nature' of social relations (Jessop, 2010). There is therefore no necessary prioritisation of a particular media form or text, because imaginaries are constructed through the circulation of intertextual meaning and in the interplay of different actors, discourses and practices.

Imaginaries researchers therefore use different data points and sources of evidence to reconstruct or assert a particular imaginary (Fig. 2), with a general preference for two broad types of data: on the one hand, texts (e.g. political manifestos, textbooks, academic texts and research projects, media texts and popular culture, policy documents, legal texts, white papers and other grey literature, websites, apps) and on the other hand, aural, spoken-word discourse, generally sourced from interviews with a wide variety of social actors (e.g. ordinary people, political representatives, company leaders, professionals, designers), and occasionally combined with a consideration of those actors' social practices. As Jasanoff (2015) notes, 'many of the classical methods for studying social meaning-making can be adapted and put to use in the framework of sociotechnical imaginaries.' Most of the precedents that we have surveyed use qualitative textual analysis methods, from Critical Discourse Analysis to social semiotics, including framing analysis and rhetorical analysis (Bollman, 2022), but there is also some use of quantitative approaches, which combine discourse analysis with bibliographic or automated research (for example Certomà, 2021; Certomà et al., 2020).

It is also widely recognized that imaginaries operate 'at many levels/scales and across many sites […] they may connect the projections of large scale political and policy discourse and the forms of everyday thinking' (Clarke 2014a). Relatedly, Jessop (2010) claims that every imaginary is constructed and expressed at a macro-, meso- and micro-level. This raises the question of the scale of the imaginary that is being asserted by the researcher (e.g. local, national or transnational) and the corresponding data points that might be appropriately evidence such an imaginary. In line with his emphasis on 'extra-discursive' real-world conditions, Jessop calls for a 'shift from a mainly semiotic analysis […] to a concern with the semiotic and extra-semiotic mechanisms that shape […] particular imaginaries' (2010: 340), implying that researchers should analyse not only discourses but also practices, objects and how institutions work.

Relevant academic scholarship aims to capture this multi-levelled nature of economic and socio-technical imaginaries by constructing a corpus that combines different materials, discourses and actors (Fig. 2). For example, Certomà et al. (2020) and Certomà (2021) analysed the imaginaries of digital social innovation processes applied to the governance of cities (such as crowdsourcing for urban governance) using a corpus that combined academic articles, policy reports, guidelines and other reports produced by research and innovation projects funded by the European Commission, websites, and local initiatives carried out and supported and funded by local government and institutions, NGOs and private companies. By doing this, Certomà et al. highlight the co-productive aspect of imaginaries and the connection between institutional or academic discourses and artifacts and practices, focusing on both semiotic and extra-semiotic elements.

Political discourses and policy documents are also a common focus. Caterina (2021) focuses on political manifestos of the far-right Italian Party Lega Norte to reconstruct the economic imaginaries that give them meaning. Bollman (2022) studies energy imaginaries by analysing political discourses and interventions from different stakeholders (political parties, representatives, activists). Guay and Birch (2022) study policy documents about the management of digital personal data published by institutional stakeholders in the US and EU, including government, public agencies, industry associations and NGOs.

Several authors also research imaginaries by including data which helps them to evidence the sense-making practices of social actors. This is achieved by using ethnographic methods such as interviews, focus groups and participant observation or by analysing social media posts. For example, Van Es and Poell (2020) analyse the interplay between 'platform imaginaries' and the duties and practices of public service broadcasting institutions in the Netherlands by studying key public service policy documents and interviewing employees from the Dutch PSB. Bucher (2017) focuses on algorithmic imaginaries by studying Facebook users' experiences. Kaun and Stiernstedt (2022) carried out an analysis of techno-social imaginaries of incarceration, using interviews, participant observations at security and prison technology trade shows and conferences, and the analysis of brochures and other advertising materials. In a study of algorithmic imaginaries focusing on two litigation cases about automated decision-making in Sweden, Kaun (2022) combines interviews with the analysis of legal documents and news pieces. Finally, Orr and Bennett (2021) examine austerity imaginaries in UK's local government by interviewing local chief executives. With their focus on the functioning of institutions and its workers and professionals, these ethnographic-inspired approaches (see also Van Es and Poell, 2020; Kaun and Stiernstedt, 2022) accord with Jessop's emphasis on the extra-semiotic mechanisms that shape imaginaries.
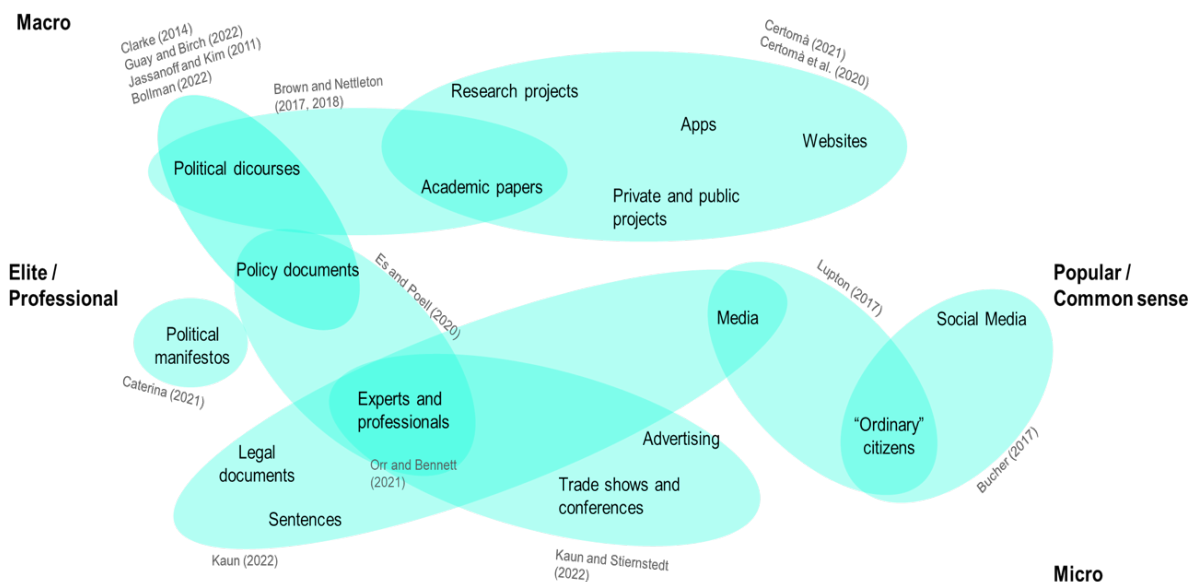

Fig. 2. Corpus analysed by academic scholarship on economic and socio-technical imaginaries. Oliva (2023).

The preference for mixed methods in imaginaries research describes an effort to draw on textual iterations in combination with data about sense-making practices and contexts. This effort can be aligned with the media and communications studies practice of considering audiences' or users' take-up of media messages as well as the media messages

themselves, and with established models in cultural studies such as the 'circuit of culture' (du Gay et al., 2013). There is however a notable tendency in imaginaries research to prioritise official, elite and professional discourse, such as scientific papers and projects, political discourses and policy documents. By contrast, the analysis of popular culture texts and ordinary people and everyday discourses is less frequent. Lupton's (2017) analysis of the sociotechnical imaginaries of 3D printed food, which combines the analysis of news reporting and focus groups with 'ordinary' people, is one exception.

Whose imaginary?
Our survey of relevant scholarship about economic and socio-technical imaginaries also points to another methodological challenge: who are the imputed subjects of the imaginary in question? This is a critical point, because as we have suggested above, it informs decisions about the institutions and actors that should be considered in order to 'reconstruct' a particular imaginary. As we have seen, existing research tends to focus on the analysis of institutional actors (academia, political institutions, social and civic institutions and groups, professionals and political elites), while everyday social actors tend to be more marginal to the enquiry. This may be motivated by an assumption that elite actors with greater institutional power have a more central role in establishing and anchoring emergent imaginaries, or by a specific interest in the imaginaries of those elite constituencies.

Although we agree that institutional actors with a degree of power and influence 'elevate, anchor and stabilize' (Guay and Birch, 2022: 3) imaginaries, we also want to recognise the role that supposedly non-powerful ('ordinary') individuals play in the production, circulation and anchoring of meaning. We follow Clarke's observation that imaginaries 'circulate widely as elements of common sense or common knowledge' (Clarke, 2014a; see also Taylor, 2004), and we seek to take into account institutions, actors and individuals which are differently located within configurations of capital and power.

A more diverse corpus of analysis also can make it possible to identify not only dominant imaginaries, but also residual and emerging ones. In some cases, certain imaginaries have become dominant and are shared by different social groups and institutions; in other cases, there may be some friction and difference, because the imaginary in question is associated with a particular political party, industry, class or professional group. Jassanoff (2015: 26) argues that competing imaginaries can most easily be identified in moments of threatened rupture or disorder.

Consideration of the subjects of a particular imaginary also relates back to questions of scale. The concept of socio-technical imaginaries arose out of the analysis of sense-making at a national scale, and it has also been used to generate comparative analysis between different countries. For example, Jasanoff and Kim carried out a comparative analysis of imaginaries about nuclear energy in the US and South Korea (Jasanoff and Kim 2009), and Guay and Birch (2022) compare US and UK energy imaginaries. Jasanoff (2015: 24) argues that: '[c]ross-national comparisons have proved especially useful in revealing the ingrained normative commitments that distinguish political communities'. This is precisely one of the key aspects of our research project, which compares five national case studies. However, imaginaries do not have to be conceived as national in scale, and the concept has been widely applied to other 'organized groups' such as corporations, social movements, and professional societies' (Jasanoff 2015: 4).

The work of interpretation

As we have noted above, we are interested in the work of interpretation that is integral to the analysis of social meaning. Once data is gathered and analysed, imaginaries must be mapped and then posited (or asserted). When it comes to identifying or labelling those imaginaries, scholarly practice varies. Some researchers give the imaginary they are identifying a particular name, or break down an overarching discursive formation into different imaginaries (e.g. Certomà et al.). Others identify the 'building blocks' of dominant imaginaries – elements that can point to certain frictions and contradictions within a dominant imaginary (e.g. Caterina, 2022). In our project, we want to recognise the possibility that '*different* imaginaries circulate and offer competing visions' (Clarke 2014b) and at the same time, we are interested in identifying the traits of dominant and emergent imaginaries, as well as identifying cross-national similarities and differences. A practice of naming or labelling distinct imaginaries as they emerge within our research could be a useful means to manage and communicate about our findings.

Methodological approach
In this final section of the paper, we will briefly set out the methodological approach of our research project. We are interested in identifying dominant and emergent redistributive imaginaries and the role of the digital in those imaginaries. To do so, we have designed a methodology that combines different data and methods. As noted above, our project's ambition to generate cross-national comparison is well-supported by the imaginaries concept: our research focuses on the analysis of five countries with different welfare traditions and moral economies, but also seeks to consider differences between imaginaries within those countries, as well as the existence of transnational, 'European' imaginaries.

Work Package 1
In WP1 we will carry out a qualitative content/discourse analysis of media texts (newspapers) and policy reports (including government, political parties, think tanks, associations, and NGOs) published from 2020 to 2022.

We will study how redistributive policies and practices are represented in news media texts and policy reports and the meanings conferred on the digital in these discourses about prosocial contribution. By analysing a sample that combines news media texts and policy reports, we aim to identify different discourses: media discourse will likely provide an insight into dominant, but more 'popular' discourses (connected to different ideological scopes), whereas the policy reports will help us to access a mix of dominant/emergent discourses connected to both elite/institutional actors and more marginal/independent ones. The main aim of this WP is to identify dominant and competing discourses since the sample includes publications from across the political spectrum as well as policy documents published by different stakeholders. We will analyse the sample of texts using qualitative textual analysis (thematic analysis and critical discourse analysis), and at this stage we expect to identify key discourses, and to begin to build hypotheses about broader imaginaries.

Work Package 2
In WP2 we will look at local and global digital platforms that facilitate prosocial contribution (e.g. via crowdfunding or other transactions), enabling us to explore the role of digitalization in the production of meaning about redistribution.

We will apply an affordance analysis (Bucher and Helmond 2018; Ash et al., 2018) based on a socio-semiotic approach to interface analysis (Fernández 2018; Scolari 2004; 2018), interrogating the aesthetics, features, functions and interactive possibilities of digital platforms and the communicative practices they permit. We will identify how platforms,

institutions, users and final recipients of prosocial contributions are positioned and represented by the design, features and structure of the platforms, as well as the relationships they promote. We will also conduct interviews with platform developers and designers, which will provide data on user experience design processes, context about the platforms and the services within which they are located (including their business models), and insights into developers' conceptions of the different actors/relationships that sustain platform-based prosocial contribution.

In this WP we want to explore how these platforms apply, condense and potentially secure certain imaginaries and how imaginaries shape and are shaped by platform owners, designers and providers. We expect to see some overlap with the dominant and emergent discourses mapped in WP1, but that more sector-specific (professional) discourses may also emerge, particularly in the interviews with developers.

Work Package 3
In WP3, we will look at ordinary people's practices and discourses, using a combination of participant observation, focus groups and individual interviews. Participants will be individuals engaged in initiatives which facilitate non-market transactions, eliciting monetary gifts to meet perceived 'gaps' in the welfare safety net (e.g. donations to food banks, NGOs, and charities). To a greater or lesser extent, these non-market transactions will be achieved using digital practices and tools (use of apps, websites, digital payment technologies and messaging tools).

WP3 will shed new light on ordinary people's understanding of redistributive practices. It will uncover how they make sense of, and contribute to, redistributive imaginaries. We will consider the extent to which the dominant and emergent discourses identified in WP 1 and 2 are adopted, assimilated or rejected by our participants. This is the stage when we will begin to understand how people activate these discursive resources in the context of the prosocial practices (both digital and non-digital) that they are engaged in. As it may be difficult for some participants to articulate their understanding of redistribution and digitalization, it may be useful to consider incorporating creative elicitation approaches into the group interview/focus group stage (e.g. Hill and Lee, 2021).

Work Package 4
In WP4 the outcomes from WP1-3 will be synthesised to formulate imaginaries and posit scenarios. In line with our ambition to approach our research as a 'performative ontological project', these scenarios will be presented back to policymakers and key stakeholders with the aim of informing emergent imaginaries. The contribution of Strengers et al. (2022), who have used scenarios to disrupt dominant imaginaries and 'reveal and realise alternatives', will be a valuable resource at this stage. By generating and sharing persuasive scenarios, ReDigIm aims to play a role in shaping emergent imaginaries and present and future practices.

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