



Addressing Gig Workers as Voters: A Typology of Party Strategies

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- Both the *Gig Economy* and *Gig Work* are rather new phenomena in Europe → emergence with financial crisis 2008
 - Research has focussed on the size and spread of the GE in the US, its legal structures and possible policy measures to address it → however, with few exceptions, it is not yet integrated into genuine political science research fields
 - Left-wing parties as „working-class parties“ seem to be the natural representatives of gig workers
- (How) Do left-wing parties across Europe address gig workers as voters?



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Why should we care?



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- The gig economy (probably) only accounts for a small share of the GDP/economic activity of European countries.
 - There are (probably) not that many gig workers.
- **Why should we as a society and as political scientists care?**
1. Workers' strikes and legal procedures resulted in a high media salience which makes it reasonable for parties to develop a policy position
 2. Gig work/the gig economy representative of a range of new business models

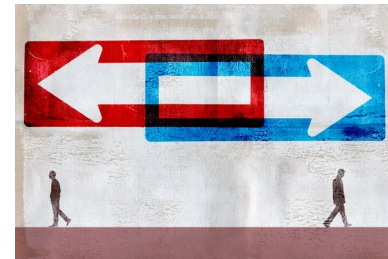
- **Standard Employment:** Work that is performed “on a fixed schedule – usually full-time – at the employer’s place of business, under the employer’s control, and with the mutual expectation of continued employment” (Kalleberg et al. 2000: 258).
→ all other forms of employment/work are therefore **non-standard**
- In the EU 2015: 67% employees with indefinite contract, 10% employees with fixed term contract, 5% self-employed with employees, **10% self-employed without employees**
- Different types of gig work:

	Online	Offline
Low-skilled	<i>Type A:</i> Microwork/Microtasking (e.g. labelling of photos and videos)	<i>Type C:</i> On-demand work (e.g. food delivery)
High-skilled	<i>Type B:</i> Crowdwork (e.g. software development)	<i>Type D:</i> Asset-based services (e.g. domestic services)

← Focus of my PhD project

Table 1: Four field matrix of different types of gig work (Own illustration based on Johnston 2020 and Howcroft & Berg-Kåreborn 2019).

- Two major theoretical perspectives that explain party competition: spatial and salience theory
 - Positional/Spatial theory: rational choice approach in the tradition of Downs (1957) → proximity and directional voting
 - Field of tension: parties are inclined to take more extreme positions to prominently voice their policy stances, but this bears the risk of scaring away moderate voters
- **H1:** The more differentiated and polarised the left party spectrum is in a country, the stronger the party competition to address gig workers is influenced by the respective party ideology.
- **H2:** The further left a party can be located on the left-right scale, the more intensively it takes more extreme positions to address gig workers.



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- Salience theory: quantity and quality of issues formulated e.g. in manifestos
 - Strategies: position emphasis, position blurring, and position avoiding
 - Issue Ownership: voters distinguish parties based on their problem-solving competence regarding different issues; left-wing parties are traditionally connected to workers' rights and social equality
- **H3**: The more a party is associated in the public perception with the issues of social market economy and workers' rights, the more likely it is to address the situation of workers in the gig economy.



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- Restriction to left-wing parties based on CHES data (2019): LRGEN-Score between 0 and 4.49 (left-right general; scale from 0 (extreme left) to 10 (extreme right))
- Sample: all left-wing parties from the EU27 countries + UK + NO + CH with at least 1 seat in national parliament → 92 (+ ?) parties
- Data: parties' most recent election manifesto produced for a national parliamentary election (e.g. for Germany: 2021 election manifestos published before the election of the *Bundestag*); machine translated to English
- Method: content analysis based on a category scheme developed from theory
 - gig1: Digitalisation of work management: Negative
 - gig2: Quality of gig work: Negative
 - gig3: Legal aspects of gig work: Negative
 - gig4: Collective action: Positive

Results: Keyword Search

Country	Party / Abbreviation	Election Year	Party Family (MARPOR ^a)	CHES-Score Irgen ^b	Keyword(s)
Austria	Die Grünen / Greens (AUS)	2019	Ecological party	2.5	crowdwork
Austria	Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs / SPÖ	2019	Social democratic party	4.0	crowdwork, platform work
Belgium	Partij van de Arbeid van België / PVDA	2019	Socialist or other left party	0.33	zero-hour contract
Belgium	Ecolo	2019	Ecological party	2.08	platform economy
Belgium	Parti Socialiste / PS	2019	Social democratic party	2.08	platform economy
Belgium	Groen	2019	Ecological party	2.42	platform economy
Belgium	Socialistische Partij Anders / sp.a	2019	Social democratic party	3.08	zero-hour contract, on call contract
Denmark	Socialistisk Folkeparti / SF	2019	Socialist or other left party	2.64	platform economy
Estonia	Eesti Keskerakond / EK	2019	Liberal party	4.46	platform work
Finland	Suomen Sosialidemokratinen Puolue / SSDP	2019	Social democratic party	3.14	platform economy, platform work, zero-hour contract
Germany	Die Linke / The Left	2021	Socialist or other left party	1.43	clickwork, on call (work)
Germany	Die Grünen / Greens (GER)	2021	Ecological party	3.24	gig work, crowd work, platform economy
Germany	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands / SPD	2021	Social democratic party	3.62	platform economy
Ireland	People Before Profit / PBP	2020	Socialist or other left party	0.8	zero-hour contract
Ireland	Irish Labour Party / Irish Labour	2020	Social democratic party	3.57	gig economy
Spain	Podemos	2019	Socialist or other left party	1.93	platform economy
Spain	Más País	2019	Socialist or other left party	2.73	platform economy
United Kingdom	Labour Party / Labour	2019	Social democratic party	1.94	zero-hour contract
United Kingdom	Green Party / Greens (UK)	2019	Ecological party	2.0	gig economy, gig work(ers)
United Kingdom	Plaid Cymru / Plaid	2019	Ethnic and regional party	3.09	zero-hour contract
United Kingdom	Liberal Democrats / LibDem	2019	Liberal party	4.24	gig economy, zero-hour contract
United Kingdom	Social Democratic and Labour Party / SDL	2019	Social democratic party	NA	gig economy, zero-hour contract

Table 2: Overview of all Parties with Keyword Search Hits (own illustration; ^aMARPOR data 2021; ^b"Irgen"= left-right general, CHES data 2020).

Preliminary Results (only half of the sample included)

- 22 of 40 parties address the gig economy directly → 10 keywords
- None of the French and Polish parties did address the GE in their manifestos
- All left-wing parties in: Austria, Belgium, Germany, UK

Results: Content Analysis

Country	Party	gig1		gig2		gig3		gig4	
Austria	Greens (AUS)	0	0%	2	33.3%	3	50%	1	16.7%
Austria	SPÖ	0	0%	3	37.5%	5	62.5%	0	0%
Belgium	PVDA	0	0%	11	52.4%	6	28.8%	4	19%
Belgium	Ecolo	0	0%	2	50%	2	50%	0	0%
Belgium	PS	0	0%	1	100%	0	0%	0	0%
Belgium	Groen	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Belgium	sp.a	0	0%	2	33.3%	3	50%	1	16.7%
Denmark	SF	0	0%	1	50%	1	50%	0	0%
Estonia	EK	0	0%	2	50%	1	25%	1	25%
Finland	SSDP	0	0%	5	41.7%	6	50%	1	8.3%
Germany	The Left	0	0%	2	25%	2	25%	4	50%
Germany	Greens (GER)	1	14.3%	2	28.6%	2	28.6%	2	28.6%
Germany	SPD	1	14.3%	2	28.6%	2	28.6%	2	28.6%
Ireland	PBP	0	0%	1	25%	2	50%	1	25%
Ireland	Irish Labour	0	0%	0	0%	1	100%	0	0%
Spain	Podemos	0	0%	2	50%	2	50%	0	0%
Spain	Más Pais	0	0%	0	0%	2	100%	0	0%
United Kingdom	Labour	0	0%	1	33.3%	2	66.7%	0	0%
United Kingdom	Green Party	0	0%	1	50%	1	50%	0	0%
United Kingdom	Plaid Cymru	0	0%	0	0%	1	100%	0	0%
United Kingdom	LibDem	0	0%	3	50%	2	33.3%	1	16.7%
United Kingdom	SDLP	0	0%	1	100%	0	0%	0	0%

Table 3: Absolute and Relative Distribution of Categories per Party.

■ Distribution of categories:

- 1st place: legal aspects (gig3) with 46 text passages
- 2nd place: quality of work (gig2) with 44 text passages
- 3rd place: collective action (gig4) with 18 text passages
- 4th place: digitalisation of work (gig1) with 2 passages

- Belgian worker's party and all German left-wing parties seem to be interesting cases → PVDA most strongly addresses the issue of gig work; German parties exhibit a strong link to collective action and most diverse addressing strategies

- About 50% of all parties address the gig economy or gig work directly in their manifestos.
- The whole left ideological spectrum is represented: left-libertarian, ecological, regional, social democratic, socialist, and communist parties
- The parties' main addressing strategy aims at
 1. legal aspects of gig work → states should take action to prohibit bogus self-employment
 2. the bad quality of gig work → parties recognise that workers are exploited
 3. collective action → workers should be encouraged to organise themselves (very country-specific)
- First assessment of the hypotheses based on this preliminary evidence:
 - H1: rejection → no connection between number of left-wing parties and addressing of gig workers
 - H2: acceptance → some connection between CHES-score and addressing of gig workers
 - H3: mixed evidence

Thank you for you attention!



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