

How public investment undermines ecofeminist change

Analysis of five strategic projects for economic recovery and transformation (PERTEs)

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Why are we interested in the Strategic Projects for Economic Recovery and Transformation (PERTE)?

The escalation of food, energy and housing prices, together with the war in Ukraine and the consequent commitment to increase military spending made at the NATO summit in July 2022, have shifted the focus of the official narrative away from the green and digital economic recovery. Promises of economic growth, modernization, employment and, above all, the fight against climate change and inequalities are increasingly being sidelined.

In this context, the green- and purple-washing of European public policies and the *NextGenerationEU* funds is being lost, leaving only the bare bones on show. In a war economy, public support for the opening of new markets that profit multinational corporations is taken for granted without the need for argument. Militarization has tightened its grip on public policy-making, and the marrow of the capitalist energy economy is on display for all to see. The energy transition has almost ceased to be a priority: little attention is paid to an increase in emissions when the system is under threat. The control of strategic resources such as gas, exacerbating neocolonial geopolitical tensions, is once again at the heart of the political agenda, and the race for renewables seeks exclusively to guarantee supply, regardless of the damage caused along the way.

Inflation, rising interest rates, an end to the purchase of debt by the European Central Bank and record levels of

indebtedness raise questions as to whether the amount of European funds that will eventually reach Spain will be less than expected. In this context, why write a report focusing on one of its key instruments, the Strategic Projects for Economic Recovery and Transformation (in Spanish, PERTEs)? We believe the corporate interests behind these strategies are those most unabashedly provided for. Far from moving towards a green and purple economic recovery (if such a thing were possible), we are moving towards a green-digital-military capitalism, which deepens and expands the impact of privatization, indebtedness, authoritarianism, extractivism, etc., and moves us further away from an ecofeminist transition.



1. An overview of the PERTE

Why write a report about the PERTEs?

- To find out what public money – in this case, a significant share of spending – is spent on what?
- More importantly, however, these plans reveal a lot about the underlying trends in the green digital capitalism which forms the backdrop to the famous triumvirate of green, digital and social transition. Moreover, they reveal the role of our public authorities therein. The PERTEs allow us to see the kind of green digital capitalism we are headed towards.

You may be wondering, what are these PERTEs all about? We'll answer that question later.

- For the time being, and in the interests of brevity, we can say they are public-private partnerships created especially for the spending of *NextGenerationEU* funds in Spain.

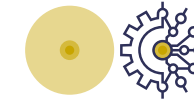
Let's start at the end: what is green digital capitalism?

- It is the restructuring of capitalism (heteropatriarchal, colonialist and ecocidal) in a context of ecological collapse and sustained reduction of profits. In other words, it is an attempt to continue doing business in circumstances different from before, against a backdrop of a lack of abundant and cheap energy, and with natural resources in free fall.
- It is a big business project (albeit with internal tensions, given the clashes between large companies) that hinders the take-off of an ecofeminist transition that would allow us to address ecological collapse and multidimensional and systemic crises in such a way as to move towards a future in which all lives, in their fullest diversity, count on a living planet.

What do the PERTEs tell us about green digital capitalism? They can be read in seven key ways.



1. As an exercise in capitalist techno-optimism.



2. As negating the building blocks that sustain everyday life.



3. As focusing on value chains and not on rights, hiding inequalities and conflicts.



4. As imposing a vision focused on growth and industrialization without global responsibility.



5. As putting (big) business at the centre and further entrenching privatization.



6. As acting from a position of opacity, lack of transparency and centralization of power.



7. And they claim to do all of this without any *washing*.



Capitalist techno-optimism

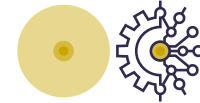
At heart, the PERTES aim to strengthen Spanish companies' standing in **global value chains** through a process of **digitalization** and **technological modernization**, subsidized by public authorities and led by (large) private companies. According to the official account, this will serve to improve the well-being of Spain's residents and the planet as whole.

This strategy is based on a double leap of faith:

- Faith in **capitalist markets**, according to which commercial growth contributes to public well-being through job creation and entrepreneurship, from which the best solutions to all socioeconomic problems emerge. In addition, it is considered possible to guide companies to act in accordance with a vision of environmental and social responsibility and sustainability.
- Faith is also placed in **technologies**, particularly digital ones, as a way of (1) ensuring that commercial growth is green (decoupling growth and greenhouse gas emissions, that is, dematerializing the economy); (2) increasing the competitiveness of Spanish companies; and (3) responding to any and all types of socioeconomic or environmental challenge (be they achieving quality care, the sustainability of the health system, avoiding water scarcity, etc.).

Capitalist techno-optimism is nothing new. However, the PERTES show us:

- **How deeply embedded it is:** the fundamental matters of well-being and environmental balance, such as food, health, care and the water cycle, are seen entirely from a commercial point of view, and are reduced to being identified in terms of value chains.
- **What it looks like in the 21st century:** the absolute protagonism held by **corporate digitalization**, which is both an end in itself (that is, a value chain in itself) and a means to other ends (for the rest of the chains). **Bioeconomies** that expand business niches based on the technological control of vital processes also play an important role. Genomics as cutting edge healthcare stands as one example.



Negation of the building blocks of everyday life

- **Its weak point: energy sources** cannot be guaranteed. Spain can only achieve its goals if it reduces its dependence on foreign energy and fossil fuels. Hence the commitment to an energy transition "designed and made in Spain", based on electrification, "innovative renewables" and hydrogen, to ensure the necessary energy for these chains.

The **negation of the land-territory** that provides the materials and energy used by the value chains is linked to the **negation of the essential work** which acts a building block in sustaining everyday life.

As is already the case with the *European Green Deal*, any understanding of ecological collapse is reduced to a **simplistic view of climate change** as being strictly linked to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The overarching goal is to reduce these emissions; the relevance of every other aspect is minimized. In terms of water and drought, for example, the focus is limited to a physical scarcity of the resource due to the effects of climate change, and the commercial aspects of the resource, ignoring its role in biodiversity, environmental balance, identity, etc. The focus on emissions also opens a whole field for creative GHG auditing. The view from a use rather than a cycle-based perspective leads to a concern only about the end emissions, **negating any ecosystemic impact** arising in the process. The impact of the materials with which components are manufactured, the energy consumed or the waste generated are ignored. Energy is considered clean and digitization climate neutral, insofar as it appears to exist unchained to the physical world. Yet, far from this position of neutrality, the planned transformation of value chains is based on an **extractivist and neocolonial** worldview, and requires the deployment of both traditional and next-generation **megaprojects**, as is the case of the current digitization of the water cycle as a replacement for traditional large-scale hydraulic operations.

The PERTES as a whole **understate the role of labour** as a central element in value chains, systematically shifting the focus onto **technology**. For example, technology and apparatus are not considered as resources for promoting care between people, but are intended as the key to achieving a model that supports personal autonomy;

indeed, in the case of health, the focus is exclusively placed on precision medicine, advanced therapy and data science as applied to each individual. Labour is only mentioned in reference to jobs that are expected to be created, all of them requiring technical expertise and qualifications. **No reference is made to the low-skilled work** that is the backbone of these areas, as though no one worked in the mines from which the materials used to manufacture microchips are extracted. Nor is there a single mention of domestic workers or day labourers. The **absolute silence regarding the role of households** as the closing space of the economic cycle and bedrock of the system is striking, especially at a time of austerity and cuts. The role of informal labour in curtailing the current care crisis and in responding to situations of poverty (energy and food, among others), shortcomings in dealing with situations of dependency, gaps in primary care, etc., is also ignored.

Techno-optimism is at the heart of the lack of recognition of the body-land-territories – the local communities – that sustain everyday life each step of the way. The agri-food plan is perhaps the most revealing when it comes to this double lack of recognition: there is an industry, but there is no land nor farmers.

There is a **total lack of reflection regarding the socioeconomic component of the sustainability of everyday life**. The arguments and objectives included in the PERTES are not written from a rights-based perspective, much less are their impacts assessed within such a framework. No mention is made of long-enshrined human rights (to water, food and health), nor is any way forward indicated for shaping new rights that are being fought for (to energy and care). This represents a clear step backwards insofar as it is a **renunciation of developing rights-based public policies**, instead basing them on value chains.

There is no reference to the inequalities that characterize the areas which the PERTES address. Energy, water and food poverty as concepts do not even feature. Care is understood without reference to inequalities of gender, social class, functional diversity and migratory status, despite the ways in which care provision is marked by these relations of privilege/oppression. The radically

individualistic nature of the Cutting Edge Healthcare plan, with no mention of inequality of access, points to a total loss of focus regarding social health determinants¹. The express lack of interest in inequalities **will lead to them increasing**, insofar as the market economy by nature operates on a basis of concentration of resources.

Ongoing global conflicts also go unmentioned, and no attention is paid to possible future conflicts that the implementation of the PERTES could favour. Among these are foreseeable disputes concerning the conversion of land for the construction of renewable energy (such as wind farms) or for agricultural use, or regarding the use of water for irrigation, in addition to the increased demand for water arising from the manufacturing of microchips strongly promoted as part of the PERTE with the largest budget. On paper, positive outcomes in terms of territorial cohesion are promised. This, however, is an optimistic forecast based on a non-territorial perspective as regards such cohesion, which is understood as the territory's insertion into joined-up value chains and not as the redistribution of resources, a balanced redistribution of the population, or reruralization. This will lead to a foreseeable increase in inequalities between urban and rural areas. Moreover, the notion of positional privilege in global geopolitical terms, taken as the plans' starting point, is not subjected to any critical analysis.



Value chains without rights, inequalities or conflicts

¹ The causes, conditions or circumstances which "determine" health. Determinants cover factors ranging from the environmental, biological, behavioural, social, economic and cultural to the health services as an organized and specialist response mechanism by society for the prevention of illness and restoration of good health.



A focus on growth through reindustrialization without global responsibility

The PERTES aim towards the **reconstruction of a financialized, market-based private manufacturing sector**, one which is **unsustainable** insofar as it is based on debt and *value creation* or, in other words, capital accumulation. Consequently, health, care, food, water and energy are not considered as **elements of well-being** to be restructured, but as value chains that can and must be scaled up; **they are appreciated for their potential role as industries that generate considerable monetary value**, emphasizing, for example, the production of components for energy generation, or the promotion of digital and (bio)technological solutions in health care.

Interest is only afforded to the means of transporting energy and water, seeking 'cleaner' ways to feed **unsustainable consumption**, and not to the essential character of these resources as building blocks of everyday life. **The usefulness** of what is produced in these value chains remains unquestioned. Thus, energy use and the need for an overall reduction in energy demand go unaddressed. The (highly contested) commitment to hydrogen responds to the needs of the industry and the haulage sector. Technological change is proposed as a guarantor for these sectors, while basic needs relating to living standards, health and, ultimately, human rights remain unguaranteed. Far from taking planned steps towards an inevitable reduction in the use of material resources and energy that ecological collapse will render a necessity, the plans commit to the growth of global value chains that can only be sustained through a worldwide **rush for resources**. The discourse of digitalization within a dematerialized economy allows this issue to be sidestepped.

The **prominent role of government ministries directly linked to commercial interests** in the oversight of the PERTES is **indicative of this focus on reindustrialization**. The Agri-Food PERTE is co-chaired by the Ministries of Agriculture and Industry; Health, by Science and Innovation and Health; and Care, by Labour. **This focus on growth** cuts across all socioeconomic areas: a commitment is made to scaling up and internationalizing **SMES and social economy** enterprises. SMES have a role to play as "auxiliary companies of major corporations", particularly when it comes to technological innovations; additionally, the plans take for granted that they benefit society regardless of whether or not they operate in socially or environmentally harmful sectors. What are referred to as the differential strengths of the social

economy (rather than the transformative solidarity economy) are not understood as being linked to this economy's small or local scale.

The ultimate aim is to position Spain as a **European and global leader** in all areas. The agri-food, health and care plans are to be accompanied by the creation of state-of-the-art hubs; the energy plan provides for the launch of the "Energía NextGen" label for joint projects (not necessarily including projects such as energy communities, given that these may be small in scale, lack links that "join" them to others, or do not generate exponential returns on investment). The pursuit of a privileged position in global value chains contrasts with the total lack of contemplation of the global **extractivist practices** which serve as the touchstone for the growth and digitalization-focused outlook that the plans promote. This imposes a markedly **neocolonial** direction upon the future European economy, centred on a rush for material resources to sustain the energy transition and actively promoting, as ecofeminist activists have pointed out, the **repatriarchalization** of the communities subject to extractivism.



Unabashed privatization

The leadership of the PERTES is given over to business, indicative of their privatization-based approach, although in practice this may play out unevenly given that each sector is subject to different degrees of private sector involvement. While private involvement is already consolidated in energy, water and land, health is perhaps the most public of the areas overseen by the welfare state. As a whole, however, we can speak of a **strong drive towards privatization, increasingly concentrated in the hands of corporate power**. **The privatization of the commons** is redoubled: efforts to remunicipalize energy are hindered; backing is given to the private management of the water cycle, which has gained traction since the 2008 crisis, and greater concentration of land in fewer hands seems likely, all while public involvement in areas such as life-long health and care are scorned.

The PERTES are predicated **on the notion of public-private partnerships** (PPPs). Each PERTE is not in itself a PPP, but it is reasonable to expect that the provisions for investment contained therein will be undertaken on this basis, and that the most substantial

(and least transparent, as already mentioned) part of this investment will likely be carried out through PPPs dominated by major corporations. This is **unabashed privatization, albeit one which is shy about revealing its inner workings.**

The drives towards privatization and digitalization feed into one another, insofar as the digitalization of value chains will generate a huge amount of data, the ownership and management of which remains undetermined. It is foreseeable – as has already happened in the past – that this management will fall into private hands, with data being sold by public authorities to private companies. This is of particular concern when basic service provision is what is at stake.

Some **non-profit, non-corporate stakeholders** are emerging, yet **their presence on the market does not represent an overall change in direction.** A scaling up of SMEs and, in some cases, cooperatives is being pursued. These are particularly present in supposedly minor value chains such as care, an area seen as the niche of social economy organizations. As part of this, smaller, these areas are assigned less specific and difficult-to-access funding pots (for energy communities, collaborative housing), with no mention of mechanisms to ensure projects are of a genuinely democratizing and non-commercial character.

The plans show a **total lack of focus on strengthening public resources**, even in sectors that make up the welfare state. One example of this is the health plan, in which potential support for a public pharmaceutical industry is absent. Furthermore, in long-term care, no reference is made to the existing care and support system. The role of the public is to anchor and sustain private investment. This is the focus of the planned funds, although "bespoke" mechanisms are also on the table².

² One example is the pre-commercial public procurement of I+D services. While this is subject to both the principles of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union as well those governing public tenders, it lies outside of the remit of the European Public Procurement Directives, as well as the World Trade Organization Agreement on Government Procurement.



Centralization and a lack of transparency and democracy

Lack of the kind of transparency which would allow us to see just how much of **economic policy has been subject to corporate takeover** is the backbone of the PERTES, and is evident from:

- **How they are written:** the unabashed corporate rhetoric, which leads us to surmise that the same companies that have made "expressions of interest" **also participated directly in the drafting** of the PERTES. There is an absolute lack of even the most elementary participatory analysis³.
- **How they are overseen:** in addition to a ministerial stakeholding, each of the PERTES envisages the establishment of **alliances for public-private governance.** An overall lack of clarity as to who will be involved and what their role will be (thus far only defined in the case of the Cutting Edge Health Alliance), leads us to foresee that organizations most closely-linked to major corporate stakeholders will play a leading budgetary role. The question remains as to whether these alliances are a **pseudo-formalization of informal networking**, which has hitherto been the way in which business lobbies have involved themselves in European funds.
- **How they are to be carried out:** how will the PERTE funds be shared out? The most transparent part of the management of the funds – insofar as they can be considered in these terms – have been the open tenders. However, these represent the smallest part of the PERTE, as is the case for example in the strategic energy plan, where they represent only 4% of the budget. The ministries steering the PERTES have a central role in accrediting the companies which bid for the tenders, and choosing the best bids. According to this process, once companies have been accredited, they are to be added to the Official Registry of the Treasury. Nevertheless, in addition to having taken fourteen months to set up this register, to date it remains empty.

The PERTES **offer a number of schemes ostensibly geared towards meeting demands for democratization** of certain economic policies, but which are largely toothless. One example is the Observatorio del Agua (Water Observatory), conceived of here to award a seal of quality, rather than to act for the oversight and guarantee

³ The expressions of interest consist of a series of market studies from which the ministries decide who to grant tenders and projects to. [See here.](#)

of good management practices. Other demands have, on the other hand, been absolutely ignored, as is the case with the care round table (Mesa de cuidados). For their part, municipal authorities have not only not participated in the design and consultation phase, but have been reduced in the delivery phase to the same level as commercial enterprises, that is, merely potential beneficiaries within a growth-focused context. Requiring local councils to bid for tenders in water management, with a complete lack of cultural understanding of the common management of such resources, implies de facto an abandonment of smaller communities by authorities. **The trend is clearly towards centralization.**



Almost no washing

Hegemonic discourse on the green and digital transition has thus far tended towards the co-opting and instrumentalization of more critical outlooks and concepts. Are the PERTES part of this same problem? Eligibility for these projects required compliance with the environmental criterion of "do no significant harm" (DNHS) and the mainstreaming of gender equality. The first of these was considered fulfilled through the signing of a responsibility statement. The second is a commitment without any mechanism through which to enforce it. Given the total lack of a system of indicators for monitoring the green or purple impact, this ultimately comes down to self-regulation and rhetoric: green- and, faintly, **purple-washing**. Of course, such discourse is rapidly unraveling against the current backdrop of war to Europe's east. Faced with the energy crisis resulting from the conflict in Ukraine, the RePowerEU strategy has been approved, which allows the DNSH criterion to be bypassed. There is now no requirement to even commit in writing.

At the same time, **the overall tone** of the requirements, expected impacts and proposed measures is **openly commercial**. The absence of concepts which, so wide has been their use, have been at risk of being emptied of meaning (agroecology, the democratization of care, etc.) is striking. Some more contested elements do feature, but they are both few and far between and peripheral within the plans themselves (e.g. initiatives with limited budgets and/or without clear plans for implementation). Among these are energy communities, a care model

focused on individuals in need of long-term care, and the deinstitutionalization of care. Public sector initiatives, both those which could be read as *washing* or as genuine attempts at a different kind of policy-making, are utterly absent from the PERTES. Some examples of this are, among others, the European Farm to Fork Strategy, and schemes for the conservation and restoration of aquatic ecosystems. In fact, the analysis included is, from the outset, market-focused. There is no crisis or inequality in health or care, nor is there water scarcity, only sectors that are "great drivers of our economy". This is to say that, beyond proposals which merely come up short, by dint of the analysis behind them, the PERTES – in contrast to other European Union-backed policy drives – are at heart wholly out of synch with reality.

The absence of any reflection within the PERTES on the cumulative set of policies in a war economy could give rise to criticism on its own. That said, the blatantly commercial tone is alarming. **Is it this lack of reflection which paves the way for policies that are openly and completely balanced in favour of corporate power?**

What are the PERTEs?

The Strategic Projects for Economic Recovery and Transformation (**PERTEs**) are the main distribution mechanism for funds assigned through the Spanish government's **Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan, otherwise known as *España Puede*** (**PRTR**), which situates the **European Recovery NextGenerationEU Plan (NGEU)** within a Spanish context⁴.



Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan

ESPAÑA PUEDE

(Spanish General State budget)

Grants: 72,000 million

Loans: 69,528 million

Total: 141,528 million

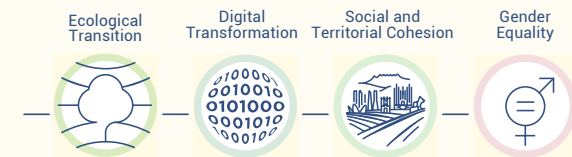
11 Strategic Projects for Economic Recovery and Transformation (PERTEs)

32,298 million

NGEU funds (commonly referred to as European funds, despite previously-existing funds) are part of a set of measures put in place in the wake of the pandemic that seek the transformation of the socioeconomic fabric of the union in way that facilitates economic recovery⁵. The NGEU funds provide 750 billion euros, the main part of which is the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF, 90% of NGEU funds). Nation states can access these funds based on how they have been affected by the pandemic⁶. Submitting a plan approved by the EU was an access requirement (in Spain's case this was *España Puede*, approved in April 2021, and accepted by the European Commission in June 2021). NGEU funds are a key tool for the implementation of the *European Green Deal* (EGD, presented in December 2019). This pact is, in turn, a crystallization of Europe's commitment to green and digital capitalism⁷. The NGEU funds have received criticism for several reasons:

- They are a form of **debt** assumed by the EU and which will be paid by all Member States. Paying off this debt means subordination to financial markets, and ultimately and **inevitably brings a biocidal austerity** in its wake.
- They come with **strings attached**. Labour, pension and tax reforms are mandatory and, within the framework of the EU, these reforms inevitably take on a neoliberal character.
- The approval and implementation process is characterized by its verticality, opacity and complexity, and by the leading role played by **major European companies**, with Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) being the format expressly chosen for the delivery of funds.

Transversal lines of the PERTEs



5 Initially (May-July 2020) these were introduced as "emergency and rescue" measures. In addition, the PEC, or Stability and Growth Pact, was suspended (first until 2021, then 2022, and now until 2023), resulting in restrictions on public spending. The following transformation and recovery phase, launched in July 2020, included the NGEUs and the increase of the EU's 2021-2027 multi-annual budget. Key references for understanding NGEU funds as they relate to Spain (and on which this section is based): Nicola Scherer, Erika González Briz and Nuria Blázquez Sánchez (2021), Bruna Cañada and Nicola Scherer (2022), and Nicola Scherer and Rubén Martínez Moreno (2022). Also touched on in Euskal Herria, Euskal Herriak Kapitalari Planto (2021). About Green Deals, Alfons Pérez (2021).

6 Spain could request up to 20% (€140 billion) but has stated that it will only request direct non-refundable aid (€72 billion), renouncing loans (€68 billion).

7 Some feminist criticisms of digital green capitalism and/or ecofeminist and anti-capitalist counter-proposals are available in: Júlia Martí Comas (2020), Blanca Bayas Fernández and Joana Bregolat i Campos (2021), Colectiva XXX and SOF (2021), Natália Lobo (2022), Sandra Ezquerro, Marina Di Masso and Marta Rivera (2022), Gonzalo Fernández, Erika González, Juan Hernández, Pedro Ramiro (2022), Amaia Pérez Orozco and Gonzalo Fernández (2020).

4 Officially, the PERTEs are public-private partnerships established by Royal Decree Law 36/2020 for the distribution of NGEU funds in Spain (in particular, €140 billion corresponding to the NGEU Recovery and Resilience Mechanism). On public-private partnerships, see [here](#).

How much money for each PERTE?

Total public investment: **€32,298** million

grants

direct tenders

<p>Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Tourism + Automobile Industry Round Table</p> <p>Electric and Connected Vehicles</p> <p>€4,295 million</p> <p>Approved 13/07/2021</p>		<p>Ministry of Economic Affairs and Digital Transformation</p> <p>Microelectronics and Semiconductors</p> <p>€12,250 million</p> <p>Approved 24/05/2022</p>	
<p>Ministry for Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge</p> <p>Water Cycle Digitalization</p> <p>€1,940 million</p> <p>Approved 22/03/2022</p>	<p>Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Tourism + Naval PERTE Alliance</p> <p>Naval Industry</p> <p>€2,193 million</p> <p>Approved 15/03/2022</p>		
<p>Ministry of Labour and Social Economy</p> <p>Social and Care Economy</p> <p>€808 million</p> <p>Approved 31/05/2022</p>	<p>Ministry of Economic Affairs and Digital Transformation, Vice-Chairs: Ministry of Culture and Sport and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, EU and Cooperation + Alliance for the New Language Economy</p> <p>New Language Economy</p> <p>€1,100 million</p> <p>Approved 01/03/2022</p>	<p>Ministry for Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge + Alliance for Innovative Renewables, Renewable Hydrogen and Storage</p> <p>Renewable Energies, Renewable Hydrogen and Storage</p> <p>€6,920 million</p> <p>Approved 14/12/2021</p>	
<p>Ministry for Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge + Bilateral dialogues with various sectors</p> <p>Circular Economy</p> <p>€492 million</p> <p>Approved 08/03/2022</p>	<p>Ministry of Science and Innovation, and Ministry of Health + Cutting Edge Health Care Alliance</p> <p>Cutting Edge Health Care</p> <p>€982 million</p> <p>Approved 30/11/2021</p>	<p>Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism; and Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food + Agro-Food PERTE Alliance</p> <p>Agri-Food PERTE</p> <p>€1,003 million</p> <p>Approved 08/02/2022</p>	
<p>Ministry for Science and Innovation + Aerospace PERTE Alliance</p> <p>PERTE for Aerospace</p> <p>€310 million</p> <p>Approved 22/03/2022</p>			

Spain's policy levers can be divided into 30 components. Each of the PERTEs addresses some of these components. The five PERTEs analyzed in this document cover 18 of them, as can be seen in this image:

Policy levers and components of the 5 PERTEs



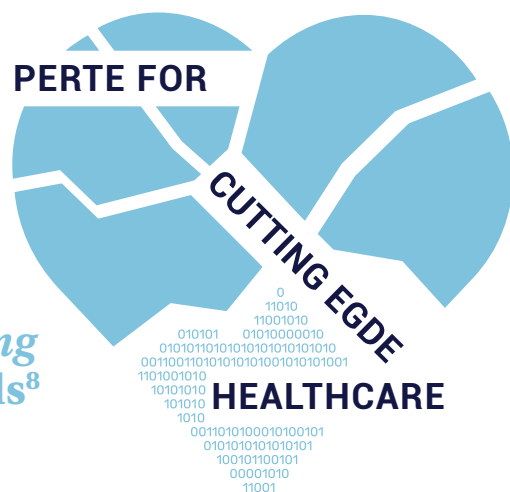
PERTEs: ● Healthcare ● Energy ● Agriculture ● Water ● Care

Five strategic projects in key areas for ecofeminist change

We have chosen to analyze five PERTEs that pertain to key areas for ecofeminist change, namely: health, energy, food, water and care. We see these areas as essential sectors within a fair and sustainable future reproductive labour framework. This means that, while profound changes are essential in the ways in which these areas are currently managed, there is no doubt that they exist to meet basic needs. Indeed, according to how these areas are managed, the enjoyment of rights to energy, health, food, water and care are either upheld or infringed.

1.

The whitewashing of recovery funds⁸



The PERTE for Cutting Edge Healthcare⁹ is unprecedented in terms of the elevated and exceptional investment it promises. This could offer an opportunity to fill the

gaps in our national health system and improve the health of the population as a whole. However, is this what is being aimed at?

Description

The PERTE for Cutting Edge Healthcare was published with the COVID-19 pandemic already well advanced both in our part of the world and elsewhere¹⁰. This plan introduces the concept of "Cutting Edge Healthcare", defined as "the process of promotion and protection of health based on the development and procurement of products, innovative procedures and digital solutions that add value in the prevention, diagnosis, treatment or rehabilitation of patients in a personalized way, and which allow us to

face emerging health challenges".

Focused on the promotion of digital and (bio)technological solutions together with the personalization of procedures, the plan concentrates on the economic opportunities that these solutions offer, promoting the health sector as an important driver of the Spanish economy.

The project has a total budget of 1.469 billion euros, with €982 million coming from the public sector (€821 million from the Recovery, Transformation

and Resilience Plan and €162 million from the Annual State Budget). Besides this, it is estimated that the private sector will invest €487 million, this coming from major players in the pharmaceutical and (bio)technology industries. For the time being, only

one call for bids has been published (on May 6th, 2022), overseen by the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Tourism. This call focused on initiatives in the pharmaceuticals and medical products sector, with a budget of €50 million¹¹.

The PERTE alludes in its objectives to strengthening the health system – and also the national system of science, technology and innovation – although it does not lay out any plan for how to do so beyond a commitment to investing in digital and (bio) technological solutions. The proposed investment lines are as follows:

Promote the equitable implementation of Personalized Precision Medicine in the national health system: €147.6 million

This measure seeks to generate new business niches and boost the creation of competitive companies through public-private R&D&i projects.

Promote the development of advanced therapies and other innovative and emerging pharmaceutical treatments: €143.43 million

This line of work will be achieved through partnerships between the academic and business sectors, and the strengthening of industrial links through public-private collaboration projects such as the Sociedad Mercantil de Medicamentos de Terapia.

Development of an innovative data system and driving the digital transformation of healthcare: €395m

This objective is geared towards taking further steps in the collection, handling, analysis and use of data from different sources to improve prevention, diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation and investigation.

Strengthening and developing the capacities of national health centres (transversal line): without resources specific to the PERTE.

Investing in the development, digitization and modernization of industry (transversal line): €206.9 million

Grants and loans for innovation projects in pharmaceutical companies.

Collaboration and coordination between science and the business sector (transversal line): €40 million

Measures for technology transfer.

Strengthening territorial cohesion (transversal line): €32 million

This includes "Supplementary R&D&i plans in biotechnology applied to health", without specifying how these will contribute to territorial cohesion.

Strengthening professional development (transversal line): €16.1 million

⁸ This section is a summary of a more extensive analysis of the PERTE for Cutting Edge Healthcare carried out by Blanca Bayas, which can be found on the websites of XXK, ODG and OMAL.

⁹ Strategic Projects for Economic Recovery and Transformation (PERTE), regulated via RDL 36/2020, which to-date has yet to be passed as law by the Congress of Deputies.

¹⁰ Available at: <https://planderecuperacion.gob.es/como-acceder-a-los-fondos/pertes/perte-para-la-salud-de-vanguardia>

¹¹ Available at: <https://www.mincotur.gob.es/PortalAyudas/IDI-Farma/DescipcionGeneral/Paginas/beneficiarios.aspx>

The stakeholder roles and mechanisms for the implementation of this plan are structured around public-private partnerships, providing for commercial involvement while at the same time failing to consider public management and service provision. Furthermore, **oversight for the plan rests in the hands of the so-called Cutting Edge Health Alliance**, constituted on April 29th, 2022¹² under the co-chairs of the Minister of Science and Innovation and the Minister of Health, and with the participation of directors and presidencies from large companies from the pharmaceutical and (bio) technological sectors. Specifically, private business is represented by executives and presidents of major trade associations and employers in the sector such as FENIN, Farmaindustria, AseBio, AMETIC, BioSim, FACME and AESEG¹³. Patient and service user representative organizations, such as the Patients' Organizations Platform (POP) and the Spanish Patient Forum (FEP) are also involved¹⁴.

At a political and civil service level, the plan as a whole is overseen by several ministries, including the Ministry of Science and Innovation, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Digital Transformation, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism, with different responsibilities in relation to the management of the planned calls for tender. The contributions of the different ministries are unevenly distributed, with Science and Innovation the most involved¹⁵.

Assessment from an ecofeminist perspective

Below is a brief discursive evaluation of the PERTE for Cutting Edge Healthcare.

What does the plan for Cutting Edge Healthcare reinforce, and what does it not?

The following elements relating to health care are elaborated on or mentioned in the project plan:

- **The PERTE hedges its bets on digitalization and (bio)technology as the necessary tools** for developing so-called "Cutting Edge Healthcare", promoting the idea that these enable the protection of people's health and the "meeting of new healthcare challenges". The analysis within the plan centres on the importance of building a digital national health system, something which falls within the ideological framework of techno-optimist capitalism.
- **It focuses on personalized attention and individualized responses linked to digitalization and data access.** This would ostensibly be achieved through public-private collaboration, with the attendant risk that multinational corporations would be in charge of the collection and management of public service users' data.
- **Public-private partnerships are the proposed mechanism** for achieving the plan's goals.

On the other hand, **the following are not alluded to or included** within the plan:

- **The primary healthcare needs** of the population.
- **A proposal for policies geared towards facilitating greater access to the health system** for all social groups, including those most excluded and most in need, or policies designed to influence health determinants, a much more effective form of reducing inequalities within the scope of healthcare.
- The lack of resources affecting the national health system, which has yet to recover from the impact of the cuts that occurred between 2009 and 2018¹⁶. No mention is made of **measures to alleviate the shortage of personnel** in various areas or specializations within the fields of health care, social health, nursing and medicine, from primary¹⁷ to specialist care.
- Opportunities to invest in the public sector and the **possibility of public research centres and pharmaceutical companies.**

A commitment to public-private partnerships and the abandonment of the public good

The PERTE for Cutting Edge Healthcare – like all PERTEs – is **a new opportunity for public-private collaboration**. It is important to note that public-private partnerships are formulas that have been widely questioned by a range of organizations and bodies¹⁸. This latest formula brings with it **greater risks than before**, insofar as mechanisms for public and environmental oversight and scrutiny into how these projects are carried

¹² Constitutional document available at:

<https://www.ciencia.gob.es/InfoGeneralPortal/documento/e63d478f-8901-484a-95f2-3f2b0754c75>

¹³ These associations and bodies represent many of the main companies in the sector, such as the pharmaceutical laboratories GlaxoSmithKline (gsk), Pfizer, Merck, Novartis, Sanofi, Lilly, Fresenius Kabi, Bayer or Esteve; biotechnology groups such as Asebio; and multinationals in the digital sector such as Siemens or Indra.

¹⁴ Organizations also financed by large pharmaceutical companies.

¹⁵ With almost €3.94 billion.

¹⁶ To date, current health spending remains barely covers essential needs, and budgets for 2022 do not indicate any increase. Further calls have been made to integrate additional services in the field of health and social healthcare; for example, the inclusion of the management of homes for the elderly under the umbrella of primary care.

¹⁷ The backbone of the health system, it deals with a high volume of patients, and there are broad demands to provide it with more resources, such as increasing its share of the overall health investment budget to 25%.

¹⁸ The European Court of Auditors has published a report on the risks involved, particularly in terms of public debt and the failure to guarantee goods or services to the entire population, and the human rights infringements this entails.

out are stripped back even further. The option of publicly managing the schemes included in the report is discarded.

Implications for the sustainability of everyday life

The PERTE for Cutting Edge Healthcare does not make any demonstrable contributions to the sustainability of the health system, nor to other structures necessary for everyday life. The only milestones it sets out – with little elaboration on to achieve them – focus on the economic contribution of the PERTE in terms of GDP,¹⁹ the jobs it is hoped will be created²⁰ and, lastly, two brief sets of data on social and health impacts²¹. What key elements of sustainability of everyday life are not featured?

Commitments tailored to local people, areas and communities

Improvements in health – that is, in quality of life and longevity – are driven by policies that seek to influence health determinants, not high-tech diagnostic testing. The PERTE neither offers a differential diagnosis based on the needs of different social groups, nor does it propose measures to influence these determinants.

Healthcare access and social inequalities are not the PERTE's only blind spot. It also **fails to elucidate – either in its arguments or in its action points – upon three of the four cross-cutting objectives that supposedly make up the overall Recovery Plan**. It only makes a declaration of intent in relation to a limited number of these

objectives, one which is not backed up by the initiatives themselves, nor given full consideration within the plan. The only axis included at the investment stage is that of digital transformation. Below, we lay out each of the three that have been omitted:

- Ecological and energy transition: despite it being stated that the plan complies with the principle of do no significant harm, there are no specific indicators that lead to this conclusion. It is important to highlight that the technologies used in precision medicine require microchips and other elements that are derived from fossil fuels and critical materials whose extraction has serious consequences which, in many cases and as a result of neocolonialist practices, affect countries of the Global South.
- Gender equality: this is reduced to a mere declaration of intentions that is not developed upon anywhere in the text. No qualitative definition or explanation of how this will be implemented is provided, nor are any indicators or proposals for gender quotas suggested²². The plan also fails to include elements from other schools of thought which are key in guaranteeing the sustainability of everyday life, such as feminist or community-based outlooks.
- Social and territorial cohesion: in some of the initiatives, this is included at an illustrative level, but without establishing clear or binding indicators; the plan focuses only on the redistribution of funds among Spain's various Autonomous Communities.

Reconfiguration of the overlooked building blocks of everyday life

The PERTE **does not guarantee the specific investment in personnel** which would be essential to any initiative designed to strengthen the national health system. Mentioned is made in relation to work that the PERTE will create – up to 12,688 new jobs, a peculiarly exact number which is, regardless, totally insufficient both in an investment of this scale and in relation to the existing needs of the health system.

The jobs to be created are defined as technical and/or specialized roles²³, overlooking the reproductive labour often carried out in insecure conditions and not improved as part of the PERTE. By not investing in this essential work carried out within the health system nor in access to health care, **care work is positioned, once again, as a feminized task carried out within the domestic sphere**.

Key takeaways

The PERTE for Cutting Edge Healthcare leaves so many gaps that it is difficult to foresee that it can meet the needs of the health system and contribute to its operative sustainability. By extension, it cannot be expected to ensure the improvement of the health of the population as a whole. **To this end, it appears to be a missed opportunity to invest in measures that reduce existing inequalities in public access to health care.**

The public health sector is currently at risk of deregulation and the expansion of the private sector into healthcare, through the progressive privatization of health services²⁴ and weakening of the public sector as a whole. It would appear that this PERTE – like the others – has passed up the opportunity to provide investment in the public sector, as well as the chance to set up a powerful public research or pharmaceutical industry.

The PERTE for Cutting Edge Healthcare, like the other strategic projects, is wedded to a pro-digital paradigm. It fails to include a focus on care or social factors in health, and instead reinforces privatization, commercialization **and the role of major companies from the pharmaceutical and (bio)technological sectors, as well as the techno-optimism of green capitalism.**

¹⁹ Projected contribution to GDP of €4.34 billion.

²⁰ Estimated at 12,688 new posts.

²¹ (1) Minimum savings of 15% disability-adjusted life expectancy and (2) 30% reduction in inter-territorial differences in healthy life years after age 65.

²² The only mention we have found is that gender equality will be taken into account by the companies that make up the Cutting Edge Health Alliance.

²³ These are defined as jobs aimed "mainly at those who carry out auxiliary activities (administrative, commercial, property, legal or consulting services); health care services; energy suppliers and manufacturers of chemical and pharmaceutical products".

²⁴ See Public-private partnerships (PPPs) as tools for privatisation. In the health sector at: https://odg.cat/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/ODG-CPP3_SANENG.pdf

2.

PERTE FOR RENEWABLE ENERGIES, RENEWABLE HYDROGEN



AND STORAGE

Commercial and techno-optimist solutions for changen.²⁵

Description

The Strategic Project for the Recovery and Economic Transformation (PERTE) of renewable energies, renewable hydrogen and storage (ERHA) is among the PERTES which provide the most funds and country-wide investment strategies via the *España Puede* Recovery Plan. This plan puts forward an energy transition "designed and made in Spain", one which aims to maximize industrial, economic, professional and research achievements and opportunities through engagement with SMEs and the general public. The PERTE's budget is around **€16.3 billion**, of which the public sector will contribute more than €6.9 billion, and which is expected to attract close to €9.5 billion of private investment.

This plan is designed around four key elements:

1. **25 transformative measures, presented as specific investment opportunities**, in relation to innovative renewables; storage, flexibility and new models of intelligent energy management; renewable hydrogen; the Fair Transition Strategy, and complementary R&D&i plans. **These transformative measures have been assigned a budget of €3.558 billion in public funds, provided by the Ministry for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge**, and which are hoped will encourage a further €5.39 billion from private investors.
2. **17 enabling or accompanying measures**: for energy transition; renewable gas for transport; training, professional development and employment, and technological and digital areas. **These measures are backed by €3.362 billion of public money**, and it is estimated that a further €4.06 billion in private CAPITAL will be obtained.
3. **The Energía NextGen seal**, a system of labeling, classification and monitoring available to across-the-board projects that bring together or represent different actions and measures of the Recovery Plan, which will help raise the profile of these projects to consumers and stakeholders both nationally and internationally, aiding brand reputation.
4. **A system for the monitoring, evaluation and analysis of the impact** on the energy transition value chain in Spain, in terms of economy of scale and added value.

In a nutshell, the ERHA PERTE aims to promote and develop technologies, new business models, research and industrial CAPacity and expertise to strengthen Spain's position as a LEADER in the field of renewable energy.

With regard to **governance**, the Ministry for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge will act as the central coordinating body for the set of measures put forward in the PERTE. However, due to the multitude of actors involved in the various actions envisaged, the creation of two units of oversight is envisaged. One will provide inter-ministerial oversight, in which the ministries of Industry, Trade and Tourism, Economic Affairs and Digital Transformation, Education and Vocational Training, and Transport, Mobility and Urban Agenda will participate. The other – the Alliance for Innovative Renewables, Renewable Hydrogen and Storage – has been created with the aim of engaging the private sector.

²⁵ This section is a summary of a more extensive analysis of the PERTE "renewable energies, renewable hydrogen and storage" carried out by Irene González and Mónica Guiteras, which can be found on the XXK, ODG and OMAL websites.

Assessment from an ecofeminist perspective

The requirements of the PERTE for Renewable Energies, Renewable Hydrogen and Storage are fully aligned with the postulates set out in the *European Green Deal*, which promote a shared route out of the energy crisis via a green recovery plan and investment in commercial and technology-based solutions that contribute to the "decarbonization" of the economy. It steadfastly maintains a **techno-optimist outlook focused on the promotion of new technologies "necessary" for the reduction of emissions** – green hydrogen, marine renewable energy, and new forms of storage – that do not put everyday life at the centre, but instead seek to use it as a stepping stone towards reindustrialization. The "leading role of Spain" in this field is continually highlighted in terms of its "value chains in the various different areas of energy transition". Indeed, consolidating value chains is one of the main objectives of the PERTE, as is aiding the country's business sector in acquiring and maintaining a LEADERSHIP role both in Europe and globally.

Some mention is made of social and environmental opportunities and the need for social innovation and democratization, in addition to the principle of do no significant harm, but these are non-binding in nature. In addition, with no mention of energy poverty or safeguarding the right to energy, the plan will lead to the neglect or worsening of both these issues, and an impact on countries in the Global South whose territories are rich in minerals and key materials for the energy transition. The drive for the construction of infrastructure for renewable energy production (with particular emphasis

on marine renewables), storage and hydrogen, as well as the public-private and private-private partnerships to carry out these projects, is key. The construction of large electrolyzers and valleys or hydrogen clusters is promoted, which – due to the high production costs they bring along – **would not be possible without public backing and funding, although the profits will presumably be reaped by the private sector**. The same is true of offshore wind farms and storage infrastructure which, for their part, still require intensive use of conflict minerals and rare earth elements.

Throughout the PERTE, the application of social justice to solutions and measures for a just transition is limited to the perfunctory treatment given to energy communities, with **the role of the citizenry being something of an afterthought in the action plan set out**.

Governance and democratization

Beyond inter-ministerial governance and the key role of the Ministry for the Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge (MITECO) and the Institute for the Diversification and Saving of Energy (IDAE), an important role is reserved for the Alliance for Innovative Renewables, Renewable Hydrogen and Storage (with significant representation from the private sector). Furthermore, at no stage are regional or local governments explicitly mentioned beyond their participation in or possible receipt of measure and action-specific budgets.

The time frame itself, which aims to see all tenders granted in 2023 and projects carried out by the end of 2026, involves the mobilization of significant funds in the short and medium-term, therefore requiring investors who can be expected to provide high returns in a short period of

time. This factor makes it very difficult for smaller stakeholders from the social and solidarity economy such as cooperatives – or even municipal public companies that are unable to meet economies of scale and high-added value, high-financial return business models – to play an important role.

Reprivatization

There is a clear risk of a new wave of privatization, using new formats and resources. The PERTE proposes business-as-usual solutions dressed up as innovative and inclusive of SMEs – that is, global tech SMEs that can be incorporated into schemes where efficiency and speed are the order of the day. Large private and multinational companies will be the only ones capable of meeting such requirements. This leaves out the public-community schemes and remunicipalization projects from a number of the sectors that were subject to privatization and deregulation in the 1990s. In addition to public-private partnerships (PPPs), the plan also puts forward the idea of private-private partnerships.

No deprivatization or public takeover measures, nor even a kick-start for public or community-based initiatives, are proposed. Local stakeholders are merely mentioned without reference to any opportunities or genuine mechanisms for effective participation, neither at a democratic/governance nor at a financial level. Without any such resources or outlook, the grassrootsing of the proposed projects are mere words without anything to back them up.

The same is true of the installation of smart grids, which is likely to be undertaken as part of a recentralization by the companies which dominate the energy

supply oligopoly. The PERTE stands in the way of this opportunity to repair and upgrade of the distribution networks also becoming one for calling into question the private management model as well as the failures in scaling and overseeing energy grids made by the major suppliers, who have been at the front of the queue in raising expressions of interest.

Reshoring and territorial cohesion?

The PERTE does not specify any schemes or proposals for increased reshoring or community stakeholding and sovereignty over land or resources, instead tending towards encouraging the surrender of yet-to-be or already-exploited territories for further spoliation. Some of the proposed action plans appear to aim towards renewing productive practices and encouraging reuse, but they do not call into question the way in which the territories of the Global South are expected to continue to provide for the Global North. The replacement of old wind turbines with new machines, the recycling and repurposing of old facilities and the development of bio gas from the recovery of waste or agricultural byproducts – including its conversion to biomethane – are just some of the proposals which do not take into account how energy demands will be managed (not only in terms of end-user consumption, but also in intermediary processes), nor the inevitable decrease in production, the weight of which will likely be borne unequally by households or in certain areas.

What about the Earth's limits?

The PERTE does not offer any proposal to reduce or even control and manage demand in relation to the physical limits of the planet. Instead, it commits to developing technology so that everything can remain the same. There is also a commitment to hydrogen for energy-intensive sectors – haulage, steel, cement, chemical, etc. – as a means of "decarbonizing" them rather than transforming or questioning their consumption

Ultimately, it encourages the strengthening of hardware and components manufacturing CAPacity associated with renewables, which entails an intensive use of critical minerals and scarce materials. This also means intensive energy consumption that will (further) drive digitalization through decentralized server centres, which will require both significant energy consumption for their operation and natural resource extraction for their construction.

A reappraisal of care work?

In terms of employment, the PERTE promises the creation of more than 280,000 "sustainable and high-quality" employment opportunities (direct, indirect and induced). This is to be achieved through a vision or conceptualization of Spain as a "world LEADER in renewables" – that is, positioning the country as a technological LEADER, one which develops and implements a wide range of technological solutions, consolidates renewable energy value chains, and drives new business models and social innovation and their integration into various productive sectors. All of this is promised without any focus on care work or vulnerability and interdependence. Vulnerable households and communities will remain on the margins without real access to these budgets, jobs, new business models, etc., deepening the insecurity of the types of jobs not associated with this green and digital model. In addition, the expansion of extractivism's borders throughout the Global South will trigger a (further) care drain away from these areas.

Key takeaways

There is an urgent need to confront the message that it is possible to ensure both carbon neutrality by 2050 and economic growth through an energy transition geared towards the private sector and the promotion of new, supposedly carbon-neutral electrification and digitalization processes and technologies.

At the same time, the role of the public and public-community spheres in such an important sector as the energy sector must be redefined. The PERTE limits its plans for a centralized public-state sector to providing economic support for new areas of technological research and costly initiatives undertaken by the private sector, and is blind to the problem of limited natural resources, inequalities, gender or the accumulation of power by business interests in the energy sector (especially those of large corporations and multinational CAPital). It ignores grassroots initiatives more consonant with the real community and household experiences.

Finally, some of the proposals contained within the plan, such as **energy communities, ought to go further in a social and democratizing direction, yet these schemes are evident bit-part players when it comes to investment, and at the time of writing are worryingly lacking in terms of transparency and participative opportunities.**

3.



AGRI-FOOD

PERTE

neither agri-
nor food.²⁶

Description

The aim of the Agri-Food PERTE is **to stimulate joined-up development throughout the entire agri-food chain, through the digitalization of processes and the onboarding of expertise and innovation.** This is intended to facilitate access to healthy, safe and sustainable food that meets the needs of an increasingly segmented population with an increased demand for food with healthy and environmentally sustainable attributes. In addition, **three strategic objectives** are put forward to drive

improvement in the agri-food sector: 1) competitiveness, 2) sustainability and 3) traceability and security. A fourth, cross-cutting objective, relating to the so-called demographic challenge, is also included.

Following its approval in February 2022, the Agri-Food PERTE freed up over €1 billion for the three axes of action and the objective measures set out therein. On May 11th, 2022, an 80% in the PERTE's budget was announced – a further €800 million – to be used for the transformation of the agri-food industry and the

improvement of water management and the modernization of irrigation, bidding for which was due to open in July. However, at the time of publication, no official notice has been published on the PRTR website, meaning our analysis is based on the latest official data available.

The PERTE argues for the strategic importance of the agri-food sector to the state economy and its essential role in providing food security for the population. It presents an in-depth study of the agri-food system with respect to production, the agri-food industry and R&D&I within the sector, and puts forward a series of benchmarks related to the food chain in terms of sustainable development and modernization and digitization. These benchmarks relate, on a general level, to some of the sector's most significant needs in recent decades: sustainability from production to consumption,

generational turnover, food and health, the role of women in the food chain, digitalization and innovation, and more global institutional strategies such as the 2030 Agenda or the Farm to Fork strategy. In addition, they are seen as drivers for a series of knock-on effects and pull factors (with an estimated impact on GDP of €3 billion), as well as endowing the sector with the potential to transform society as a whole – in terms of its ability to generate quality employment and in turn address the demographic challenge, particularly in rural areas (with an estimated 12,250-16,300 new quality jobs) – with the further positive impact of reducing the administrative and bureaucratic burden faced by producers. In addition, the value of the sector's contribution to the circular economy and to reducing the environmental impact of the agri-food system is highlighted.

Both the analysis and the benchmarks are presented as a definition and a justification of what constitutes the three axes of action:

Industrial consolidation of the agri-food sector: €400 million

This axis is divided into three blocks: competitiveness, sustainability and traceability, and food security. Funding is made available for the automation and digitalization of its processes (data, logistics, modernization of machinery, replacement of renewable materials, etc.).

Digitalization of the agri-food sector: €454.35 million

Among the projects specified in the second axis, the Digital Kit stands out, with more than 27% of the total funding. This kit is geared towards supporting the digitalization of SMEs, and is to be led by so-called "digitalizing agents". This endeavour is designed to complement action aimed at the application of precision agriculture and 4.0 technologies in the agricultural and livestock sectors (measure C3.14), to be carried out by the Autonomous Communities, and amounts to another €80 million.

Research in the agri-food sector: €148.56 million

The most important measures of this axis are the development of two complementary plans in conjunction with the country's Autonomous Communities: the Agri-Food R&D&I Programme and the Marine Sciences R&D&I Programme, in addition to missions for Science and Innovation and R&D actions in priority technologies.

²⁶ This is a summary of a more extensive analysis of the Agri-Food PERTE carried out by Mirene Begiristain Zubillaga that can be found on the XXK, ODG and OMAL websites.

Prior to its approval, the Agri-Food PERTE was already linked with five of the policy levers and several components of the PRTR, including 11 facilitative measures. Among these components, Component 3 (C3) stands out: Environmental and digital transformation of the agri-food and fisheries sectors. C3 consists of nine reforms and eleven investment projects related to digitalization, improving irrigation efficiency, and boosting sustainability and competitiveness. In relation to C3, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAP) is scheduled to handle a three-year budget of 1.051 billion euros. 54% of this amount will be dedicated to what is described as the "modernization" of irrigation through the State Society of Agrarian Infrastructure (SEIASA), and it is indicated that this will be carried out in "cooperation" with the Autonomous Communities (CCAA) and Water Partnerships. The plan states that the rest will be distributed through what it calls the Plan to Promote the Sustainability of Agriculture and Livestock, which includes a set of investments in precision agriculture, energy efficiency and the circular economy, and in the use of renewable energies and gases.

The Agri-Food PERTE is also linked to its sister plan for renewable energy, renewable hydrogen and storage projects. Some of the grants are included in the supplementary plans of the Autonomous Communities (with a number of calls for bids already open). It is important to bear in mind that purely agricultural investments will continue to be financed through the Common European Agricultural Policy (CAP) via EAFRD or EAGF funds, as well as the new ERDF for the food-processing industry, the EAFRD for primary processing, and the LEADER funds for rural areas.

The bodies responsible for this project are the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism (axis 1), the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAPA) and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Digital Transformation (axis 2), and principally the Ministry of Science and Innovation (axis 3). The **governance model** for delivery is built on two levels. On the one hand, there is **inter-ministerial governance**, with the establishment of a working group in which members of the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism, the MAPA, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Digital Transformation, the Ministry of Science and Innovation and the Ministry of Social Rights and Agenda 2030 participate, with different roles and ranks. With the role of chair and vice-chair going to the ministries of Industry and Agriculture, the balance of power swings in their favour.

On the other hand, there is a **second level** of oversight at which explicit mention is made of public-private partnerships (PPP), in addition to the objective of involving the private sector via the so-called **Agri-Food Partnership**, which is identified as a forum for participation and dialogue. In addition to the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism and the MAPA, this second level brings together "members of the Interministerial Working Group, representatives of the Spanish Agency for Food Security and Nutrition belonging to the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, representatives from the country's Autonomous Communities, private sector stakeholders (employers and associations), agricultural organizations, agri-food cooperatives, technological centres and other businesses that will participate in the PERTE, having been awarded one of the support packages it sets out, as well as other important actors who facilitate comprehensive dialogue and monitoring".

Assessment from an ecofeminist perspective

Both the analysis of the agricultural and food sector and the benchmarks mentioned in the report are presented in a superficial and perfunctory manner, without delving into the underlying motivations behind them and denying the bases that really support agri-food activity. The response measures are simplified to issues of traceability, modernization, food security, digitization, R&D& I, etc., which say little about the socio-political thinking guiding them. While the European From Farm to Fork strategy is mentioned, its objectives are taken up in the PERTE solely insofar as they relate to industrial questions concerning use of technologies, food design, and transport networks.

How will we be able to solve the underlying issues if agricultural and food policies are not geared towards social justice, dealing with the food system as a whole, responding to the needs of those involved in it, addressing the social rights surrounding access to healthy and sustainable food, and the rural environment and the people who inhabit it?

While evidently co-opting some of the aforementioned concepts – sustainability, resilience, cohesion, inclusion, cooperation, etc. – the PERTE does not so much as venture to mention *agroecology*, *organic agriculture*, *care* or *feminism* once. Conversely, the word *digital* appears more than 70 times. Thus, while in other settings there is lively debate regarding the co-opting of agroecology and purplewashing, here a lackadaisical

splash of green seems to have been considered more than enough before sending the PERTE into circulation.

Specifically:

The pillars of the model of production are not called into question.

The plan pins its flag to the mast of a productivist model dependent on inputs – in this case, technological and material – and extractivism, promoting land grabbing and ignoring the ecosocial limits and ramifications of the existing food production model, and contributing to a consolidation of prosperous centres and dispossessed peripheral communities. The PERTE further fuels intensive production, for example, through the PRTR support package for irrigation systems, a measure that has been made necessary by the damage and desertification caused by an already-unsustainable production model. *Greenwashing* is the order of the day; notably, no limitations or vetoes are placed on funding for organizations previously or currently linked to ecologically or socially harmful projects or practices (as per the maxim *Do No Significant Harm*), nor is any impact monitoring system set out.

Although there is talk of a sustainable agri-food system, in reality this is a geared towards financing a digital, robotic and genomic agro-industrial system.

Financing is made available to major corporate players and logistics and services companies for the automation – robotization and digitalization – of processes, as well as R&D&I institutions and organizations whose interests in biotechnology translate into "genetic improvement" projects (without mentioning GMOs), hydroponics, aquaponics or artificial meat, in the name of the crop efficiency and the health properties of food but with the lasting destruction of biodiversity.

What is being sought is an agriculture without farmers.

While a number of different terms exist, the term *agriculture 4.0*. summarizes the line of action in the PERTE related to "blockchain technology, the Internet of things, artificial intelligence, serving both agriculture and precision livestock and industry 4.0". These concepts are aligned with various robotized agri-industrial megaprojects and digitalized infrastructure that we have already seen rolled out on the ground, in addition to global strategies that negate the link between the land and the communities that inhabit it, and completely overlook those working in production, situating them on the periphery of these projects through insecure subcontracted roles or expelling them directly from their local area.

The plan builds a narrative in which systemic crises are dressed up as business opportunities, with an added message of equal opportunities.

Concepts such as growth, the fight against climate change, sustainable management of energy and materials, the demographic challenge or generational change and quality employment for young people and women, among others, are thrown in together as though they were perfectly compatible. Moreover, the plan presents equal opportunities – the opportunity for equality between men and women, and even the opportunity to deepen democracy – as a stepping stone for new business models, wiping the slate clean and ignoring the unequal starting points in meeting conditions for tenders and criteria for participation in the decision-making spaces in which the measures set out in the PERTE have been defined.

There is no inclusion of any measure which seeks to address the suffering caused by temporary workers' working conditions or the inequalities generated by agricultural policies and their link with precarity in agroecological and small-scale agricultural projects, nor the difficulties in getting new infrastructure projects up and running (something which particularly impacts women). There is also no reference to addressing domestic food responsibilities, nor the role of women's care in rural areas, nor gender discrimination in access to healthy and sustainable food.

There is a manifest lack of transparency and democracy.

Nothing is explicitly mentioned in these terms beyond the two levels of governance, and the clear promotion of PPPs. This is indicative of a lack of transparency regarding operational issues, decision-making criteria and oversight mechanisms, a lack of transparency, the exclusion of local and civic stakeholders and, above all, an ongoing impediment to the construction and unification of food networks that lay the groundwork for a genuine, fair and democratic agri-food transition. In addition, problems relating to deadlines and bureaucracy for agricultural, food and social organizations form a bottleneck at the implementation stage of the PERTE, to such an extent that, in practice, it is not feasible for these organizations to participate in or access the schemes the plan supposedly seeks to promote. There is a lack of information regarding the content, oversight and strategic roll-out of the schemes to which specific support is given in the PERTE. Although a timetable has been laid out, it is not known whether efforts are running on schedule, nor if any major changes, such as the recent 80% budget increase, have been made.

Food consumption and where food comes from are thoroughly decoupled.

Although mention is made of healthy and quality foods and their development, and the growing awareness of the relation between food and health, in the analysis, benchmarks and needs of the sector included in the PERTE, the plan avoids broaching the subject of the clear class divisions that underlie the widespread consumption of processed foods, the significant impact of junk food advertising on society – especially on its most vulnerable groups – and public health expenditure on diseases associated with poor nutrition (equivalent to 7.8% of GDP in the EU). At no stage is the model of consumption addressed, nor matters of access and the collective right healthy food either.

There is not a single mention of short distribution channels, nor is any appraisal made of the transitional utility of a market-based model in the midst of a climate crisis when food travels thousands of kilometres on average before it reaches our plates. Moreover, the plan pays no attention to the multiple structural constraints that often limit food choice (financial insecurity, relative poverty, living in a food desert, etc.), and does not suggest measures to create a healthier food environment or bring about changes in food consumption for those who need it most. Furthermore, the disconnect between food consumption and where it is produced arising from the green revolution is completely normalized, without taking into account the significant loss of knowledge and links between food and territory (and, consequently, between urban and rural communities).

It seems that the only role for food consumers in building a supposedly sustainable food system is to buy and consume. This totally overlooks the political dimension of food and food systems, and the fact that individuals and communities have a collective right to healthy and sustainable food and to participate directly in democratic and open processes concerning the future of their food (a cornerstone of food sovereignty).

Key takeaways

In line with agro-ecofeminist thinking, analysis and calls for action and change centred on and built from the grassroots up, we propose the following steps for a double deprivatization:

- **de-commercialization**, through joint efforts between individuals, groups and public institutions, to be able to offer agricultural work with decent working conditions, to ensure a care-work balance in agricultural labour, and to encourage community participation and living without any increase in working days or the long-standing precarity afflicting the development of agricultural and food initiatives;
- **defamiliarization** and questioning of familial power relations and the idealization of the "rural family", as a means of challenging and modifying the patriarchal relations and worldview that underpin agricultural production. Both of these necessitate a strengthening of the common and the public, in their multiple possible permutations.

Other key takeaways from an agro-ecofeminist perspective concern:

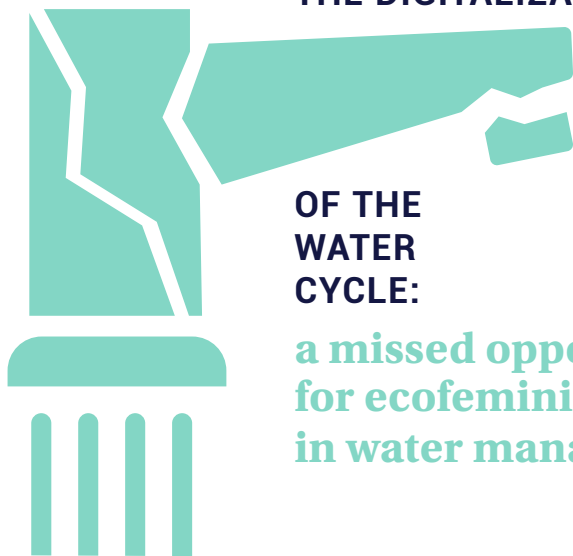
- **The transition towards less complex agrarian systems**, exploring opportunities for bio-intensification and favouring the fertility of the land – with machinery adapted to a small-scale and lower energy expenditure – and deepening knowledge in agroecological production and management.
- **The insourcing of socioeconomic activity via Alternative Food Networks:** taking steps towards joining up production and consumption, creating relationships of trust and transparency, and rebalancing power relationships within the food chain with the aim of social and political change that goes beyond quality seals or certificates of origin which lead to standardized production practices that favour large businesses.
- **Governance and collective joint-working between agri-food stakeholders:** from an agroecological perspective, horizontal and vertical scaling is necessary to widen agroecology and build agroecological communities. In these processes, organizational and power-sharing criteria, mechanisms for dynamization, streamlining, communication, reflection and the creation of relationships of trust and conscious decision-making regarding multilevel strategies and public-community participation are fundamental.

Far from being a historic milestone which addresses human and alimentary challenges as a means of driving real ecological and social change, the PRTR and the Agri-Food PERTE continue steadfast down the road of the green revolution, with all the environmental, economic, social and cultural consequences this entails. The objectives and measures included overlook how food is produced and consumed and afford an absolute centrality to industry and PPPs, demonstrating a lack of neutrality, and giving precedence to the private over the public and the common, to commercial interests over human rights, to large-scale over small, to agro-industry over agroecology, and to extractivism over everyday life. All of this represents a continued boost to the marketization of the food chain and where food is produced, to agro-industrial and digital production, and to hegemonic patriarchal models. The plan does not elucidate upon the demands of the existing model of production, similarly failing to address the unsustainable saturation of its biophysical limits and the bases on which it stands. It thus further accentuates the ecological crisis, and provides no redistributive strategy for degrowth, both locally and worldwide, as a matter of global justice and urgency.

4.



PERTE FOR THE DIGITALIZATION



OF THE WATER CYCLE:

a missed opportunity for ecofeminist change in water management.²⁷

Description

The **PERTE for the Digitalization of the Water Cycle** aims to transform and modernize water management systems, both in urban areas and in irrigation and industry, with digitalization accompanied by innovation and training as the main driver. The plan seeks to promote the use of new information technologies

throughout water cycle, with the intention of: 1) improving knowledge of water uses, 2) improving oversight and increasing transparency, 3) taking steps towards the fulfillment of environmental objectives set as part of hydrological planning and international regulations and 4) creating quality, highly-qualified employment.

Notably, the plan argues for the economic importance of water, which is defined on several occasions as a "strategic component of our economy" (Memoria, pp. 6, 13 and 15). Data on its contribution to GDP – approximately 1% (about €7.6 billion per year) – is mentioned

throughout the document, as is the creation of 27,000 direct and 35,000 indirect jobs in 2018 (Memoria, p. 15), underlining the enormous potential of this scheme as a driving force of the digital green capitalism promoted by the *European Green Deal*.

In order to achieve its objectives, the plan establishes the following four lines of action, which cover the entire management of the hydrological cycle. In order to implement the schemes set out, the **project aims to mobilize €3.06 billion**, with **€1.94 billion** in public investment, and an estimated €1.12 billion through public-private collaborations.

Improved oversight of water use management: €10 million

The standout measure in this line of action, and to which the entire budget is given over, is the creation of a national water management Observatory and a "transparent water management" seal.

Promotion of the digitalization of the catchment basin: €225 million

The PERTE advocates for digitalization of water catchment organizations (€69.9 million) via an internal investment plan based on component 5 of the PRTR.

Development of grant programmes to drive end-user digitalization in Spain: €2.82 billion

The major commitment of the PERTE is the digitalization of the urban water cycle through programmes covering settlements or areas of over 20,000 inhabitants. Public urban water service providers are invited to bid, with concessionary companies managing mixed or private urban water also able to submit applications. This line of action supposes the bulk of the budget as well as the entire allocation from public-private partnerships, adjudicating €720 million to the digitization of the urban water cycle²⁸.

Promoting training and innovation in digital skills in water administration and management: €5 million

The measures in this area focus on the preparation of technical manuals, recommendations and informative materials, leaving the matter of innovation to be taken up at other stages of the plan.

²⁷ This is a summary of a more extensive analysis of the PERTE for the Digitalization of the Water Cycle carried out by Ruth Pérez, and which can be found on the XXK, ODG and OMAL websites.

²⁸ The first tender in concurrent competition as part of the unique programmes for the digitalization of the urban water cycle, with grants ranging from 3 to 10 million euros and up to a total of 200 million euros, was opened between 9th and 29th June 2022.

The PERTE for the Digitalization of the Water Cycle is connected to other PERTES, such as Renewable Energies, Renewable Hydrogen and Storage, Circular Economy, Agri-Food and Aerospace. All of these share a commitment to modernization through digitalization, the efficiency of value chains and a hoped-for improvement in global market competitiveness, moving away from seeing water, energy and food production in terms of the commons and social and environmental rights.

The Ministry for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge is responsible for **overseeing** the development of the initiatives through the Dirección General del Agua, with the essential participation of the Hydrographic Confederations and intra-community water catchment organizations, the Federation of Taibilla Channels and the state companies ACUAMED and ACUAES. The document outlines a governance model aimed towards ensuring meaningful participation on the part of the stakeholders involved, and to "make public-private collaboration effective". At national government level, the plan proposes a working group with representatives from various ministries and the Autonomous Communities, with "structured bilateral dialogues" with private sector stakeholders. No mention is made of any mechanisms to avoid the possible pressure that powerful interest groups might exert regarding water management.

Assessment from an ecofeminist perspective

The cross-cutting argument of the PERTE – despite a fleeting recognition of water as a basic and essential resource for life – is founded on a reductionist discourse in which the impacts of climate change and the physical scarcity of this resource act as the central thread in justifying the digitization of the water cycle as a means of ensuring sustainable and efficient management. While it is true that the latest IPCC reports warn that, if global warming reaches 2°C, one third of the population of southern Europe will suffer from water scarcity, simplifying the causes of this situation by ignoring the physical limits of the planet, and failing to question the current energy and agricultural model and their privatization, will lead us to (re)implement solutions based on cutting edge technology and lose the chance to carry out a water transition based on social and climate justice.

At heart, this involves maintaining pre-existing supply strategies. The only difference is that, where before large hydraulic works were the order of the day, we now talk of digitization as a solution to a global water crisis. The impact on local communities is, however, the same, with the most vulnerable groups being those that suffer the most. Such notions are very dangerous, and move us away from demand management based on participatory democracy – in which, for example, industrial use, or the concession of water service provision to powerful corporations via Water Partnerships (Comunidades de Regantes) can be called into question. The lines of action are instead based on the savings to be made through digitization alone, without taking into account that this process requires the use of scarce raw materials.

Water as economic input

The PERTE reinforces a longstanding inertia in which water as a whole is reduced to the status of economic input, abandoning the holistic vision of this resource – which positions it as an ecosocial asset, putting value on its traditional role in ensuring biodiversity, ecology, identity and emotional well-being. This is a step backwards on the journey towards a new water culture, one which promotes grassroots ecosystem management, with links to local communities and deliberative democracy at its heart. It is particularly surprising that, throughout the report, there is not a single mention of the Human Right to Water and Sanitation recognized by the United Nations in 2010.

The push for a public-private model

The PERTE represents a missed opportunity to explore new models of public-public or public-community collaboration, and perhaps to learn from the disastrous consequences that privatizations have had in terms of water justice throughout the world and, in particular, within Spain via Public Private Partnerships (PPP). The reality is quite the opposite: in its summary, the plan commits to the digitalization of the water cycle through public-private collaboration. As the former UN Special Rapporteur on the right to water and sanitation has highlighted, privatization poses risks to these rights due to a combination of three factors related to private water supply and sanitation: maximization of profits; natural monopoly of services, and power imbalances.

In Spain, the dominant model of privatization is carried out through joint ventures. In this context, businesses have repeatedly demanded public funds for investment in grid maintenance,

construction of sewage treatment plants, and installation of metres and digital control and management applications, among others. These calls are made under the auspices of supporting municipal water supply and sanitation; however, what they are really calling for is the transfer of public funds to private coffers. On the other hand, as the UN report warns, the power imbalances intrinsic to the public-private partnership model have all too often resulted in the sidelining of public stakeholders in overseeing their private partners' activities, with the implementation of this model in the urban water cycle being particularly high-risk.

Democratization?

The measures for oversight and participation envisaged by the PERTE are wholly inadequate: no mechanism is set out for engagement with or participation from civil society stakeholders, and opportunities for social and citizen decision-making with respect to the plan's objectives and oversight mechanisms are practically nil. Similarly, no provision is made for the participation of members of the public in the evaluation and monitoring of the available funds, or the conditions of eligibility and deliverables for such funds. One of the measures to improve water governance is the creation of the Water Management Observatory, a resource that has been demanded by environmental activists for years. However, its objective of providing a "seal of excellence" has been reduced to transparency in management, abandoning the possibility of a collective knowledge bank that could be gathered via this type of resource.

A reappraisal of care work?

The PERTE promises the creation of 3,430 jobs (Memoria, p. 43), all of them highly-qualified posts, and shifts the balance of power from the human to the technological, rendering essential jobs totally invisible. None of the measures are aimed at bridging the wage gap or, at the very least, promoting gender equity in a remarkably masculinized sector.

Territorial cohesion?

One of the overarching objectives of the PERTE is territorial cohesion, yet, in reality, these are only words: no concrete measures are set out to achieve it. In its analysis, the plan fails to delve into the historical problems associated with the irrigation sector, the ability of its lobby to exert pressure and shape public water policies, entrenched territorial unrest, or the problems that irrigation modernization entails. The overall focus is placed on water for consumption and the need to improve efficiency through digitization.

Another point of concern is the increasing inequality between urban and rural areas. Tenders for the development of programmes and grants are aimed at larger municipalities or conglomerations of various municipalities with more than 20,000 inhabitants, something which suggests that, for practical purposes, smaller and more dispersed settlements will not qualify for funding due to the lack of joint working culture in the management of their urban services, including water.

Key takeaways

The PERTE for the Digitalization of the Water Cycle boasts of a plethora of measures that chart a way forward for sustainable management. While it is evident that there is room for improvement in terms of data transparency, savings and efficiency due to losses across the network, **the reductionist vision that the document lays out in its analysis and measures leads us to believe that this is a missed opportunity for an ecofeminist water transition.** What we do find is another lynch pin for the green digital capitalism that further contributes to the expansion of extractivism, does not take into account the physical limits of the planet, and will serve to increase social and territorial inequalities both locally and globally.

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the friendly face
of corporate capture
in care work.²⁹

Description

A dual-purpose PERTE to boost the social economy (SE) and intervene in care.

The plan presents two general objectives: OBJ1 "Promotion and development of the Spanish Social Economy and its transformative potential" (€112.7 million) and OBJ2 "Development and promotion of

advanced services in the field of accessible and person-centred care" (€717.2 million)³⁰. In addition, it sets out a strategic objective, "Setting up a Cutting Edge Social Economy Hub", to which no budget is allocated. This PERTE does not cross over in any significant way with other PERTES.

²⁹ This section is a summary of a more extensive analysis of the PERTE for the Social Economy and Care carried out by Amaia Pérez, which can be found on the websites of xxk, odg and omal.

³⁰ In total, the promised budget reaches €872 million. If we exclude the items pertaining to the central government and account only for those belonging to the PRTR, this figure stands at €829.87 million, and not the €808 million announced. The calculations in this report are made based on €829.9m.

Its dual line of argument highlights: (1) the strategic nature of the SE in terms of its current weight in the wider *economy*; its resilience in times of crisis; its ability to level up, particularly in areas affected by demographic challenges, and the plurality of its social and environmental benefits, and (2) the need for the modernization and adaptation (in terms of market efficiency) of SE and care value chains, mainly through digitalization.

It is difficult to find a guiding thread which unites the range of measures included. The PERTE's stated aim is "the consolidation of the SE ecosystem

focused on care" and, to this end, it commits to an "interrelated network of value chains centred on the care of people" (Memoria, pp. 12 and 14), offering a description of that value chain (principles, actions, investment proposals, etc.) that is inconsistent and not particularly suitable to the idea of a value chain in and of itself.

Overall, **this PERTE commits to a digitalized, scaled and concentrated SE sector**, more competitive at a market level, with a fundamental weight in the care sector, and with a strong presence beyond large urban centres.

The main proposals, in order of budgetary relevance, are as follows:

Long-term care: €429.4 million (action lines b.1.1, b.1.2 and b.1.3)

In its commitment to deinstitutionalization (a change mandated via European guidelines), the PERTE offers three actions: (1) an evaluation of the system for Personal Autonomy and Dependent Care and the subsequent development of a deinstitutionalization strategy; (2) new technological solutions for self-care at home; and (3) the promotion of co-housing and collaborative housing. The division of funds between these three lines of action is not made clear, although it is foreseeable that the second of these will take up the majority, given the weight of investment in digitalization outlined in Component 22 of the PRTR.

Child and adolescent care: €164.3 million (action line b.1.4)

This line aims to move towards a "model more focused on the rights of the child and on the social and/or professional inclusion of young people" (Memoria, p. 36) through the creation and improvement of residential infrastructure, including access to digital technologies and the creation of participatory processes in their design; the refurbishment of infrastructure for Adolescent Crisis Units, and the promotion of specialized family care.

Direct funding for SE organizations €112.7 m (action lines a.1, a.2 and a.3)

This funding is provided for three areas: digitalization, the establishment of new forms of intercooperation (business alliances and groups), and increased incorporation in green and digital transitional sectors. It is understood that SE organizations are those who stand to benefit from article 4 of Law 5/2011, insofar as they pursue "either the collective interest of their members, overall economic or social interest, or both" (Memoria, p. 8).

A **dual-level governance** model is set out, at one level, public, chaired by the Ministry of Labour and Social Economy, with the Ministry of Social Rights and Agenda 2030 as vice-chair. At the other, public-private level, provision is made for the constitution of an Alliance for the Social Economy and Care, whose composition is entirely unknown, except that the Spanish Social Economy Employers' Confederation (CEPES) will have a leading role. No mention is made of the participation of any stakeholders expressly involved in care.

Assessment from an ecofeminist perspective

We could read this report as an attempt to both engage with an area until now scandalously neglected by public policymakers – care – and promote the non-capitalist socioeconomic fabric represented by the social economy. Both of these aspects would appear, from the outset, to be worthy of praise. At the same time, it is impossible to avoid mentioning the limited budget (there are only two PERTEs with less funding assigned to them). Beyond the allotted financing, a more thorough analysis of the PERTE leads us to some unflattering conclusions. We can consider the PERTE from three perspectives: SE, care, and how these are interrelated.

Appraisal of the social economy

The plan neglects to offer an explanation of how the SE operates that would bring it closer to the Transformative Social and Solidarity Economy (TSSE). Its appraisal of SE organizations is purely regulatory, assuming an automatic respect for "differential" values and principles. No action is set out to strengthen these organizations (innovation in the value chain of the SE is considered in terms of its market value alone). The plan commits to boosting the competitiveness of the SE within the framework of a changing productive structure in terms of digitalization and an increase importance for supposedly green sectors and, to a lesser extent, the care sector. Both of these aspects (commercial growth, and the demand for profit in a sector that is unable to achieve this if not through the degradation of existing working conditions) lead us to foresee serious

challenges in maintaining the ethical principles and social and environmental values of the SE. The SE that this PERTE seeks to encourage cannot be read in terms of community or the TSSE, but rather in terms of private commercial interests.

Appraisal of care

The PERTE does not address care as an overlooked opportunity to leverage change in socioeconomic priorities; such an idea is not even given rhetorical consideration. Of course, perhaps such considerations are impossible, to the extent that the PERTE's very structure necessitates the use of value chains as a framework, within which care work sits ill-at-ease and to which it offers a direct challenge. The PERTE defines care – a socioeconomic area that is the hidden buffer of the market system – precisely in terms of what it is not: as a profitable sector in a mercantile value chain. This leads to its inevitable depoliticization and neutralization.

It is worth highlighting that the plan does not propose any *innovation* in the care system or in relation to the collective right to care. It is difficult to see positive impacts in terms of:

- **Decommercialization:** increased funding for long-term care is redirected back to the private sector. Co-payment, the outsourcing of management of public services and the subsidizing of private providers through monetary support all go unquestioned. Prioritizing investment in equipment and technology will redirect funds to companies in the construction and digital sectors. Much weight is given to digitalization and little to human care relationships. This is a further step towards the corporate digitalization and the commodification of everyday life.

- **Defamiliarization and collectivization:** the scheme aimed at co-housing and collaborative housing is interesting, but raises doubts as to its scope, the type of initiatives that will be supported through it, and the effectiveness of the type of support to be provided. Driving deinstitutionalization through better household resources and digitization of care without raising the question of alternative household models – and without addressing domestic employment – could result in a greater burden falling on households and, in turn, on family caregivers and domestic workers.

- **Reappraisal of care work:** the lack of schemes designed to guarantee decent working conditions in the care sector or which challenge the privatization of care management offers little promise of improvement. References to unpaid care work are few and far between, and no efforts are suggested to deal with it. Domestic work is not mentioned, despite the potential to create a business niche in the area for digitalized, ostensibly social intermediary companies. There is a push away from essential jobs, with priority given to the technological over the human, the promotion of digital employment, and the creation of jobs in value-chain development and management.

The interrelationship between the SE and care

The PERTE is a missed opportunity to open space for a public-community focus at a time when care is undergoing restructuring. Far from doing so, it commits to a public-private model, defending the value of SE organizations to an audience of for-profit operators. It puts forward a model that we could call public-private, in which the privatization of management is whitewashed by placing it in the hands of the most palatable commercial companies. The plan sets out a new paradigm in which care is privatized twice over: on a private-social-commercial scale and, below this, on a private-domestic-digital scale. Automated households will continue to guarantee basic care (interpersonal relationships) under the guise of new technologies. Care, placed in the hands of a digitalized and concentrated SE sector, offers an opportunity for the most *social* of commercial operators to carve out their terrain.

Key takeaways

This PERTE sets out the groundwork for situating the ES and care as *minor sectors* within green and digital capitalism, contributing to its consolidation – particularly in terms of digitization and commodification of everyday life – while giving it a more human and friendly face.

The public-social-private dimension of care is up for contention and forces us to deepen our commitment to the public-community in the care system we want, in order to clearly distinguish it from the one that this PERTE stands for. The nature of the SE is also to be contended: do we call for a SE that seeks to embed itself in a capitalist market economy, or for a TSSE which underpins a socioeconomic fabric based on inshoring, adjustment to the biophysical limits of the planet, the revaluation of essential work, and the collectivization and democratization of the processes which sustain everyday life?

Finally, it is essential to point out that this PERTE, like the rest – given its commitment to digitalization – **is based on an expansion of extractivism and on an intensive use of energy that increases global territorial inequalities.**

5. Final reflections

As outlined at the beginning, despite the differences between the circumstances in which these plans will be rolled out and those extant when the European NGEU funds were first launched, we believe that it remains important to analyze them not so much in terms of obtaining an understanding of their inner workings as reaching a comprehension of what lies at their heart. To this end, we have found that the PERTES put forward a vision for recovery and transition which, far from facing up to the need to react to the emerging ecosocial crisis, deepens the capital-life conflict.

The PERTES use collective resources as a step towards taking a leap of faith in a digitalized capitalism that claims to be green but which is nothing of the sort, although it does fight for energy resources. They represent a public-sector boost for commercial and high-tech interests, and one which is filled with gaps:

- ✘ **First, the negation of the building blocks that sustain every day life.** The suppression of work belies the role it plays in interdependence. The non-acknowledgment of the planet and the need for reduced consumption belies our dependence on our environment.
- ✘ **Second, the denial of the conflicts of interest** and lifestyles based on hoarding, inequality and ecosystemic plunder which encumber the processes for sustaining everyday life.
- ✘ **Third, the disavowal of the urgent need to build collective spaces for shared decision-making** and to reverse the trend towards privatization.
- ✘ **Fourth, the denial of a vision focused on the sustainability of life,** centred on democratic planning and transitional global justice, which recognizes collective rights and the need to adjust to the biophysical limits of the planet.
- ✘ **Fifth, the denial of the community roots of the processes of sustaining life,** and the continued push towards an ever-more complex globalization.

The PERTES stand for a **capitalism** which holds us back from achieving an ecofeminist transition founded on five pillars:

- ✓ **Collectivization and deprivatization:** less private-commercial, less private-domestic, and much more public-community.
- ✓ **Reshoring of socioeconomic activity:** shortening the chains and rooting them in local communities.
- ✓ **Adjusting to the limits of the planet,** correcting global privileges and inequalities.
- ✓ **Reorganization and revaluation of essential work,** reducing unnecessary harmful jobs.
- ✓ **Democratization and mutual care,** the backbone of a new socioeconomic vision.

This is why we are interested in the PERTES. They allow us to see the digital green capitalism we are moving towards.

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