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Introduction

"La Ruche qui dit Oui!" is an innovative French company that claims to be successfully combining both aspects of the social economy and uberization in its business model. It supports small-scale producers, creates jobs and fosters social well-being by putting farmers and consumers directly in contact thanks to its online platform. Founded in France in 2011, it is now present in 9 countries with more than 6000 producers and 150 000 members that have joined the network. If the apparent success of *La Ruche qui dit Oui* gives us the impression that the combination of the social economy and uberization can be beneficial, it is however ambivalent as the two models appear to be, *a priori*, divergent.

The social economy is known for striving to solve social issues since the 19th century. It contrasts with the market economy as it has values and management principles of its own that differ from the liberal philosophy. Social economy enterprises are driven by solidarity, cooperation, equality as well as responsibility. They are managed democratically with a not-for-profit logic, emphasizing that the social objective primes over economic benefits. It has gained momentum especially since the years 2000s and represents today 10% of all European businesses (European Commission, 2017d). The actors of the social economy are very present in our daily lives under five different legal forms. (1) Cooperatives, like Crélan, a cooperative bank, or farmers and artisans cooperatives, (2) Social Enterprises, that are drivers of social innovation such as Fairphone, (3) Mutualities, which provide, among other services, health insurances like Partenamut in Belgium, (4) Associations such as sports clubs or Ashoka that supports social entrepreneurs and (5) Foundations, like the Fondation Roi Baudoin, that are serving the general interest and aim to create a more harmonious development of society.

Uberization is spreading very rapidly, with new projects being launched every day and revenues of such actors growing faster than traditional companies (Daverio and Vaughan, 2016). The emergence of uberization is fundamentally changing the way we live our lives in a wide range of sectors. Indeed, such companies disrupt traditional actors by leveraging the opportunities of digitalization and creating new innovative business models. Peer-to-peer transport companies (Uber, BlaBlaCar), food sharing platforms (MenuNextDoor, Deliveroo), freelancing platforms (Freelancer, TaskRabbit), peer-to-peer accommodation companies (Airbnb) or collaborative finance platforms (KissKissBankBank, the Lending Club), are all creating new economic and social interactions *via* their online platforms. There are three participants in what is called a peer-to-peer (P2P) transaction: the platform, the provider and the user. The idea of these platforms is that people (the providers) can put their under-used resources at the disposal of others (the users), with or without a monetary transaction. Such resources can be goods, such as a car, or services, like repairing a broken chair.

Both models seem to be perceived differently: while the social economy is perceived positively, uberization is usually associated with negative connotations. The social economy is seen as an economic model focusing on offering goods and services that have a real social utility. Indeed, social economy enterprises provide insertion jobs to the unemployed, develop communities locally, insure a good health plan to citizens and sell sustainable and local goods. In contrast, people tend to have a negative perception of uberization. From the first use of the term by Maurice Levy, CEO of Publicis, in 2014 to today's press highlights, uberization has been used to describe the incumbents' protests against unfair competition, the workers' complaints about poor labor conditions and an overall fear that its development would lead to the destruction of thousands of jobs.

Still, through the example of *La Ruche qui dit Oui,* it seems that combining the two models could be desirable, taking advantage of their respective strengths without distorting the essence of each system. Is *La Ruche qui dit Oui* a pioneer that has understood the synergies that could arise when merging the models? Or is the enterprise going in the wrong direction when combining two models that are opposed by too many obstacles and principles?

These are some of the interrogations that led us to orient this thesis around the following question: *Are social economy and uberization compatible and could they strengthen each other?* By asking this question, we aim at critically determining first if the two models could exist together, and then whether the uberized social economy would be desirable, i.e. if it would make the existing models stronger.

The first part of this thesis will clarify the two key concepts, namely the social economy and uberization. This is a necessary step that will later enable their comparison. Chapters 1 and 2 respectively propose a comprehensive definition for both concepts, identify their origins, give a factual overview of their current state and summarize their essential characteristics. Chapter 3 combines the key elements of the previous chapters in a summary grid, offering a first comparison of the two models.

In the second part, the two concepts are compared and then combined in order to analyze the compatibility of the social economy with uberization and then determine whether their combination would strengthen them. Chapter 1 confronts the models to distinguish the potential commonalities, complementarities or obstacles between them, assessing their compatibility. Chapter 2 debates three key areas of discussion in order to determine whether the uberized social economy is desirable or not, using the example of *La Ruche qui dit Oui* to enrich and illustrate the debates.

4.

PART 1. Social economy and Uberization: two concepts to be clarified

To begin, the two main concepts of this thesis will be defined, namely the Social Economy and Uberization. Both terms have been widely used, yet their meaning remains vague and requires clarification. In Chapter 1 and 2, we will explain them both separately, by giving an overview of the literature and by proposing our own definition for each successively. We will then look at the origins of the two concepts and see how each evolved over time, which will then lead us to a snapshot of their current state. After that, the main characteristics of each will be highlighted, in order to outline the essentials of both models. Finally, Chapter 3 will conclude this first part with a summary grid, gathering some of the key elements mentioned separately in Chapters 1 and 2. This will enable us to introduce a first picture of the two models combined. This Part 1 will serve as basis for the assessment, in Part 2, of the compatibility of the systems, of whether they could strengthen each other and of whether the uberized social economy is desirable.

Chapter 1. The Social Economy

The objective of this chapter is to answer three main questions: *What is the social economy? How did it evolve over time?* And *What are the essentials of the social economy?*

1.1. What is the Social Economy?

1.1.1. Terminology challenges

a. Challenges

Before defining the social economy, we will introduce the terminology challenges.

Definitions for the social sector have varied with time, authors having influenced the content of the definitions over time. This made it difficult to reach a solid theoretical basis universally accepted (Bidet, 2017).

In addition, the level of recognition of such an economy by the population and country regulations is still very low, despite the European Union's efforts. For example, the European Union finances projects that are encouraging the sharing of good practices, revising the regulations, raising awareness and collecting statistical data (European Commission, 2017a). In the cases where the social economy is recognized as a specific sector, various schools of thoughts have erupted. They cover more or less distinct objects and use different terminologies depending on the country's legal context and language (Bidet, 2017). Here again, the European Commission (2017d) is trying to promote suitable policies allowing, among others, a homogenized legal acknowledgment of social enterprises in the Union.

As mentioned, the different terminologies vary a lot depending on the countries. Bidet and Westlund (2003) explain that in the United States the sector is called the "Non-Profit sector", in the United Kingdom it is referred to as the "Voluntary Sector" or the "Third Sector", in Latin America as "the People's Economy" and finally as the "Community Economy" in Canada. In Europe, the term "Social Economy" is most accepted (Chaves and Monzon, 2008).

Finally, the social economy can be defined based on different elements. Allemand and Boutillier (2010) as well as Westlund (2003) write that it can be defined by either (1) the actors that support the structure or the primary person in charge (for instance entrepreneurs, customers, employees…), (2) by the legal form of the organization (public limited company, association, foundation, cooperative…) or also (3) by its activities and their purpose (fair trade, professional insertion…). These three ways of defining the social economy seem not to be easily applicable because they lack precision.

b. Terminology

We will now explain how we have decided to tackle the aforementioned challenges.

- The French terms "*économie sociale*", "*économie solidaire*" and "*économie sociale et solidaire*" will be used as synonyms since the latter is actually the evolution and a mix of the two other more historical terms (Ailenei and Moulaert, 2005; Bidet, n.a).
- Similarly, the English terms: "social economy", "third sector" and "non-profit sector" will not be distinguished, as the "*Centre International de Recherches et d'Information sur l'Economie Publique, Sociale et Coopérative* » (CIRIEC) and the OECD have done in their reports (Noya, 2007; Westlund, 2003).
- Finally, given the definition challenges identified and the assumptions made, we chose to use the terminology *social economy* as the umbrella term throughout this thesis, encompassing the different nuances. We consider it is the best hybrid term between the English and French literature.

1.1.2. Different definitions in the literature

Now that the main definition obstacles have been mitigated, we will cite different definitions from the literature. The choice of the definitions was done based on the following criteria:

- The date, selecting both older and newer definitions with a focus on recent ones,
- The author, privileging scientific papers and well-known institutions,
- The variety, showing the different types of definitions that exist.

In 1980, the National Liaison Committee for Mutual, Cooperative and Associative Activities (CNLAMCA) decided to publish the Charter of the Social Economy. There, the social economy was said to encompass companies that are not part of the public sector, that give equal rights and allegiances to their members and hence behave democratically, and that have a specific ownership as well as profit distribution regulation. The latter consists in using the surplus only to develop the company and to improve its services to society and its members (Chaves and Monzon, 2008).

The Walloon Social Economy Council (CWES) defined in 1990 the social economy sector as a third sector, composed of organizations fulfilling four characteristics:

1. Community benefit, not profit making
2. Management autonomy
3. Democratic decision-making procedures
4. Primacy of people and work over capital in the allocation of surpluses and revenues (Chaves and Monzon, 2008).

Ailenei and Moulaert (2005) state in an academic paper that the social economy does not fit with the private and public sector since it is an alternative with specific practices and forms to raise economic resource in order to satisfy people's needs. The social economy is composed of the following state-independent sectors: the voluntary, non-profit and co-operative sector. Those sectors' market activities are a way to reach social development objectives that overstep the market in itself. This is why the social economy should be regarded as a third sector.

According to Akhabbar and Swaton (2011), the social economy includes most often cooperative, mutual aid societies and associative companies resulting of legal and moral persons, of which they will fulfill the expectations and needs. In their book, they also argue that the social economy designates a movement stemming from experiences and practices willing to be different from what they call the “other economy”. In that sense, it distinguishes itself from private and capital companies through, for instance, the principles of management and the missions involved. Among those missions, one is to create a social link from the common realizations that are not focused on growth at all costs but on the quality of life, giving priority to the person rather than to the capital. It is usually called “not-for-profit” or “*lucrativité limitée*” in French.

Then, in the 2012 report of “the social economy in the European Union” carried out by the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), the social economy is defined as:

“The set of private, formally-organized enterprises, with autonomy of decision and freedom of membership, created to meet their members’ needs through the market by producing goods and providing services, insurance and finance, where decision-making and any distribution of profits or surpluses among the members are not directly linked to the capital or fees contributed by each member, each of whom has one vote, or at all events take place through democratic and participative decision-making processes. The social economy also includes private, formally-organized organizations with autonomy of decision and freedom of membership that produce non-market services for households and whose surpluses, if any, cannot be appropriated by the economic agents that create, control or finance them” (cited in Avila and Campos, 2012, p.22).

In an academic paper, Sdrali et al. (2016) define the social economy sector as the part of the economy that hangs between the private and the public sector. Such economy comprises various organizations, such as cooperatives, associations, foundations, charities and mutual aid organizations. Moreover, the social economy fulfills ignored needs or ineffectively satisfied by the governments or private businesses. Besides, “it is based on the principles of social value maximization, solidarity and responsibility, organizational autonomy, democratic decision-making process, priority of people and society over capital, voluntary and equal participation” (Sdrali et al., 2016, p.1334). In summary, it has values that differ from the private sector and its objective is to have a fair distribution of resources and duties in order to respond to basic needs of people.

According to the Centre of Documentation Economy-Finances (CEDEF, 2017), the concept of social economy designates companies organized as cooperatives, mutual aid societies, associations or foundations, whose internal functioning and activities are founded on the principles of solidarity and social utility. Those companies adopt democratic and participative management modes. They strictly regulate the use of the earning that they make: individual profit is prohibited and the revenues are reinvested. Their financial resources are generally partly from public subsidies (CEDEF, 2017).

Finally, according to the European Commission's definition, the social economy designates the part of the economy that aims at creating revenue for individuals that are neither investors nor owners. Such economy involves cooperatives, mutual societies, non-profit organizations, foundations and social enterprises (which are defined as "an operator in the social economy whose main objective is to have a social impact rather than make a profit for their owners or shareholders. It operates by providing goods and services for the market in an entrepreneurial and innovative fashion and uses its profits primarily to achieve social objectives. It is managed in an open and responsible manner and, in particular, involves employees, consumers and stakeholders affected by its commercial activities" (European Commission, 2017d, para.1).

a. Analysis of definitions

Let us now analyze the key elements of each definition in order to have a clearer view of the definition that should be used in this thesis. Therefore, we have wrapped up the above definitions in the summary table below.

Table 1: Overview of key elements from definitions of the Social Economy

Factors / Authors	Legal form	Principles						Alternative economy (third sector)
		Social utility – fulfill needs	Democratic and participative management	Autonomy	Freedom of membership	Social cohesion	Not-for-profit	
Social Economy Charter		✓	✓				✓	✓
CWES		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
Ailenei and Moulaert	✓	✓						✓
Akhabar and Swaton	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
EESC	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	
Sdrali et al.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
CEDEF	✓	✓	✓				✓	
European Commission	✓							
Total	6	6	6	3	2	2	6	5

The outcomes of this table are threefold.

1. The definition should include the elements that are the most recurrent throughout the different definitions. These are (in green): “Legal form”, “Principles: Social-utility, Democratic and participative management, Not-for-profit” and “Alternative economy”. The definitions that do not include all these elements are considered as incomplete. Only Akhabar and Swaton and Sdrali et al. mention them all.
2. The elements in yellow and red are not being used enough in the different definitions to be part of the final one. The definition retained should be clear, putting the emphasis on the principal concepts only. This shows that the definitions of Akhabar and Swaton and Sdrali et al. are too dense.
3. As a conclusion, this table highlights the need to propose our own definition, including the fundamental features only.

1.1.3. Definition proposed

Based on the overview of the definitions of the literature and on the observations made, we propose the following comprehensive definition of the Social Economy:

Definition: The social economy is an alternative economy, belonging neither to the public nor to the private sector. Its peculiarity lies in its key principles and in its specific legal forms. The principles are to have a goal of social-utility, a democratic and participative management, and a limited distribution of profit. The legal forms involve cooperatives, mutual societies, associations, foundations and social enterprises.

1.2. How has the social economy evolved over time?

1.2.1. Origins of the social economy

In order to have a better idea of where the term social economy comes from, we will here mention a short timeline of the events that have influenced its development.

The French literature is much more precise concerning the evolution of the social economy than the English one. Indeed, it has identified major historical moments that relate each time to a terminology change. The first term was "*économie sociale*", which evolved into "*économie solidaire*" to finally be called "*économie sociale et solidaire*". In the English literature, because the term did not change, the progression is less clear-cut. In order to section historical happenings logically, we will use the French terms to identify the highlights and structure our timeline.

a. The birth of social economy: From the industrial revolution to the 1970s (i.e. "*l'économie sociale*")

According to Ailenei and Moulaert (2005), the social economy first saw light in the 19th century. It was mentioned for the first time in 1830 by Charles Dunoyer, a French economist. It is only a bit later that the concept social economy was given full academic and governmental recognition. The atrocities of the Industrial Revolution such as misery and abusive working conditions, the appearance of the liberal doctrines and the government's response to the movements of workers and associations led to an "outburst of ideas, concepts, experiences, co-operative, associative or mutual aid practices, institutional and utopian initiatives" (Ailenei and Moulaert, 2005, p.2039). For instance, Akhabbar and Swaton (2011) state that during the second half of the 19th century, the first solidarity funds for workers were created.

In the first half of the 20th century, the two World Wars caused economic and social disruptions, creating peculiar situations where priorities were modified by emergency situations and where the role of the public sector increased in importance. This created a growing movement of social actions. For instance, after the stock market crash in the 1930s, public power extended to other domains such as health, unemployment, and accommodation. However, Flahaut et al. (2013) explain that social actions led by the state confined in the shadows the initiatives taken by the social economy's first actors: cooperatives, mutual societies, associations and foundations.

It is only after the Second World War and the second Industrial Revolution that the social economy really developed. Ailenei and Moulaert (2005) and Lacroix and Slitine (2016) claim that it was characterized by the will to cure the Industrial Revolution's evils (poverty and exploitation), to reduce inequalities and to invent new, fairer economic relations. It gave rise to a new approach, different from the philanthropic solidarity: one of mutual help and self-management of the people, who share a common destiny (Lacroix and Slitine, 2016). By going through transformations, the social economy finally earned recognition. As a matter of fact, in the 1970's, the "Comité National de Liaison des Activités Mutualistes, Coopératives et Associatives" (CNLAMCA) was set up, which grouped together the three main families of the social economy: mutual societies, cooperatives and associations (Flahaut et al., 2013).

b. From social economy to solidarity economy: 1980s – 1990s (i.e. "*l'économie solidaire*").

A new type of social economy, called "*l'économie solidaire*" in French, emerged in the 1980's after the oil shock of 1973 (Flahaut et al., 2013). Chaves and Monzon (2008) and Lacroix and Slitine (2016) describe this period of history with high level of unemployment, the importance of the welfare state and private economy economic crisis. Bidet (2017) and Chaves and Monzon (2008) explain that it is in this context of increasing amount of unsatisfied social demands by the traditional institutions of the market economies (both private and public actors) that citizens came up with actions called services to individuals. For instance, as illustrated by Flahaut et al (2013), unemployment pushed for the creation of organizations targeting insertion through economic activity; the recession for the research of local development strategies through new activities; and modern life conditions and the aging of population favored the invention of new proximity services allowing for an easier daily life. It is because these initiatives appeared as a factor of social cohesion since they strengthened social links as well as supported the economic and social development of territories; that they were called the solidarity economy in the 1990's.

c. The social economy today: 2000s – Present (i.e. *"l'économie sociale et solidaire"*).

In the 2000's, as explained by Bidet (2017), the number of associations and cooperatives trying to find a solution to the problems of social exclusion (such as economic insertion, help to the disadvantaged citizens or to disabled people) and to the problems of emerging needs linked to demographic and socio-economic evolutions continued to rise. More recently, the failure of the international financial system has underlined the importance of finding alternatives to the model of capital enterprises. Moreover, Golob et al. (2008) mention that the new generation is much more concerned about its environment and the threats that humans' current way of living represent.

All in all, a pattern in the origin of the social economy can be distinguished. Indeed, as Ailenei and Moulaert (2005) and Bouchard (2011) mention, social initiatives seem to emerge in times of crises as they tackle the non-satisfaction of social needs by the public and private sector. As Bouchard said: "Crisis of work and employment, crisis of the State, financial crisis, global economic crisis, ecological crisis… are all periods of great mutation that are marked by growth in inequalities, social exclusion, the "ungovernability" of States, individualism, etc" (Bouchard, 2011, pp.47-48). It is such disruptions that led to social actions, individuals willing to fulfill necessities in a way that it would also strengthen solidarity and reduce injustice.

1.2.2. Social Economy versus Liberalism

As the evolution of the social economy has pointed out, the social economy strives to correct the "evils" generated by the neoliberal doctrines and individualistic behavior (Ailenei and Moulaert, 2005). Golob et al. (2008) have analyzed what makes the social economy so different from the traditional market economy.

The first distinction to be made between the two models is their respective essence. The social economy puts the emphasis on the individual while the market economy focuses on measurable things instead. For instance, non-monetary aspects are important in the social economy, whereas the private and public sector are solely concentrated on monetary moralities.

Secondly, they both have a different notion of balance. While the capitalist notion of balance lies in the equilibrium between supply and demand, the social economy puts humans at the center, the balance struck when producers and consumers are in agreement.

Thirdly, in the liberal ideology, wealth distribution is based on fulfilling one's own interest whereas the social economy has a motivation to satisfy the common interest.

The role of the state is another major difference. According to the liberal ideology, the state is supposed to accelerate liberalization and to protect the free market, while the social economy advocates the state as a social actor.

Finally, when looking at the responsibilities of companies in the economy, social economy organizations aim at finding solutions to social problems and at defending the rights of diverse stakeholders. Differently, private enterprises are targeting the maximization of profit for their primary stakeholder, the shareholders.

1.2.3. The social economy in numbers today

Let us now have a glimpse at the current magnitude of the social economy in Europe.

The 2012 report "The Social Economy in the European Union" (Avila et Campos, 2012) conducted a detailed study on the significance of the social economy in the European Union. Most of the figures are from the years 2009-2010 and concern cooperatives, mutual societies (as well as their similar entities) as well as foundations, associations and other non-profit types. Since it is the most complete study to this date allowing the comparison of the different countries on a similar basis, it will be used to measure the social economy even though it was released five years ago.

The study revealed that there are 2 million social economy enterprises in Europe, which represents 10% of all the businesses in Europe. In terms of paid employment, the social economy, in the European Union, employed 14.5 million people in the years 2009-2010 (versus 11 million in 2002-2003), that is 6.5% of the total EU-27 working population (versus 6% in 2002-2003) and 7.4% of the older 15 member states. This percentage is even higher in some countries such as Sweden, Belgium, Italy, France and the Netherlands going up to 9%-

11.5% of the working population. Based on this, it seems that the social economy is more present in the older member states than in the new ones. More precisely, Sweden is the biggest employer in Europe with 11.16% of the working population in 2009-2010, an increase of 147% compared to 2002-2003. By contrast, the countries that are performing poorly in 2009-2010 are Latvia, Lithuania and Slovenia.

Concerning the spread of the working population, associations, foundations and other non-profit organizations employ the most people, around 9 million workers. Cooperatives follow with 4.5 million and lastly mutual societies with 362,000.

Having a closer look at Belgium, "L'Observatoire de l'Economie Sociale" (2015) mentions that the social economy represented about 10% of the working population in 2009-2010, that is 462 000 paid employment, compared to around 4.5% in 2002-2003. Most employees work in associations (94%) and the rest in cooperatives and mutual societies (Avila and Campos, 2012). In addition, "L'Observatoire de L'Economie Sociale" (2015) provides more recent statistics showing that in 2015, the sectors of employment of the social economy were mostly health, social action and hospitals. Besides, Flanders is the Region with the most social companies and hence employees, with 43% of all the social companies and 55% of the total full-time equivalents (FTEs). Wallonia follows Flanders and hosts 32% of the total social companies in Belgium and 25% of the total FTEs. Finally, Brussels represents 25% of the social companies and 20% of the FTEs. In addition to that, we notice that the social economy in Belgium employs in majority women, with 57% of FTEs being female in 2015.

These numbers reveal that the social economy has been gaining momentum over the years, including in Belgium, one of the leading countries in Europe.

1.3. What are the essentials of the social economy?

Let us now go more in depth concerning the dimensions that define the social economy.

The first essential is two-fold. The social economy is considered as an alternative to the traditional models. According to Flahaut et al. (2013) and Lacroix and Slitine (2016), the social economy builds its own plural economic model by combining various logics such as market and non-market as well as monetary and non-monetary logics. Seyfang (2006) adds that it also possesses its own values and principles, through which it has the capacity to re-conceptualize the economy into a more sustainable, fairer model in which people produce and live differently. From this perspective, two essentials are outlined: (1) the social economy is a hybrid model between the public and the private sector, (2) the social economy has a double nature: it can be social and economic at the same time.

1.3.1. Hybrid model: between private and public sector

The social economy is often also called, as mentioned earlier, the third sector. Akhabbar and Swaton (2011) and Boutillier and Ndiaye (2011) mention it can indeed be recognized as a sector of hybridization between the private initiatives of the market sector and the management of the public sector, with specific values and missions. It strives to invest in areas neglected by the government and private actors. However, Bouchard, (2011), Boutillier and Ndiaye (2011) and Sdrali et al. (2016) explain that in order to do so, it often relies on the help and support of the state, through subsidies, and on the private sector for funding (e.g. sports sponsorship) and trading. Therefore, Seyfang (2006) argues that considering the social economy as an alternative is somehow illusory. Hence, it is more relevant to use the word "hybrid", allowing for the three sectors to overlap to some extent. As a matter of fact, Golob et al. (2008) consider "integration and reciprocal cooperation between the third sector, the state and corporations (formal branches of economy) and individuals or citizens as a necessary prerequisite for social economy" (Golob et al., 2008, p.633). Bouchard (2011) writes that as a result of this cooperation, networks linking the different actors mentioned are created, ensuring, for instance, public-private partnerships.

1.3.2. Double nature

The second essential stemming from the fact that the social economy is an alternative is its double nature, namely economic and social. Lacroix and Slitine (2016) mention that the social-oriented economy tries to reconcile economic performance and social utility by striving to reduce the inequalities and foster "healthier" economic relations. Moreover, Chaves and Monzon (2008) remind that social actors are actually groups of individuals who are trying to satisfy the needs of the general interest through their economic activities rather than the interest of the investors. In a nutshell, the social economy is "conducting economic activities that are subordinated to social objectives" (Bouchard, 2011, p.48).

1.3.3. Creation of social links and sense of community

As mentioned, the social economy has the particularity of creating or strengthening social links through its activities, fostering social cohesion. In addition, Bouchard (2011) and Golob et al. (2008) claim that it creates networks by connecting the different actors, including:

- Individuals, who are fighting for a better world.
- The government, that increasingly considers the social sector as a partner, and that starts introducing standards concerning social responsibility of corporations.
- Corporations, who are the biggest barrier to a new economic model. Indeed, they are "a driving force behind the accumulation of private capital and a personification of the existing economic system" (Golob et al., 2008, p.634).
- The organizations of the social economy themselves, trying to serve the community.

Furthermore, Westlund (2003) stresses that the networks are reciprocal, meaning that they are more horizontal than in other types of economy. Finally, Akhabbar and Swaton (2011) mention that communities are created through the aforementioned synergies between the different players and the social links fostered as they involve local people.

1.3.4. Serving the general interest

One of the social economy's objectives is to serve the global interest and not only the interest of shareholders. Undeniably, according to Chaves and Monzon (2008) and Lacroix and Slitine (2016), because the individual is put at the center, the social economy strives to create activities that have as goal the common good of all members and of the community in general.

1.3.5. Satisfaction of unmet needs

The social economy also has the specificity of being guided by satisfying the users' needs rather than by making profit write Lacroix and Slitine (2016). Beyond that, Bouchard (2011) and Sdrali et al (2016) point out that the social economy strives to meet needs (including basic ones such as finding a job) that were unfulfilled by both the private and public sector.

1.3.6. Innovation

In order to solve social problems, the social economy sometimes proves to be innovative. According to Ailenei and Moulaert (2005) as well as Lacroix and Slitine (2016), it is seen as a source of innovation as its objective is to find solutions for unmet or unsatisfied needs. Hence, it has to find ways to create economic activities with a true social utility, which differs from the traditional way of doing business. This is often why the actors of the social economy come up with new ways of governing, "new products or services, new openings, new organizations and new procedures" (Bouchard, 2011, p.51).

1.3.7. Environmental and local embeddedness

A dimension less mentioned in the literature is the local and environmental aspect. Flahaut et al. (2013) and Seyfang (2006) explain that often, the initiatives created are local by the people they involve and the scope of their activities (e.g. Local Exchange Trading Schemes). Moreover, as the individual is at the center, social economy organizations need to find sustainable solutions that will not jeopardize the users' environment and hence their survival (Akhabbar and Swaton, 2011; Sdrali et al., 2016).

1.3.8. Driven by specific values

Another specificity of the social economy differentiating it from the market economy is the importance of its democratic values. The key values, as mentioned by Akhabbar and Swaton (2011) and Sdrali et al. (2011), are solidarity, equality, autonomy, cooperation, reciprocity, trust and responsibility. For instance, Golob et al. (2008) define solidarity as the connection of individuals "into a community or a group, which helps them face economic, political and social issues" (Golob et al., 2008, p.631). Another example is reciprocity, that Westlund (2003) illustrates by: "horizontal hierarchical relations and the absence of legal means of coercion" (Westlund, 2003, p.1197). This differs significantly from the traditional relations of the government with the citizens or the managers with their workforce.

1.3.9. Respect of statutory principles

From the values cited above, specific principles concerning the internal structure of social organizations have flourished. According to Richez-Battesti (2010), the main ones are the following:

- Membership is voluntary.
- Companies of individuals/partnerships, not of capital.
- Model of democratic management centered on the active participation of the members: one person, one vote.
- The model of capital detention is based on collective ownership, not-for-profit and the absence of individual appropriation of profits. Not-for-profit means that the majority of the profits are reinvested in the company, or distributed to the community. The

remuneration of shareholders, when it exists, is limited.
- All actions need to be driven by a social utility principle. Goods and services have to satisfy user's needs and serve the general interest (Lacroix and Slitine, 2016).

In some legal forms, there exist additional statutory principles such as the dual status in mutual societies and shared-ownership in cooperatives.

1.3.10. Adoption of a specific legal form

The last dimension concerns the type of organizations involved. The European Commission (2017d) and Richez-Battesti (2010) agree on saying that organizations adopting one of the following legal forms can be considered as actors of the social economy.

- Cooperatives. They are created to ensure solidarity among the cooperators, like Biocoop.
- Mutual societies. They are based on the principle of mutuality and having as purpose to raise money from its members to be able to then provide services for its members, like health and insurance mutual.
- Social enterprises. For instance, Project Repat upcycles t-shirts into fashionable clothing accessories while creating jobs for disadvantaged people. Other examples include the Grameen Bank or Fairphone.
- Non-profit organizations (also called associations). Unicef or The Red Cross are examples.
- Foundations. For instance, Fondation Abbé Pierre or Fondation Roi Baudouin.

Among these legal forms, Chaves and Monzon (2008) point out there are two sub-sectors: (1) the market sub-sector, including cooperatives, mutual societies and social enterprises and (2) the non-market sub-sector with the associations and foundations.

Akhabbar and Swaton (2011) and Golob et al. (2008) stress how difficult it is to define which organizations are considered as actor of the social economy because the legal forms change over time. Besides, they warn that having a specific legal form does not ensure the respect of the other principles that are inherent to the social economy, and vice versa. This is why some authors also allow for other juridical forms to be accepted as long as the social mission is fulfilled (Lacroix and Slitine, 2016). Yet, based on the definition chosen, only the five actors mentioned above will be considered as part of the social economy.

20.

Chapter 2. Uberization

Uberization is a buzzword. As of today, no real consensus has been reached on the definition of the term and its meaning. The goal of this section is to clarify the concept. A panel of existing definitions from literature and press will be explored. Then, the main elements of each will be retrieved and assessed to finally propose a comprehensive definition of the concept. We will then explore the factors explaining the rise of uberization to finally highlight relevant numbers to assess the current state of the phenomenon and its magnitude.

2.1. What is uberization?

2.1.1. Terminology challenges

When exploring the existing ways of defining uberization, two main observations are to be made.

First, if the term has been frequently used and defined in French, it is not the case in English. Some other terms are more widely used in English, such as « sharing economy » or « collaborative economy ». In French, more subtleties exist between the different terms, whereas in English, umbrella terms are more often utilized, with less precision in the terms used.

Secondly, even in French, there is no clear definition of the term. Various authors such as Borel et al. (2015), Damgé (2015) and Jacquet and Leclercq (2016) agree that the term uberization has been used as a neologism, for different purposes and often to describe different phenomena. Moreover, they recognize the need for conceptual clarity and the difficulties arising when attempting to define it. A few elements can explain it:

- It is a new terminology, which has only been introduced in 2014 (Jacquet and Leclercq, 2016).
- The notion is still evolving, which explains the various perspectives people still have on it. For instance, Bertholet and Létourneau (2017) explain that it does not have the same signification for a taxi driver as for an entrepreneur of the Silicon Valley.
- This 'semantic confusion' (Richardson, 2015, p.122) comes from the fact that the term is referred to by a wide range of alternative words, especially in English, such as collaborative, gig, and on-demand economy (Richardson, 2015).

In light of the above observations, the purpose of this section is to come up with an English definition that could be universally used to describe the rising phenomenon.

2.1.2. Different definitions in the literature

The definition proposed is based on a panel of selected descriptions from different authors to provide a complete and balanced picture of the different interpretations that exist.

As previously said, the term uberization in French was introduced by Maurice Lévy, CEO of Publicis, in 2014. He mentioned it during an interview for the Financial Times, as representing the fear of companies to be threatened by new competitors taking advantage of technological advances, such as Uber (Jacquet and Leclercq, 2016).

Since its introduction in 2014, the term uberization has been widely used in the media as well as by individuals, intrigued by this hot topic. Therefore, to represent the public opinion, we have selected some definitions coming from a leading newspaper in Europe and from Wikipedia.

In an article in the French newspaper Le Monde (2017), uberization was described as the name given to the rise of collaborative economic models, driven by start-ups such as Uber or Airbnb, that do not rely on employees anymore, but rather on independents providing the desired services (Le Monde, 2017).

Then, it is interesting to look into Wikipedia's definition, both in French and in English, to clarify the concept in both languages. The website can indeed be considered as representing the public opinion since its articles are collectively written and constantly modified by anonymous contributors.

On the one hand, on its French page, Wikipedia defines it as a recent economic phenomenon consisting in the use of services allowing professionals and clients to be put in direct contact, in an almost instantaneous way, thanks to the use of new technologies. Further, it is said that uberization fits within the framework of the more general concept of collaborative economy (Wikipédia, 2017). On the other hand, on its English web page, Wikipedia defines it as being « a transition to an operational model where economic agents exchange under-utilised capacity of existing assets or human resources (typically through a website or software platform), while incurring only low transaction costs » (Wikipedia, 2017a). The platform

Wiktionary redirects the search for « uberization » to the article on the sharing economy. There, uberization is defined as being an alternative name for the phenomenon of sharing economy (Wikipedia, 2017b).

Then, with an extensive media coverage and people talking a lot about it, it became commonplace to use the term uberization. This is illustrated by the introduction of this word into various dictionaries.

In 2017, the term entered in the French dictionary « Le Robert Maxi »: « *transformer (un secteur d'activité) avec un modèle économique tirant parti du numérique*» (transforming (a business sector) with a business model taking advantage of digital technology) (Le Robert Maxi, 2017, p.1109).

The Cambridge online dictionary defines the verb « uberize » as: « to change the market for a service by introducing a different way of buying or using it, especially using mobile technology » (Cambridge Dictionary, 2017).

Finally, with the rise of the phenomenon, some experts have tried to define the concept and to determine its key factors.

Leclercq (2016), co-founder of the Uberization's Observatory (*Observatoire de l'Ubérisation*), defines uberization as being at the crossroads of the collaborative consumption (which is a revolution in the way we consume products), the digital innovation (mastery of technologies and of the big data) and the gig economy. The gig economy is the « informal definition for people who make a living by sharing and selling services and goods on platforms like Airbnb, Uber, Lyft, Task Rabbit, and so forth. » (Ma and Parigi, 2016, p.38). This term is used to refer to « gig jobs », created by technological companies such as Airbnb and Taskrabbit, that are « structurally uncommitted, free of expectations, and undefined » (Ma and Parigi, 2016, p.39).

Monitor Deloitte (2015) suggested a definition based on seven criteria.

1. Disruption: economic models are questioned and large existing companies are threatened by private individuals that upset the market in a very short time.
2. Usage: the use of a good or service prevails over the possession of it.
3. Innovation: new ways of doing that make people look differently at their day-to-day life.

4. Exchange: connect people that are looking for a good or service with the individuals that have a good or service to offer. This exchange can be done through barter, sharing, selling or renting.
5. Digital: the exchange mentioned is supported by digital platforms, such as the Internet, smartphones or online payment systems.
6. Interdependence: the customer is put at the center of the transaction, and the number of intermediaries is reduced.
7. Dynamic: prices are adjusted in real time, according to supply and demand. The access to the good or service is done on demand, when and where the consumer wishes it.

In a recent book, published in 2017, Bertholet and Létourneau define the term as: "*disruption rapide de modèles économiques existants par des plateformes numériques de confiance sans infrastructures physiques ni opérateurs et centrées sur le client*" (quick disruption of existing economic models by trustworthy digital platforms, that do not have physical infrastructure, nor operators, and that are clients-oriented) (Bertholet and Létourneau, 2017, p.21).

a. Analysis of definitions

Uberization is most commonly used in French, whereas in English, the « sharing economy » is rather employed. However, for this thesis, it has been chosen to adopt the terminology uberization. Then, we noticed that all the authors have different ways of defining the concept of uberization, but that a few characteristics are similar in all, or almost all of them, as it is represented in the table below. This being said, most of the definitions are incomplete and therefore need to be combined.

Table 2: Overview of key elements from definitions of Uberization

Factors / Authors	Threat	Disruption	Innovation: business model such as Uber	Usage: different ways of buying and using	Technology	Collaborative economy
M. Lévy	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Le Monde			✓			✓
Wikipédia					✓	✓
Wikipedia		✓			✓	✓
Le Robert		✓	✓		✓	
Cambridge		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Leclercq			✓	✓	✓	✓
Deloitte		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bertholet and Létourneau		✓			✓	✓
Total	**1**	**6**	**6**	**3**	**8**	**6**

Two main criteria are used to propose our definition, namely the uniqueness of the characteristic and its presence in the existing definitions from the literature.

The presence of the characteristic in the literature is assessed thanks to this comparative table, with in green the elements found in the majority of the definitions. For instance, since only M. Lévy considers uberization as being a threat (in red), the element is not considered as essential, and will not be part of the final definition.

A characteristic is considered as unique if it does not overlap with another one, it is related to this phenomenon in particular, and it is not used to describe other phenomena. For example, the characteristic of "innovation: business models such as Uber" and "usage: different ways of buying and using" overlap, since businesses like Uber innovate in the way they consider the usage of goods. Similarly, the "collaborative economy" concept encompasses dimensions such as the usage, or the business models like Uber. These three characteristics are thus not mutually exclusive. Consequently, only the one that covers the other two, namely the "collaborative economy", should form part of the definition. Moreover, the technological aspect, even though present in almost all the definitions, does not only characterize uberization, since it could also be used to describe other phenomena. It is therefore not a unique feature of the uberization, and will thus not be included in the definition proposed.

This overview confirms that the literature is still vague when it comes to defining precisely what uberization is, emphasizing the importance of building a clarified version of the term.

2.1.3. Definition proposed

Based on the analysis of existing definitions and the criteria explained above, we have composed the following definition that will be used throughout this thesis.

Definition: Uberization is a phenomenon characterized by (1) the disruption of current industries using (2) innovative business models of the collaborative economy.

We will now clarify the second part of the definition (2), since it involves the core concept, namely the collaborative economy, before analyzing its disruptive aspect (1), by comparing it with the traditional market economy.

a. Innovative business models of the collaborative economy

Since uberization is defined in the context of the collaborative economy, it is important to fully understand the concept firstly by defining it and then by identifying its underlying characteristics.

Even though the notion of collaborative economy is still evolving, definitions exist in the literature. The table below gives an overview of it, with four definitions selected: one from the European Commission, two from recent academic papers, and one from Rachel Botsman[1].

[1] Rachel Botsman is an author and a visiting academic at the University of Oxford, Saïd Business School. She co-wrote a book with Roo Rogers, “What’s mine is yours”, focusing on collaborative consumption.

Table 3: Overview of definitions of the Collaborative Economy

Source	European Commission (2016, p.5)	Alt and Puschmann (2016, p.95)	Frenken et al. (2017, pp.2-3)	Botsman (2017)
Definition	**Collaborative economy** "refers to business models where activities are facilitated by online platforms that create an open marketplace for the temporary use of goods or services often provided by private individuals".	"The term ''**Sharing Economy**'' was first mentioned in 2008 and denotes the ''collaborative consumption made by the activities of sharing, exchanging, and rental of resources without owning the goods.''[2] In the context of economic transactions, it refers to the use of an object (a physical good or a service) whose consumption is split-up into single parts. These parts are collaboratively consumed in C2C networks coordinated through community-based online services or through intermediaries in B2C models[3]."	**Sharing economy**: "Consumers granting each other temporary access to under-utilized physical assets (« idle capacity »), possibly for money."	**Collaborative economy**: "An economic system that unlocks the value of underused assets through platforms that match 'haves' with 'wants' in ways that bypass traditional intermediaries and distribution channels. **Sharing economy**: "Economic system that facilitates the sharing of underused assets or services, for free or for a fee, directly between individuals or organizations."
Key elements	- Online platforms - Temporary use of goods or services - Provided by private individuals	- Collaborative consumption: sharing, exchanging and renting resources - No owning of goods - C2C or B2C - Online services	- C2C - Temporary access - Under-utilized physical assets - Money or not	- Underused assets - Platforms - Bypass traditional intermediaries - C2C or B2C

The outcomes of the analysis of this table are twofold.

1. There is no universally accepted definition of the concept but a lot of synonyms exist, such as sharing economy, peer-to-peer economy, or on-demand economy (European Commission, 2016a). However, some, such as Botsman, argue that all the terms are not synonyms because some nuances remain. However, for the purpose of this thesis and based on many academic papers that use them all to illustrate the same concept, they will be considered as synonyms and will always refer to the phenomenon of uberization.
2. Authors are aligned in their interpretation as they stress the same key elements. Therefore, we chose to use the definition given by the European Commission, but slightly modifying it by adding a missing element, the notion of 'idle capacity', i.e. the use of « under utilized physical assets ». We will define the collaborative economy in the following way.

<u>Definition:</u> Business models where activities are facilitated by online platforms that create an open marketplace for the temporary use of under utilized physical assets ("idle capacity") often provided by private individuals.

Collaborative business models share the following typical features:

- **Temporary use**: Goods are rented rather than being bought. The use of a resource prevails its possession. In other words, access prevails ownership (Monitor Deloitte, 2015). For example, OuiCar enables individuals to rent cars belonging to their neighbors for a short period of time. People do not need to own a car anymore since they can access one when they need it.
- **Under utilized assets**: The use of resources is optimized, individuals giving access to their under utilized goods to peers, possibly for money (The Economist, 2013). OuiCar illustrates this feature as well, private individuals giving access to their car to their neighbors when they do not need it.
- **Facilitated by online platforms**: The key goal of the platform is to connect providers with users, facilitating transactions and reducing intermediaries, consequently lowering the transaction costs. The platform usually becomes the only beneficiary between the buyer and the seller but is not involved in the object of the action. The platform charges a fee to the users on the exchanges it facilitates (European Commission, 2016). For example, Uber (2017) considers itself as the intermediary between the user and the Transportation provider. Some authors (Bertholet and Létourneau, 2017; Borel et al., 2015) mention that some view it as a disintermediation, connecting individuals directly

and setting up short circuits while others see it as a re-intermediation, with the platforms becoming a new intermediary that did not exist before (for example Airbnb) or that replaces traditional intermediaries (such as Uber, substituting taxi booking phone platforms).

- **Peer-to-peer ("P2P") relations**: A user can be on both side of the transaction, sometimes as a buyer and other times as a seller, as it suits him best (The Economist, 2014b). For instance, someone can book an accommodation on Airbnb one week, and the next one rent his house on the same platform.

According to Botsman (2010), additionally to these four key characteristics, there are four essential principles in the domain of collaborative consumption:

- **The critical mass**: A collaborative platform needs to attract enough people to be attractive. For instance, Airbnb is attractive only if it has a large enough panel of accommodations at its disposal.
- **The power of idling capacity:** As explained above, the idle capacity of objects is leveraged. The most commonly used example to illustrate this is the use of a drill: most people use their drill only a few times in their lives, but the majority of the households possess one. If a drilling machine could be borrowed only when needed, people would not have to own one anymore. "I do not need a drill, I need a hole in the wall" (Monitor Deloitte, 2015, p.15)
- **Belief in the commons**: People need to believe in the sharing of resources and trust that they will not suffer from the collective management of goods.
- **Trust between strangers**: Sharing is not new, but sharing with strangers is. There is, therefore, a clear need for trust among users. Besides, the intermediary does not act as a guarantor anymore, that risk being passed on directly to the users. The higher degree of risk that stranger sharing involves is mitigated thanks to the reputational systems of the platforms, such as ratings, essential to instill trust and enable the exchanges.

b. The disruption of existing industries

Let us now look at the first part of the definition that tackles the disruption of traditional business models. This destabilization comes from the profound differences between uberization and the traditional market economy. We have grouped them into four main parts.

First, according to Alt and Puschmann (2016), the collaborative economy follows a hybrid market model, highlighting the coexistence of different types of market (traditional market model) and non-market models (gift giving). It is positioned as an alternative to the prevailing model of ownership and continuous growth. Rather than transferring the ownership of the goods, it is the use of it that is valued. Besides, as explained by Borel et al. (2015), the collaborative economy is composed of both market and non-market actors, thus facing a potential contradiction between two logics: the profit and market rationale, and a logic driven by social and environmental values. P2P platforms therefore position themselves differently depending on how they handle this duality. Some will become purely market platforms, whereas others will not even monetize their activities.

Second, whereas traditional companies are vertically integrated, business models of P2P platforms are characterized by their horizontality. Indeed, the platform, replacing the majority of the intermediaries, becomes the only real indispensable intermediary, with no hierarchy anymore (Borel et al., 2015). Next to that, companies do not produce anything by themselves. Take for instance Spotify, Uber or Blablacar: none of them sells a product they own or produce (Monitor Deloitte, 2015).

The cost structure is another major difference. Usually, since the platform replaces the intermediaries, costs decrease, allowing the company to offer lower prices. Similarly, the companies leverage the technology to decrease their costs structure. On top of that, they do not own the assets they sell or rent and usually do not directly employ labor, since they only act as platforms, connecting sellers with buyers, which gives them a significant cost advantage (Montgomery et al., 2015).

Lastly, the regulation varies from country to country regarding these new platforms. Regulatory differences with traditional business models include requirements regarding employment contracts or insurances. As the new platforms have only started to be regulated, it leads to unfair competition with platforms benefiting from the lack of regulatory framework (Jacquet and Leclercq, 2016).2.2. How has uberization developed?
Now that the concept of uberization has been clarified, defined and described, we will look at the dynamics behind it. Indeed, these dynamics explain both the origin of the phenomenon and its amplification over time, leading to today's situation.

2.2.1. Origins of uberization

According to Montgomery et al. (2015), the emergence of collaborative business models was driven by the combination of technological advances, changes in demographics and labor market, as well as evolving consumer behaviors.

a. Technological advances

Worldwide Internet penetration, which increased from 5.8% in 2000 to 49.7% in 2017 (Internet World Stats, 2017) and smartphone penetration have paved the way to innovation in the way we do business and commerce. The key technological aspects that fostered the rise of the sharing economy include Global Positioning Systems (GPS) locator capabilities, trust systems and online payment platforms. Jacquet and Leclercq (2016) add that this digital revolution brought a lot of innovative opportunities that both companies and consumers have been seizing. On the one hand, firms have been faced with the challenge of internalizing the value creation triggered by digital tools. Many companies have been able to take up this challenge and are now mastering these new technologies, which give them a competitive edge and bring about change in the way they operate. On the other hand, Internet connectivity, through smartphones, tablets and other connected objects facilitated the access to digital applications for consumers.

b. Changes in demographics and evolving labor market

The global financial crisis of 2008 gave rise to significant changes in demographics and in the global distribution of labor, which favored the development of collaborative business models. The crisis caused unemployment to rise and wages to decline, hurting younger generations the most. This, in the US, was paired with increases in student debt, deeply influencing people's view on work and consumption.

A first consequence of the crisis that favored the rise of on-demand companies is the fact that people moved to cities, hoping to find job opportunities there. Companies took advantage of this increasing concentration of population in cities by enabling exchanges between people physically close to each other.

The crisis also had an impact on people, particularly the youth, influencing how they viewed work. Young people, disillusioned by traditional employment, sought new forms of employment, such as freelance work. Between 2005 and 2010, about three million full-time

U.S. jobs were converted into uninsured contracts, in other words, the kind of positions used in the sharing economy. The Economist (2014a) highlights that people were indeed looking for independence, with the freedom to work when they wanted, for the period of time they were choosing, and where they wanted. The temporary aspect of the missions also played a role in attracting young people to that new form of employment. This gave companies a new way to source labor, without the traditional heavy costs including insurances, paid time off, maternity leave, or taxes, thus reducing drastically the financial burden of on-demand firms (Montgomery et al., 2015).

c. Evolving consumer behaviors

The 2008 crisis also brought about change in the attitudes towards consumption and ownership, nurturing the desire for more collaborative consumption habits.

First of all, young people started to pay more attention to their expenses, often changing their purchasing habits, favoring renting over buying. Older generations, which had been affected by the crisis, were looking to find ways of optimizing the assets they possessed, such as cars or empty rooms. This trend helped the development of the sharing economy, which saw private goods owned by individuals available for trade, and temporary usage sometimes preferred over ownership (Montgomery et al., 2015; Alt and Puschmann, 2016).

Next to that, the rise of online platforms and social media pushed people to act as part of a community, and consequently to pool resources: goods, services, pieces of advice or experiences. This fostered the creation of social link, collaborative platforms facilitating social interaction and community building.

In addition, Jacquet and Leclercq (2016) mention that people now want to be able to have access to the resources they need when they want to, where they want and at the best price possible. Consumers are indeed increasingly impatient, looking for speed, simplicity and fluidity. Platforms answer that need by providing easy to use, intuitive applications that make consumers' lives easier.

Besides, Jacquet and Leclercq (2016) also explain that customers require transparency, respect and want to feel valued in their daily lives, which platforms fulfill with the service, quality, comfort and fixed price guaranteed in advance. Moreover, people, disillusioned by the crisis and the empty promises of governments, were looking for interpersonal relationships based on trust. Collaborative platforms succeeded to transform this quest for trust into a major strength, via digital systems such as scoring or ranking (Jacquet and Leclercq, 2016).

These dynamics that explain the rise of collaborative models, both in terms of demographics and labor market as well as in terms of consumer behavior can be illustrated by some key figures about the participation patterns in the collaborative economy. PwC's 2016 report (Daverio and Vaughan, 2016) indeed shows that:

- It is mostly the younger generations (under 35) and the well-educated that participate.
- In Europe, awareness and participation are highest in Southern European countries, such as Italy and Spain. This proves the link between the 2008 financial crisis and the development of the collaborative economy. Southern European member States were indeed more impacted by the crisis, with high unemployment rates and low economic growth (Daverio and Vaughan, 2016).
- Similarly, the willingness to participate in such collaborative models is greater in developing regions, such as Asia-Pacific (78%) and Latin America (70%) as compared to developed regions like Europe (54%) and North America (53%).
- In Europe, the key factors influencing the participation of people in the collaborative economy are linked to cost savings (see Appendix 1). Indeed, 58% of "European consumers who have participated in the collaborative economy did it to save money" (Daverio and Vaughan, 2016, p.9), and 53% did it because it is an easy way to make extra money. Moreover, 52% engage in collaborative economy because it is good for the environment, and 47% because it helps build communities. In Belgium, the numbers follow the same trend: 50% of Belgian consumers participated in the sharing economy to make extra money easily and to save money, while about 40% of Belgians did it for the environment and for the community aspect.
- In the US, another study was carried out and revealed that the main motivations for working in the collaborative economy were: the source of income it represents, the employment opportunity (when could not find standard employment) as well as the attractiveness of flexibility, independence and "greater control over working patterns" (European Commission, 2016a, p.37).

2.2.2. Uberization in numbers today

Having analyzed the elements that pushed towards uberization, we will now assess the current situation to seize the magnitude of the phenomenon. P2P platforms are indeed a fast growing trend. Even though the extent of the phenomenon is still small, its rapid growth proves the attention we should pay to it (European Commission, 2016b).

The 2016 study conducted by PwC (Daverio and Vaughan, 2016) estimated that "platforms in five key sectors of the collaborative economy generated revenues of nearly € 4 billion in Europe in 2015 and facilitated around € 28 billion of transactions" (Daverio and Vaughan, 2016, p.6). These five key sectors are P2P accommodation, P2P transportation, on-demand household services, on-demand professional service and collaborative finance (see Appendices 2 and 3).

Another key takeaway of PwC's market sizing assessment is that the growth rate of the collaborative economy has been substantial since 2013, European revenues generated by the platforms having almost doubled from 2014 to 2015. This trend is expected to continue, confirmed by a Eurobarometer assessing consumers' interest in the collaborative economy (European Commission, 2016b). This 2016 Eurobarometer poll indeed revealed that more than half of European citizens know what the collaborative economy is and that one-sixth of Europeans are using it (European Commission, 2016a).

In its study, PwC also analyzes the countries of origins of collaborative economy organizations (see Appendix 4). It concluded that UK and France are leading the movement, the UK having contributed to about one-third of the activity in 2015. Germany, Spain and the Netherlands follow them, each having founded over twenty-five collaborative economy companies. Finally, Sweden, Italy, Poland and Belgium have created around twenty-five collaborative economy organizations. In Belgium, in 2015, 8.5% of the population stated that they had already participated in a P2P transaction, either by exchanging or by sharing a service or an asset, with a monetary transaction involved. However, taking into consideration Brussels only, this number reaches 16% (Daverio and Vaughan, 2016).

Overall, the growth witnessed in Europe is expected to continue, giving rise to more collaborative economy companies, and challenges linked to the emergence of such innovative business models.

2.3. What are the essentials of a uberized model?

The purpose of this section is to conclude this chapter by giving an overview of the uberization's essential features. In order to do so, the list below was created, compiling the most important aspects that were mentioned throughout this chapter.

Uberization is characterized by the following elements:

- A hybrid model, between profit and commoditization on the one hand and social and environmental values on the other hand; between traditional market and non-market models
- The disruption of the traditional market model, with collaborative business models
- The reliance on underused assets, leveraging idle capacity
- The prevalence of use over ownership
- The use of platforms, replacing traditional intermediaries and connecting providers with users
- The use of technology, characterized by the intensive use of internet, mobile technology, GPS, social networks and online payment systems
- Its local and proximity dimension, since individuals connected are usually in close geographical proximity
- The creation of social link, fostering a sense of community and social interaction
- The new cost-price-quality relation: lower cost, enabling platforms to offer lower prices, or better quality.
- Importance trust among users: ensured via the rating systems
- A new transaction type (P2P), connecting private individuals.

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Chapter 3. Social economy and uberization: summary grid

This third chapter summarizes some of the information from the two previous chapters to conclude this first part with a clarified view on both concepts. The goal is also to start confronting the two models that were previously analyzed separately. Therefore, we propose a structural framework that groups in different categories some key aspects that were touched upon in chapters 1 and 2.

Table 4: Summary grid of social economy and uberization

	Social Economy	Uberization
Economic sector	Third sector: Between the public and the private sector	Hybrid market model: Between traditional market and non-market models
Sectors	All sectors involved: health, education, environmental protection, sports, arts, culture or historical preservation, science, research and innovation, agriculture, tourism, media and communication, etc.[4]	More and more sectors involved: food, financial, mobility, travel, logistics, work, education, media and entertainment, etc.
Interaction type	B2B and B2C	Mostly P2P, could include B2C and B2B
Actors	Associations, mutual societies, foundations, cooperatives and social enterprises	Private individuals
Legal status	Legal forms established	No legal form established
Regulation	More and more regulations arising allowing for more recognition	No clear regulatory framework yet
Purpose	Dual: social purpose as well as an economic purpose for most actors, and a community dimension.	Hybrid: from purely economic purpose to solely social purpose (from traditional market to non-market economy)
Examples	- Non-profits: Greenpeace, Unicef - Foundations: Fondation Roi Baudouin - Cooperatives: Crélan, Biocoop - Mutual societies: health mutual - Social enterprises: Fair Phone	Uber, Airbnb, Lyft, Freelancer, Couchsurfing, WeClaim, Ouicar, etc.

[4] European Commission, 2017

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PART 2. The uberized social economy

After clarifying the concepts of social economy and uberization separately in Part 1, we will now focus on analyzing them together to evaluate their compatibility. Do the two models share commonalities or are they diametrically opposed? Could it be beneficial to combine the two or would it lead to their distortion? If beneficial, how should both models be combined? All these questions will be tackled in this second part. Firstly, in Chapter 1, we will compare the two models according to several criteria, namely their origins, present state, key concepts and a SWOT analysis. These analyses will allow us to assess the compatibility of the models and will highlight the areas that require further discussion to determine whether the two models could strengthen each other, i.e. if the uberized social economy is desirable or not. This will be done in Chapter 2.

Chapter 1. Comparison of the models

1.1. Are the two models compatible?

The goal of this section is to confront the concepts of uberization and social economy, so as to identify their similarities and differences, as well as the potential synergies and the obstacles that arise when combining the two. In order to do so, the two concepts will be compared based on different points. Firstly, we will compare them according to elements that were brought forward in Part 1, namely the origins of the two concepts, their present state and the essential aspects of both, based on the definitions proposed. These essentials will be compared in tables summarizing the key concepts of each model as well as their respective dimensions and indicators. The tables will then be put together to create a discovery matrix, enabling us to confront all the dimensions and to have a clearer picture of what the combination of the social economy and uberization entails. Secondly, a SWOT analysis will be conducted for each model separately. This will, again, enable us to compare the models. It will also make sure all key points have been identified since the SWOT matrix introduces new elements not covered in Part 1. We will conclude this chapter by summarizing in a framework the findings of the analyses conducted, stressing the areas that require further discussion before judging the desirability of the uberized social economy.

1.1.1. Comparison of the origins

In Part 1, we have identified the origins of both models separately. As a reminder, the social economy started in the 19th century and finds its origins in (1) the eruption of economic and/or social crises that lead to (2) changes in citizens' mindsets, which (3) are expressed through the creation of social initiatives aiming at solving the crises' issues. Uberization is a very recent concept that developed thanks to a combination of three dynamics: (1) technological advances, (2) changes in demographics and the labor market as well as (3) evolving consumer behaviors.

The comparison of the origins of the two models brings to light two elements.

1. The social economy dates from the 19th century, while uberization is not even ten years old. This has several implications. Firstly, there is a generational shift between the two. While uberization is mostly popular among the youth, the social economy attracts more adults in their 45 to 55 years old (Observatoire économie sociale, 2015). Secondly, according to Winkel (2014), young entrepreneurs willing to have a social impact tend to see the social economy as somehow outdated and burdened by its slow way of working. Because of that, they are likely to turn to structures of the traditional economy. But then, Winkel (2014) also highlights that the collaborative economy sometimes strives to reinvent aspects that the social economy has already tackled. This reveals an opportunity for the collaborative economy to leverage the experience and know-how of the social economy.

2. Although the models emerged in times of crises, aiming for innovation, the way organizations innovate differs significantly. On the one hand, social economy enterprises innovate as they offer new ways of governing as well as new goods and services in order to solve social problems. On the other hand, the major disruptive element of uberization is linked to the technological advances and digital tools, which collaborative businesses have leveraged to connect peers directly. Conversely, the social economy has not been taking advantage of the digital revolution yet.

1.1.2. Comparison of the current state

Let us now take a closer look at some of the key numbers of each model mentioned in Part 1 in order to compare the scope and growth of the two phenomena. We highlight here three comparison points.

1. Regarding their scope, the social economy's presence is much larger. Indeed, there are 2 million social economy enterprises in Europe, representing 10% of all European businesses (European Commission, 2017d). In comparison to that, PwC (2016) has estimated that over 275 collaborative economy organizations have been founded across nine key member States. Even though this number is likely to be higher (it should include all European countries and should be reassessed today), it still shows that the social economy has a larger breadth than the collaborative economy.

2. With regard to their growth, both models show growing trends, but to a different extent. The comparison is based on different measurements but the purpose here is to have a general order of magnitude of the models' evolution. On the one hand, jobs in the social economy increased from 11 million in 2002 to 14.5 million in 2010 (European Commission, 2017d). This number is likely to be higher today, but no recent numbers could be found. On the other hand, as stated by PwC (2016), the revenues generated by the collaborative economy are constantly increasing and have almost doubled between 2014 and 2015. As mentioned, although these figures compare different elements (growth in terms of employment versus growth of revenues generated), they reveal that both systems are growing but that the collaborative economy is doing so at an unprecedented pace.

3. Lastly, the countries leading the way are similar in both systems: France, the Netherlands, Italy, Belgium and Sweden. For the collaborative economy though, there are additional players such as the United Kingdom, Germany and Spain (PwC, 2016).

1.1.3. Comparison of the essentials' matrices

Based on the definitions proposed for both models in Part 1, we have created two tables, one for the social economy and one for uberization, organizing the information for each in the following way:

- First, the concepts stemming from the definition.
- Then, the dimensions related to these concepts.
- Finally, the indicators that enable the identification of each dimension.

This classification enables us to organize in a structured way all the key aspects gathered previously and allows for a systematic comparison of both models.

Table 5: Concepts, dimensions and indicators of the social economy

<table>
<tr><th>Concepts</th><th>Dimensions</th><th>Indicators</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Alternative economy</td><td>Hybrid model</td><td>• Third sector: between private and public sector
• Reliance on subsidies/sponsorships from public and private sector</td></tr>
<tr><td>Double nature</td><td>• Economic activities subordinated to social objectives
• Creation of social link and social cohesion
• Fair and ethical economic activity</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Principles</td><td>Social utility</td><td>• Satisfy users' needs
• Profit is not the priority
• Serve the general interest / the community</td></tr>
<tr><td>Democratic and participative management</td><td>• One person one vote
• Sharing of power and decisions</td></tr>
<tr><td>Not-for-profit</td><td>• Reinvestment of profit in the organization
• Distribution of profit to the community
• Limited/forbidden distribution to shareholders</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Legal form</td><td>Cooperatives</td><td>• Legal entities
• Operate on the market
• Primary purpose: satisfy members' needs
• Respect of social economy's values and principles
• Set up by consumers, workers or producers</td></tr>
<tr><td>Mutual societies</td><td>• Autonomous association of persons - legal entities or natural persons
• Operate on the market
• Primary purpose: satisfy members' common needs in the insurance, providence, health and banking sectors
• Respect of social economy's values and principles
• Mutual provident societies or mutual insurance companies
• Ownership by users</td></tr>
</table>

Concepts	Dimensions	Indicators
	Social enterprises	• Legal entities, private companies • Operate on the market • Primary purpose: achieve social impact over generating profits for members • Respect of social economy's values and principles • High degree of autonomy • Significant level of financial risk • Offer goods and services in an entrepreneurial and innovative way
	Associations	• Legal entities • Non-market producer • Primary purpose: offer social goods and services of unquestionable social utility for individuals • Respect of social economy's values and principles • Funded by voluntary contributions in return of services provided • Non-distribution of profits or surpluses
	Foundations	• Legal entities • Non-market producer • Primary purpose: offer social goods and services of unquestionable social utility for individuals • Respect of social economy's values and principles • Funded by voluntary contributions in return of services provided • Non-distribution of profits or surpluses

Table 6: Concepts, dimensions and indicators of uberization

Concepts	Dimensions	Indicators
Disruption of existing industries	Hybrid model	• Purely market platforms/ Gift-giving platforms/ Mixed • Alternative to model of ownership and growth • Dual logic: profit and market rationale as well as social and environmental values
	Horizontality	• Horizontal conception, production and consumption modes • Direct coordination between members (no vertical hierarchy)
	Cost structure	• Lower costs (low overhead and labor costs) • Lower prices or increased quality
Collaborative economy business models	Digital platforms	• Connection of providers with users: Internet, mobile technologies, GPS, social networks • Mechanism of economic transaction: online payment system • Mechanism of verification and trust: reputational systems, e.g. ratings • Replace traditional intermediaries • Creation of social link
	Underused assets	• Idle capacity of goods shared
	Use over ownership	• Goods rented, not bought • Temporary use
	P2P relations	• Users' role central • Users as both buyers and sellers

a. Methodology

The comparison of these two tables is done with a discovery matrix, which is "a dual entry chart which permits the intersection of two different types of information variables" (Benoit-Cervantes, 2016, p.104). We confront the concepts and dimensions of the social economy and uberization with the help of the indicators. This matrix is typically used to produce innovative ideas by confronting two universes that are usually not combined. All the boxes constitute innovation windows on which the search of new ideas can be based. Indeed, we intend to combine two ideas that, a priori, seem to stem from very different realms, with the objective of creating a third one, unprecedented.

The methodology we used to analyze this matrix is based on Benoit-Cervantes' approach (2016) and consists of the following:

- For each cell, we confronted the dimensions of the social economy with the ones of uberization, using the indicators[5] for more precise comparisons. Systematically, we focused on identifying similarities and differences between the two models, with the objective of detecting possible synergies or obstacles to construct a combined concept. Out of all the cells, we have enumerated the relevant cells, from 1 to 13. The cells left blank are the ones where no comparison point was found.
- After analyzing and commenting on all the cells separately, we took a step back and tried to distinguish patterns from our findings. We concluded that all the elements identified can be grouped into four main categories:
    1. In green, elements that clearly show a commonality between the models. As defined by Bascle (2016), a commonality is the "extent to which two businesses have a high degree of overlap in their resources or competences" (Bascle, 2016, p.10). Thus, the commonalities identified are the areas where the two models' dimensions overlap.
    2. In yellow, dimensions that may show a commonality to both models but need to be further discussed.
    3. In blue, complementarities that may lead to opportunities of synergies. Complementarities "occur when resources or competences of one business complete those of another business" (Bascle, 2016, p.10). They can lead to synergies, which "are supposed to be obtained through the exploitation of relatedness, which consists of commonality and/or complementarity across some of the firm's businesses" (Bascle, 2016, p.10).
    4. In red, obstacles to the rapprochement of the models.

[5] The indicators are not shown in the matrix, but can be found in tables 5 and 6.

Table 7: Matrix of social economy and uberization

			Uberization						
			Disruption of existing industries			Collaborative economy business models			
			Hybrid Model	Horizontality	Cost Structure	Digital platforms	Underused assets	Use over ownership	P2P relations
Social Economy	Alternative economy	Hybrid model	-	-	-		-	-	-
		Double nature	**1.**	-	-	**2.**	-	-	-
	Principles	Social utility	**3.**	-	**4.**	-	-	-	**5.**
		Democratic and participative management	-	**6.**	-	-	-	-	-
		Not-for-profit	**7.**	-	-	-	-	-	**8.**
	Legal form	Cooperatives	**9.**	-	**10.**	**11.**	**12.**	**12.**	**13.**
		Mutual societies	**9.**	-	**10.**	**11.**	-	-	**13.**
		Social enterprises	**9.**	-	**10.**	**11.**	-	-	**13.**
		Foundations	**15.**	-	**10.**	**11.**	-	-	**13.**
		Non-profit organizations	**15.**	-	**10.**	**11.**	-	-	**13.**

Caption	
Commonality	Complementarity
Possible commonality	Obstacle

b. Findings

Commonalities

In green, cells number 3 and 5 highlight the fit of the hybrid model and P2P relations dimensions of uberization with the social utility dimension of the social economy. In both models, great attention is given to the users' needs and to serving the community in general, not only to profit. Users are central in both cases, the models striving to put individuals back at the center. This match shows that both share commonalities in that regard and encourages us to continue confronting the models, looking at other dimensions to assess the compatibility and complementarity of the models.

Possible commonalities

In yellow are the dimensions that could possibly be commonalities. For all of them, more research is needed so as to determine whether they are matching or not. We noticed that they are all linked to the hybrid model dimension of uberization.

Firstly, cell 1 focuses on the double nature of the social economy, characterized by economic activities being subordinated to social objectives as well as the pursuit of a fair and ethical economic activity, which seems to be similar to the dual logic of uberization (profit and market rationale as well as social and environmental values). However, the profit logic of uberized business models could be an obstacle to the association of the models.

Then, cells 9 and 15 link the hybrid model dimension of uberization with the legal forms of the social economy. On the one hand, cells 9 group the cooperatives, mutual societies and social enterprises. Their market aspect favors a rapprochement with the market or mixed models of collaborative platforms and their dual logic. However, attention should be paid to the central values of social economy enterprises, which might not be respected by collaborative platforms. On the other hand, cells 15 include the non-market entities, namely foundations and associations. The match here is between their non-market aspect and the gift-giving platforms of the collaborative economy. It highlights an interesting perspective: bringing together the two extremes of each model.

Complementarities

In blue are all the complementarities that were spotted and have the potential to lead to synergies. They can be divided into two main groups.

The first opportunity we identified is the digital platforms on which collaborative companies rely. Cells number 2 and 11 illustrate this opportunity. The key point here is that digital technologies could help the social economy in its strive to create social link. Platforms in uberized business models have indeed as main goal the connection of individuals, and could, therefore, be used in social economy models as well. Besides, the primary purpose of all the legal forms of the social economy is to satisfy members' needs. Digital tools could assist them in this objective. This being said, further discussion is needed to determine whether the digitalization would be a real opportunity for the social economy and whether it would lead to synergies, or not.

Secondly, we gathered cells number 7, 8, 12 and 13 as they are all linked to the desire of both models to have the users central in their model. It represents an opportunity for collaborative platforms to find a balance between the economic rationale and the social and environmental values, by putting the users even more at the center and have them benefit from the value they create. For instance, the non-for-profit principle of the social economy could be applied to uberization (cells 7 and 8). Consequently, the distribution of profit would be regulated and could be distributed to the users/members and community/other stakeholders rather than to shareholders. Similarly, all the values and principles ruling social economy enterprises could be integrated into collaborative companies (cells 13). This could represent an opportunity for collaborative platforms to integrate more formally the fact that users and their needs are central.

Cells 12 reveal commonalities and possibilities of complementarity between the cooperatives and the dimensions of underused assets as well as the use over ownership of uberization. In cooperatives, ownership is usually shared with the people that founded the cooperative. They do it in order to benefit from the advantage of acquiring, processing or producing products or services together (Clarence and Noya, 2007). Such a particularity can be combined with the underused assets dimension of uberization since cooperators often come together to share goods that have some idle capacity. Besides, the fact that they share ownership shows that the use of goods is more important than their individual possession, as it is the case in the collaborative economy. We also see a possible complementarity: what if uberized business models would take the form of cooperatives? Could it lead to a true distribution of ownership, profit, and responsibility?

On top of these two groups, one more opportunity remains, cell number 6, at the intersection of the democratic and participative principle of the social economy with the horizontality dimension of uberization. Emphasizing the democratic and participative management in collaborative economy models could have a positive impact for uberization, by giving a voice to all members, for instance. Besides, the horizontality is characterized by the direct coordination between members, without many intermediaries, which is made possible thanks to the online platforms. Therefore, leveraging the technology could be an opportunity to help social economy organizations share the power equally, put the members directly in contact and have more horizontal conception, production and consumption modes.

Obstacles

In red, we have marked the areas where there is a clear barrier to the combination of the two models. It is striking to see that these obstacles are all related to the cost structure dimension of uberization. It is characterized by low costs, usually thanks to low overhead and labor costs. For instance, Uber owns no car and the drivers are independent contractors, which means Uber usually does not need to pay for social security, health care, or the cars themselves. This cost structure can clash with the social utility dimension of the social economy (cell 4) as well as with the values and primary purpose of social economy enterprises (cells 10). Further research is thus needed to determine if this obstacle is impassable, or if it could be overcome.

In conclusion, thanks to the thorough analysis of this discovery matrix, four main categories were identified. Among them, three require further analysis in order to be able to assess the desirability of the combination of the models, i.e. if the two models would reinforce each other.

1. Potential commonalities limited by the tensions between the market and non-market rationale, as well as between the social and environmental values and the search for profit.
2. Complementarities that could lead to synergies, mainly coming from the digital technologies and from the social economy's principles aiming at valuing the people as such, over capital.
3. Obstacles arising from the cost structure of P2P platforms, which conflicts with the model and values of social economy enterprises.

One drawback of such a matrix is its systematic character. It enables the identification of many possibilities but that can lead to a lack of clarity so as to what the key findings are. To make sure we have not missed any essential element and to help in the selection of the major aspects only, we need to combine this matrix with another analytical tool. We chose to use the SWOT analysis.

1.1.4. Comparison of the SWOT matrices

a. Methodology

Conducting a SWOT analysis for both models separately will enable us to identify possible relevant strategies in the creation of a uberized social economy model. The objective of constructing a SWOT analysis is to identify the strengths (S), weaknesses (W), opportunities (O) and threats (T) of each model and to find a way to manage them, so as to optimize performance (Hindle, 2002). Then, according to Hunger and Wheelen (2010), after listing items in the four categories, a choice needs to be made among four different strategies: (1) "SO strategies", using strengths to take advantage of opportunities, (2) "WO strategies", taking advantage of opportunities by overcoming weaknesses, (3) "ST strategies", using strengths to avoid threats and (4) "WT strategies", minimizing weaknesses and avoiding threats.

In our case, we are not analyzing specific companies like it is usually done, but rather social economy and collaborative economy organizations in general. We have used the PESTEL framework to identify the opportunities and threats of both models (see Appendices 5 and 6). After the respective SWOT analyses (see Appendices 7 and 8 for the SWOT matrices and 9 and 10 for the details of each element of the SWOT), we have reflected on the strategies suggested by Hunger and Wheelen (2010) referred to above. We have however adapted them since our goal is to find a strategy combining the two models, and not a strategy for each separately.

b. Findings

By analyzing and comparing these SWOT, we noticed common strengths and opportunities to both concepts, which is encouraging as it allows for a possible compatibility between the two. We also identified a common weakness to both, namely their regulatory frameworks. Concerning the specific strengths and weaknesses of each concept, we observed that the key strengths of one model could be leveraged to overcome the key weaknesses of the other one, and vice versa. Grant (2013) classifies in his matrix (See Appendix 11) strengths and weaknesses according to their strategic importance and their relative strength. He defines key strengths as being the most important ones, of high strategic importance and of high relative strength compared to rivals. Key weaknesses are the most important weaknesses, that are of strategic importance but that have a low relative strength compared to rivals. We used Grant’s matrix to identify the key strengths and weaknesses of each model.

These findings confirm that combining the two models could be desirable and worth exploring as the two models could strengthen each other.

Using common strengths to take advantage of opportunities

When observing the two SWOT analyses, we first noticed common strengths to both models, linked to their practices. It shows that both models share commonalities, which justifies the idea of combining the two. The two models are not diametrically opposed, both striving to give a central position to the consumers or users in their model. Then, the two aim at creating social links, which should be further used to take advantage of the growing desire to create social links among younger generations. Finally, they both have a dual logic, driven by the willingness to serve individuals and the community, giving importance to social and environmental aspects, but at the same time sometimes looking for profit. This can be boosted by the growing concern for social and environmental issues. The strengths identified can hence be used as a strategy to take advantage of opportunities from the external environment, when combining the two models.

Taking advantage of opportunities by overcoming common weaknesses

The second key finding is that both models have a common weakness linked to the regulation.

On the one hand, uberization has almost no legal framework. This translates into its workers having the status of independent contractors, therefore not benefitting from the social benefits of employees. As a consequence, their income is unpredictable and long-term employment remains insecure. On top of that, the absence of a regulatory framework leads to a situation of unfair competition with traditional actors. The sustainability of the actual model, taking advantage of the regulation’s blurriness, is threatened by over-regulation, the instauration of specific regulations per country and the reaction of incumbents.

On the other hand, the social economy is regulated. However, the legal framework is not always adapted, sometimes forcing social economy enterprises to survive with the same regulations as private actors. It also seems to be incomplete, lacking common European regulations.

To overcome this common weakness linked to the lack or the absence of regulation, both models should take advantage of the support they benefit from the European Commission and other institutions. Spotting this Weakness-Opportunity strategy that could be beneficial to both models simultaneously brings to light a new debate question: is the current lack of regulation an opportunity to reinvent and create a suited regulatory framework for both models? Or would clearer (and maybe stricter) regulations jeopardize the models?

Using uberization's key strengths to overcome social economy's key weaknesses

The uberization's SWOT analysis revealed that one of its key strength is its innovative use of digital tools (i.e. online platforms), which positively influences the cost structure, the efficiency and the quality of the services of P2P platforms. This distinctive feature translates into other major strengths of the model, namely the online payment system, the trust ensured by reputational systems and the incentive to behave well, the flexibility for service providers in terms of job and money as well as the instantaneity of the service for the users. All these elements also often lead to the creation of strong brand equity.

The social economy's SWOT analysis showed that the key weaknesses of the model are likely to be linked to its weak digital presence and use, its poor management, its difficult access to financing as well as its low level of recognition. Our finding here is that the key strength of uberization could be used to overcome these weaknesses of the social economy. Introducing digital tools into social economy enterprises while taking advantage of external opportunities and avoiding external threats could indeed enable them to go over these weaknesses. It would overcome the social economy's weak digital use and presence and its low level of recognition. This would be done by leveraging the digitalization, the rise of Internet and social media, as well as the fact that teenagers are social natives. Secondly, the emergence of alternative online financing capacities such as online crowdfunding represents another digital opportunity for social economy enterprises that struggle to access financing and are threatened by budget restrictions from governments. Introducing more technology into the model could also help overcome the slowness and sometimes poor management inherent to the model. Finally, using this uberization's strength could assist the social economy in avoiding some threats, namely the emergence of start-ups with a social purpose but not belonging to the social economy and the ongoing disrupting digital revolution which is likely to continue destabilizing more and more sectors.

In short, we recognized an opportunity to use the digital strength of uberization to tackle weaknesses of the social economy, at the same time taking advantage of opportunities and avoiding threats (SO and ST strategies). This complementarity shows that economic synergies could emerge from the combination of the two models.

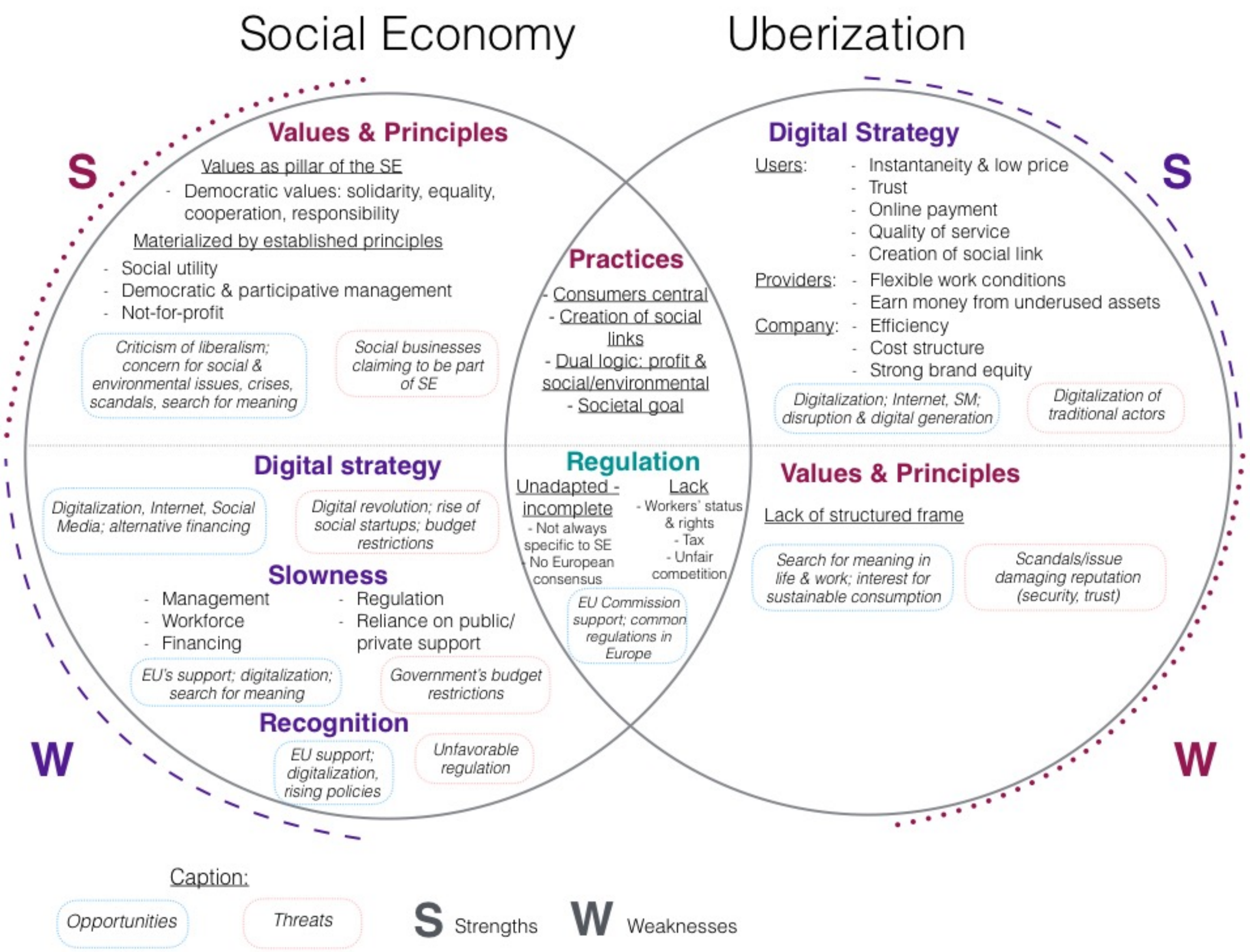
Using social economy's key strengths to overcome uberization's key weaknesses

One of the social economy's key strengths is linked to its strong principles and values, usually leading to the reconceptualization of economic relationships along more equitable, democratic and sustainable lines. On the contrary, one of uberization's key weaknesses is the lack of structured frame regarding its values and principles. It is characterized by the fact that, for instance, no values or management principles are clearly established as mandatory elements of the model. As a result, we notice that the combination of the two models could be an opportunity. Indeed, leveraging the strong values and principles of the social economy could help uberized models to overcome their lack of established principles and values. This complementarity is legitimized by opportunities in the external environment, such as the increasing search for meaning in work and in life in general, the growing interest for sustainable consumption and concern for social and environmental issues, the increasing criticism of the neoliberal model as well as the environmental and social scandals of private firms. Introducing these values formally into uberization could hence help the model avoid scandals damaging its reputation. All these opportunities encourage us to consider the values and principles at the heart of the social economy as an opportunity of complementarity with uberization.

1.1.5. Outcome of the comparison

Combining these observations and conclusions with the ones from the discovery matrix above and from the comparison of the origins and present state of the two models, we conclude this chapter by proposing a framework that summarizes our analyses' takeaways (See Figure 1). Each circle represents one model: one for the social economy and one for uberization. The two circles include, at the top, the key strengths of the model (S) and, at the bottom, its key weaknesses (W). These are followed by the opportunities (in the blue dotted frame) and threats (in the orange dotted frame) linked to them. At the intersection of the two circles, we identified the strengths (Practices) and weaknesses (Regulation) that are similar to both models.

Figure 1: Summary of comparison findings



As illustrated in Figure 1, the social economy and uberization are two distinct models, but which share commonalities. Combining them seems to have potential benefits even though some obstacles were also highlighted throughout this chapter. Three areas were identified that require further discussion to determine whether the models strengthen each other, i.e. if the uberized social economy would be desirable. As shown in the framework, these are: (1) the digital strategy, (2) the values and principles and (3) the regulation.

1. The way uberized business models leverage the use of digital platforms is their key strength. It is beneficial to the users, the service providers as well as to the company itself. They take advantage of all the opportunities brought forward by the digital revolution. This clearly reveals that combining the two models could lead to possible synergies. As a matter of fact, the social economy's key weaknesses (W) could be overcome by the development of a digital strategy (S). The latter could revitalize the social economy, create new financing possibilities, boost enthusiasm from the younger generations and increase its recognition, both from governments and individuals.

2. The strong values and principles of the social economy are one of its key strengths (S). It could help counteract the key weakness of uberization (W), namely the lack of structured frame regarding its values and principles. The common practices of the two models, i.e. the importance of having the users in a central position, the creation of social links, the pursuit of a societal goal and the dual logic are also elements interesting to analyze further. Indeed, although these practices seem to be similar to both models, questions arise regarding the extent to which they are applied and respected. For instance, what is the balance between the profit and market rationale and the social and environmental values in the models? How important is making a profit as compared to having a societal impact?

3. Regulation is positioned at the intersection of the two models because both the social economy and uberization struggle with their current regulatory framework but could leverage the support they benefit from the European Commission to turn this weakness into a strength. There is thus an opportunity to create a common legal framework, or to adapt the current one. From another perspective, the actual lack of regulation of uberization could be an obstacle to the combination of the models, as noticed in the matrix. Indeed, collaborative economy companies tend to take advantage of this regulatory blurriness, which could clash with the social economy's values and principles.

Chapter 2. Assessment of the desirability of the uberized social economy

In this last chapter, we will cover the three areas of discussion identified in Chapter 1 in order to determine whether the two models can strengthen each other and hence if the uberized social economy is desirable or not. In the first discussion, we will wonder whether digitalization, characterizing uberization, can benefit the social economy. Secondly, the social economy's values and principles and their potential for uberization will be addressed. Finally, we will focus on the breaches in the regulation of both models and how to possibly offset them with the uberized social economy. The three debates will each time be illustrated using the example of *La Ruche qui dit Oui* (LRQDO) in order to compare the theory with a practical case of a company that combines features of both the social economy and uberization. As a reminder, LRQDO is a company connecting local farmers with consumers through its online platform. It is structured in beehives, each beehive gathering the local community and being directed by a beehive manager, responsible for organizing the online sales each week on the platform and for the distributions. *La Ruche Mama* handles the maintenance of the platform for all beehives and other administrative services. LRQDO is a commercial enterprise that was given the status of social enterprise in 2012 ("*Entreprise Sociale et Solidaire*") because it is said to respect the principles of the social economy.

2.1. Uberization's digital strategy: desirable for the uberized social economy?

As distinguished in Chapter 1, digital technologies seem to have a role to play in social change as they could mitigate some of the weaknesses of the social economy such as its weak digital presence and use, its lack of professionalism, its low level of recognition and its difficulties to attract qualified employees. Such opportunities could become a reality through the uberized social economy. Yet, there are some negative aspects linked to digital platforms too, which raises questions on the desirability of combining uberization and the social economy. In order to assess this, we wondered: are the digital technologies at the center of uberization really an opportunity to strengthen the social economy? If so, does it make the creation of a uberized social economy desirable?

This section will cover these questions and will unfold in three parts: the impact of P2P platforms – both positive and negative - on (1) the company, (2) its providers and (3) its users. The impacts will be linked each time to LRQDO and to the social economy's specificities in order to evaluate the attractiveness of combining uberization and the social economy.

2.1.1. Impact of digitalization on companies

P2P platforms are said to bring about positive openings for companies and, by extension, for social economy enterprises. We grouped the impact that digitalization has on companies into three categories: modernization, management improvement and expansion.

a. A way to modernize social economy companies

According to Bressant (2016), digital innovation is a relatively easy way to modernize a firm's core activities and structure. This was observed in uberized companies and the creation of modern P2P platforms. Waintrop (2017) adds that the digital can boost companies that lag behind. Platforms are drivers of innovation, as Grover et al. (2015) explain, because they are easy to maintain, easy to connect with other technologies, are flexible, can process a lot of information, are relatively cheap and can be reused for other projects. The digital has hence lowered the barriers to innovation that before required significant financial and qualified human resources. Whathelet (2015) therefore advocates for the use of digital tools by social economy companies, seeing it as a way to re-energize their production, consumption and redistribution modalities. Besides, it could help social economy actors in competing against the rising number of social start-ups.

b. A way to improve the management of social economy companies

The characteristics aforementioned seem to grant firms not only a way to be innovative but also a way to improve their management. Como et al. (2016) write that it enables enterprises to be more efficient by exchanging and sharing faster and more easily. Flexibility is another advantage that platforms give, as they are modular and allow for enhanced coordination by assigning responsibilities more simply (Cenamor et al., 2016). A third factor enabling better management is the low costs and decreasing marginal costs of digital platforms. Beckouche (2017) gives three reasons for this: (1) the more the production of goods or services uses informatics, the smaller the costs as softwares are cheap, (2) the bigger the distribution network, the less distribution costs thanks to network economies, and (3) the more the use of goods and services is optimized by being employed by many users thousands of times, the tinier the expenses. Moreover, Schor (2017) mentions that transaction costs are lower since the exchanges happen from person to person, deleting unnecessary intermediaries. Finally, platforms are very effective at collecting precious data, which can be used to customize goods and services to the taste of the company’s customers (Beckouche, 2017).

However, some authors (Errard, 2015; Gaonach and Lebellego, 2016) argue that building a digital architecture can actually be very expensive and is not always easy to use.

To help us judge if the uberized social economy is desirable, let us compare the theoretical findings with the concrete example of LRQDO. According to Chéron (2013), the CEO of LRQDO, the company is tapping into the digital opportunities mentioned. For instance, even though setting up a platform and maintaining it requires resources as highlighted by Florent Artaud, legal counsel at LRQDO (interview, 26th of July 2017; see Appendix 12), Chéron (2013) explains that it is partly offset by the efficiency gains and reduced costs granted by the digital tool. Thanks to lower transaction costs among other things, digital even helped to double the income of suppliers compared to the traditional sector. Moreover, LRQDO gathers and studies data from its platform to improve its website and understand consumption patterns to offer tailor-made services and goods. One of the producers (La Ruche qui dit Oui, 2017) adds that the Internet and the digital can boost short-circuits: everything goes faster, communication is more efficient and new customers are reached every day. Further, according to Laurence Everard (interview, 13th of July 2017; see Appendix 13), spokesperson for the Belgian network and beehive manager in Brussels, LRQDO is more professional than other organizations such as the Associations to Maintain Small-scale Farming ("*AMAP*" in French) in France thanks to its digital strategy including, for example analytical tools and dashboards available on its platform for the use of the producers.

Based on the theory and the practical case of LRQDO, it seems that the benefits of P2P platforms for companies and their management outweigh the disadvantages, making the uberized social economy desirable for the social economy as it could strengthen it.

c. A way to scale up social economy companies

The last aspect of platforms that impacts companies is the chance it gives them to expand smoothly and rapidly. Bringer and Viola (2017) and Cenamor et al. (2016) in fact write that "platforms are technological infrastructures that allow firms to develop, configure, and deliver advanced services efficiently at an unprecedented scale" (Cenamor et al., 2016, p.2) to a lot of people, without geographical limits. Also, Beckouche (2017) explains that once you succeeded at implementing a platform, you can spread easily from your current core business to almost anything, anywhere, by tapping into the skills acquired and the network economies. In addition to this, uberized actors often use social media in parallel to the online platform.

Both tools have great potential to increase the visibility and communication of companies, by creating social buzz for instance (Fournier, 2015).

Nevertheless, the growth of existing online platforms has shed light to a negative aspect. Béraud (2016) explains that their modality to grow fast and easily has led to the creation of monopoly platforms such as Uber and Airbnb jeopardizing smaller start-ups. This monopolistic attitude raises doubts concerning the word “sharing” economy.

For LRQDO, L. Everard (interview, 13th of July 2017) confirms that the platform has helped it to expand and be known. As its network was a success, the company decided to expand to other countries. This was facilitated by the national and international exchanges of best practices and information between the members on the platform, says Chéron (2013). LRQDO hence confirms Beckouche’s saying, as the skills acquired from the first beehive were copied and pasted to create other beehives on the platform. Concerning social media, LRQDO is present on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Youtube. L. Everard (interview, 13th of July 2017) however tempers the digital enthusiasm, saying that social media is not always enough to make beehives known to the local community, reminding the importance of word of mouth.

Applying the scale up arguments to the social economy, the ability to expand and to be more visible can be useful to the social economy as it sometimes faces a low level of recognition among citizens and lacks the tools to increase its size, writes Winkel (2014). Besides, knowing that the social economy has a very local impact and uberization has both a global and local reach, the uberized social economy could result in a global audience at the service of an increased visibility of local initiatives (Borel et al., 2015). Thanks to P2P platforms that connect peers directly, social economy companies’ mission to create social link will be facilitated and its reach as well as impact augmented. However, we have seen through L. Everard’s interview that digital platforms and social media are not always the best tools to do so. In addition to this, the threat of monopoly platforms still remains, as there is no certainty that LRQDO will not become a monopoly in the future, clashing with the values of the social economy.

All in all, P2P platforms offer desirable attributes for the social economy as long as the actors mitigate the threat of monopoly.

2.1.2. Impact of digitalization on providers

Providers of services and goods can also benefit from online P2P platforms. First, it allows them to have flexible working conditions as they can choose when and how much they want to work (Manjoo, 2015). As Freeman (2015) notices, this answers the current trend of employees looking for part-time, temporary or self-employed jobs. In addition to offering flexible working conditions, Grover et al. (2015) argue that uberization creates jobs for low qualified people. For instance, there are no special skills required to become an Uber driver or a Deliveroo courier. Adding to this, unlike artificial intelligence that is a job destructor, Alexandre (2017) explains that digitalization is not a threat to employments; it only modifies them as you train employees to incorporate the new tools in their tasks.

Some authors are more skeptical regarding the benefits of P2P platforms for the providers. To begin with, Schor (2017) disagrees with the good working conditions mentioned above, as employees in uberization are paid poorly, based on supply and demand (i.e. it is not predictable), and are taking on a lot of risks due to their independent status (see section 2.3.). Regarding the creation of low-qualified jobs, Beckouche (2017) contradicts the belief, explaining that new positions will be created, but for highly qualified people only, able to analyze data and build algorithms. On top of that, Schor (2017) reveals in her study that currently, the providers of Airbnb are "highly educated, often professionals, and that they are using the platforms to increase their earnings" (Schor, 2017, p.276). Lastly, Beckouche (2017) and Goument and Miguet (2015) are pessimistic as platforms replace traditional actors such as banks in the case of lending platforms, putting at risk millions of jobs, which will not be replaced fully. Indeed, it is estimated that in the next twenty years, 47% of the jobs in America will be taken over by digital tools and 54% in Europe (Beckouche, 2017). This scenario seems hence far from the social benefits of creating jobs for the unemployed and the socially excluded.

In the case of LRQDO, we witness good working conditions, farmers earning twice as much as if they were working with traditional supermarkets and benefitting from computer and Internet training if they lack digital knowledge (Chéron, 2013). As manager of a beehive, L. Everard (interview, 13th of July 2017) enjoys her independent status giving her total flexibility on her schedule. She says that the working conditions are absolutely optimal. Besides, LRQDO participates to the disintermediation of the distribution of agricultural products but is itself a new intermediary. In this case, and because one of LRQDO's mission is to help producers find consumers easier, the wave of job destruction announced by Beckouche does not seem to apply.

From a social economy point of view, we see that the working condition debate is moderated with LRQDO who manages to be an attractive employer and avoid the precarious working conditions. This shows that decent labor settings are possible within uberized models. Secondly, it appears that the authors arguing about the type of work created are both right meaning that low and high skilled employees will be needed, as Jacquet and Leclercq (2016) suggest. While this aspect can be interesting for the social economy and its job insertion goals, it might add on to the current struggle of social economy enterprises to attract highly qualified employees. But as Valnier (2016) argues, this difficulty also applies to uberization actors anyway. Finally, it is important not to mix digital tools with artificial intelligence as Alexandre (2017) rightly points out. Job destruction should not be feared if the companies train their employees, as LRQDO does with the farmers lacking digital skills.

It seems that LRQDO managed to tackle the negative aspects of digital platforms for providers, confirming that the uberized social economy could be desirable and could be a way of strengthening the social economy, as long as its values and principles are respected.

2.1.3. Impact of digitalization on users

The final benefits of platforms concern the users. There is a consensus that uberization's use of platforms is very advantageous for users for different reasons.

The digital platforms allow firstly to offer services of better quality thanks to, for instance, the analysis of data which permits to create an adequate offer to each customer, as mentioned earlier (Cenamor et al., 2016). As Goument and Miguet (2015) also point out, the quality of the services is higher thanks to geolocalization that enables goods delivery and services on-demand, online payment which allows users not to worry about having cash and fixed rates in advance putting an end to the risk of being ripped off. The price is also often lower.

The second opportunity for users is the creation of social link and cohesion that P2P platforms enable. The direct contact is actually what changed between the initial P2P market such as E-Bay and the new market of the collaborative economy mention Ert et al. (2016). It works because, as explained by Jacquet and Leclercq (2016), there is a new societal tendency, people increasingly willing to create social contact and to find in social interactions conviviality and friendliness.

Third, trust is absolutely necessary for uberization "since trading with strangers in P2P marketplaces involves asymmetric information and economic risks" (Ert et al., 2016, p.63). Ert et al. (2016) explain that the risks are not only monetary anymore, as with the primary P2P actors, because now users go into strangers' home, cars… P2P platforms have hence created rating systems, ensuring trust between peers and consequently promoting direct interactions, guaranteeing good behavior and transparency. This is beneficial for the users that are guaranteed of the quality of the service provided, or able to directly complain about it on the platform through the rating system when they are not fully satisfied (Bonneau, 2016; Goument and Miguet, 2015).

However, as argued by Beckouche (2017) and Borel et al. (2015), it appears that uberization is actually pushing to what they call a "de-socialization". For instance, users of Airbnb do not always meet the owners and reviews have codified trust. Bonneau (2016) and Ert et al. (2016) go further saying that personal photos of Airbnb users have led to racism, a price difference of 12% being noticed depending on the skin color of the user. Additionally, the collaborative economy's initial sharing nature has been distorted by the primacy of the proprietary model of capitalism (Beckouche, 2017). Bertier (2017) justifies this idea by reporting providers of Airbnb who are buying flats to make a living on the rents all year round.

The three aforementioned positive points, i.e. better quality of services, creation of social link and fostering of trust, apply to LRQDO. Buyers enjoy fair prices as well as a user-friendly platform providing convenient services such as online payment (European Commission, 2015). Besides, consumers are in direct contact with the producers, which fosters the sense of local community (Chéron, 2013). Direct interaction is also ensured through other initiatives such as the Beehives' Walls which are dialogue spaces open to members and producers to create a real connected community, or the hashtag #lifeinabeehive favoring sharing on social media (La Ruche qui dit Oui, 2017). Concerning the trust aspect, LRQDO does not have a rating system yet. L. Everard (interview, 13th of July 2017) said, however, that even though trust is already well implanted through the beehive manager (consumers trust him/her in the choice of producers and products…), they are thinking about integrating one. F. Artaud (interview, 26th of July 2017) confirmed this but added that they wanted the rating system to have a positive impact and not be a tool of pure criticism, which is sometimes the case in uberized companies. LRQDO wants to achieve this by, for instance, using the review system to help beehive managers and producers improve their performance, giving them tips on how to do better the next time.

From a social economy point of view, there is significant synergy potential stemming from the three traits if they are not dehumanized or guided by a capitalist logic. Trust and the creation of social link are key essentials of social economy actors and quality of services highlights that the user is central, one of the social economy's principles. Combining uberization and the social economy would hence be putting twice as much importance on those features. Further, as seen with LRQDO, P2P transactions could be a way for the social economy to attract a new segment that has great potential: the youth. Younger generations are digital natives and are looking for more meaning in life, so uberized social economy models could attract them. However, the limits mentioned, clashing with the values and principles of the social economy, could jeopardize the desirability of the uberized social economy, as will be introduced in the next debate (see section 2.2.).

As a matter of conclusion, uberization's digital strategy is desirable for the uberized social economy as would make the social economy stronger. We indeed see that P2P platforms are an efficient way for the social economy to catch up with the digital revolution. Como et al. (2016) perfectly summarize this idea: "digital innovation allows to do more, better, and at a larger scale what social economy actors have been doing for a long time: mobilizing community resources, fostering people's collaboration, promoting democratic governance and control" (Como et al., 2016, p.24). Moreover, the specificities of uberization such as the ability to reinvent exchanges and to make good use of digital tools can be helpful for the social economy's need for innovation. However, digitalization can lead to the creation of monopolies, of precarious working conditions and to dehumanized social interactions. Those downsides question the true desirability of the uberized social economy. Because LRQDO has managed to successfully mitigate the digitalization's risks, it seems possible for uberized social economy actors to take the advantages of the digital technologies without their drawbacks. Yet, from a uberization's perspective, we can wonder what added value would its combination with the social economy bring? Could it strengthen uberization? This will be tackled in the next section.

2.2. Social economy's values and principles: desirable for the uberized social economy?

The social economy and uberization have common strengths in their models as shown in Figure 1 (see page 54). These are that in both, users are put in a central position, social links are aimed at being created, a societal goal is pursued and a double logic exists between the search for profit and the social as well as environmental values. Even though these practices are common to both models, the extent to which they are applied can vary significantly from one model to the other. Therefore, when thinking about the combination of the two models, some questions arise. In the uberized social economy, where would the balance lie between the quest for profit and the social and environmental values? How important would the pursuit of a societal goal be? These questions, in fact, reveal the strong values and principles that are embedded in the social economy versus the lack of established values and principles in uberization. The values of the social economy, namely solidarity, freedom, democracy, equality and supremacy of humans above capital are translated into specific principles. These include the free adhesion principle, democratic management principles (one person, one vote) and the not-for-profit principle (limited or forbidden distribution of surpluses). In contrast, uberization has been increasingly criticized over the years for its excessive search for profit, its deep-rootedness in a market logic and the distance it has taken from its initial collaborative nature and values.

In light of the identification of these values and principles as key strength of the social economy and key weakness of uberization, two perspectives arise when assessing the desirability of the creation of a uberized social economy: could it be an opportunity for uberization to overcome its weakness, or would it lead to a distortion of the social economy?

2.2.1. An opportunity to be truly collaborative

The social economy's strong values and principles could be valuable for uberization, giving legitimacy to the uberized social economy. In this section, we therefore ask ourselves the following question: is the creation of the uberized social economy an opportunity for uberization to be truly collaborative?

As defined in the first part of this thesis, uberization is based on the business models of the collaborative economy. Although the collaborative economy has gained momentum and is experiencing growth, it faces increasing criticisms (Jacquet and Leclercq, 2016). Initially presented as an alternative to capitalism, authors like Borel et al. (2015), Como et al. (2016) and Frenken and Schor (2017) argue that it failed to deliver on its economic, social and environmental promises. According to them, uberization did not create all the jobs that were hoped for, but rather destroyed many; it did not provide an opportunity for recovery of economic growth but, instead, threatens social protection of workers, minimum wage and fiscal revenues. Next to that, they refute the idea that uberization, because it is based on the sharing of assets, is eco-friendly, since goods will get used faster, and thus renewed more often. More generally, they claim that the collaborative economy, characterizing uberization, is not truly collaborative. As stated by Alphonso Sánchez (2016), « many studies suggest that the collaborative economy does not have anything to do with the adjective "collaborative" since platforms do not share, neither the property, nor the benefits with the users, those who really generate value within them » (Alphonso Sánchez, 2016, p.233). Indeed, « while users bring to the platforms the fundamental assets that create value, the deriving profits are appropriated by the restricted group of platform owners » (Como et al., 2016, p.5). Whatelet (2015) goes further by saying that the collaborative practices today are nothing but a new form of digitalized neoliberal capitalism, centered on profit optimization. Building up on that, Kalamar (2013) criticizes what he calls « sharewashing », or the way for-profit companies leverage the positive connotations of sharing, not revealing their actual self-seeking activities. All these abuses threaten the sustainability of uberization since they go against the collaborative ideals that were at the heart of the model and which have led to its success.

This begs the question: could the strong values and principles of the social economy be a way for uberization to counter its drifts and become truly collaborative?

Bonneau (2016) suggests that to handle these tensions between profit and social and environmental values, as well as its criticized capitalistic orientation, the collaborative economy should get closer to the social economy and renew its ties with the values that made it successful. This shows that the uberized social economy does represent an opportunity for uberization. Indeed, the social economy could strengthen it by bringing its social objectives and values, whose respect is ensured through the established principles of social economy enterprises. Berlingen (2013), co-founder of OuiShare, reinforces this idea as she is convinced the values of the social economy represent a real driving force for the development of collaborative initiatives. Consequently, collaborative practices would have a strong social utility goal and be economically efficient, which would lead to the creation of shared value.

2.2.2. A risk of perversion of social objectives and values

Now that we have determined that the values and principles of the social economy would be a strength in the uberized social economy, let us look at it from the perspective of the social economy. The drifts of uberization mentioned above could jeopardize the distinctiveness of the social economy, and more particularly its strong values and principles. To conclude on the desirability of the uberized social economy, we will thus need to raise the following issue: could the uberized social economy represent a risk of perversion of the social objectives and values of the social economy?

As explained previously above, uberization has been criticized for its lack of collaborative practices, due to its market and commodification rationale taking over its social and environmental values. We therefore see an obstacle to the combination of the models, fearing that the uberized social economy would mean the distortion of the social economy.

First, some characteristics of uberization could clash with the social economy's values and principles. Indeed, the fact that uberization is said by some authors (Borel et al., 2015; Bressant, 2016; Manjoo, 2015; Whatelet, 2015) to be damaging employment, in quantity by destroying jobs, as well as in quality by favoring the creation of mini-jobs, goes against the social economy's objective to provide quality employment (European Commission, 2017d). The same applies to the fact that workers of platforms lack protection, social advantages and are usually low-paid. Therefore, the uberized social economy would be desirable only if workers are granted a fair retribution for their work, social protection and good working conditions.

Second, as mentioned in the previous debate regarding the digital technology (see Section 2.1.), the expansion of the social economy is not only positive, a few negative aspects must also be considered. According to Budd et al. (2015), social economy organizations experience both coercive pressures (e.g. legal requirements, government regulation) and indirect pressures (e.g. competition from for-profit actors that are better resourced) to become more commercially oriented over time. Because of these competitive pressures, social economy enterprises, as they grow, are more likely to adopt market-like economic and managerial practices like "bureaucratic and formalized organizational processes; hierarchical organizational structures; and, centralized decision-making processes" (Budd et al., 2015, p.242). The creation of a uberized social economy is likely to increase these, which can have positive as well as negative consequences.

On the one hand, being more expanded and commercially oriented enables social economy organizations to "enhance their organisational capability to mobilise resources, sustain external relations and make an external impact" (Budd et al., 2015, p.242). For example, they can have better access to financial resources or more easily engage with governments. On the other hand, there are drawbacks to those new abilities. First, according to the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), it can give rise to tensions "that can undermine the possibilities of realizing the potential of SSE and cause it to deviate from core values and objectives" (Matheï et al., 2014, p.11). Second, the increasing market pressures "can have the effect of diluting core SSE principles and practices" (Matheï et al., 2014, p.11). Besides, Budd et al. (2015) argue: "the values of efficiency and effectiveness can come to dominate organisational activity, at the expense of other human values including sociability and solidarity" (Budd et al., 2015, p.242).

The uberization of the social economy, by enabling the social economy to scale up and increasing the pressures for it to become more commercially-oriented could lead to the dilution of the core principles and practices of the social economy. However, UNRISD emphasizes in its report (Matheï et al., 2014) that social economy enterprises should constantly pay attention to the growth opportunities that arise in their socio-political context. In that perspective, uberization should be considered as an opportunity for the social economy to become stronger. Yet, to tackle the risk of value dilution, the social economy's values should remain central. According to UNRISD (2013), social economy organizations should better cultivate their brand image, insisting on the ethical value of their activities. Therefore, for the uberized social economy to be successful, social enterprises should work on that as well.

2.2.3. Values and principles in the case of La Ruche qui dit Oui!

The two perspectives elaborated previously regarding the values and principles can be illustrated with LRQDO.

First, the example of LRQDO shows that the strong values of the social economy represent an opportunity for uberization to be truly collaborative and counter its downsides. The collaborative essence of uberization indeed appears to be valued in LRQDO. For instance, producers and beehive managers receive a fair remuneration for their work. The producers pay 16.7% as service fee from their sales revenues. 8.35% of which is used to pay the beehive managers, and the 8.35% remaining are for the development of the platform as well as the general management of La Ruche Mama. Besides, each producer is free to set the selling price that he considers to be a fair remuneration for his work (La Ruche qui dit Oui, 2017). This shows that workers are not abused and that, unlike sometimes in uberization, the benefits are shared with the people actually generating the value created. Next to that, LRQDO cherishes values such as cooperation, transparency and democracy, which are in line with the values of the social economy. Besides, LRQDO pursues a societal goal by supporting agriculture, promoting high-quality food and creating social links (La Ruche qui dit Oui, 2017). This confirms that it is possible for uberized companies to really deliver on the social and environmental promises.

Second, the risk of perversion of social values and principles can also be illustrated through LRQDO. First, the fact that LRQDO is both a market actor that depends on the resources of its investors and a social economy actor can lead to tensions between the market logic and the social as well as environmental values. L. Everard (interview, 13th of July 2017) indeed acknowledged the fact that LRQDO is a for-profit, commercial company, that surely has a societal goal, but that is also profit-driven. Second, Everard admits that the role of the beehive managers is crucial, and that the way a beehive is handled greatly depends on them. They are indeed granted a lot of autonomy and freedom, LRQDO having established a decentralized network. Although autonomy and freedom are central to the social economy's philosophy, the pitfall is that the respect of the values will vary depending on who is in charge. The values and principles are not embedded like in cooperatives, mutual companies and associations. Because LRQDO is a "Société par Actions Simplifiées (SAS)", it is not forced to comply with the principles ruling the other legal forms of social economy enterprises. On the long term, and with LRQDO growing fast (from five employees and one beehive five years ago to one hundred and thirty employees and one thousand beehives today), it could lead to the erosion of its social and collaborative values, since they are not institutionalized in the company. Borel et al. (2015) indeed argue that it will highly depend on the entrepreneurs at the heart of the projects. He distinguishes the "traditional entrepreneur" from what he calls the "activist entrepreneur". The traditional one's main goal is the economic profitability whereas the activist is driven by a logic of social and environmental action. The respect of the values and principles are thus likely to vary in function of the individuals behind the organization and their vision. Joachim Jacob (interview 14th of July 2017; see Appendix 14), founder of Partago (an electric car sharing cooperative platform) shares this vision, as he said: "My opinion is that the platform on itself is a tool. It's the organization behind it that has values, moral values. So the adoption of these values will depend on the organization and its founders" (Jacob, interview 14th of July 2017).

In a nutshell, as testified by the success of the company, the model of LRQDO, combining the social economy and the collaborative economy appears to be working. However, the potential risks of loss of social values and objectives over time identified lead us to wonder whether its model is really viable and sustainable. We therefore ask the question: How to ensure a lasting uberized social economy? This interrogation will be answered in the next section.

2.3. What perspective of regulation for the uberized social economy?

The last point that will be debated to assess whether both models can make each other stronger and thus evaluate the desirability of the uberized social economy is the regulation. As we identified in the conclusion figure of Chapter 1 (see page 54) comparing the systems, the regulation is a weakness to both. On the one side, the social economy's regulation is unadapted and incomplete, resulting in drifts or limits to the potential of the model. On the other side, uberization still lacks a clear regulatory framework, leading to abuses of all kinds. But what about the uberized social economy? We will start by giving a small overview of the regulatory issues for each model separately, stressing on what still needs to be achieved. With a better understanding of the topic and potential development paths in mind, we will then be able to answer the following question: from a regulatory perspective, is the combination of the two models desirable, do they strengthen each other? Is there a way to overcome the regulations flaws? And could the regulation ensure a lasting uberized social economy?

2.3.1. Social economy's regulatory issues

States and institutions have realized the potential of the social economy. However, despite its rising importance, it is not recognized enough by the regulators. Indeed, as mentioned in the UNRISD report (2014) and in the "En Marche!" program of French President, Emmanuel Macron (2017), the international and national institutions' attention given to the social economy is still very poor. This can be explained by the fact that governments tend to see the social economy only as a way to decrease poverty but not as a major actor in economic and social development. Because the social economy lacks recognition, the actors of the social economy feel they are not being supported enough and that the current regulations are sometimes not adapted to today's reality anymore.

First, as written in the UNRISD report (2013), the relation between the organizations of the social economy and the state has always been complex. This is because the social economy is sometimes seen as a substitute for the government, creating a fine line between how much autonomy should be awarded to it and how much the state should intervene. If the state intervenes too much, the managerial autonomy of social economy enterprises is likely to be put at risk, while the lack of state intervention can hinder the development of social economy organizations. Besides, the report points out that governments should be incentivized to support social economy actors since they often lighten the government's burden of providing public services. However, the report stresses that, instead, the state tends to rely too much on social economy's activities without giving them real support.

Second, the social economy's lack of recognition has led to unadapted regulations. The UNRISD (2013) argues that too often, the regulator's efforts can harm the objectives of the social economy as it puts its organizations into a too narrow scope of action and political space, restraining their potential. Macron adds in its program (En Marche!, 2017) that the current fiscal and regulatory environment does not allow for the social economy to develop all its potential in terms of scale and innovation. It explains that there are too many barriers holding back innovation and experimentation such as the lack of public money, financing and analytical tools to measure the social impact as well as because of paralyzing regulatory constraints. The difficult access to financing is an obstacle because it "restricts the ability to survive, expand and compete with conventional business" (UNRISD, 2014, p.18). The report details that commercial banks often refuse loans because social economy enterprises do not have recognized legal statuses or because these are too complex to understand. Finally, Louis Cousin (interview, 25th of July 2017; see Appendix 15), project manager at Cooperatives Europe adds that the regulation is also very fragmented in European countries. France and Italy are leaders in terms of social economy legislation whereas Denmark and Holland, for instance, do not have regulations for some legal forms such as cooperatives. Concerning Belgium, if it does have a regulation, L. Cousin (interview, 25th of July 2017) argues that it is not strict enough.

These regulation issues highlight a need to provide companies of the social economy with a way to consolidate their models, accelerate their development, facilitate cooperation and strengthen their innovation capacity. To do so, both the UNRISD (2014) and the program "En Marche!" (2017) suggest the creation of fiscal, regulatory and legislative policies that would accelerate the economic performance as well as the social and environmental impact of the social economy. It would also "foster the development of the sector in terms of upscaling, capacity building and participation in governmental decision-making processes" (UNRISD, 2014, p.28). In a nutshell, the social economy's regulation needs to be more adapted in order for social economy enterprises to finally develop, innovate and be recognized at the scale of their potential.

2.3.2. Uberization's regulatory issues

Because it is a very recent phenomenon, the legislation around uberization is still very vague. The regulation gaps at the national level and the highly fragmented European regulatory framework leave room for abuses and uncontrollable deviations to take place. This affects different actors: traditional actors, employees of uberized companies, consumers, the companies themselves and even the governments.

First, traditional actors denounce the unfair competition that is made possible due to the regulation gaps from which P2P platforms take advantage (Alfonso Sanchez, 2016). Because of this unfair competition, incumbents face economic difficulties resulting in redundancies and bankruptcy (Jacquet and Leclercq, 2016). As a consequence, Béraud (2016) and Nicolas (2015) write that incumbents are asking for more regulation as well as laws to control excesses. For instance, traditional taxi companies demonstrated, complaining about the absence of regulation for Uber, the latter contracting unlicensed drivers, escaping regulations required for professional taxis. As a result, many countries, including Belgium, decided to ban UberPop (Scholz, 2017).

Second, the lack of regulation impacts the workers of the platforms. Being considered as independent contractors and not employees, they do not benefit from the social security, insurances and other benefits employees are entitled to. The issue, as Whatelet (2015) stresses it, is that by having this status, the workers are actually bearing all the costs and the responsibilities traditionally taken care of by the company such as insurance and employer contribution. Next to that, the company does not need to pay employee salaries and does not have to provide for the productive resources (e.g. car and fuel), nor for the licenses and training as it should if the workers (e.g. the drivers) were employees. According to Béraud (2016), if stricter regulations are not created, there is a risk for workers' situations to become increasingly precarious and for the added value of the platforms not to be reinvested or distributed to the ones generating the value, but rather kept for investors and platform owners.

Third, consumers are often said to be the winners of uberization, benefitting from the flexibility, instantaneity, low price and good quality of the services provided. However, they are also concerned by the lack of protection. For instance, the risk of big international platforms turning into monopolies, like Airbnb in the P2P accommodation sector, can harm the users by decreasing the number of providers they can choose from. This would not happen in a competitive market (European Commission, 2017b). Besides, Terrasse (2016) claims that the P2P rating systems, essential to ensure trust, lack transparency because they are managed by the platforms that can control users' opinion. On top of that, consumers are too often unaware of the exact rules regarding, for example, their responsibilities in case of a driver or owner's complaint. Terrasse (2016) therefore calls for more protection for platforms' users

Fourth, uberized companies can also suffer from taking advantage of the current lack of regulation. The regulation gaps cause threats such as the reaction of incumbents, the lack of legitimacy and the negative perception from the society. Consequently, and if the situation remains the same, platforms will find it increasingly difficult to attract investors (Miller, 2015).

Lastly, governments miss out on opportunities due to the regulation's blurriness. Miller (2015) argues that a growing sector of the economy should not be illegal because it would lead to increasing problems in terms of security, health… Besides, because it offers new economic opportunities, creating employment and demand, governments should take advantage of it to foster economic growth (without needing to invest in infrastructures themselves) and to increase their fiscal revenues. As explained by Jacquet and Leclercq (2016), uberization is said to boost the demand, even though its disruptive aspect also leads to the destruction of jobs. Taking the example of Airbnb, the number of rents made on the platform largely exceeds the loss of market shares faced by hotels. There is thus more than an incentive for governments to assist uberization in its sustainable development.

All these consequences arising from the current regulation gaps lead us to the conclusion that there is a need for regulation to support uberization, and not to hamper its development. The OECD (2016) invites governments to modernize the legislative framework so as to take into account these new types of platforms that do not fit in the current legislation. According to the European Commission (2016b), the promising growth of the model should incentivize governments to adapt their legislative framework and even create new regulatory and fiscal schemes, allowing collaborative companies to grow and innovative projects to emerge. Adapted regulation would also help the platforms to find adequate financing and to increase their reach. Building up on that, European leaders such as Macron (En Marche!, 2017), call for a European Digital Single Market, that would standardize regulations in the Union and therefore facilitate the development of collaborative companies throughout Europe.

To conclude, there is a need to adapt and create suitable regulation for uberization. A new or updated regulation, reflecting today's reality, would avoid abuses and support innovative collaborative companies to blossom.

2.3.3. Regulation in the case of La Ruche qui dit Oui

Let us now analyze these two perspectives using the case of LRQDO. Because LRQDO is both a social enterprise and a collaborative company, it gives us a first snapshot of how the uberized social economy could deal with the ambiguity of the regulation. How does the company tackle the weaknesses identified in the regulation of both models?

As a social economy enterprise, LRQDO could be facing the regulation weaknesses of the latter. Let us see if it is the case.

First, in terms of support from the regulator, L. Everard (interview, 13th of July 2017) says that LRQDO does not suffer from a lack of support and does not believe that the state should intervene more in the activities of the company. This is maybe linked to the fact that it operates on the market and therefore has the ability to sustain itself more easily. Yet, as written in its pressbook (La Ruche qui dit Oui, 2017), in 2014, the company was given a subvention from the region Ile-de-France. The ambivalence of social companies, striving to be independent but also benefitting from the help of the state is thus illustrated in LRQDO, even though it manages to stay autonomous.

Second, the regulation itself and the fact that it is not always adapted does not seem to apply to LRQDO. The company is, as mentioned previously, a "Société par Actions Simplifiées (SAS)" which enjoys a lot of flexibility, allowing LRQDO to obtain loans and financing easily (La Ruche qui dit Oui, 2017). Nevertheless, such a structure is not as demanding in terms of values and management principles as the traditional legal forms of the social economy. When we asked L. Everard (interview, 13th of July 2017) if she was familiar with the management principles of social economy enterprises, she did not know there was any. Even though she then confirmed the presence of a number of them, it shows that the lack of clear frame in that regard might lead, over time, to the burying of what represents a significant pillar of the social economy.

On top of being a social economy enterprise, LRQDO is a collaborative company. When analyzing the regulatory issues from uberization, we mentioned that they affect different actors. Let us go through them by taking the example of LRQDO to see if the regulatory gaps also apply to the uberized social economy, and if they would clash with the values and principles of the social economy.

First, it seems LRQDO is not taking advantage of any regulatory blurriness, therefore not competing unfairly with traditional actors.

Second, the workers of the platforms are not complaining about their status of independent, because, as L. Everard (interview, 13th of July 2017) explained, the work of beehive manager does not correspond to an employee job. They are free to work when it suits them, and are granted a lot of autonomy as well as decision-making power concerning the management of their beehive. They need to convince people to rally to their beehive, contact producers, find a place to organize the gatherings… This is the job of an entrepreneur as it requires management skills and hence differs from the deliveroo couriers' type of work, argues L. Everard. Besides, they can decide the legal status of their beehive. For instance, some beehives take the status of an association or of a farm business.

Third, LRQDO's consumers are not lacking protection of any kind, says L. Everard. The company indeed values transparency and trust is inherent to the model: consumers build a relationship with their beehive manager and trust their judgment. This being said, as already mentioned, LRQDO is currently developing a rating system.

Fourth, LRQDO is not suffering from regulation gaps and therefore does not feel any lack of legitimacy or recognition. This is most probably thanks to the values and principles inherent to the social economy.

All in all, we see through the example of LRQDO that the regulation issues uberized social economy models could face are mostly linked to the lack of clear legal frame for the values and principles. This leads us to the same conclusion as in the previous debate (see section 2.2.), i.e. how to ensure the sustainability of the uberized social economy?

The discussion around the regulation has brought an element of answer to this question: the risk of perversion of the social economy's values and principles can be avoided if the organization takes one of the initial legal forms of the social economy (i.e. cooperative, mutual society, association or foundation). Victor Meseguer, director of Social Economy Europe (interview, 25th of July 2017; see Appendix 16) confirms that the status of Social Enterprise given to commercial companies like LRQDO (thus not one of the traditional legal forms) requires the application of social economy's principles, but to a lesser extent. Because the status of social enterprise is added to the status of commercial company (e.g. in France "Société commerciale de l'économie sociale et solidaire" and in Belgium "Société à Finalité Sociale"), explains V. Meseguer, the risks of non-respect or dilution of the social economy's values over time are bigger. L. Cousin (interview, 25th of July 2017) agrees, emphasizing that even though such imbalance could happen in the traditional forms as well, organizations are more legally bound to apply their values and principles in the traditional forms.

This justifies our choice to focus on one of the initial legal forms to try to find a way to mitigate the risks of distortion of the values and principles: cooperatives.

In addition to benefiting from rising recognition and more adapted regulation, cooperatives are considered by Como et al. (2016), Cooperatives Europe (2017) and the program "En Marche!" (2017) as an alternative model for the digital and collaborative economy. In fact, the connection they make between cooperatives and the collaborative economy can be illustrated by the concept of "Platform Cooperativism".

2.3.4. Platform Cooperativism, an opportunity for the uberized social economy

As the name implies, "Platform Cooperativism" is used to describe cooperatives using an online P2P platform. The European Commission defines a cooperative as "an autonomous association of persons united to meet common economic, social, and cultural goals. They achieve their objectives through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise. Cooperatives have several defining characteristics: an open and voluntary association; a democratic structure with each member having one vote; an equitable and fair distribution of economic results according to the volume of operations made through the cooperative" (European Commission, 2017c, para.1). Scholz (2016), who proposed the idea of platform cooperativism sees in the combination of the collaborative economy with cooperatives the way to tackle the issues related to the platforms' « deceptive use of collaborative economy discourses » (Como et al., 2016, p.9).

Platform cooperativism could be a concrete way of ensuring a desirable, viable and sustainable uberized social economy. Indeed, it can bring solutions to the risks raised in the values and principles' debate as well as to the issues introduced in the regulation debate, as will be explained in this section.

a. A solution to the distortion of the values and principles

It appears that the two main obstacles to the creation of the uberized social economy when it comes to the values and principles, namely the lack of collaborative practices in uberization and thus the risk of perversion of the social economy's essence, could be mitigated with the platform cooperativism.

Cooperatives can contribute by turning "collaborative economy into something truly collaborative for suppliers and users" (Alfonso Sánchez, 2016, p.233). Indeed, Alfonso Sánchez (2016), Como et al. (2016) and Scholz (2016) argue that if platforms were owned by their users, organized as a cooperative, most of the governance issues could be solved. First, the shared ownership would allow for a fairer distribution of the value created, actually sharing the added value with the people who created it, rather than keeping it in the hands of a few investors. Second, it could help find a balance in the collaborative economy's dual logic by valorizing cooperatives' "capacity to keep together social and economic objectives in a unique project of local development" (Como et al., 2016, p.2). Besides, creating models based on membership rather than usership could assist in fostering social and solidarity links among the workers, whose interests would be aligned. On top of that, it could help "fighting the tendency towards new forms of alienated on-demand employment" (Como et al., 2016, p.9).

We see that the governance of cooperative platforms and their legally binding values and principles allow overcoming the issues related to the debate of values and principles.

b. A way to override the hindrance of the regulation

Let us now see if the regulation concerns of the social economy and uberization can also be tackled through this innovative structure.

Looking at the weaknesses in the regulation of the social economy, it seems that cooperatives are not as affected by the lack of support, recognition and adapted regulation like other social economy enterprises are. Yet, we highlighted the need for cooperatives to innovate, increase their attractiveness and further develop. Cooperative platforms, by combining cooperatives with digital platforms, can help to tackle the downsides specific to the sole structure of cooperatives because digital technologies are drivers of innovation and of expansion. Moreover, knowing that the youth are digital natives, platforms will enable cooperatives to be more appealing to this segment. As Como et al. (2016) point out: "Cooperatives may potentially benefit from engaging with the collaborative economy phenomenon. In particular, by exploring its innovation potential, it was suggested that cooperatives may discover new interesting ways to update and transform some of their established features, to better fit the emerging developments at societal, market, and technological level" (Como et al., 2016, p.26).

Moving on to uberization, LRQDO and its current regulatory framework have shed light on the fact that values and principles need to be clearly enrooted in an organization's legal form in order to avoid drifting away from them. Hence, knowing that the regulation should be a response to avoid abuses and to promote innovation as well as fair and democratic structures, cooperative platforms offer a good compromise. In fact, the platform aspect allows the enterprise to keep its innovation potential while the cooperative legal form ensures that values and principles are clearly enrooted, avoiding abuses and supporting fair behaviors. This is confirmed by Alfonso Sánchez (2016) who believes that cooperatives can be an added value to uberized actors "especially by proposing their ownership and governance model and by valorizing their long history and capacity to keep together social and economic objectives in a unique project of local development" (Alfonso Sánchez, 2016, p.233).

Let us now have a closer look at the regulation of cooperative platforms. If this combination of models seems to be strengthening both the social economy and uberization, the regulation of cooperatives might need to be revised. L. Cousin (interview, 25th of July 2017), as project manager of “Cooperatives Europe”, gave us an overview of the current state. First, he mentioned the loose Belgian regulation for cooperatives, which leads to abuses, some companies pretending to be cooperatives but not respecting its rules in reality. He highlighted that the regulation for cooperatives needed take the digitalization into account, as it would help the development of cooperative platforms. According to him, the majority are currently in France and in Germany, because the regulation is more suitable for their development. This, he added, stresses the importance of having a European consensus on the matter, despite being difficult to reach. Moreover, as cooperatives realize the potential of digital tools, they are pushing the regulator to modernize and adapt the legislation. Yet, while in some countries, such as the UK, France, Belgium and Austria, Como et al. (2016) say that “there is a growing awareness of the potential of the collaborative economy for cooperative companies, and a desire of representative associations to see cooperatives take the lead of this emerging phenomenon” (Como et al., 2016, p.13) in others, such as Italy and the Netherlands, cooperatives are more reluctant to a rapprochement with the collaborative economy and its drifts. This being said, L. Cousin mentioned the existence of the European Cooperative Society (SCE), optional legal form that cooperatives can adopt. This is specific to cooperatives as compared to associations or mutualities and can help cooperative platforms develop cross-border.

c. Limits to the platform cooperativism

Despite the opportunities that cooperative platforms can provide to both the social economy and uberization, there are some limits.

First, according to Como et al. (2016), there is still work to be done to convince existing cooperatives to leverage the digital opportunities because it can be very difficult for existing cooperatives to undertake such a structural change. Which explains why “digital innovation and collaborative economy models tend to be more easily incorporated by younger cooperatives” (Como et al., 2016, p.21).

A second obstacle is specific to cooperatives, namely financing. As L. Cousin (interview, 25th of July 2017) explains, cooperatives tend to struggle to find financing because their legal form does not allow them to open their capital to shareholders. It is a big difference with the collaborative economy, he says, where capital can easily be raised and in a few days only. F. Artaud (interview, 26th of July 2017) agrees with this view, arguing that the main reason why LRQDO did not take the form of a cooperative is that it was too restrictive regarding the financing possibilities. LRQDO therefore preferred the status of SAS. Yet, France Barter seems to have found a way to solve this issue. France Barter is a B2B cooperative platform allowing the exchange of goods and services between companies (France Barter, 2017). Manon Lavaud (interview, 25th of July 2017; see Appendix 17), responsible for the business development at France Barter, explains that the firm managed, through the crowdfunding platform Wiseed, to issue participative securities and raise 300,000€. Wiseed is the first crowdfunding platform to permit financing for cooperatives. The Blog of France Barter (2016) clarifies that participative securities are comparable to bonds but exclusively for people willing to support cooperatives. This participative investment permits to give a return on investment to the investors while keeping the right to vote exclusively for members. M. Lavaud points out, nevertheless, that the cooperative status limits France Barter in the amount it can raise.

Third, when trying to apply the model of uberized companies, “there is a risk of copying the same mistakes and weakening the cooperative model if cooperatives are not able to preserve their distinctive features” (Como et al., 2016, p.9). For instance, Como et al. (2016) illustrate that it is not because cooperatives have the ability to create freelancer platforms that they should support this status and the increasing job insecurity. “Overall, the biggest challenge is to apply cooperative values online, and to operationalise cooperative principles (as defined by the International Cooperative Alliance) through new forms of cooperation that may be quite different from those used for the past couple of centuries” (Como et al., 2016, p.25).

Finally, because the topic is still very new, research on it is still limited. We should therefore be cautious before jumping to conclusions too fast.

Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to explore the combination of two models that, at first sight, seem to be opposed: the social economy and uberization. Companies such as *La Ruche qui dit Oui* appear however to be combining both successfully. This raises questions regarding the benefits of such an association, leading us to our research question: *Are the social economy and uberization compatible and could they strengthen each other?*

To answer this question, we started by clarifying the concepts of the social economy and uberization. After an in depth analysis of the existing definitions, we have proposed our own for the purpose of this thesis. We defined the Social Economy as: “an alternative economy, belonging neither to the public nor to the private sector. Its peculiarity lies in its key principles and in its specific legal forms. The principles are to have a goal of social-utility, a democratic and participative management, and a limited distribution of profit. The legal forms involve cooperatives, mutual societies, associations, foundations and social enterprises”. Uberization is: “a phenomenon characterized by (1) the disruption of current industries using (2) innovative business models of the collaborative economy”. To fully understand the context of each, we then identified their origins, current scope and dimensions. From there on, we used different methodologies to compare the two models and assess their compatibility, detecting commonalities to determine a potential match, complementarities to see if it would lead to synergies, and obstacles to identify the barriers. Thanks to this thorough analysis, we have proposed a framework highlighting three central discussion points in the assessment of the desirability of the uberized social economy, i.e. in determining whether the two models could strengthen each other: (1) the digitalization, (2) the values and principles and (3) the regulation. By looking in-depth at these three successively, and by illustrating the theoretical findings with the practical case of *La Ruche qui dit Oui*, we have been able to draw conclusions on the desirability of the uberized social economy.

First, we found that from a digital point of view, the uberized social economy would be desirable as it brings an added value to the social economy. The digital platforms that form the cornerstone of uberized models indeed create many opportunities for the social economy such as the possibility to modernize, scale up and especially foster social cohesion, one of its primary objectives. Some drawbacks were also discovered such as the risk of emergence of big monopolistic platforms and the dehumanization of social contact going against the values and principles of the social economy.

Second, we concluded that the specific values and principles characterizing the social economy could strengthen uberized models. Uberization indeed currently lacks established principles ensuring the respect of its true “collaborative” nature, which too often depends on the values and objectives of the entrepreneurs behind the projects. We have thus pointed out the pending risk of distortion over time of the social economy’s values and principles in the uberized social economy. Our analysis suggests that as long as the values are not established as legal rules in the organization, the desirability and sustainability of the uberized social economy will always be threatened. Part of the answer to our research question was hence found in the analysis of the regulation.

Analyzing the regulation of the models separately, we realized both require more support from the legislator. Because the two appear promising in terms of economic growth, job creation and innovation, we believe governments should adapt the regulation to help them grow within boundaries ensuring the respect of certain values and principles.

As a result of these three debates, platform cooperativism seems to be a desirable structure for the uberized social economy, giving leads to overcome the obstacles encountered in the three debates. This confirms that, when combined, the models can strengthen each other. First, it would enable cooperatives to leverage the opportunities that P2P platforms offer, tackling cooperatives’ possible lack of attractiveness and efficiency. Second, the shared-ownership and shared-governance rules specific to cooperatives would ensure a fair distribution of the value created to all members and the respect of the social economy’s values and principles. This would help avoid the dilution of the values and principles over time detected in social enterprises. Besides, the willingness to collaborate and cooperate characterizing the collaborative economy matches with cooperatives. Third, realizing the potential of cooperative platforms as a way to tackle the social tensions of uberization and foster innovation at the same time, the European Union is showing increasing interest. We have thus reasons to believe that such model, if it carries on with its own momentum, will encourage the legislator to create a suitable regulatory framework to deal with its limits, such as the access to financing, and to enable it to grow.

Platform cooperativism, despite its ability to make the uberized social economy desirable and sustainable, is still just one alternative among an array of others. It caught our attention because it offers what seems to be a tailor-made solution to the issues identified in our debates.

However, it may have restricted our scope, leaving out the other legal forms like the mutual societies, associations and foundations. As each has its own particularities, further research needs to be done in order to determine whether their association with uberization could also lead to a reinforcement of both models.

From a more general point of view, this thesis is limited by the recentness of the topic and by our theoretical approach. Because there is still limited attention paid to the uberized social economy, we first had to analyze the theory of both models separately before merging them and create a framework summarizing what the uberized social economy implies. In the discussion phase, we confronted our theoretical findings with the practical case of *La Ruche qui dit Oui*, but as the uberized social economy is not yet clearly established, it was hard to find a perfect case study.

Another limit of this thesis is the absence of a precise geographical frame. Because each country has its own regulatory framework, we decided not to focus on one specific country only, but rather to keep an overall perspective in order to provide the reader with a broader picture. This choice may have prevented us from conducting a more detailed analysis.

In the future, it would thus be relevant to conduct research on the uberized social economy across all European Member States, so as to better understand the context, specificities and needs of each country and come up with leads for a European legislation. Also, the analysis could be deepened by investigating each legal form in detail using both an empirical and quantitative approach. Finally, the research could be extended to explore ways of helping existing social economy and uberization actors in their transition towards uberized social economy models.

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