

Louvain School of Management

The benefits of collaborative approaches in CSR fields within the sector of social entrepreneurship and the value created by that increased collaborative strategy.

Author: Juliette Maquet

Supervisor: Carlos Desmet

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1 Introduction

“We are meeting at a time of immense challenge to sustainable development” (UN, 2015). As explained in “*Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development*” by the United Nations, there is an increasing need to collaborate and to share a social vision, in order to have a real impact and real values on today’s professional environment. The United Nations implemented guidelines and framework – like the Sustainable Development Goals – to lead society towards constructive and sustainable decisions. As a matter of fact, today’s world is trying to increase productivity in every work done and its number is lower than before. But it is important to understand that productivity cannot be calculated the same way as before. There is a tertiarization of the economy that must be taken into account (*Evaluer l’impact social de l’entrepreneuriat social: La nécessité d’une co-construction*, 2017). The main issue in modern society is that the economic and social aspects are usually seen as two opposite components, even though their coexistence is possible and even indispensable (*L’efficacité économique au service de l’intérêt général*, 2012).

In addition to this divided way of managing society, one of the issues impacting everyone on the planet is ‘overconsumption’. Botsman and Rogers (2011) brought up three main arguments about this concept. First, since the World War I, there is an abundance of throwaway living and therefore, an unbelievable amount of waste. Secondly, there is an increase of self-stockage and possessions of useless materials. Lastly, the raise of permanent dissatisfaction of the number/quality of items a person owns is visible. The consumers are always running on a hedonic treadmill towards a satisfaction they will never see coming. The consequences of this way of living are becoming unbearable. Therefore, it is essential to go back to a more collective wealth and a collaborative consumption (Botsman & Rogers, 2011). Although there are a lot of negative externalities, the UN agenda (2015) stated that “[...] it is also, however, a time of immense opportunity”. It is essential to highlight the work already done by so many initiatives around the world.

The aim of this master thesis is to review the benefits of collaborative approaches in CSR fields within the sector of social entrepreneurship and assess the value of that increased collaboration strategy. The idea is to tackle the subject of the transition coming by thinking out of the box and trying to elaborate a research over this specific learning domain. There is an increasing

awareness of the numerous societal issues, and there should be an increasing global movement around those issues¹.

This research work points out three aspects relevant in today's management. The aim is to analyze the possible added values from a collaboration within companies involved in a more social and sustainable environment. First of all, the concept mainly applied is 'collaboration', which etymologically speaking means 'to work together' (Step Entreprendre, 2019). A collaborative strategy is used to join up tools, knowledge, technology, and capabilities from all relevant entities (Crosby & Bryson, 2005). Creating those partnerships towards a social mission enables a sharing of responsibilities, ideas and competences (Huxham & Vangen, 2000). Indeed, it can be quite helpful as an organization could not tackle the societal issues on its own. Then, there is the notion of Corporate Social Responsibility. Unfortunately, no real definition exists for this term because of the abundance of them. Indeed, CSR is a growing term, although its first appearance is back from the 1980s. Its meaning depends on the context and the situation of each organization (Dahlsrud, 2008). However, some dimensions are common for all of them: *“human capital management, health and safety standards, quality of management, adoption to change and innovation, managing environmental impacts, natural resources and managing finances”* (Cornelius, Todres, Janjuha-Jivraj, Woods, & Wallace, 2008). Increasingly, companies communicate about the social responsibility they try to implement through their core purpose and mission (B. Huybrechts & Nicholls, 2013). The last one is social entrepreneurship. This sector is growing, increasing its network and trying to answer to a lot of challenges (Mortier & Konstantatos, 2019). There is an urgent need to keep focusing on this way of managing and to keep expanding this sector. It is full of values and principles, however a bit different within each company. Nevertheless, some characteristics are specific to this system. As for example, the search for a social mission as an end instead of profit maximization (De Bolster, 2018).

Following the deepening of these terms, this thesis wants to go further and look into the development and establishment of values within those sectors. Therefore, the research question is *“What are the added values of a collaboration strategy in CSR fields within the social entrepreneurship sector?”*. The significant part is to understand if a collaboration in a social enterprise creates values in addition to economic and social values.

¹ The writer studied Corporate Sustainable Management and extended her knowledge in this subject during a professional experience in a social enterprise. Those experiences opened her eyes and are the reason she chose this specific domain.

To do so, this thesis is divided into different sections. First, the previously explained concepts will be described more in-depth. Their characteristics will be clarified independently and then, conjointly. The last part of this section will describe the term of ‘value’ and the usable frameworks to create or measure it. In the literature, it will be highlighted that a collaboration by itself creates social, environmental or economic value: *“recognizing that it creates not only social or environmental value, but that it creates business value as well”* (McElhaney, 2009). The second section will outline the research methodology used. The outputs are coming from eight face-to face interviews of social enterprises. Indeed, it was relevant to use social interaction as a way to answer this problematic. Then, the analysis of these interviews will be detailed and then the actual values that emerged from it will be discussed. The results will show that there are different types of added values, when talking about collaboration in the CSR domains of a social enterprise. Moreover, a section about further thinking will expose some suggestions for a positive development in this domain.

In concluding this introduction, it is necessary to understand the focus on the transition coming and therefore, the problems with today’s society, the over-consumption, the way of ruling companies, the coming emergence of social enterprises and their will to change the world as we know it. There is a need to decrease waste, to increase circular and social economy businesses, to think ethically, to look out for the others and to learn to work together. There is a necessity to act and implementing collaborations with other social actors is one of the best methods to improve everyone’s working environment. This transition has to happen now: *“We can be the first generation to succeed in ending poverty; just as we may be the last to have a chance of saving the planet”* (UN, 2015).

2 Literature

To understand the main aspects of this work, it is relevant to set a theoretical part explaining the main concepts. This literature review will be structured into four main sections. It will start with the concept of collaboration; a short background will be explored, followed by the main aspects of this phenomenon. Secondly, an examination of the historical context of Corporate Sustainable Management will be followed by the main aspects of its implementation and communication. The next section covering Social Entrepreneurship will investigate its historical development and the differences in school of thought. Finally, the last point will interlink those three concepts and clarify some guidelines about the creation and measurement of value.

2.1 Collaboration

This first section will explain the term ‘collaboration’, the differences found in the documents but also the difference within the word itself. Notice that it can be broadly used as the ‘collaborative economy’. But in this case, it will be analyzed as an external strategy for the firm used in collaboration with another entity to achieve with specific results for an action or a project. Before exploring this in detail, it is appropriate to first undertake a brief historical review to understand the origins and meaning of it.

2.1.1 Meaning and history

Etymologically speaking, the word ‘collaborate’ means to work (*labore*) together (*co*), in a situation where the actors involved want to achieve a mutual goal and reach a common solution. It appears spontaneously within group interactions, where there is joint responsibility based on voluntary actions. It can only emerge in a group with common trust and shared values (Step Entrepreneur, 2019). In a broader definition, to collaborate means to share, to understand and to talk with each other. It is a meaningful partnership built together between stakeholders. A collaboration can help them understand and learn from their mistakes, but also embrace their achievements (Duggan & Terwiesch, 2007). This kind of strategy allows the development of stable and sustainable solutions. As explained, two parties that partake in collaboration are working together towards a mutual goal, forming an alliance, or partnership to attain common goals. To do so, it is necessary to organize themselves in a relationship that keeps each other’s identity and personal capabilities, for the group to come out of it stronger. The coordination and decision-making must be joint as much as the information and the risks are shared (Huxham, 1996).

In earlier literature, the benefits sought after mainly related to transaction costs and efficiency as well as a desire to improve knowledge and subsequently, to decrease the risks, time and costs (Dyer, 1997; Lewis, 2002). However, after deepening their relationship, the actors also looked for collective work to increase productivity and performance. Indeed, this comes along with what Adam Smith focused on: the quality of the organization. Furthermore, this encompasses in the communication and interactions between actors and their competencies (Le Boterf, 2008).

Communicating and agreeing on the structure of the organization is therefore one of the most difficult parts of collaboration. Huxham and Vangen (2000) noticed that shared responsibility and diverse ideas and competences are becoming more emphasized in collaborative partnerships. Indeed, the place of a leader in a collaborative strategy is often seen as manipulative and its empowerment can be used to influence the decisions. Contrary to this, 'cooperation' fits within a structured organization, where the tasks are well shared between the actors, distinguishing itself from the above limitation. In this case, the term comes from 'operating together', and means that the actors working independently towards a common goal. For this type of work, respect and engagement are crucial (Step Entreprendre, 2019). Some aspects of the organization are common between the two structures. In this way, individuals can contribute to solutions through interactive participation, where everyone participates in a shared decision-making. This allows everyone to be involved and responsible for the outcomes. This also means there is a shared responsibility between everyone involved in the decision-making (Borrini, Favar, Nguinguir, & Ndangang, 2000). Bouwen and Taillieu (2004) also noted that collaboration appears in independently governed organizations, which move towards closely organized relationships. It is when this mutual process is implemented informally that collaboration will be dynamic. Some actions need the involvement of a community. Because the scale and complexity of many social issues is such that they cannot be overcome by individual organizations, collaboration that combines and shares knowledge, tools and technology from the relevant actors is of immense importance (Crosby & Bryson, 2005). Indeed, collaborating with an actor that is complementary to your organization can be stimulating on many levels, as both parties shape the partnership bringing relevant knowledge and expertise to it (Benjamin Huybrechts, Mertens, & Xhaufclair, 2006).

This sharing of expertise can be linked to 'collective intelligence', which is a strong advantage to increase performance through a collaboration strategy. It is used to combine and add up the competences from different actors. This pooling helps to manage difficult decisions and increases cohesiveness through strategy (Comtet, 2006). But more than that, the aim of a good

collaborative partnership integrates some key elements. The stakeholders must have a clear, shared vision, mutual trust, open communication and a constructive way to share and work with different ideas (Walker, Sederlund, Gipson, Cosman, & Company, 2006). A collaborative strategy is indeed based on mutual respect, empathy and trustworthiness of the parties involved (Zaïbet, 2007). However, trust is vital to this relationship and comes from active collaboration, great communication and transparency between the parties (Scandellius & Cohen, 2016). In addition to this, collaborating between multiple firms enables a greater range of action and visibility (Peloza & Falkenberg, 2009). Thus, it can be seen how collaboration succeed, there is a need for trust in the relationship, especially between two organizations who could be competitors and may therefore be opportunistic (Lafaye & Berger-Douce, 2014). Such situations, where a company collaborates with diverse stakeholders that may have competing views and values, which can cause tensions (C. H. Kim, Amaeshi, Harris, & Suh, 2013). Despite this, it also provides a wide range of capabilities and more active participation (Scandellius & Cohen, 2016). So, to be able to utilize a collaborative approach, it is important to have access to knowledge – or even collective intelligence – and to communicate, as the firm is sharing its work with others. But the firms must be able to be multitask, to manage and to coordinate the different lines of work of the respective actors (Silva & Ali, 2010).

Thanks to technological advances and computerization, sharing information has become easier. Interpersonal collaboration can also improve the quantity and quality of this information while at the next level, communicating over a distance range becomes easier as well. Indeed, the coming work organization forms are ubiquity, collaboration and virtuality (Orlikowski, 2000). It is faster to work with anyone as it is possible to reach them all the time from anywhere. A collaborative enterprise is “*a distinct mode of organization in which participant organizations work together in equity, commitment and trust exchanging information, sharing activities and resources and complimenting and enhancing each other’s capacity for mutual benefit and a common purpose by sharing risks, responsibilities and rewards*” (Bititci, Martinez, Albores, & Parung, 2004). As for a collaborative tool, will enable a link through the whole work and in the end, allows the creation of a common interest and project (Poinsot, Duport, Champloix, & Japiot, 2010).

After this review of the background of collaboration, some aspects emerged. Indeed, it seems that the main features – a shared knowledge and the collectivity – are important to detail to understand the concept of collaboration.

2.1.2 Knowledge

The main advantage of collaboration is to work with a variety of actors and their own knowledge but at the same time, to share the same perspective and challenge. It is the construction of “*a social learning process in an emerging community of practice*” (Rene Bouwen & Taillieu, 2004). As a matter of fact, collaboration will enable creation, alignment and deepening of this common knowledge (Slowak, 2008). This collaboration also brings something called social learning, which goes beyond community participation and implies a grasp of participatory and learning-oriented forms of governance. Social learning incorporates a generation of knowledge and a shared perspective of the values, that enables building collective solutions (René Bouwen, Craps, & Santos, 1999). Another way to regroup and approve this available knowledge and information is explained by West (2007), with Open standards. This concept requires the people involved to participate and vote in a “due” process for the information to be fully accessible. It can be related to a democratic way to rule a business.

Indeed, collaboration is interesting to practice when the actors have common interests around which they can create a community and manage their knowledge as one (Poinsot et al., 2010). The different backgrounds and disciplines of each collaborator bring new understanding and knowledge to a project. It is important to consider each party’s identity, interest and perspective. The recognition of those will allow interdependence between parties (Rene Bouwen & Taillieu, 2004).

2.1.3 Collectivity

As Zaïbet (2007) said, “*la collaboration est l’engagement mutuel des membres d’une équipe de travail dans un effort coordonné pour résoudre ensemble un problème*”²³. It can take place in a social network of companies, which eases the consolidation of ideas and the share of information. This subsequently creates collective intelligence (Poinsot et al., 2010). Additionally, working as a team is known to ease the participation and creativity of the employees. This collective intelligence is increased by the relationship between the contributors and becomes more than the sum of that of the individual. This is how it differs from simple collective work (Zaïbet, 2007). These collaborative strategies demonstrate that there is a commitment between organizations regarding their resources and competences that will be used

² English translation: “*collaboration is the mutual commitment of each work team member in a coordinated effort to solve a problem together*”.

³ In the main body of this thesis, the quotes are written in their original language to keep the exact essence of the sentence, however, an English translation is provided in the footnotes.

to realize common strategic goals (Lafaye & Berger-Douce, 2014). For Bréchet, Schieb-Bienfait and Desreumaux (2009), a collective action can be translated as “*the joint construction of knowledge and relationships*”, while for Leyronas and Loup (2009), to co-construct a project implies that individual and collective goals and benefits are lined up.

It is important that all the actors of the collaboration are involved in the production and consumption of information and knowledge (P. Kim, Lee, Lee, Huang, & Makany, 2011). The collectivity of all these actors' interactions will equal more than just the sum of their individual input. This mutual process can contribute to the appearance of innovative new ideas (Lafaye & Berger-Douce, 2014). In other words, the fact that collective intelligence is more than just an addition allows a shared thinking that assists the resolution of a problem that a single person wouldn't be able to solve (Schein, 1971). Delving deeper, Lévy (1997) describes collective intelligence as being based on three concepts. First, is group work; then there is a dimension where the workers collaborate towards a common goal; and finally, he explained about the capacity of understanding. Everaere (1999), on the other hand, talked about three characteristics. The first one is interdependence, which means that there is a need that the group carry on an activity. Then comes the interaction that links the actors from that interdependence. This collective action depends on the will of each actor, but in the end, it will foster their social integration. Thirdly, co-activity engages notions of time and space, which means the activity has to be done simultaneously and in a common place.

In the same idea as collective intelligence, collaboration can create organizational creativity, which is the sum of all the individual creativity and the creative collective output, that can happen during social interactions. Being able to display individual creativity into a collaborative process helps bringing a collective work and emerging new ideas (Cullmann, Guittard, & Schenk, 2015).

All of this shared knowledge, perspectives, collectivity and creativity enables the emergence of new ideas, but also creates value.

2.1.4 Value creation

It is quite hard to understand the impact of knowledge on the capital of a company. But the fact that people cooperate and create pooled knowledge increases the chance of value generation (Slowak, 2008). The creation of value comes from a collaborative endeavor and contributes to a mutually beneficial relationship (Ulaga & Eggert, 2006). Indeed, for collaboration to work at its best, it is important that it creates value for both parties.

The term ‘value’ can be understood in different ways. There is internal value, seen from the shareholders, which is wealth; and there is external value, seen from the customers, which is satisfaction. Collaboration helps create these two kinds of values for each party involved (Martinez-Hernandez, 2003). In addition to this, Bititci *et al* (2004) talked about another type of value created by a collaboration, including the individual and the intra-network values. However, he also discusses how a collaborative strategy builds up a new value proposition with the input of each actor’s competencies. With the assumption that, to ensure value creation in a collaboration, one has to incorporate sustainable/long-term relationships (Wagner, Eggert, & Lindemann, 2010). More about value creation will be explained in a later section.

2.2 Corporate Social Responsibility

The second aspect is Corporate Social Responsibility. This section will be divided into the historical background, where its reasons for existence and resulting advantages from that time will be stated, and then, the position of CSR nowadays in the transitioning society will be explained.

2.2.1 Definition and history

After analyzing over 30 definitions of CSR, Dahlsrud (2008) concluded by stating that: “*the challenge for business is not so much to define CSR, as it is to understand how CSR is socially constructed in a specific context and how to take this into account when business strategies are developed*”. That is to say that the notion of CSR can be understood in many different ways, with a range of different terms found in the literature: *sustainable development*, *triple-bottom-line*, *business ethics*. Despite these minor differences, the terms share the important fact that they incorporate a voluntary commitment (Van Marrewijk, 2003).

Van Marrewijk (2003), based on the work of Milton Friedman and R. Edward Freeman, explained the three perspectives that emerged through the years. The first one is the *shareholder approach*, which allows the introduction of a CSR strategy inside the firm as long as the aim of the company continues to be profit maximization. Then there is the *stakeholder approach*, which suggests that a company is accountable to not just the shareholders, but to anyone in relation to the organization’s actions. And the *societal approach*, where any business is liable for society.

Even though no authoritative definition exists, the literature consistently focuses on several dimensions. First, is this notion of voluntariness. Secondly, is the involvement of multiple stakeholders. The literature also emphasizes that the economic and the social dimensions should

coexist in the company's structure – for example, economic responsibility, corporate citizenship or business ethics. Moreover, environmental externalities must be looked after. And finally, those should be practiced by way of actions taken and values believed in by the organization; this goes beyond philanthropic activities (Dahlsrud, 2008; Desmet, 2017b; Windsor, 2006).

The idea behind CSR is that it is a corporate strategy that takes place through actions that are disconnected from the main business. However, some definitions highlight another aspect of CSR and view it as a way to create value and social change through the business culture, goals and core operations (McElhaney, 2009).

Generally, the top management looks at the short-term advantages a CSR strategy brings to the firm. However, this restrictive view will lead to a negative performance, as what shows that a CSR implementation is successful is the long-term perspective. In the 1990's, CSR was viewed in contrast to profit, as if it was something one had to choose between. It was believed that a company engaging in a CSR strategy would have their profits affected, however in time, firms came to realize that CSR could also provide greater social legitimacy and long-term profitability (Steiner, 1980). Later, the main financial benefit concerns the employees – HR, operational costs, talent management and reputation. Indeed, workers are more satisfied and committed to a socially responsible company, which is an advantage for recruitment (McElhaney, 2009).

2.2.2 Implementation and communication

An increase in socially responsible companies suggests that people are increasingly aware of CSR practices. Those corporations have a social or environmental purpose, but do not reject profit for their shareholders. The businesses are becoming increasingly aware of these social and environmental issues and many eventually change their business model to conform to societal needs (Tihon & Ingham, 2011).

This is when CSR strategies are implemented. Several reasons for setting up a sustainable approach into strategic and operational actions are enumerated by Tihon and Ingham (2011): *“[...] it contributes directly or indirectly to performances including economic ones. It is also through intangible factors that the return on responsible innovations can be measured: positive reputation, legitimacy and social capital. All these elements are looked upon favorably by customers and employees who are sensitive to these values.”*

To successfully implement CSR, a company must proceed through different steps (Maon et al., 2009; Quinn & D'amato, 2008)⁴:

- *Step 1. Raising awareness.* At first, the firm needs to learn about CSR. This awareness can come from external environment of the firm or internal pressure made by a change in mindset inside the organization.
- *Step 2. Alignment of norms and values.* The company must change its business model, align its strategy to responsibility goals and create new norms regarding CSR practices. In addition to this, this step requires the company to find stakeholders in line with this new strategy. They need to share their knowledge, impacts and values as a result of their relationship.
- *Step 3. Establishing internal meaning of CSR.* As explained above, the definition of CSR depends on the situation and the organization of the firm. In this step, the company must find a definition that includes the stakeholders' expectations and the long-term objectives of the organization. They should strive towards effective and open two-way communication between those inside the company and those outside of it; thus, ensuring that sharing relationship with the stakeholders.
- *Step 4. Assessing status.* The current policies, mission statements, code of conduct, and any documents involving the organization should be reviewed. Furthermore, the company must integrate a benchmark associated with the allowed practices.
- *Step 5 and 6. Developing and implementing an integrated strategy.* At this stage, the company needs a long-term vision, sustainable goals and a strategy derived from the core of its business. The new targeted values and statements are now becoming commitments. There should be an operationalization of the global responsibility throughout all of the firm's tasks. All actors must commit to the triple-bottom-line principles. It is required to ensure ethical actions, apply environmental, social and financial criteria in decision-making and be totally transparent about it.
- *Step 7. Communicating.* Internal communication is important to keep increasing awareness. There should be trainings and development meetings for the employees and management of the firm to correctly embed CSR in their working habits.
- *Step 8. Evaluating the new strategy and communication.* This stage enables the management to understand the successful choices from what did not work well within the

⁴ A representation of the proposed framework of these nine steps can be found in Appendix 1.

strategy. The management should change some of the original goals and design new ones to try out.

- *Step 9. Institutionalizing.* This last step enables the CSR strategy to sustain in the business. Whether it comes from top management or the employees, the leaders have to engage in and commit to it. The strategy should be incorporated in the decision-making process and in the long-term plan. Indeed, *“a clear vision of CSR needs to be embedded within and reflect the core values of the firm, and be linked to the mission, vision and values of the organization—recognizing that it creates not only social or environmental value, but that it creates business value as well.”* (McElhaney, 2009).

After a firm implements a CSR strategy, it is important for them to communicate about it. One of the aims of an effective CSR strategy is to gain recognition for the important work done. As the goal of profit maximization and shareholder benefit remains central, it is all the more important to communicate about how CSR can not only coexist but complement the firm's profitability. Though, this is changing over time and is becoming more concerned about the link between financial return and positive impact in the company's core business (McElhaney, 2009). When a company communicates about CSR there are usually two different reactions. The first one involves positive feedback by stakeholders and the second raises questions about the incentives of the companies that do it. To integrate its stakeholders means to listen to their concerns and advice on which CSR issues are relevant to tackle (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). Indeed, CSR begins with companies whose stakeholders want to follow “good behavior practices” and after some time those ethical methods develop within the firm and may result in the implementation of a more ethical code of conduct, sustainable reporting or certifications (Cornelius et al., 2008).

A CSR strategy is the first commitment towards a social enterprise. It is relevant for the values and mission of the company, with the help of stakeholders, to align with the CSR domain in which it operates. After this the change has to be more radical and incorporate within the core business (Tihon & Ingham, 2011). Even in older literature, the authors regarded this issue as crucial and the development of a capitalistic profit-driven company having a triple-bottom line was questioned (Meadows, Meadows, Randers, & Behrens III, 1972). The difference between CSR and Social Entrepreneurship is thus: *“The challenge for many social enterprises is to engender similarly socially responsible practices internally, to reflect their external achievements”* (Cornelius et al., 2008).

2.3 Social Entrepreneurship

First thing first, there are two schools of thought on how to describe a social enterprise. The first one is the European point of view, which focuses on collectivity whereas the second, Anglo-Saxon perspective, concentrates on the social entrepreneur itself. Ultimately however, both focus on the value created by the social construction (Alvarez & Barney, 2010).

2.3.1 History

The oldest origin of ‘social economy’ comes from Europe in the 19th century, with the emergence of cooperatives. Those were created by the poor people to collectively answer societal needs. The term ‘social entrepreneurship’ was coined well after this, in the 1990’s, by rich actors who were interested in those societal issues and who wanted to help how they could (Huens, 2014). Those two terms found common ground with the appearance of ‘social enterprises’. Social enterprises achieve both economic and social purpose and reinvest their profits into their main mission, which is social and/or environmental (Moulaert, 2013). Social constructions and beliefs come as a result of the interactions and relationships between the people and their environment arising from the opportunities, thoughts and ideas shared between the organization’s actors (Wood & McKinley, 2010). In support of this thought, Puhakka and Stewart (2015) said that “[...] *entrepreneurial opportunities are built upon ideas, beliefs and actions that enable the creation of goods and services for either existing or future markets*”. It is also important to note that a social enterprise is not viable without effective financial management. Indeed, the social goals need the reinvestment of surplus to be able to grow and have a positive outcome (European Commission, 2002).

One way describing a social enterprise was articulated by the Social Business Initiative in 2011:

“A social enterprise is an operator in the social economy whose main objective is to have a social impact rather than make a profit for its 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.”

This definition can apply to both schools of thoughts, with the main discrepancies concern the individuality, the value creation and the governance (Petrella & Richez-Battesti, 2014).

2.3.2 European

To understand this type of social enterprise, it is important to understand the values and principles of social economy. The characteristics are that there should be a production of goods and/or services, it should answer a community need which is not-for-profit, and have a democratic decision-making process. In parallel, there are four important principles to underline. The first one refers to the redistribution of profit, that it should be used for the members and collectivity of the firm. The second one is about the self-management of the company. Thirdly, as said before, the firm has to have a democratic decision-making process and follow the principle of ‘one person refers to one voice’, this avoids a company ruled entirely by shareholders. And the fourth one refers to the division of incomes, which must highlight the employees and their work more than the capital itself (De Bolster, 2018). Those characteristics are still quite common with the Anglo-Saxon type, excluding one or two exceptions discussed later. But the main difference is that this type is built on the European Model of Social Enterprises (EMES) Research Network. It describes three main groups, within which lies nine criteria of a social enterprise. The first one regroups the economic dimensions, the second one focuses on the social ones, and then it gathers the dimensions about governance structure. Here, democratic governance and participation are important (Petrella & Richez-Battesti, 2014).

The main advantage of social economy is that it combines performance, public interest and efficiency with social needs and civic innovation. The final goal is not profit itself, it is only used to be redistributed as a mean for social purposes (*L'efficacité économique au service de l'intérêt général*, 2012)

2.3.3 Anglo-Saxon

This type of social enterprise is often called ‘social business’, and has a more individualistic perspective (Huens, 2014). Indeed, it comes from the person as the social entrepreneur, seen as a hero, that combines all the essential visionary and ethical qualities needed to make change happen (Defourny & Nyssens, 2017). In this case, “*social entrepreneurship is often associated with social innovation since social entrepreneurs are searching for innovative solutions to meet these new needs.*” (Petrella & Richez-Battesti, 2014). The Anglo-Saxon perspective focuses on social innovation to reinvest in their social mission. They are mainly led by the social entrepreneur, who has a strong personality of a change-maker. The individual characteristics of this entrepreneur are the emphasis (Defourny & Nyssens, 2010). The four central elements needed for a social opportunity to grow are 1) an entrepreneurial strong vision; 2) a sharing

knowledge and points of view; 3) a combination of different backgrounds; and 4) an external communication. The strong vision has to be carried out by a social entrepreneur, who focuses on social change and does it with a bold, creative and leader personality (Puhakka & Stewart, 2015).

In this case, the criteria are less strict and more inclusive, which enables more actors to be identified as social enterprises. This means that anyone who is more socially conscious can be seen as such (Huens, 2014). However, some principles found in social business are similar with the social economy's ones. There still must be a social mission purpose rather than purely profit maximization; the firm must still self-manage and self-fund; and the shareholders will not receive any of the dividends. The rest of it is different, for example, the shareholders can still receive back their initial investment; or just not emphasized, as the employees will benefit from better working conditions, and the company has to be environmentally friendly (Hiez, 2011).

In addition to being easier to access, social business enables more people to be aware of the good that social entrepreneurship does for the people, the planet and the environment. The communication is open and easier, which gives hope that economy and social can be intertwined and successful (Huens, 2014). But it needs to be analyzed carefully to ensure that it does not fall into 'greenwashing'. Indeed, some initiatives use their social responsibility to fit in this definition of social entrepreneurship but still focus mainly on their profit maximization (Defourny & Nyssens, 2017). To some extent, this type of social enterprise can relate to a more advanced form of CSR, also called Corporate Social Entrepreneurship (J. Austin & Reficco, 2009). Austin, Leonard, Reficco and Wei-Skillern (2006) defined it as "*the process of extending the firm's domain and corresponding opportunity set through innovative leveraging of resources, both with and outside its direct control, aimed at the simultaneous creation of economic and social value*". Some elements are essential for implementing a Corporate Social Entrepreneurship in the company's operations. First of all, the firm needs an enabling environment such as a social value-based culture that allows the transition to take place. Next, it needs corporate social entrepreneurs, who are change actors that take initiative and drive this transformation. Thirdly, the key purpose stays corporate value-based, which means that to be able to generate social value it is essential to keep true to the corporate mission, structural components and organizational identity. The fourth element is about the innovative value creation and double return, as it is both economic and social. And finally, there is this co-generation of value, where collaboration is seen as a vital part of this value creation (J. Austin

& Reficco, 2009).

In concluding this section about social entrepreneurship, it is interesting to reunite both school of thoughts with a saying of the Mouves: “*L’idée de l’entreprise sociale est simple et intuitive : utiliser l’entreprise et la création de richesses pour répondre efficacement à des besoins sociaux*”⁵ (*L’efficacité économique au service de l’intérêt général*, 2012).

2.4 Link between the concepts

After individually analyzing these three concepts – collaboration, corporate social responsibility, and social entrepreneurship – this section will examine the literature available that connects them to each other.

2.4.1 Corporate Social Responsibility - Collaboration

A CSR strategy is mainly implemented through the vision and the culture of the organization, which improves due to the practice of collaboration and the interdependence between the actors involved (Quinn & D’amato, 2008). The perspectives of CSR also place greater focus on the creation of a long-term relationship between a firm and its stakeholders (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). Indeed, those relationships are vital for a company to pursue its activities and is the reason that participation and collaboration are important within those relationships (Andriof, Waddock, Husted, & Rahman, 2017). A clear dialogue is necessary to share concerns and so, understand the creation of a common business strategy and decision-making (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). Sakarya, Bodur, Yildirim-Öktem and Selekler-Göksen (2012) support this thought and go deeper, saying that “*corporate social engagement through collaboration is providing an opportunity and medium for corporate social performance*”. Those relationships indeed imply mutual goals and a share of information to solve common problems through constructive approaches, but also with the trust and engagement of all the parties (Lacoste & Pardo, 2016). To understand the appropriate collaborative relationship to adopt, it can help to look at which CSR domains are being taking care of in the company. This will enable a structure and an alignment to take place (Peloza & Falkenberg, 2009).

2.4.2 Social Enterprise - Collaboration

To collaborate in a social environment, it is important to address more complex social issues of mutual concern that a unilateral organization action could not handle on its own (Waddock &

⁵ English translation: “*the idea of a social enterprise is simple and intuitive: to use the company and the creation of wealth to efficiently answer societal needs*”.

Post, 1991). A collaboration with social enterprises can lead to new competencies, knowledge or skills in term of social and environmental solutions. It will allow a gain in cost, time and efficiency (Peloza & Falkenberg, 2009). In addition to this, through those social interactions, there can be a creation of opportunities, common knowledge and mutual understanding (Fletcher, 2006). The most important thing for a social opportunity to grow is to have feedback and help from the collectivity, from peers, closed relations, etc. But there is a need of collective input, knowledge and point of views (Wood & McKinley, 2010).

The literature mainly talks about collaboration between social enterprises and corporations. It usually pursues the social mission born by the social enterprise but with bilateral governance mechanisms. It increases the social approach of the business but also the commercial orientation of the social enterprise. In the end, both of those input will enable a better grasp of the issue (B. Huybrechts & Nicholls, 2013). As Phillips, Lawrence and Hardy (2000) explained, collaboration between organizations is “*a co-operative relationship among organizations that relies on neither market nor hierarchical mechanisms of control*”. This is one reason why it is interesting to create *social alliance*. Moreover, they are necessary “to achieving sustainably successful business” and this collectivity enables an increase in organizational performance as well as societal betterment (J. Austin & Reficco, 2009). Di Domenico, Tracey and Haugh (2009) set a theoretical base called Social Exchange Theory (SET) that explained the different points needed for a collaboration to be balanced: the attributes’ value, the practices and the benefits. As for the risks that a social enterprise has in collaborating with a business, they are often related to the possibility of a scandal and the resulting negative publicity of the company. This creates a legitimacy problem for the social enterprise, that it may have difficulties to come back from (Wymer & Samu, 2003). On the other hand, the advantages of this type of collaboration are that usually the two organizations are different but also complementary, which will bring interesting prospects, and also “[...] *could embody the bridge-building of and blurring boundaries between two previously well distinct institutional orders*” (B. Huybrechts & Nicholls, 2013).

More than a risk afterwards, there can be a misunderstanding on the reciprocal goals of the exchange. Indeed, the decision-making process of corporations is informed by a market demand point of view and the responsibility towards their shareholders whereas the social enterprise will always look after their stakeholders’ expectations, and the social and community needs (Di Domenico et al., 2009). The purposes of the collaboration are also quite different. Social enterprises’ main reason to collaborate with corporation is to increase their viability and long-

term perspectives while corporations are more interested in showing their customers that they are socially responsible, which they hope will increase their reputation, legitimacy and stakeholder relationships. It also helps the corporation to keep the economic advantages of their business while also profiting from the social image and positive reputational advantages from the collaboration. There are, however, risks that the bigger corporation uses the social mission for its own good and in the end, transform the initiative into a competitive advantage within the opportunistic market (Di Domenico et al., 2009; B. Huybrechts & Nicholls, 2013). But, as explained by Di Domenico et al (2009), “*we contend that synthesis also requires a two-way transfer of resources and a high level of exchange equity between partners. Collaborations must therefore involve negotiated exchanges for mutual benefit rather than a one-way transfer of resources*”.

In concluding, Moore (1993) and after that, Torrès-Blay (2000) talked about business ecosystems, and described it as companies from different sectors working in a collaborative strategy to create a community, increase innovation, all this orchestrated by a leader who will easily share its direction. Uzan (2013) also talked about this leader and pointed out the fact that its final goal is to create a collective value.

2.5 Value

This section will explain the creation and generation of value for CSR, Social Entrepreneurship, Collaboration and for their combination. On a regular basis, the analyses describe the values captured by the organization’s strategic choices as economic or social values (Shafer, Smith, & Linder, 2005). The part about value creation will be followed by one about its measurement, cumulating in some guidelines and frameworks used to capture value.

2.5.1 Creation

There are five dimensions that are useful to understand the value creation of a firm. The first one is ‘centrality’, which implies the closeness of the CSR objectives and the strategy of the firm. The higher it is, the greater chance there is that the CSR program will succeed, yielding future benefits, productivity and ethical motivations. The second dimension is ‘specificity’, which means that the benefits triggered are going into the firm rather than the industry itself. In this way, a CSR strategy can create specific benefits that will be private and bring a competitive advantage for the firm. However, the implementation of a CSR strategy mainly contributes to nonspecific contributions available for the community at large, for example, an action can result in positive or negative externalities. Thirdly, ‘proactivity’ is when the company scans the

opportunities and anticipate the market trends, which will allow it to be better positioned when the crisis comes. The fourth dimension is ‘voluntarism’, which are decisions taken by the firm on its own, that were not required. This usually increases the quality of the standards and gains in strategic and social responsibility activities. Finally, the last dimension is ‘visibility’. This refers to an increase in the recognition of the firm’s CSR activities, which brings forward as much economic benefits as stakeholders’ loyalty (Burke & Logsdon, 1996). The value created by a CSR strategy contributes as well for the shareholders as for the society and the environment (Scandellius & Cohen, 2016). And since 1996, Burke and Logsdon explained that it is usually linked to the future purchases and products sells. It helps in the increase of productivity, loyalty and opportunity creation, as much for the firm than, just as mentioned, for its stakeholders.

A social enterprise is differentiated from the fact a company has a CSR strategy by the creation of social value (Petrella & Richez-Battesti, 2014). The word “entrepreneurship” itself describes an initiative that increases value and brings change for the market and society. And in the case of social entrepreneurship, it focuses on the creation of social value (Dees, 2017). A social enterprise is described as a mission-driven business that concentrates on a social purpose and produces services or goods for the public interest. In this case, there is a focus on the triple-bottom line, which requires the company to blend financial results with environmental and social goals. In the end, this enables the creation of a blended value (Defourny & Nyssens, 2017). As well as intelligence and creativity, ‘collective performance’ refers to the sum – and more – of all the ones from the individuals. Increasingly, the state and social enterprises must be as efficient as a for-profit company and focus on the three E’s (economy, efficiency, effectiveness). Their nature changes from social to service provider, which facilitate greater evaluation (Jany-Catrice & Clotuche, 2017). Indeed, it is relevant to measure the value and the impact of a strategy because firms are more regulated, both by the institutions but also by their own management. This increase in regulation happens with a change in the valuation goals. It starts with reporting, first for the concerned actors and then for the subsidiary powers and ultimately becomes a way to indicate the efficiency of the activities to be able to answer to social needs (*Evaluer l’impact social de l’entrepreneuriat social: La nécessité d’une co-construction*, 2017). But another issue is that social enterprises rarely communicate about their social impact, unlike bigger capitalist groups, which announce theirs with tremendous messages. Despite this, such communication would help those small enterprises to show that a lot of better things can be done (Mortier, 2013). The notion of impact comes from the fact that a firm produces goods or services and realizing it can improve results. It is in the end of the

process that the company's results achieve an impact. Those can be social, but also economic, political, environmental, cultural, and so on (Arena, Azzone, & Bengo, 2015).

The creation of a good collaboration and in the end, a co-creation of value between stakeholders essentially needs inside communication, especially to be transparent on sustainability throughout the whole value chain (Crane, Palazzo, Spence, & Matten, 2014). Communication is indeed an important aspect of collaboration. A fair sharing of information between parties can only improve the relationships which, in the end, increase value creation. An understandable value-sharing process helps each party to accept their roles too. All this is also based on trust within the collaboration, because if the relationship is trustworthy, no one will try to change his behavior (Wagner et al., 2010). In this way, building a shared social project will help the creation of social value instead of market value. This shared creation comes from the different actors and parts of the collaboration (Koenig, 2012). Some internal advantages of a co-creation of social entrepreneurship are to increase the company's performance and knowledge about its own work and structure. External advantages are to increase value and visibility (*Evaluer l'impact social de l'entrepreneuriat social: La nécessité d'une co-construction*, 2017). Moreover, if a firm collaborates with a social enterprise, the increase in social value will be implemented as social capital, CSR initiatives and knowledge improvements in the other firm (Di Domenico et al., 2009). In addition to the value created for both collaborators independently, there is a formation of a "joint value" as well as a "community capacity" (Sakarya et al., 2012).

Mainly, a collaboration can bring complementary capabilities, which can be knowledge, human capital, reputation, production or even market access. Sharing all those will enable the companies to deliver a new kind of value to their customers and indeed can increase the legitimacy, viability or quality of product. In the end it will create economic and/or social value (Dahan, Doh, Oetzel, & Yaziji, 2010). Both parties of the collaboration tend to look for a certain kind of value. Social enterprises are looking for the social value they can bring to their stakeholders as corporations will tend to research for financial value, which will be redistributed for their shareholders. But both also have different types of value to offer, "[...] *social enterprises' exchange value is rooted in their local knowledge, social capital and social legitimacy, while corporations' exchange value is rooted in their commercial knowledge, financial capital and market legitimacy.*" (Di Domenico et al., 2009).

2.5.2 Measurement

Difficulties may arise when one tries to calculate the social impact of an activity. The first one refers to the way to issue a value to the non-monetary transactions. The second will be that one is never really certain of the causality between social elements (Maas & Liket, 2011). The third difficulty is about its effect on employees' motivation. Unfortunately, this valuation could bring some non-satisfying impacts and directly touch hopelessness of the actors. Finally, although the perspective of the valuation is measurable on a long-term basis, information is not as easy to collect (*Evaluer l'impact social de l'entrepreneuriat social: La nécessité d'une co-construction*, 2017). These difficulties of measurement are inconceivable in a capitalist society, where the real productivity is seen as work and, more importantly, its exchange value. The aim of measuring social utility is to capture material and immaterial values to be able to determine the real resources of the society. Using quantitative methods, however, will not catch any of the real aspects (civil harmony, health, positive actions, etc.) that improve life (Caillé, 2010). Those are aspects that Tronto (2008) included in the field of 'care'. They are mainly human activities, whose aim is to maintain, perpetuate and repair the world we live in. On this idea, Jany-Catrice and Clotuche (2017) underlined that “*on considère comme richesse tout ce qui est produit et qui peut être mesuré*”⁶ and for the rest, there should be a way to include non-measurable items in the KPI's so it can answer to other needs or be socially innovative (Clotuche, 2017). It is important that the valuation of a company helps it find a way to change negative aspects and grow in the right direction. Indeed, “*l'évaluation est un outil de médiation et de progrès, et non un outil de contrôle ou de certification*”⁷ (*Evaluer l'impact social de l'entrepreneuriat social: La nécessité d'une co-construction*, 2017). First of all, it can be used in the communication of its social impact to the company's stakeholders, especially towards public instance or financial actors. It would be used as a benchmark to compare with other firms' actions in financing seeking or to communicate about the company's will of common interest improvement. Furthermore, the measure of an impact or a value can be used as a compass inside the company. It indeed helps to understand where its actions are leading, its legitimacy and efficiency, and so on (Mortier, 2013).

In this mindset, it is relevant to highlight that 'wealth' is not only an economic concept, it also regroups social and human perspective. This reflection brought an increase in alternative wealth indicators, which could also be seen as a compass to measure good actions. But it is relevant to

⁶ English translation: “we consider as wealth all that is produced and can be measured”.

⁷ English translation: “the valuation is a mediation and improvement tool, not a control and certification tool”.

ask at which extent those indicators should be quantitative (Caillé, 2010). In his analysis, Caillé (2010) underlines an important aspect: “*Une telle perspective peut sembler séduisante à de nombreux égards. Nous voudrions pourtant suggérer ici que cette séduction est trompeuse et très vraisemblablement contreproductive, parce que la subordination du travail associatif à la visée d’une amélioration de son évaluation chiffrée est contraire à l’esprit même de l’association*”⁸.

2.5.3 Possible guidelines

Some frameworks are available for companies to measure their social and/or sustainable impact.

The first one is called *Human Development Indicator (HDI)* and was introduced by Amartya Sen. To understand the HDI, it is essential to explain a little about another of Sen’s work: The capabilities approach. Those capabilities refer to any particular functions that an individual can freely realize regarding its preferences. Those can be assessed through a qualitative analysis of a population’s development. In contrast, GDP can provide an effective evaluation of that clearly measures economic outcomes. Their link is through the potential analysis of the development, to which there is a belief that the well-being of individuals can be measured with the economic growth. Through poverty, the analysts could observe this ‘economic development’, which became few years later, ‘human development’ thanks to the Human development global report 1990 (Bendaoud, 2011). This report stated that ‘human development’ enlarged anyone’s possibilities thanks to three conditions: to live in good health, to gain knowledge, and to access the essential resources for a comfortable life (UN, 1990). The HDI is measured using three aspects; life expectancy at birth, adult literacy rate, and GDP per capita adjusted for purchasing power. The index gives a number between 0 and 1, which is a little simplistic to relate to the well-being of individuals. After some years, another UN report (2010) came out, adjusting the Human Development Index to inequalities within the three initial aspects (Bendaoud, 2011). But this quantitative method is not always relevant to understand each concept of the development and well-being of the individuals.

Another way of measuring a Social Impact is to use the *Social Return on Investment (SROI)*. SROI is used to have a common language for a valuation, including an understanding of

⁸ English translation: “*Such a perspective can seem attractive for many regards. We would like to suggest here, that this attractiveness is misleading and likely counterproductive, because the subordination of associative work to the aim of improving its quantitative evaluation is contrary to the very spirit of the association*”.

difference in culture and situation. It is a framework to measure change and to help assessing value in an easier way, which is relevant to the organizations. In other words, “*it tells the story of how change is being created by measuring social, environmental and economic outcomes and uses monetary values to represent them*” (*A guide to Social Return on Investment*, 2012). The ratio used to translate those outcomes is 3:1, which means a pound invested refers to the creation of three pounds of social value. This is a benefit-to-cost ratio, but for decision-making, SROI contains more than the quantitative information as it also includes qualitative ones and case studies. This analysis could be used as communication tool showing the company’s social impact, or as a strategic tool or guide to underline which part needs improvements and where to make investment decisions (*A guide to Social Return on Investment*, 2012). This framework includes different types and principles. It can be used as an evaluative method, using the outcomes of a past action, or as a forecast, which in this case predicts the creation of social value of predicted outcomes. The principles are the following: involving the stakeholders by informing them about the measurement process; understanding what changes by articulated the intended ones as well as the unintended ones; valuing what matters by giving a voice to every outcomes; including information which will give a true and reasonable picture to stakeholders; claiming only the creation of value, for which the firm is responsible; being transparent and honest about the analysis; and verifying the results (*A guide to Social Return on Investment*, 2012). To carry out this measurement, there are six stages to follow⁹. The first one results in the identification of the stakeholders, and in the establishment of the boundaries and scope covered in the process. The second stage is the theory of change, which is a map identifying the different outcomes. Thirdly, it is important to relate if the outcomes happened, and if so, assessing them a value. The fourth step is the monetization of the value into a quantitative impact. The fifth stage refers to the calculation of the SROI, after the addition or subtraction of the positives and negatives, the firm compares that final result with the initial investment. Finally, the organization needs to verify the report and to share its SROI with the stakeholders (*A guide to Social Return on Investment*, 2012).

In addition to those two frameworks, one guideline that is necessary to present is the *United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs)*. Those are used by companies as a compass to guide their strategic decisions towards economic, social and environmental objectives. Unlike the others, it not used as a measurement, but rather as a way to conduct a sustainable scope of action. The SDGs come from an older framework called the Millennium

⁹ A complete checklist of the six stages can be found in the Appendix 2.

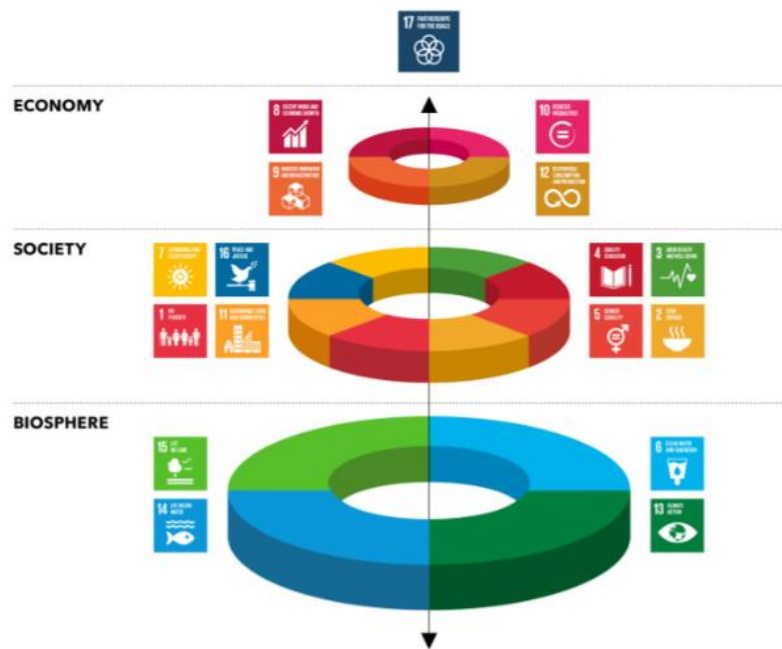
Development Goals (UN, 2015). There are eight MDGs and “*they express widespread public concern about poverty, hunger, disease, unmet schooling, gender inequality, and environmental degradation*” (Sachs, 2012). The SDGs appeared to follow a greater sustainable trajectory and more concrete goals than the eight existing MDGs. They are also based on the 5Ps – People, Planet, Peace, Prosperity and Partnership – and tackle at least one aspect of them. This agenda regrouped world leaders around a common action and universal policies (UN, 2015). This agenda regrouped world leaders around a common action and universal policies. This collective engagement towards sustainable development touches many aspects of our daily life:

“We resolve, between now and 2030, to end poverty and hunger everywhere; to combat inequalities within and among countries; to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies; to protect human rights and promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; and to ensure the lasting protection of the planet and its natural resources. We resolve also to create conditions for sustainable, inclusive and sustained economic growth, shared prosperity and decent work for all, taking into account different levels of national development and capacities” (UN, 2015)¹⁰.

For this research, a useful representation of the SDGs is as a ‘Wedding Cake’. Indeed, in this Figure 1., three layers are clearly drawn. The first one relates the four SDGs concerning the biosphere. The second layer refers to society, with eight SDGs. And the top layer is composed of the four SDGs about economy. This representation is meaningful as those layers are on top of each other. Indeed, without the biosphere, society would not be able to exist, and consequently, with neither the biosphere nor society, the economy would be aimless. But what is the most interesting about this figure is that the pole keeping all this ecosystem together is represented by the SDG17: Partnership for the goals. This agenda indeed needs a collaboration including every actor and their resources to be implemented successfully (UN, 2015).

¹⁰ A more detailed explanation of each SDG is available in the Appendix 3.

Figure 1. SDG ‘Wedding Cake’. Retrieved from (Swaen, 2018a).



In a similar vein, **the pyramid of CSR** introduced by Carroll (2016) is relevant for an organization, instead of the whole society. It is based on four responsibilities; economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic. Figure 2. shows the logic of this pyramid. The economic responsibilities, in this case, are on the bottom as they are required for a business to run properly; they are needed to support the entire enterprise. The second pole is the legal responsibilities that regulate the system and society. Ethical and philanthropic duties are only at the top of the pyramid as they need the other two to exist. But it is important to understand that the ethical aspects are expected throughout the whole pyramid to be able to reach the top and, therefore, for the company to be a good corporate citizen. All of the stakeholders can find their place in the pyramid, which gives the organization a common framework (Carroll, 2016).

Figure 2. Carroll's pyramid of CSR. Retrieved from (Carroll, 2016).



3 Research methodology

The reasons to write a research paper are multiple, in this case, the aim is to give new insights in a field concerning management sciences. ‘Research methodology’ is the study of the way researches are done and is relevant to understand the path through the whole research construction. It is important to underline the methods and logic used by the researcher (Kothari, 2004). The guideline used to construct this research methodology is taken from “*Research Methodology - Methods and Techniques*”, a book written by Kothari in 2004.

To start, it is relevant to reformulate the research question:

What are the added values of a collaboration strategy in CSR domains within the social entrepreneurship sector?

The first step of a research is to find a research theme, which will bring about a research problem. After this, it is necessary to get started and dig into what already exists on the subject, into what the authors have already found on the field of research. This part was evaluated with the literature review on point 2. of this thesis. Research works on relevant concepts were made and pooled into this revision. For this theoretical background, I decided to first take those three concepts independently. The first part explains how collaboration within-sector or cross-sector is seen until today, as well as its core aspects and the creation of value. Then, how CSR evolve until now. And finally, it explains the emergence of social entrepreneurship, its definitions and purpose. The second part mixed all of these concepts above and show the links each has with each other. And a third one refers specifically about value creation in these concepts and frameworks which can be used to measure it.

It is a fact that any of the documents mentioning value creation in the previous literature, discuss another type of value than economic or social – and sometimes, environmental. Collaboration on its own increases economic value for the shareholders and, economic and social ones for the customer (Martinez-Hernandez, 2003). And when the authors discussed Corporate Social Entrepreneurship, they say that it “[...] aimed at the simultaneous creation of economic and social value” (J. E. Austin et al., 2006). A sub-question came from this review: “*Are the economic and social value the only added values of a collaboration strategy in CSR domains within the social entrepreneurship sector?*”. In this way, the purpose of this research is to prove that a collaboration within a social enterprise brings more than just social or economic value. In other words, the aim is to see if the fact that two companies – including one social enterprise – working together towards a goal in line with CSR principles – social, ethical or environmental

– bring added value to the project. The assumption is that it contributes to, at least, the creation of one or two added value – other than the ones described earlier.

3.1 Methodological approach

After this restatement of the research question, it is interesting to dig deeper within the methodology. The main objective is to confront the choices made during the creation of the research question and demonstrate the usefulness of methods used.

A first step is to describe the method used during the research. The choice of method was between a quantitative or a qualitative approach. The first one refers to quantity, which means that the research is based on amounts to measure (Kothari, 2004). Unfortunately, using the SROI for example, would have just measured the social impact of the action. For this analysis, there was a need to figure out other values, not always quantifiable, and to understand this notion with a broader view. The second method comes from behavioral sciences and enables the analysis of various factors (Kothari, 2004). Bryman (2008) underlined two advantages brought with the appearance of qualitative analysis. The first one refers to the methods interest within the field, which increased a lot. Then, it gave methodological consideration for more literary branches. It was relevant to find a method that images the unique character of each individual (Bryman, 2008). And this is exactly what was tried to be highlighted in this case. So, in the continuity of this thought, the method chosen to analyze this research is a qualitative approach. It will look into the way of thinking and feeling of the actors in social entrepreneurship more than some actual numbers. It is important to understand how to use this valuation. As Caillé (2010) explained, “*c’est [...] dans le face à face maintenu entre acteurs qui assument leurs actions et leurs décisions, que réside la véritable condition d’émergence d’une richesse alternative*”¹¹. It is much more relevant to evaluate the person in real time interviews than completing standardized forms, which try to translate qualitative data into figures. In their paper, Graebner, Martin and Roundy (2012), state that “*it is often observed that no cookbook or recipe exists for qualitative research*”, which would actually be contradictory to the essence of what a qualitative approach inquires. However, the article explains some cases where it is relevant to use it, and in this case, it is indeed “*to capture individual’s lived experiences and interpretations*”. This method enables the interviewed person to talk more freely, and in their own vocabulary, about their subjective opinions from their experiences.

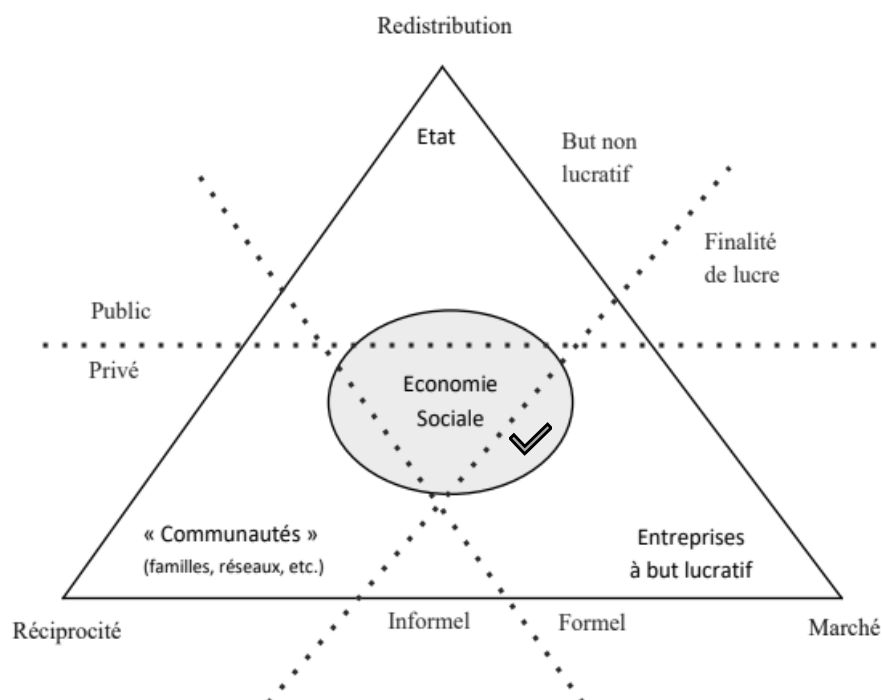
¹¹ English translation: “*it is [...] in a face-to-face held between actors, who undertake their actions and decisions, that reside the real emergence condition of an alternative wealth*”.

3.2 Data collection

The choice of conducting interviews is to regroup data filled with relevant – or just interesting – information from different perspectives and different levels in the firms (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007) explain that there are closed to as many definitions of qualitative research as there are authors talking about it. In this case, the data collection and analysis will follow the way of Elsbach and Kramer (2003), using exclusively face-to-face interviews and pooling the data instead of arranging them into cases. In other categories analyzed, the interviews are semi-directive and the process used is “shared traits”. It is an analysis which compare the elements in each interview, categorize them, and analyze their importance in parallel to their frequency (Miles & Huberman, 2003).

The selected companies are for-profit organizations within the social entrepreneurship sector, and non-for-profit at the border line. However, within this area, they are from different line of business. Indeed, it was more interesting to see the opinion and experience of several actors from different horizons within this field. It was relevant to pool all those points of view to end up with a general state of mind from this part of the social entrepreneurship sector. To locate this type of organizations, a representation of the economic system was used in Figure 3.

Figure 3. The economic system represented by Saw-b analysis. Retrieved from (De Bolster, 2018).



This triangle broadly represents the economic system known as today. Three economic logic are depicted: ‘Redistribution’, which is equivalent to the State part of the economy looking after the collective interest of individuals; ‘Reciprocity’, which refers to communities, including social networks and domestic economy; and ‘Market’, which is the pole of for-profit organizations, seeking to maximize their individual profit. Different lines are dividing this triangle into three other parts. The first one cuts it between the formal and informal character of the initiative. The second one refers to the public or private domain. And the last one separates the for-profit from the non-for-profit aspects of the enterprise. The area used for the analysis is represented by a check mark. This section comes from the market side of the economy and is linked with it thanks to CSR initiatives. Those social businesses and enterprises are situated in the designated area, whose origin and resources come from this market section of the triangle, and still have a for-profit objective, therefore stand under this border (De Bolster, 2018). Furthermore, within this chosen zone, the companies come from multiple types of businesses to understand a broader part of this section.

One of the main difficulties of a multiple-case research though, is to present a complete evidence of all the firm’s perspectives. A point of advice provided was to create a summary table gathering summaries of the different descriptions and data from the companies (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). This has been made in the following Table 1., which collects the information about the employees approached and the context of the interview¹².

Table 1. Details of the respondents and interviews.

Companies	Person interviewed <i>Position in the company</i>	Context of the interview
Coopcity Int1.	Candice Francescato <i>Communication manager</i>	Face to face In Coopcity’s office, in Saint-Gilles, Brussels Time: 25 minutes
Usitoo Int2.	Xavier Marichal <i>Co-founder and managing director</i>	Face to face At Exki, in Louvain-la-Neuve Time: 54 minutes
Febecoop Int3.	Audrey Renier <i>Project manager</i>	Face to face In Coopcity’s office, in Saint-Gilles, Brussels Time: 19 minutes
The Shift Int4.	Eglantine Eeckhout <i>Change facilitator</i>	Face to face At the Espace Jacqmotte, in Brussels Time: 29 minutes

¹² In addition to this table, a questionnaire of the interviews can be found in Appendix 4.

Triodos Int5.	Simon Michotte <i>Internal relationship manager</i>	Face to face At the Espace Jacquemotte, in Brussels Time: 19min
Credal Int6.	Isabelle Philippe <i>Chief executive officer</i>	Face to face In Credal's office, in Mont-Saint-Guibert Time: 48 minutes
Ashoka Int7.	Yannick Fischer <i>Partnership manager</i>	Face to face At the Impact House, in Brussels Time: 32 minutes
La Halle de Han Int8.	Isabelle Houtart <i>Chief executive officer</i>	Face to face At La Halle de Han in Tintigny, in the Province of Luxembourg Time : 37 minutes
Alterfin Int9.	Karin Huffer <i>Communication and marketing officer</i> Pierre Rialland <i>Social and environmental performance manager</i>	Face to face At Mundo B's office, in Saint-Josse, Brussels Time: 28 minutes

3.3 Results analysis

As explained earlier in this research methodology, the approach used is the pooling of the information collected in each of the face to face interviews. In the following Table 2., the companies chosen and their relation to collaboration will be more detailed. Afterwards, the analysis part will look for common points through each of the interviews and will regroup the values identified.

Table 2. Description of the companies and the collaborative strategies.

Companies	Main focus	Collaboration implemented
Coopcity Int1.	Coaching and support structure. Helping entrepreneurs to develop or consolidate their business ideas that meet a need in Brussel.	Used as a tool within their coaching program. Displayed as a strategy that should be used through any actions.
Usitoo Int2.	Cooperative that rents second-handed materials. Distribution channels are through social enterprises, that they call "relaying point".	In the involvement of the cooperators. With their relaying points. Towards actor-enterprises.
Febecoop Int3.	Platform to compute cooperative knowledge. Coaching and support structure.	In the sharing of tools and knowledge.

	Cooperatives representative.	Happens between actors who have common values.
The Shift Int4.	Sustainable development network. Creation of Green Deals starting from a problem and consulting all the relevant actors around it.	Is born from one between four entities. Is in every actions of the company. Is seen as the spinal cord.
Triodos Int5.	Public limited ethical and sustainable bank. Social impact on society by granting loans towards social, environmental or cultural projects.	Sometimes with banks or other actors to have a greater impact.
Credal Int6.	Ethical cooperative bank. Three businesses: money investment (cooperators), credit and support.	Through the whole actions, impossibility to work without collaboration. For example: with other banks, public authorities, social enterprises, cooperators, etc.
Ashoka Int7.	Change-making network. Selection of social entrepreneurs who detect new innovative idea, called Ashoka Fellows.	With actors who will help connecting the dots. Between two Fellows.
La Halle de Han Int8.	Combination of two organizations and several activities within one place. Two missions: the professional integration and the promotion of local and sustainable agriculture.	Through all the actions as it is based on a coexistence between two entities and several activities. Decline if the values differ.
Alterfin Int9.	Solidary investment portfolio towards microcredit for southern hemisphere countries. Cooperative born from the collaboration of non-for-profits and banks.	At all levels of the company. With Belgian bodies and small producers from the southern hemisphere.

From the interviews, some observations are relevant to be underlined. First, Triodos (**Int5.**) is a public limited company, not a social enterprise. Therefore, the data collected from this interview will not be used as an input like the others, but more as a comparison. Another finding is that none of the social enterprises are taking place in a CSR strategy as such. Each of them claims it is in their core business – in their DNA – but none have enough resources or time to implement one in particular. What was interesting to see, is that the collaborations established were always towards a CSR oriented project, as all the projects of the companies were. Some authors highlighted that when a company uses collaboration to address issues in CSR domains, all actors should be directed to any of these dimensions: “*human capital management, health and safety standards, quality of management, adoption to change and innovation, managing*

environmental impacts, natural resources and managing finances” (Cornelius et al., 2008; Peloza & Falkenberg, 2009). It is interesting to add that to be able to compare companies, each should have societal behavior factors that could be assessed (Tihon & Ingham, 2011), therefore, this analysis is based on those dimensions-oriented projects. Finally, the last comment is about the difference with collaborative economy. Three of the actors insisted on the fact that a collaboration should not be mistaken with the collaborative economy in general. There is a difference between a collaborative strategy and the collaborative economy. This is also called “platform capitalism” and regroups the big companies as Uber or Airbnb. The main criticism about this type of collaboration is that it focuses on profit only and has a strong hierarchy with insecure employment (Wathelet, 2017). Collaborative economy is closer to sharing or even peer to peer economy, and also embeds collaborative consumption, which includes four main concepts: Functional economy, which looks after the utilization of the objects instead of its possession, indeed, sometimes one resource is too much for a person on its own; Gift economy, where the social exchange is focused on giving, receiving and returning; Common Pool Resources, which share collective governance and knowledge, therefore, there is a need of a critical mass to include enough resources; And libertarian counter-culture, that suggests a come-back of the individuals’ freedom of action ideology. Some points may be common as this system is based on the main principle of collaboration; to create and keep mutually valuable relationships. It is too, a share of competences, time, money or space, which is identical collaborative lifestyle (Acquier, Carbone, & Massé, 2016; Botsman & Rogers, 2011).

4 Findings

Now that each term of the research problem is reframed, and that the interviews are better described, it is interesting to pool the available information and compare the data to answer the research question. The outcomes of those interviews are quite similar, even though the enterprises analyzed, within the social entrepreneurship sector, came from different horizons. The analysis is based on several criteria. Those criteria are based on the pooled information from the interviews; economic viability, collective intelligence, share of initial values, coherence through the value chain, complementarity between actors, requirement to collaborate, emerged values.

4.1 Economic viability

The criteria emerged mainly thanks to the insight of **Int3** and was supported by **Int5**, **Int6**, **Int8** and **Int9**.

“[...] une entreprise elle doit être viable il faut pouvoir vraiment parler de l'argent qu'on génère et comment on le redistribue. Déjà commencer par-là, c'est super. Après s'il y a des valeurs déjà sociales et puis environnementales qui arrivent, c'est encore mieux. Il faut commencer par l'économique”¹³ – Audrey Renier from Febecoop (Int3).

As explained, it is really important to be able to speak about the monetary aspect of the enterprise. Even more in a social enterprise, where the profit is redistributed inside the company's organization. It is the beginning of any companies; to be viable. If the firm does not think precisely on how to manage its finances, it will not be able to sustain its business. As a social enterprise, the final goal is not towards enrichment but there still is the question of economic viability. And then, a collaboration is indeed interesting for both parties as it brings out an economic interest for both of them as they will share some costs.

Triodos (Int5) supported this idea by saying that there is an essential need to make profit to run a business properly. Even if its mission is righteous, the need to thing squarely for the organization to run is essential.

¹³ English translation: “[...] for an enterprise to be viable, it should really be able to talk about the money that it generates and how it redistributes it. Starting with this is already great. And, if there are social and then environmental values that come afterwards, it is even better. [But], it has to start with the economic”.

Then, in this same thinking, Credal (Int6) and La Halle de Han (Int8) mentioned that a collaboration is helping to create scale economies. And finally, Alterfin (Int9) stated that a collaboration will help to collect more resources to be able to help bigger projects in the southern hemisphere. And it would be a shame for those not to exist, only because there was no external support.

4.2 Collective intelligence

Collective intelligence comes from the addition of the actors' knowledge, competencies and resources put together, and is increased by the relationship between the concerned parties. This tool is needed to work together towards a sustainable partnership. It is used by Coopcity (**Int1**) and Usitoo (**Int2**).

Coopcity (Int1) exploits this tool within their support programs. It passes tools on – like collective intelligence or for collective projects management – and realizes that the companies use them a lot. It helps those to build a cohesive team and to lay the foundations for a strong partnership. An emerging company should talk to the actors around it, including the companies who exist close to the business, to learn from them. It is relevant for a startup to collaborate and get help from a company rather than being its competitor right away. Indeed, it is quite essential to begin a business with allies who will help with its knowledge and who will end up bringing collective intelligence. This will result in a gain of time and money.

The second company, Usitoo (Int2) uses collective intelligence a little bit differently. Usitoo (Int2) is a cooperative which operates in a democratic governance. Therefore, this collective intelligence is highlighting the 'one person equals one voice' principle. It helps with the reciprocity in the exchanges and in the decision-making power.

4.3 Share of initial values

For Usitoo (**Int2**) and Febecoop (**Int3**), a collaboration is implemented in the first place, because the concerned actors have common values. There was a need to specify that a collaboration does not only bring about added values to a project but is built especially because there initially were some shared ones.

Usitoo (Int2) defined a collaboration as a spontaneous common project. So, there is a need for an initial tie and affinity of values with the ones with who the company is constructing the project. In this case, sharing a socio-environmental perspective in addition to an economic contract will permit long-term relationships and a more stable environment.

“Je le vois en partie dans l'autre sens. C'est que ce n'est pas facile à trouver ces partenariats. Mais quand on l'a trouvé, si le partenariat est ancré aussi sur des valeurs environnementales et sociales partagées, [...] plus qu'uniquement sur modèle économique vous pérenniser la collaboration. Elle va couler de soi à beaucoup plus long terme. Vous n'êtes pas dans la relation contractuelle où à la moindre incartade, [...] quelqu'un va dire "on arrête, j'ai le droit de donner mon préavis en 3 mois c'est terminé". Vous êtes dans une relation qui est différente, et je sens beaucoup de nouveaux acteurs, nouvelles entreprises sont très sensibles à ce côté des valeurs. Et tous les entrepreneurs au plus je les rencontre, au plus ils sont jeunes, au plus ils sont vraiment demandeurs d'avoir cet alignement de valeurs. Donc on sent qu'alors il peut avoir un partage”¹⁴ – Xavier Marichal from Usitoo (Int2).

This point of view is shared by Febecoop (Int3) as well. They believe that a collaboration takes place between actors because they already share the values of transparency, social cohesion, ecological sustainability and solidarity.

In this state of mind, The Shift (**Int4**) and Credal (**Int6**) added other opinions. The Shift (Int4) issued the idea that all companies should head towards a business model using these shared values. There would not be any barriers in partnerships if all the companies would contribute to positive goals for society. And Credal (Int6) brings the idea that those values and affinities can be shared between two people from different companies, who will therefore construct a collaboration. Alternatively, if the management changes, the collaboration could actually collapse.

4.4 Coherence through the value chain

This section logically flows from point 4.3. Indeed, to be coherent throughout the whole value chain, it is necessary for an enterprise to collaborate with actors with who your organization shares values. This section has mainly emerged from the findings in **Int2** and **Int8**.

¹⁴ English translation: “I see it in the other direction. It is not easy to find those partnerships, but when we find it, if the partnership is also rooted on environmental and social shared values, [...] more than only over an economic model, you perpetuate the collaboration. It will be self-evident in much longer term. You are not in a contract relationship, where, at the slightest incident, [...] someone will say “we stop here, I can give my notice, in three months it is over”. You are in a different relationship, and I can feel a lot of new actors and new companies which are very sensitive about these values. And all the entrepreneurs, the more I meet them, the more they are young, and the more they are really looking for this alignment of values. Then we feel like we can have this sharing”.

As a causal effect, to stay coherent through its value chain, there is a need of a collaboration between actors that initially share values. Usitoo (Int2) believes that being coherent within its choice of collaborators and transparent with its customers about them, can only be beneficial for the company. Indeed, the end consumers can see its environmental and social goals, but this coherence makes them even more sensible about its business model. Choosing the collaborators who share those environmental and social values is essential to capture the consumers' interest. It is really important not to claim something on one side and actually doing something else on the other.

In this point of view, La Halle de Han (Int8) even refuses to collaborate with any actor whose values are in disagreement with theirs. Indeed, it is important to keep this coherence in what they offer to the clients. This is present in every action taken by the company and this needs to be reminded each day. This transparency is essential for the customers to trust the company.

“On n'aura jamais, c'est un peu symbolique, mais on ne vendra jamais du Coca Cola. Même si un client vient ici et me dit « je veux du Coca pour mes invités », nous n'avons pas de Coca Cola nous n'en vendront pas. Maintenant je ne veux pas me bagarrer avec lui si lui amène ses bouteilles de Coca. Mais notre philosophie, c'est non, on n'aura pas le Coca parce que c'est une entreprise qui fait énormément de dégâts au niveau environnemental et social. Voilà, c'est un exemple”¹⁵ – Isabelle Houtart from La Halle de Han (Int8).

4.5 Complementarity between actors

In the same spirit than this coherence in the value chain, there should be a relevance in the social actors chosen and a complementarity with other non-social parties. This criterion is present in five of the interviews: **Int4**, **Int6**, **Int7**, **Int8** and **Int9**.

One perfect example for this comes from Int4. The Shift's Green Deals are moments where concerned actors from different horizons meet to solve a societal problem. This problem is called a 'Priority of Change', and those is decided based on a mix of information and on market needs. The people chosen to sit around the table and discuss about this 'Priority of Change' have complementary jobs and views over the specific problem to tackle. It is essential to have

¹⁵ English translation: “We will never have, this is a little symbolic, but we will never sell Coke. Even if a client comes here and wants Coke for its guests, we do not have Coke and will never sell some. Now, I do not want to fight, if he brings his bottles of Coke. But in our philosophy, it is no, we will not have Coke because this is a company that does enormous collaterals at the environmental and social level. This is an example”.

all of them to understand each aspect of the issue and find a relevant solution. The Shift is a neutral area where the exchanges can be dynamic and benefic for everyone. This is this complementarity, which brings out innovative solutions to actually tackle those societal issues.

Credal (Int6) is looking for complementariness in collaboration to be able to offer a complete ‘package’ to its clients. As there is a lot of demand for credit, Credal can only grant one out of five. But they help the other four out of five and redirect them towards partners. For example, they send them towards LITA.co, which is a crowd equity platform where individuals fund projects. Another one is with MiiMOSA, which is a crowdfunding platform oriented towards sustainable agriculture. They have a sort of mutual communication and visibility agreement, as they send candidates to each other. After the support program, Credal usually talks to the trainees about MiiMOSA, for them to raise funds on the platform. And inversely, MiiMOSA sends some potential clients to the programs organized by Credal. Those are examples that Credal found to offer a broader package to their clients. They also have another collaboration with public authorities. In this collaboration, each party brings its own share, in relation to its strengths and the resources that he holds.

*“L'animation économique c'est pour accompagner l'émergence pour défricher les nouveaux champs de l'économie sociale. Ça veut dire que là on est souvent mandaté par les pouvoirs publics. [...] Maintenant c'est vrai que ça peut être intéressant de mettre le focus sur la collaboration entre nous et les pouvoirs publics. Et ça c'est vraiment une collaboration fructueuse, j'ai envie de dire parce que d'un côté, par nos différents métiers, on apporte d'une part le capital financier, via la coopérative, [...] et on a aussi tout le capital social, le réseau. [...] et puis les pouvoirs publics, ce qu'ils apportent, c'est le capital humain. C'est à dire que c'est grâce à eux qu'on peut financer nos ressources humaines parce qu'ici à Credal, on a environ 50% de nos produits qui viennent de recettes propres, par les taux d'intérêt et les frais de dossier, et 50 % qui viennent des pouvoirs publics. S'ils n'étaient pas là pour financer les ressources humaines pour l'accompagnement des personnes des bénéficiaires, on ne pourrait pas faire ces activités-là.”*¹⁶ – Isabelle Philippe from Credal (Int6)

¹⁶ English translation: “The economic development pole is about accompanying the emergence to clear the new fields of the social economy. This means that we are often mandated by the public authorities. [...] Now, it can be interesting to focus on the collaboration between us and the public authorities. And that is truly a successful collaboration, I want to say, because on one side, by our different occupations, we bring the financial capital, with the cooperative, [...], and we also have all the social capital, the network. [...], and then, the public authorities, what they are bringing is the human capital. In other words, it is thanks to them that we can finance our human resources, because here in Credal, we have about 50% of our products that come from our own revenues, through

The next finding is in the interview from Ashoka (Int7). The company's main job is to find new 'Fellows' in the whole world. Those 'Fellows' are social entrepreneurs with a new innovative idea to implement to build a greater society. It also helps building a network, finding new actors, creating an ecosystem, to connect all the dots to ease the change-making process. Within this global ecosystem, exchanges happen, and this continuously is bringing different worlds together. It is complementary as each actor "*exchange best practices ideas*" (Int7), which contributes to their projects and helps them in the long run. It indeed boosts the emergence of innovative ideas all around the globe, brings a cross virtualization, builds a common understanding, and simply, avoids doing the same job twice. An example is the creation of the European Fellowship Program, which established online and physical classes for the Fellows to discuss "*on certain subjects that Ashoka is fighting*" (Int7). This program creates connection and exchanges between the Fellows for them to learn together and share innovative ideas about those issues, and most probably, collaborations emerge from them.

Alterfin (Int9) shares some of Ashoka's ideas, that an organization needs a relevant network to boost the emergence of new ideas. Each actor brings their resources and knowledge, which permits support between them and prevent them to do the same thing twice. There is this need to stop working in silos over the same issues. Moreover, the respondent supports the fact that it is inspiring to be in a global movement, it enables exchanges and is much more beneficial than being alone on a project.

And finally, La Halle de Han (Int8) is a bit different than the others. They have outside collaborations, which can be useful to add up their network together. Indeed, it allows more weight to the clients' eyes and their relationship enables more than the addition of both organizations' resources and inputs. But they also have this complementarity through the whole system as two businesses co-exist within the same organization. They are linked into their tasks as the main mission about socio-insertion and sustainable agriculture is joint.

"Et comment elles interagissent, c'est très simple, c'est la même directrice, on se partage les bureaux, donc c'est un peu plutôt comme différents services d'une même entreprise. [...] Il y a certaines refacturations, notamment de location des bureaux, c'est une des deux associations qui loue les locaux qui sous-loue à l'autre. Sinon, on a une comptabilité bien séparée, mais moi quand je travaille je ne dis pas le matin je travaille

interest rates and administrative fees, and 50% that come from public authorities. If they were not there to finance human resources to support people, beneficiaries, we would not be able to do these activities".

pour l'une et l'après-midi pour l'autre, c'est assez global. Il y a tellement de choses communes, déjà tout ce qui est insertion socioprofessionnelle, que ce soit de l'orientation ou de la cuisine, ça reste le même sujet. Donc oui on est deux entités juridiques et en même temps on ne travaille pas dans ce sens-là, on est tellement liés qu'on ne fait pas la différence dans toutes les tâches.”¹⁷ – Isabelle Houtart from La Halle de Han (Int8)

4.6 Collaboration as a requirement

Some of the companies go even further in this thinking and say that it is a necessity to collaborate. They explain it is the driving power which keeps the company running, a sort of spinal cord which enable the organization to stand together. This conclusion came from **Int2**, **Int4**, **Int5**, **Int8** and **Int9**.

The first enterprise is Usitoo (Int2), which relies on its collaboration with the relay points for its business model to work. Those locations are what enables it to distribute its products to the end customers, that is the firm's value proposition. Thus, without those partnerships, the purpose of the company and its whole system would collapse.

The second is more explicitly said with The Shift (Int4). The respondent made a parallel with the SDGs 'Wedding Cake' and the place of the SDG17 about partnership is the center, as the spinal cord of the whole system represented. Nowadays, actors have a lot of great ideas but only try them individually, which will not have a great purpose for the global society.

“Pour moi ce n'est pas une valeur ajoutée, c'est un moteur. Donc si jamais chacun de son côté a des bonnes actions [ça ne fonctionnera pas]. Si je reprends mon exemple de Colbat, l'appauvrissement des métaux rares dans les mines, plus de travail d'esclavage moderne ou des enfants, c'est une problématique. En Belgique on n'a plus assez de matériaux pour faire des GSM ou des batteries pour les voitures électriques. Chacun de son côté et ici par exemple l'asbl, elle va s'occuper de récupérer les GSM mais qu'il n'y a pas de partenariat ou qu'ils ne se sont pas parlé, ça ne marchera jamais. Donc ce

¹⁷ English translation: “And how they interact, it's very simple, it's the same director, we share offices, so it's more like different departments within the same company. [...] There is some re-invoicing, in particular for office rentals, it is one of the two associations that rents the office spaces, that sub-leases to the other. Otherwise, we have a very separate accounting, but when I work, I don't say in the morning I work for one and in the afternoon for the other, it's quite global. There are so many things in common, already everything that is socio-professional integration, whether it is orientation or cooking, it remains the same subject. So yes, we are two legal entities and at the same time we are not working in this direction, we are so closely linked that we do not make a difference in all the tasks.”

n'est même pas plus-value, pour moi c'est un moteur. Ça paraît tout à fait logique quand on le dit, mais les gens travaillent en silo. On a vraiment été formatés à étudier, à travailler par matières, dans des départements, et donc on travaille en silo. Donc ce n'est pas du tout un réflexe d'aller parler à une entreprise [à propos d'un problème commun] et c'est pour ça que voit la puissance d'un réseau comme The Shift. C'est presque surprenant comme bêtement mettre des gens autour de la table [peut aider].”¹⁸

– Eglantine Eeckhout from The Shift (Int4)

Credal stated that they “cannot do anything without partners” (Int6). Indeed, they have different collaborations for any aspects of the company, its activities are not feasible without any network. It is the same idea for Alterfin (Int9), they have collaboration implemented as much in Belgium with local actors, as towards the small companies and producers from the southern hemisphere. It is indeed in every level of the company. And finally, as already explained, the whole organization of La Halle de Han (Int8) is a collaboration between two entities. They share the office space, the head coordinator, in fact, they are seen as two departments from the same company.

4.7 Emerged values

From the interviews and more especially from the six criteria analyzed, nine types of values can be outlined. As Kramer and Porter (2011) explained, for a lot of organizations, the ‘shared value’ created is seen as the benefits, in monetary terms, identified between economic and societal advances inside communities (Kramer & Porter, 2011). In this case, it is important to understand ‘shared values’ as the value created as a result of the collaboration between the two enterprises operating towards a social purpose. Those values are not measured in a quantitative way, but as keywords adjusted to end up with a combined list of each respondent’s opinions. These nine exhaustive values are listed in Figure 4. and are detailed in the following paragraphs, where each definition of concepts come from the Collins Online Dictionary.

¹⁸ English translation: “For me, it is not an added value, it is a driving force. So, if everyone has good deeds on their own [, it will not work]. If I use my example of Colbat, with the decline of rare metals in mines, and in addition, the modern slave labor or child labor, it is a problem. In Belgium we no longer have enough materials to make mobile phones or batteries for electric cars. Each on its own side, and here, for example, the non-profit association, will take care of recovering the mobile phones but if there is no partnership or if they have not spoken to each other, it will never work. So, it's not even an added value, for me it's a driving force. It makes perfect sense when you say it, but people work in silos. We really have been trained to study, to work by subjects, in departments, and therefore we work in silos. So, it's not a reflex to go and talk to a company [about a common issue] and that's why you see the power of a network like The Shift. It's almost surprising how stupidly putting people around the table [can help].”

Figure 4. Values emerged from the interviews.

1. Pooling and exchanging
2. Coherence
3. Visibility and reach
4. Economic
5. Gathering
6. Driving power
7. Environmental
8. Social
9. Legitimacy

The first found value is “pooling and exchanging”, which appeared in **Int1**, **Int2**, **Int3**, **Int7**, **Int8** and **Int9**. The verb ‘to pool’ means that the companies combine their knowledge and/or resources and use it together for a particular purpose. As an ‘exchange’ is defined as an arrangement to trade, to do business or to strengthen the links between two entities. In the interviews, they are mentioned as the main advantage found in a collaboration. Working within a system, enabling the actors to share knowledge, costs, manpower, networks, etc., can only be beneficial for the project. A collaboration ends up in an exchange of capabilities towards common objectives. This is even more sustainable if the companies share initial values and complementary resources. Thanks to complementary actors, the companies can really offer the best ‘package’ to their clients, and the exchanges are even more relevant and efficient. “Pooling and exchanging” also enables a rational and reasonable use of resources of each actor.

The second value is “coherence”, highlighted in **Int2** and **Int8**. It happens in situations when the different parts fit so well together that it becomes a whole. The companies want to stay coherent through their value chain in identifying relevant actors for their collaborations. Doing this highlights their initial value proposition and they say that they owe it to their clients.

“De manière assez surprenante, même si on ne l'avait pas pensé comme ça, beaucoup de gens sont surtout sensibles au fait que on est cohérent sur nos valeurs et qu'on ne clame pas les valeurs d'un côté pour faire quelque chose de l'autre. Et donc la cohérence devient une valeur à part entière. Alors qu'à la base, ça serait plutôt un fil entre les valeurs, beaucoup de gens, dans leur feedback, placent la cohérence comme une valeur vraiment hyper importante et qui chapeaute les autres.”¹⁹ – Xavier Marichal from Usitoo (Int2)

¹⁹ English translation: “Surprisingly enough, even if we had not thought it like that, many people are really sensitive to the fact that we are consistent on our values and that we do not shout values on one side to do something on the

Thirdly, **Int2**, **Int6**, **Int7** and **Int8** emphasized a value called “visibility and reach”. This is related to the promotion and the communication of the companies – how much it is seen by their customers. Indeed, in collaborating, the firms combine their network, which raises the range of visibility, sensibilization and awareness of both of them. The impact is therefore increased thanks to this reciprocal and mutual communication.

The most logical value is still the creation of “economic” value. This one was present in **Int3**, **Int6**, **Int8** and **Int9**. One of the main reasons to implement a collaboration is still that it creates economies of scale and reduces costs for both parties. They mainly join forces because there is an economic interest behind it. All companies are concerned about this question of viability and collaborating with other actors will undoubtedly help out. It can also – as the firm is discovered by this new network – simply bring more clients or collaborators, which will in the end be an economic advantage.

The fifth value is the “gathering” between the actors. This was found in **Int1**, **Int3**, **Int7** and **Int9**. This refers to a group of people meeting for particular goals. In this case, the actors regroup with each other to move towards a common objective. The companies imply that working collectively helps in the emergence of innovative and new ideas. It enables a network to meet and exchange ideas, to grow from the others mindset, and to give some support. It is important to avoid working in silos, as it is within an ecosystem that social change can be achieved.

Then, another value is concerning collaboration as being the “driving power” of the companies. This question of necessity to work with outside partners is present in **Int2**, **Int4**, **Int6**, **Int8**, and **Int9**. Those companies highlighted this need to collaborate for the company to run properly. For some of the respondents, it is present in each level of the organization and each department of the firm. Finding a working collaboration is positive on every aspect “*On a tout à gagner de collaborer*”²⁰ (Int6). It is essential to include all the actors concerned, while working on a specific issue. For others, the collaboration is present in one part of the enterprise, but if it is removed, the whole business model falls apart. In this case, it lies in the value proposition itself.

The seventh and eighth values can be analyzed together. **Int9** is the only firm to talk about “environmental” and “social” values as added values instead of initial shared ones. As it is the

other. And then, coherence becomes a value on its own. While at the first, it would rather be a link between values, many people, in their feedback, place coherence as a really super-important value that overshadows others.”

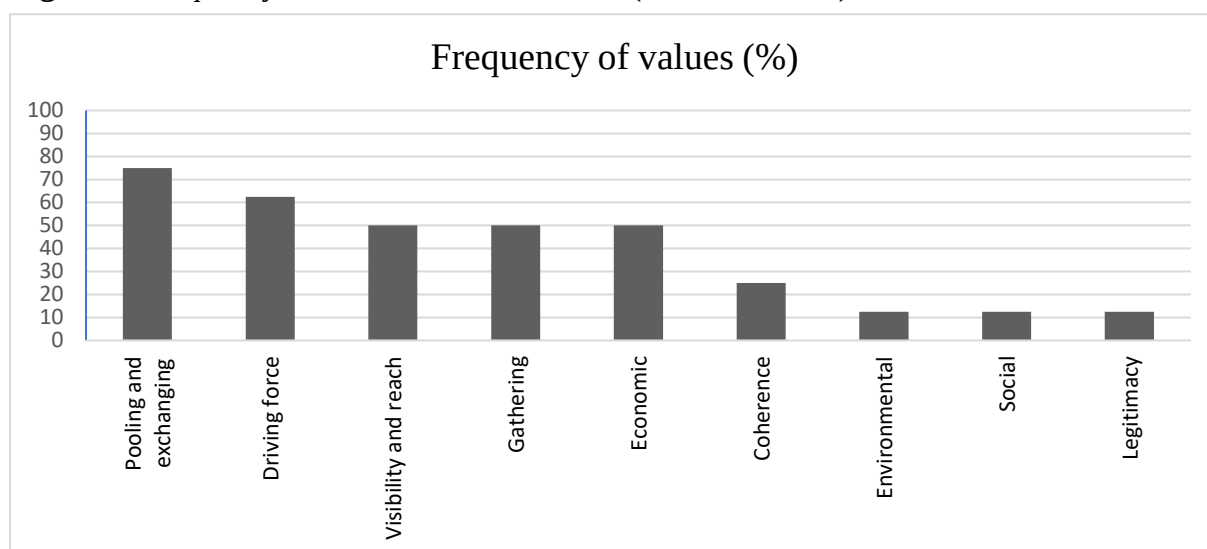
²⁰ English translation: “we have everything to win in collaborating”.

only company to have an impact on the southern hemisphere, their collaboration with them adds those values to the small producers there. They indeed end up increasing their environmental and social impacts thanks to resources that the concerned countries do not always have and that they bring in those collaborations.

Finally, **Int7** highlighted a last value: “Legitimacy”. Indeed, depending on the collaborator, a company can increase its feeling of being acknowledged by the industry. An older or bigger actor can have more resources or knowledge about the business and collaborating with it increases one’s acquaintance and understanding. If the reputation of the collaborator is great, the other company can also impregnate from that, which is important for any future collaborations.

To have a more visual grasp, Figure 5. ranks the nine values by their frequency of appearance in the interviews. The first one, with 75% of presence is “pooling and exchange” and the second one is “driving force”, with 62.5%. The next three are equivalent with still 50% of appearance in the interviews. What is interesting to see is that “social” and “environmental” values are only mentioned by one company, even if they could be the most logical answer. And finally, “legitimacy” was only highlighted by 12.5% of the respondents.

Figure 5. Frequency of values in the interviews (calculated in %).



5 Discussion

It is interesting how, in a normal collaboration, half of the above keywords would only be seen as mere advantages for the firm, but in a social entrepreneurship context, they can become more than that. As implied in Int2, when people are really sensitive to something, it can actually become a value on its own. From the nine values, two are additional values for the consumers. “pooling and exchanging” enables them to find all their needs in one place. The fact that companies actually bring together two complementary services can only be beneficial for the customers. And the second one is “coherence”, which the customers are looking for in a project and are very sensitive to. Then, the rest of those added values are relevant to the firm and the project itself. The value of “visibility and reach” enables the company to be seen and can create increases in the external communication. “Gathering” allows the firm to share their experience with a network and can be seen as the mutual value created by a collaboration. “Legitimacy” gives authenticity to the business in the perspective of others, improving the external perception of the company. “Driving force”, as explained by Int4, is not strictly a value, but is what drives the collaboration that creates these additional values. “Economic”, “environmental” and “social” values are related to the literature.

Indeed, the value that is created by the strategic choices of a company are mainly described as economic or social (Shafer et al., 2005). Equally, in a collaboration with shared capabilities, the end value that is created is always seen as economic or social, regardless of the other advantages it can bring (Dahan et al., 2010). Some authors point out the fact that a shared social project actually creates more social value than market value (Koenig, 2012). This analysis makes it possible to answer the hypothesis in the affirmative: H0 is true. Collaboration within the social entrepreneurship sector contributes to the creation of more than two added values. Indeed, a collaboration forms not only joint value but also community capacity, which enables different types of value to be created (Sakarya et al., 2012). Next, it is relevant to understand those eight values in more details, integrating the previous findings and the literature from section two.

5.1 Comparison with literature

From the early the literature, when talking about collaboration, the aspects of shared values and common trust appeared to be essential for companies to reach desired mutual goals (Step Entrepreneur, 2019). Each actor introduces its own capabilities but share a mutual perspective and ultimate challenge, which will result in a community of aligned practices and common knowledge, which in the end will generate value (Rene Bouwen & Taillieu, 2004; Slowak,

2008). This thinking is indeed implied in social enterprises as well, and even, goes beyond. It is explicitly stated in two of the interviews that for any collaboration to take place, but also to be sustainable, the actors have to share core values. The vision and mindset of those social enterprises should also be aligned to allow the collaborative strategy to correctly be implemented.

Most social enterprises do follow the same “economic”, “social” and “environmental” purpose and values. Therefore, they are not seen as values added from a collaboration, but more as a part of their core ones. In addition to this, Bouwen, Craps and Santos (1999) supported the idea of “social learning”. In order to be able to build these collective solutions, a community should participate in governance and strive to learn from each other’s knowledge. Indeed, some interviews also included a “collective intelligence” in their management. La Halle de Han clearly outlined the fact that when the collectivity is entailed, the work provided refers to more than the addition. This surplus is created by the relationships within the collectivity (Zaïbet, 2007). Those joint projects imply that the resources, the competences and the knowledge of all involved actors are shared (Bréchet et al., 2009; Lafaye & Berger-Douce, 2014), and thus, the benefits achieved thanks to this pursuit of common goals are also shared (Leyronas & Loup, 2009). This idea refers to the value of “pooling and exchanging”. Indeed, sharing the capabilities of each actor increases this aspect of mutualization. It enables a better use of everyone’s resources, which lower the price and increase the chances of success for the project. This collective intelligence facilitates the occasionally difficult shared decision-making processes by promoting open communication, trust and the share of different ideas (Comtet, 2006; Walker et al., 2006). The importance of relationships and collective input is seen in multiple interviews; moreover, finding a collaboration with a complementary actor is significant. Indeed, the exchanges are even more consistent as it will influence both actors (Benjamin Huybrechts et al., 2006). As each party contributes its own capabilities, the strengths of the parties, increased by their relationship, is beneficial for the firms.

This exchange between parties inevitably increases the value of “gathering”. A group of people working together raises the sense of community and seems essential to move together towards a common solution. Those types of relationships are necessary to boost the appearance of new and innovative ideas while the concept of collective intelligence allows mutual thinking, which increases the chances of finding a solution to the common problem (Lafaye & Berger-Douce, 2014; Schein, 1971). Some of the interviews revealed that collaboration between actors from different disciplines helped to address societal issues. Bringing everyone together within a

social environmental focused on a common problem can often uncover much more solutions than a company could find on its own (Waddock & Post, 1991). These social interactions enable the perspectives of all participants to be shared, creating a common understanding that generates more social opportunities (Fletcher, 2006). This can be described as a business ecosystem, which develops a sense of community and thus foster innovation (Torrès-Blay, 2000). An ecosystem exists to provide support for each party, which makes work easier and prevents the collaborators for doing the same job twice. Working within this type of ecosystem can save time and resources, which could be used in silo operations. This more rational use of an organization's resources goes beyond the benefits for the company but allows an increase of each collaborator's positive environmental impact.

Before elaborating further on this point, it is relevant to understand the added value for the firm itself. Collaboration allows the organizations to pool their network towards mutual goals. Therefore, working within a multiple firm environment increases the firm's range of action, strength, visibility, and creates financial synergies for each of the involved firms (Peloza & Falkenberg, 2009). The value of "visibility and reach" enables more prominent and effective external communication, which increases the customer impact. Some collaborations are mandated by the public authorities, which means a firm can work with companies who are competitors on other projects. This is why the presence of trust in the inter-firm relationship is essential; because if the firm is trustworthy, none of them will try to change its behavior (Lafaye & Berger-Douce, 2014; Wagner et al., 2010). In addition to this trust, for the process of shared creation of value, each organization needs to be transparent through the whole value chain (Crane et al., 2014).

In contrast to more formal collaborations, sometimes collaborations are implemented more informally, as a result of their shared values and the relationship between them. These are usually more dynamic as they are not bound by any written agreement and refer to a 'good practice exchange'. This happens more often in independently governed companies, an 'independent governance' being one of the criteria often used within a social enterprise (Rene Bouwen & Taillieu, 2004). When the firm is independently governed, the choice of collaborator is really important. In the literature, the articles mainly explain the collaboration between a social enterprise and a corporation. In some cases – The Shift, Credal and Ashoka – it is important to have actors from many different industries involved in a project's decision-making processes in order to be complementary and effectively tackle the whole issue. Indeed, this collaboration can be seen as a link between two distinct institutional orders and therefore hopes

to inspire shift in the perspective from the corporations (B. Huybrechts & Nicholls, 2013). In other cases – Usitoo and La Halle de Han – the existence of “coherence” within the value chain is the most important. A company should therefore be working with other actors who are engaged in a social mission. One of the noticeable differences is that the first group is selling services, whereas the others are selling goods. What is important to remember is the common idea, that to collaborate with them, the collaborators still have to be aware of the importance of this “social” value. What is unanimously agreed between the interviewees, is that although the other firm does not need to be a social enterprise, it needs to have this awareness of the importance of the concept of CSR.

Another commonality exists between the Anglo-Saxon type of social enterprise and the interview from Ashoka. Both highlight the strong vision of the social entrepreneur as a leader instead of part of a collectivity (Puhakka & Stewart, 2015). In terms of personal characteristics, the entrepreneur should be creative and have an entrepreneurial mindset while also being ethically strong and socially conscious. It is accurate to say that Ashoka is creating a whole community including these social entrepreneurs and that their goal remains the creation of a collective value (Uzan, 2013). Indeed, the idea of a social enterprise is always to answer societal needs. This large community of entrepreneurs brings a common understanding, a cross-virtualization and the value of “legitimacy”. In the literature, legitimacy is primarily a positive attribute of the collaboration that flows from the social enterprise over to the corporation. It allows the firm to increase its social image and improve or establish a good reputation (Benjamin Huybrechts et al., 2006). For Ashoka, however, working with some specific corporations brings legitimacy to the social enterprise and improves its prospects for future collaborations. This legitimacy comes from the improved knowledge and expertise that the smaller social enterprise gains from the collaboration. Indeed, as the social enterprise brings social value to the collaboration, the corporation contributes knowledge and market legitimacy (Di Domenico et al., 2009). This legitimacy, improved reputation and social capital can also be brought by a good CSR strategy, influencing the sensitivity of customers and employees (Tihon & Ingham, 2011).

5.1.1 Link with CSR

Some of the definitions of Corporate Social Responsibility highlight it as way to create value and social change, which is then implemented through the business culture and core operations (McElhaney, 2009). In the interviews, a lot of the respondents assumed that CSR is actually in the essence of a social enterprise. It was believed that it is intrinsic in the core operations of the

social enterprise and not a proper strategy that is implemented. Some of the companies – ones following the European type of social enterprise – explained that a CSR strategy is the equivalent of social entrepreneurship mechanisms for more corporate approaches. It can be seen as the first commitment towards the creation of a social enterprise, which is more radical and incorporated within the core business (Tihon & Ingham, 2011). The other companies implied that CSR is omnipresent in a social enterprise, that it is part of the firm and that the whole business is oriented towards this social responsibility, without establishing a distinct strategy. Its implementation is expensive in terms of money and human resources, which are not always easy to find in smaller social enterprises. Their point of view is that they have no internal need to implement an explicit CSR strategy as it is already understood by the stakeholders to be in the organization's DNA.

One important aspects of a clear strategy is to communicate externally about the firm's actions to broaden the firm's customer base. This can be done courtesy of the collaboration and the resulting interdependence with coherent actors (Quinn & D'amato, 2008). This supports the idea that collaboration with firms including a CSR perspective – including social enterprises – will create a long-term relationship of trust and engagement that incorporates the stakeholders of the firm (Lacoste & Pardo, 2016; Morsing & Schultz, 2006). The importance is not that a company achieves its social mission in any way, it is 'how' it does it. If a social enterprise does not work acknowledging and focusing on this social perspective within its core business, it is misleading its customers. A collaborative relationship rightly undertaken creates a structure and alignment between the stakeholders of the parties (Peloza & Falkenberg, 2009).

To support this idea, some of the interviews highlighted the necessity of an economic base for a social enterprise to ensure it is sustainable and will operate in the long run. This is exactly what was explained by the pyramid of CSR (Carroll, 2016)²¹. An organization first has economic responsibilities that are essential for the organization's existence. The respondent from Febecoop emphasized the company's need to generate capital in order for it to be viable in the long term. In a collaboration, actors join together mainly for the financial synergies and economic interests with the rest of the responsibilities coming afterwards. The legal responsibilities refer to the status and the regulations of the enterprise. In the case of the interviewees, the different status analyzed are cooperatives, some non-profit associations and sustainable networks. Being a social enterprise is not a legal regulation *per se*, however it is

²¹ The representation of the pyramid of Carroll is in section 2.5.3 *Possible guidelines*.

present in different types of status. What is important in this part is how the company is governed and how its profit is reinvested. The difference from the pyramid is that the ethical and philanthropic responsibilities are seen as a requirement for a social enterprise. Those principles and responsibilities that Carroll (2016) emphasized as part of a CSR strategy are also present in a social business. In both cases, implementing an ethically responsible strategy, requires support from both the economic and legal facets of an organization. A social enterprise needs to generate enough profit and to intelligently reinvest its profit in the organization to sustain its social mission.

A social enterprise is still considered as a mission-driven business, despite its focus on a social interest and on the triple-bottom line perspective. This means that the company needs to balance its financial pursuits with the environmental and social goals (Defourny & Nyssens, 2017). This triple-bottom line concept is regularly present in definitions of a CSR strategy, supporting the information given by the interview respondents about a CSR strategy being part of the whole organization within a social enterprise. In this way, a company is able to create blended value, which can be understood through the five dimensions mentioned earlier; centrality, specificity, proactivity, voluntarism and visibility²² (Burke & Logsdon, 1996). In order to create value within a CSR strategy, those dimensions are essential. It is therefore interesting to highlight how these dimensions exist within the social entrepreneurship sector. The higher the ‘centrality’, the closer the CSR objectives are to the core strategy of the firm. In the case of a social enterprise, where centrality is at its highest point, the chance of value creation is therefore great. Similarly, high ‘specificity’ creates benefits for the firm on its own. A social enterprise’s main mission is to meet a social need, which means creating nonspecific benefits available for the entire community as well as some specific ones to maintain the firm’s long-term viability. In terms of ‘voluntarism’, this dimension is actually one of the principles of a social enterprise. The firm should be autonomous in its management and should not be dependent on another institution for governance or executive organization. The final dimension relevant for a social enterprise, ‘visibility’ is seen as a particularly desirable added value that results from the implementation of a collaborative strategy. ‘Visibility’ subsequently creates improved reach that enables wider recognition of the social enterprise, facilitating the accomplishment of their mission.

²² These concepts are explained in point 2.5.1 Creation.

5.1.2 Use of the Sustainable Development Goals

After understanding how to evaluate a social enterprise, this is important to underline that the SDGs should not be used as a certification method, but more as a mediation and improvement tool (*Evaluer l'impact social de l'entrepreneuriat social: La nécessité d'une co-construction*, 2017). Indeed, this is relevant to employ this guideline for external communication to the stakeholders, as a benchmark for internal or external comparison or as a compass for internal action lead (Mortier, 2013). This is exactly what is said about the Sustainable Development Goals. The guideline, highlighted in the literature review, also stood out in the interviews with The Shift and Alterfin.

The SDGs refers to a common language, agreed and signed by every country included in the United Nations. For The Shift, those 17 Goals are completely holistic and inclusive, as this approach has seen the term 'sustainability' evolve into the 5 Ps – People, Planet, Peace, Prosperity and Partnership – which is a really good framework with which to work towards a better future. This framework permits every firm, as varied as they could be, to understand each other's purpose. In this case, The Shift refers to the SDG17 – Partnership for the Goals – as their main mission, which enables a common understanding from the stakeholders they work with. Their responses supported the fact that this guideline is a real compass for the organizations to see where they stand, the challenges they have to overcome and where they are heading towards. Moreover, she explained the importance of the 'Wedding Cake' representation of the SDGs:

*“Aujourd'hui il y a beaucoup d'acteurs qui font des choses fantastiques de leur côté. Mais on voit que si chacun de son côté il n'y a rien qui bougera. Si on prend dans les SDGs, le Wedding Cake de la représentation des SDGs, on voit vraiment que l'économie fait partie de la société mais la société fait partie d'une biosphère. Donc si ce n'est pas une biosphère saine, on ne peut pas avoir une économie saine. Mais on voit que la colonne vertébrale pour faire fonctionner tout ça c'est le partenariat.”*²³ – Eglantine Eeckhout from The Shift (Int4).

²³ English translation: “Today there are many actors doing fantastic things on their own. But we can see that if everyone is on their own, nothing will move. If we take, in the SDGs, the Wedding Cake of the SDGs' representation, we really see that the economy is part of society, but society is [itself] part of a biosphere. Therefore, if it is not a healthy biosphere, we cannot have a healthy economy. But we see that the backbone to make it all work is partnership.”

The interview highlighted the interrelationship of the biosphere, society and the economy. Partnership between entities assist them to stand together, indeed, with the failure of one aspect, the other ones cannot exist. The interesting point about the SDGs is that they tackle aspects at each layer and goes further by dedicating one Goal to act as connector for all of them. Even highly accomplished, companies cannot attempt to achieve each of the Goals on its own; a firm has to choose a target and act upon it. The last SDG is vital to the realization of the ‘Wedding Cake’, that involves each actor thanks to its capabilities and gathering their work.

For example, Alterfin is one of the companies using this guideline. The firm employs it to communicate about their positive contribution towards social, financial and environmental challenges. The company refers to the SDG1 (No poverty), SDG2 (Zero hunger), SDG5 (Gender equality), SDG8 (Decent work and economic growth), SDG12 (Responsible consumption and production), SDG13 (Climate action), and SDG17 (Partnership for the Goals) (Debricon et al., 2018). Alterfin’s scope of action can be found through the whole representation: one concerning the biosphere, two at the society level, two in the economic sphere, while SDG17 unites the six previous ones. Because firms need to collaborate and work with other organizations in order to tackle the whole framework, this guideline assists companies to better understand their own position, which allows them to seek out and collaborate with complementary actors to globally overcome societal issues. This concept of collaboration and partnership is demonstrated here as the backbone of the whole system. The immense scale of the issues makes it crucial to be able to pool every one’s capacities and interests to move towards a more sustainable future.

Furthermore, it was explained in the methodology of this work that social impact is really hard to explicitly measure. In trying to explain social concepts with figures companies miss out a lot of information and it can be better for social enterprises to express their mission in global terms, utilizing the common language of the SDGs. This compass helps guide strategic decision-making processes. It is not a way to measure, but rather to conduct their sustainable scope of action (UN, 2015). By using this guideline, social enterprises can understand which aspects of their social mission they want to emphasize while keeping in sight that collaboration should be the backbone of the whole society. Following the SDGs, even without communicating them externally – which could be costly for smaller entities – can be helpful for the firm’s vision. Of course, if the firm does have the resources to communicate externally about them it would promote greater understanding, visibility and accessibility, however, the incorporation of the SDG’s by the firm tells more about their sustainable social vision than figures.

5.2 Further thinking

This aspect of collaboration and partnership being the “driving force” of a company is mentioned sparsely in the literature. In an older article, collaboration was seen, as an essential way to handle complex social issues (Trist, 1983). More recently, it was discussed how the creation of a social alliance is necessary in the achievement of a sustainable business, increasing its performance and improving society (J. Austin & Reficco, 2009). Although this is not a generality, this thinking regularly presented in the interviews.

Collaboration between smaller entities can substitute the advantages brought by a CSR strategy and is a very good way to communicate and expand business. The interviews showed that it increases visibility by the firm joining a network, decreases costs as a result of exchanges between entities and reduces need for personal resources thanks to the pooling of information. For this reason, collaborations assist social enterprises to be sustainable in their business. Mortier and Konstantatos (2019) supported this point by explaining the need to create alliances and to realize an in-depth work – towards the links and tensions around values, impacts and regulations. Nowadays, there is an urgent necessity to understand other socioeconomic and politic visions, to soak up each other skills and competencies, and “[...] *de travailler la complémentarité autour de nos thématiques transversales*”²⁴ (Mortier & Konstantatos, 2019). The authors considered that forming a common identity was both important and necessary in order to “make change” in our actual society. Three problematics are highlighted as common to the greater range of people. The first concept is to give more purpose to work. The second aspect is the democratization of businesses and economy, which will be explored in the following subsection, and finally, there is an urgency to change people’s way of producing and consuming, which will be discussed last (Mortier & Konstantatos, 2019).

Global societal production is currently divided into five different spheres. The first is the ‘autonomous’ sphere, where self-realization and personal satisfaction occurs. Next, the ‘social’ sphere works for the general well-being and the collective welfare through organizations like social businesses. The third sphere is about ‘profit-making businesses’, which search for the maximization of their economic performance. The fourth sphere is the State and ‘public’ sector, which satisfies the common good. And finally is the ‘democratic’ space, which connects all the other ones thanks to the independence of the actors and their human rights. The cooperation and connection of those five spheres dictates the existence of welfare or tensions (Tihon &

²⁴ English translation: “[...] *work the complementarity around our cross-cutting issues.*”

Ingham, 2011). The connections between the five spheres becomes more important as responsibility lies within each actor. It becomes more common that the State and social enterprises need to provide services as efficiently and effectively as a corporation (Jany-Catrice & Clotuche, 2017). For these reasons, it is vital that those five spheres work together and prevent repeating each other's work. This is why The Shift is working on 'Green Deals', trying to unite all those different entities. As the respondent explained, to properly tackle a social issue, it is not relevant to count on social enterprises as the state knows about the appropriate regulation and the profit-making corporation brings its knowledge about its supply chain. In this way, it is necessary to ensure that all parties involved in the issue understand each aspect of it. It is logical that any concerned actor should be present when a societal issue is brought up. Although these spheres are divided by the respective responsibilities, knowledge and capacities of their domains, there remain links of differing strengths. In fact, the link between the economy and democracy in fact facilitates and enables the coordination required between the five spheres and highlights the necessity of their collaboration: “[...] *la démocratie ne peut pas s’arrêter aux portes de l’entreprise mais aussi, corrélativement, [...] l’entreprise (et ce qui se passe en son sein) joue un rôle important dans la démocratie. Autrement dit, c’est l’entreprise qui doit être démocratisée mais aussi l’économie et la société.*”²⁵ (Mortier & Konstantinos, 2019).

Finally, there is the unsustainable nature of the consumption and production society that continues to create many negative consequences such as the aspiration towards perpetual growth driven by continually increasing advertising, the loss of expertise and the overconsumption in some parts of the world contrasted with extreme poverty somewhere else to name a few (Mortier & Konstantatos, 2019). There is a pressing need to pool our resources and knowledge and to collaborate towards more sustainable habits. In order to alter our present way of consumption, it is necessary to change the mindset of the actors, redefine value and reevaluate the metrics used to measure growth (Botsman & Rogers, 2011). Working together facilitates a better use of resources, which enables companies to reduce their negative environmental impact while social enterprises are trying to change the nature of consumption and production by rejecting profit maximization as a way to enrich the wealthy. Instead they support the idea of respect towards the environment and fellow humans and withstand the

²⁵ English translation: “[...] *the democracy cannot stop at the doors of the business but also, accordingly, [...] the business – and everything inside it – plays an important role in democracy. In other words, it is [not just] the business that must be democratized but the economy and the society as well*”.

economy of the useful to reduce and minimize any kind of waste (Mortier & Konstantatos, 2019). In this way, The Shift believes that every organization should work towards a vision for a better society. Despite these idealistic goals, it can be difficult for some companies that may be quite advanced in the other direction, to make necessary changes to work towards such a vision. Kramer and Porter (2011) explained the concept of shared value in a more capitalistic way: *“by better connecting companies’ success with societal improvement, it opens up many ways to serve new needs, gain efficiency, create differentiation, and expend markets”*. A characterization of the concept in this way can help corporations to move towards a better way of producing – even if it may be for the wrong reasons. Following this path, Ashoka explained that their collaborations sometimes bring hope for a strategic shift from those types of organizations while attempts to adopt a more ethical strategy can actually give the company’s stakeholders an extra feeling of purpose. It is crucial to move towards this social mindset as there is a need of a collectivity to overcome the societal problems while working in silos over the same or similar issues is counterproductive. There is a pressing need to share the work and advance together in the same direction.

To conclude this part, it is relevant to highlight that one of the greatest obstacles to progress in today’s society is the tension between asking people to save the biosphere while living in an economy that is ruled by the profit-making sphere that aims to continually increase consumption to increase shareholders’ returns (Krugman, 2010). For humanity to survive, organizations will need to broaden their vision and move towards more sustainable ways of operating. In this thought, Krugman (2010) emphasized that:

“We have begun to make the difference between growth and prosperity, and to consider as possible the capability of men and women, personally and collectively, to live the lives they have reasons to value, to live in cooperation and not in perpetual conflict with others, and to respect the limits of the planet”.

6 Conclusion and limits

The aim of this thesis is to assess the added value of a collaborative strategy in CSR fields of projects established in a social enterprise. In other words, this assignment wanted to highlight the development of different values in a social and sustainable initiative working with another entity. The research question was then to estimate a value to this strategy. After analyzing the literature present on the subject, a sub-question emerged:

“Are the economic and social values the only added values of a collaborative strategy in CSR fields within the social entrepreneurship sector?”

Indeed, all parts of the theoretical input explained the term ‘value’ as a social or an economic concept – a small amount also talked about environmental value. However, it was interesting to understand if those values actually were the only ones emerging from a collaboration within a social and sustainable environment, or either there are other values created but not usually brought to the fore. This is where the two hypotheses came from: H0 being that a collaboration within CSR fields in a social enterprise brings more than two added values to the project; and H1 supporting the fact that there are not more than two added values, being economic and social values.

Eight face-to-face interviews with different types of social enterprises were conducted to test these hypotheses. And the outcome that has been identified is that H0 is true. According to the findings, eight added values emerged: pooling and exchanging, coherence, visibility and reach, gathering, legitimacy, economic, social, and environmental values. Therefore, more advantages than social and economic ones emerged in exchanging with the interviewees. Indeed, it depended on the respondent’s perspective and point of view about what is important to his/her organization. It is however interesting to highlight that social and economic values are mentioned by those social enterprises and are present in their reflection, but not as their first stated value.

The data gathered supports the hypothesis H0.

Another important aspect emerging from the interviews is that not every collaboration is profitable. Although, having initially shared values increases the chances of a successful collaborative strategy. Collaboration is even more dynamic when seen as an exchange of good practice and with a contract not too strict for all entities. In means that the involved actors have mutual socially oriented goals to enables them to move in the same direction and thus, to stay

coherent in their choices. The principal idea is that any kind of collaboration should start with shared of initial values to be sustainable.

All of those interviews demonstrated that a collaboration gives additional value to a project and to go further, a collaboration is in fact, the “driving force” of a social enterprise. Some respondents highlighted that their company could not exist without partnerships and that it is a requirement for the organization to sustain its business. This perception is emphasized by the United Nations with the appearance, in 2015, of the Sustainable Development Goals. The representation of those 17 Goals implies that partnership is essential for the proper functioning of the system, including aspects as the biosphere, society and the economy. There is a need for all the actors – governments, corporations, associations, civil society, and so on – to work together, while keeping the SDGs in mind when they operate in their own field of expertise. This collaboration will enable the creation of a unified all, going in the right direction for the creation of a sustainable world. Indeed, collaborations within social enterprises are the way of increasing their common value. It is intensively important that actors start to work together, in collaboration, towards this sustainable future. It is essential that everyone, not only social actors, contributing their resources and knowledge for the needs of the biosphere, society and the economy.

Moreover, there is a need to go towards a society establishing more social enterprises or, as a first step, towards more socially and sustainably oriented businesses. Thanks to the increase of social enterprises and corporate collaborations, there is a hope for a mindset shift. This may bring a feeling of purpose. In addition to that, a question emerged: Shouldn't all enterprises become more social, having a positive impact on society? Within the CSR pyramid, the two first level are required from the society, the third one is expected, and the top level is desired. But, shouldn't all of these levels be a requirement?

To close this thesis, it is important to foreground three limits: the first one is about the diversity in the definition of a social enterprises, the second concerns the difficulty in implementing such a big global collaboration, and the third limit involves the dominance of the quantitative language in our society.

To start off, the definition of a social enterprise is unclear. There are two school of thought which creates differing opinions and uncertainties about some aspects. One is more inclusive, accepting as ‘social enterprise’ every actor whose core business is ruled towards a social mission instead of seeking for profit maximization. The other one is stricter, considering as

‘social enterprise’ every actor following specific principles. The European type of social entrepreneurship is more politically invested, they do not always accept the Anglo-Saxon way of doing business²⁶. There are divergent opinions about the role of CSR as well. Some social enterprises think those two concepts are contrary while others understand CSR as part of their core business. Moreover, some actors are not even aware of the existence of social enterprises or CSR strategies. These concepts are still quite unknown in the Belgian society. And further afield, some firms do not want to include a more sustainable vision in their organization and its implementation would take a lot of time. Companies stand at very different stages, which makes it complicated to hold them towards the same long-term vision for a more social system.

Unfortunately, the second limit is that, for this United Nations’ global system to work, all the actors and available resources are needed. The UN “[...] *acknowledge the role of the diverse private sector, ranging from micro enterprises to cooperatives to multinationals, and that of civil society organizations and philanthropic organizations in the implementation of the new Agenda*” (UN, 2015). This global collaboration and engagement towards the Goals implies that everyone will be involved, however a lot of organizations are not ready to collaborate towards a social future. This transition and the implementation of the guideline (SDGs) will need a lot of resources – both financial and technological. It is a question of domestic and international finances (UN, 2015). Therefore, this global partnership may seem utopic for a lot of entities.

The last limit refers to the difficulty to quantify every action, although it is necessary in this society. Indeed, there is a constant need to quantify the impact of a project for it to be quickly understandable by corporations and government. Social enterprises have an imperative for “[...] *translating some of the impact language and the social entrepreneurship language into money language so that those two worlds understand each other and make it easier*” (Yannick Fischer from Ashoka). However, social impacts cannot always be quantified, and a lot of important information can be lost in the process. Even though some frameworks approximate a real representation of a social value, a figure will never be the exact illustration of the impact created by the social action. Those guidelines included in this thesis are the VISES project, the Social Return On Investment, and Human Development Index. However, a lot of other initiatives are working on the subject. Starting in 2016, for example, some Walloons entities conducted a research called SECOIA (Social Economy Impact Assessment). A social action is primarily computed to calculate the financial yield of the social enterprise. Those evaluation methods are

²⁶ This statement refers to the writer’s professional experience in a social enterprise (Mars-June 2019).

mainly requested by authorities – banks, investors and international finance groups. The aim of the SECOIA project is to evaluate the impacts that are specific to a social enterprise and to try to detect other ways to recognize those practices (Moreau & Mortier, 2017). This assessment tries to be the most relevant representation of a social practice and tries to find other opportunities to detect its value. Is the necessity to quantify greater than the denaturation of the social aspects? (Mortier, 2013). Perhaps it could be more relevant to understand value within social and sustainable environment as a qualitative method instead of figures.

The understanding of those three limits needs to be deepened as they can be a way “[...] *to take the bold and transformative steps which are urgently needed to shift the world on to a sustainable and resilient path*” (UN, 2015).

7 Bibliography

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