

Positive platforms identity

Map and analysis of the Italian ecosystem

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INTRODUCTION

In December 2016, **Institute For The Future** (IFTF) launched the **Positive Platform Design Jam** initiative. The event, which was held in Palo Alto, CA, was created in collaboration with Simone Cicero, founder of the Platform Design Toolkit, which combines the Design Jam format with Open Space Technology. The event had an international reach thanks to IFTF's invitation to extend the initiative globally. The goal was to try to imagine the possible positive evolutions of work practices in the world of platforms.

In order to further develop some of the various project ideas that were emerging from different the jams taking place across the world, IFTF offered [four research grants](#). Each participant or team had the opportunity to apply for one of these grants. At Cohub Milano, a sharing economy collaborative, we organized one of the three jams held in Italy, and our team won one of the grants.

This paper documents every stage of our research process and includes our resources so that others can implement the research.

Scope of the research

The initial goal was to develop shared guidelines to **define the concept of *positive platforms*** starting from an Italian context. We wanted to understand which platforms might fall into this category, what the parameters of positivity are that characterize them, and how these parameters might affect the health of these platforms.

We took a **design-based approach to look at these issues**, and the feedback we received from the people and groups we consulted led us to redefine our initial goals and assumptions.

Definition of Platform

We can define *platforms* as entities consisting of an **infrastructure** and a type of **governance** that, by referring to one or more **ecosystems**, enables third parties to **exchange value** (exchange of **tangible assets** such as money or goods and/or **intangible assets** such as services, information, feedback, or reputation).

The platform is a model that can be applied to diverse areas such as organizations, processes, and cities. Each ecosystem can be developed as a platform so that asset exchanges can easily happen through the most appropriate channels and contexts.

As stated above, the platform is a model and it is possible to think of each ecosystem (or multiple connected ecosystems) in terms of a platform. The platform does not necessarily have to be translated into a custom-built digital platform, application, or website. Very often, platform-based systems use other software, digital technologies or already existing platforms to perform their functions and achieve their goals. See the case of *social streets* that use *Facebook groups* as a digital communication channel in order to meet, share, and exchange value in real life. For this reason, as you will see later, you will find, in the list of platforms that we have examined, several cases similar to the latter.

The following are some **definitions of platforms** given by experts on the subject, the starting point of our work. Platforms are defined as:

“a governance structure [...] that determines who can participate, what roles they might play, how they might interact and how disputes get resolved.”

“set of protocols or standards [...] to facilitate connection, coordination, and collaboration.”
John Hagel III¹

“business models that allow multiple sides (producers and consumers) to interact [...] by providing an infrastructure that connects them.”
Sangeet Paul Choudary²

“medium which lets others connect to it.”
Peter Evans³

“Platforms are essentially bureaucracies for the networked age.”
Greg Satell⁴

As you can see, there are many ways of defining platforms, and looking at them through different lenses and perspectives. Talking about their classification, for example, in the *Collaborative Economy Honeycomb*, Jeremiah Owyang⁵ organizes platforms in 16 main macro groups depending on the industry in which they operate. John Hagel III’s definition seemed to us particularly relevant to the kind of work we had to do, and it was also the trigger of our work on the taxonomy of platforms.

1

Hagel, J. (2015) *The power of platforms*. Part of the Business Trends series. [online] Deloitte University Press. Available at: <http://dupress.com/articles/platform-strategy-new-level-business-trends> Last accessed: 24/07/2017 15:51

2

The New Rules of Business in a Networked World. (2016). [online] Platform Thinking Blog. Available at: <http://platformed.info/> Last accessed 18/09/2016 19:41

3

The Emerging Platform Economy | The Center for Global Enterprise. (2016). [online] Thecge.net. Available at: <http://thecge.net/category/research/the-emerging-platform-economy> Last accessed: 24/07/2017 15:53

4

Satell, G. (2015) *4 Things You Should Know About Platforms*. [online] Forbes. Available at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/gregsatell/2015/05/17/4-things-you-should-know-about-platforms/#77a5406e4b2a> Last accessed: 12/05/2017 21:18

5

Owjang, J. (2016) *Collaborative Economy Honeycomb 3.0*. [online] Crowd Companies. Available at: <http://crowdcompanies.com/the-new-honeycomb-3-0-more-industries-impacted-by-the-collaborative-economy/> Last accessed: 13/05/2017 14:34

Positive platforms: historical context

The **history of platforms** is still very recent, but it is already very rich. It has evolved incredibly quickly, driven by strong media interest and accompanied by great expectations in a period of profound crisis and of economic and social change.

It was 2010 when authors Rachel Botsman and Roo Rogers, with their book *What's Mine Is Yours*,⁶ contributed to opening the debate on the **sharing economy** by describing the context where the **transition from the economy of possession to the economy of access** took place. Bringing a very famous example: people don't want to own a drill, they want a hole, which presents an opportunity to share a single drill among neighbors.

A few years later, in 2013, the term *sharing economy* appeared on the first page of *The Economist*⁷. Time had passed and the definition of "sharing economy" had evolved. Exchange, sharing, barter, and gift services were offering space for platforms that could generate earnings for their users and for themselves. The subtitle of the article was: *On the internet, everything is for hire* and the cover image showed a classic American house with labeled arrows pointing to various objects, such as "Lawnmower/\$6 a day" and "Pickup truck/\$9 an hour," showing the economic value that could be extracted for these possessions for an hour, day, or week.

The *sharing economy* was soon used alongside the term *on-demand*, which emphasizes just-in-time value exchange. *Gig economy* (the economy of "small jobs") was another new term, referring to those platforms, especially the delivery ones, where anyone who participates may have an economic compensation (usually decided by the platform owners) in exchange for the provision of a service performed. The term *sharing economy* was no longer sufficient to explain these different phenomena, leading to the adoption of the all-encompassing term: *platform economy*.

At the same time, widespread concerns arose around the ethics of these economic models, the unstable working conditions they imposed on temporary employees and occasional workers, and the relationship between people and AI.

In the summer of 2016, workers in London organized the first of two strikes against food delivery company Deliveroo over changes to its payment structure that reduced compensation to its couriers. The dissatisfaction was widespread. In Turin, another strike happened in the same year against a similar service platform called Foodora.

2016 and the beginning of 2017 were characterized by a heated debate over different **forms of governance** of *labor platforms*. A new form of *cooperative platforms* (platforms owned by the workers themselves) were presented as an alternative to *capitalistic platforms* (owned by investors and management). Because very few cooperative platforms exist, there's not enough data to tell us

6

Botsman, R. Rogers, R. (2010) *What's Mine is Yours*. Harper Collins

7

The rise of the sharing economy. [online] Available at: <http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21573104-internet-everything-hire-rise-sharing-economy> Last accessed: 14/05/2017 12:13

whether or not they're a sustainable form of governance. In the framework of a transnational discussion, they may seem idealistic, but IFTF, with its invitation to reflect on positive platforms, opens up the possibility to imagine and design new future scenarios beyond the common labels or prejudices. This kind of exploration, however, is only in the beginning stages, and it could take a long time before cooperative platforms become a viable model considering the complexity of the political, economical, and sociological implications.

Calls to contribute to the theme of positive platforms, both in the form of debate and in a more practical way (contributions by designers, developers, etc.) have been numerous. In the following table we try to retrace the main articles and events of recent years.

Date	Type	Name	Authors/ Organizers	Link
Jan 2016	Paper	Platform Cooperativism - Challenging the Corporate Sharing Economy	T. Scholz	http://bit.ly/2bSWItD
Apr 2016	Article	Design It Like Our Livelihoods Depend on It: 8 Principles for creating on-demand platforms for better work futures.	M. Gorbis, D. Fidler	http://bit.ly/2pol5Vt
May 2016	Procomuns statement	Procomuns statement and policies for Commons Collaborative Economies at European level	Barcola and Dimmons with support of the P2Pvalue project	http://bit.ly/2qTwf5P
June 2016	Article	The Sharing Movement in its Maturity – towards a ‘Disruptive Normality’	E. Manzini	http://bit.ly/2apxRiA
July 2016	Workshop	<i>Progettare Piattaforme Positive</i> (Design Positive Platforms)	S. Cicero	http://bit.ly/2qKGgG8
Sept 2016	Paper	A Review of Methodologies for the Design & Incubation of Collaborative Platforms	S. Cicero, C. Agamennone, E. Battaglia	http://bit.ly/2fU9XAq
Oct 2016	Whitepaper	From Business Modeling to Platform Design	S. Cicero	http://bit.ly/2pIT8J3
Dec 2016	Design jam	Positive Platform Design Jam	M. Gorbis and D. Fidler in collaboration with S. Cicero	http://bit.ly/2ps0PGd
Mar 2017	Event	<i>Le Piattaforme del Capitale</i> (Platforms Capitalism)	Macao	http://bit.ly/2psc1Qx
Mar 2017	Open Letter	Open Letter to the Design Community: Stand Up for Democracy	E. Manzini, V. Margolin	http://bit.ly/2otHgw8
Mar 2017	Initiative / events	Stand Up for Democracy	Dipartimento di Design del Politecnico di Milano	http://bit.ly/2raVZvv
May 2017	Workshop	Platform Labor in the Digital Economy	A. Ardivison	http://bit.ly/2pXFdSu

Table 1

PROJECT

How the project was born

One of the outputs of the Positive Platform Design Jam was a document that included a number of [parameters of positivity](#) proposed by various studies and research institutes. We have tried to verify the presence of these in this case study of Italian sharing economy platforms and we realized that many of these did not adhere to the parameters even if they could be considered "positive" for certain other aspects.

What is a Positive Platform?

Is it possible to establish a univocal definition of Positive Platform?

This question sparked our desire to do this work.

On a semantic level, the word *positive* is up for grabs. The issue becomes even more delicate by associating the term to *platforms*, whose definition is still unclear.

On the basis of material we've collected and through discussions we've had, what has emerged is the tendency to think that positive platforms must be cooperative. We were not convinced this is necessarily true, because we have not yet seen enough examples of successful cooperative platforms. In the specific case of *labor platforms*, their positivity is often associated with worker safeguards. Even though this is a very important topic to discuss, we've decided to open the discussion to a broader context including other kinds of platforms.

A case study of Blablacar in Italy⁸ that analyzed the social impact of carpooling and demonstrated the decisive role that relational opportunities have in choosing *shared modes of travel* reveals the importance of considering and developing other parameters and indicators of positivity.

We therefore decided to expand the field of investigation to all platforms—not just the *labor platforms*—and to various organizational and proprietary models, by structuring a **platform taxonomy** that would allow us, on the one hand, to not exclude a priori certain types of platforms, and on the other, to set the starting point of our analysis. How do we establish positive parameters adaptable to multiple identities of the platforms if not by starting from their identification?

Platforms taxonomy

The first step to carry out the research was to understand which tools to be use, what questions to ask, and to whom. The questions themselves had to be functional to study the peculiar aspects of the platforms in their heterogeneity. To do this we needed to classify the platforms and group them into macro categories. This classification work had to be functional to the data collection and to facilitate its interpretation.

The platforms have been classified and grouped according to the kind of **ecosystem generated** and the type of **governance** and **ownership**.

8

Arcidiacono, D. Mainieri, M. Pais, I. (2016) *Quando la sharing economy fa innovazione sociale. Il caso BlaBlaCar*. [online] Sharitaly. Available at: <http://www.collaboriamo.org/risorse/quando-la-sharing-economy-fa-innovazione-il-caso-blablacar/> Last accessed: 13/05/2017 12:06

The image below—which can be explored in more detail [following this link](#)—shows the final version of the taxonomy we chose as the starting point for the development of the next phases. This, like the rest of the research, is open to changes.

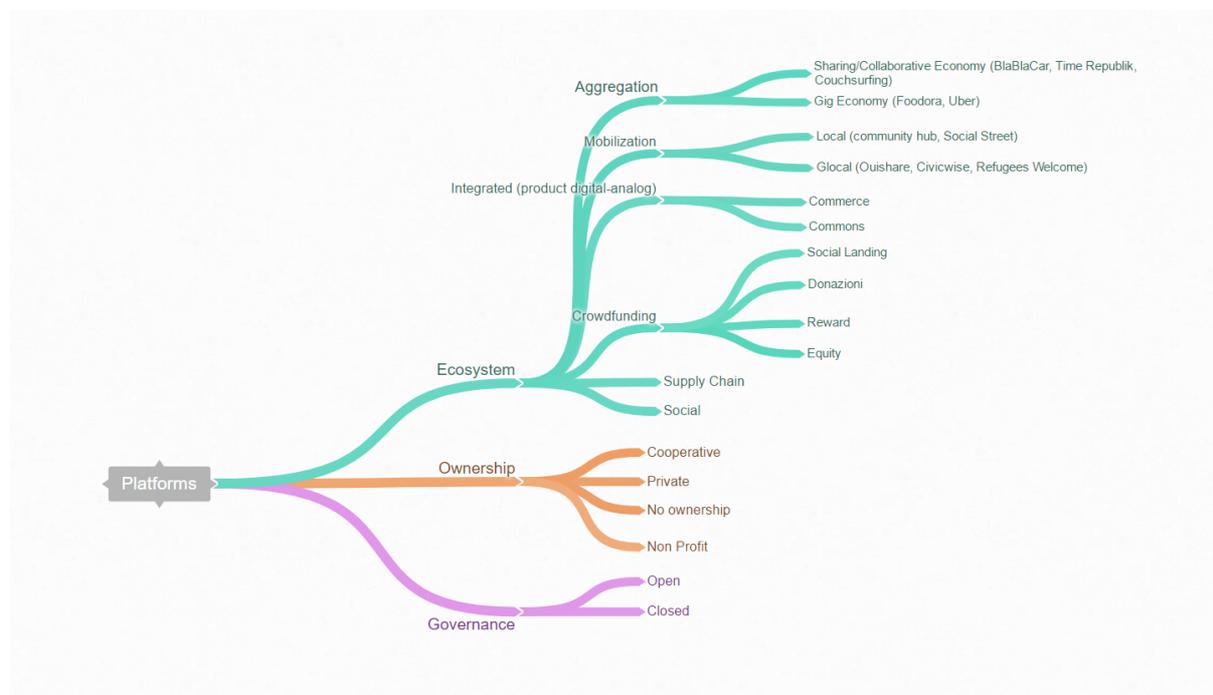


Image 1 - Platforms taxonomy⁹

In the tables below you will find an in-depth study of the three main branches: ecosystem, ownership and governance, and examples of some types of business models adopted by platforms.

ECOSYSTEM		
Name	Description	Examples
Aggregation Platforms	“The basic focus of these platforms is to bring together a broad array of relevant resources and help users of the platform to connect with the most appropriate resources.” ¹⁰	Couchsurfing; BlaBlaCar; Airbnb;

⁹

Platforms taxonomy. (2016) [online] Available at: <https://coggle.it/diagram/WMwEO4pPwAABJdrY/da143d33f9337a9414a456fff4e490c1b63c58ca24cbbd1d81ccd5ef95317ca9> Last accessed: 12/05/2017 22:17

¹⁰

Hagel, J. (2015) *The power of platforms*. Part of the Business Trends series. [online] Deloitte University Press. Available at: <http://dupress.com/articles/platform-strategy-new-level-business-trends> Last accessed: 24/07/2017 15:51

	<p>Subcategories:</p> <p>Sharing economy: the transaction happens among users that share assets, time, money, spaces etc.</p> <p>Gig economy: the transaction does not cover sharing. The one who actively participates in the platform carries out tasks that he wouldn't do if he wasn't on the platform (as it happens in the sharing economy, for example in <i>BlaBlaCar</i>). The participant receives cash compensation, usually decided by the platform, for carrying out a task.</p>	<p>Zego; Time republik; Gnammo; Holidog; Deliveroo; Foodora; JustEat; Cotabo; La Scuola Opensource</p>
Mobilization platforms	<p>Connecting and mobilizing a group of people to achieve common goals that go beyond the capabilities of the individual.</p> <p>Subcategories:</p> <p>Local: Enables users who share a local context to improve its quality.</p> <p>Glocal: Allows users to gather (in digital or physical spaces) to create projects, products, or services that deal with a common theme. The platform is enriched by these projects that are owned by the project creators, thus they can improve their status in the platform and generate value at the venue. The global community promotes the creation of local nodes and strengthens them thanks to the latter.</p>	<p>Social Street; Retake; Civicwise; CocoonProjects; Makesense; RefugeesWelcome; Ouishare</p>
Integrated	<p>Platforms that provide users with the digital infrastructure that allows them to sell their products/services, share specific content or develop shared projects through digital channels. This, potentially, extends the access to information and/or sales at a global level.</p> <p>Subcategories:</p> <p>Commercial: Create a digital channel allowing users to sell products, services, expertise, etc.</p> <p>Commons: Create a digital channel for creating or share content that is open and accessible to everyone.</p>	<p>Amazon; Ebay; Behance; Etzy; The Noun Project; Jamendo; Spotify; Stocksy; Resonate; Wikipedia; Medium; Instructables</p>

Crowdfunding	<p>Platforms that allow users to receive funding from other users.</p> <p>Subcategories:</p> <p>Social Lending: P2P lending, lending platform among private individuals.</p> <p>Donations: Platform where you can donate for a project without receiving anything in return.</p> <p>Reward: Platform where there is a reward for a donation, it is usually also a pre-sales platform for products.</p> <p>Equity: A platform that allows users to invest in a project in exchange of <i>shares</i>.</p>	Smartika; Eppela; Crowdfundme; Cooperacy
Supply Chain	Platforms that can generate a chain around a given service or product through the contributions of professionals.	Angellist; Alveare che dice si; Houzz; Opendesk
Social platforms	Allow users to know and connect to other people around areas of common interest.	Fubles; Steam

Table 2

OWNERSHIP OF PLATFORMS		
Name	Description	Examples
Private platforms	Enterprises and startups	Couchsurfing; BlaBla Car; AirBnB; Zego; Time Republik; Gnammo; Holidog; Deliveroo; Foodora; JustEat; Cocoon Projects; Amazon; Ebay; Behance; Etzy; The noun project; Jamendo; Spotify; Medium; Instructables; Smartika; Eppela; Crowdfoundme; Angellist; Alveare che dice si; Houzz; Opendesk; Fubles; Steam
Cooperative Platforms	Platforms with a cooperative model of ownership and governance in which there is a clear regulation of the forms of work and payments, with particular attention to the redistribution of value between workers and users.	Cotabo; Resonate; Stocksy
Non profit	Organizations or entities operating nonprofit.	La Scuola Open Source; Retake; Makesense; Refugees Welcome; Ouishare; Wikipedia; Cooperacy

No ownership	Absence of actual platform holders. This is built through shared organization and relations generated by the needs of a group of people who then can lean to other existing platforms for the fulfillment of their needs.	Social Street; CivicWise
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Table 3

GOVERNANCE OF PLATFORMS	
Name	Description
Centralized	In the centralized system all the elements (nodes) are connected to a single central node where the power is concentrated.
Decentralized	In the decentralized system there are several central nodes connected to each other and to other nodes.
Distributed	In the distributed system, each node is connected with several other nodes and so, with the rest of the network. This peer-to-peer arrangement allows an unrestricted flow of information, knowledge and expertise. Each node is useful to others, but no one is indispensable for the functioning of the network.

Table 4

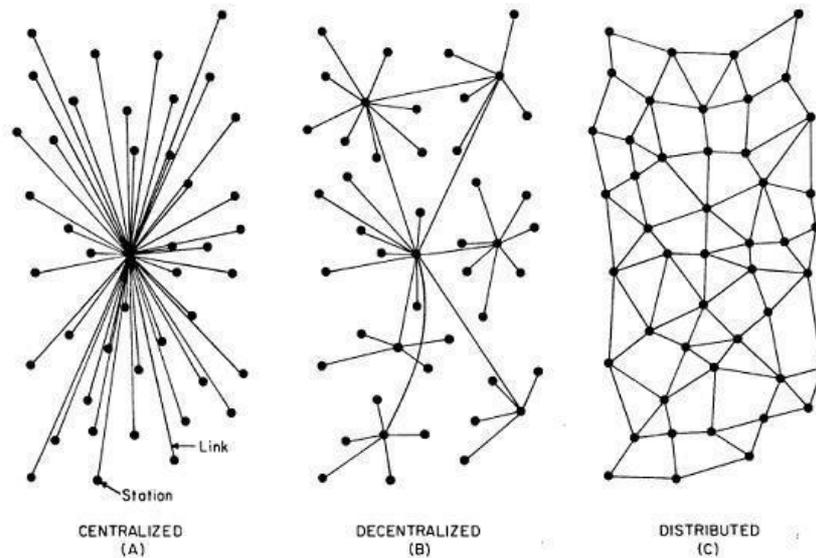


Image 2 - Centralized, decentralized and distributed network models
 Excerpted from *Introduction to Distributed Communications Networks*¹¹

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Baran, P. (1964) *Introduction to Distributed Communications Networks*. [online] Available at <https://image.slidesharecdn.com/gsrmaqachieving-scale-with-messaging-and-the-cloud-090714070531-phpapp01/95/achieving-scale-with-messaging-and-the-cloud-19-728.jpg?cb=1247555148> Last accessed 14/05/2017 11:17

Our first phase of research revealed that the viability of a platforms is strongly determined by its business model. Table 5 shows the main business models adopted by the platforms.

BUSINESS MODEL		
Type	Description	Examples
Transaction fee	The platform is available and free but will charge a user fee for each transaction made on it.	Airbnb
Freemium	Freemium is offering a free basic version of the product (sometimes charging a fee for additional functionality), and a premium version of the product containing premium functionality.	Spotify
Subscription	In this model, consumers pay a subscription fee to receive products or services,	Resonate
Advertising	The source of revenue is advertising inserted during use sessions.	Instructables
Sales	The revenue occurs through the sale of an asset (product or service).	Amazon
Users data	Platforms that collect data about users and sell it to interested companies.	Facebook
Volunteering	Based on voluntary work.	Refugees Welcome

Table 5

Most of the platforms adopt a “**mixed**” **business model**. See the case of Spotify that offers two formulas: *Free* and *Premium*. The first does not provide any cost but imposes restrictions to users as well as advertisements between songs. The second model requires a monthly outlay (subscription) which provides extra features (and no advertising).

The business model, such as data processing, has not been taken into account in defining the taxonomy of the platforms and therefore in the final analysis.

Selection of the sample

Our research focused on the Italian context but could be implemented and applied to other specific contexts or to a larger sample.

Platforms eligible to be included in research met the following criteria:

- founded or operating in Italy
- accessible from Italy (from the physical, legal and linguistic point of view, including English language)
- currently active
- belong to a wider sample in order to include different kinds of governance and ownership

Website platform analysis

By consulting with Davide Arcidiacono - Researcher in Sociology of Economic and Labor Processes and Professor at "Università Cattolica" in Milan—we've decided to analyze the platforms by direct observation of their website user interface and of the contents available online. The aim was to assess whether the platform design enhances the social impact, and in particular, which, if any, elements facilitated the relationship-building between the members/users of the platform.

To define **platform evaluation criteria** through the web interface analysis we formulated the following questions:

Platform profile

- Mission
- Business model
- Relation exchange
- Size of the community
- Year of founding

Observation of the website

- Can you see the community from outside?
- Need to register to access to the platform?
- Need to download to use the platform?

Fill out the profile

- Profile picture
- Personal data
- Description
- Contacts
- Verify users

Contacts between users - digital channels, communication and community building

- Internal tools/channels (follow, public messages, chat etc.)
- External channels (i.e. Facebook, Slack, Trello, etc.)
- Feedback and/or rating

Contexts to meet in real life

- Does the platform provide settings that allow users to come together to pursue specific purposes?
- Are users able to meet each other and create events that favor the development of the community or activation?

Learning/possibility of growth

- Is there a clear process for evolution and growth within the platform?
- How can people reach higher levels?
- What are the advantages in attaining higher levels?

Principles for Positive Platforms

- Earnings maximization for those working on the platform
- Stability and predictability
- Transparency
- Data
- Algorithm

- Portability
 - of reputation
 - of products
- Upskilling
- Social connectedness
- Bias elimination
- Feedback mechanisms
 - Is it possible to give feedback to peers?
 - Is it possible to give feedback to improve the platform?

[This link](#) will direct you to spreadsheet with the analysis work and the data collected.

In parallel, we prepared a simple survey (at [this link](#)) to send to the platforms in our sample to obtain specific information regarding their governance model, because that information is oftentimes not available online. We simplified the types of governance in our analysis (see the spreadsheet mentioned above) to either *open governance* or *closed governance*.

We received only few responses and believe that in further research development it would be interesting to conduct semi-structured interviews addressed to platform owners to gain deeper insight into the forms of governance represented in our platform sample. We sent the survey to all the platforms that have been examined, along with an invitation to correct any inaccuracies.

We found that it was easier to identify the business model through observation of the platform. However, we believe interviews could yield additional important information about business models.

Presentation and analysis of the results

Referring to [this excel file](#), we examined the results of the survey by comparing the tables containing the information on the ecosystem, governance and ownership, with the positivity parameters suggested by Marina Gorbis and Devin Fidler in *Design It Like Our Livelihoods Depend on It*.¹²

Below, we'll present the data we collected through different lenses, letting recurring patterns emerge. Through deep analysis of every single category and subcategory of ecosystems, we'll report on the salient features.

Aggregation

In this category, we can find prevalence of private and for-profit platforms with a closed governance model with a few exceptions.

- Sharing platforms and gig platforms both operate through on-demand logic, but the differences in terms of stability, predictability work opportunities, and the ability for users to create peer communities are stark. Most *sharing platform* users are able to set the value of their time, product, or service. In *gig platforms*, however, the value is set from the top, often through algorithms or other tools (e.g. spreadsheets).
- Sharing platforms usually offer better opportunities for creating user communities, but that is not always the case. La Scuola Open Source is a gig platform that fosters community through didactic courses for its users.

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Gorbis, M. Fidler, D. (2016). Design It Like Our Livelihoods Depend on It: 8 Principles for creating on-demand platforms for better work futures. [online] Medium. Available at: <https://medium.com/the-wtf-economy/design-it-like-our-livelihoods-depend-on-it-e1b6388eb752#.i0scqjyab> Last accessed: 14/05/2017 20:17

It is also interesting to think about how platforms' primary ecosystems will change over time in response to the way its workers and customer use them, and how the people who oversee the platforms will respond to these changes to the ecosystems.

Here two examples:

Airbnb is a platform that makes it possible to monetize underutilized personal resources by sharing them. At the same time—as in the case of many other platforms—it can become a gig platform by creating the need for *property managers* who manage multiple properties at the same time, re-intermediating a process that the platform had disintermediated.

Zego can be considered a carpooling platform (sharing) if passengers share a route that the driver was already planning to travel, but it would also fit in the category of gig platforms if the driver agrees to take passengers to locations other than those envisaged by their own itinerary (*Uber* style).

Mobilization

These platforms are divided into **locals** and **glocals**. They are often distinguished by their ability to counterbalance the extractive effects of other processes by relocating skills, knowledge and communities.

They completely differ from other types of platforms for a variety of specific behaviors:

- They use communication and management tools/channels external to the platform (Facebook, Slack, Loomio, etc.).
- Most of the mobilization platforms are in the form of non-profit organizations or are not legally formalized. Glocals often have the freedom to assume different legal forms according to the national laws and the needs of the individual local groups.
- There is no money transaction mediated by the platform. If needed, the network is committed to achieving its goals by seeking external financing.
- Mobilization platforms (along with others) give more opportunities to increase the skills of those who participate. Users have the opportunity to get in touch with people who would be inaccessible in their local environment, grow professionally, and bring these skills back into their own territory.
- The high frequency of social, digital and face-to-face exchanges promotes the creation of cohesive communities. This phenomenon, at the local level, can reduce competition, thanks to an increased collaboration among people sharing the niche in which the platform mobilizes the network.
- All of these platforms are characterized by a lack of feedback mechanism, probably due to the highly directed and disintermediated social interaction.

Cocoon Projects is the great exception in this category. It is located between *mobilization*, *chain*, and *gig platforms*, so it has behaviors that belong to each of these categories. It provides remuneration for its users, has a feedback system, allows for great professional growth, and favors social interactions among participants. Cocoon Projects is unique with regard to the relationship between ownership and governance, because it is a private company with an open governance.

LiquidO¹³ is the model of governance adopted by Cocoon Projects and is one of the elements that makes this platform so peculiar.

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Cocoon Projects. Liquid Organisation [online]. Available at: <http://liquido.cocoonprojects.com/> Last accessed: 14/05/2017 20:57

Integrated

They are divided into *e-commerce* and *commons platforms* (common goods). Although at first these two categories may seem very different from each other, they respond to common features:

- Integrated platforms are the most connected to the digital context, creating conditions that allow the exchange of products or contents, for sale or accessible in creative commons.
- They are less influenced by language barriers, because the products/services that are sold/shared do not require direct knowledge of the language or because the websites are translated.
- Their infrastructure allows a transnational scalability, thanks to the use of digital channels or by relying directly on logistics and external distribution services, already available in the different territories.
- Usually the ownership is private and for profit, while the governance is closed (except for *Wikipedia*, *Resonate* and *Stocksy*).
- Both categories can accept feedback on the products/services they offer.
- These platforms have a relatively high barrier to entry, which often results in a high quality of service.
- Integrated platforms in general do not aim to promote the established social relationships between users. However, platforms such as *Wikipedia*, *Medium* and *Instructables* are an exception: they are learning contexts that leverage the connection and collaboration between people to enrich the contents, and this inevitably generates new relationships.

Supply chain

By definition *supply chain platforms* allow grouping of different professionals belonging to a specific workplace. The data we extracted describes similar behaviors:

- Private ownership (and for profit) with a closed governance.
- The users of these platforms can decide on the price of their products/services.
- Personal skills are not directly increased through the platform.
- While in the *mobilization* and *integrated platforms* the skills and the relationships among users increase progressively, there is a different phenomenon in supply chain platforms. In the latter case, platforms do not offer particular learning opportunities, but they do allow social relationships: the lack of specific skill-building opportunities is offset by opportunities to connect with other professionals, who can in turn provide the missing skills. The result is the birth of *professional networks*, critical to the development of wider projects potentially more durable over time.

Crowdfunding and Social

We studied these platforms the least of all because there is already a huge amount of literature on them.

In addition to the specific comments on the categories listed above, by widening the point of view it is possible to outline the macro categories of platforms, which we will analyze below:

Labor platforms

Labor platforms allow users to generate direct earnings from their work within the platform. They consist of *gig*, *supply chain* and *e-commerce platforms*.

LABOR PLATFORMS		
Gig	E-commerce	Supply chain

Table 6

While in the *gig* and *supply chain platforms* the users are recognized as professionals, in the *e-commerce platforms* the focus is on the channel of sales and not on the user who produce and sells. The latter allows access to a much larger number of customers than through the classic local channels because it extends its sales capability to a global context.

On demand platforms

On demand is a **behavior** that is naturally assumed within certain platforms where demand for goods or services is paid with an offer just in time. On demand is not a category of platforms as it doesn't define an ecosystem, for this reason you won't find it in the taxonomy scheme (image 1).

As can be seen in Table 7, we find *on demand* behaviors mainly in *gig*, *e-commerce* and *supply chain* platforms.

ON DEMAND PLATFORMS		
	E-commerce	Supply chain
Gig		

Table 7

Here we'd like to bring the focus on the *sharing economy* platforms that in the collective imagination stand out from *gig* platforms precisely because of the lack of an on demand behavior.

Nevertheless, we can observe that, in various *sharing* platforms, there is more and more recurring sliding from situations that allow the pure sharing of goods / services to situations where users end up offering goods / services on demand. In the latter case, we can see how, based on user behavior, platforms can be defined at the same time as sharing and gig.

CONCLUSIONS

From the results of the research we have identified two main reasons why it is very difficult to define *positive platform*. First, the research field related to platforms is still too young to have a well-developed understanding of the influences these new infrastructures have on the social, economical, and environmental sphere. The second reason is the subjectivity of the term *positive*.

We found it useful to categorize our sample set of platforms using the proposed taxonomy and to compare them with three main indicators: the **social**, the **economical**, and the **knowledge-related impact**. These three aspects are recurrent in almost all platforms, albeit at different levels, and have allowed us to compare them, showing positive behaviors in platform categories that are often termed as *negative* and vice versa.

It is important to note that mass behaviors are defined by *rules* established by those at the helm of ownership and governance of the platforms, and these rules must be communicated **transparently** to those who take part in the platform.

In this process of analysis, it is therefore necessary to include **users behaviors** as an integral part of the platform. It is up to users to decide whether or not to join a platform and understand its underlying governance structure and the obligations and benefits that arise from it.

How can we go deeper into the complexities of positive platforms and gain a holistic understanding of them? The answer might lie in a yet-to-be developed tool that *dissect* a platform into its components. Such a tool could be used to understand a platform's deeper features, so that we could reassemble this information on a higher level that reveals emerging patterns and behaviors.

We hope our work has made a contribution towards capturing some of the infinite nuances that every platform brings in its uniqueness.

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APPENDIX

Link to the bibliography: <http://bit.ly/2pOUeCZ>

Link to the bibliography in its open and implementable version: <http://bit.ly/2rk6UmM>

Link to the platforms taxonomy: <http://bit.ly/2qlenmY>

Parameters for a positive platform: <http://bit.ly/2mhZNZK>

Spreadsheet grid for the analysis of platforms: <http://bit.ly/2pQ8JpB>