"Putting stars in their eyes": how platform-owners exercise commensurative power

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Abstract :

Decentralized evaluation systems of the sharing-economy are depicted either as apparatuses of control that instantiate specific forms of power, or as information products that mitigate situations of information asymmetry. In this study, we take another perspective and we explore whether and how platform-owners rather strategically manipulate the internal value of this valuation device for the users of the digital infrastructure they provide. The results of our study of several sharing-economy market-organizations in France suggest that platform-owners manipulate the value of the valuation device by exerting an episodic power over an offline network, or by manipulating the value of evaluations in the commensurability of users' demands or requests (notably by manipulating the possibility for users to express sameness and differences through this valuation device).

Mots-clés : platform ; peer-to-peer ; neo-institutional theory ; evaluation ; commensuration

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1. INTRODUCTION

In 2011, Rachel Botsman started to spread the idea that « trust » was the new currency of the digital economy (Botsman & Rogers, 2011). Then, at Know Identity Conference 2018, Nick Shapiro, the Global Head of Trust & Risk Management at Airbnb delivered a keynote speech entitled: « Trust: The Fundamental Currency of the Sharing Economy ». Indeed, research has highlighted ratings and reviews could matter more than prices in sharing-economy platform users decision-making (Resnick & Zeckhauser, 2002) : ratings and reviews seem to have become a legitimate metric to commensurate goods and services in sharing-economy platforms. Organizational literature analyze ratings and reviews devices either as elements of a wider control apparatus (Rosenblat & Stark, 2016) or as a way to neutrally mitigate situations of information asymmetries (Dellarocas, 2003) but their implementation and the effect they produce seem taken-for-granted : platform-owners and users seem to disappear behind the rational imperative or the disciplinary regime. In this article, we take another perspective and we propose to rather envisage ratings and reviews' value in users' decision-making as a commensuration-related "myth" that has pervaded sharing-economy organizational field.

Along with « myths », coupling and decoupling are core concepts in neo-institutional analysis. Neo-institutional scholars pioneers indeed early explained that if organizations being part of a organizational field were to adopt highly similar elements of structure, some of them might actually "decouple" their daily practices from this formal structure (Meyer & Rowan, 1977) for instance to preserve internal trust and logic of good faith. This early conceptualization of decoupling was refined recently: Bromley & Powell (2012) proposed indeed to distinguish symbolic implementation (traditional policy-practice decoupling) from symbolic adoption (a mean-end decoupling). Overall, an extant stream of research has developed on the coupling and decoupling, notably to explore determinants of decoupling, either at field, organizational, or individual levels (e.g. Covaleski, & Dirsmith, 1983; Oliver, 1991; Westphal & Zajac, 1994, 2001). Connecting different levels of analysis somehow, scholars account for organizational decoupling as a matter of power: organizations being

likely to decouple as a whole when "powerful" actors in the organization have interest to and can impose other member to do so (Pache & Santos, 2010; Westphal & Zajac, 2001) a perspective recently furthered by Kern, Laguecir, & Leca (2018) who point out decoupling and intra-organizational dynamics of power balance. Underlying those ideas and related conceptions of decoupling and power, however, is the hypothesis of organization being traditional « rational hierarchical bureaucratic organizations » (Zucker, 1983, p. 2). Yet, what happen when collective action is achieved through platform-based organization ?

Answering Hinings, Gegenhuber, & Greenwood's (2018) suggestion to build on neo-institutional insights to analyze those organizational forms, and in particular, their call to « look behind the digital veil [to] take into account the role of the hierarchical organization running the platform » (p.7), we conceptualize platform-based organization as set of digital infrastructure - and in particular, as a set of evaluative infrastructure (Kornberger, Pflueger, & Mouritsen, 2017) - provided by a platform-owner to a community of users, for them to transact in a non-hierarchical way (Mair & Reischauer, 2017). This focus on evaluative infrastructures put notably the emphasis on the idea according to which the commensuration of services and object is the outcome of social processes : objects and services are to be dis-embedded, differentiated and made comparable in order to be exchangeable (Espeland & Stevens, 1998) and to do so, actors notably rely on judgement devices (Karpik, 2010). Noticing that in organizational fields populated by those new platform-based organizations, the commensurability of certain goods and services can be institutionalized and the related use of particular judgement devices routinized, so that platform-owners are compelled to incorporate a particular judgement feature on their infrastructure, we ask: can platform-owners influence platform-users (de)coupling behaviors and if so, how?

To answer this question, we conducted a qualitative case-study on the organization field of sharing-economy platforms operating in France and collected multi-source data on 22 platforms. Our main data set comprise 27 interviews with platform owners and/or managers coupled with related archival data. Sharing-economy organizations constitute a field of interest since several empirical evidences that let us believe that ratings and reviews systems constitute an institutional requirements for platform-owners (most sharing-economy platform-owners incorporate one - Hausemer et al., 2017 - while complaining about their effects at the same time ; Federal Trade Commission, 2016) and France (and French people) being a particularly sharing-economy friendly country (Andreotti et al., 2017).
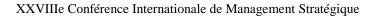
In this article, we first show that incorporating a ratings and reviews system on their digital infrastructure may indeed constitute an institutional requirement for owners and/or managers of platforms operating in France: documenting this commensurability-related "shared myth", we explain then that platforms-owners all want to influence platform-users' (de)coupling behaviors, but in different directions. Second, we explain that platform-owners achieve to do so either by influencing directly users belonging to their personal network of relationship or by manipulating the commensurability of users' demands and requests, on the evaluative infrastructure. Accordingly, our contributions to the literature are threefold. We first contribute to neo-institutional literature by providing insights on decoupling in platform-based organization and in particular by conceptualizing a "commensuration-related" facet of episodic power for platform-owners. Our analysis also complements commensuration literature by emphasizing how platform-owners can strategically valorize or devalorize the internal use of an institutionalized judgement device, i.e. how they can put a judgement device into action. Finally, we enrich the understanding of competition between digital marketplaces, by showing that the latter can't be reduced to increasing the overall number of users, but also involves "struggling over the authority and legitimacy of valuation practices" (Kornberger, 2017) of valuation devices.

2. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

2.1. INSTITUTIONAL REQUIREMENTS, DECOUPLING AND EPISODIC POWER IN « TRADITIONAL » ORGANIZATIONS

The concept of institutional requirements is at the core of neo-institutional theory : the initial focus of neo-institutional scholars is indeed to understand how delimited sets of organizations come to adopt similar elements of formal structure (Meyer & Rowan, 1977) that situated efficiency constraints (Hannan & Freeman, 1977) fail to account for. For instance, Meyer & Rowan (1977) point out that efficiency imperatives do not account for the emergence of economists departments in their contemporary organizations, since no organizational members « *may read, understand, or believe them* » (p. 350). Building on Berger & Luckmann's (1966) insights', neo-institutional pioneers rather point out that organizations being part of the same organizational field (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) are embedded in a common institutional environnement, populated with shared « *myths* », i.e. taken-for-granted statements about what constitutes desirable end and the ways and means to attain it.

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Organizations of a given field, thus come to adopt similar formal elements of structure in order to achieve a situated legitimacy (Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

Institutional pioneers explain also that the emergence of shared « myths » within bundles of organizations is accompanied by the structuration of asymmetrical relationships within them, since processes of field structuration consists notably of « *the emergence of sharply defined interorganizational structures of domination and patterns of coalition* » (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 148). Thus, when neo-institutional scholars confronted, later, with the problem of institutional change, they pointed out that in given fields, some organizations and/or individuals were working to maintain institutions, whereas others were working to change or to disrupt them (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). Doing so, they highlighted that institutional requirements were aligned with certain organizations' interests but misaligned with others (Levy & Scully, 2007). If an extant stream of literature focused on agency in fields through institutional change and institutional entrepreneurship (Lawrence, Suddaby, & Leca, 2009) another part of neo-institutional literature rather investigated how organizations were to formally adopt institutional requirements, without actually enacting them.

Institutional pioneers already suspected that implementing institutional requirements can trigger internal coordination problems: they thus early acknowledged that organizations might formally implement certain institutional requirements but actually "*decouple*" their daily practices from their formal structure (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Recently, Bromley & Powell (2012) refined this early idea and distinguished « *symbolic adoption* » - referring to traditional policy-practice decoupling- and «*symbolic implementation* » - referring to mean-end decoupling, that is situations in which organizations implement institutional requirements, allocates resources to perform it, but do not incorporate institutional requirements' outcomes in their daily activities. Overall, greenwashing strategies constitute paradigmatic instances of decoupling, where organizations formally adopt ecological-friendly formal processes but do business as usual (Walker & Wan, 2012).

Scholars first interested in field-level conditions stimulating organizational decoupling. They acknowledged notably that organizations are likely to decouple when they are embedded in a field where multiple and eventually conflicting institutional demands operate (Greenwood, Raynard, Kodeih, Micelotta, & Lounsbury, 2011; Oliver, 1991). Scholars also explored organization-level conditions stimulating organizational decoupling and explained that late adopters of institutional requirements are more likely to decouple (Westphal & Zajac, 1994). Scholars finally interested in organizational-level conditions stimulating decoupling of

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individuals members in organizations, and pointed out that individuals are likely to decouple when implemented institutional requirements conflict with their own interests (Covaleski, & Dirsmith, 1983) or with the logic they subscribe to (Pache & Santos, 2010, 2013b). Connecting the two levels of analysis somehow, scholars explain that organizations are likely to decouple as a whole when "*powerful*" actors in the organization impose other member to do so, thus implementing decoupling at the organizational level (Pache & Santos, 2010; Westphal & Zajac, 1994, 2001). Furthering this perspective, Kern et al. (2018) recently proposed to depart from static views on decoupling and envisaged the dynamics of decoupling in a hospital as a matter of power relationships balance, and unbalance. It should be noted that as power, all those authors broadly refer to dependence relationships or legal status (e.g. decoupling induced by powerful top-executives in U.S. industrial and service firms; Westphal & Zajac, 2001) i.e. the relational-focused organizational "*episodic power*" depicted by Lawrence (2008) that encompasses "*influence*" and even "*use of force*". However, underlying this definition of episodic power that organizational members can build on to induce decoupling in some spaces within organizational boundaries, is the vision of organization as traditional and locally anchored « *rational hierarchical bureaucratic organization* » (Zucker, 1983, p. 2). Yet, across fields, new organizational forms have gained legitimacy for a couple of years, what may challenge those statements (Hinings et al., 2018).

2.2. DECOUPLING IN PLATFORM-BASED ORGANIZATION?

Recurrent calls thus urge institutional scholars to engage with new « *forms of organizing* » (e.g. Hinings et al., 2018; Meyer & Höllerer, 2014, p. 1224) that some recall as platform-based organization (Srnicek, 2016) and which encompass a wide set of entities such as eBay, Airbnb, Couchsurfing, Malt, or Deliveroo. Some of them attempt to conceptualize platform-based organisation as a set of digital infrastructure provided by a platform-owner to a community of users, for them to transact in a non-hierarchical way (Acquier, Daudigeos, & Pinkse, 2017; Mair & Reischauer, 2017). Some organizational scholars go one step further and emphasize that platform-owners provide evaluative infrastructures (Kornberger et al., 2017) to a communities of users, stressing the transactional character of those new forms of organizing and echoing thus early attempts of Ahrne, Aspers, & Brunsson (2015) to conceptualize "market-organizations".

Taking this perspective, some authors explains that providers of the infrastructure may fail in their attempts to organize decentralized exchanges, if they do not succeed to provide a

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consensual and legitimate exchange scheme: for instance, Fitzmaurice & Schor (2019) account for a failed attempt to organize a "homemade food swap", explaining that "*as participants were unable to reach consensus on valuations* » (in press). Doing so, those scholars borrow from economic sociology the old idea that the commensurability of services and objects is socially constructed (hence demonstrating ontological roots compatible with neo-institutional views). Tenets from this perspective explain indeed that, in order to be exchanged on markets, goods and services need to be made exchangeable, i.e. commensurable, that is to be rendered different but comparable thanks to a common metric (Espeland & Stevens, 1998). This commensurability of services and objects is achieved notably through the use of rankings, evaluation, classifications, metrics and other "*judgment devices*" (Karpik, 2010) by multiple parties, namely the audience, the evaluated and the ones performing the evaluation (Espeland & Sauder, 2007). Finally, in given fields, the commensurability of goods and services can be more or less institutionalized and the related use of those devices more or less routinized, i.e. they overall vary in how "*natural the process* [of commensuration] *seems to involved parties*"(Espeland & Stevens, 1998, p. 329).

This stream of research thus largely focused on field level processes related to the production and institutionalization of the use of judgement devices and their attached commensuration criteria, as well as on their effects on field-dynamics once institutionalized. For instance, Fourcade (2011) accounts for the socio-cultural construction of the price of nature in the U.S and in France, taking the case of the elaboration of cultural-dependent pricing models for oil spills catastrophes. Giamporcaro & Gond (2016) rather emphasize the dynamics of power relationships at stake in the construction and institutionalization of a metric, in the field of responsible investment. Once institutionalized, once their use seems "natural" (Espeland & Stevens, 1998), then, scholars explain that those judgment devices operate as "*cognitive prothesis*" (Cochoy, 2008) since (1) they reduce information (2) they categorize, i.e. creating relationships among alternately disparate organizations and things, and since (3) they provide ready-to-wear schemes to express "*sameness and difference*" (Espeland & Stevens, 1998, p.16). Recently, Brandtner (2017) added that, the more numerous different commensuration schemes were considered as legitimate in a given field, the less their respective effects. Finally, even if some scholars are starting considering that organizations face the strategic decisions to internalize, game or impose the use of a particular judgement device (Kornberger, 2017) scant dedicated literature explicitly investigate how organizational members could precisely attempt to do so, i.e. what they do to *valorize* or *de-valorize* internally the use of an

overall institutionalized judgement device with its embedded commensuration scheme (Vatin, 2013).

Then, what happens in organizational fields populated by those platform-based organizations if platform-owners are precisely compelled to integrate a particular judgement device on their infrastructure, as an institutional requirement? Owing that platform-owners seem theoretically unable to enjoy any kind of episodic power that managers can build on in "*traditional organizations*"(Laamanen, Pfeffer, Rong, & Van de Ven, 2018), if the formers interests are to be opposed to users' routinized use of the judgement feature they are compelled to incorporate, can they exert any kind of "episodic power" to influence coupling/decoupling behaviors of their users, and how? Overall, can platform-owners induce decoupling within platform-users and how, or put it the other way around, can platform-owners (de)valorize the use of a judgement feature they are compelled to incorporate on their infrastructure and how?

3. METHOD

3.1. OVERALL RESEARCH DESIGN

In order to answer these questions, we adopted a qualitative approach and engaged with a case-study of the French sharing-economy organizational field (Acquier, Carbone, & Massé, 2017). First, sharing-economy organizational field (Laurell & Sandström, 2017) constitute a field of interest for answering our questions since several studies provide us with empirical evidences that let us believe that five-star ratings and open-text reviews, as well as other highly similar ratings and review systems, constitute institutional requirements for platform-owners. A field investigation conducted on behalf of the European Commission recently highlight that more than a half of the 485 sharing-economy platforms screened, and a huge majority of the ones identified as the major actors of the field, incorporate a ratings and reviews system on their digital infrastructure (Hausemer et al., 2017). Moreover, marketing research emphasizes that consumers routinely rely on those ratings and reviews when they need to prospectively estimate quality online, even if other more accurate and reliable information is available: this overconfidence in ratings and reviews appearing as being "*based on an « illusion of validity »* (de Langhe et al., 2016, p. 817). However, users' excessive valuing of ratings and reviews in their decision-making might become detrimental to platform-owners at least in some sharing-economy market-organizations. For instance, a set of panelists gathered by U.S. Federal Trade Commission evoke the "*cold start effect*", to

depict the difficulties faced by certain platform-owners to incorporate new users, due to the latters' lack of evaluation metrics (Federal Trade Commission, 2016).

Second, France is an interesting delimitation for studying a sharing-economy organizational field, since it is one of the European countries where 1) the population is the most familiar with the use of those sharing-economy-platforms, and 2) numerous active market-organizations exist. A survey conducted on behalf of the European Commission in 2016 estimates that 36% of French citizens have ever used sharing-economy platform, ahead of the 24% of Croatian and Latvian citizens, or the 20% of German citizens for instance (Flash Eurobarometer 438, 2016). This claim is also supported by survey data from the EU H2020 research project's report dedicated to participation in the sharing-economy (Andreotti et al., 2017). Moreover, an exploratory empirical study conducted on behalf of the European Commission and published in 2017 ranks France 3rd in terms of annual peer consumer spending in the sharing-economy platforms, behind the U.K. and Germany and much above the European average (Hausemer et al., 2017). Lastly, a report conducted on behalf of the French government identify more than 270 active sharing-economy platforms in France in 2015 (Pipame, 2015).

Overall, to conduct this case-study we adopted a grounded theory perspective and we accordingly strongly relied on Glaser and Strauss's (1967) guidelines. In particular, we "*jointly collect, code, and analyze* [our] *data and decide what data to collect next*" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 45). In the following sections, we thus explain how we came to gather our final set of data as well as to build our final analysis.

3.2. DATA COLLECTION

We started our data collection process by gathering various published material, in order to build an overview of the French sharing-economy organizational field and its current issues. We thus first compiled empirical reports from various institutional sources addressing the issues of sharing-economy market-organizations in France. We built on this preliminary empirical material to construct a first open-ended interview guide. Accordingly, we identified five early respondents in five sharing-economy market-organizations and conducted exploratory interviews between March and August 2017. Using Glaser & Strauss (1967)'s picture, during those preliminary interviews, we "*sat back and listen*[ed] *while the respondents tell their stories*" (p.75), and then, we recorded, transcribed and analyzed them. This first step helped us enhancing our "*interaction expertise*" (Collins, 2004) since we notably immerged ourselves in "*the linguistic culture pertaining to* [our] *practical domain*"

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(p.127) of interest. We also attended a national event dedicated to sharing-economy market-organizations and their issues in France in September 2017. Accordingly, we progressively refined our interview guide, while going back-and-forth with the literature (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

We continued our data collection process by conducing additional 22 semi-structured interviews with platform-owners or managers of other sharing-economy market-organizations in France between September 2017 and January 2019. Those interviews constituted our main source of primary data for this study: we considered them as relevant in our case, since platform-owners and/or managers are "*knowledgeable agents*" (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 17) of how they are purposively acting or re-acting on their platform (Lamont & Swidler, 2014). We selected the founders of the businesses as interview partners whenever possible, or country-level managers when it appeared neither relevant nor possible to interview the founders (for instance, when the founders were not anymore involved in daily activities of the platform). The duration of the interviews ranged from 30 to 100 minutes, with an average duration of 50 minutes. We conducted those interviews face-to-face when possible, or by phone and all interviews were realized in French. We recorded and transcribed all but one interview, since one respondent refused conversation record: we then took notes manually. Following Gioia et al. (2013)'s guidelines, we assured all interviewees, at all stages of data collection, of their anonymity. Table 1 provides the resulting set of market-organizations we engaged with for this study, as well as our key respondents. In this table, we also provide a concise description of the nature of peer-to-peer services transactions that those market-organizations organize, since Bardhi & Eckhardt (2012) explain that the nature of shared goods and skills may constitute a key dimension for studying organizations of the sharing-economy. However, these dimensions did not emerge as salient in our empirical investigations.

We deliberately chose to focus on sharing-economy market-organizations which do incorporate a ratings and reviews system on their digital infrastructure, as our goal was 1) to understand whether this adoption choice was driven by other rationales than efficiency constraints and if so (and only) 2) to analyze why and how platform-owners could attempt to influence the routinized use their users have of those rating and reviews systems in their decision-making. We finally expanded and strengthened our data collection on those sharing-economy market-organizations by collecting archival data from their websites, exploring in particular online content dedicated to ratings and reviews systems. A detailed and structured presentation of our data sources is available in Appendix A.

3.3. DATA ANALYSIS

Our analytic approach is abductive and we used qualitative analysis software Nvivo 12 to realize our iterative data analyses (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). After preliminary analysis, final data analysis was conducted in three main stages.

In the first stage, we performed open-coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994) : we notably noticed that platform-owners and/or managers did not considered as a choice, driven my pure functional considerations, to incorporate (or not) a ratings and review system on their digital infrastructure: we thus first elaborated on the "*mythical*" dimension surrounding rating and review systems, in the field. Going back and forth with the literature (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and informed by neo-institutional insights that institutional requirements were to be aligned with certain organizations and organization members' interests but misaligned with others (Levy & Scully, 2007), we thus found out that users' routinized use of five-star ratings and reviews was to be detrimental to platform-owners and/or managers in three different manners. Accordingly, we noticed that all platform-owners and/or managers desired to influence the routinized use users had of ratings and reviews system, overall in three different directions. Three analytical categories accounting for heterogeneous organizational stance thus emerged from our data: we provide detailed empirical material to support this early stage of analysis in Table 2. Those three emergent analytical categories provided us with focal points for exploring how platform-owners and/or managers attempt to influence users' use of rating and reviews system.

Our last stage of analysis focused on investigating platform-owners and/or managers activities. To do so, we strongly relied on Gioia et al. (2013)'s guidelines : we initially identified first-order concepts and labeled them with wordings close to informants' terms. Adopting constant comparative method of those first-order concepts and going back-and-forth with the literature (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 103) we then gathered relevant first-order concepts around second-order themes, that we labeled for them to be more « *firmly in the theoretical realm* » (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 20). We then grouped our second-order them into aggregate dimensions. Our final data structure for this second stage of analysis is illustrated in Figure 1 and exemplary evidences for first-order categories are displayed in Table 3.

Figure 1

4. FINDINGS

4.1. A SHARED "MYTH" BUT THREE DIFFERENT ORGANIZATIONAL STANCES ALL AROUND

In this section, we first elaborate on the "*mythical*" dimension of rating and review systems within the boundaries of the French sharing-economy organization field. We explain that rating and reviews systems have taken a rule-like status for owners and/or managers of platforms operating in France: accordingly, incorporating such a system on their digital infrastructure constitutes an institutional requirement for them. Second, we depict three different analytical organizational stances toward this commensurability-related "*shared myth*", as displayed in Table 2.

4.1.1. A commensurability-related shared myth: ratings and reviews system as an institutional requirement for platform-owners

Not matter what is the subject of exchange in the peer-to-peer transactions they organize nor whether they are profit-oriented or not, or finally whether they have launched their platform early or not, platform-owners all acknowledge that they feel compelled to incorporate a ratings and reviews system on the digital infrastructure they provide to their users : for many, it appears first and foremost as a « *standard of the industry* », so that they « *cannot do otherwise* » (Crowdshipping2). Ratings and reviews systems appear overall as a taken-for-granted element for organizing decentralized transactions between individuals: while some platform-owners and/or managers do not even consider that they could possibly organize decentralized transactions between individuals without providing such a feature - whereas precisely, some other platforms do (« *if there was no rating, then people could not trust each other* » Crowdshipping3), some platform managers explain that they ended up providing ratings and reviews to their community of users, precisely because everyone around them considered that "*it could not be otherwise*":

> "it's almost a legal obligation now. If you do press relationships, people ask you whether on your platform, there is ratings and reviews, you have to answer "yes yes" ... you see? I was a little forced, by the force of circumstances" (Crowdshipping1)

Not only are star-rating and reviews systems taken-for-granted formal elements of infrastructure and not only incorporating such a system constitute an institutional requirement for platform-owners and/or managers: those systems carry a precise attached meaning that most platform-owners and/or managers seem to share: ratings and reviews systems *should* provide users with the possibility to best differentiate their potential interlocutors and accordingly it seems natural for them to consider that ratings and reviews systems' outcome

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are to constitute the basic units for users' exchange commensuration. Indeed, to introduce us their rating and review system they display as well as to provide insights on the way their users use it, the vast majority of the platform-owners and/or managers compare their users use of this system with the "*myth*" according to which two users, who completed a transaction together, should leave detailed and objective comments about their exchange, so as other members could build on those feedbacks to best discriminate between future potential interlocutors, in order finally to achieve the best possible transactions. Thus, most platforms provide online content that encompasses such a view, in their FAQ section or else in special sections dedicated to "*trust and safety*":

> "In order to improve the security and transparency within [the community], we provide a rating system to our users. Thus, after a [transaction] pilots and passengers can leave a score from 1 to 5 as well as leave text comments on user's profile. This system allows pilots to determine which passengers they could bring on board and passengers to identify the pilot they could trust" – Flight-sharing1's website

4.1.2. Users routinized use of ratings and reviews: asymmetrical consequences for platform-owners and/or managers

Platform-owners and/or managers thus largely describe users' routinized use of the rating and review system by comparing this routinized use with the commensuration-related "*myth*" that we previously documented. Accordingly, they quite all agree that users do rely on ratings and reviews system's outcomes to discriminate between several potential interlocutors (i.e. users' ratings and reviews as the basis for differentiating them). Most of them explain for instance that users far prefer to accept less advantageous market conditions (higher prices, constraining time-schedule etc.) required by users who can demonstrate many positive ratings and reviews on their profile rather than addressing demands to users with no rating, or worse, bad ratings. Conversely, the vast majority of platform-owners and/or managers explain that information provided through those system is biased since they explain that only few users use rating and reviews to report transactions that "*went wrong*". This routinized use generate consequences more or less aligned with platform-owners interests.

First, certain platform-owners and/or managers complain about users' routinized use of the ratings and review system by regretting users' "*self-censorship*", deploring indeed that those users do not dare to relate, detail and document unpleasant transactions in their reviews, what, in turns, prevents or even discourage overall community to rely on ratings and reviews to best discriminate among potential interlocutors in future transactions:

« Users have positive reviews, generally speaking, so yes I guess it generates trust, but at the same time ... when everyone ends up having the same ratings, you cannot rely on that to differentiate between users anymore» - Services-Exchange1

Another group of platform-owners and/or manager explain that users' routinized use of the rating and reviews system generates consequences truly antagonist to their own interests. Indeed, owing that users heavily rely on ratings and review system in their decision-making to enter in transactions, the fact that only few evaluated users use the infrastructure that those platform-owners provide retains them from attracting new users:

« What I mean is that ... when you go to a platform, where there is ... 100 similar profiles, there are 0 comments, 0 star-rating, you run away! […] If you are looking for someone from Marseille, you go to [their main competitor]'s platform and you see Roger who has only one evaluation ... and if you go on Crowdshipping1, looking fo someone from Marseille ... and you see Roger with 20 comment, you will exchange with Roger who has 20 comments, on Crowdshipping1» (Crowdshipping1)

Finally, even when platform-owners have succeeded to gather first few users having ratings and reviews, they explain that users' routinized use of the ratings and reviews system can also be detrimental, somehow, to their interests. Indeed, they explain that the first few users gathering ratings and reviews, on the one side of the platform, centralize all requests issued by users from the other side of the platform, leaving other users with no hope to conduct a single transaction, so finally, pushing them out of the platform. It accordingly contradicts platform-owners' goal to expand the number of active users on the market-organization they govern:

« if there are two users doing the same thing, at the same time, on the same journey, people contact the one with ratings... and finally there is not even one request which is sent to the user who has no comments [...] it's a massive challenge » - Crowdshipping3

4.1.3. Platform-owners' will to influence their users' (de)coupling behaviors

Even if some platform-owners precisely consider that they don't "*need to explain what five-stars ratings mean*" (Flight-sharing1) because their users are strongly accustomed to rely on those ratings and reviews to differentiate potential interlocutors, the vast majority of them acknowledge that they are trying to influence their users' use of those devices (even if they want to influence this use in quite opposite directions, however).

First and foremost, platform-owners that struggle to gather their first evaluated users aim at gathering users who can dispense with relying on ratings and reviews in their decision-making, and who could accordingly leave first few positive ratings and reviews in the

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community. They would like to induce "decoupling" toward this specific commensuration practice, within their community of users:

> "we would like to gather users that could "play the game", who know that there are not many offers, who publish adds, who answer requests [even without evaluation]" (Services-Exchange4)

Platform-owners of market-organizations that already gather few evaluated users aim at making their users to less heavily rely on ratings and reviews in their decision-making. Overall, they would like the ratings and review system to deter enough their users do adopt harmful behaviors, but they would also like users not to focus that much on ratings and reviews in their decision-making to enter in transaction. They would like to instill "loose coupling" toward this commensuration practice, within their users:

> "We leave people writing comments, give the star-ratings, it provides something as an overview, but we do not want to know very precisely what happens […] For us rating and reviews should constitute more a "pledge" for trust, it is more to say "hey, he has already completed transactions" rather than "is it a member who behaves like that when he exchanges" (Accomodation-sharing1)

Ultimately, platform-owners who deplore users "*self-censorship*", that impeach the whole community to rely on ratings and reviews for achieving commensuration would like to influence their users for them to more tightly couple their practices with the "*myth*" (i.e. that two users who completed a transaction together leave public feedbacks about their exchange, so as other members build on those feedbacks to discriminate between future potential interlocutors. Those platform-owners wish their users to use the decentralized evaluation not to solely discriminate between safe and unsafe users, but rather to use it to "*find the best journey*" (BlaBaCar's website), selecting precisely who they want to transact with, by precisely and carefully reading the detailed comments and ratings that users would have exchanged. It's not a question of being safe anymore: users are encouraged to "*exceed expectations*", in order to receive 5-stars and glowing comments (Vehiculesharing1's website). Platform owners are considering inducing "tight coupling" among their users.

4.2. HOW PLATFORM-OWNERS ORIENT (DE)COUPLING BEHAVIORS WITHIN THEIR COMMUNITY OF USERS

In the following section, we explain that platform-owners and/or manager attempt to influence their users' (de)coupling behaviors, either (1) by exerting their episodic power over a personal and offline network, or (2) by manipulating the value of ratings and reviews in the

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"commensurability" of users' demands or requests. Relevant verbatims supporting our claims are provided in Table 3.

4.2.1. Platform-owners who want to induce decoupling rely on direct influence

Platform-owners who want to induce decoupling attempt to build on their own networks of relationships and/or on the offline community they personally belong to, in order to initiate the first transactions on the platform. For instance, they can connect friends and family members, as well as link pilots and pilots-aspirants from the aeroclub they belong to, or they can even carry out (many) transactions by themselves or with relatives. Then, they build on this local network (which constitutes a first community of users over which they can give explicit recommendations about what to do with the evaluation system, for instance) to make their first users transact while only symbolically using the ratings and reviews system, namely (1) without relying on the ratings and review system's outcome in their decision-making and also (2) in leaving only positive ratings and reviews after their transactions. Despite platform-owners and/or managers' prudence, if a transaction goes badly and if users finally exchange negative ratings and reviews, platform-owners may directly phone or meet the protagonists, to ask them the permission to remove their negative ratings and reviews, the latter "penalizing everyone", or even to urge them to do so.

> "So far…only few transactions have been completed through the platform... consequently we do some "test" transactions with people that we know personally"
>
> (Accomodation-sharing3)

4.2.2. Platform-owners who want to induce loose coupling de-valorize the use of ratings and reviews for the commensuration of users' demands and requests

Platform-owners who want to induce loose coupling attempt to indirectly influence their users' use of the ratings and review system, in a different way. Since their communities of users have expanded beyond their network of direct influence, they attempt to orient users' use of the ratings and review system by influencing the value of ratings and reviews in the commensurability of users' demands or requests. To do so, they manipulate (1) the scope of the demands or requests of users that the platform put into relationships (i.e. which demands or requests of which users those platform-owners allow "to compete" with which others, within the marketplace they govern) and (2) the way users can express sameness and difference between those demands or requests on the platform.

To narrow the scope of users and of demands or requests which are put into relationships in the results pages, those platform owners can for instance rely on users' geo-location data: they can indeed restrict users' capacity to transact with users who are located over a certain distance from the requesting ones, whatever their respective ratings and reviews. They can also restrict users' capacity to respond to certain demands, based on those users' declared skills. Doing so, they attempt mitigating the value of ratings and reviews' in users' practices of commensuration:

> " [the fact that evaluated users polarize transactions] that's why now, we have decided to "hide" part of our users, that why on the results page we only show the two who are the closest to the request, based on their geo-location. We only propose the two users who are the closest to your geo-location. It is not like everyone who can appear anymore... well, the awesome guy, who has 300 ratings and reviews, which are all great, and well if he's not located in your street you will not be able to choose him" - Services-Exchange3

Many of the platform-owners who noticed the polarization of transactions also implement alternative certification systems (for instance: certification systems sanctioning the check of ID documents, certification sanctioning the check of safety elements onboard for registered boats, certification sanctioning the check of proof residency, link to Facebook profiles, etc.) and they display those alternative certifications on users' profiles that appear in results pages. Doing so, they provide users with competing elements to express sameness and differences between potential interlocutors, in order to alleviate the weight of ratings and reviews in users' decision-making. Some of them actively promote the use of those alternative certification systems, for instance imposing new users to submit to those certifications systems in order to be finally granted access to the platform.

> "We have launched something to… differentiate from our main competitor: it is the certification of the ads. It consists in …going to meet the owners of the boats and to say to them "all right, we want to check your security equipment otherwise, we do not want to provide you with insurance for the rental of the users who come to rent your boats" – Boat-sharing1

4.2.3. Platform-owners who want to induce tight coupling valorize the value of ratings and reviews in users' commensurability
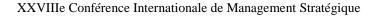
On the contrary, platform-owners who want to induce tight coupling within their community of users attempt to make their users more tightly couple their practices with the "myth" To do so, they influence and/or manipulate: (1) the categories of users and related demands or requests which are put into relationships and (2) the accuracy of information given in the evaluation.

In the first case they create special categories of users, mainly based on the number and the content of the ratings and reviews they received. Carpooling1 for instance implemented special categories of users (with five different levels and labels: "Beginners", "Intermediate", "Experienced", "Expert", and "Ambassadors"), with criteria for categorization largely related to received ratings and reviews : what differentiates an "expert" user from an "ambassador" one, is that the latter is required to be registered on the platform for at least 12 months, with at least 12 ratings (90% of them being positive, at least), whereas the other is required to be registered on the platform for at least 6 months, with at least 6 ratings (and at least 80% positive ones). Those labels are displayed on profile pages of users who publish an add for a journey or who request a ride.

Platform-owners can incentivize users to focus on the category they belong to, by granting them access to financial or organizational benefits based on their category. Hence, depending on the category they belong to, Carpooling1's users are granted access to special leasing formulas on certain cars with discounted prices. If they are categorized as Experienced, Expert, or Ambassadors, they are also provided with special vouchers for car checks in partners' garages. Thus, Carpooling1 provides its users with advices to raise their categories, encouraging them to provide ratings and reviews to the users they transacted with: "the best way to get ratings is to travel often and always leave them for other members: 75% of members who receive a rating leave one in return ». Other platforms implementing similar categorizations based on received ratings and reviews, reward their best users with direct financial benefits, such as a reduction of commission percentage.

In order to achieve their goal, those platform-owners can also play on the scope and the reliability of the information encapsulated in the ratings and reviews. so as to consolidate or increase ratings and reviews weight in users' decision-making. Thinking about enlarging the scope of the information contained in the ratings and reviews, several platform-owners explain that their users are allowed to cancel a transaction at the very last moment, and that this behavior is not visible in the ratings and reviews (since users can evaluate a transaction only when they fully completed one). Those platform-owners are thus considering incorporating automatic reviews on users' profile, for signaling those kinds of behaviors. Several platform-owners also implemented double-blind ratings and reviews: with the aim to mitigate positive bias of reviews and provide more accurate details on the transaction that has been completed.

"Recently, two-way ratings were introduced, whereby when a member receives a rating, it's undisclosed until they leave one in return. This process allows members to leave a completely honest rating, because they know the other member can't leave a negative rating as revenge, in response. It therefore improves the overall accuracy of ratings" (Carpooling1's archival data)

5. DISCUSSION

Our empirical account of how platform-owners and/or managers implement ratings and reviews system in their infrastructure as an institutional requirement but yet attempt to orient the use their users' have of it, elucidates some of the mechanisms through which platform-owners and/or managers orient (de)coupling behaviors of their infrastructure users, and doing so, how they govern market-organizations. They do so notably when exerting a relational-focused episodic power, or when manipulating the value of the commensurability of users demands and requests. We discuss below the theoretical implications of these findings and suggest areas for future research.

5.1. IMPLICATIONS FOR NEO-INSTITUTIONAL THEORY

Our findings first contribute to neo-institutional theory by enriching the current neo-institutional understanding of platform-based organizations and in particular, by providing insights on the possibilities for platform-owner to orient users' (de)coupling behaviors. Through this study, we thus attempt to provide partial answer to the question raised by Hinings et al. (2018) when they interrogate on "*how do organizations operate a crowd-based platform* » (p. 7), in their overall call to mobilize neo-institutional concepts for looking at new organizational forms.

Neo-institutional scholars used to approach decoupling (one of the core concepts of neo-institutional theory ; Boxenbaum & Jonsson, 2008) through the sole prism of traditional hierarchical organizations (Tolbert & Zucker, 1983) whereas those traditional hierarchical organizations are precisely themselves institutionalized schemes for achieving collective action. Underlying their theoretical developments was thus the conception of traditional managers "*episodic power*": for instance they broadly considered « *powerful individuals* » (Pache & Santos, 2010) capabilities to induce decoupling or coupling in their organization through direct « *influence* » or « *force* », such as dependence relationships or legal prerogatives (Lawrence, 2008). Accordingly, platform-owners' role for neo-institutional scholars seemed theoretically bounded to the adoption or non adoption of formal elements of structure, possibly induced by their environment, or to the control over users' access or users'

use of their infrastructure. With this study, we rely on the conceptualization of platform-organization as a set of evaluative infrastructure provided by a platform-owner to a community of users, for them to transact in a non-hierarchical way (Kornberger et al., 2017; Mair & Reischauer, 2017) and we accordingly bring to neo-institutional theory a « *commensuration-related* » facet of episodic power for platform-owner. Indeed, when platform-owners cannot anymore rely on traditional relational-focused episodic power (users of the infrastructure stepping out of platform-owners personal network of relationships), so that they cannot anymore directly « tell them what to do »(Rietveld, Seamans, & Meggiorin, 2018) we explain that they can still orient users behaviors, by manipulating how users services and products are constituted as exchangeable on the digital marketplace infrastructure they operate, and particularly in our case, by manipulating the value of a judgement device's outcomes in users' demands or requests. With this study, finally, we also point out that traditional relational-focused episodic power that neo-institutional scholars traditionnaly account for or underlying refer to still matter for platform-owners : indeed, we explain that some platform-owner induce decoupling in market-organization building on their personal network of acquaintances, over which they can have direct influence, urging them to decouple for instance.

5.2. IMPLICATIONS FOR COMMENSURATION LITERATURE

Our findings then also contribute to literature dedicated to commensuration: by conceptualizing the incorporation of a particular judgement device on platform-based organization as an institutional requirement and by analyzing related platform-owners' attempt to orient users' (de)coupling behavior, our analysis point out at possibilities for the organizational member to internally *valorize* or *de-valorize* the use of a particular judgement device (Karpik, 2010; Vatin, 2013) whose use seems "*natural*" for all concerned parties, in the field (Espeland & Stevens, 1998).

Literature on the commensuration has devoted great attention to the pervasive and constitutive effects of judgement devices - detailing power relations at stake, social processes and cognitive mechanisms through which the latter come to constitute value of things in bounded organizational fields (Espeland & Sauder, 2007; Espeland & Stevens, 1998; Giamporcaro & Gond, 2016; Orlikowski & Scott, 2014). Somehow, if scholars accounted for the effects produced by institutionalized judgement devices and explained that organizations could either strategically internalize, game or impose the use of particular judgement devices (Kornberger,

2017) the process through which they could achieve to do so was quite overlooked. In this study, we document then how platform-owners manipulate (1) the categories of users which are put into relationships through the valuation device (2) the possibility for users to express sameness and differences through the valuation device and the (3) information conveyed through these valuation device, in order to *valorize* to *de-valorize* the use of this judgement device in their users' commensuration processes. Doing so, we contribute to elucidate how the introduction of a judgement device can become effective. By accounting for the valorization or de-valorization of a judgement device, we thus subscribe to the idea that if commensurability is produced in practices (Kornberger, 2017) notably through the use of judgement devices, we also need to consider how those devices are constituted as valuable, in practices.

5.3. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE LITERATURE ON PLATFORM-BASED ORGANIZATION

Through this article, finally, we answer recurrent calls to mobilize neo-institutional concepts to engage with new forms of organizing (Hinings et al., 2018; Meyer & Höllerer, 2014) and we thus contribute to the burgeoning literature on platform-based organizations (Acquier, Daudigeos, et al., 2017; Casprini, Di Minin, & Paraboschi, 2018; Laamanen et al., 2018; Mair & Reischauer, 2017; Reischauer & Mair, 2018; Täuscher & Laudien, 2018). In particular, while most studies look at ratings and review systems of platforms either with a (more or less) implicit functional perspective (those systems solving situations of information asymmetry among users; Dellarocas, 2003, providing a monitoring tool over those users for platform-owners ; Reischauer & Mair, 2018, or constituting an exit barrier for already evaluated users; Casprini et al., 2018) or in conceptualizing them as apparatuses of control (Rosenblat & Stark, 2016), we develop here another point of view. We propose thus to envisage the socially constructed nature of the value of this judgement device in users' decision-making.

Doing so, we enrich our current understanding of platform-owner governance of platform-based organization (Reischauer & Mair, 2018). Even if incorporating a rating and review system on the infrastructure they provide might not constitute a strategic decision but an institutional requirement for platform-owners, the latter however succeed to strategically govern the encounter between their users and this decentralized evaluation system: platform-owners and/or manager govern through valuation practices (Kornberger, 2017). Those platform-owners notably organize this encounter (1) when using direct influence over users they can exert episodic power on or (2) when internally constituting decentralized evaluation

system's outcome as more or less valuable elements to scrutinize and discriminate between users' requests and demands, i.e. when manipulating the mechanisms that literature on commensuration brings to the fore (Espeland & Stevens, 1998).

Ultimately, if for traditional organizations, adopting valuation practices' lenses implies to understand competition between organizations as "*struggling over the authority and legitimacy of valuation practices*" (Kornberger, 2017) for sharing-economy market-organizations and their owners, we rather suggest to understand competition as struggling over the valuation of specific elements of evaluative infrastructures (Kornberger et al., 2017). Taking this perspective then, "*reputation*" constituted by decentralized evaluation systems is not anymore "*an exogenous « object » that* [platform-owners of the sharing-economy] *try to capture or account for*"(Kornberger, 2017). On the contrary, even if they are requested to incorporate this "reputation" system on their infrastructure, those organizations could still actively participate in defining "*what reputation is, what it means, how to attain it, how to act on it* ». (p.16-17).

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Tables

Table 1 – Final set of studied sharing-economy market-organizations

Organization	Type of peer-to-peer transactions they organize	Respondents
Accomodation-sharing1	P2P Accomodation	1 Country Manager 1 Communication Manager
Accomodation-sharing2	P2P Camping	1 Co-founder
Accomodation-sharing3	P2P Outdoor areas sharing	1 Co-founder
Accomodation-sharing4	P2P Working spaces sharin	1 Co-founder
Boat-sharing1	P2P Boat rental	1 Co-founder
Carpooling1	P2P Carpooling	1 Manager dedicated to Members Relations 1 Member of Customer Support Department
Co-browing1	P2P Co-browsing	1 Co-founder
Crowdshipping1	P2P Crowdshipping	1 Co-founder
Crowdshipping2	P2P Crowdshipping	1 Co-founder
Crowshipping3	P2P Crowdshipping	1 Co-founder
Entairtainement-sharing1	P2P Experience sharing	1 Co-founder
Flight-sharing1	P2P Flight-sharing	The founder
Flight-sharing2	P2P Flight-sharing	1 Co-founder
Meal-sharing1	P2P Meals sharing	1 Co-founder
Services-exchange1	P2P Jobbing	3 Business Analysts
Services-exchange2	P2P Jobbing	The founder
Services-exchange3	P2P Jobbing	The 2 co-founders
Services-exchange4	P2P Jobbing	The founder
Services-exchange5	P2P Jobbing	1 Co-founder
Services-exchange6	P2P Jobbing	1 Co-founder
Vehiculesharing1	P2P Car-sharing	1 Traffic Manager
Vehiculesharing2	P2P Campingcars-sharing	1 Co-founder

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Table 2 – Three analytical organizational categories

A shared myth	Consequences of users' use of the ratings and review system	Evaluation practices supported by platforms' owners	Organizational stance in the field
An institutional requirement « *I think that we have reached a point where we have no choice any more. At the beginning, it surely would have been interesting to have a debate [on the fact to incorporate or not an evaluation system into the digital infrastructure], but now it is done to death, it has become a norm, truly. Everyone puts a system for ratings and reviews. It's quite impossible to imagine that a sharing-economy platform does not have that. It's unimaginable not to work on it for platform-owners* » (Crowdshipping3)	Since there is no evaluated users, potential users run away "*when you have zero evaluation at the beginning... It is very difficult, users are all at level 0* […] *And since there is nothing that exists, today, apart from evaluation, it is very complicated*" (Services-Exchange5)	They wish to induce decoupling within their community of users "*Because we want the first transactions to go smoothly [...] so basically, they exchange* [artificially] *positive reviews and that's our objective in fact*" (Accomodation-sharing3)	Organizational stance 1
	First evaluated users centralize transactions "*She is one of our first users, she is one of the first who received... like 45 reviews on the app ... you can be sure that... if she indicates that she has some time slots available, within an hour, she has at least 10 requests*" (Services-Exchange3)	They wish to induce loose coupling within their community of users "*The purpose of reviews, for us, is twofold, binary: either to tell the community that this user is a good user, either to tell that "this user is to be avoided*" (Co-browing1)	Organizational stance 2
	Users cannot rely on the ratings and review system to find the best interlocutor because reviews are biased or uncomplete « *a problem is that when transactions went wrong, most users still hesitate to publish negative reviews* » (Vehiculesharing1)	They wish to induce tight coupling within their community of users "*the best possible situation would be... when you can see profiles all around you, and* [thanks to the ratings and reviews] *you can pick-up just the right person, who will supply the perfect service, with whom you will get along*» (Services-Exchange1)	Organizational stance 3

Table 3 – Table of verbatims and empirical material

First-order codes	Verbatims (Organization/source)
Directly asking users from the local network of influence to publish positive ratings and reviews or to remove negative ones	"At the begining, one user in fact screwed up […] I managed to phone the client, and to say him "ok can we remove his comment because it is very detrimental for him?" He accepted finally". (Services-Exchange3 - verbatim) « [Having few evaluated users] it could be a barrier but ... I think you can manage to cope with that, by recruiting people, by making them make transactions to collect ratings » (Services-Exchange6 – verbatim)
Reassuring users from the local network of influence of another user's goodwill	"At the beginning you phone directly the users, telling them: this user has applied to your request, he is very good, we know him, we met him at our place, please do not hesitate to accept him" (Services-Exchange5 - verbatim) " we ask users to invite friends, friends of friends to organize a transaction and we have a photographer, he comes to make pictures of this moment" (Meal-sharing1 - verbatim)
Asking users from the local network of influence to perform transactions without relying on evaluation in their decision-making	"In fact, when we launched the website we had something like 50 users. It was maily... our friends and our family ... Well, when you have to start a community.... And today we have more than 30,000 users" (Meal-sharing1 - verbatim) "at the beginning, when we did not have many users on the platform, we had the tendency to put always put our own adds in the locations where there was nobody available, and I think for example of [one founder]'s girlfriend, who has completed in the first 2 or 3 weeks, a lot of transactions" (Services-Exchange3 - verbatim)
Narrowing the geographical or the skill scope of the users who can answer the demands or requests published	"We have developed an alternative matching system. In the results page, we bring to the fore the few proposals of the users who...compared to what you are looking for... I mean we push the profiles that will best suit you. It will not be necessarily the ones with many ratings and reviews: we push the ones who have the skills you are looking for ... the ones who answer in times, the one who is also the closest" (Services-Exchange5 - verbatim)
Implementing and boosting the use of other types of certifications	"We allow our users to ask their relatives to write "recommendations" for them, for example. We did this so that people ... who ... have not rating could still have something" (Crowdshipping3 - verbatim) "We have created "trust badges". So if you have checked your ID, if you provided your proof of residency ... these badges of trust we provide, they tell the other users: this user has shown he has clean hands, he activated several trust badges. It is a very useful tool to increase the overall trust on the platform"(Services-Exchange5 - verbatim)
Creating special categories devoted to users, based on their ratings and reviews, with financial or organizational advantages	"[Users-status] are users that meet specific trust and security criteria and who are the most active on the platform. We make them stand out with this special status visible on their profiles [...] The program also aims to reward those users by bringing to the foreground their profiles of high quality" (Services-Exchange1's archival data)
Thinking about integrating "no-show" in ratings and reviews	"unfortunately, today, you can only evaluate the transaction if you actually completed the transaction. And in fact there is a behavior which is... very negative, we call it the "no-show". Tow users book a transaction, but one does not show up at the rendez-vous. Tre transaction is canceled, but you cannot leave a feedback" (Services-Exchange1 - verbatim)
Implementing double-blind evaluation	"To make sure your review is objective, it can't be seen by the driver or publicly viewed until the driver has submitted their review of you" (Vehiculesharing1's archival data)

Appendix

Appendix 1 Description of the main data sources

Data Source	Description
French event dedicated to the sharing-economy	We attended a France national-level event dedicated to sharing-economy market-organizations. Share Paris took place in September 2017 and self-designates as "*French first public event dedicated to sharing and collaborative economy*" (www.shareparis.com). Doing so, we met many sharing-economy market-organization owners, we conducted informal interviews and we attended to several conferences dedicated to sharing-economy market organizations issues in France.
Studies dedicated to the sharing-economy in France	We gathered and compiled studies from OuiShare (a France-based think-tank dedicated to the sharing-economy) ADEME (the French Environment and Energy Management Agency) PIPAME (the French Interministerial Economic Change Forward-Planning and Forecasting Unit) as well as from the European Commission and the U.S. Federal Trade Commission.
Interviews with platform-owners of platform-managers	Overall, we conducted 5 open-ended and 22 semi-structured interviews with platform-owners and/or platform-managers of 22 sharing-economy market-organizations operating in France.
Archival data from market-organizations websites	We gathered records of sharing-economy market-organizations we studied, such as web-pages texts explaining how to use the ratings and review systems, FAQ dedicated to reviews, and reports on ratings and review systems produced by those sharing-economy-market-organizations.

Figure

Figure 1. Data- structure of the second stage of analysis

- Directly asking users from the personnal network to publish positive ratings and reviews
- Directly asking users from the personnal network to remove negative ones

Encouraging users from the personnal network to perform symbolic evaluation

- Reassuring users from the personnal network of influence of another user's goodwill
- Asking users from the personnal network of influence to perform transactions without relying on evaluation in their decision-making

Encouraging users from the personnal network of influence not to rely on evaluation in their decision making

Inducing decoupling through direct influence

- Narrowing the geographical scope of the users who can answer the adds published
- Narrowing the skills scope of the users who can answer the adds published

Narrowing the categories of the users who can compete

- Implementing and boosting the use of other types of certifications
- Encouraging users to fill their profile page

Diversifying users' possibilites to perceive sameness and differences

Inducing loose coupling by de-valorizing the value of ratings and reviews in commensurability

- Creating special categories devoted to users, based on their ratings and reviews, with financial or organizational advantages

Creating users' categories based on received ratings and reviews

- Thinking about integrating "no-show" in ratings and reviews

Extending the scope of the informationreduced in ratings and reviews

Inducing tight coupling by valorizing the value of ratings and reviews in commensurability

- Implementing double-blind evaluation

Strenghtening the certainty of the information encapsulated in ratings and reviews

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