



Universiteit  
Leiden  
The Netherlands

## **The emergence of democratic firms in the platform economy: drivers, obstacles, and the path ahead**

Mannan, M.

### **Citation**

Mannan, M. (2022, February 15). *The emergence of democratic firms in the platform economy: drivers, obstacles, and the path ahead*. Meijers-reeks. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3278843>

Version: Publisher's Version

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3278843>

**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

### 1.1 TERMINOLOGY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The past decade has seen the rapid expansion of the ‘platform economy’. The platform economy is a capacious term defined by Montalban and colleagues as “economic activities where tangible or intangible resources are exchanged between providers and users by the way of centralised electronic platforms”.<sup>2</sup> The platform plays the dual role of being a tool to intermediate exchange, as well as a governance system operated by a private company. An increasing number of economic sectors are experiencing *platformisation* and there are online platforms operating on a planetary scale. While some have viewed this as a positive development, there is also a growing chorus of voices who are critical of the depredations of *platform capitalism*.

For its supporters, the opportunities that social media platforms have offered users to connect with others across the globe are unprecedented. Meanwhile, platform labour is valorised for offering a source of supplemental income with low barriers of entry, while also offering flexibility regarding when and where such work is done. For its detractors, social media and online labour platforms exacerbate the worst excesses of neoliberalism. The concentration of corporate power, dismantling of hard-won protections of standard employment, and the abuse of data extracted from users and workers are among a long list of charges levelled against the major companies operating in the platform economy.

A number of proposals have been made for platform regulation across jurisdictions, particularly within labour & employment law, privacy and consumer protection law, antitrust and competition law, and intermediary liability law.<sup>3</sup> However, the ownership and governance of the companies operating these online platforms have not received the same level of scrutiny. While their employment practices or personal data management may be criticized, the organisation of these platforms as capital-managed firms is taken as a given in contemporary capitalism. Yet, as these platform companies evolve beyond their original activities and take on a prominent role in global and planetary governance, it begins to feel as if there is no exit from

---

2 Matthieu Montalban, Vincent Frigant and Bernard Jullien, ‘Platform Economy as a New Form of Capitalism: A Régulationist Research Programme’ (2019) 43 Cambridge Journal of Economics 805, 807.

3 See chapter 1.2.2. below.

the platform. Even non-users are unable to escape Facebook's social graph or Uber's gaze, as these companies are still able to track those who are not on their platforms.

The platform economy cuts across a multitude of economic sectors – from high finance to care work – so it is necessary to indicate which sectors this dissertation concentrates on. As my interest in the topic began with researching the economic precarity and weakness of corporate accountability endemic to the platform economy, I decided to focus on labour platforms and social media platforms. A dilemma posed by this choice is providing a coherent framework through which these platforms, and their diverse challenges, can be compared and contrasted.

One useful categorization of platform labour is according to its geographic proximity – whether the work is done locally or can be done remotely – and the level of specialized qualifications required for such work. This leads to four types of platform labour: (1) local, low-qualification work (e.g., Uber, Deliveroo), (2) local, high-qualification work (e.g., freelance tutoring), (3) remote, low-qualification work (e.g., Amazon Mechanical Turk) and (4) remote, high-qualification work (e.g., UpWork).<sup>4</sup> The emphasis on qualifications is not intended to insinuate that some forms of platform labour, by their very nature, require less knowledge. Even with low entry barriers to certain types of platform labour, specialized knowledge is still valuable, such as deep familiarity with a city's traffic infrastructure.

However, for the purposes of this dissertation, I modify this typology to include 'prosumption' – activities where production and consumption are blurred. This is not only to account for the fact that work such as making stock photography, ride-hailing and food delivery often put to commercial use the goods that were bought for personal consumption, it also acknowledges new types of value contribution, such as social media use and electric car sharing. Hence, the modified typology encompasses the aforementioned examples of work but also includes remote, low-qualification prosumption, such as Twitter and Facebook use. Conversely, electric car sharing would be an example of local, low-qualification prosumption. The revamped typology would be: (1) local, low-qualification prosumption (e.g., Uber, Deliveroo, Helpling, Zipcar), (2) local, high-qualification prosumption (e.g., in-home tutoring, citizen oceanography<sup>5</sup>), (3) remote, low-qualification prosumption (e.g., Twitter use, Amazon Mechanical Turk, citizen archaeology), and (4) remote, high-qualification prosumption (e.g., UpWork). While prosumption provides a helpful heuristic for comparing these activi-

---

4 Heiner Heiland, 'Workers' Voice in Platform Labour: An Overview' (Hans-Böckler Stiftung 2020) 5.

5 See, e.g., Federico M Lauro and others, 'The Common Oceanographer: Crowdsourcing the Collection of Oceanographic Data' (2014) 12 PLoS Biology e1001947. Citizen oceanographers are recreational sailors with training in sailing and oceanographic data collection that use devices installed in their vessels to collect data each time they are out at sea.

ties, the legal analysis in the chapters of this dissertation does account for the fact that such activities may be regulated by multiple overlapping legal frameworks (e.g., labour law & data protection law).

The emergence of ‘democratic firms’ presents a promising, emancipatory alternative to corporate platforms by centring the redistribution of control and financial rights as a pathway towards improving platform governance. In the past, democratic firms have been defined as firms “where the people working in the firm are the residual claimants”.<sup>6</sup> As the platform economy notably blurs work and consumption, I draw on earlier research on multi-stakeholder ownership,<sup>7</sup> to provide a modified version of this definition. For the purposes of this dissertation, democratic firms are firms where the people contributing intellectual, social, financial and use value are residual claimants and, consequently, enjoy important control and financial rights in the firm. This includes contributions of labour, but also use of a business’s services. Such firms can include one non-investor stakeholder or several. Two central differences between a democratic firm and a capital-managed firm are the former’s use of democratic governance (e.g., one member, one vote, instead of one share, one vote) and their focus on being run for the benefit of their members who are actively and directly involved in their enterprise rather than *outside* investors.

Alongside the growth of the corporate platform economy, a small, but steadily growing, number of democratic firms have begun to emerge. They are a diverse group, including existing cooperatives who are building their presence in the platform economy to serve the needs of their members, new digitally-native cooperatives (a.k.a., platform cooperatives), community-owned platform companies, stakeholder-controlled trusts, and distributed organisations that redistribute ownership using the affordances of block-chain technology (e.g., decentralised autonomous organisations).

A recent interview of Cirenía Dominguez, one of the worker-owners and board members of Up&Go, a platform cooperative in the cleaning sector in New York City, described the difference in owning a cooperative compared to serving a corporate competitor:

“From one year to another year we’ve seen the growth. My personal income has increased by 20%. I can work less hours and make the same amount of money I used to make when I was working an entire day. Now I can save and think about the future.”<sup>8</sup>

---

6 David Ellerman, ‘The Democratic Firm: An Argument Based on Ordinary Jurisprudence’ (1999) 21 *Journal of Business Ethics* 111, 117.

7 Rory Ridley-Duff, ‘The Internationalisation of the FairShares Model: Where Agency Meets Structure in US and UK Company Law’ in Nina Boeger and Charlotte Villiers (eds), *Shaping the Corporate Landscape: Towards Corporate Reform and Enterprise Diversity* (Hart Publishing 2018) 313.

8 AROUNDTHEWORLD.coop and International Co-operative Alliance, *Up&Go* (2020) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OLD0BgHuaHQ>>. [translation from Spanish to English by the filmmakers.]

Elsewhere, and worlds apart, the technocratic and nominally independent Facebook Oversight Board has begun ruling on whether the removal of certain content on Facebook's platform amounts to a restriction of freedom of expression under international human rights standards,<sup>9</sup> and suggesting policy recommendations concerning the suspension of users who are also political leaders, such as former US President Donald Trump.<sup>10</sup>

These two vignettes are, of course, distinct. The former is a cooperative comprising 22 worker-owners, concerned with issues such as member pay and the usability of their platform, and the latter is an expert board that is funded by Facebook to deliver decisions and advice on content moderation that affects billions of social media users. Yet both vignettes speak to a shared, underlying aspiration: building a more socially equitable and democratically accountable platform economy, for the benefit of those who makes these platforms valuable by using them.

The onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic has given impetus to this aspiration and underscored why it is one that has to be urgently addressed. If this ambition is realised as part of an agenda to 'build back better', the frontline delivery workers who risked their health in delivering us food would share in the wealth that they generated for food delivery platforms. The ride-hailing drivers who take us where we need to go when public transport is absent or too crowded, would have say in setting the fares they charge and the functionality of the platform that is their source of work. The users of social media platforms, that are now essential sources of news and means of communication, would collectively determine how the revenue of these platforms is reinvested in new services and shape moderation policies and community values. In an economy that strives for broad-based ownership and governance, the Facebook Oversight Board would not be appointed by Facebook and existing board members, but rather the global user base in whose interest they serve.

There are numerous obstacles in the path towards realising this seemingly Panglossian vision. In spite of these challenges, there is much that can be done to translate this vision into reality. This will need a collective effort, not just by co-operators or policymakers, but also by academics, business advisers, and software developers. It will need the engagement of workers and users; to see past the inevitability of the capital-managed model and recognise that alternative models are possible.

However, until now, the creation of such democratic firms in the platform economy – and the obstacles thereto – has received limited attention. This is particularly true of the legal academy. The overarching research project of this dissertation is to contribute to filling this gap. It does so by investigating the following research question and sub-questions, in the context of the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Belgium, jurisdictions which have seen the rapid-rise of corporate

---

9 Facebook Oversight Board Case Decision 2021-004-FB-UA.

10 Facebook Oversight Board Case Decision 2021-001-FB-FBR.

platforms but have also experienced a counter-movement against such platforms.

These research questions are:

- ▷ How can the democratisation of capital-managed prosumption platforms ameliorate socio-economic concerns raised by platform capitalism, and how can this democratisation process be facilitated?
  - What are the main motivations for, and challenges to, the formation and governance of democratic firms as viable alternatives to capital-managed prosumption platforms?
  - How can the obstacles to the formation and governance of democratic firms be overcome?

The remainder of this introduction is devoted to limiting the scope of this dissertation, both in terms of what segments of the platform economy I will be exploring as well as in terms of how it fits amongst other research on platform regulation. Subsequently, I explain who I think my readers will be and why I chose to write a dissertation through publications, rather than as a monograph. The introduction closes with an overview of how the chapters of the dissertation are arranged.

## 1.2 LIMITATIONS OF SCOPE

### 1.2.1 Scope of Research on the Platform Economy

While ideas about the sectors where platform cooperatives can operate are as broad as the platform economy itself, this dissertation primarily focuses on specific type (1), (3) and (4) prosumption platforms outlined in the previous sub section. Type (2) platforms have been excluded altogether as it is a category that bears limited relevance in the broader discussion on the platform economy as such locally-based, highly-qualified workers are usually not dependent on platform intermediation.<sup>11</sup> With respect to type (1) platforms, particular attention is devoted to the ride-hailing, electric car sharing, food-delivery and on-demand cleaning sectors in chapters 2, 3, and 6. Short-term rental platforms, such as Airbnb, are sometimes considered to be within the ambit of such local, low-qualification prosumption,<sup>12</sup> but they are excluded from this dissertation as being a short-term landlord is typically a source of supplemental, rather than essential, income.

Turning to type (3) platforms, prosumption in the form of micro-blogging and social networking is studied in this dissertation. However, the completion of crowdwork or microtasks is excluded. Microtasks refer to tasks that

11 Heiland (n 4) 6.

12 Juliet B Schor and others, 'Dependence and Precarity in the Platform Economy' (2020) 49 *Theory and Society* 833, 843–844.

have broken down into small, online tasks that are completed by a ‘crowd’ of workers, with examples including image tagging, content moderation and video transcription.<sup>13</sup> This can be for remuneration or recreation. For instance, citizen archaeology can involve splitting up the analysis of a large set of archaeological data into individual tasks (e.g., evaluating satellite images, entering metadata or interpreting handwriting) that are distributed across a large number of persons and completed remotely from a field site.<sup>14</sup> This omission is deliberate as a platform cooperative for micro-taskers has yet to be formed, with attention being devoted towards enabling collective bargaining and co-determination in this sector.<sup>15</sup> Instead, in chapters 4 and 5, I assess how certain types of trusts and foundations could be deployed to enable a broad-based ownership of social media platforms that includes platform users. While the cases discussed in those chapters are for the management of certain types of social media, the arguments presented could be extended to research other globally distributed networks that are heterogeneous and experience a high-degree of rapid turnover, such as blockchain-based networks and crowdworkers.

Finally, type (4) prosumption is covered by this dissertation, particularly in chapter 3 when distinguishing local and remote forms of platform labour, in chapter 4 when building a case for a new type of start-up ‘exit’ for a corporate platform that fuses elements of social media and remote gig work, and in chapter 7 when discussing the use of blockchain technology to foster transnational cooperatives of highly-skilled workers. This choice was influenced by the fact that a host of platforms has emerged that organise highly-skilled, freelance workers and producers into member-owned businesses (e.g., Colony, Stocksy, dOrg).

## 1.2.2 Scope of Research on Platform Regulation and Governance

In the years since the aforementioned types of labour and social media platforms rose to prominence, a large number of regulatory options have been presented. Broadly speaking, the regulatory discourse for labour platforms has focused on: (1) doubling-down on the enforcement of existing labour and employment laws, (2) redefining and widening the concept of employment, (3) creating a third employment category between being self-employed and employed, (4) attaching more rights and protections to anyone who works, irrespective of employment status, and (5) reassessing the concept of platforms being employers.<sup>16</sup> Turning to the same discourse with respect to social media platforms, the “policy levers” that most scholars

---

13 Janine Berg and others, ‘Digital Labour Platforms and the Future of Work: Towards Decent Work in the Online World’ (International Labour Organization 2018) Report xv.

14 Monica L Smith, ‘Citizen Science in Archaeology’ (2014) 79 *American Antiquity* 749, 755.

15 Berg and others (n 13) 105–106.

16 Andrew Stewart and Jim Stanford, ‘Regulating Work in the Gig Economy: What Are the Options?’ (2017) 28 *The Economic and Labour Relations Review* 420, 429–431.



and policymakers have focused on are privacy and consumer protection laws, antitrust and competition laws, and intermediary liability laws.<sup>17</sup> The proposed ‘Digital Services Act’ in the European Union is a recent case in point that, among other things, seeks to improve the content moderation practices of large social media platforms by requiring them to remove flagged illegal content.<sup>18</sup> The specific approaches that have been favoured differ between jurisdictions, but the above provides a concise overview.

The scientific and social contribution of this dissertation is to complement and build on this discourse by making the ownership and governance of the companies that operate these platforms the focal point of analysis. I argue that the *democratisation* of ownership and governance will complement and reinforce the policy objectives pursued by the aforementioned regulatory approaches, including redressing workplace precarity, reducing abuses of market power and ensuring public accountability. In chapters 2.2, 3.1-3.2., 4.1.1., and 5.1.-5.2., an overview of these existing approaches to platform regulation is provided, along with a consideration of how the democratisation of these platforms can support these approaches. The literature and laws that are discussed primarily stem from the Global North, ranging from the United States of America to the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. While this literature has become voluminous during the course of writing this dissertation, the question of broad-based ownership and governance of platforms has received limited attention from lawyers anywhere. Indeed, some of the pathbreaking investigations on this topic were conducted outside of the structures of an academic environment, by free/open-source software advocates and digital ‘commoners’, reflected in an array of outputs, ranging from ‘free’ software to peer production software licenses to exhaustive reports. To the extent that this topic has been subject to academic scholarship, it has largely been the preserve of critical media scholars, sociologists, anthropologists, and a handful of computer scientists, heterodox economists and management researchers. The work of this diverse group is introduced throughout the chapters of this dissertation.

As a whole, this dissertation makes a three-fold contribution to the literature. First, it explores the extent to which democratic firms can ameliorate the socio-economic concerns raised by capital-managed online labour and social media platforms. Second, it unpacks the (socio-)legal obstacles that exist to the formation and governance of democratic firms in the platform economy. Third, it charts pathways towards making such firms more viable. To that effect, it examines the legal obstacles involved in the formation of, and transfer to, democratically owned and -managed firms, as well as the

---

17 Jack M Balkin, ‘How to Regulate (and Not Regulate) Social Media’ (Knight First Amendment Institute at Columbia University 2020) Essay <<https://bit.ly/3wcwzOf>>.

18 Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on a Single Market for Digital Services (Digital Services Act) and amending Directive 2000/31/EC, COM(2020) 825 final, Brussels, 15.12.2020, recitals 58, arts. 26-27(1)(a).



collective action problems that make the governance of such firms challenging. Decades of research evaluating employee ownership, stakeholder governance, bazaar governance and distributed technologies provided a rich seam of analysis to draw on for this purpose. As there is an absence of specific, enabling legal frameworks for democratic ownership of labour and social media platforms, inspiration for these pathways had to be 'borrowed' from across the globe, from the Employee Stock Ownership Plans (ESOPs) of the United States to the worker buyout legislation of Italy and France to the *keiretsu* and client councils of Japan and the Netherlands. At the same time, the legal uncertainty that pervades this fast-evolving field and the lack of a single exemplary enabling framework prevented the type of comparative, doctrinal research that is common in a legal dissertation. However, these powerful examples of business transfer and stakeholder governance mechanisms provide a foundation for creatively and productively thinking about how a new generation of democratic firms can be encouraged in the platform economy.

### 1.2.3 Readership

In view of the above, this dissertation can be said to fall within the intersection of organisational law, labour and employment law and science and technology studies. I use the term organisational law because it is broader than corporate/company law as conventionally understood, encompassing the bodies of law governing corporations/companies, partnerships, cooperatives, trusts and nonprofit organisations. While the term 'organisation' acknowledges the importance of legal structure and governance on this topic, this dissertation also draws upon other fields that have a bearing on the attractiveness, viability and survival of an organisation. This includes tax law, competition law and regulations conferring subsidies to certain organisations, ranging from awards given to certain innovative start-ups to preferential policies specified in public procurement regulations.

As the dissertation actively engages with the question of economic democracy,<sup>19</sup> its scope spills over into questions that are typically within the purview of labour and employment law. Indeed, several of the instrumental

---

19 Economic democracy is a contested term but broadly refers to the idea that "workers and citizens ought to possess control rights over the conditions of production in the economy as a whole" (Vrousalis, 259). While authors like Vrousalis equate economic democracy with socialism, David Ellerman dismisses Marxist socialism as a distraction and instead advances a definition of economic democracy as "universal self-employment". Though there is disagreement on whether the term entails, for example, the abolition of private property, both agree that workplace democracy is an important component of economic democracy. Workplace democracy is the idea that control and financial rights within a firm should be redistributed to a broader array of stakeholders, most notably rank-and-file workers. Nicholas Vrousalis, 'Workplace Democracy Implies Economic Democracy' (2019) 50 *Journal of Social Philosophy* 259, 259; David P Ellerman, *Property & Contract in Economics: The Case for Economic Democracy* (Blackwell Publishers 1992) 106, 113.

purposes of economic democracy is intended to give voice to workers on *inter alia* health and safety issues, worker turnover and transfer of undertakings, which may overlap with protections already extended to employees under European or national law (as the case may be). While this is alluded to, this dissertation also points out how ‘non-standard’ workers may fall through the gaps of these existing protections and, instead, may even find themselves on a collision course with certain legal norms, such as restraints on collective action by independent contractors. The focus on recalibrating ownership and governance is not only intended to give stakeholders such as non-standard workers and users ultimate control rights as a powerful form of voice, it is also intended to heighten organizational sensitivity to other issues that are of concern to these stakeholders – such as the management of their personal data.

From a normative standpoint, this dissertation supports the view that workers, regardless of employment status, are the ones in the best position to be involved in day-to-day decision-making and those dependent on a single corporation have more to lose from business failure than an average diversified shareholder,<sup>20</sup> but as a practical matter recognizes that private ordering mechanisms and legal reform is needed to achieve these norms. In other words, this dissertation highlights how industrial citizenship<sup>21</sup> – and the rights of voice that come along with it – is not only sourced directly from the state but can also be gained indirectly from the state through democratic organisations, such as cooperatives, and unincorporated associations, such as trade unions. Indeed, with the growing prominence of users as a distinct category of stakeholders that creates value for platform companies and is affected by its operations, an argument can be made that users too should be brought within the fold of broad-based, multi-stakeholder ownership.

Persons interested in the distribution of organizational control and accountability also find allies in the field of science and technology studies; a field that includes scholars concerned by the social and political implications of concentrating (market) power in certain tech companies and their opaque practices of data collection and use. This is a wide, politically heterogeneous group, involving researchers on algorithms, software, platforms, media, and digital geography. These researchers, some of whom are also

- 
- 20 This is predicated on the view that, firstly, shareholders of public companies only have nominal control and, secondly, that strengthening shareholders’ democracy would be chimeric as it is workers (in particular) who are governed by a company and not shareholders. In recent times, an additional factor has been the cost of shares, which make ‘real’ shareholder democracy increasingly inaccessible. Andrew R Timming, ‘The “Reach” of Employee Participation in Decision-Making: Exploring the Aristotelian Roots of Workplace Democracy’ (2015) 25 Human Resource Management Journal 382, 390; Carol Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory* (Cambridge University Press 1970); David Ellerman, *Democratic Worker-Owned Firm: A New Model for the East and West*. (Taylor & Francis 2016) 49–50.
- 21 Alejo José G Sison, ‘Aristotelian Citizenship and Corporate Citizenship: Who Is a Citizen of the Corporate Polis?’ (2011) 100 Journal of Business Ethics 3, 3.

activists, have greatly inspired this dissertation and their work is cited throughout the text, particularly with respect to P2P technologies, federated networks, protocols and digital commons.

I hope that this dissertation is a stimulating and informative read for persons interested in cooperatives and labour law, but also human resource management scholars, sociologists of work, heterodox economists, and political philosophers investigating autonomy and republicanism at the workplace. Most of all, regardless of background, it hopes to inspire its readers to think about a more equitable, just and democratic future of work and organization.

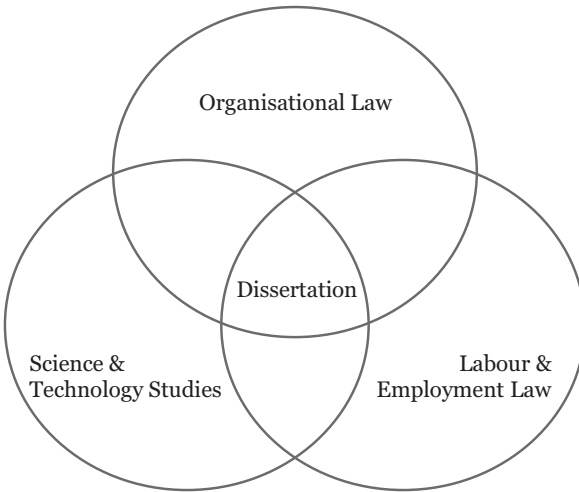


Figure 2: Potential Readership of this Dissertation

1.2.4 Writing a Dissertation through Publications

Writing a PhD dissertation through publications has its advantages and disadvantages. It requires each publication to make a distinct contribution and allows for the ideas expressed therein to reach a wide audience. At the time of writing, the article on which chapter 7 is based, has already been cited 17 times (Google Scholar) and my research collaboration with Nathan Schneider that resulted in the article on which chapter 4 is based has generated interest from media outlets including *WIRED*, *The Baffler* and *Noema*. Dgen, a Berlin-based think tank focused on the sustainable adoption of technology, also recently featured the research I conducted for chapters 6 and 7 as examples of how cooperatives could add blockchain to their technology stack and, conversely, how blockchain projects could benefit from cooperative structures.<sup>22</sup> This publicity has not only been personally

22 Joshua Davila, 'Decentralisation at Work: Cooperatives on the Blockchain' (*dGen Blog*, 27 May 2021) <<https://bit.ly/3AjEj4q>>.

gratifying, but it has also opened doors to interacting with movement builders in this space and policy makers. This has ranged from becoming a research fellow (now research affiliate) at the Institute for the Cooperative Digital Economy at The New School, led by the pioneer of platform cooperativism Dr. Trebor Scholz, to being invited to act as an expert on matters of cooperative law for the International Cooperative Alliance, the National Cooperative Business Association CLUSA International, and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. These opportunities, alongside the conferences, workers' gatherings and blockchain workshops I participated in, from New York City to Buenos Aires to Athens to Florence, all contributed immensely to my thinking on this subject and helped my research take a more practical, constructive turn. This can be seen in the policy-oriented research papers and reports that accompany the articles, book chapters and original contributions that comprise this dissertation. In that way, I hope that the research I began in 2017 can add in a meaningful way to the legal and policy frameworks that have very recently begun to emerge concerning platform cooperativism.

The main disadvantage of writing a dissertation through publications is that as your ideas evolve and mature, a disconnect may appear between the first publications you produce and the last. As research publications, they each have independent research questions/thesis statements and use differing research methodologies. Moreover, there is a risk that in a fast-moving area, a publication that appeared towards the beginning of one's PhD trajectory may age poorly. I believe that in this instance, the advantages outweigh the disadvantages, and I have taken steps to ensure the coherence and currency of the dissertation. For the purpose of preparing this manuscript, cross-referencing was included, so as to show how the chapters interrelate and substantiate an overarching, coherent research project. To the extent that some of the democratic firms or blockchain projects that were surveyed or studied in-depth underwent changes between the time of publication to the time they were included in the dissertation, I made updates to reflect and reconcile these developments. Research for this dissertation ended as of 1 July 2021.

The following section presents a concise overview of how the chapters of this dissertation are arranged.

### 1.3 ARRANGEMENT OF CHAPTERS

The overview below concisely sets out the main objective of each subsequent chapter and the research method used to pursue this research objective. A more detailed synopsis of the dissertation was presented in the Executive Summary, while the specific scientific and social contributions of the dissertation are discussed in chapter 8.

	Research Objective	Research Method
<b>Chapter 2</b>	Building Theory on the Emergence of Platform Cooperativism, a Prominent Type of Democratic Firm	Literature Review, Desk-Based Research of Registries and Databases, Socio-Legal Analysis
<b>Chapter 3</b>	Assessing Demand for Greater Control and Financial Rights in Platform Companies	Literature Review, Delphi Study
<b>Chapter 4</b>	Developing Strategies for Platforms to Democratisé Ownership and Control Through an Exit to Community	Literature Review, Legal Analysis
<b>Chapter 5</b>	Understanding the Drivers for, and Obstacles and Limitations to, the Representation of Social Media Users in Social Media Platforms. Suggesting how these Obstacles may be Overcome.	Literature Review, Legal Analysis
<b>Chapter 6</b>	Understanding the Drivers for, and Obstacles and Limitations to, the Creation and Governance of Urban Mobility Platform Cooperatives. Suggesting how these Obstacles may be Overcome.	Literature Review, Comparative Case Study, Interviews
<b>Chapter 7</b>	Understanding the Drivers for, and Obstacles and Limitations to, the Creation of High Qualification, Remote Worker Cooperatives. Suggesting how these Obstacles may be Overcome.	Literature Review, Case Study
<b>Chapter 8</b>	Conclusion	Evaluation and Conclusions
<b>Chapter 9</b>	'Legislative Benchmarking' Tool	Evaluation, Construction of a New Tool and Legal Analysis

*Overview: Arrangement of Chapters and Research Methods*