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On the tragedy of sharing (and the 'uberization' of the sharing economy)

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Mag. Katarzyna Gruszka, MA

Institute for Ecological Economics/RCE Vienna

WU Vienna University of Economics and Business



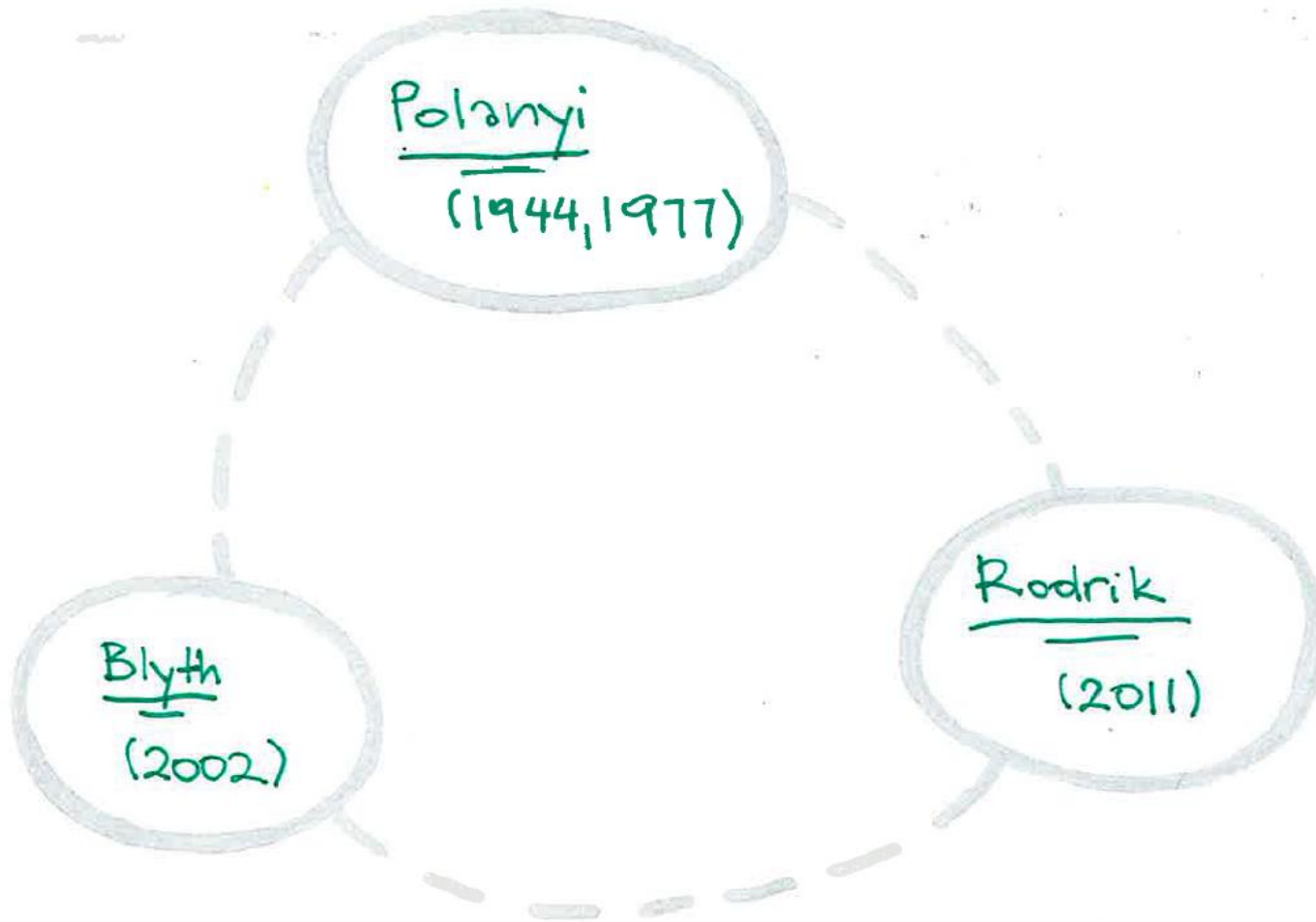
So what?

- How can we learn from these events?
- What can they tell us about contemporary capitalism(s), particularly in the context of expanding cyberspace of platform capitalism?
- What would Polanyi have to say about such developments?
- What contradictions and conflicts are at stake?
- What can we learn from specific discursive practices and (economic) ideas?

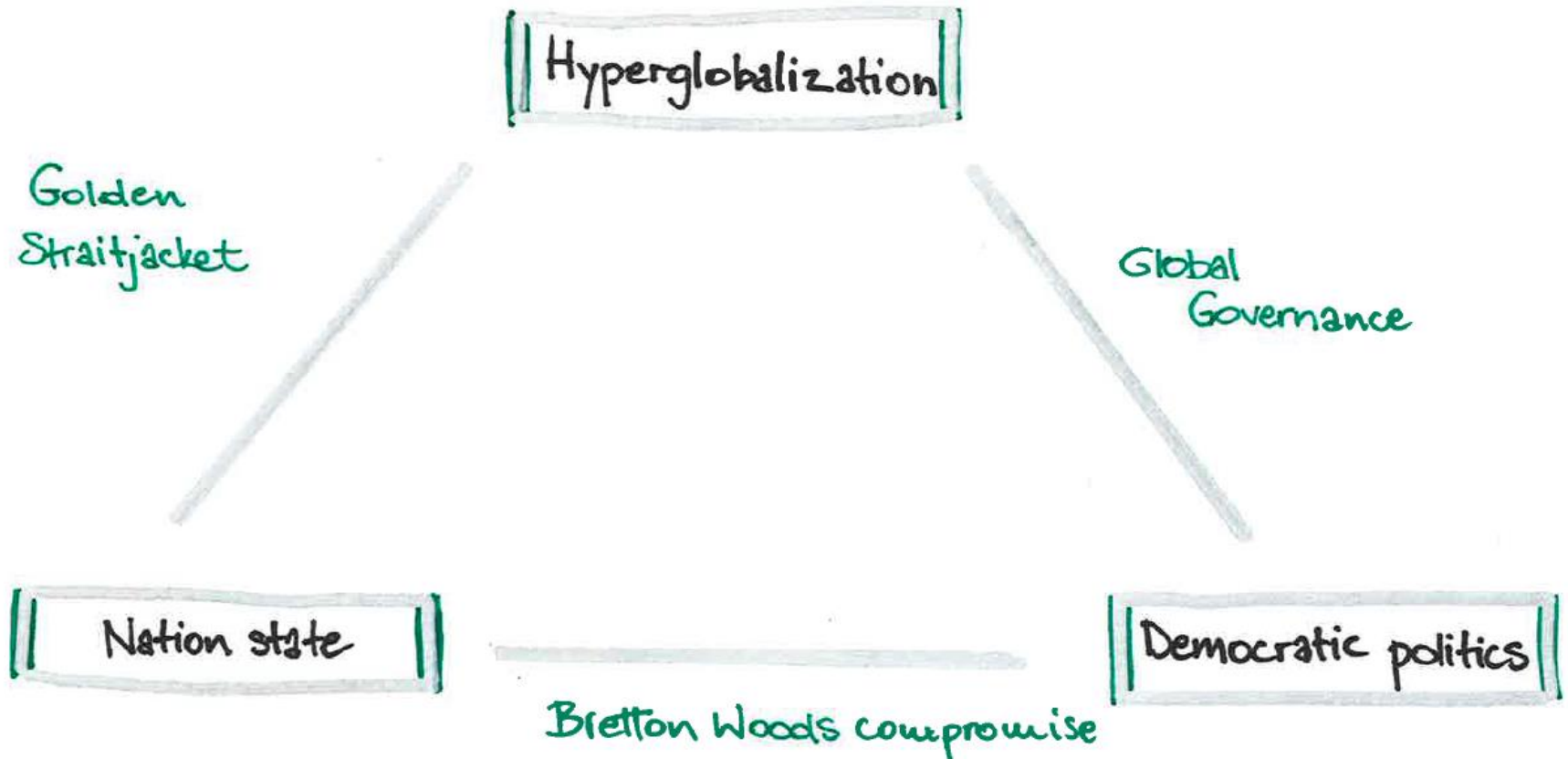
The plan

- 1) Theoretical lens (Polanyi, Rodrik, Blyth) → **in the process of being updated**
- 2) Platform capitalism & Co. (Srnicek, Bretton) → **in the process of becoming the update**
- 3) The sharing or collaborative economy – vision & issues
- 4) Uber's "French resistance"
- 5) Concluding remarks, open questions?

Theoretical lens



The political trilemma of the world economy (Rodrik, 2011)



Platform capitalism

(Srnicek 2017, Scholz 2016)

- Platform = a new type of firm; digital infrastructure that enable 2 or more groups to interact → intermediary function!
- Perfectly designed for data extraction and use! → DATA as the new gold; the centre of 21st century capitalism, the new „raw material“
- 5 types: advertising, cloud, product, industrial, lean
- Lean platform = minimum assets, maximum profit through cost reduction; e.g. UBER, Airbnb
- Network effects & monopolization of key importance!

The Stack



The Stack
| On Software
and Sovereignty

Benjamin H. Bratton

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The collaborative economy stands for...

...a range of digital platforms and offline activities centered on the highly contested concept of sharing (Schor, 2014)

THE Vision

- **Wide-spread empowerment and participation**
 - **Social connectedness**
 - **Resource efficiency**
 - **Access-over ownership, co-creation, collaboration**
 - **Decentralization and peer-to-peer boost**
 - **Saving money**
- 

Criticism - Empty promises

“The central theme of the critics is that for-profit platforms have coopted what began as a progressive, socially transformative idea” (Schor, 2014:9)

- Research on resource efficiency needed
- Rebound effect (e.g. boosting purchase power)
- Social connection questionable, often discriminatory
- Exploiting labor and dodging regulation
- Marketization and commodification

→ From a potential pathway to sustainability to a nightmarish form of neoliberalism (Martin 2016)

→ most relevant for Big Sharing (Cohen, 2016) or commercial framing of sharing (McLaren and Agyeman, 2015), e.g. UBER, TaskRabbit, Airbnb



haring?



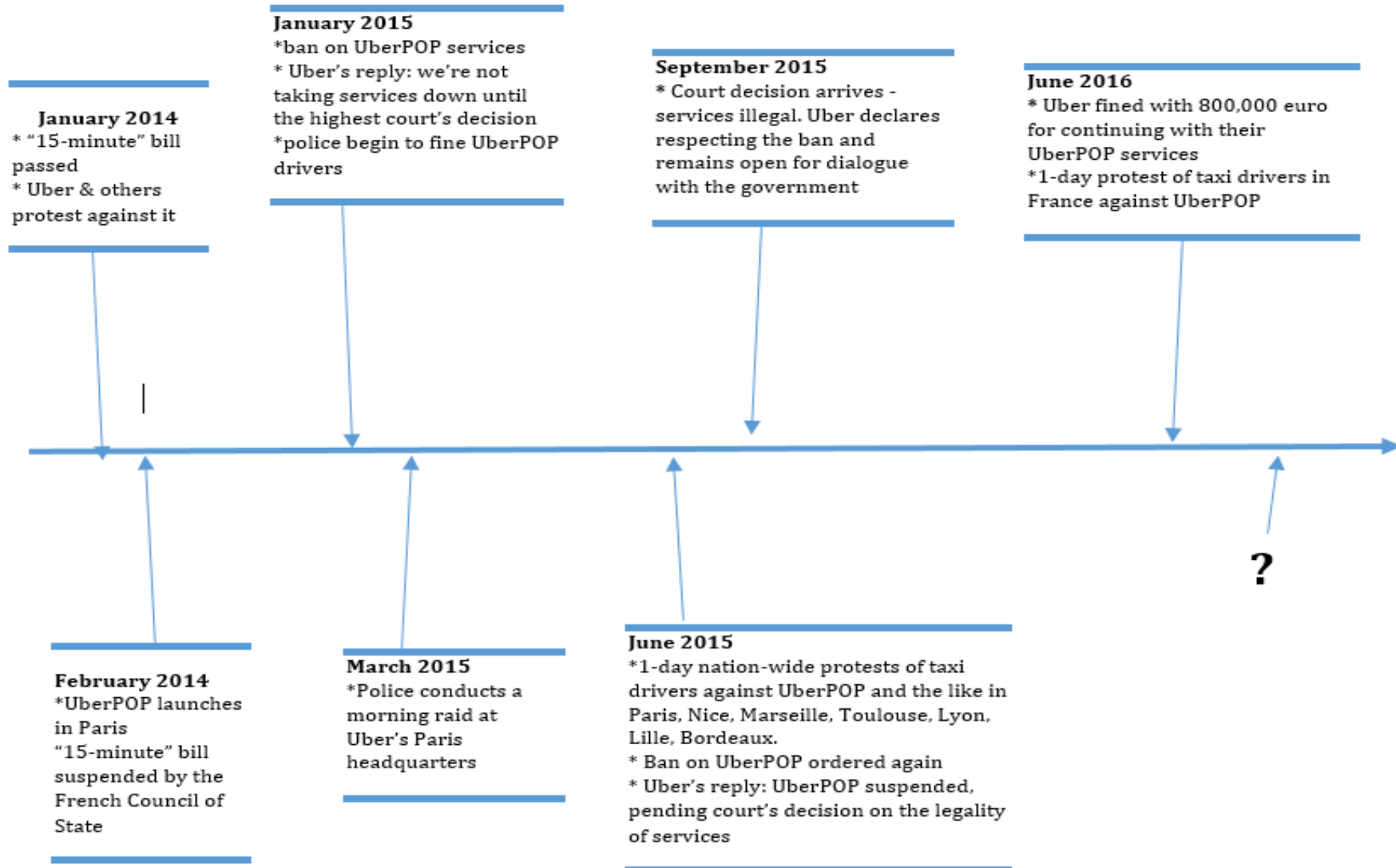
L'ÉCONOMIE COLLABORATIVE, C'EST FINI

ARTHUR DE GRAVE le 16 février 2016

Uber's "French Resistance"



Uber's "French Resistance" Timeline



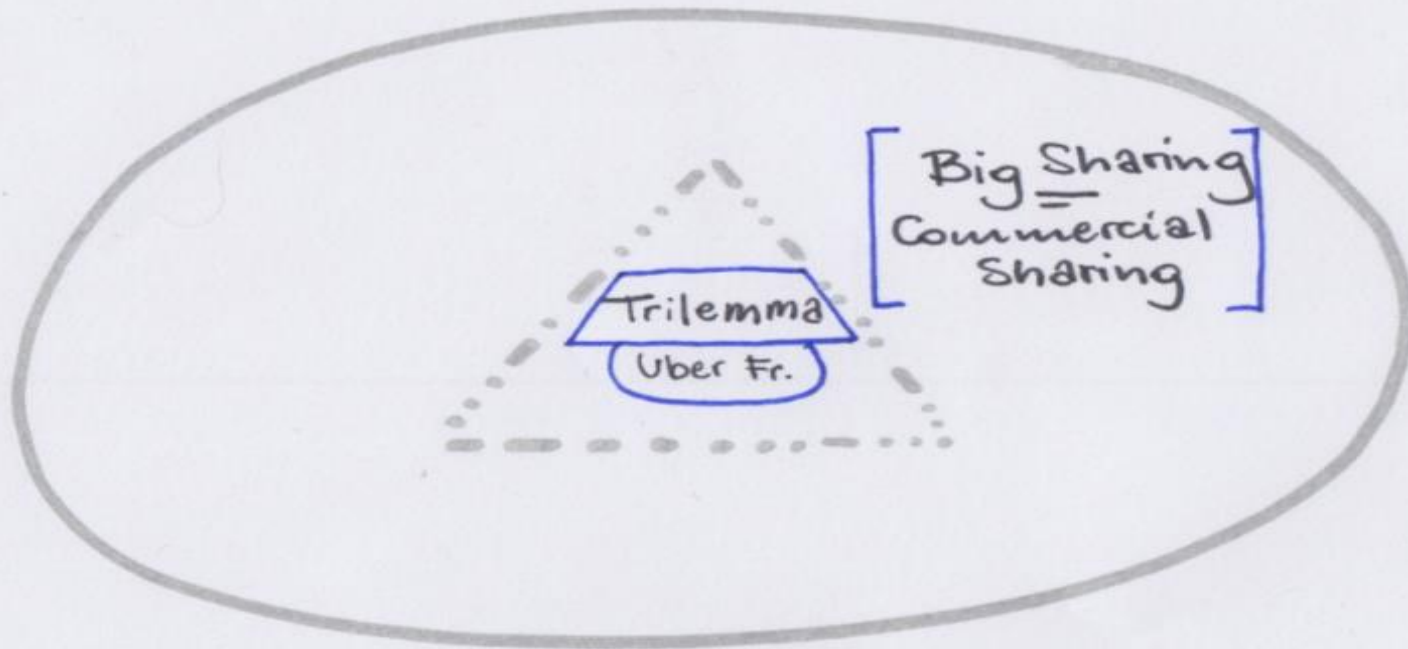
Theoretical lens

[Sharing Economy
Collaborative Economy]

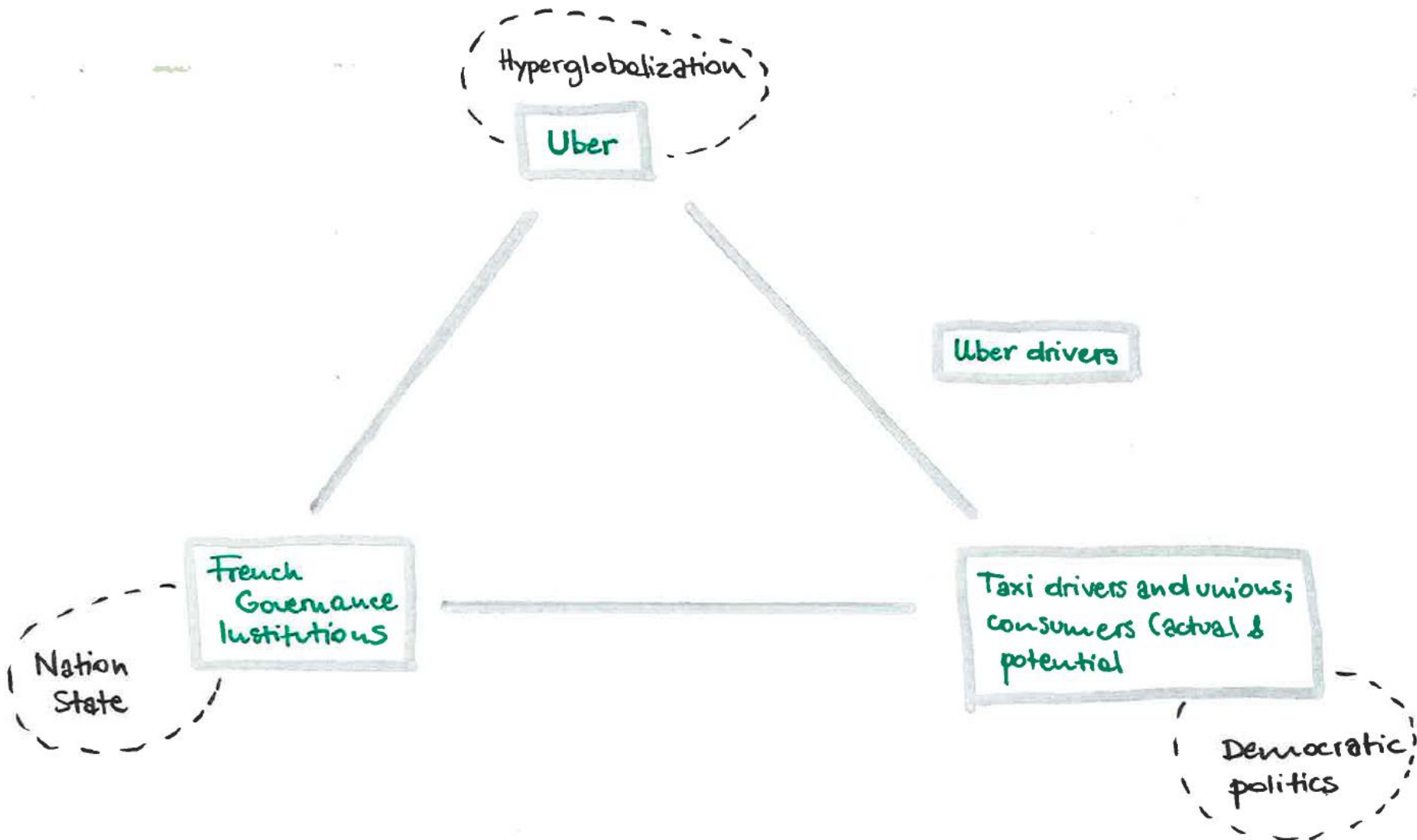
[Big Sharing
Commercial
Sharing]

Trilemma

Uber Fr.



Zoom in: the trilemma?



Questions, questions, questions...

- Why and how is something visionary coopted and commodified?
- What leads to dissolving of diversity, variety, or plurality in the face of isomorphism and monopolies? Are platforms invincible?
- How do specific ideas and discursive practices construct this “Silicon Valley” culture and reality?
- What methodologies can be used to explore such processes?
- What realistic space for intervention does nation state or other territorial units have here? How do we rethink governance in this reality?
- How would the discussions and dynamics look like if the mainstream would be based on the substantial meaning of the economic?

Thank you for your attention!



Comments/questions/feedback/tips?

kgruszka@wu.ac.at