
Sharing economy, an opportunity for the poorest?

An exploratory study

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COLOPHON

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rue Brederodestraat 21
1000 Brussels

AUTHORS

Agence Alter:
Nathalie Cobbaut
Barbara Gonzalez
Ria Goris
Julien Winkel

COORDINATION KING BAUDOUIIN FOUNDATION

Françoise Pissart
Pascale Taminiaux

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PREFACE

The concept of the sharing economy appears extremely broad, according to press reports, an increasing number of analyses, and inventories of this type of initiative; it concerns not only housing, work, transport and travel but also services and knowledge, material goods, culture and so on. The sharing economy can be organised in many different ways; besides models characterised by the exchange of services or donation, the sharing economy includes the business model concept which assumes that clients pay for services offered by their peers – some call this collaborative capitalism. It also exists on various levels – at a very small-scale, local level and in a much more globalised way, assisted by a proliferation linked to the digital platform revolution.

The King Baudouin Foundation has a keen interest in this phenomenon which concerns an ever-increasing number of people in society, and commissioned Agence Alter to produce an exploratory report in order to clarify the concept itself, the extent of the phenomenon and the resulting issues. The aim of this report is to tackle the question of the sharing economy as a subject of study and reflection and as a potential way of emancipating the vulnerable. Is the sharing economy capable of improving the situation of the poorest or, on the contrary, could it carry the risk of a general deregulation of social benefits and rights, even more detrimental to vulnerable people?

To answer these questions is neither simple nor unilateral. Agence Alter's researchers have endeavoured firstly to characterise this multi-faceted sharing economy and to pick out its constituent parts. They have also produced an overview of collaborative practices, highlighting their tendencies and structural specificities.

Another aim was to assess the scope of this phenomenon, which is still very difficult to define adequately, and to understand its social and economic issues at both Belgian and European level. A series of observers was therefore interviewed in this regard. The question of regulation was raised, as well as the opportunities and risks presented by such a phenomenon in social terms.

This exploratory report focused on the question of knowing whether the sharing economy could constitute a means of emancipation and social progress for the vulnerable. To try to determine from amongst these collaborative practices which ones could possibly provide solutions in the fight against poverty, a number of people in vulnerable circumstances were interviewed to assess their interest in this phenomenon. Some Belgian schemes were analysed with regard to this objective of social emancipation and the heads of various services which work with the vulnerable were asked about the possibility of making such collaborative practices more accessible to their public.

The aim of the approaches taken in this exploratory report is to open up the existing debate on the possibilities for greater social justice offered by the sharing economy. The King Baudouin Foundation will certainly continue to reflect on this, particularly by gathering together stakeholders in order to explore questions arising from the development of the sharing economy and the ways in which this phenomenon could be directed to try to ultimately reinvent social action.

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SUMMARY

Tentative definition and overview of collaborative practices

This exploratory research attempts to give an account of a rather vague concept which is difficult to define – that of the sharing economy. It could be said to encompass four main sectors: consumption, production, finance and collaborative knowledge. A series of practices are emerging from it, such as peer-to-peer production, participation, free access, relocation, dematerialisation, deconsumerism, disintermediation and mutualisation. An inventory of sharing economy initiatives in both the French- and Dutch-speaking areas in Belgium has been drawn up and can be found in the appendix to this exploratory report.

The sharing economy is expanding alongside a growth in the number of internet platforms. Together with digitisation, the sharing economy is helping to stimulate a revival of the ‘old means of sharing and solidarity’ (bartering, grouped purchases, car-sharing, etc.), and is now bringing about a real change of scale, in terms of both possibilities and the impact of these practices. However, some of these practices, characterised by a shift from ownership to usage, are accessed via extremely profitable platforms based on a much more classic business model which assumes that clients pay for services offered by their peers. This is known as collaborative capitalism. This economy thus displays great diversity in both its economic and its political models.

Scope, resulting issues and regulation in Belgium

Besides the variable definition of the sharing economy, its scale is equally difficult to gauge. Few convincing statistics have been produced and the rare studies that exist are not necessarily objective, but there appears to be potential for significant progress over the coming years. The inventory of collaborative practices in Belgium reveals a certain dynamic in terms of the sectors explored and the scale of services offered.

On the basis of the collaborative projects examined, it appears that different types of contributor are emerging:

- those who claim to be part of the sharing economy, that is businesses which are generally internet-based and most of which have little or no link with the social economy;
- those involved in the social economy and who have for a long time been used to horizontal, cooperative practices, but who do not claim to be part of the sharing economy;
- and finally, those involved in social action and voluntary projects who use certain collaborative practices as new tools or solutions for responding to social needs.

The potential of such an economy to progress clearly raises the question of deregulation and the threats that this could pose to the right to work, the protection of workers and the social security system as we know it. This is particularly, but not exclusively, the case for platforms based on the collaborative capitalism business model. Propositions for regulation exist and are being considered at a European level and there are generally positive initiatives particularly with regard to federal regulation.

The sharing economy – an opportunity in the fight against social precariousness?

The question of opportunities offered by the sharing economy to the social sector was one of the core issues of this exploratory research. Essential and other resulting questions are addressed, such as how to make these initiatives accessible to the more vulnerable in society, how to equip social stakeholders for the possibility of a change of scale/impact posed by digital tools, and the risk of imbalance between public policies which are based on collective solidarity and social action more related to charitable practices.

Through interviews with vulnerable people, the study shows the relatively inaccessible character of a whole series of services offered by the sharing economy, in particular those which fall within the business model as they come at a cost. Collaborative practices based on internet access raise the question of the digital divide. Finally, services which require the sharing of skills call into question feelings of ability; the vulnerable do not feel 'capable' of exchanging services in this way.

However, among the schemes analysed were pilot projects which use digital platforms with a social purpose, for example in the fight against food waste and for access to food, such as Soli-food and Wefood. These projects also highlighted the possibility of favouring collaboration, mutualisation and creating networks of those with a common goal. Other projects were noted which aim to include the vulnerable by reducing prices through collaborative practices, as in the case of certain collective purchasing or participative supermarket projects such as Bees-coop.

Those involved in the social sector, and more specifically those working in the area of aid for the most vulnerable, harbour various fears with regard to the potential of the sharing economy and question this model: if the sharing economy is applied to social projects, does it endanger our already fragile social model? Is the arrival of new players from the sharing economy leading to a certain competition imbalance with the social economy sector? Conversely, is the sharing economy a windfall which could face up to reductions in subsidies and diversify and mutualise resources, structures and partnerships? Does the economic model which relies on public subsidies slow the emergence of collaborative practices among those involved in social projects? All these questions deserve to be examined in detail by those on the ground and by politicians, in order to establish a clearly-defined and informed policy regarding the sharing economy, in which potential and pitfalls coexist.

SYNTHÈSE

Tentative de définition et panorama de pratiques collaboratives

Cette recherche exploratoire tente de rendre compte d'un concept assez flou, difficile à définir, celui d'économie collaborative. On peut dire qu'elle recouvre quatre grands secteurs: la consommation, la production, le financement et la connaissance collaborative. Une série de pratiques s'y déploient, telles que la production de pair à pair, la participation, le libre accès, la relocalisation, la dématérialisation, la déconsommation, la désintermédiation, la mutualisation. Un inventaire des initiatives relevant de l'économie collaborative tant du côté francophone que néerlandophone a été dressé et se retrouve en annexe de ce rapport exploratoire.

Cette économie prend de plus en plus d'ampleur à l'heure des plateformes web. Avec l'ajout du facteur numérique, l'économie collaborative participe à une stimulation renouvelée des « anciennes formes de partage ou de solidarité » (troc, achat groupé, co-voiturage...) qui permet aujourd'hui un réel changement d'échelle, tant au niveau des possibilités qu'en ce qui concerne l'impact de ces pratiques. Pourtant, un certain nombre d'entre elles, caractérisées par le glissement de la propriété vers l'usage, sont aujourd'hui utilisées via des plateformes extrêmement rentables, sur la base d'un business model beaucoup plus classique qui suppose que des clients payent pour des services offerts par des pairs. On parle dans ce cas de capitalisme collaboratif. On observe ainsi une grande diversité tant dans les modèles économiques que politiques de cette économie.

Ampleur, enjeux et réglementation en Belgique

Outre la définition à géométrie variable de cette économie collaborative, son ampleur est également difficile à cerner. Peu de chiffres probants circulent, les rares études existantes ne sont pas forcément objectives, mais le sentiment d'un potentiel de progression important dans les années à venir est présent. L'inventaire des pratiques collaboratives en Belgique révèle une certaine dynamique, au niveau des secteurs explorés et de l'échelle des services proposés.

Sur la base des projets collaboratifs examinés, différents types d'intervenants se dégagent:

- des acteurs qui se revendiquent directement de l'économie collaborative, à savoir les entrepreneurs issus pour la majorité des métiers du web, n'ayant pour la plupart peu ou pas du tout de touche avec l'économie sociale,
- les acteurs de l'économie sociale, adeptes depuis de longues années des pratiques horizontales, coopératives..., mais qui ne se revendiquent pas de l'économie collaborative,
- et enfin, les acteurs issus de l'action sociale et de l'associatif qui s'emparent de certaines pratiques collaboratives comme nouvel outil/solution pour répondre à des besoins sociaux.

Le potentiel de progression d'une telle économie pose évidemment la question de la dérégulation et des menaces que celle-ci peut induire à l'égard du droit au travail, de la protection des travailleurs et du système de sécurité sociale tel que nous le connaissons. A fortiori pour les plateformes basées sur le business model du capitalisme collaboratif, mais pas exclusivement. Des prémisses de régulation existent, avec des réflexions à l'échelle européenne et des initiatives notamment sur le plan réglementaire fédéral, plus ou moins heureuses.

L'économie collaborative, une opportunité pour la lutte contre la précarité?

La question de l'opportunité de l'économie collaborative pour le secteur social était un des enjeux centraux de cette recherche exploratoire. Avec des questions fondamentales et corollaires, telles que le fait de savoir comment rendre accessibles ces initiatives à des publics plus précaires, comment outiller les acteurs sociaux aux possibilités de changement d'échelle/d'impact offert par l'outil numérique ou encore le risque de distorsion entre des politiques publiques, basées sur la solidarité collective et une action sociale davantage liée à des pratiques caritatives.

Au travers d'interviews de publics précarisés, l'étude montre en tout cas le caractère relativement inaccessible de toute une série d'offres relevant de l'économie collaborative, notamment celles relevant du business model puisque payant. Les pratiques collaboratives basées sur un accès numérique questionnent la fracture numérique. Enfin les offres qui sollicitent le partage de compétences interrogent le sentiment de capacité, les personnes précarisées ne se sentant 'pas à la hauteur' pour ce type d'échanges de services.

Pourtant, parmi les dispositifs étudiés, des projets-pilotes faisant usage des plateformes numériques dans une finalité sociale ont été analysés, par exemple pour la lutte contre le gaspillage alimentaire et l'accès à l'alimentation avec des projets comme Soli-food, Wefood. Ces projets ont également mis en lumière la possibilité de favoriser la collaboration, la mutualisation et la mise en réseau d'acteurs dans un but commun. D'autres projets visant à l'inclusion d'un public précaire grâce à la réduction des prix par des pratiques collaboratives ont été observés, comme c'est le cas dans certains projets d'achats collectifs ou de supermarchés participatifs (Bees-coop).

Quant aux acteurs du secteur social, et plus spécifiquement ceux actifs dans l'aide aux plus démunis, ils appréhendent diversement les potentialités de cette économie collaborative et questionnent ce modèle: l'économie collaborative appliquée à l'action sociale met-elle en péril notre modèle social déjà fragilisé? L'avènement de nouveaux acteurs issus de l'économie collaborative conduit-il à une certaine distorsion de concurrence avec le secteur de l'économie sociale? A contrario, l'économie collaborative est-elle une aubaine pour faire face aux réductions de subsides, pour diversifier et mutualiser les ressources, les structures, les partenariats? Le modèle économique reposant sur le subside public freine-t-il l'émergence des pratiques collaboratives au sein des acteurs de l'action sociale? Toutes ces questions mériteraient d'être creusées par les acteurs de terrain et les responsables politiques, pour mettre en place une politique articulée et éclairée autour de cette économie collaborative, dont les potentialités et les écueils coexistent.

SAMENVATTING

Een verkennende omschrijving en een overzicht van deelpraktijken

Dit verkennend onderzoek gaat in op de deeleconomie, een eerder vaag concept, dat moeilijk te definiëren valt. De deeleconomie omvat grosso modo vier grote domeinen: consumptie, productie, financiering en gedeelde kennis. Daarbinnen ontwikkelen zich een hele reeks praktijken, zoals peer to peer-productie, participatie, vrije toegang (*open access*), herlokalisering, dematerialisering, het verminderen van de consumptie, het wegvallen van tussenschakels, *pooling*,... Er werd in dit verkennend rapport een inventaris opgesteld van initiatieven in de deeleconomie, zowel aan Franstalige als aan Nederlandstalige kant. Deze inventaris is als bijlage opgenomen.

In tijden van webplatforms wordt de omvang van de deeleconomie steeds groter. Ze bezorgt oude vormen van delen en solidariteit nieuwe impulsen, met de digitalisering als bijkomende factor: ruilhandel, groepsaankopen, autodelen... Hierdoor verandert de schaalgrootte, zowel wat de mogelijkheden betreft als inzake de impact van de praktijken. In een aantal praktijken vindt een verschuiving plaats van eigendom naar gebruik. Maar die praktijken maken wel gebruik van uiterst rendabele platforms en zijn gebaseerd op een businessmodel dat veel klassieker is. Het vertrekt van het gegeven dat klanten betalen voor diensten die worden aangeboden door peers. In dat geval spreekt men van deelkapitalisme. Er is ook een grote diversiteit, zowel in de economische als politieke modellen van deze vorm van economie.

Omvang, uitdagingen en reglementering in België

De deeleconomie is met haar diverse schaalgroottes moeilijk te definiëren, en ook haar omvang is lastig te bepalen. Er zijn maar weinig cijfers die echt overtuigen en de zeldzame bestaande studies zijn niet altijd objectief. Toch leeft het gevoel dat er de komende jaren grote ontwikkelingen op stapel staan. De inventaris van deelpraktijken in België getuigt van een zekere dynamiek, zowel wat betreft de sectoren die werden verkend als wat de schaal van de aangeboden diensten aangaat.

Op basis van de onderzochte deelprojecten tekenen zich diverse types van initiatiefnemers af:

- actoren die zich rechtstreeks beroepen op de deeleconomie. Het gaat om ondernemers die meestal uit de internetsfeer komen en weinig of geen voeling hebben met de sociale economie;
- actoren uit de sociale economie die sinds jaar en dag aanhangers zijn van horizontale, coöperatieve praktijken. Zij beroepen zich niet op de deeleconomie;
- actoren uit de sociale actie en de verenigingswereld die deelpraktijken inzetten als een nieuwe tool/oplossing om tegemoet te komen aan maatschappelijke noden.

Het ontwikkelingspotentieel van de deeleconomie doet uiteraard ook vragen rijzen over de (de)regulering en de bedreigingen die dit met zich mee kan brengen voor het

arbeidsrecht, de bescherming van werknemers en het socialezekerheidssysteem zoals wij dat nu kennen. Dat geldt a fortiori, maar niet uitsluitend, voor de platformen die zijn gebaseerd op het businessmodel van het deelcapitalisme. Er bestaan reguleringsvoorstellen, er wordt op Europese schaal over gereflecteerd en er zijn federale initiatieven inzake regulering. Ze zijn minder of meer geslaagd.

De deeleconomie: een opportuniteit voor de strijd tegen kansarmoede?

De vraag naar de kansen die de deeleconomie biedt voor de sociale sector is een van de centrale kwesties in dit verkennend onderzoek. Daar vloeien fundamentele vragen uit voort, zoals: hoe kunnen we deze initiatieven toegankelijk maken voor kwetsbare groepen? Hoe kunnen we sociale actoren uitrusten voor de mogelijkheden die de digitalisering biedt om dingen te veranderen (schaal, impact)? Bestaat het risico dat er een onevenwicht ontstaat met een overheidsbeleid dat gebaseerd is op groepssolidariteit en een sociale actie die meer verbonden is met caritatieve praktijken?

Uit gesprekken met een kansarm publiek blijkt in dit rapport alvast dat een hele reeks mogelijkheden van de deeleconomie voor deze mensen behoorlijk ontoegankelijk zijn, te beginnen met alles wat via een betalend businessmodel werkt. De deelpraktijken die gebaseerd zijn op digitale toegankelijkheid stellen de digitale kloof aan de orde. En initiatieven die een beroep doen op het delen van competenties roepen bij deze mensen vragen naar hun vaardigheden op: een kansarm publiek voelt zich 'niet klaar' voor dit soort uitwisseling van diensten.

Bij de onderzochte initiatieven zijn er desondanks proefprojecten die gebruik maken van digitale platforms en die een maatschappelijke finaliteit hebben, zoals in de strijd tegen voedselverspilling en de toegang tot voedingsmiddelen (projecten als Soli-food, Wefood...). Deze projecten tonen ook de kansen die er zijn om samenwerking te stimuleren, naast vormen van *pooling* en de netwerking van actoren met een gemeenschappelijk doel. Ook andere projecten worden onderzocht. Zij beogen de inclusie van een kansarm publiek dankzij prijsverminderingen die het gevolg zijn van deelpraktijken. Dat is het geval bij sommige projecten die werken met groepsaankopen of met deelsupermarkten (Bees-coop).

Actoren in de sociale sector, met name zij die actief zijn in de hulp aan de minstbedeelden, beoordelen de mogelijkheden van de deeleconomie verschillend en zitten met vragen over het model: als je de deeleconomie verbindt met de sociale actie, vormt ze dan een bedreiging voor ons toch al breekbare sociaal model? Leidt de komst van nieuwe actoren uit de deeleconomie tot concurrentievervalsing met de sector van de sociale economie? Of is het tegendeel het geval en is de deeleconomie juist een zegen om het hoofd te bieden aan de vermindering van de subsidies, om de middelen, de structuren en de partnerschappen te diversifiëren en te delen? Zet het economische model dat gebaseerd is op overheids subsidies een rem op de ontwikkeling van deelpraktijken bij actoren in de sociale sector?

Al deze vragen verdienen nader onderzoek door de actoren op het terrein en de beleidsverantwoordelijken, om zo voor de deeleconomie te komen tot een gestructureerd en goed geïnformeerd beleid. Het is duidelijk dat er zowel sprake is van mogelijkheden als van struikelstenen.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years in Brussels, Wallonia and Flanders, as elsewhere in the world, we have witnessed the emergence of ‘collaborative practices’ which have brought new ways of accessing products, as well as new types of services.

But is the ‘sharing economy’ a real innovation or a simple variation of something that already exists? We believe that collaborative innovation should be considered as supporting new concepts, particularly with regard to pooling resources, moving towards the value of use, and regaining interest in such practices via the internet. An assessment should be made of whether these new collaborative practices could, or perhaps already do, provide solutions to the social problems with which the most destitute in society are confronted.

How can we provide access to mobility for people on social benefits who do not have a driving licence? How can we provide proper spectacles to poor, retired people when the price of frames exceeds €200? How can we house those on low incomes properly without having to send them to the outskirts of our cities? How can those living in poverty dress and feed themselves?

Nowadays, there are various digital platforms which can provide solutions to mobility problems or access to low-cost food. ‘Fab labs’¹ for instance provide facilities for making very low-cost spectacles, and donation banks are a source of free clothing.

However, some collaborative practices are now being taken over by platforms which more resemble large monopolies (Uber, Airbnb, etc.), and no longer represent the original values of sharing and exchange (Couchsurfing, etc.). They are used more by the middle and upper classes than by the most destitute.

In order to respond briefly to questions raised by the sharing economy and its very diverse practices, we set out below a tentative definition of the sharing economy and an overview of the collaborative practices which already exist in Belgium, and we outline the issues it raises in a European context.

With regard to issues concerning the fight against poverty and particular challenges in the area of poverty and social justice, we shall then assess whether such collaborative practices could provide new solutions, services and tools for combatting poverty.

¹ Fab lab (from ‘fabrication laboratory’): a small digital workshop open to the general public and providing facilities for inventing and making objects.

Chapter I

The sharing economy: definition and overview of collaborative practices in Belgium

I. TENTATIVE DEFINITION

Defining the sharing economy is without doubt one of the seemingly impossible challenges of our time. Even specialists consider the concept to be vague, and it is overused and susceptible to becoming a vehicle for trendy sharewashing operations. For some, such as Matthieu Lietaert, author of *Homo Cooperans 2.0*² and devoted defender of the sharing economy, it is not a new concept: “Human beings have always practised a sharing economy. Two million years ago, ‘Homo habilis’ already exchanged things and cooperated with like-minded beings.”³

Today, we can list a series of initiatives which fall within this economy but without providing a precise definition of what exactly it is. From what we can read in the press as well as more scientific analyses of the phenomenon and inventories of this type of initiative, it seems that the sharing economy consists of **four sectors**: consumption, production, finance and collaborative ‘knowledge’. These sectors cover areas as varied as food, housing, work, transport, travel, services and knowledge, material goods, economic and financial models and culture.

2 Published by Éditions Couleur Livres, 2015.

3 Interview with Matthieu Lietaert, *Alter Échos*, published on the website www.alterechos.be on 20 November 2015.

Summary table of the four areas of the sharing economy⁴:

COLLABORATIVE PRODUCTION	This refers to both the material and the non-material: in other words, to the production of common goods and to platforms for sharing. The ‘makers’ movement is highly symbolic here; instead of producing goods manufactured in Asia and then shipping them all around the world, 3D printing, the DIY (Do It Yourself) movement and attaching greater value to second hand objects all enable customised, small-scale production, as close as possible to the place (and to required volumes) of consumption.
COLLABORATIVE CONSUMPTION	In collaborative consumption, use predominates over ownership of property or of a service. It can relate to renting or lending between individuals or to food- or house-sharing initiatives. This is without doubt the most mature sector of the sharing economy and rests on the principle of exploiting things which are ‘unused’. Thanks to technology, it is now possible to match up a request to use with an offer to lend or rent, which until recently was not expressed with sufficient precision.
COLLABORATIVE FUNDING	There are three types of collaborative funding: peer-to-peer funding, peer-to-peer lending and peer-to-peer currency, or the sharing of funds and loans and the creation of alternative currencies. It eliminates the need for intermediaries and allows economic models to evolve which have existed for over 400 years.
COLLABORATIVE KNOWLEDGE	This is based on the idea of free knowledge and relates to education, research, creation and exchange networks, as well as governance. It is an impressive movement and current models of education and teaching are preparing to be radically transformed, notably through Open Science. Insofar as Open Democracy is concerned, movements to open up public data (Open Data) or provide legal texts on Wiki are slowly beginning to have an impact on our society, but they could have a considerable influence in the future. Source: Etiopia

Could the sharing economy represent an **alternative to the consumption and competition model**? The *Wikipedia* encyclopaedia, itself the product of the collaborative movement, defines the sharing economy as follows: “Human activity which aims to produce shared value and which is founded on new ways of organising work. It is based on horizontal rather than vertical organisation, on the sharing of goods, space and tools, the organisation of citizens into networks or communities, and generally on intermediation via internet platforms.”

Another fundamental issue is that “its rapid development is due to the use of new technologies which enable collective creativity and productivity.” Even though not all schemes associated with a sharing economy in its broad sense are necessarily based on an economy of platforms, these platforms have enabled the unprecedented expansion of this sharing economy and its associated (or indeed unassociated) changes in paradigms.

⁴ See *L'économie collaborative, une alternative au modèle de compétition* (The Sharing Economy: an alternative to the competition model), Delphine Masset and Eric Luyckx, on the Etiopia website etopia.be, consulted on 31 May 2015.

The collaborative encyclopaedia adds: “This type of economy appears within the context of defiance of the traditional capitalist system, economic crisis and an environmental ethic.”

The above definition is doubtless already skewed towards a specific conception of this economy, at odds with a capital-intensive economy. It places more value on collaborative logistics based on a return to collectives and a relocation of the economy, with an emphasis on social links and respect for the environment.

It is nevertheless difficult to keep to such a restricted definition; not all companies which claim to be part of the sharing economy today are covered by this definition. This is particularly true for extremely profitable platforms such as Uber, Airbnb or Blablacar, whose primary objectives are not those described above. Many other projects associated with this economy are created with profit in mind. Are these projects really part of the sharing economy or have they simply integrated collaborative behaviour into their usual activities? The economist Jeremy Rifkin, the American economic forecaster who has written a book on *The Zero Marginal Cost Society*⁵ proclaims that “the increasing power of the collaborative model will progressively marginalise a capitalism that is already in decline”, but in reality, there is still a long way to go.

Alongside the collaborative model characterised by the exchange of services or donations, **the sharing economy does not exclude the business model concept**, which assumes that clients pay for services offered by their peers; some call this collaborative capitalism.

There is thus a great variety of economic as well as political models in this sharing economy. These models follow either commercial or non-commercial principles.

Example of model typology

BUSINESS ORIENTED MODEL	Commercial exchange of goods or services (e.g. Airbnb, Uber, etc.)
GIVING & TAKING MODEL	Non-commercial exchange of goods or services (e.g. Couchsurfing)
ONE-WAY GIVING OR CHARITY MODEL	Exchange or donation without any compensation (e.g. donation banks)

So is the sharing economy really a **catch-all concept**? As Eric Luyck, Head of Lifelong Learning at the Etopia Centre and author of several studies on the sharing economy points out, “We are faced with something very hybrid, which relates as much to the purely virtual, as in the case of online platforms which merely enable the matching up of consumers or users, as to projects like Repair Cafés, which propose something truly concrete - physical repair and reconstruction work. (...) Some projects are com-

5 Jeremy Rifkin, *The Zero Marginal Cost Society*, published by Editions Les liens qui libèrent, 2014.

pletely neo-liberal, whilst others are very citizen-based and participatory. (...) The expected gains are equally varied. Some initiatives may be based more on financial gain; others are more concerned with greater well-being via external social links or awareness, for example.⁶

This ‘new economy’ grew from an activist and socially aware movement which aimed to change methods of production and individual mass consumption and is rooted deep in the issues of societies looking for an alternative economic model:

ECONOMIC ISSUE	<i>The sharing (collaborative) or cooperative economy</i>	Collaboration through mutualising means and sharing expenditure in times of crisis seems to be a particularly attractive way of helping people to maintain access to consumer goods. Work is organised in a horizontal and democratic way.
SOCIAL ISSUE	<i>The sharing economy (non-commercial sector, with no specific aim to make a profit)</i>	Cooperation between members is a way of recreating social bonds. It is another way of producing or consuming - sharing tools, repairing and recycling household appliances, Repair Cafés, donation banks.
ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUE	<i>The circular economy</i>	The free circulation of goods enables society to break free from mass consumption, and the circular economy combats waste and pollution.
DIGITAL ISSUE	<i>The platform economy</i>	New technologies facilitate connections and exchanges and offer a virtual place for selling or renting goods and services, generally between individuals, and in some cases in return for payment.

These various issues may be cumulative within a single collaborative project but may sometimes also be contradictory and paradoxical. At Airbnb in particular, some researchers have observed rebound effects in the minds of platform users, who claim to travel more since starting to use Airbnb, and this has an associated ecological impact.

6 Eric Luyckx, *Economie collaborative, de quoi parle-t-on?* (The Sharing Economy: what is it all about?) in *L'économie collaborative, une alternative au capitalisme?* (The Sharing Economy – an alternative to capitalism?), Cahiers du Ciep no. 19, March 2015

II. OVERVIEW OF COLLABORATIVE PRACTICES IN BELGIUM

The term ‘sharing economy’ may be quite recent, but in Belgium, collaborative practices have existed for a long time. In 1994, the first Local Exchange and Trading Systems (Lets) were established in Leuven, where groups of people began to exchange micro-services. In 2006, the first three purchasing groups (known as GAS or GAC) were set up in Brussels. These were people who wanted to consume differently, other than through supermarket-type intermediaries, and they joined forces and pooled finances to buy organic produce from a single local producer. Today, there are over seventy purchasing groups in Brussels. In the mobility sector, Taxistop was a forerunner to the car-sharing platforms which are currently in fashion (Uber, Blablacar, etc.). As long ago as the 1970s, Taxistop was already offering a service which matched people up to share short or long distance car journeys. Repair Cafés, SELs (local exchange systems), Couchsurfing, etc., initiatives run by citizens, associations, social entrepreneurs, students or ‘social makers’ spring up here and there every day. Faced with this constant stream of new projects, it is almost impossible to draw up an exhaustive list of collaborative practices. Nevertheless, a first overview of collaborative projects in Belgium reveals to a certain extent how quickly the phenomenon is expanding (see appendix).

Having developed from an activist and socially aware movement which aimed to change production methods, today’s collaborative projects are stimulated by **different types of stakeholder**:

- those who clearly claim to be part of the sharing economy. These are generally businesses, mostly internet-based, the majority of which have little or no connection with the social economy (Wefood, car renting, Ouishare, etc.);
- those from the social economy sector who have worked for many years with horizontal working practices, cooperatives, etc., and who do not necessarily claim to be part of the sharing economy;
- those from social action associations which seize on certain collaborative practices as new tools or solutions to meet social needs (e.g. online food banks, Soli-food, etc.).

The range of collaborative practices in Belgium today is thus extremely wide. It revolves around **the four main areas of the sharing economy**:

• collaborative consumption

The not-for-profit association Réseau des Consommateurs Responsables (Network of Responsible Consumers) has recently pinpointed on an interactive map all responsible consumption projects in Wallonia and Brussels. In total, more than 900 initiatives are shown: sharing and mutual aid initiatives, grouped purchases, Repair Cafés, donation banks, local exchange systems, Give Boxes, etc.

• collaborative production

New models of sharing workspace (co-working), knowledge (internet community) and production (e.g. fab labs) have also begun to appear in our towns and cities. Fab labs are places to share knowledge, tools and sometimes even the latest technological tools, such as 3D printers, which can be used to make prototype goods at minimal cost.

• collaborative financing

Participative internet-based financing platforms enable everyone to contribute financially to projects.

• collaborative knowledge

The Wikipedia platform is one of the pioneers in the area of social use of digital technology. Many schemes have developed, for example *open street map*, a collaborative mapping project, or education projects such as MOOCs.

Summary table showing the four main sectors of the sharing economy in Belgium

COLLABORATIVE CONSUMPTION	COLLABORATIVE PRODUCTION	COLLABORATIVE FINANCING	COLLABORATIVE KNOWLEDGE
Food <i>Group purchases from local producers, sales points and cooperative supermarkets/short distribution circuits, campaigns against food waste, recycling and redistribution, etc.</i>	Co-working (fab labs, Tournevie (tool bank), etc.)	Platforms (Kisskissbankbank, Growfunding (crowdfunding projects), etc.)	Cartographie (Open street map...)
Mobility <i>Car sharing, rental/service, etc.</i>	Médias (Médor, WhatFor (online magazines))		Internet community (Wikipedia, MailingList, etc.)
Tourism (Couchsurfing, Airbnb, WarmShowers, etc.)	Free software (Linux, Open Office)		Idea incubators/accelerators (Ouishare network, Hellosaring, hackathons or collaborative programming events, etc.)
Housing <i>House-share, community living (Community land trust, etc.)</i>			
Local services <i>Local exchange systems, internet platforms for providers in return for payment</i>			
Circular economy <i>Collective composting, recycling of renovation and construction materials, second hand goods</i>			
Leisure			

Beyond this classification of the sharing economy into four sectors, the projects identified can be categorised into **different types of collaborative practice**, amongst others:⁷

• **Peer-to-peer production**

Production is no longer the work of just one person, protected by patents which prevent sharing. If people can become producers of services, we call this a distributive economy (e.g. Co-makers, co-working, Airbnb, Couchsurfing).

• **Participation**

People can take part in any phase of a project (e.g. participative financing).

• **Free access**

This principle is becoming increasingly common and is facilitated by the internet (e.g. free software).

• **Relocation**

Producer-consumer relationships have disappeared. The search for a new relationship between these two parties is leading to a relocation of production (e.g. GAS/GACs for grouped purchasing).

• **Dematerialisation**

This responds to the need to make use of a service rather than owning a product. It is the economy of practicality (e.g. lending objects and providing services between individuals).

• **Deconsumerism**

This involves the selection of products instead of overabundance. Quality presides over quantity (e.g. Troc - second hand goods platform).

• **Elimination of intermediaries**

We are in a period of rationalisation. To consume and produce as cheaply as possible, unnecessary intermediaries such as large supermarket chains are cut out. This micro-economy takes the form of a short distribution circuit (e.g. GAS, Airbnb).

• **Mutualisation**

Mutualisation enables individual property to be used or owned collectively. The principle is no longer to own something but to have access to it. An owner is still needed who shares out the use of an item; alternatively, there is a shared purchase and all the owners agree amongst themselves regarding the sharing out of its use, as in a consumer cooperative for example (e.g. car sharing, Taxistop, etc.).

⁷ See definition of the collaborative economy by the 'Labo de l'économie sociale et solidaire' (Social Economy Lab); website consulted on 31 May 2015; lelabo-ess.org.

Chapter II

The sharing economy: scope, issues and regulation in Belgium and Europe

The world of the sharing economy includes initiatives which sometimes have little in common. “All these projects are very vaguely related and are led by people with very different motives,” explains Damien Demailly, coordinator of the ‘New Prosperity’ project at the IDDRI (Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations) in Paris. Projects with entirely commercial aims exist alongside others offering simple exchanges or car-sharing. Damien Demailly is considered one of the leading sharing economy specialists in France.

I. SCOPE OF THE PHENOMENON AND RESULTING ISSUES

While this ‘new industrial revolution’ is being billed as a bringer of economic development or as a break with the employment market as we have known it until now, there are few who can **analyse the phenomenon objectively at a European level**. There seem to be insufficient reliable means of measuring it. Figures certainly exist but are mostly rather approximate and often come from the sector itself, either from institutions with self-interest or from the ‘evangelising prophets’ of the sharing economy such as Rachel Botsman and Jeremy Rifkin.

This lack of data is explained partly by the fact that a significant number of exchanges are carried out in a non-commercial context. It is therefore not surprising that the only available data relate to just one area of the sharing economy – the most commonly cited ‘commercial’ sharing economy, sometimes also known as the ‘renting economy’ or even ‘platform capitalism’. Among the meagre references is a study led by PricewaterhouseCoopers in 2015⁸. The study is limited to five sectors: peer-to-peer financing (loans between individuals), online recruitment, housing, car-sharing and music/video streaming. The French Ministry of the Economy, Industry and Digital Technology itself published these figures – in the absence of any others – in a report dated June 2015 and entitled *Issues and Perspectives of Collaborative Consumption* and this is indicative of the limited data available. Another source of data is a survey undertaken by ING at the beginning of 2015, which focused only on sharing economy activities involving payment.

The results of the study led by PwC suggest that the sharing economy market is valued at around \$15 billion worldwide (figures from May 2015). The auditors estimate that its value could reach \$335 billion by 2025. According to Olivier Salesse, Director of Strategy at PwC, “companies in the sharing economy modify income distribution within the value chain. The question is: who will benefit from the added value – the consumer or these new intermediaries?” The authors of the report published by the French Ministry of the Economy, Industry and Digital Technology based on the figures from PwC’s study attribute these figures to some 9,000 start-ups which make up the global collaborative consumption market. They single out certain bodies which have grown from start-ups, such as Airbnb which today is worth more than \$25 billion, as well as Uber, the taxi platform, and Blablacar, the French car-sharing platform⁹. The results of the survey by ING show that around 1/3 of Europeans have heard of the sharing economy. Unsurprisingly, it is in the field of holidays that Europe’s sharing economy seems to take the lion’s share. According to ING’s survey, 16% of those questioned had been paid during the previous 12 months for ‘sharing’ a property in the context of holidays, and 49% were considering doing so in the following 12 months.

⁸ *Consumer Intelligence Series: The Sharing Economy*, PricewaterhouseCoopers, April 2015.

⁹ Report by Pipame (Interministerial centre for economic forecasting), *Enjeux et perspectives de la consommation collaborative* (Issues and perspectives on collaborative consumption), June 2015, page 16; see <http://www.entreprises.gouv.fr>, under ‘Publications conjoncturelles’ then ‘Numérique’.

It is important to note that a large majority of Europeans questioned in the context of the ING survey earned €1,000 or less from the sharing economy over the course of the past year. The average amounts to around €300 per year. We are thus still a long way from a situation in which the sharing economy represents a means of subsistence for its ‘workers’.

Some of those interviewed felt that the sharing economy could **seriously threaten the right to work, workers themselves and social security systems**. Edgar Szoc is an economist and professor at the Henri Spaak College. He has recently carried out a study entitled *Du partage à l’enchère: les infortunes de la Sharing Economy* (From sharing to bidding: the misfortunes of the sharing economy)¹⁰ for the Joseph Jacquemotte cultural association. His conclusion is rather cruel: the sharing economy could potentially realise the capitalist dream of the fragmentation of, and uncompromising competition within, the labour market, which would spread worldwide with no way of people coming together to voice demands. It would also widen the gap between those who own things and can give value to them via a platform and those who have nothing. It would also present difficulties for the public authorities, which would see a significant proportion of their potential tax base disappear into the internet maze.

There is the additional question of working relationships between the platforms and their ‘workers’. Are these workers employees? Or freelance? In the USA, there are lawsuits in progress trying to redefine ‘free’ working relationships between service providers and platforms involving subordination, which could transform providers into employees of these platforms. There are as yet no similar cases in Belgium according to the labour court judges to whom we were able to speak. Many believe that the worker of tomorrow – due to the effect of the sharing economy – will combine several activities. He or she could be an employee/an Uber driver/active on an exchange platform/etc., a new status which the French organisation Fing (New Generation Internet Foundation) calls ‘slasher’, from the English word ‘slash’ for the punctuation mark ‘/’. “Employment is not dead, but there will be some degree of hybridisation,” explains Amandine Brugière, head of the Digiwork and Infolab projects at Fing. Here too, the extent of this new trend seems difficult to evaluate at the present time. Some see it as already significant, while others, like Damien Demailly, play down its current importance. The debate is certainly fierce; many consider this multi-activity to be jeopardising workers, particularly the European Trade Union Confederation, which points out that “before, these unconventional types of work were on the sidelines of the employment market. Today, it sometimes seems as though they are becoming the norm”.

¹⁰ This article can be consulted on the website of the Joseph Jacquemotte cultural association: <http://acjj.be/publications/nos-analyses/du-partage-a-l-enchere-les.html>

II. GROUNDS FOR REGULATION

Many of those involved consider the advent of the sharing economy to be unavoidable and governments are encouraged to take advantage of it. Matthieu Lietaert in particular, in his work *Homo Cooperans 2.0*¹¹, explains that “labour law problems are caused by the fact that there is a complete lack of legislation.” Denis Stokkink, President of the European think tank Pour la Solidarité (For Solidarity) agrees: “There is an unavoidable transformation of the employment market but nothing has changed at the level of social relations. The state and the social sector have not given any consideration to ways of managing this transformation.” He then goes on to put forward the idea of a single, universal worker status, which would enable all workers to benefit from the same social protection. “Workers with limited job security work for Uber. Many of them do it to survive and we refuse to support them by giving them a work status - it’s unbelievable,” deplores Denis Stokkink. He continues, “The European Commission is at least considering the issue; it is tackling the subject. Because in Belgium, there is nothing.”

The public authorities are certainly **quite cautious** with regard to this new economy and are reacting little by little, backed by traditional companies, equally keen to preserve their financing structures, but with no real other vision than to slow the extreme competition generated by platforms whose business models are based mainly on the renting economy. Their aim is to ensure that the established rules are respected, some of which are already quite unable to cope with the situation. Some feel that it is important to act now in the area of the sharing economy, in order on the one hand to create conditions which allow the development of collaborative social initiatives whilst removing administrative hurdles and creating legal frameworks adapted to their objectives, and on the other hand to manage the commercial sharing economy of large groups. Such regulation would have as its objective to make sure that these activities contribute financially to solidarity and offer social rights to individuals who subscribe to this model. Several political parties and their research bodies are showing interest in this notion of the sharing economy by organising symposiums to discuss the definition of the sharing economy and issues associated with it, such as regulation and the risk of the dismantling of social benefits. Approaches and responses remain very hesitant.

However, in Belgium in May 2016, draft legislation proposed by Alexander De Croo (Open VLD party), federal Minister for the Digital Agenda and Telecoms, was approved by the government at the Council of Ministers. The bill programme contained measures concerning adjustments to earnings derived from the sharing economy and was passed in the House of Representatives on 30 June of this year¹². The resulting changes came into effect on 1 July 2016. This law provides for a new regime for those whose income derived from the sharing economy does not exceed €5,000 gross per year. These people would be subject to a one-off tax payment at source of 20%, after a fixed deduction for

¹¹ op cit, published by Editions Couleur Livres, 2015.

¹² House of Representatives, 3rd session of the 54th legislative period, Doc 54K1875, downloadable on the following website: <http://www.lachambre.be/kvvcr/showpage.cfm?section=/flwb&language=fr&cfm=/site/wwwcfm/flwb/flwbn.cfm?legislat=54&dossierID=1875>.

expenses of 50%. In other words, someone who earns €4,000 per year in the context of the sharing economy will pay €400 in tax on this amount (20% on half of €4,000). Those who exceed this gross income will revert to a traditional taxation regime. The law also provides for an exemption from freelance status for those carrying on an activity which generates income in the context of the sharing economy, up to the income limit mentioned above. In the arguments presented on his website¹³, Minister De Croo recognises that the Belgian fiscal and social model is not adapted to the reality of this new economy. A formula thus had to be found which could extract a whole series of activities from the grey area and tax them at source via the platforms themselves. The tax will be paid over to the tax authorities, accompanied by the necessary taxation data. This taxation relates only to individuals and not to service providers for whom the activity is a core business.

This bill is a first in Europe; up until now, only the United Kingdom has legislated in the area of the sharing economy, by allowing a tax exemption for income derived from this economy of up to €2,500. However, this addresses only taxation problems and does not take into account the status of these vulnerable workers, as it reverts back to traditional freelance regulations for the balance over this amount. There have therefore been a number of proposals to create a specific social status for workers in this disruptive economy.

In September 2015, the European Commission launched a **public consultation** - aimed at individuals but also at all those involved in the sharing economy - on the regulatory environment concerning platforms, online intermediaries, data and cloud computing and the sharing economy. This consultation was held from 24 September 2015 to 31 December 2015. According to a press release from the Commission dated 6 May 2015, "it aims to gather opinion on the effects of the sharing economy on rights and responsibilities, existing suppliers, innovation and consumer choice."

Its preliminary results - the definitive results should be published soon - showed that "consumers, businesses and national authorities have concerns regarding the applicable rules and other rights and obligations for users and service providers," explains a Commission spokesperson. "More guidance is required, as well as better information concerning the application of existing rules." The Commission used the results of this consultation to prepare a communication regarding the European agenda for a sharing economy. This communication will explain how European rules currently in existence apply to the sharing economy, notably the services and E-commerce directives. "The communication will also include recommendations to the Member States on the best way to align their legislation with the European rules, so as to ensure a balanced development of the sharing economy," explains the Commission.

In connection with this, the Commission is assessing how to encourage the development of new and innovative services, without favouring any particular business model. "The sharing economy allows greater choice and better prices for the consumer, as well as pointing to possible growth in the European economy," claims the Commission. "But at the same time, there are important issues in terms of consumer protection, tax and employment rights which must be taken into consideration."

13 www.decroo.belgium/fr

III. AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE SOCIAL SECTOR?

Despite criticism from some, a large number of those to whom we were able to speak believe that **the sharing economy could benefit the social sector**. Furthermore, any reservations usually relate only to the most commercial extreme of the sharing economy and not to the way in which this new tool could benefit the social sector. “It is a structural economic mutation in which everyone should have an interest, particularly those in the area of solidarity,” points out Denis Stokkink. So why are some areas of the social sector so nervous? For Matthieu Lietaert, the ‘horizontal’ aspect of the sharing economy seems to conflict with the culture of the voluntary sector in particular, characterised by its ‘top-down’ vision. “For many associations, the action plan is: we receive subsidies and then we help the vulnerable. It is a very vertical way of seeing things,” he argues. Damien Demailly notes that “there is a mental block. Many people think that the sharing economy is Uber or Airbnb.” In the minds of those to whom we spoke however, it is above all a tool which can be used ‘for any job’ and especially for working on the social sector.

It will be interesting to know how the social sector will make use of this tool made up of peer-to-peer relations: the online platform. “The social sector must really ask itself what the sharing economy is and how it can reinvent its initiatives in the light of this new tool,” stresses Matthieu Lietaert. There are many examples. “Imagine an underprivileged neighbourhood. A good platform, with the right support, particularly from associations, could allow those in need to forge links with one another, to exchange and to have access to certain services,” continues Matthieu Lietaert. He adds that the state itself should take inspiration from this tool, notably to adapt the way in which it delivers its social benefits.

In any case, one thing seems clear: for projects of this type to start up, we need either motivated people to initiate them or public authorities which will hold their hand and encourage them. “Projects which tend to take off easily will be those where the project leaders and service providers can make money. The more social projects won’t develop just like that. We need to push them, particularly through calls for proposals,” explains Damien Demailly, quoting in particular the case of carpooling websites boosted by a large number of local groups in the Lyon area.

The question then seems to be how to encourage new projects which bring value to society. Edgar Szoc seems pessimistic. For him, “the fixed costs associated with the launch of a platform are too high. They probably dissuade people from setting up less commercial, more modest projects.” Damien Demailly doesn’t agree. For him, this drawback applies mainly to commercial projects. He cites the case of the MAIF, a French mutual benefit society which has just launched an interesting project called MAIF Avenir (MAIF Future). This is an investment fund dedicated to the financing of projects related to the sharing economy, digital technology and innovation, whilst trying to transmit the MAIF’s mutualist values to the project leaders. Is this a good way of combining the sharing economy with social objectives?

There is a consensus on one thing: stronger links between the sharing economy and the social economy are needed. "At some point, we need a distinction between the purely commercial sharing economy - without judging the quality of services it could offer - and a sharing economy based on the principles of the social economy, such as the mutualisation of production methods," explains Damien Demailly. This definition can be compared with that of the social economy contained in the Wallonian decree of 20 November 2008 (MB, 31 December 2008, p.69056): "economic activities which provide goods or services and which are carried on by companies (mainly cooperatives or companies with social objectives), associations, mutual benefit societies or foundations, whose ethics are based on the following principles: service to the community or to members, as opposed to financial gain; managerial autonomy; democratic decision processes; priority of people and work over capital in income distribution." Both definitions refer to social objectives and horizontal decision-making, as well as to the mutualisation of resources. For Violaine Wathelet, head of projects in the social economy federation SAW-B, the sharing economy is nothing new. "If we compared the social economy and the sharing economy, would we not find a variation in form rather than the creation of a new economic system?" She concludes that "the sharing economy is not a proper concept because it refers not to a new economic system but to (new) practices."

Looking beyond phrasing, the social economy must also adopt some of the practices used in the sharing economy. "Many young project leaders in the sharing economy know little about the world of work and work relations. When the platforms mature, this will pose a problem," explains Amandine Brugière. At that point, the social economy will need to be able to 'irrigate' the sharing economy with its principles, whilst learning from the sharing economy and questioning its own practices in the light of those of the latter. This is not a given, according to those to whom we spoke. "I heard the case of a young girl leading a sharing economy project which wanted to become a cooperative, but Febecoop, the Belgian federation of the social and cooperative economy, would apparently not touch anything in the field of the sharing economy," says Matthieu Lietaert regretfully. The question of cooperatives is not trivial - it comes up more and more frequently. And what if sharing economy projects did form into cooperatives? In the USA, a conference on 'platformcooperativism' was held on this very subject on 13 and 14 November 2015.

The launch of COOP CITY is an important development in the area of the social economy. This is a new incubator of ideas for the social and sharing economy, supported by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). Led by SAW-B, Bruxelles-Emergences, (JobYourself), Febecoop, ICHEC-PME, Impulse and Solvay-Entrepreneurs, COOP CITY will provide the city of Brussels with a centre for social, cooperative and collaborative entrepreneurship. In its role as an incubator, this centre will be a one-stop shop for support and training for social entrepreneurs. It will also provide space for co-working and will help to heighten awareness of innovation and new entrepreneurial models.

Chapter III **The sharing economy:
what opportunities does it offer
to vulnerable groups in society?**

One of the aims of the King Baudouin Foundation in producing this report was to explore whether the sharing economy could be a way of emancipating the more vulnerable members of society and stimulating their social progress. We considered those issues peculiar to the fight against poverty and those specific to the 'Poverty and Social Justice' section of the King Baudouin Foundation, and tried to pinpoint (or not) collaborative practices which are capable of providing solutions, services or tools in the battle against vulnerability.

In this third chapter, we therefore propose to deal with this question from three angles:

- finding out whether vulnerable people are interested in collaborative practices and whether they use them to improve their daily lives;
- the existence of innovative collaborative practices, focused on the vulnerable, and the need to provide ways of attracting people less used to this type of approach when creating and developing such practices;
- the general attitude of a few service managers concerning the opportunity to make collaborative practices more accessible to the vulnerable.

To do this, we collated information about each of these points using qualitative research methods (group and individual interviews), and tried to incorporate as wide a range as possible of professional and social backgrounds amongst the people and institutions we approached. Nevertheless, the lack of knowledge of sharing economy practices among those actively involved in the fight against poverty (and thus a very patchy, or even inexistent, grasp of these practices), ultimately restricted our interviews to people who were already giving some consideration to this sharing economy phenomenon. In fact, without naming them, a large number of associations, administrative services and social service federations claimed to give little or no thought to the sharing economy's stake in society.

This attitude doubtless also justifies such an exploratory report, as it can help to inform people about the phenomenon, its potential and its limits.

I. OF WHAT INTEREST IS THE SHARING ECONOMY TO VULNERABLE PEOPLE?

In order to evaluate to what extent the vulnerable are aware of, and participate in, schemes related to the sharing economy, we met with vulnerable people from Flanders as well as from the Wallonia-Brussels federation. In Flanders, we met forty-five people in vulnerable situations who are supported by the CPAS or CAW (social protection organisations) and ten members of these people's support teams (social workers, activity leaders, etc.). Around fifteen over-indebted people from a support group in the Brussels Capital region were also interviewed in this regard.

Forty-five users of the Flemish social protection organisations CPAS and CAW (in Leuven, Antwerp, Ghent, Hasselt and Turnhout) and around ten support workers from these organisations gave their opinions on a (non-exhaustive) list of existing schemes in Flanders in the area of the sharing economy (see appendix). Their knowledge of, use of and interest in the collaborative practices which were presented to them varied enormously from one category to another.

In general, they showed most interest in the area of collaborative consumption.

As far as food is concerned, social grocery stores and restaurants are services which are well-known and used by this sector of society. They are considered to be of great material help, and also enable the forging of social links. Food parcels are also familiar and used, but there were several comments about the variety of products distributed, as well as the way they are distributed in certain places, where people cannot access them discreetly. Collective vegetable gardens aroused interest, although none of those questioned were involved with these; in their opinion, such facilities could allow them to eat fresh, healthy products at low cost, to meet others and to create links, as long as such initiatives existed nearby and were organised by someone trustworthy, and as long as participants had the necessary physical capacity. Other good initiatives which were mentioned included food banks, but those which benefit associations rather than individuals. Schemes such as group purchasing (food or non-food), organic food baskets and pick-your-own farms were considered too onerous and aimed at social categories and income levels which were higher than theirs.

With regard to mobility and travel, the respondents talked in particular about public transport and did not mention possibilities such as car-sharing or alternative taxis such as Uber and Blablacar. Travel and holidays were considered to be a superfluous and inaccessible luxury, unless they were organised by associations offering packages at greatly subsidised prices.

The question of accommodation provoked a number of reactions, as everyone believed it to be an extremely sensitive subject, given its cost which weighs heavily on budgets, and the fact that social housing is often inaccessible. Collective housing or house-share schemes were thought to be interesting but were considered inaccessible due to administrative problems and financial penalties, even for those living with their own children. Social

house-share experiments carried out by social housing or Community Land Trust organisations aroused interest but no respondents were involved in them.

In terms of the sharing of goods and services, certain initiatives such as Les Petits Riens or Kringwinkels (charity shop style organisations) were known and used but were considered to have become too expensive. Donation banks and exchanges were more appreciated. Mutual help services (SEL in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation and Lets in Flanders) and other tool- or service-sharing sites were viewed as interesting but were little used by this sector of the population due to the technology barrier which prevents them from using sharing economy platforms, and also to a lack of skills and materials needed to participate in such schemes.

The people interviewed did not feel concerned by workspace-sharing schemes, as they did not have regular work. Neither did they mention the possibility of registering for this type of scheme in order to supplement their income.

The other group interviewed in the context of this exploratory research was gathered together by the Brussels support centre for debt mediation services – it is a support group for those living in situations of excessive debt. This support group is made up of around fifteen people who meet regularly to talk about their financial difficulties. These people find themselves in vulnerable situations because they have significant debts eating into their budget, but they are also familiar with long-term poverty due to a loss of work or an incapacitating illness. They are forced to struggle to meet basic needs, such as eating, dressing and getting out and about. It is important to note that the leaders of this support group have made them aware of the existence of collaborative practices which enable them to improve their everyday lives, and little by little, the members of the group have shown interest in these possibilities.

Like the vulnerable people interviewed in Flanders, their interests generally lie quite clearly in collaborative consumption. Given their extremely tight budgets, it is practices stemming from the ‘charity model’ which attract them the most.

Donation banks and collection points allow them access to goods which they would not be able to acquire via traditional economic exchange. They also rely on Repair Cafés to try to repair their everyday objects.

Participation in local mutual help services (SELS) remains rather theoretical as they feel that they have no skills to offer and that they are at odds with others in such networks, whom they term ‘bobos’ – middle class people who lead a bohemian lifestyle. Nevertheless, some members of the support group belong to a sewing workshop, where they exchange know-how and sew through necessity or for pleasure.

As far as food is concerned, one of the members helps to organise a ‘table d’hôte’ with fruit and vegetables left over from the morning market and which offers very low-cost meals. The whole group goes regularly to the social restaurant ‘Les Uns et les Autres’ in Molenbeek. The support group members make use of food parcels and often visit social groceries. One of the members works in a collective vegetable garden and is part of a purchasing group which buys organic food.

The group said that they do not use platforms such as Uber or Airbnb, as these are beyond their budget, and neither do they act as service providers, since they do not have a vehicle or housing that they can share.

Like the group of vulnerable people interviewed in Flanders, these over-indebted people felt that they could not easily access the internet, and are thus cut off from collaborative practices hosted on digital platforms.

II. IMPROVING THE SITUATION OF VULNERABLE PEOPLE AND MAKING THE SHARING ECONOMY MORE ACCESSIBLE TO THEM

We have also examined closely a number of sharing economy schemes in order to understand how they aim to improve the situation of vulnerable people, as well as the way in which some of these schemes establish mechanisms to try to attract the vulnerable and include them in these initiatives.

Some sharing economy schemes are based on digital platforms, which allow them to operate to greater effect. Some aim to impact the lives of vulnerable members of society.

This is particularly the case in the food sector, where food aid is becoming more and more in demand. In fact in Belgium, hundreds of thousands of people depend on food aid, go to social restaurants and grocery shops and benefit from emergency food parcels. By centralising the purchase of goods (varied produce and fresh fruit and vegetables) and storage for these organisations, **the social platform for food purchasing, Soli-Food**¹⁴, lowers costs by negotiating the best prices, facilitates the job of the different partners and promotes healthier and more local food. The organisations involved in this platform are: the Réseau des Épiceries Sociales (REPIS), a social grocery network represented by the Federation of Social Services (FDSS), the Belgian Red Cross, the CPAS (community support services) in Charleroi, Les Bons Villers and Uccle, the social grocery shop *Amphora* and the mutual aid service of St Gilles (AOP asbl). This structure is financed by private donations (Red Cross) and by subsidies. Another initiative in this same sector is **the platform Foodwe**, which was created by web development and multimedia professionals to fight against food waste. It is a not-for-profit association financed by individuals who wanted to start a concrete project to reduce food waste and is based on the ‘charity model’. Food available on the FoodWe platform is still suitable for consumption but cannot be sold as it is too close to its expiry date and as such can no longer be stored, delivered and sold to the public. Foods taken out of the traditional production chain for non-conformity are also included, for example the well-known ‘ugly fruit and vegetables’ which are perfectly edible but nevertheless thrown away. These are donated or sold at a discount to charitable organisations and delivered under optimal conditions, following safety and food hygiene regulations.

In the mobility sector, Taxistop, founded in 1975, is without doubt the forerunner in shared and social mobility services. This not-for-profit association has been attracting different types of people for over 40 years, from lone commuters and the elderly to hardened backpackers. The advent of internet and digital tools has however relaunched Taxistop into the sharing economy. In addition to services which until recently have been limited to a fairly closed community of carpoolers, Taxistop is now beginning to offer a much broader range of sharing services. Taking advantage of this swing from valuing ownership to valuing usage inspired by the sharing economy, Taxistop is

14 See more about this project at http://www.fdss.be/uploads/Aide_Alimentaire/Soli-Food.pdf

counting on its Cozycar project (formerly Autopia) to encourage neighbours to share cars. It is interesting to note that the French-speaking area of the country is lagging behind here, as this project was based on autodeelen.be, Taxistop's Flemish counterpart, which was created in 2002 and which has met with great success right across Flanders. Another project called Avira¹⁵ was recently launched by Taxistop with the more inclusive aim of targeting the sharing of cars adapted for people with reduced mobility (PRM). Given the huge expense involved in buying or adapting this type of vehicle, Avira aims to match up PRM users with health centres, residential services or individual owners of adapted vehicles. Nevertheless, Villo, Cambio and Taxistop, run by both private and public operators, are based on the same objectives of sharing and use and none of them has yet really managed to reach out to the most vulnerable; they remain focused on a very restricted and mostly young sector of the population. We should however mention 'Les Centrales des Moins Mobiles', a service for those with reduced mobility offered by Taxistop; here again, Flanders is ahead as the service has existed here since 1983, but it was not created in Wallonia and Brussels until 2008. It is aimed at those with limited income who have physical mobility problems. The service is based on a partnership between Taxistop, social services and local authorities wishing to organise this type of network and relies on volunteer drivers. The cost to users is relatively low: €10 annual membership and €0.34 per kilometre paid to the driver. The cost to the local authorities is €80 per year.

These are good examples of the impact that such initiatives can have on vulnerable people when they are focused on this specific group.

Group interviews with vulnerable people (see point I) show that these people can feel quite distant from some schemes which to them seem inaccessible or inappropriate to their level of poverty. We were interested to find out how those on the ground set about giving these people greater access to sharing economy initiatives. We focused on three examples: the Bees Coop, a participative supermarket; Le Tremplin, a not-for-profit association set up by social services in Dinant; and Eco Iris, an alternative currency created by social services in St Gilles.

The Bees Coop, the first participative supermarket, is a type of cooperative which aims to provide quality food at affordable prices, with the ambition of bringing together people from different social backgrounds. The idea is to allow all members of the cooperative, whatever their social origin and means, access to training to take part in the cooperative's activities on a voluntary basis (ordering, managing deliveries, stacking shelves and operating the cash tills) in order to reduce costs and allow everyone access to low prices. The Bees Coop is run by task forces, one of which is dedicated solely to social diversity. The managers of the cooperative have met with associations in St Josse and Schaerbeek (the cooperative's catchment area) which work with vulnerable and multi-cultural communities. The issue of food is quite an important one to these associations (e.g. women's groups, the Îlot day centre for the homeless which is undertaking a social economy project focusing on food, and social services in Schaerbeek). The Bees Coop is very keen to point out that it works very hard to ensure that it does not become a trendy place intended only for the well-off. A study has begun into the Bees Coop's solidarity

15 http://www.autopartage.be/avira_fr

mechanisms and a research project entitled FALCOOP - favouring access to quality, sustainable food for diverse urban communities by setting up local cooperative-style supermarkets - has been undertaken by Bees Coop together with the Brussels Free University's Centre for Environmental Economic and Social Studies. This research is financed by Innoviris and aims to analyse how to render sustainable food truly accessible and to understand the social and cultural barriers to fairer consumption. Its methodology is based in particular on working in partnership with local associations.

Another example is **the not-for-profit association Tremplin**, set up by the CPAS (social services) in Dinant in 1992 to help vulnerable people to reintegrate socially and vocationally into society, by creating services to respond to needs in the city. These services provide reintegration and training for around fifty marginalised people, in particular through 'Article 60' contracts (which provide work for those who have never had a job). There is a wide variety of activities available: second hand clothes shops, sewing workshops, launderettes, removals services, furniture and household appliance shops, repair workshops, furniture restoration and chair upholstery workshops, bicycle workshops, etc. Working in partnership with the CPAS, some services, such as the launderette and the removals service, are reserved exclusively for the very poorest. The second hand clothes and furniture shops and the bicycle workshop are open to everyone and charge very reasonable prices, thus making them accessible to all and creating diversity amongst those who use these services. According to those in charge, this mixing of different populations is evident in those services which are open to all.

On another level is the creation of an alternative or complementary currency, the Eco Iris, launched in 2012 by Bruxelles-Environnement (formerly IBGE). The principle was based on distributing Eco Iris vouchers in exchange for proof of environmentally-friendly actions, such as taking part in a collective composting scheme, creating a 'green roof', having a bicycle repaired in a recognised workshop, using public transport, etc. Eco Iris vouchers were distributed in return for all these actions and the vouchers could then be spent in places which accepted this currency (e.g. book shops, bars, second hand shops, organic food shops, etc.). It was a way of rewarding environmentally-friendly gestures and of favouring the local economy and short distribution circuits.

This experiment was halted in 2014 due to the change in government following local elections in Brussels, but also because use of the currency was much less widespread than expected. At the CPAS in Forest, a partner in this pilot project, the idea was to include vulnerable people in order to avoid the scheme applying only to those who were already aware of environmental problems. Besides the failure in general terms of the scheme, the managers of CPAS Forest cited the difficulty involved in mobilising people far removed from these types of issue, underlining the high costs in terms of finance and especially in terms of working time necessary to achieve what turned out to be rather poor results. The initiative was well-intentioned and based on sound principles, but it seemed a little out of touch with the realities of CPAS's work, which is confronted with growing demand and decreasing means.

III. INTEREST IN AND RETICENCE TOWARDS THE SHARING ECONOMY

As part of this exploratory study, we also wanted to hear from different people involved in supporting the poorest in society about the sharing economy as defined here. To do this, we contacted a number of people working in this field but we did not receive many responses to our requests. Among poverty support networks, public service federations, inter-federal federations and associations more directly connected with vulnerable communities, awareness of the sharing economy seems quite undeveloped.¹⁶

Despite this, a few comments emerged concerning the sharing economy and its impact on the poorest in society from the interviews and other research that we were able to carry out.

Interest in this model:

- The sharing economy can improve the situation of vulnerable people, as it allows access to various goods and services at low or even no cost. It constitutes a concrete response to difficulties relating to some people's restricted budgets.
- The sharing economy to a certain extent calls into question the current consumption pattern - an economic model based on mass consumption. Ultimately, it allows us to imagine different ways of sharing values within our society.
- It also enables us to value a more local economy, based more on short distribution circuits.
- Participation in sharing economy initiatives creates social bonds, as well as social recognition between peers, and allows people to regain knowledge.
- The question of a basic income or a universal benefit raised by some ideologues in relation to the development of the sharing economy could allow it to establish another societal model, which would no longer necessarily be based only on work, but also on participation.

Reticence with regard to this model:

- Quite a few of those involved in work on the ground claimed to be worried about the appropriation of the collaborative model by operators with the objective of making a profit, such as Airbnb and Uber. Companies like this are thought to hijack approaches

¹⁶ We were able to contact and interview Jean Spinette (PS party), President of the CPAS in St Gilles and President of the convention of the 19 Brussels CPAS organisations, Stéphane Roberti (Ecolo party), President of the CPAS in Forest, Christine Mahy, Secretary General of the Wallonian network against poverty and Christine Steinbach, President of the Equipes Populaires, a popular education movement linked to the Christian Workers' Movement and aimed at the working classes in general.

based on collaboration, mutual aid and interpersonal exchange of goods and services and use them for commercial purposes.

- In so doing, these types of organisation are believed to unpick the existing economic fabric and the protected status enjoyed by workers. Many fear that workers' social protection will be called into question, since the model advocated by such organisations is a long way from the concept of collective solidarity through taxation, and the organisation of work regulated by social concertation.
- For quite a few stakeholders, the combination of a commandeering of the social sharing economy by capital-oriented operators and the will of some to see the state withdraw a large number of public policies constitute a danger for our already fragile social model.
- Another reason for mistrust, this time more general with regard to public policies, is the tendency towards the shifting of a model based on structured, clear social policies aimed at reducing poverty towards a model based on charity, the goodwill of community stakeholders or individual initiatives using crowdfunding to fight the insecurity of the poorest.
- A further fear arises from the fact that the sharing economy, particularly when platform-based, is aimed at sections of the population which are similar and mutually reinforcing, leading to the risk that the most in need will be excluded from this type of networking. It is thus necessary to devise ways of raising awareness and of bringing the vulnerable closer to these collaborative practices, including reducing the existing marked digital divisions.
- For some of those interviewed, the issue of a basic income or universal benefit touched on by some ideologues in connection with the development of the sharing economy risks a reduction in the rights and needs covered by the current social security system and which would in no way reduce existing inequality.

CONCLUSIONS

Collaborative projects can be found in many areas of the social sector. Digital technology has helped to modify practices and usage. In certain areas such as food, mobility and the fight against food waste, social action and collaborative practices can join forces. New stakeholders and new methods of financing, recycling and redistributing etc. are emerging in this sector.

We must now determine how to:

- avoid creating competition between all these initiatives and stakeholders but instead find a way of pooling them and encouraging collaboration between them;
- prepare the sector for changes in scale brought about by the sharing economy by providing ways for different stakeholders to meet and by developing local working groups together with these stakeholders;
- avoid creating competition between stakeholders in the sharing economy and those in the social economy;
- seize opportunities offered by the multiplying effect of digital platforms;
- devise a way for large and small platforms to co-exist.

In his study entitled *Cinquante nuances de partage* (Fifty Shades of Sharing), Gaetan Vanloqueren raises seven issues for the sharing economy of tomorrow:

- 1) Understand the scale of potential transformations;
- 2) Move away from a strictly defensive position;
- 3) Recognise the diversity of different models;
- 4) Do not leave the commercial sharing economy to ‘venture capitalists’;
- 5) Forge alliances;
- 6) Deal with political choices one by one;
- 7) Catch up in the area of digital technology¹⁷.

There are other very specific lines of thought, such as the 65 measures for the sharing economy, from the memorandum *Deel de toekomst, 65 maatregelen voor de deel-economie in een veerkrachtig Vlaanderen* (A Share in the Future; 65 measures for the sharing economy in a flexible Flanders), published in February 2014 by a group of Flemish social and environmental organisations (Bon Beter Leefmilieu, Netwerk Bewust Verbruiken, Taxistop, Autopia, Samenhuizen, Velt and Voedseldealms). These 65

¹⁷ *Cinquante nuances de partage: sept enjeux pour l'économie collaborative de demain* (Fifty Shades of Sharing: Seven Issues for Tomorrow's Sharing Economy), Gaëtan Van Loqueren, 2014 analysis, downloadable on the following website: www.saw.be: http://www.saw-b.be/spip/IMG/pdf/a1415_transformer_ecocol.pdf

recommendations touch on the different areas of the sharing economy and propose concrete measures to promote and develop these types of practice.¹⁸

The issues which must absolutely be addressed in order to bring about the collaborative initiatives of tomorrow must without doubt involve partnerships between sharing economy pioneers, social entrepreneurs, public authorities and...the people. While collaborative practices lead us to reinvent the economy and social welfare, this revolution or evolution in practice and in our ways of consuming, travelling, moving around, etc. also results in new economic and political roles for consumers. To a certain extent, the sharing economy reaffirms people's attachment to common goods, to projects set up for them, and to participation in measures which historically have come under the remit of the state but which can nowadays also be shared out at other levels. This encourages even wider and doubtless more paradigmatic reflection on the rethinking of our exclusively work-based economy, by giving value to service, exchange and sharing.

18 *These 65 measures for the sharing economy* have been translated and published on the following website: <http://www.etopia.be/spip.php?article2655>.

APPENDIX. INVENTORY OF SHARING ECONOMY INITIATIVES

A. IN FRENCH-SPEAKING BELGIUM

I. Collaborative consumption

The Réseau des Consommateurs Responsables (Network of Responsible Consumers) has pinpointed on an interactive map all the responsible consumption projects in operation in Wallonia and Brussels. In total, there are over 900 initiatives: sharing, mutual help and grouped buying projects, Repair Cafés, donation banks, SELs (local exchange systems), Giveboxes, etc. See all these projects on the map at:
<http://www.asblrcr.be/carto>.

a. Food

- Grouped purchases from local producers
 - **Gasap**, the Brussels network for social or collective buying groups (GAS/GAC)
There is a **GAC** in Brussels which is part of the Protestant social centre and which focuses on the vulnerable:
<http://www.csp-psc.be/content/groupe-dachats-collectifs>
 - The not-for-profit association **Réseau des Consommateurs Responsables**, (Network of Responsible Consumers) - social or collective buying groups in Wallonia: <http://www.asblrcr.be/gac>
- Sales outlets and cooperative supermarkets/short distribution circuits
 - **La ruche qui dit oui!**: <https://laruchequiditoui.be/>
 - **Bees-coop in Brussels**
Currently being set up based on cooperative supermarket models in New York and Paris (La Louve): <http://bees-coop.be/>
 - **Coopéco in Charleroi**
Currently being set up based on cooperative supermarket models in New York and Paris (La Louve): <http://coopeco2.be/>
- Recycling, redistribution and campaigns against food waste
 - **Soli-food platform (Belgium)**
Platform managed by the FDSS (Federation of Social Services) for group buying and redistribution, aimed at social grocery shops:
<http://www.fdss.be/index.php?page=soli-food>
 - **bourseauxdons.be platform (Belgium)**
Platform managed by the FDSS (Federation of Social Services) to collect donations of food: <http://www.bourseauxdons.be>
 - **FoodWe** (Belgium): <https://www.foodwe.be/>
 - **Re-fresh** (Brussels): <http://www.refresh-brussels.be/>

- **Recup' Kitchen** (Brussels): www.recupkitchen.be en <https://www.growfunding.be/bxl/recup-kitchen-fr>
- **Collectactif'** (Brussels): <https://www.facebook.com/CollectActif/>
- **Soréal** (Mons)
Led by the Mons-Borinage urban social support system, Soréal, a social food network, is made up of the Mons, Quaregnon, Frameries and St Ghislain CPAS (social services) and the following associations: ESOP in Cuesmes, l'Entraide in Ghlin, the St Augustin hostel and the food bank in Tournai. Their objective is to collect foodstuffs in shops and to redistribute them, as quickly as possible for perishable goods in particular. <http://www.rsumb.be/relais-social-24.html>
- **Reverval** (Verviers)
Similar to the Soréal project: <http://www.relais-social-verviers.be/>

b. Mobility/Tourism

- Carpooling
 - **Taxistop** (Autopia, Avira): taxistop.be
 - **Schoolpool** (carpooling for school runs): schoolpool.be
 - **Collecto**: collecto.be
- Car hire/service
 - **ZenCar**: zencar.eu
 - **Shareyourauto**: shareyourauto.com
 - **Caramigo**: caramigo.be/fr
 - **Carasap**: carasap.be
 - **Uber**: uber.com
 - **Cambio**: cambio.be
 - **Villo**: villo.be
- Parking
 - **Carambla**: www.carambla.com

c. Tourism

- **Couchsurfing**: www.couchsurfing.com/
- **Guesttogoest**: www.guesttogoest.fr/
- **Airbnb**: www.fr.airbnb.be/
- **WarmShowers**: www.fr.warmshowers.org/
- **Tourisme autrement**: www.tourisme-autrement.be

d. Housing

- **Un toit deux âges** (Wallonie): www.1toit2ages.be
- **Community land trust**: communitylandtrust.wordpress.com
- **House sharing**

e. Local services (gardening, odd jobs, etc.)

- **Listminuut**

<https://listminut.be/listminute>

Internet platform which brings together service providers and potential clients in the same area in return for payment

f. Circular economy

- **Worms**

Collective compost: www.wormsasbl.org/

- **Rotor**

Recycling of renovation and construction materials:
www.rotordb.org/

- **Le réseau des ressourceries**

second hand goods network

- **Les magasins de seconde main**

(Rouff, Les Petits riens, etc.)

g. Leisure

- **Amuuze**: www.amuuze.com/

II. Collaborative production

Places to exchange knowledge and share production. The development of work- and knowledge-sharing models (co-working, fab labs, learning platforms, MOOCs etc.) as well as new technological tools (e.g. 3D printers) means that it is now possible to produce prototype goods at low cost.

a. Co-working

- **Transforma bxl**: www.transformabxl.be

- **Betacowork**: www.betacowork.com

b. Media

- **Médor**: www.medor.coop

- **Whatfor, Ezelstad (Dewey)**: www.whatfor.be/

c. Software and free IT services

- **Cassiopea**: www.cassiopea.org

- **Domainepublic.net**: www.domainepublic.net

- **Linux, Open office**, enz.

III. Collaborative financing

Participative financing platforms include:

- **Growfunding**: www.growfunding.be

- **kisskissbankbank**: www.kisskissbankbank.com/

IV. Collaborative knowledge

The Wikipedia platform is one of the pioneers in the social use of digital technology.

Today, there are also several **collaborative mapping projects** (open street map).

a. Mapping

- « **Bruxelles mode d'emploi** » (a guide to Brussels), developed by DEWEY¹⁹
A participative map showing all the collaborative services offered by individuals (mutual help, sharing and collaboration projects and low cost services) and all social support initiatives relating to access to rights, healthcare, home help, etc. The project aims to show that in Brussels, everything can be borrowed, recycled or shared: housing, food, work tools, transport, living space, home care resources, legal aid, etc. Today, the map includes almost 3,200 points of interest:

b. Internet community

- **Facebookpagina's en groepen** (themed groups and pages: sortir à BXL, BXL à récup', BXL à louer, etc.),
- **Mailing-list** (Bertha, Craigslist enz.)

c. Sharing economy and social start-up incubators/accelerators

- **Ouishare**: <http://ouishare.net/fr>
- **Hellosaring**: <http://www.hellosaring.org/contact/>
- **Makesense** (social entrepreneurship): <http://www.sensecube.cc/brussels/>
- **Coop-city**. As part of its social economy work, the ERDF programme supports the creation of Coop-city, a new ideas incubator for the social and sharing economy. Run by SAW-B, Bruxelles-Emergences (JobYourself), Febecoop, ICHEC-PME, Impulse and Solvay-Entrepreneurs, COOP CITY will provide the city of Brussels with a centre for social, cooperative and collaborative entrepreneurship. Acting as an incubator, it will be a training and support hub for social entrepreneurs. It will also offer them space for co-working and will assist in raising awareness of innovation and of new entrepreneurial models.
- **Citizen lab**: citizenlab.co
- **Refugees citizen lab** - hackathon -a social laboratory for debating solutions to the reception of migrants.
On 1 February 2016, 'La Petite Ecole' (The Little School) was founded. This is a 100% social, participative school, run by volunteers for children waiting for school places. <http://redlabopedagogique.tumblr.com/>

¹⁹ <http://maps.dewey.be/>

B. IN DUTCH-SPEAKING BELGIUM

I. Collaborative consumption

a. Food

- **Voedselteams**
A not-for-profit association made up of local teams of farmers, volunteer consumers and paid workers, to sell local organic farm produce to local groups. Active in 175 places across Flanders. www.voedselteams.be
- **VOKO in Ghent**: a similar initiative, whose list of products includes more than just fresh fruit and vegetables: www.anarchie.be/voko/
- **Food banks**
Volunteers collect surplus food for the poor from industry and distribution chains and share it out across various organisations. Food was distributed in this way to no fewer than 130,000 people in Belgium in 2014 via more than 600 organisations. www.foodbanks.be

Also:

- **Al Ikram**
a similar initiative but focused on people of foreign origin in Antwerp and the surrounding area: www.al-ikram.be (distribution of halal food and clothing and other activities).
- **Moeders voor moeders** (www.moedersvoormoeders.be, in Antwerp and Turnhout);
Poverello (www.poverello.be, in several towns).
At both Moeders voor moeders and Poverello, visitors can also chat over a cup of coffee with other visitors or with volunteers.
- **Free hot meals**
Kamiano (Antwerp). Free meals offered by the Christian community of San Egidio in Antwerp. It is intended for illegal immigrants and the homeless but everyone is welcome: www.santegidio.be
- **Community kitchens/Social restaurants**
Community kitchens: from time to time, volunteers set up a community kitchen, open to everyone, in exchange for a small contribution or help. They use simple, seasonal produce: www.brugsalternatiefforum.be/volkskeukens/ (see also 'cuisines populaires' (community kitchens); these spontaneous initiatives sometimes disappear as quickly as they appeared).

Social restaurants: these exist in many Flemish communities and work according to different principles. Some have just one price and clients must

prove their right to meals; in others, with fewer subsidies, there are several different prices, depending on income levels. www.vakantieparticipatie.be

- **Collective vegetable gardens**

Initiatives which bring together people who practice ecological gardening. There are currently 73 collective vegetable gardens, worked on by more than 1,800 families. www.velt.nu/samentuinen

In a few municipalities, local residents' associations or social projects have established collective gardens for their members (for example Rabot, which is in the process of being set up in Ghent).

- **Pick-your-own farms (Community supported agriculture)**

On a pick-your-own farm, members pay an annual subscription which covers production costs. In exchange, they can come and pick/collect part of the harvest each week. There are currently around ten of these farms in Flanders. www.communitysupportedagriculture.be or www.zelfoogstboerderijen

- **Food donation exchange**

This scheme brings together two types of partner: food companies which have unsold or surplus food and social or food aid organisations. Such schemes exist in several municipalities, and are often led by an individual, a local not-for-profit association (e.g. Ikram in Antwerp, or the priest Rik Konings in Hasselt) or by traders in collaboration with social restaurants or neighbourhood associations. The not-for-profit association Komosie offers support for these schemes, but it is a very new organisation. www.schenkingsbeurs.be

- **Buurderij**

A network of local producers/farmers and consumers who wish to buy directly from the producer (inspired by the organisation La Ruche Qui Dit Oui). In Flanders, it exists so far only in Meise and Antwerp. www.boerenburen.be or www.rechtvanbijdeboer.be

A similar initiative: **De fermentisten in Antwerp** (www.defermetisten.be)

- **Thuisafgehaald**

An online platform which matches people with surplus food with those who need a cheap, ready-prepared meal. Several possibilities in various places. www.thuisafgehaald.be

b. Mobility/Tourism

- **Taxistop**

An organisation which puts people travelling to a certain place by car in contact with others who are looking for a way of reaching the same destination. Taxistop also organises carpooling for commuters (carpool), car sharing

(Cambio) and house exchanges (homelink): www.taxistop.be; www.carpool.be; www.cambio.be; www.homelink.be.

- **Uber**
A private taxi service which allows people to offer their services as a driver in return for payment. There are several hundred Uber drivers in Brussels.
www.uber.com/nl/
- **Car sharing**
These platforms enable the lending and borrowing of cars. They are aimed at people who own a car and do not use it all the time, and those who do not own a car but would like to use one occasionally.
Registered members can find a car, or someone renting a car, near their home.
<https://tapazz.com>; or www.cambio.be; or www.autodelen.net
- **Couchsurfing**
An online platform for people offering/looking for free accommodation for a few days and a way of getting to know people from the country they are visiting.
www.couchsurfing.org (similar organisations: www.bewelcome.org; www.nederlands.hospitalityclub.org)
- **Airbnb**
A platform for offering or finding a room, an apartment or a house for a short stay. The platform currently has accommodation on offer in 190 countries and over 34,000 towns and cities. Last year, there were around 3,600 lodgings in Flanders. www.airbnb.be.
- **House exchange**
House exchanges, mainly for holidays. An online platform puts people from all around the world in contact with each other. www.homelink.be (similar websites: www.huizenruil.com; www.homeexchange.com; www.gocampr.com).

c. Housing

- **Cohousing or grouped housing**
A form of sustainable housing; residents join forces and provide, alongside private space, communal areas (living/meeting room, washing machines, shed, bicycle parking, garden, etc.). It often goes hand in hand with car sharing and joint maintenance. There are around 70 such schemes in Flanders.
www.samenuizen.be
- **Woningdelen**
This organisation brings together those wishing to share living space.
www.woningdelen.be (similar: www.allesthuis.be)
- **Community Land Trust**
A type of housing on community land (for example a commune). Residents pay for their housing at affordable prices while the land remains the property of the

community. One such scheme has been set up in Brussels and similar schemes are being considered in a few other areas (e.g. the De Sijs cohousing project in Leuven). Still in its infancy. www.communitylandtrust.worldpress.com

- **Woningoppas**

This online platform connects people who do not want to leave their home, including their pets, unattended, and others who are looking for temporary accommodation. www.woningoppas.be

d. Exchange of goods and services

- **Lets**

Short for 'Local exchange and trading system', this is an exchange of services along the lines of 'I'll do something for you and you do something for me'. This can be anything from babysitting to hairdressing, cooking or gardening. 'Payment' is made using a virtual currency (the Wallonian counterpart is CommunityForge). Many Flemish municipalities have a local Lets group which has its own currency: ecus in Leuven, 'torekes' in Ghent, 'troeven' in Turnhout and 'handjes' in Antwerp. www.letsvlaanderen.be

- **Peerby**

This platform is for lending and borrowing tools. Users indicate their location and their needs on the website and can find someone who lends nearby. www.peerby.be

e. Second hand and repair schemes

- **Kringwinkels**

A chain of shops which collect and recycle clothes, selling them on at very affordable prices through social workshops. There are 127 such shops in Flanders. www.dekringwinkel.be

- **Repair cafés**

A meeting place where people repair broken objects together. It is free to take all kinds of items to be repaired and it is also possible to learn from volunteers how to repair things. There are 38 Repair Cafés in Flanders. www.repaircafe.be

- **Donation banks**

On given dates, you can display things you no longer need, or look through and take away things for free. Flemish websites can be found by typing 'geefpleinen + [the name of your municipality]'.

- **Clothes exchanges**

On given dates, you can exchange clothes you no longer wear for other second hand clothes. Flemish websites can be found by typing 'kledingruil + [the name of your municipality]'.

II. Collaborative production

a. Work

- **Office sharing**

Offers the possibility of sharing rented office space with others and is cheaper and more sociable than renting an office alone.

Examples of such schemes: www.burooz.be; www.indiancaps.be;
www.factoryforty.be/nl/

Overview of various schemes at

www.bewustverbruiken.be/artikel/gedeelde-werkruimtes-een-overzicht

b. Media

<http://www.bewustverbruiken.be/artikel/>

[deelmogelijkheden-voor-media-en-cultuur-een-overzicht](http://www.bewustverbruiken.be/artikel/deelmogelijkheden-voor-media-en-cultuur-een-overzicht)

III. Participative finance models

There are different platforms for participative finance models. An overview can be found at: <http://www.bewustverbruiken.be/artikel/>

[economische-modellen-rond-sharing-een-overzicht](http://www.bewustverbruiken.be/artikel/economische-modellen-rond-sharing-een-overzicht)

IV. Exchange of knowledge about the sharing economy

The Netwerk Bewust Verbruiken (gedeelddoor.be) is a central organisation in Flanders -

also <http://www.bewustverbruiken.be/artikel/>

[kennis-en-vaardigheden-delen-een-overzicht](http://www.bewustverbruiken.be/artikel/kennis-en-vaardigheden-delen-een-overzicht)

An organisation which is not specific to Flanders is: <http://p2pfoundation.net/>

<http://new-commons.blogspot.be/>: This network is aimed at platforms which plan to undertake a project together with others (a 'common' is a platform for doing things together).



King Baudouin Foundation,
public benefit foundation
Rue Brederodestraat 21 B-1000 Brussels
info@kbs-frb.be
T. +32-2-500 45 55
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an opportunity for the poorest?