Is the sharing economy living up to its sustainability promise?

Aurélien Acquier,
Associate Professor, ESCP Europe
aacquier@escpeurope.eu

European Economic and Social Committee
– Public hearing – March, 2017, the 1st
A research program on the sharing economy

“The environmental and social impacts of sharing economy”

Academic Partners

NGO partners

Aurélien Acquier (aacquier@escpeurope.eu; @aacquier)
Sharing economy (SE) initiatives exemplify disruptive organizational innovations based on digital models, that may contribute to the transition towards low-carbon societies.

1. How green is the sharing economy?

2. Understanding SE organizational models to understand (and regulate) their sustainability impacts.
A green narrative within the Sharing economy:

Excess / idle capacity

Intensifying resource use

A solution to boost circular economy business models based on functionnality and access

Digital platforms

- Renting?
- Lending?
- Re-selling?

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An attractive story, but…

• Customer behaviors:
  – From owners to clients: shifts in behaviors
  – Substitution effects with more eco-friendly products/services (car-sharing VS train)
  – Rebound effects: how do people use the money saved through sharing economy?
  – P2P re-selling platforms may intensify hyperconsumption

• The back-office of the sharing economy:
  – The impact of transport and logistics
  – The impact of digital infrastructure

see Acquier, Carbone and Demailly (2016)
1. How green is the sharing economy?

2. Understanding SE organizational models to understand (and regulate) their sustainability impacts
Sharing economy: an umbrella concept

Collaborative economy

On demand / gig economy

Collaborative consumption

Alternative consumption

Access economy

Gift economy

Functional /circular economy

Peer to peer economy

Holacracy & collective governance

Crowd-based economy

Collaborative economy

Sharing economy

Aurélien Acquier (aacquier@escpeurope.eu; @aacquier)
The feel good / fell bad story of the sharing economy

Aurélien Acquier (aacquier@escpeurope.eu; @aacquier)

26th January 2016, Paris (Porte Maillot)
A typology of SE organizational models

Towards mutualization and access

- **Commoners**
- **Matchmakers**
  - **Mission-driven platforms**
- **Shared Infrastructure providers**

**Purpose:** extended value creation

**Sustain**
- High sustainability promise
- Issues: scaling the initiative, lack of access to capital and professionalization

**Shape**
- Functional economy (access VS. ownership)
- Capital intensive
  - May require public/private collaboration

**Regulate**
- Market driven platforms
- Environmental impacts are unintended by-products
- High growth potential => important social and environmental externalities and controversies

**Source:** Acquier, Carbone & Massé (2017)
• The relationship between sharing economy and environmental efficiency is complex

• Beware of technological solutionism (Morozof, 2013)

• Need to think the diversity of SE organizations:
  – Sharing economy: make it green!
  – Pay attention to « hybrid organizations »

• Beyond the environmental, huge social challenges (unequality, power, transformation of work)
A few references


- Acquier, A.; Carbone V.; Massé, D. (2016), *Framing the sharing Economy – a business model perspective*, Egos conference


Back-up slides
A typology of SE organizational models

Purpose: extended value creation

Towards mutualization and access

**Commoners**

**Mission-driven platforms**

Peer to peer decentralization

**Shared Infrastructure providers**

**Matchmakers**

Purpose: economic value creation

Legend
- I: Initiative
- C: Consumers
- C': Contributors
- P: Peers

Source: Acquier, Carbone & Massé (2017)
A typology of SE organizational models

Commoners
- Wikipedia
- Open Source Ecology
- IFIXIT

Mission-driven platforms
- Repair Cafe
- Too Good To Go
- The Food Assembly
- Peerby

Shared Infrastructure providers
- TechShop
- Autolib
- Zipcar
- Communauto

Matchmakers
- BlaBlaCar
- Etsy
- Airbnb
- Uber

Purpose: extended value creation

Towards mutualization and access

Peer to peer decentralization

Purpose: economic value creation
From promises to impacts

Purpose: economic value creation

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Peer to peer decentralization

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Matchmakers

Mission-driven platforms

Commoners

Source: Acquier, Carbone & Massé (2017)