

More than profit: a collaborative economy with a social purpose

Preliminary review of how collaborative economy models can help address social challenges in Europe and the characteristics of current activities

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About this paper

In April 2016, the Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG Growth) commissioned Nesta to produce a briefing paper on Europe's social purpose collaborative economy. This request is part of a broader effort by DG Growth to understand and respond to Europe's growing collaborative economy, including the publication of guidance and policy recommendations in June 2016. In response to this, the authors have endeavoured to make sense of Europe's social purpose collaborative economy, its current state and key actors, as well as major challenges and opportunities for its development.

The paper presents a brief overview of current literature and expert views related to Europe's social purpose collaborative economy, undertaken over May and June 2016. Desk research focused on research studies, policy documents, evaluations, and grey literature addressing the social impact driven elements of the collaborative economy in Europe. To complement this, we interviewed a selection of professional and topic experts who were familiar with social-purpose elements of the collaborative economy, or the collaborative economy within different European regions.

Interviewees were: Dalma Berkovics, OuiShare, Collaborative Consumption, and Traity; Joana Breidenbach co-founder, betterplace.org and founder, Betterplace Lab; Professor Boyd Cohen; Elena Denaro, PhD researcher, London School of Economics; Tomas Diez, Fab City Research Laboratory; Professor Christian Iaione, LUISS University, and founder, GovLab; Michael Knobloch, director, Fairmondo; Dr Vasilis Kostakis, senior research fellow, Tallinn University of Technology, and research coordinator, P2P Lab; Dr Ioannis Nasioulas, director, Social Economy Institute; Olivier Schulbaum, co-founder, Goteo.org; Pieter van de Glind, co-founder Share NL, and; Christian Villum, project lead, Danish Design Centre and former global community lead, OKF. We would like to thank these experts for their invaluable insights and contributions.

As ever, all errors and omissions remain our own.

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CONTENTS

Introduction.....	5
Understanding Europe's social purpose collaborative economy.....	6
Defining the collaborative economy	6
What can we say about Europe's collaborative economy?	8
Key trends in Europe's social purpose collaborative economy.....	9
1) Social purpose is not a specific model.....	9
2) Sharing intangible assets and tangible resources	9
3) A wide variety of practice, with little dedicated support.....	10
4) Little collaboration with existing movements and institutions.....	10
5) Cities and urban initiatives are key proponents.....	11
6. Funding and politics are shaping opportunities	12
Discussion	12
Towards a typology for Europe's social purpose collaborative economy	13
What qualifies as social purpose collaborative economy activity?.....	13
Key features.....	15
Looking ahead: opportunities, challenges and recommendations	17
Opportunities	17
Challenges.....	18
Recommendations.....	19
Appendix: examples of Europe's social purpose collaborative economy	21
Collaborative market places and cooperatives with a social focus.....	21
LastMinuteSottoCasa – working with shopkeepers to reduce foodwaste in Italy.....	21
Fairmondo – the cooperatively owned ethical market place.....	21
City-based social purpose collaborative economy initiatives	22
LabGov – piloting the city as commons in Italy	22
Peerby – connecting communities through sharing.....	22
Collaborative finance initiatives	23
Betri Reykjavik – collaborative decision making in Reykjavik, Iceland.....	23
Madame Mayor I have an idea – participatory budgeting in Paris	23
Collaborative and sustainable food systems.....	24
Food Assembly/La ruche qui dit oui - reducing food waste in france.....	24
Open source technology in agricultural production.....	24
Sharing tangible assets and resources	25
Refugees Welcome - Airbnb for refugees	25

FreeBird Club – house sharing targeting those over 50	26
Guifinet - a network for sharing internet in rural Spain	26
Using collaborative models to share intangible assets and resources.....	27
Wikihouse - a collaborative model for designing and building housing.....	27
Economy of Hours - a timebank for sharing time and skills	27
Open Ministry - opening up the Finish parliament to citizen ideas	28
Addressing health and social care challenges	28
Thuisafgehaald/Shareyourmeal – a platform for sharing meals in the Netherlands.....	28
Good Gym - combining exercising and visits to the elderly	29
Casserole Club - a meal sharing service that addresses isolation and loneliness in the UK	29
References.....	30

INTRODUCTION

The collaborative economy is a rapidly growing market in Europe. The European Commission in its agenda for the collaborative economy noted that the collaborative economy offers future benefits to EU member states.¹ Some estimates put the potential economic gain linked with a better use of resources through sharing and collaboration in Europe at €572 billion.²

Looking beyond economic gains, the collaborative economy can also be a vehicle for achieving triple bottom line impacts, and help address societal challenges. However, these non-financial benefits have received limited attention from policy makers, funders, and researchers to date. As Europe's collaborative economy grows in size and influence, how can we ensure it has a positive impact for participants and society more generally? While for-profit companies of the collaborative economy have actively sought to demonstrate their impact and lobby for favourable conditions, comparatively little has been said about the specificities of socially driven initiatives and platforms.

The research identified a number of key opportunities and challenges facing Europe's social purpose collaborative economy. Opportunities include reducing cost of delivering and increasing the scale and reach of initiatives that address social challenges. Alongside this, examples from our study have demonstrated how collaborative models can help develop more flexible solutions to niche or local needs, while involving new people, assets, and skills.

The main challenge is to ensure access and equality in the collaborative economy, as online collaborative economy market places favour those with disposable income or assets as well as those who have digital skills.

Following on from this the research, the authors have identified a number of recommendations to support and encourage the development of Europe's social purpose collaborative economy. These include the following:

- Identify barriers to uptake of social purpose collaborative economy models, and consider how they can be addressed. Invest in infrastructure solutions that make it easier for organisations to engage with and use collaborative models to address social challenges.
- Capture and spread best practice across Europe and promote collaboration between collaborative economy practitioners and movements/organisations with a social mission. Building on this, invest in supportive infrastructures such as training and skills development common infrastructures, spaces and other forms of support to enable more people and organisations to develop the skills and capacity needed to make the most of collaborative economy models.
- Fund research and pilots that develop an understanding of both the social and financial impacts of social purpose models and establish metrics which measure impact more systematically.

UNDERSTANDING EUROPE'S SOCIAL PURPOSE COLLABORATIVE ECONOMY

What can we say about Europe's social purpose collaborative economy? Following a review of relevant literature, and interviews with experts, this chapter outlines key insight into elements of Europe's collaborative economy that seek to deliver positive social and societal benefits. Before considering this particular area, however, we must first make sense of the collaborative economy.

DEFINING THE COLLABORATIVE ECONOMY

The collaborative economy covers a wide range of activities, from crowdfunding platforms to websites for sharing clothes and books. A number of different terms – such as the *sharing economy*, *gig economy* and *collaborative consumption* – have been used to describe these activities, and the trends they represent. Similarly, adjacent terms like *digital social innovation* cover many of the same trends that characterise the collaborative economy, such as using online marketplaces and using digital technology to mobilise large groups of people and resources.³

This report bases its definition of the collaborative economy on Nesta's landmark report *Making Sense of the Collaborative Economy* (2014),⁴ which defines the collaborative economy as having five traits - *enabled by internet technologies, connecting distributed networks of people and/or assets, making use of the idling capacity of tangible and intangible assets, encouraging meaningful interactions and trust, and embracing openness, inclusivity and the commons*.⁵ Building on these traits, the study outlines how the collaborative economy can be understood through four overarching types of activity:

- **Collaborative consumption:** Gaining access to goods or services through bartering, renting, lending, trading, leasing, exchanging, reselling and swapping.
- **Collaborative production:** Groups or networks of individuals collaborate to design, produce or distribute goods
- **Collaborative learning:** Learning experiences that are open to anyone and where people share resources and knowledge to learn together.
- **Collaborative finance:** Funding, lending and investment services offered outside of traditional financial institutions.

More recently, the European Commission offered a more precise definition of the collaborative economy in their communication *A European agenda for the collaborative economy*.⁶ This definition uses collaborative business models and digital technology and key parameters for inclusion. While this definition recognises both for profit and not for profit models, it is primarily limited to forms of collaborative consumption.⁷

Definitions like these help to illustrate the range of activities occurring across the collaborative economy, however they also tend to rely on profit-driven examples. Nevertheless, several studies of the collaborative economy, such as *A Fair Share: Towards a New Collaborative Economy*⁸, have described how many of the features of profit-oriented models in the collaborative economy can be applied to address social challenges, support sustainable practices, and enable cultural understanding or civic engagement. For example, the Berlin Dinner Exchange⁹ and foodsharing.de use a collaborative consumption approach to turn food waste into meals for the community. Meanwhile, collaborative learning models have demonstrated that massive open online courses (MOOCs) can lower the bar to entry and cost of education,¹⁰ and citizen science approaches get more people involved in undertaking studies addressing major societal challenges, such as cancer research.¹¹

For collaborative finance, crowdfunding has proven a powerful tool to not just fund business loans and start-ups, but also community investment in civic assets and initiatives. As an example, the UK concept of community shares allows people to use online market places to invest in and own small parts of a community project, such as wind farms or community centres, which in 2015 facilitated £60 million worth of social investments.¹² Lastly, collaborative modes of production can include open source designs or shared workspaces, where people work together across geographic and expertise boundaries to iteratively create and improve designs for software, housing plans, and other things. Furthermore, Wikipedia is a ubiquitous example of taking a collaborative production approach to creating a common good.

Despite the variety of social purpose activities taking place within the collaborative economy, the experts we interviewed described how the majority of debate and policy discussions focused on a very narrow set of collaborative activities – in particular, two main companies (Uber and Airbnb) and their associated business models. This has two potentially negative consequences for other forms of collaborative economy platforms, including those with a social purpose. Firstly collaborative economy models operating with alternative models struggle to get attention from funders, policy makers, and press. As such, their innovative approaches and potential impact are not strongly associated with the public and policy zeitgeist of the collaborative economy. Secondly, the narrow focus has resulted in a strong, and often polarising, debate surrounding the collaborative economy models in general. In some cases, this has led to social purpose collaborative economy models experiencing unjustified negative associations.

Language is important as it shapes our understanding and opinions. Present definitions of the collaborative economy seem to extend naturally to social purpose models; however, public discussion is still limited to a narrow set of examples within the collaborative economy. This needs to be addressed through expanded definitions and distinguished terms for underrepresented models, as well as through broader focus on the part of the media and policymakers.



Wheeliz is the first website which enables peer-to-peer rental of adapted vehicles for those with reduced mobility in France. It has more than 120 vehicles and 900 registered users operating in Paris. Photo by Wheeliz

WHAT CAN WE SAY ABOUT EUROPE'S COLLABORATIVE ECONOMY?

As a relatively recent phenomenon, it is perhaps unsurprising that there are few studies on the collaborative economy's market size and trends. Similarly, research on the collaborative economy's impact is still scarce. Indeed, the collaborative economy does not relate to traditional ways of measuring economic activity, making it particularly difficult for research institutes and national statistical bodies to measure activity levels and value.¹³ Despite this, there have been a few attempts to understand the size of European collaborative economy as a whole and its future potential.

To date, European market studies have primarily focused on the wider collaborative economy. While these studies do not differentiate between profit-orientated and social purpose initiatives, they do reflect the broader state of Europe's collaborative economy. In their analysis for the European Commission, PwC estimated that the sharing economy generated revenues of nearly €4bn and facilitated around €28bn of transactions in Europe in 2015.¹⁴ Also focusing on the market as a whole, the European Parliamentary Research Service paper on the collaborative economy¹⁵ looked at the economic gains for Europe linked with a better use of capacities (otherwise under-used), and estimated that this could be as high as €572 billion.¹⁶

On a policy level, most research and policy responses have focused on opportunities for using collaborative economy models to stimulate job creation and economic growth. At a European level, the communication on *A European agenda for the collaborative economy*, noted that the collaborative economy offers future benefits to EU member states, but also affirmed the need to address certain regulatory and legal issues, including: market access, liability regimes, user protection, self-employment rules, worker definitions and taxation. In response to this, the communication announced the Commission's intention to establish a monitoring framework for the collaborative economy, which will follow trends on prices and quality of services and identify possible obstacles and problems – in particular, those arising from divergent national regulations or regulatory gaps.¹⁷

Little research on the social purpose collaborative economy

While these market studies and policy initiatives demonstrate an increased awareness of the collaborative economy, they primarily focus on economic growth and profit driven models. National and sub-national studies have similarly focused on profit-oriented services. For instance, the UK government's 2014 review of the sharing economy primarily discussed its economic potential.¹⁸ As such, market and policy research to date has produced very little insight on the size or impact of social purpose-driven activities within Europe's collaborative economy.

Similarly, just as few studies have distinguished or focused on social purpose activities, no collaborative economy directories and databases – such as the European Digital Social Innovation¹⁹ map, Collaborative Lab's directory of collaborative consumption activities²⁰ and the Mesh²¹ sharing economy directory – have sought to map and categorise collaborative economy activities that focus specifically on social purpose activities. As a result, these databases are unhelpful for investigating levels and types of activity within the social purpose collaborative economy.

As we can see, the majority of research and databases for Europe's collaborative economy have focused on the market as whole, rather than social purpose activities. However, while these studies are primarily focused on profit-orientated models, studies of the motivations of users of collaborative economy models have found that their participation is partly driven by social motivations, even if it is not clear whether there is an actual social impact from their participation. The *ING International Special Report on the Sharing Economy* for example found that collaborative economy users, in addition to making and saving

money, were motivated to achieve some form of societal impact (such as social inclusion, environmental sustainability or community development) through their engagement with a collaborative platform. Forty-seven per cent of the surveyed European consumers who participate in the sharing economy are influenced to do so because “it helps build communities” and 53 per cent said they were influenced to participate because they believe “it is good for the environment”.²²

These findings are interesting, but ultimately do little to tell us a great deal about social purpose activities within Europe’s collaborative economy. To address this gap, we have sought to improve our understanding through expert interviews and case studies.

KEY TRENDS IN EUROPE’S SOCIAL PURPOSE COLLABORATIVE ECONOMY

While research on Europe’s social purpose collaborative economy is limited, practice is thriving – from early stage experiments to more established initiatives. Our expert interviews and review of case studies uncovered wide range of opinions and insights on social purpose collaborative economy’s characteristics. Below we highlight six key trends underpinning Europe’s social purpose collaborative economy.

1) SOCIAL PURPOSE IS NOT A SPECIFIC MODEL

Europe’s social purpose collaborative economy is not defined by one type of organisation or activity. Instead, collaborative economy models adopt a variety of approaches and forms to identify and address social and societal challenges. Alongside public services, organisations like charities, community groups and social enterprises are the main drivers (and beneficiaries) of social purpose collaborative economy models. In most cases, community groups, charities and social enterprises initiate these kinds of activities.²³ However, other types of organisations, such as private companies and businesses, have used collaborative platforms to pursue social aims. Many platforms operate mixed businesses models that attempt to combine financial sustainability with social motivations. Two examples of this are Fairmondo and Peerby (see Appendix).

As emphasised in studies like *Defining the Third Sector in Europe*²⁴ there is a significant variation in how non-state led activities address social challenges are defined across Europe. Social economy, third sector, civil society, and the not for profit sector are some of the main ways these kinds of initiatives are described.²⁵ For this reason, associating the social purpose collaborative economy with a single organisational model is unhelpful. Instead, we suggest viewing collaborative economy models as an opportunity any organisation or group can experiment with or apply. Namely these will be projects and organisations that are not primarily driven by profit, but rather seek to address social challenges within areas such as health, education, and the environment.²⁶

2) SHARING INTANGIBLE ASSETS AND TANGIBLE RESOURCES

The collaborative economy is most commonly associated with the sharing of tangible assets, such as physical spaces, tools, and food. While social purpose initiatives also facilitate the sharing of tangible assets, our interviews suggested that a much higher proportion focus on intangible assets such as education, time, knowledge, information, and software. This suggests two things. First, intangible assets are generally easier to move, share, and spread through digital technologies. It is easier to establish digital platforms without needing to finance and manage material infrastructures and physical resources. Likewise, social purpose activities focused on tangible resources tend to address basic needs or unequal circumstances. Therefore, we do not see luxury or tertiary sectors as the focus of social purpose driven activities (such as boats and designer clothing). Instead, these areas of focus usually reflect unmet needs in a specific context – such as food or accommodation.

On this basis, some interviewees suggested that the social purpose collaborative economy may be two distinct spheres of activity – a more globalised network focusing on digital commons and open source intangible assets, and more localised platforms and activities addressing specific material inequalities and challenges.

3) A WIDE VARIETY OF PRACTICE, WITH LITTLE DEDICATED SUPPORT

The social purpose collaborative economy is not limited to a specific sector or societal issue – it can be applied to a range areas or challenges. Amongst other areas, collaborative economy models are being developed to improve access to basic infrastructures and services – such as social care, energy, or Internet access. Interviews also suggested the potential for collaborative economy models to improve social outcomes in the areas of arts and heritage. While broad, many collaborative models have emerged in response to their social or local context. For instance, Internet sharing service guifi.net emerged in response to insufficient Internet access in rural Spain²⁷, while platforms like Casserole Club²⁸ and the Good Gym²⁹ were created to address urban isolation in London.

Social purpose collaborative platforms are also often associated with existing forms of financial and institutional support. While there are few dedicated investment or support programmes for the social purpose collaborative economy, many successful organisations manage to access funding and support for through adjacent opportunities. For instance, the European Commission's European Social Innovation Competition has funded collaborative platforms like Wheeliz, a French platform for disabled people to share adapted cars.³⁰

Support mechanisms and infrastructures have also been important for many collaborative economy activities. Collaborative workspaces, regulation and funding sources were repeatedly mentioned as important conditions for supporting social purpose activities within collaborative economy. Not all of these mechanisms are digital, but they nevertheless play an instrumental role in making it easier to start and develop a social purpose collaborative initiative. For example, open source groups and organisations use platforms like Github to develop their products and share the code with people setting up similar projects. Collaborative organisations currently sharing their code via Github include crowdfunding platform Goteo,³¹ the Better Reykjavik³² voting platform, and the cooperative Fairmondo.³³

4) LITTLE COLLABORATION WITH EXISTING MOVEMENTS AND INSTITUTIONS

Most social purpose collaborative economy models have been initiated by start-ups and other new organisations. In contrast, there has been relatively limited uptake and use of collaborative economy models by established charities, community groups, and social entrepreneurs. As pointed out by the Stanford Social Innovation Review, this is a missed opportunity for developing a more socially oriented collaborative economy.³⁴

According to our interviews, many established organisations have a limited of understanding of collaborative economy models. Some commentators suggest that collaborative economy will naturally evolve and become increasingly applied to address social challenges, since socially oriented organisations are generally slower to develop and adopt innovative models and technologies than the private sector.³⁵ While this may be true, a laissez-faire attitude towards this gap could pose a significant challenge to the development of Europe's social purpose collaborative economy.

For existing organisations, insufficient digital skills are a frequent barrier to integrating collaborative economy platforms and approaches within existing offline collaborative projects. For instance, unlike many profit oriented collaborative platforms, few social purpose initiatives appeared to use data produced

through their digital platform to improve their service or inform their development. Likewise, a recent UK study on the use of crowdfunding by social enterprises, community groups and charities found that only one in ten organisations had used crowdfunding. Those who had not used it cited a lack of digital skills and understanding of the dynamics of crowd-based activities. Participants in the study also described how training and support to develop their skills and capacity would be an important incentive for trying crowdfunding.³⁶

Despite this apparent separation, there are instances where existing organisations adapt or integrate collaborative economy models. Still, collaborative platforms were more likely to draw upon traits or principles of established social or civic organisations than work with them directly. For instance, a number of platforms have incorporated cooperative models or group buying schemes but do not work with directly organisations that have a long history of employing these methods.

5) CITIES AND URBAN INITIATIVES ARE KEY PROPONENTS

Our research also indicates local governments or city-based initiatives are important proponents of the collaborative economy, enabling various forms of public support and experimentation. In Europe, the most substantial initiative to date is the EU Sharing Cities Project, run by EUROcities with €25 million in EU funding in six European cities (London, Lisbon, Milan, Bordeaux, Burgas and Warsaw). Like most other 'sharing city' initiatives, EU Sharing Cities has a relatively narrow focus, generally looking at profit-oriented models that create jobs. Energy and transport have also been priorities for most sharing city initiatives, which typically involve the promotion of electric vehicles and bikes, renewable energy for households, and smart energy solutions.³⁷

Looking beyond the general priorities of sharing city initiatives, a number of individual cities have sought to explore the potential for collaborative economy models to address social and urban challenges. Many of these are discussed and analysed in the report *Rethinking Smart Cities from the Ground Up*.³⁸

A number of European city-based initiatives are exploring how they can work more systemically with social purpose collaborative economy models. Amsterdam is a leading example. The city recently launched the Amsterdam Sharing City Action Plan, which seeks to enable collaboration between existing stakeholders and support pilot projects that tackle urban challenges. As the plan moves forward, the city will launch a number of their own pilots for sharing city assets, such as public vehicles and office space.³⁹

While Amsterdam seeks to increase efficiencies and gain value from idling capacity, the city also wants to ensure the sharing city is inclusive to all residents. Several efforts have been proposed to encourage a more inclusive collaborative economy by connecting with existing institutions. First, opportunities and discounts for collaborative platforms will be extended to low income and elderly residents through Amsterdam's city pass (Stadspas). This initiative has not yet begun, but is currently being explored between the city and partners, including ShareNL, Thuisafgehaald, and Peerby. Likewise, the city has been working with partners to consider how public libraries could support collaborative practices and activities, and raise awareness about the collaborative economy.⁴⁰

Where Amsterdam has a comprehensive strategy for the collaborative economy, other European cities have developed more targeted projects. Many of these, such as Better Reykjavik and Madame Mayor in Paris, have focused on getting citizens involved in decision-making on public spending. Others have set up matched crowdfunding initiatives, where cities work with a crowdfunding platform to co-fund citizen-led projects. For instance, Plymouth City Council set aside £60,000 for Crowdfund Plymouth, a dedicated local crowdfunding platform where residents can submit ideas for community initiatives. Project donations are

matched by Plymouth Council at up to 50 per cent, or a maximum of £5,000 per project. So far, this has led to the residents raising more than £460,000 for 109 city projects - including an open air cinema, a community café and drop in centre for sign language users, and an arts outreach project timed for Plymouth Arts Weekend. Similar initiatives include the London Mayor's crowdfunding programme⁴¹ and the City of Zaragoza's match funding scheme.⁴²

6. FUNDING AND POLITICS ARE SHAPING OPPORTUNITIES

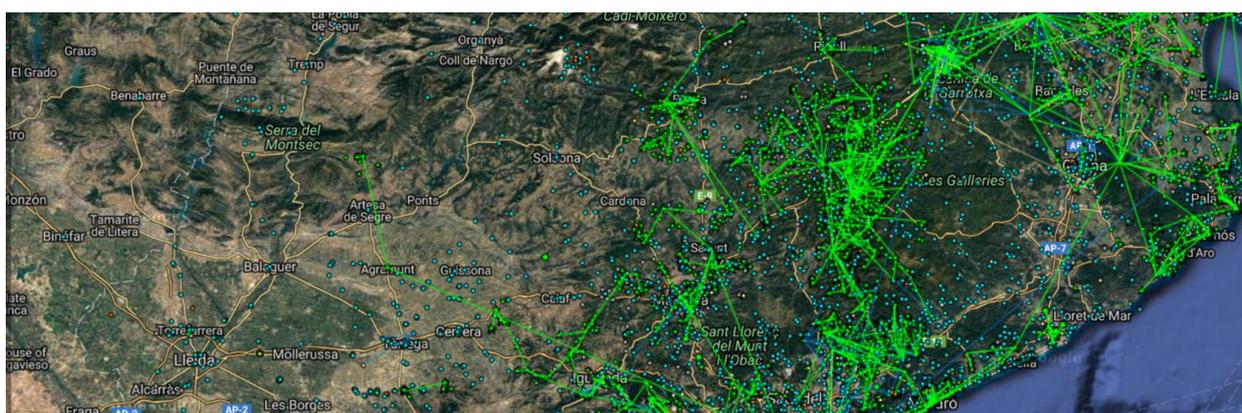
When looking at the different manifestations of Europe's social purpose collaborative economy, it is important to ask why variations have occurred. On the one hand, digital technology has made collaborative activities easier and faster amongst bigger and broader networks of people. Likewise, while the economic crisis is not responsible for the development of the collaborative economy, the resulting challenges faced by many Europeans have contributed to the growing interest in collaborative models.

Our interviews also suggested the growth of certain elements of the collaborative economy reflect the influence of funding priorities within the European Commission and other funding agencies. Along with local and city-based initiatives, platforms supporting local forms of collaborative decision-making and governance have been backed by European funds and tested by local authorities in a number of cities and governments. Without financial incentives, some activities may not have been developed. Likewise, without this external support, experts fear certain initiatives will become unsustainable.

DISCUSSION

Despite limited research on Europe's social purpose collaborative economy, a growing movement of organisations and activities are showing how collaborative economy models can be applied to address social challenges. Mapping such activities creates a snapshot but is rarely complete and quickly becomes out-dated. Instead, we present a range of illustrative examples of prevailing type of activity within Europe's social purpose collaborative economy in the Appendix.

Along with illustrative examples, we feel there is great value in creating a typology of how the different activities and their impact can be grouped and understood. The next chapter will present a preliminary typology for the social purpose collaborative economy.



Guifi.net is a network developed in rural parts of Spain to enable anyone with an internet connection to share it with fellow community members. It has grown to a network of more than 30,000 network nodes which has brought internet access to areas that previously had little or no internet access. Source guifi.net

TOWARDS A TYPOLOGY FOR EUROPE'S SOCIAL PURPOSE COLLABORATIVE ECONOMY

To support the social purpose collaborative economy, we need a clearer understanding of its prevailing activities and potential impact. Along with illustrative case studies (see Appendix), we have developed a preliminary typology to help make sense of the different organisations and activities within Europe's social purpose collaborative economy.

WHAT QUALIFIES AS SOCIAL PURPOSE COLLABORATIVE ECONOMY ACTIVITY?

The first task in developing the typology is defining a set of minimum conditions for being considered part of Europe's social purpose collaborative economy. We propose the following three criteria for inclusion.

By social purpose collaborative economy, we mean activities that:

- **Are part of the collaborative economy** – in keeping with current definitions of the collaborative economy,⁴³ organisations need to make use of idling capacity (such as underused resources, untapped value, or waste), operate across decentralised networks, and involve some form of digital technology to facilitate collaboration and distribute resources.
- **Have a positive social or societal impact** – organisations are at the very least be able to communicate how their organisation delivers social or societal (combined social and environmental) impact; greater weight is given to models which can demonstrate this impact (perhaps linking to standards of evidence), although we recognise that many platforms may not have the capacity or resources to undertake impact evaluations. Furthermore, we focus on impact that stems directly from their collaborative activity – not through ripple effects, or by simple virtue of existing.
- **Operate a more than profit business model** – organisations do not extract a profit from their activity, or can demonstrate that their profits are mainly reinvested into organisational improvement or other socially motivated initiatives. A single legal form does not define this. In many cases, these organisations fit within the European Commission's definition of a 'social enterprise' where social or societal goals underpin the organisation's commercial activity and organisational structure.⁴⁴

Once we have created a parameter for our typology, there are a number of ways this emergent trend can be organised or categorised – including scale of operations, type of transaction and sector. For the purposes of this report, we believe it is most helpful to differentiate between different types of impact. We propose five areas that appear to reflect the potential impact of social purpose collaborative activities within Europe:

- **Lowering cost of living for essential goods and services** – from food to transport, many platforms help to lower the costs of living for households. However, this is not simply a matter of digital platforms driving down costs – we are particularly interested in collaborative economy models that explicitly seek to lower costs in a consistent and responsible way.
- **Accessible learning and wellbeing** – activities that democratise access to knowledge, skills and create situations where people come together to learn, improve, and support one another.

- **Employment opportunities** – spaces, resources, and platforms that help unemployed or underemployed people to secure opportunities for paid employment, or create new economic opportunities to maintain their livelihoods.
- **Democracy and civic participation** – platforms that support collective forms of civic engagement, and enable more people to be involved in developing and deciding on political ideas and policy decisions – such as community budgeting to civic crowdfunding.
- **Common and community infrastructures** – from shared workspaces to crowdfunding community campaigns, many initiatives cultivate an inclusive social fabric, promote collective forms of living and working, while reduce consumption and waste.

Bearing in mind that limited evidence of impact exists, this typology is meant to reflect what initiatives are working towards, rather than the measurable impact of their activity. Over time, we hope it will be possible to update these areas with the help of additional evaluation and research. Furthermore, these types of impact are not uniform, or mutually exclusive. Certain activities may respond to several types of impact, while each impact type consists of a variety of business models, resources and objectives. In turn, they should be seen as broad overarching and, at times, overlapping types.

Our typology is closely aligned with major European research and policy priorities. For instance, Europe 2020 growth strategy has targets to increase overall employment, broaden access to education and reduce poverty and social exclusion to create a “smart, sustainable and inclusive economy”, while EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, Horizon 2020, has a number of focus areas that correspond to the social-purpose initiatives' prevailing types of impact.⁴⁵ The table below outlines how our impact typology corresponds to the Horizon 2020 focus areas.

Impact type	Corresponding Horizon 2020 priorities
1. Lowering the cost of living for essential goods and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure, clean and efficient energy; • Smart, green and integrated transport; • Europe in a changing world
2. Accessible learning and wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health, demographic change and wellbeing; • Europe in a changing world
3. Employment opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Europe in a changing world
4. Democracy and civic participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Europe in a changing world; • Smart and sustainable cities
5. Common and community infrastructures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Europe in a changing world; • Smart and sustainable cities

KEY FEATURES

What kinds of collaborative economy activities are pursuing different types of impact? To understand this, we must investigate the key features of the organisations and platforms within our impact typology. This can help us to understand which features are more commonly associated with (and perhaps even amenable to) certain types of impact. Several features are particularly important to consider:

- **Asset/resource** – what is the focus of the collaborative activity? This factor highlights what types of resources and assets are central to the collaborative activity.
- **Relation between end users and organisation/platform** – how does the organisation interact with its end-users (people who provide or access services and resources through the platform)?
- **End user interactions** – how do end users of platforms interact through this organisation (including those providing and accessing services or resources)? Activities could include borrowing/lending, renting, selling/buying, exchanging, bartering, and gifting.
- **Scale of operations** – how big is this activity? This could include participation rates, geographic spread, and (when relevant) turnover.
- **Type of digital technology** – What types of digital technologies are being used to facilitate this collaborative activity?

Using these features, we can begin to distinguish between prevailing models emerging from Europe's' social purpose collaborative economy. The table below outlines how these features correspond to activities across the different impact types.



Better Reykjavik, is a website for citizens of Reykjavik to submit ideas about local issues, promoting citizen participation and decision making in the city. To date more than 4200 ideas have been discussed on the platform. Image Citizens Foundation

Key features	Impact 1: Lowering the cost of living for essential goods and services	Impact 2: Accessible learning and wellbeing	Impact 3: Employment opportunities	Impact 4: Democracy and civic participation	Impact 5: Common and community infrastructure
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Free or cooperative marketplaces (e.g. Peerby, Fairmondo) Eliminating 'middlemen' to lower costs (e.g. Farmdrop, La ruche qui dit oui) Shared and common access to resources (e.g. GuifiNet) Connecting waste or surplus with those in need (e.g. Wheeliz, LastMinuteSottoCasa) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meal sharing (e.g. Casserole Club, Thuisafgehaald) P2P learning and tutorials (e.g. (Nauchi Me) Social connection for health and wellbeing (e.g. GoodGym, FreeBird Club) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lowering barrier to entrepreneurship (e.g. Economy of Hours, Babele) Collaborative sector creating meaningful employment (e.g. Furniture Reuse Network) Open source design and decentralised manufacturing (e.g. Wikihouse, L'atelier Paysan) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participatory budgeting (e.g. Madame Mayor I have an idea) Crowdsourcing civic ideas and legislation (e.g. Betri Reykjavik, Open Ministry) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborative funding mechanisms (e.g. Crowdfunder, Goteo) Shared spaces (e.g. Impact Hub Network) Regulation for partnership and commons governance (e.g. LabGov city as commons)
Asset / resource	Material assets and associated resources. While this can include many examples within the collaborative economy, generally focuses on resources needed for a good quality of life (e.g. food, clothing, transport, internet connection).	Primarily intangible assets, including knowledge and information, as well as design and care. Alternatively, resources related to improving quality of life, such as education, health and social care.	People's time and skills. Not simply about connecting labour power to any opportunity, but connecting people's skills and capacities with the labour market, and lowering barriers to creating new economic opportunities. Flexible employment opportunities are only considered 'social purpose' when they represent a supplemental income opportunity for low-income households or an entry point for further employment – not a sole means of securing a livelihood.	People's ideas, knowledge and priorities regarding state services and responsibilities.	Common infrastructures, spaces, or similar resources. Tends to support the development of collaborative initiatives or social fabric in communities.
User platform relation	Varied. For material assets, the platform acts as a connector for P2P interactions. With other resources, the platform tends to coordinate processes, e.g. through application and verification. In some cases, the platform manages asset distribution.	Platform tends to operate inventive models where people can connect and support one another. Strong emphasis on collective benefits and common good. Open source, and time-based schemes commonly used to facilitate these interactions.	Platform acts as a marketplace and community manager for labour opportunities or resources needed to start an enterprise. Frequently includes additional support for entrepreneurs, such as mentorship, payment systems, or insurance advice.	The platform seeks to transparently and inclusively gather citizens' ideas and priorities for government. Citizens use the platform to suggest, review and vote on ideas. Often run by associated civil society organisation or government body.	Initiatives are not all platform-based, but generally have a direct relationship with their end users. Focus on creating close relationships and sense of community. Generally, the interaction and spaces (offline and online) are carefully managed, which can include significant user involvement.
End user inter-action	Generally P2P interactions, where the person offering and the person accessing a resource are in direct contact. This can be for money or another form of exchange. Some interactions only occur online, however most seem to involve a face-to-face encounter.	Blurring of contributor and beneficiary. People tend to make use of different elements - like educational resources, unpaid support from neighbours or spare meals.	Clearly distinguishes between worker and person/organisation with the employment opportunity. Often leads to face-to-face interaction, although some work is online. Worker protection is put in place, but primarily relies on the people willing to use the platform to find labour. Some platforms offer additional support to encourage user collaboration.	Users seek consensus by discussing and deliberating one another's ideas and proposals. In some cases, voting and rating systems are also used.	Users interact in different ways, although these are often predetermined by the platform. A platform may carefully establish means of offering and accessing resources through P2P exchanges. Alternatively, users may access a common resource through the platform, which results in interactions with peers or commoners.
Scale of operations	Platforms tend to function on larger scales. However, activities within the platform usually focus on producing a localised user experience.	Generally activity specific, apart from multi-purpose time-based models. Almost entirely localised, from neighbourhoods to regional scale.	Unlike globalised gig economy platforms, social purpose platforms tend to have a geographic or sector focus.	Has been employed at different levels of government across Europe - including local, regional and national.	Both broad and local in scale. Initiatives reliant on physical space are very much grounded within their local environment, although some might be part of global networks. Other activities are not location specific, but limited by legal jurisdiction and language.
Digital technology	Websites and mobile apps, relying on geo-location technology to show locally available assets and resources.	Website and mobile apps. Broad ranging models including common repositories for intangible assets, mechanisms for matching people's needs and time, and credit systems to recognise and encourage reciprocal activity.	Instantaneous marketplace type websites and mobile apps, generally matching opportunities and people with capacity. Many platforms incorporate online payment mechanisms.	Websites, with user generated content and voting systems.	Most initiatives have an informational website, where some invite user contributions or commitments (e.g. promising funds or booking desk time). These models appear much more reliant on offline resources and configurations.

LOOKING AHEAD: OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The collaborative economy brings a number of opportunities for innovation within social purpose organisations and activities. However, as has been the case with profit-oriented collaborative economy activities, disruption and change in how services are designed and delivered also brings a number of challenges. We outline these opportunities and challenges below.

OPPORTUNITIES

- **Reduced cost and better opportunities to scale:** As with the profit-oriented collaborative economy, social purpose models use digital technologies to reduce the cost of mobilising and exchanging resources and assets. Collaborative online marketplaces also provide opportunities for platforms to scale beyond local communities, which have been the focus of many traditional offline collaborative initiatives. Peerby and Fairmondo are two examples of this.
- **Increased efficiency and flexibility:** Collaborative platforms make it easier for vast numbers of people to collaborate and mobilise resources towards a common cause. Through this, the collaborative economy can help create more efficient solutions for social, and often local, challenges. Platforms such as Your Priorities and Madame Mayor I Have an Idea allow citizens to post and seek support for ideas that government in many cases would not have otherwise initiated.
- **Increasing participation and new forms of collaboration:** Collaborative platforms open up new channels for people to request or provide resources. This creates the opportunity to get more people involved in positive social initiatives, thereby increasing a community's social fabric and resilience. Economy of Hours, for example, encourages new forms of micro volunteering and exchange of assets through its platforms.
- **Improved information and measurement:** While many traditional social purpose and civic economy initiatives have brought together people and resources, it has been challenging to document the scale and impact of such activities. Data from collaborative platforms can be used to improve public understanding of a community's needs, capacities and resources. Furthermore, there is the potential to aggregate such data across organisations, sectors and localities, and address the lack of information presently available on the collaborative economy. This data would also be highly valuable for organisations looking to improve their services, and for governments intent on improving social and environmental outcomes.
- **Increased transparency:** Collaborative platforms can also significantly increase transparency and visibility of social purpose initiatives in the collaborative economy. For communities, this can make it easier to explore and engage with local activities and find others in their community working on something similar. For funders and policy makers, platforms and marketplaces can provide insights on where activity is and is not taking place, and which communities are represented or unrepresented on the platforms. This can help steer the design of future policy and funding initiatives. For instance, most crowdfunding platforms publish details on all campaigns (both successful and unsuccessful) that have sought finance.

CHALLENGES

- **Pricing and potential for uneven distribution:** One of the defining features of the collaborative economy is its decentralised approach to markets, and relatively unregulated pricing models. Individuals can set the prices they want in some cases, or platforms introduce pricing scheme, often using complex algorithms. Prices can easily change, often rising according to demand. For social purpose collaborative economy activities, flexible approaches may exclude those who cannot afford to participate and reflect existing inequalities. Furthermore, it is also important to consider whether disadvantaged individuals and marginalised communities can participate equally in collaborative economy activities. Do people participate on equal and fair terms, and does everyone benefit in some way? This is particularly relevant in the case of flexible and/or precarious employment frequently associated with collaborative economy platforms. While a digital platform can open up employment and income opportunities to a broader network, they can also become potentially monopolistic and perpetuate the casualization of labour and declining responsibility on the part of employers. This requires an active choice on the part of platforms to ensure that employment opportunities are safe, dignified, and not exploited.
- **Increasing the digital divide:** By relying on digital platforms, social purpose collaborative economy activities can also exacerbate the digital divide. While 81 per cent of EU-28 households had Internet access in 2014, a significant minority still had limited or no Internet access.⁴⁶ Lower income households and countries, in particular, are less likely to have Internet access. While this trend is changing, it is important to note that many of the most vulnerable and marginalised members of European society are still unable to access digital platforms, regardless of their social aims and impact.
- **Lack of sustainable business models:** Business and platform sustainability is also a challenge for many social purpose activities. Indeed, some platforms begin with social aims only to opt towards more commercial models after initial financial struggles. Along with ensuring social purpose, platforms need to become self-sustaining. It is important to consider how changes in business models might affect people running these initiatives, and end users themselves. What happens to those who invest time and resources into a social purpose platform, only to have their work lost or exploited if the model changes?
- **Public attitudes and perception:** Attitudes towards sharing and collaboration are also varied, with some groups viewing them as a form of tax evasion or symptomatic of an inability to care for one's self. Negative attitudes towards the collaborative economy have been noted in certain regional or cultural contexts, but also among lower income groups in different countries. Furthermore, many people have become sceptical of the collaborative economy following media critiques of profit-oriented platforms. While such concerns need to be addressed, how can these platforms also build a more positive image across society?
- **Relation with existing services and institutions:** Many social purpose collaborative economy initiatives overlap with existing public services and social initiatives. In some cases, established institutions are making use of these digitally enabled models; however, the social purpose collaborative economy can also become a source of competition or disruption. Differences in ideology can make existing organisations hesitant. Likewise, the relative newness of collaborative platforms means most teams driving them are preoccupied with ensuring their sustainability, leaving innovative partnerships or collaborations lower in the list of priorities. While this has not occurred on a mass scale, it is worthwhile anticipating how a scaled social purpose collaborative economy will sit alongside (and within) the broader array of social and public organisations, services and institutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This report has uncovered a variety of collaborative economy models and initiatives that seek to achieve positive social impact and tackle societal challenges. However, such initiatives often fall between the categorisations of for-profit company and not-for-profit organisations. As such, they face competition from commercial counterparts but do not receive the support allocated to many social impact-driven organisations. This is a missed opportunity. While we still have much to learn about Europe's social purpose collaborative economy, the initial signs of promise highlight the importance of investigating this area further and putting mechanisms in place to direct the power of collaborative economy models towards Europe's most pressing societal challenges. With this in mind, our research and interviews have surfaced a number of recommendations for supporting Europe's social purpose collaborative economy:

- **Further research on impact is needed:** The social purpose collaborative economy is currently dominated by practice, with little research on its characteristics and impact. Research into the collaborative economy should therefore focus on understanding its societal impact and how these models compare to more traditional approaches. Impact studies should seek to align the impact of social purpose collaborative approaches (or lack thereof) with public funding priorities and outcomes sought by public services, such as those outline H2020. Research should look at both the potential positive and negative consequences of a collaborative economy approach to a social challenge.
- **Encourage collaboration with different organisations:** The majority of social purpose activities in Europe's collaborative economy are primarily driven by start-ups and new organisations, with few established organisations or institutions using these models. While this study has surfaced some barriers, we need to better understand how established organisations and collaborative economy models can be brought together in more productive ways. To achieve this, different organisations and actors must be encouraged to work more closely together. Public funders can enable this through a variety of means, including making it mandatory for organisations to apply collaborative approaches to be eligible for funding or investment, developing impact specific research and development calls, and playing an active role in helping collaborative economy start-ups and established social purpose organisations form cross-sector consortia.
- **Prioritise support and funding that seeks demonstrable impact and organisational sustainability:** Funding and government support has been considerably helpful for the development of the many activities outlined above. However, experts also noted that such support has skewed activities and markets, and in many cases have focused on supporting pilot stage initiatives and experiments with little or no focus on helping projects develop and scale. Similarly, some funding has prioritised the collaborative element of a project over the social impact. To address, this support and funding needs to ensure that initiatives have defined the social impact they are seeking, are capable of achieving it (or can access support to develop these capabilities), and have indicators in place for how to measure their impact. Following on from this, funders should seek to integrate support for collaborative economy initiatives in to existing funding and strategic priorities in key societal areas such as health, environment, social care, and education.
- **Invest in supportive infrastructures:** Many social purpose models within the collaborative economy do not have the resources and capital of their mainstream commercial equivalents. However, to compete with such models, they require additional support. Many localities have seen social purpose initiatives emerge and thrive through common infrastructures, shared spaces, and other forms of support. In turn, it is worth considering whether investing in support would be a more

inclusive and comprehensive approach to developing collaborative initiatives for social ends. This includes access to workspaces and tools, as well as different sorts of knowledge and information.

- **Capture and spread best practice across Europe:** As different groups, localities, and networks continue to pursue social purpose through collaborative economy models, it is important to capture best practice and learn from others' experiences. Along with further research, there is a coordination role to be played in sharing lessons and providing guidance to practitioners and governments looking to adapt collaborative practices to their contexts. This could be done digitally, as with the Collaborative Economy Research Library,⁴⁷ as well as through in-person encounters, training offerings, and thematic networks. In particular, place-based initiatives, such as those focused on the collaborative economy at the city/regional scale, seem to be particularly promising areas for coordinating support and sharing information.

APPENDIX: EXAMPLES OF EUROPE'S SOCIAL PURPOSE COLLABORATIVE ECONOMY

COLLABORATIVE MARKET PLACES AND COOPERATIVES WITH A SOCIAL FOCUS

LASTMINUTESOTTOCASA – WORKING WITH SHOPKEEPERS TO REDUCE FOODWASTE IN ITALY

Type of impact: *lowering the cost of living for essential goods and services*

LastMinuteSottoCasa (LMSC) tackles food waste in Italy. Through its website, LMSC lets shopkeepers send out a text message to members who live nearby, advertising last minute discounts on food that is about to expire or be thrown out. When users register on the site, they select what foods they wish to track and, for each one, the distance they are prepared to travel.

As well as reducing food waste, LMSC enables shoppers to save money and helps shopkeepers make extra profit out of their stock, while also connecting new customers with local businesses. Over 30,000 users have registered since the project launched, saving over one tonne of food per month.⁴⁸

FAIRMONDO – THE COOPERATIVELY OWNED ETHICAL MARKET PLACE

Type of impact: *lowering the cost of living for essential goods and services*

Fairmondo is a Berlin-based coop which operates like other digital marketplaces (eBay and Amazon for example) but is cooperatively owned and promotes fair goods and services, as well as “responsible consumption.” Fairmondo is based on the democratic principle of one member = one vote. Membership is open to anyone who buys a €10 share in the company. The project intends to create a global online marketplace where local co-operatives in different countries can connect and participate. Over time, Fairmondo hopes to replace traditional online marketplaces.⁴⁹

Fairmondo is an alternative for people who want to buy ethical products and services from suppliers committed to ethical and equitable trade. Since launching in 2013, the website has gained over 10,000 registered users.⁵⁰ Fairmondo has also received significant support through crowdfunding platforms, raising €350,000 over the course of two campaigns in 2013 and 2014.⁵¹ While focusing on ethical products, Fairmondo allows anyone to trade via their platform, but applies a different fee structure depending on the type of product. Fairtrade, organic, and ethical products are charged a four per cent fee, whereas products that do not meet these criteria are charged a seven per cent fee. As part of its attempt to grow a global network, Fairmondo is expanding to a number of European Countries and the US.⁵²

CITY-BASED SOCIAL PURPOSE COLLABORATIVE ECONOMY INITIATIVES

LABGOV – PILOTING THE CITY AS COMMONS IN ITALY

Type of impact: *democracy and civic participation; common and community infrastructure*

In Italy, the LABORatory for the GOVernance of commons (LabGov) has been looking to develop a type of sharing city, based on the commons. In response to the recent economic crisis, they believe the only way to maintain a good quality of life is through different forms of civic collaboration and commons that privilege general interests. Set up by Professor Christian Iaione in 2012, LabGov has initiated a number of projects that experiment with city partnership models, and ways of governing and maintaining the urban commons. Key stakeholders in such collaborations include social innovators, schools and universities, civil society organisations, businesses and public authorities. To start this process, LabGov has pioneered new regulatory frameworks that enable different actors to manage common spaces, services, and assets. This is now recognised as the Bologna process.

Bologna was the first city as commons project. Starting in 2012, LabGov, in partnership with the Fondazione del Monte di Bologna and Ravenna, started to study and analyse examples of collaborative governance and initiate experimental partnerships between local stakeholders. In the first phase of work, they focused on managing the urban commons, such as physical space or buildings. The results of this initial project were presented in 2014, along with draft Bologna Regulation for the Care and Regeneration of Urban Commons, which has led to further work developing partnership governance and urban commons in Bologna. Bologna is now recognised for its commitment to promoting collective care and management of common assets such as public spaces, buildings, as well as social initiatives and urban creativity.

Following the success of the Bologna pilot, LabGov has extended its efforts and is now working with several localities across Italy to develop and experiment with creating a city as commons. These presently include Bari, Battipaglia, Mantova, Palermo, and Roma. In the Co-Mantova Lab, partners have begun to prototype models for shared care and regeneration of cultural commons, as well as economic transitioning and territorial resistance. With the aim of establishing collaborative local governance, Co-Mantova presently has several projects and research efforts underway. These include a small rural FabLab, as well as a 'smart' human street where neighbours are developing new ways to share their skills, goods and time. Local partners are also creating an online platform for residents to report vacant spaces or request to use them.

PEERBY – CONNECTING COMMUNITIES THROUGH SHARING

Type of impact: *lowering the cost of living for essential goods and services*

Launched in Amsterdam in 2012, Peerby is a website and app which enables people to request and share items with their neighbours. Peerby works to create a more sustainable alternative to excessive consumer culture by connecting individuals and encouraging collaborative consumption. As well as helping individuals save time, money, and storage space, Peerby also emphasises its potential positive environmental impact and contribution towards building better-connected communities. Users can request and share any type of item through the platform, although typical items shared include DIY tools, gardening or party equipment (things usually needed for one-off occasions). According to Peerby, the biggest difference between them and other sharing platforms is that they allow users to request what they would like to borrow, which is then sent to people in the user's neighbourhood.⁵³

Peerby has expanded from Amsterdam to 20 other cities in Europe, including London and Paris. In this time, it has processed over 100,000 transactions, while collecting more than \$1 billion worth of items on its database. It plans to have a network of owners and renters in all major American cities by 2017.⁵⁴

In October 2015, Peerby also launched a paid-for service called Peerby Go, which enables people to rent items from those nearby and have the item delivered. Owners can earn up to €250 a month by renting their items through the platform, with Peerby then taking a percentage of the rental cost. Peerby launched this for-profit part of the platform in response to user demand for greater convenience and clearer reciprocity in the sharing of household items.⁵⁵

In March 2016, Peerby raised \$2.2 million over the course of a weekend from 1051 investors on the Dutch sustainable crowdfunding platform OnePlanetCrowd.com, making the crowd its largest shareholder.⁵⁶

COLLABORATIVE FINANCE INITIATIVES

BETRI REYKJAVIK – COLLABORATIVE DECISION MAKING IN REYKJAVIK, ICELAND

Type of impact: *democracy and civic participation*

Betri Reykjavik, or Better Reykjavik, is a website for citizens of Reykjavik to submit ideas about local issues, promoting citizen participation and decision making in the city. Reykjavik city council has committed to debate the most popular ideas from the website to determine whether there is enough political support to implement them. This model stems from Your Priorities, a web-based platform developed by the Icelandic Citizens Foundation, which enables citizens to develop, prioritise, and decide ideas to implement. Better Reykjavik has also worked with the D-Cent project to pilot new digital democracy tools.⁵⁷

Better Reykjavik has had considerable impact on civic engagement in the city. Since launching in 2010, over 70,000 people (Reykjavik's population is 122,000) have used the platform to propose and discuss 4,200 ideas.⁵⁸ Nearly 450 ideas have received formal consideration from the municipal government and over 350 have been implemented or are in the process of implementation.⁵⁹

A recent survey found that the “citizens of Reykjavik are generally happy with Better Reykjavik. Among those respondents who know the platform, 67 per cent stated they were happy, while only 7 per cent stated they were unhappy. Among the 2,500 people surveyed, about two-thirds said they were familiar with the platform and the project.”⁶⁰

MADAME MAYOR I HAVE AN IDEA – PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING IN PARIS

Type of impact: *democracy and civic participation*

‘Madame Mayor, I have an idea’ is a website and participatory budgeting scheme in Paris which will allocate €500 million to projects proposed by and voted for on by citizens between 2014 and 2020. Nearly 23,000 users are registered on the site.⁶¹ The process is open to all Parisians, regardless of age and nationality, and proposals can be ideas for citywide projects, local neighbourhood projects, or projects covering one or several districts.⁶² A series of topic areas for ideas are proposed and, once received, ideas are studied in terms of feasibility before a shortlist is selected and put to a public vote. To date, one of the

most popular projects, receiving over 21,000 votes, was to install 41 vertical garden walls on the sides of buildings in Paris.⁶³

As a scheme, 'Madame Mayor, I have an idea' works to improve local democracy and citizen participation in the allocation of public funds. The Mayor of Paris, Anne Hidalgo, has herself emphasised that, "in order to build a legitimate, progressive and durable city, collective intelligence is our greatest strength. Exchange and debate are our most powerful tools."⁶⁴

In 2015, €75 million was allocated to the most popular projects, representing five per cent of the city's investment budget (year on year, this five per cent will amount to €426 million over the course of the current mayoral term).⁶⁵ Budgets for projects are also divided among the 20 districts of Paris in accordance with economic need, with the poorer and outer districts allocated more than central Paris.⁶⁶

COLLABORATIVE AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS

FOOD ASSEMBLY/LA RUCHE QUI DIT OUI - REDUCING FOOD WASTE IN FRANCE

Type of impact: *lowering the cost of living for essential goods and services*

The Food Assembly is a web platform that connects food producers with local consumers. Beginning in France in 2011, the Food Assembly has now spread to Germany, Italy, Belgium, and the UK. In France alone, the model has grown from 23 assemblies, 103 active producers and 842 active members in 2011, to 657 assemblies, 4355 active producers and 129,165 active members in May 2015.⁶⁷ The Food Assembly operates a franchise model, recruiting organisers to source local producers, build a membership, and organise a venue for a weekly market in their area. The produce is sold directly through the Food Assembly online marketplace and then collected at the weekly market.

The Food Assembly model offers an alternative to the shortcomings and inequities of conventional supermarkets. By connecting shoppers with local producers directly, the Food Assembly ensures a fairer, more transparent and sustainable retail model for both producers and consumers. Producers set their own prices and pay only 8.35 per cent of their pre-tax profits to the Food Assembly for IT support and development of the online platform, and another 8.35 per cent to the hosts who organise the weekly markets and online shop. This means producers earn over 80 per cent for their hard work (compared to 15 to 25 per cent through supermarkets).⁶⁸ Also, shoppers order their produce directly from the producers prior to the weekly market, so producers know exactly how much to harvest for that week, helping reduce waste. Finally, by demanding that all produce is sourced from a 250km radius, the Food Assembly works to reduce unsustainable food mileages.

OPEN SOURCE TECHNOLOGY IN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

Type of impact: *lowering the cost of living for essential goods and services; employment opportunities; common and community infrastructure*

While many of the leading examples of the collaborative economy relate to urban contexts and issues, some groups are harnessing digital collaborative technologies to help improve the livelihoods of rural agricultural communities. Noting that several models are already underway which promote commons-

based peer production and alternative development models, P2P Lab has identified open agricultural machinery as one emergent trend where farmers collaborate with scientists and engineers to create and adapt technologies for farming in different contexts. These efforts challenge profit-driven models of corporate research and development, and also enable the creation of inclusive, appropriate tools for different sites. By undertaking a collaborative approach, participants furthermore spread collective knowledge, and mutualise design and production efforts.

L'atelier Paysan in France exemplifies this trend in the European context. In 2011, around 50 small-scale farmers and agriculturalists organised into a collective with the aim of adapting farm tools to become better suited to organic farming. The collective has begun to create a toolbox of technologies, designs and practices, along with complementary training and workshops. Their information and resources are freely disseminated to organic farmers, who are encouraged to help validate and improve designs. Several full time employees are also available to provide technical advice or assist members in their efforts.

Similar efforts are underway around the world, including the Open Source Ecology project which has begun to develop open designs for 50 machines necessary for maintaining civilisation (including agriculture), as well as communities promoting and developing open source beehives, farm hacking, and the slow tools.⁶⁹

SHARING TANGIBLE ASSETS AND RESOURCES

REFUGEES WELCOME - AIRBNB FOR REFUGEES

Type of impact: *lowering the cost of living for essential goods and services*

Described as “Airbnb for refugees”, Refugees Welcome is a website that matches people willing to share their homes with refugees in need of accommodation.⁷⁰ Refugees Welcome was established in Germany amidst the growing European refugee crisis. The idea is not just to find accommodation for refugees, but to accommodate them in an environment where they can become better integrated with European communities.⁷¹ Once users register their flat-share, Refugees Welcome contacts them and begins finding a tenant. When a suitable tenant is found, they are put in touch with the person so they can get to know one another. If both parties decide to go ahead, Refugees Welcome then helps to find funding to cover the process. This might be through micro donations, crowdfunding, federal state funding, or by letting a refugee stay rent-free. Refugees Welcome then offers support and advice throughout the duration of the stay.

At the time of research, Refugees Welcome has matched 321 refugees.⁷² The project has received positive responses from beyond Germany and now also operates in Austria, Greece, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, The Netherlands, Poland, Italy, and Canada.

WHEELIZ - A PLATFORM FOR COLLABORATIVE USE OF VEHICLES FOR THOSE WITH REDUCED MOBILITY

Type of impact: *lowering the cost of living for essential goods and services; accessible learning and wellbeing*

Wheeliz is the first website which enables peer-to-peer rental of adapted vehicles for those with reduced mobility in France. There are approximately 100,000 privately owned adapted vehicles in France, however, not all are in constant daily use. Private rental costs for adapted vehicles can often be considerably higher and with fewer options. Wheeliz allows owners to directly rent out their adapted vehicles to those who require one. Owners can rent out their vehicles at a recommended daily fee of €50 to €60, dependent on whether the vehicle is adapted for drivers or passengers. Wheeliz takes a 30 per cent commission and also provides insurance.

By pooling together adapted vehicles, Wheeliz has made them more accessible and affordable to those who need them, while also creating a new way for owners of such vehicles to earn extra cash. The founder of Wheeliz, Charlotte de Vilmorin, has explained how she sees that “the world of startups and innovation is still disconnected from the needs of disabled people... it is essential to create and build a sustainable sharing community dedicated to the mobility problem.”

As of October 2015, Wheeliz had 120 vehicles and 900 registered users operating in Paris. In November 2015, it was selected as a winner in the European Social Innovation Competition.⁷³

FREEBIRD CLUB – HOUSE SHARING TARGETING THOSE OVER 50

Type of impact: *lowering the cost of living for essential goods and services; accessible learning and wellbeing*

Established in 2015, FreeBird Club is a web-based platform and peer-to-peer membership vacation club for people over 50. Members opt to become ‘hosts’ and make their spare rooms available for a set nightly rate to fellow member ‘guests’. Unlike services like Airbnb, the host and guest always stay together, as FreeBird Club is as much about enjoying each other's company as it is about travelling to new locations.

For members, FreeBird Club is a new way to travel, meet like-minded people and develop social ties in later life, all while earning extra money as a host. This carries obvious benefits to the wellbeing of older individuals and addresses two important social issues: isolation amongst seniors and financial insecurity in later life.

FreeBird Club has received significant recognition. In November 2015, it was selected as a winner in the European Social Innovation Competition.⁷⁴

GUIFINET - A NETWORK FOR SHARING INTERNET IN RURAL SPAIN

Type of impact: *lowering the cost of living for essential goods and services; common and community infrastructure*

The availability and affordability of broadband Internet has historically been poor in Spain, particularly when compared to other European nations. In rural Catalonia, a local community sought to address this issue through setting up the community network Guifi.net.

Guifinet is a ‘crowdsourced computer network’ structured to be free, neutral and open to all, where members use a small radio transmitter to function like a wireless router and become a node in the network. This allows anyone with an Internet connection to share with fellow community members who have a transmitter. This creates an adaptable and decentralised network infrastructure built by individuals,

organisations, and communities pooling their resources together. The network now consists of 31,387 working nodes covering over 56,000 kilometres of Internet connection links, many of them offering high broadband quality.⁷⁵

Guifinet has proved an effective way of providing Internet to those who would be unable to access it otherwise. Finally, since Guifinet is an open network, anybody can join it and use it for whatever purpose, including individuals, enterprise, associations, and public administrations.⁷⁶ While much of Guifinet's network remains concentrated in Catalonia, but it has also expanded across parts of Europe and other continents.

USING COLLABORATIVE MODELS TO SHARE INTANGIBLE ASSETS AND RESOURCES

WIKIHOUSE - A COLLABORATIVE MODEL FOR DESIGNING AND BUILDING HOUSING

Type of impact: *common and community infrastructure; employment opportunities*

Started in 2011, WikiHouse is an open-source construction platform for anyone to download, design, 'print', collaborate on, and construct customisable houses, and the components from which to build them. Moreover, the housing is intended to be sustainable, low-cost and resource-light. WikiHouse works to democratise the process of house-building and architecture, while tackling "our dependence on a few large development companies to buy the land, beat their way through local community resistance and build rows of poor quality, unsustainable mass housing that fewer and fewer of us can afford," says WikiHouse co-founder, Alastair Parvin.⁷⁷

WikiHouse constructions are based on connected plywood fins that form a robust timber frame structure. Users access the WikiHouse open source website with the Google Sketchup plug-in. They design their structure and download a template which can then be printed on a CNC milling machine (CNC stands for Computer Numeric Control).

So far, WikiHouse has received significant media recognition and started pilots in communities in New Zealand and Europe, such as South Yorkshire in the UK.⁷⁸

ECONOMY OF HOURS - A TIMEBANK FOR SHARING TIME AND SKILLS

Type of impact: *lowering the cost of living for essential goods and services; employment opportunities*

Economy of Hours, or Echo, is an online timebank network where people can trade their time, skills and resources. Members trade using time (or 'Echoes') as currency. One Echo = one hour.⁷⁹ The platform intends to build greater connectivity between its users and ensure more egalitarian economic exchanges.⁸⁰ It does this by offering a platform which helps fast-track greater connectivity between individuals and business, but also ensures that everyone's time is valued equally regardless of what skills they have to offer.⁸¹

Anybody can use Echo, and its community members include individuals, charities, start-ups, and more established businesses. For example, a freelance graphic designer could offer three hours of their services, and then redeem these hours by taking three hours of guitar tuition.

Echo was piloted as 'Hackney Shares' in London in 2013 and has now expanded from East London to across the U.K. and beyond. According to a recent impact report, Echo's membership has grown to 2,405 and those who have traded on the platform have accessed 8,718 hours and the equivalent of £375,188 of skills, services and resources.⁸² Notably, 82 per cent of members who joined Echo because of its egalitarian ethos went on to trade on the platform, while 67 per cent of users said that being involved with Echo made them more connected to their local community.⁸³

OPEN MINISTRY - OPENING UP THE FINISH PARLIAMENT TO CITIZEN IDEAS

Type of impact: *democracy and civic participation*

In March 2012, the Finnish government amended the national constitution to allow any citizen to propose legislation. The 'Citizens' Initiative Act' requires at least 50,000 citizens of voting age to vote on a proposed idea for it to pass into parliament and be voted on within six months. This new piece of legislation led a group of non-profit entrepreneurs to launch Open Ministry, an online crowdsourced legislation platform for Finnish citizens.

Open Ministry helps citizens develop their initial idea into a clear proposition for parliament, and also acts as a platform to collect signatures. The platform is operated by volunteers who are independent of government or any political parties. To date, five proposals originating from Open Ministry been put before parliament, including a proposal for marriage equality which has subsequently been passed into law.^{84, 85}

ADDRESSING HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE CHALLENGES

THUISAFGEHAALD/SHAREYOURMEAL – A PLATFORM FOR SHARING MEALS IN THE NETHERLANDS

Type of impact: *accessible learning and wellbeing*

Thuisafgehaald allows anyone to share meals with their neighbours for a small cost. People can sign up as local cooks and offer extra portions of their meals in advance. The website then sends a regular email listing all meals locally available for pre-order. Once cooks accept their orders, the person can pick up their meal at the cook's house, and pay in cash. Unlike other food platforms, Thuisafgehaald does not permit restaurants or professional catering companies to participate.

Along with bringing together local residents, Thuisafgehaald also believes it has the potential to reduce food waste and encourage healthy eating. Furthermore, Thuisafgehaald has proven particularly useful for municipal services, and developed a specific service targeting people who need some extra support with meals – either due to age or other special needs. Within this service, people can arrange for a meal to be delivered or picked up on a weekly basis. Phone orders are also available for people who are not comfortable with online services. Whenever this scheme is initiated, a test meal is arranged to ensure the person is happy with their designated cook. To further this service, Thuisafgehaald has partnered with local governments in Utrecht, Amsterdam, and Rotterdam.

While the platform has received some funding from the DOEN foundation, it aims to sustain itself through commercial approaches – including sponsoring, advertisement, and paid subscriptions. It views itself as a socially engaged enterprise. In addition to their original Dutch site, Thuisafgehaald has also created English,

Spanish, Flemish and Portuguese versions of their site. The Dutch website has over 10,000 chefs and has facilitated over 150,000 encounters. Meanwhile, the English website reports having over 780 home cooks and facilitated the purchasing of over 3,300 meals.⁸⁶

GOOD GYM - COMBINING EXERCISING AND VISITS TO THE ELDERLY

Type of impact: *accessible learning and wellbeing*

Launched in 2009, Good Gym works to channel the energy people use while exercising and use it to deliver positive social impact. Instead of 'wasting' energy in the gym, Good Gym encourages people to volunteer and help seniors who are isolated from the local community, while exercising and keeping fit in the process. Good Gym's online platform pairs elderly individuals with local runners. Volunteers run to visit their elderly partner or 'coach' once a week (or more), giving them the chance to get some exercise, but also help out and offer some social interaction. Good Gym also provides fitness advice and organises group runs where volunteers get together to perform collective tasks in the community such as clearing gardens or DIY.

Good Gym describes how the platform offers a new way to combat the problem of social isolation amongst older people and provides an alternative approach to exercise and volunteering.⁸⁷ In the UK, the platform has worked with the National Health Service and local authorities.

CASSEROLE CLUB - A MEAL SHARING SERVICE THAT ADDRESSES ISOLATION AND LONELINESS IN THE UK

Type of impact: *accessible learning and wellbeing*

Casserole Club is a UK service that connects those who enjoy cooking with those unable to, in an attempt to tackle loneliness and malnutrition amongst older people. Started by the company FutureGov in 2011, the Casserole Club website allows neighbours to sign up as cooks and search for diners in their area who they can offer a meal to. The majority of diners are over the age of 80, making Casserole Club an impactful way of addressing isolation and loneliness among the elderly, while also saving time and money for local authorities.⁸⁸ FutureGov describe how an alternative service such as Casserole Club could be essential in the face of increasing demand for social care solutions. The situation in the UK is one example of this, with UK adult Social Care faces a funding gap £907 million by 2018, while over half the population will be aged 50+ by 2020.⁸⁹

According to FutureGov, more than 6,000 people across Britain and Australia have signed up to share meals through Casserole Club. Among the older people receiving meals through the service, 70 per cent of consider their volunteer cooks to be friends and 80 per cent say they would not have as much social contact without services like Casserole Club.⁹⁰

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- Health, Demographic Change and Wellbeing, which endeavours to invest in “better health for all” and personalise health and social care;
- Secure, Clean and Efficient Energy, which seeks to contribute towards the transition to “reliable, sustainable and competitive energy system”;
- Smart, Green and Integrated Transport, which desires to improve competitiveness of European transport industries to achieve a system that is resource efficiency, environmentally friendly and safe for all citizens;
- Europe in a changing world, which looks to build inclusive, innovative and reflective societies by reducing inequality, poverty, and social exclusion;
- Internet of Things, which is invested in supporting new technologies which can be used in innovative ways to address major societal challenges, and create new markets and industries;
- Smart and Sustainable Cities, which look at developing large-scale solutions for smart and sustainable cities in Europe.

Alongside Horizon 2020’s focus areas, Europe’s broader growth strategy (Europe 2020) also overlaps with some of the social impact of Europe’s not for profit collaborative economy. In seeking to make Europe a “smart, sustainable and inclusive economy” the strategy has targets to increase overall employment, broaden access to education and reduce poverty and social exclusion.

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