

# Sharing Is (S)Caring

*Sharing* has always been considered a very ethically good thing to do. Most of us have probably at least once during our usually blissful childhood years heard that we should *share* something of our own with other kids on the block. Generally, after the initial hesitation – quite understandable, since it does not seem like great fun to spend less time playing with our toys on behalf of others – we would most likely notice how great it is to share something. Even though we are already all grown up, we are constantly reminded that “Life’s for Sharing” – to put it in the words of an advertising campaign by one of the key mobile operators. However, recently, it seems that ‘sharing’ *sensu stricto* is generating a lot more controversy than sheer encouragement. And this is because of the sharing *economy*.

In the ever-changing reality, where ideas are disseminated with the speed of light, in the times after yet another economic crisis, in the age on the brink of post-consumption, sharing cars, apartments, and other commodities on a broad scale was only a matter of time. The digital era enabled the emergence of the platforms of the likes of Uber or Airbnb only a little faster than anticipated. After all, *quae non valeant singula, iuncta iuvant*<sup>1</sup>! Unfortunately, when one group benefits from this natural development, others may feel cheated – of their profits, privileges or hitherto prevailing monopolies. In this sense, their understanding of the ‘sharing’ stems, sadly, rather from the Middle English origins of the word, meaning ‘cutting’ or ‘dividing’ (moreover, the resemblance to ‘shear’ is uncanny!). And if this is the case, then *Houston, we have a problem*. Success always has many fathers, but it generates even more rent-seekers. And we shall bear in mind the lesson already Homer tried to teach us: “Too many kings can ruin an army”. It seems that the same goes for a sharing economy.

On top of that, the governments are, as usual, two steps behind – which does not really surprise us anymore, does it? The real challenge will occur the minute the rent-seekers and regulators try to do their utmost to catch up with the novelty, which more often than not results in hampering the initial potential of a given creative solution.

Given the numerous misconceptions, the lack of understanding of the concept or the phenomenon itself, we felt that it is our obligation to take up a sharing economy as our next topic. Nevertheless, it became obvious that there can be no talk of it without touching upon the digital solutions as such, since at the end of the day, all that matters is making all individuals better citizens and better people. Therefore, we proudly present you the result of our work: a collection of articles and analyses devoted to (first and foremost) the sharing economy and secondly, to the digital challenges our region faces. Because as the fictional but nonetheless real Ayn Rand once said, “If you don’t know, the thing to do is not to get scared, but to learn”. And, after all, *sharing is caring*, right?

Enjoy your reading  
and remember to share it,

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<sup>1</sup> Latin for “What is without value on its own, helps when joined”.