



**EPREUVES D'ADMISSION  
EN PREMIER CYCLE**

**SESSION D'AOUT 2017**

**LANGUE DE TRAVAIL : ANGLAIS**

## **Epreuve de la matinée : 9h – 13h**

- **Lecture des documents**
- **Synthèse**
- **Traduction**

# I. DOSSIER

## *Doc. 1*

### **The problem with Airbnb and Uber**

“Sharing” is one of the most rhetorically abused virtues of our age. First we had the euphemism “file-sharing”, for duplicating and uploading copies of albums or films to the internet. Well, you can’t share what isn’t yours in the first place. (If I pilfer money from a bank and give it to my friends, I might plead that I was just “money-sharing”, but I am more likely to be convicted of robbery.) And now we supposedly have a “sharing economy”, the most-often cited two examples of which – Uber and Airbnb – are giant corporations pursuing monopoly power and fighting governments the world over. What exactly is being shared here, and in whose interest?

The first “sharing economy” organisations allowed members to time-share things such as cars or power tools, rather than owning one each and leaving it idle most of the time. In their purest form such groups were “peer-to-peer”: self-organising, with no central authority. Once a for-profit company is set up to handle the logistics – such as Zipcar – however, the notion of “sharing” is arguably already out of the window. Still, there remained the seed of a communitarian idea in the origin of Airbnb, founded by two tech workers who rented out airbeds in their spare rooms for a conference, and thought there might be a market.

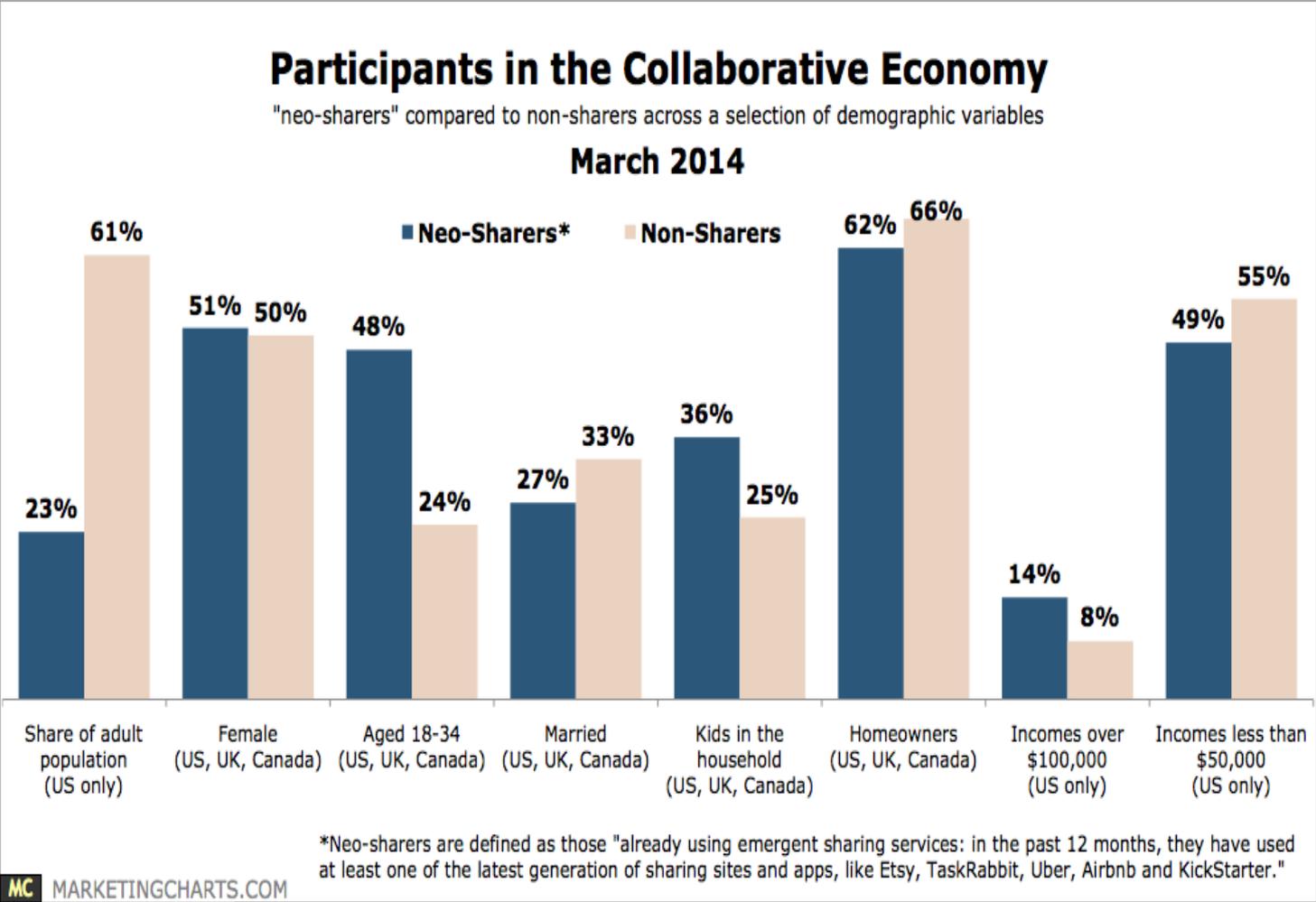
Airbnb’s marketing still plays on the feelings of virtuous and adventurous sociability in the idea of a “guest” staying in a spare room of the “host’s” home. However, the vast majority of Airbnb’s business is now “entire home” rentals: self-contained flats or villas. Long-term renters in cities such as San Francisco are being forced out by landlords who see more profit in short-term Airbnb stays. Some very clever data research reveals that the most expensive Airbnb apartment in Rome is one of several European luxury pads rented out by an American tech entrepreneur, who bought them with the proceeds of the sale of his last software company. The idea of “sharing” is as meaningless here as it is in Uber’s made-up concept of “ride-sharing”, which sounds as ecologically minded as “car-sharing” but actually describes a taxi service. Nor is any “sharing” going on with companies such as TaskRabbit, in which people bid to perform other people’s odd jobs.

What is explicitly not shared by any of the flagship companies of the “sharing economy” is responsibility. When something goes horribly wrong with an Airbnb or Uber transaction, the companies just say: “It wasn’t me.” (The mega-corporation is purportedly neither buyer nor seller but innocent middleman.) Take the example of users giving each other star-ratings. This system is flawed, because people feel bad about giving low ratings even when they are amply deserved, so they all cluster between four and five stars. Instead, trust has to be enforced by authoritarian surveillance and discipline imposed by the company itself. Even so, the companies insist that they are not even providing a service; the websites and apps are just a “communications platform” to link buyers and sellers. (Uber has the cheek to claim this as it continues taking increasingly large cuts of up to 30% of

a fare.) Nor, notoriously, does Uber consider its drivers to be employees to whom they would owe responsibilities: they are instead “independent contractors”.

None of this is to say that profitable pseudo-“sharing” operations cannot be set up to work in the best interests of everyone. The introduction of Paris’s cycle-hire scheme Vélib’ in 2007 was a great boon for residents of the city, and it now also has Autolib’, a very successful similar operation for electric cars. In the meantime, lots of us will continue to use Uber, too. Criticising the latter is not the sole preserve of people who are unqualified admirers of taxi driver’s high fares. It can be pointed out – and rightly so - that the real issue is not about whether we actually use these services or not. In modern times we have been miseducated to believe that consumer choice is all-powerful, but the idea that consumers exercising their sovereign right to choose will always lead to the best outcomes is obviously in the interest of corporations seeking to escape official regulation. So, although we might use Airbnb ourselves, we can still back the city authorities seeking to regulate it more tightly; and there is no contradiction in taking an Uber home from a party while wishing the company were better behaved. Only the law can force it to be so.

**Doc. 2**



Source: Vision Critical/Crowd Companies

## **Doc. 3**

### **3 reasons to cheer Uber and the sharing economy**

The sharing economy, where people rent apartments, cars, boats and other assets directly from each other through the Internet, has received a lot of flak lately. Critics of companies such as Uber, Task Rabbit and the like say workers lose out on the benefits and protections that regular full-time employees at big companies enjoy, such as health insurance and retirement savings.

It's true that today's laws need to catch up to this emerging business model, but there are three big benefits to the sharing economy that could be compromised if governments tinker too much with this arena.

#### **Creates new services**

There's growing demand for services like ride sharing and short-term apartment rentals that isn't easily met by traditional means, often due to the capital investment required. Uber has been successful because of the ubiquity of its service. The transportation company requires a massive fleet of vehicles and drivers, which could be prohibitively expensive if Uber had to supply all those cars or hire all those drivers full-time. In other words, if Uber didn't employ the model that it currently does, it might not be able to provide the valuable service that it does.

That doesn't mean the company couldn't pay its drivers more, especially since they have to invest in their own vehicles. Uber has a mercenary attitude toward its drivers and competitors, but solutions are emerging to mitigate some of these problems, such as a startup called Breeze that rents cars to Uber and Lyft drivers to enable them to provide ride sharing services cost-effectively. Uber estimates that on average its drivers make \$19 an hour in the U.S., which suggests that it would take just one week of driving for someone to cover the monthly costs of a Breeze rental, according to a calculation by the agency Billfold.

#### **Provides workplace flexibility**

While full-time employees enjoy many benefits, they can also have restrictions placed upon them; it's an expected quid pro quo. By contrast, a freelancer can usually set their own hours, work from home or elsewhere instead of an office, take more vacations, and do pretty much whatever they want outside of work. This is particularly important for millennials, who tend to put a premium on flexibility, enjoy doing different things and dislike being tied down. According to a study by PwC, the demand for flexibility isn't just limited to millennials, but is becoming a feature of the wider workforce.

The sharing economy seems tailor made for this trend. Despite its drawbacks, freelancing could well be the preferred work structure of the future. While it may be impossible to ascribe a dollar value to flexibility, it clearly has value for many since almost 34% of the U.S. population is now freelancing, according to a survey conducted by the Freelancers Union. In addition, freelance work, especially something like driving an Uber, can also sometimes be a lifeline for those who lack the credentials for more skilled jobs or need to make a living without committing too heavily to an employer so that they can pursue other passions.

**Sharing economy jobs can be just as, or more, lucrative than full-time gigs**

Contrary to what critics might say, wages under the sharing economy are not necessarily inferior to regular full-time jobs. Even though companies like Walmart and McDonalds are now increasing wages and some cities like Los Angeles have enacted a \$15 an hour minimum wage, the minimum wage in most of the U.S. still remains fairly low – the federal level is \$7.25 an hour and the 10 states with the highest minimum wage all have wages below \$10 an hour.

It’s worth noting that employer-subsidized health insurance does add to full-time wages, but not enough. On average, the annual employer contribution to cover a worker and his/her family was \$12,011 in 2014, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation, offset by \$4,823 that the employee had to pay from his/her side. This translates to net additional compensation for a full-time employee working 40 hours a week of \$3.75 an hour and for someone making a base of \$10 an hour, a total wage of only \$13.75 an hour. By contrast, an Uber driver who makes \$19 an hour can get family health coverage at about \$570 a month, which translates to \$3.60 an hour and therefore a net income of \$15.40 an hour.

What this all means is that some full-time jobs may pay less, even taking health insurance into account, than what Uber says their average driver makes.

From a purely financial standpoint, therefore, there is little difference between the traditional economy and the new sharing economy. There is a need in the U.S. to raise wages for workers of all stripes, but whether they are full-time or freelance is mostly irrelevant.

**Doc. 4**

**Revenue and transaction value of five key sharing economy sectors in Europe, 2015**



Source: 2016 PwC analysis

Doc. 5



## II. SYNTHÈSE

*Vous réaliserez une synthèse en langue anglaise en vous appuyant sur les documents du dossier. Vous veillerez à ne pas dépasser 400 mots.*

## III. TRADUCTION

*Vous traduirez vers votre langue maternelle le segment d'article ci-dessous, extrait du Doc. 3*

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## **Epreuve de l'après-midi : 14h30 – 16h30**

### **IV. REDACTION**

*Croyez-vous qu'un jour le modèle économique de l'économie collaborative sera considéré comme la norme plutôt que l'exception ?*

*Votre rédaction, écrite dans votre langue maternelle, ne devrait pas excéder 500 mots.*