

NORDIC WORKING PAPERS

Nordic labour markets and the sharing economy

National Background Reports

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Preface

This collection of national background reports are produced as part of a pilot project on Nordic Labour Markets and the Sharing Economy funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers and organized by Fafo, Oslo. The aim of the pilot project was to facilitate Nordic information exchange and provide a better knowledge base for developing future Nordic studies in this area. As part of the project, Fafo invited a group of researchers from all the Nordic countries to prepare short national background papers and take part in a two day workshop in Oslo, 26-27 September 2016. The national background papers were written within very restricted budget frames, and should be read in combination with the overall report from the pilot project. The Nordic research group has consisted of Antti Saloniemi (University of Tampere), Per Kongshøj-Madsen and Stine Rasmussen (CARMA, Aalborg University), Anna Illsøe (FAOS, Copenhage University), Bertil Rolandsson, Jesper Peterson and Tomas Berglund (University of Gothenburg), Katrín Ólafsdóttir (Reykjavik University School of Business), and Jon Erik Dølvik and Kristin Jesnes (Fafo).

In the work on the national background reports the contributors have benefitted from interviews with a range of sharing economy experts, and social partner representatives who generously have shared their knowledge and thoughts. Many thanks for that! We would also like to thank the Labour Market Committee of the Nordic Council of Ministers for funding the pilot study, its secretary Tryggvi Haraldsson for good support underway, and the participants in the Nordic research group for your enthusiastic and insightful contributions to the pilot study.

Oslo, January 2017

Jon Erik Dølvik and Kristin Jesnes

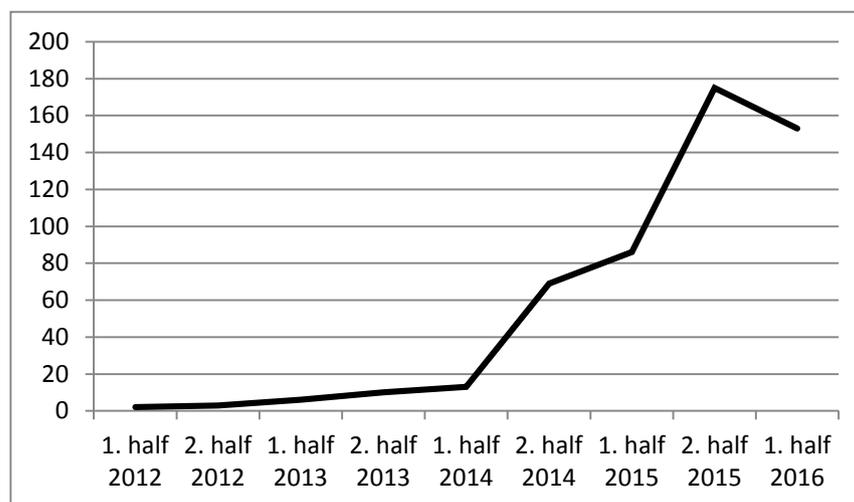
Denmark

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1. Introduction

As in many other countries, the issue of the sharing economy has rapidly reached the top of the Danish agenda, both measured by media coverage and by the interest of key political actors including the social partners.

Figure 1: Number of references to the Danish word for "sharing economy" in 17 Danish national newspapers from 2012.1 to 2016.1. Source: Calculated by the authors on the base of Infomedia.



The media coverage illustrated in figure 1 shows the number of references to the Danish word for "sharing economy" ("deleøkonomi") in seventeen printed news media

from the first half of 2012 to the first half of 2016. The two observations from the first half of 2012 are the earliest found in the Danish media database. As is evident from figure 1, the media coverage took off during the second half of 2014 probably related to the fact that the taxi platform Uber launched its services in Copenhagen in November 2014.

The alternative term "platform economy" – or "platformsøkonomi" in Danish – arrived much later and still plays an insignificant role in the media. The first mentioning of this term was in the second half of 2015, where the term occurred eight times. In the second half of 2016 only two examples are found. This is in spite of the fact that the Confederation of Danish Trade Unions (LO) has tried to market this alternative term as part of its critical approach to the sharing economy as further discussed below. The struggle about the correct term to be used of course reflects the point that the Danish word "deleøkonomi" - like the English term "sharing economy" - has a clear positive connotation, while the term "platform economy" is more neutral and just refers to the digital tool applied in the transactions. It therefore invites to a more balanced or even critical assessment of the phenomena.

As discussed in detail in the subsequent section, a related point is that the activities discussed under the heading of the new «sharing economy» covers a wide range of activities from exchange of goods, rental of cars and accommodation to direct exchange of labour. Their common characteristic is simply that a digital platform is involved. This aspect also adds to the fuzziness of the media coverage and the policy debates. Given the focus of the present research, emphasis below will however be on the labour market aspects of the sharing economy, where some sort of labour exchange is present.

Finally the rising media interest is mirrored by an increased attention from a number of political actors. In most cases the actors try to take a balanced view, where they on the one hand welcome the increased transparency in the markets, where digital platforms are used and where they – like the platforms for hotel booking (e.g. booking.com and hotels.com) - make it easier for consumers to navigate in the market. Along the same line, Uber has also been welcomed as a new player in the market for taxi services, which traditionally is highly regulated. For example the now former Social Democratic Minister for Business Henrik Sass Larsen has stated that: "One must say that taking a taxi today is a pricey pleasure, and I think that it is great that you can suddenly get someone in, who actually makes it affordable to be transported around in a car" (quoted in Radio Denmark News, May 20, 2015, translated by the aut-

hors). Not surprisingly this quote has later caused some critical remarks from trade unionists.

On the other hand, calls have also been made for more regulation of the “sharing economy” in order to ensure among other things the safety of the participants and the correct taxation of the revenues. The Government has also announced a white paper to be published in September 2016. The paper will analyse both the merits and the dangers of the sharing economy and the needs for regulation. These issues will be dealt with in further detail in section 4.

2. Size of the sharing economy

In Denmark, there is scarce knowledge about the size of the sharing economy measured by the share of GDP or employment. Research from research institutions is practically non-existing, but a few surveys from market research institutes and interest groups have been trying to map how many and who makes use of activities and services in the sharing economy. In these studies the respondents have been asked broadly about their use of activities and services in the sharing economy.

Results from surveys

A study from Gallup (a market research institute) asked an online panel in September 2015 if they had participated in the sharing economy during the last 6 months. Here, sharing economy was exemplified as the use of AirBnb, Uber, GoMore (car-pooling) or Resecond (exchange of dresses). In the survey 9 % answered yes. A year earlier the share was 3 %. The study showed that young people and people with residence in the capital are most likely to utilize the sharing economy. There was also a tendency to find more participants either in the lowest or the highest income groups. The total turnover in the activities measured in the survey was almost 1.2 billion DKK and the total number of participants was estimated at 315,000 persons. The survey does not allow for identifying the activities, which were directly related to the labour market (Erichsen 2015, Nordea 2016).

A survey from Dansk Erhverv (the Confederation of Danish Enterprise) showed similar results. Here, a representative section of the Danish population was asked in September 2015, if they had either used transportation services like Uber or Lyft or rented an accommodation through AirBnB or similar services during the last 12 months. 5 % had

used Uber or a similar service and 8 % had used AirBnb or a similar service and in total almost 10 % of the population had used one or more of these services. In line with the previous survey, this survey also showed that young people and citizens with residence in the capital or other large cities are more likely to utilize the sharing economy. This survey also showed that initiatives in the sharing economy are often used when travelling abroad (Munkøe et al. 2015).

Examples of individual activities directly involving employment

If we look broadly at the Danish sharing economy, there are a lot of different initiatives (around 100) but if we only are to focus on activities and services that directly involve employment, the volume is more limited.

First of all we have Uber, which is probably the most debated initiative in the sharing economy in Denmark. Uber came to Denmark in November 2014 and is so far only located in Copenhagen. In a newspaper article from May 2016 it is estimated that around 1700 Danes are registered as Uber drivers (Christensen 2016). Since Uber was launched in Denmark, it's been heavily debated among especially politicians and interest groups (unions etc.), whether Uber is to be considered professional taxi driving or not. Especially the traditional taxi business has protested strongly against Uber. In July 2016 six Uber drivers were convicted of violating the taxi legislation by the municipal court in Copenhagen and convicted to pay a fine. The sentence was later confirmed by the "High Court". This made the Public Prosecutor announce in early December 2016 that charges would now be raised directly towards the Dutch company Uber BV, which is behind Uber's activities in Denmark. At the time of writing Uber is however still operating in Copenhagen.

Besides Uber there are a number of initiatives in the Danish sharing economy that has directly to do with labour exchange. One example is Meploy which is a website described as a "supplement to the existing job market" aimed at young people and students, where firms and individuals can hire other individuals (not professionals) to carry out certain tasks for payment (Svansø, 2016). The concept is that firms or individuals can create a so-called "ploy" on the website, which is a short description of the task they want someone to complete and then individuals can apply for that ploy. Thereafter the firm or the individual decide which one to hire for the job. It must be possible to complete the task between 1 and 7 hours, and the hourly pay is 150 Danish kroner (around 20 Euros). A fee of 5 percent is charged by Meploy.

The CEO of MePloy has explicitly stated the firm has aimed at taking into account the worries of the trade unions (Svansø, 2016). Thus the hourly wage level of 150 DKK (20 Euro) is calculated in order to allow the workers to pay for pensions and insurance in addition to the minimum wage for unskilled workers in the collective agreements. To avoid tax evasion, the firm has also set a limit, so people who don't have a VAT number are blocked from seeking new jobs, when they have earned more than 50,000 DKK (6,700 Euro) in a year.

Payment takes place through the website and after the task is completed, the persons involved write a recommendation of each other. The ploys on the website mainly have to do with painting, gardening, bartending and 'handyman-like' tasks. It's not been possible to find out how widespread MePloy is, but when searching the website in October 2016 a very limited number of ploys seem to be present (below 10). However, the founder of MePloy has in an interview in a newspaper article from October 2016 stated that more than 2500 persons have signed up at the website and that around 500 jobs have been offered (Svansø 2016). The website was launched in the end of 2015 and so far only in Copenhagen.

We have also found other examples of similar concepts, for instance AHandyHand.dk, Lejdet.dk, DenLilleTjeneste.dk and Happytown.dk. AHandyHand is similar to MePloy (exchange of labour), has existed since 2009 and covers the entire country. The jobs available range from 'handyman-like' tasks, babysitting and cleaning to computer assistance. According to the website around 6000 persons offer their help and as opposed to MePloy no fixed hourly pay exists, but the website has examples of what is appropriate wages for different tasks ranging from 60-100 Danish kroner (8-13 Euro) for individuals below the age of 18 and 100-300 Danish kroner (13-40 Euro) for individuals over the age of 18. There is also not an upper limit as to how many hours the individuals can use in order to complete the tasks. DenLilleTjeneste.dk and Happytown.dk seems similar to AHandyHand.dk and Happytown.dk is also the provider of more stable after-school jobs for young people. Lejdet.dk. is also similar to the before mentioned initiatives in terms of exchange of labour and covers all sorts of jobs performed by both professionals and individuals (photography, different types of therapists, babysitting, cleaning, teaching, plumbing etc.), but is also engaged in letting out personal belongings. Common for the different initiatives is that the firm behind the website takes a certain amount of money in commission in order to match the workers and jobs or a fee in order to have a profile on the website.

We have also found that Upwork has Danish jobs and Danish freelancers affiliated. According to a study by CEVEA (a Danish think tank) 1621 Danish freelancers are signed up at Upwork and 163 of them have carried out tasks (CEVEA 2015:41).

Attitudes towards the sharing economy

Finally one can mention that the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) has conducted two surveys among its members and potential members concerning their perception of the sharing economy (LO 2016a, LO 2016b). Given the target group, the main results are hardly surprising.

When asked about the negative effects of the sharing economy, a majority of between half and two thirds points to unfair competition, the evasion of tax payment and lack of basic rights like maternity leave and sickness pay. However, when asked to balance the positive and negative effects a large minority of around 40 % state that they do not know. In addition 36 % in the latest survey find both positive and negative effects. This is a decline from 45 % in the first survey. On the other hand 22 % in the latest survey find only negative effect compared to 11 % in the first survey. The share finding only positive effects is only 2 to 3 %. Thus the surveys reveal a significant uncertainty in the assessment of the sharing economy, but also a tendency towards an increasingly sceptical attitude among the LO-membership.

Similarly the trade union organising salaried workers (HK) has conducted a survey among its members about their attitudes towards seeking employment using digital platforms like Upwork (Redder, 2016). Around half of the members would never consider this option. Their major worry was the lack of basic in-work benefits like sickness pay, paid vacation and training.

3. Impacts of the sharing economy on working conditions, pay and employment relations

Given the sparse knowledge on the extent and content of the Danish sharing economy there is also little, if any, knowledge about its impact on working conditions, pay and employment conditions.

This situation must also be seen in the light of the fact that work and pay conditions on the Danish labour market traditionally have been regulated through collective agreements, although EU-regulations have played an increasing role in recent years. However, there is no legally binding minimum wage in Denmark and therefore no formal issue concerning the pay conditions on the Danish sharing economy. Many collective agreements will have a “minimum wage” (typically around 120 DKK/16 Euro per hour for adult workers), but this is only binding for employees directly covered by the agreement. Comparing the minimum wage in the collective agreements with the hourly wages from the labour-exchange platforms quoted in the previous section, the latter do not seem to be totally out of line. However, it should be added that the average wage for unskilled adult workers is significantly higher than the minimum wage – around 200 DKK per hour (around 27 Euro) (2014).

A further issue concerns the fact that many of the persons working in the sharing economy will have an uncertain status with respect to being employees or self-employed (cf. the debate about the Uber-drivers) and it is also not evident how the work these persons are carrying out is regulated and protected.

These issues have of course been in the focus of the trade unions. In the following section the reactions of the main Danish trade unions as well as other political actors are discussed.

4. Government and social partners’ approaches

In this section we look at the attitudes and policies presented by the main political actors in response to the growth of the platform economy.

The Government

So far, the present Danish liberal government has expressed a positive view on the sharing economy. The Danish Minister for Business and Growth Troels Lund Poulsen has stated that he sees a large potential in the sharing economy, because it creates growth and wealth. He therefore aims at integrating the different services in the sharing economy more into the Danish economy. To support this, he will launch a comprehensive strategy concerning the sharing economy in Denmark, which is to be published in 2017.

In addition the recent long-term growth strategy from the Government published in August 2016 has a section on the sharing economy (Regeringen 2016:37-38). Here the Government again states that a more comprehensive strategy will be published later in the fall. The strategy will ensure a more transparent framework in general areas such as taxation and consumer protection etc. In addition the following more specific points are mentioned:

The government will increase the existing basic tax allowance in connection with the rental of second homes and room rental by 10,000 DKK. The allowance for rental of holiday homes will in addition be increased by 5,000 DKK. The extra allowance is made conditional on the reporting of taxable income to the tax authorities through a rental agency or a digital platform.

In addition, the government will examine the possibility of introducing a general basic tax allowance for activities in the sharing economy in order to increase the incentives to participate in it. Again this will be conditional on "automatic" reporting to the tax authorities through a digital platform

In order to support the use of digital reporting platforms voluntary agreements will be made with actors in the sharing economy and marketing efforts made towards the citizens, share economic platforms etc.

Private individuals' use of digital payment also provides a new opportunity to creating an easy digital path for reporting to the tax authorities. A dialogue with the financial sector will be initiated in order to mainstream reporting solutions in existing payment services, for instance for payment for services between private individuals.

Thus the Government's focus at present seems to be almost solely on issues of taxation. Whether the final strategy will be more comprehensive or visionary remains to be seen.

Finally the growth of the platform economy has given rise to new challenges for regulation not only with respect to taxation and consumer protection, but also to within other policy areas. A recent example is related to a new requirement stipulating that unemployed recipients of social cash benefits must have ordinary employment for at

least 225 hours a year in order to receive the full benefits. At present it is unclear, whether temporary employment arranged via a digital platform will let the unemployed person qualify for further cash benefits. The assessment of many jobcentres is that such employment cannot be seen as ordinary employment, because the necessary documentation in the form of an employment contract and payslips will not be available (Tybjerg, 2016).

The Danish National Confederation of Trade Unions (LO)

In May 2016 LO published a report focused on the challenges posed by the sharing economy and the strategy to be pursued in relation hereto (LO, 2016c). In addition LO has conducted some survey about the attitudes towards the sharing economy (cf. the data reported in section 2).

In its report LO first discusses some conceptual issues along the lines of the discussions in the first section of the present report. As already indicated in the introduction, a major point for LO is to distinguish between the concepts of sharing economy ("deleøkonomi") and of platform economy ("platformsøkonomi"). Here sharing economy should generally describe non-profit activities like carpooling, etc. On the other hand the notion of platform economy should be used to describe profit-seeking companies, whose business models are based on digital platforms. LO finds that the platform economy should be welcomed, but only if it is in accordance with Danish legislation and the Danish labour market model.

In addition LO points to the need to distinguish between business models based on peer-to-peer interaction and on business to customer interaction. In the first case the digital platform connects individual sellers and buyers of goods or services. Airbnb is an example of a profit-seeking business based on this model. In the second model the same firm uses the platform to connect to several consumers. The car-sharing company Car2go is an example of this model. One may add that in Denmark it closed down its operations in February 2016 after 17 months due to a lack of customers. The distinction between peer-to-peer models and business to consumer models is however not clear-cut. For instance Uber has can be seen as representing both business models depending on whether one considers the individual taxi drivers to be employed by Uber or to be individuals offering car sharing services. In the various legal allegations against Uber and its drivers the choice between these two perspectives is of course a core issue.

In its discussion of the consequences of the platform economy, LO not surprisingly focuses on those platforms, which directly involves employment (including self-employment). Here a number of challenges are identified and later illustrated using Uber as the case (LO 2016c:14-21):

- Lack of implementation of existing legislation for instance with respect to safety at work, often due to the fact the existing legislation is not adapted to the use of digital platforms
- Tax evasion
- Missing monitoring of rules concerning insurance, authorization etc.
- Lack of basic right for employees like sickness pay, paid vacation etc. This is often related to the unclear status of the involved persons as either employees or self-employed.

Following the identification of these challenges, LO proposes both better implementation of existing legislation and a number of new initiatives. Finally the LO discusses the need for trade unions to include the employers and employees of the platform economy into the organised labour market. This call for overcoming barriers due to the resistance of the employers involved, but also due to the facts that those employed in the platform economy mostly work separated from one another and without a sense of common professional identity.

Other trade unions

In addition to LO other large trade unions have also been active concerning the challenges posed by the platform economy. Thus HK, which organises salaried workers, has recruited new personnel and trained their employees in order to offers better assistance to members, if they ask for advice in relation to take work through a Danish or foreign platform. Along similar lines the Danish Confederation of Professional Associations (Akademikerne) has stated that the unions clearly have a role to play in ensuring the rights of the new independent workers. Together the two unions have announced that they will establish a task force of experts, which will come up with concrete solutions to some of the many challenges that follow in the wake of platform economy. The task force will consist of leading representatives of IT companies, platform companies, trade unions, employers and researchers. For a more detailed analysis of the responses of Danish trade unions to the challenges of digitalisation, reference can be made to Ilsøe (forthcoming).

Employer's organizations

While the national trade unions have been very active in the debate on the sharing economy, the national employer's organisations have been more reluctant to express strong and detailed view.

The website of the Confederation of Danish Employers (DA) has only one document related to the sharing economy. It is a brief reply to a hearing concerning a Commission Communication on the sharing economy from June 16, 2016. The main message is that existing regulation is sufficient to cope with the challenges from the sharing economy, when it comes to employment relations. There is therefore no need for further initiatives.

The Confederation of Danish Industry has some references to the sharing economy as part of its strategy towards environmental issues and the circular economy (Dansk Industri, 2015), but no comprehensive analysis or policy statements.

The Confederation of Danish Enterprise (Dansk Erhverv), whose membership consists of firms that are mainly oriented towards the domestic market, has published a brief analysis of the concept of the sharing economy and a survey on the use of mainly Uber and Airbnb (Dansk Erhverv 2015). It has also on a number of occasions expressed a positive attitude towards activities in the sharing economy, but at the same time pointed to the need for fair competition including compliance with national tax laws.

The most critical voices towards activities in the sharing economy has – not surprisingly – been raised by employers organisation's that represent businesses that are most directly affected by the present large platform operator, especially Uber and Airbnb.

Thus, Dansk Taxi Råd (Danish Taxi Council), which organises the majority of taxi companies, has taken a critical attitude towards Uber and at the same time called for a modernisation and liberalisation of the complicated laws that at present regulate the taxi business. The main claim is thus that a level playing field should be created, where platform based services will compete with other providers of transport services on equal conditions. Here protection of customers and ensuring compliance with lax legislation are key issues. Together with other employers organisations involved in the taxi business a proposal for reform was sent to the Minister of Transportation in October 2015 (Dansk Taxi Råd et al, 2015).

Along the same lines the largest employers organisation for the hotel-, restaurant and tourism-sector HORESTA has criticised Airbnb for unfair competition and called for a tighter monitoring of the taxable incomes from the individuals that rent their homes through Airbnb and for giving them the same obligation as the traditional hotel business, when it comes to compliance with consumer safety, statistical reporting etc.

5. Summary

As in many other countries the issue of the “sharing economy” has rapidly risen to the top of the public agenda, both measured by media attention and by the interest of the main political actors.

In spite hereof, our knowledge about both the content and the extent of the activities in the sharing economy is still scattered. This is to a large degree caused by the vagueness of the concept of the sharing economy itself. Also, the question of the term to use to describe the phenomena is an issue. Some actors thus argue that the correct term should be the “digital platform economy” in order to stress the main new feature of the activities in this sector.

Due to the ambiguity of the concept our knowledge about the consequences of the platform economy is also fuzzy. Focusing on the platforms related to labour exchange, they mainly seem to offer jobs at the lower end of the pay scale, but no hard evidence is available.

Furthermore, in spite of the political focus on the issue, no new regulations or policies has yet been introduced. Several political actors including the social partners have called for interventions that create a more level playing field for both traditional firms and the new platform based activities, but apart from a district court ruling against the activities of Uber, no concrete initiatives have yet been taken. The trade unions have also started to develop a strategy to support the basic right of members working in the platforms, but also in this area there are few actual initiatives.

Finally, the Government has announced a strategy directed at the “sharing economy” or “platform economy” to be published later in the fall. The strategy will both focus on worker and consumer safety and on various tax issues.

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Finland

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1. Introduction

“You don’t want the drill – you want the hole.” The widely quoted slogan above illustrates the logic of the sharing economy and challenges the necessity of ownership: is there really a need to own a drill if your real need is a hole in a wall? Most of the time the drill sits unused in the toolbox. Correspondingly, private cars remain unused for most of the day; even when they are used, most often there is only one passenger. Similarly, homes are perhaps not inhabited all of the time. The sharing economy asks “why not” share your drill, car, or home? It is possible to validate this type of thinking from the point of sustainable development. Instead of increasing consumption, more attention should be paid to the optimal use of already existing resources (e.g. Botsman & Rogers 2010.)

The situation becomes more complicated when we follow up the drill example with a (realistic) thought experiment: if the basic aim is the hole, perhaps we don’t want to hire only a drill, but someone to use it as well. On some scale, the option is already available today. In the wake of the physical means of production, human labour is creeping into the sharing economy as well.

In itself, the sharing economy formulates a dualistic vision, as C.J. Martin (2016) puts it in the title of her article: “The sharing economy: A pathway to sustainability or a nightmarish form of neoliberal capitalism?” The logic of the sharing economy simultaneously includes the potential for sustainable consumption and a decentralized, equitable economy, on the one hand, and for unregulated markets for goods, services, and labour, on the other. One of the grand stories around the evolution of modern wage labour is its decommodification, a process where workers and citizens are freed from absolute market dependency. As a result, in the state of mature wage labour, the status of labour in the market is no longer absolutely identical to that of other means

of production. In the most dystopian of visions, the implementation of the sharing economy in the labour market will be a way to reintroduce pre-modern forms of wage labour (Siltala 2016).

In discussions about the sharing economy, it is common to lament the vagueness of the concept. It seems to refer to the accumulation of things from flea-markets and Wikipedia to start-up enterprises and Uber taxis. The lowest common denominator of all this seems to be technology, or – to be more precise – digitalization. In its modern form, the sharing economy involves the application of modern technology, even if the service itself is simply cleaning or car driving. Another term, the platform economy, is often used alongside the sharing economy; it refers specifically to those new tools that make connections between the client and the customer easier than ever. However, new digital connection means are changing the links between producers profoundly as well. The connections between digitalization, the sharing economy, and the platform economy are relatively unclear, both in scientific and public discussion. (Sundararajan 2016).

The purpose of this text is to outline and contextualize the link between the labour market and the sharing economy from the Finnish perspective. We can start with the conclusion: until recently discussions on the labour market and the sharing economy met each other only incidentally. However, the need for an integrative discussion has been recognized widely.

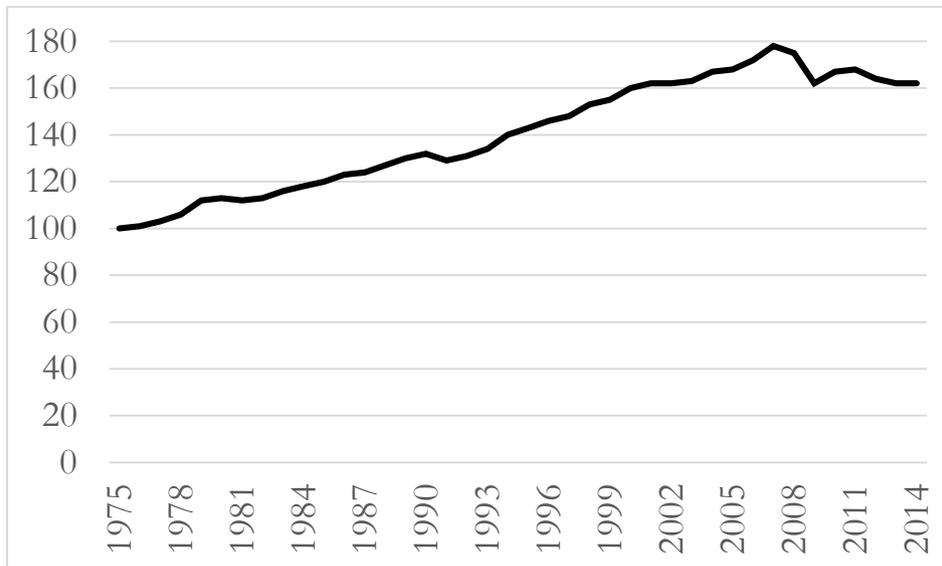
The themes of lifestyle, consumption, and a sustainable economy have been the main frames in which the dimensions of the sharing economy have been dealt with. Even in serious re-evaluations that are seeking ways of implementing a sustainability economy, the sharing economy is conceptualized, but in a way where the fate of wage labour plays only a marginal role (Jakonen & Silvasti 2015; Joutsenvirta et al. 2016).

2. Finland – an affluent economy in troubles?

The figures below illustrate the two mutually interwoven key problems of the Finnish labour market and economy in general. First of all, the employment rate has stabilized at a relatively low level (Figure 1). At the beginning of 2016, it was 66.8 per cent (15-64 years). In the current context there is no gender difference: the rate is 66.6 for men and 66.9 for women. This situation is far from satisfactory; one of the main goals of

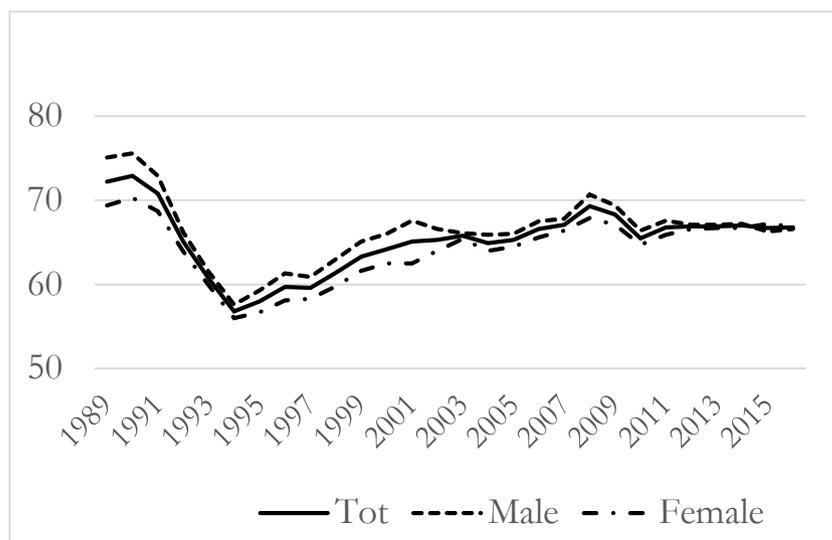
the current government is to raise the employment rate to 72 per cent. In practice, the rate has never reached this level, even before the great Finnish recession of the 1990s.

Figure 1. Productivity in Finland 1975-2014 (1975= 100). Source: Statistics Finland.



Another source of continuous concern is the trend in productivity. Even in the deepest years of the aforementioned recession, there was a steady growth in productivity up to 2008. At the beginning of the latest economic crisis, productivity fell remarkably, and since then development has been unstable: no steady growth in productivity has been achieved.

Figure 2. Employment rate in Finland 1989 – 2016 (the first quartile of the year). Source: Statistics Finland.



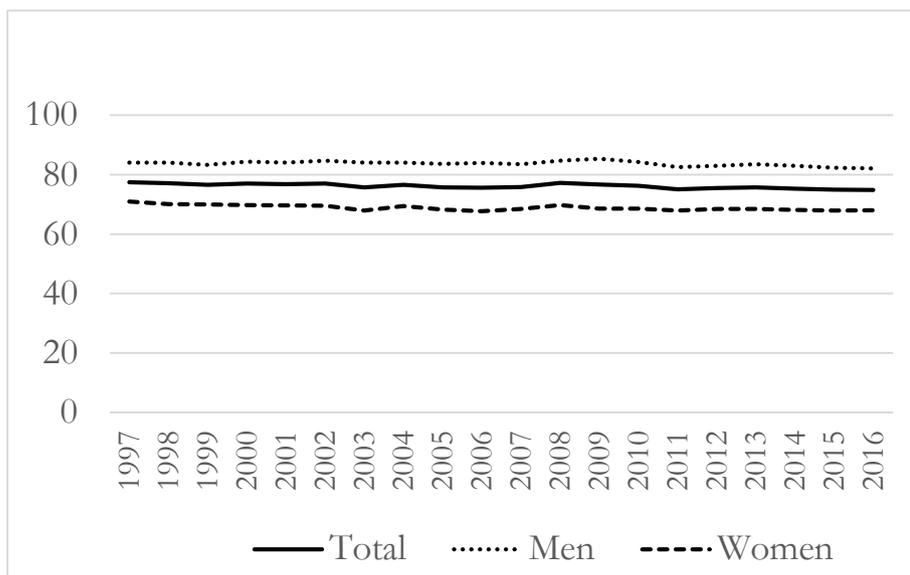
Both of these concerns are linked with questions concerning the platform/sharing economy, although from different angles.

3. Non-standard employment in Finland

Compared to the other Nordic countries, Finland is a latecomer as a society based on wage labour. The country's long agrarian tradition coupled with the heritage of World War II generated a situation in which the proportions of employees in the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors were equal still in the early 1960s. Paradoxically, despite the late formation, the result has been a rigid wage labour society; for those who are employed, the status of full-timer has been the rule. Part-time work, for men as well as women, has been much less common than in the other Nordic countries (see e.g. Kangas & Saloniemi 2013.)

The proportion of employees working full-time on permanent contracts has remained surprising constant over the last twenty years (Figure 3). From this point of view, popular arguments that normal forms of wage labour are in decline hardly gain support in evidence.

Figure 3. Employment rate in Finland 1997-2016 (the first quartile of the year). Source: Statistics Finland.



Nevertheless, there is no reason to underestimate the changes behind the broad overview. Figures 4 and 5 depict the trends of work outside normal (permanent, full-time) contracts. As the Finnish labour markets are highly segregated by gender, these trends are displayed separately for men and women.

Figure 4. Number (1000) of male fixed-term employees, part-time employees and self-employer 1997-2016 (the first quartile of the year).

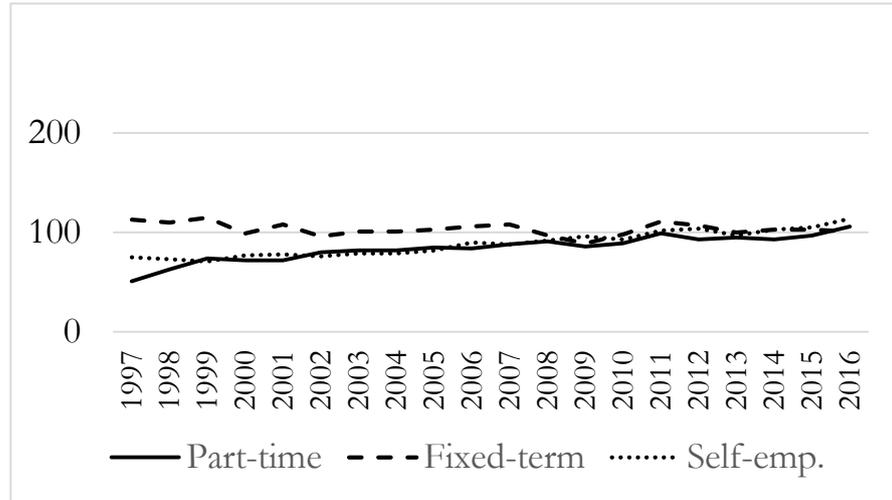
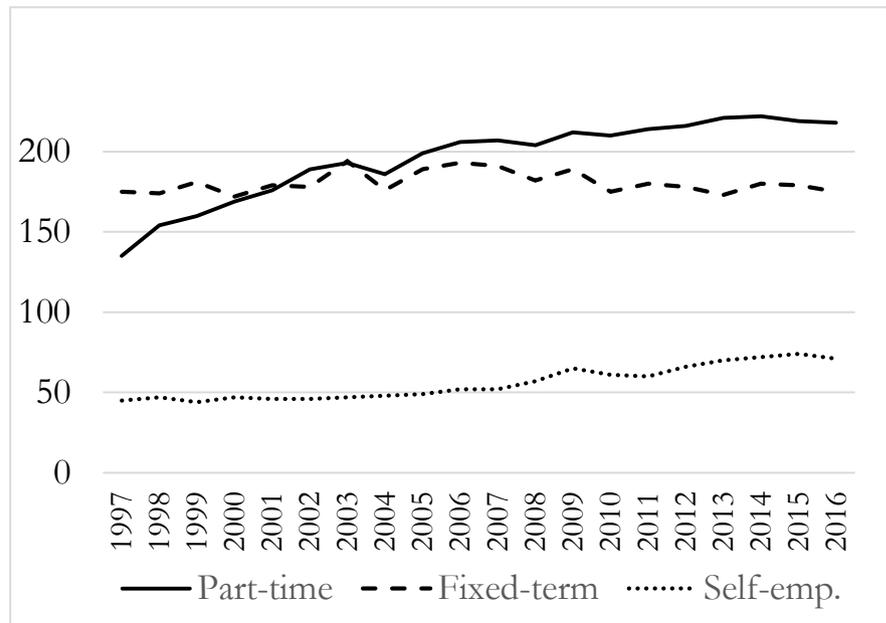


Figure 5. Number (1000) of female fixed-term employees, part-time employees and self-employed 1997-2016 (the first quartile of the year).



The changes in fixed-term employment are modest for both men and women. There is, however, an increasing trend in part-time work. In 1997, 51,000 men and 135,000 women worked part-time; the number of men working part-time has doubled over twenty years (106, 000 in 2016), and the increase was strong for women as well (218,000 in 2016).

Young and educated people are the most dominant group in fixed-term employment. Respectively, family reasons and studies are the most common reasons for part-time work. One in three listed the lack of full-time work as the reason for part-time work. (Sutela & Lehto 2013.)

For the main goal of this paper, a third group – those in non-standard work – is the most important. Among men, the self-employed are the largest group of non-standard workers. In 2016, the number of self-employed males was 114,000, whereas twenty years ago the number was 75,000. Most of the rise came before the sharing economy occurred. There has been an increase in self-employment among women as well (from 47,000 in 1996 to 71,000 in 2016), but this type of working is clearly more common among men.

Statistics Finland has produced an extensive study on the self-employed (Pärnänen & Sutela 2013). The study also covered the economic and work quality dimensions of their situation. As expected, the self-employed were an extremely heterogeneous group. As a rule, their incomes were clearly lower compared with those of employees. Still, in many dimensions of the quality of working life, the self-employed held the upper hand. The study also showed that about twenty per cent reported being self-employed because it was the only option.

4. The missing link of digitalization?

Although the sharing economy with its threats and possibilities is not a leading theme in Finnish labour market debates, it would be misleading to argue that the questions and problems linked to the erosion of standard wage labour are totally absent from the Finnish discussion. Above all, research activity around non-standard work has been substantial.

Administrative logic has had to react as well. As mentioned earlier, Finland's version of the wage labour society is young but rigid. The general assumption has been that

people are either full time employees or completely out of work. In essence, the whole social security system is set according to this supposition. The increasing diversity in the forms of work has challenged this norm, and step by step, more or less incremental renewals have been carried out. This process has also generated a number of administrative reports on the changing conditions of work.

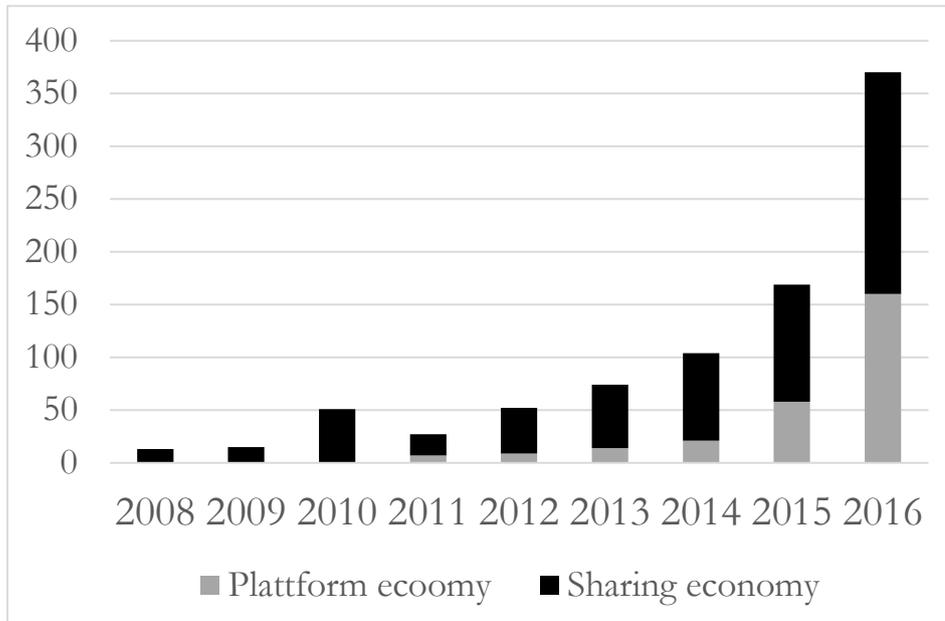
Traditionally, and with good reasons, trade unions have seen the new forms of work as a threat: the erosion of stable work diminishes the power of worker collectives and limits in this way also the collective power of the unions. The new situation has provoked union related “who is in and who is out” problems as well: are the union clubs only for those with traditional, permanent contracts? In recent years, the unions have purposefully developed their strategies to make the interests of non-standard employees more visible. Not surprisingly, the union for private sector service workers (PAM) has been the most active in this process.

In recent years, the question of the self-employed has made a breakthrough. The first covering study was published by Pärnänen and Sutela (2013). The topic has raised increasing attention, including among unions: Akava (Confederation of Unions for Professional and Managerial Staff in Finland) has in particular been active in creating new openings for this group.

5. The pending trend?

Above, I outlined some forms of non-standard work in Finland. Despite some issues, especially self employment, coming relatively close to the ideas of the sharing economy and its implications for the labour market, hardly any systematic research is available, even about the basic characteristics of the sharing economy phenomenon. From this point of view, the situation is different from the other Nordic countries. Still, it is rising in the public discussion. Figure 6 depicts the situation.

Figure 6. Google hits for “jakamistalous” [sharing economy] and “alustatalous” [platform economy] 2008 – 2016 (October).



The basis of the figure – the number of Google hits for “jakamistalous” (sharing economy) and “alustatalous” (platform economy) – is far from reliable. Nevertheless, it depicts two trends: the use of the terms started very recently, but the increase is remarkable. Another issue worthy of attention is that the notion “sharing economy” seems to be much more common than “platform economy”. In Finland, the latter term refers much more directly to the sphere of the economy, whereas the former term perhaps refers more to consumption and lifestyles, etc. This might confirm the suspicion presented earlier: in the Finnish discussion, the emphasis in the discussion on the sharing economy is more focused on consumption and lifestyles than on the labour market.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the Uber taxi service has been the form of business that has prompted public debate related to the sharing economy. Uber arrived in Helsinki three years ago. From its launch, Uber’s legal status in Finland was unclear until autumn 2016, when the Court of Appeal stated that driving for Uber contravenes Finnish legislation. Besides the sharing economy, the Uber case has illustrated contradictory interests regarding the general deregulation pressures of the Finnish private hire industry in general. Occurring almost simultaneously with the legal verdict, a bitter political struggle over deregulation has come to its conclusion. The compromise loosens permit conditions for taxi driving remarkably, but the period of transition is long; the

new rules do not take full effect until 2018. An interesting detail in the new regulations is the statement about language: fluent Finnish is a condition for a taxi license. Currently, working for Uber is illegal, but it is hard to believe the resolution has eliminated Uber from Finland.

A quick glance at the Finnish sharing/platform debate from the point of working life does not reveal a great deal. Those engaged in the debate – including researchers and policymakers – are not blind to the changes in how work is done. Still, the logic of platforms and sharing is not the focus of the discussions. An illustrative fact is that even rough estimations about the number of people utilizing or working in the sharing economy are not available. At the same time, the importance of getting a better grasp of the new phenomenon is being acknowledged: the new digital society is soon coming – in fact, it is already here.

As anticipated, the first concrete marks of awakening are seminars, references in important public speeches, and so on (e.g. Mahdollisuuksien aika 2016, Työn murros 2015). The digitalization of work is regularly the broader concept under which the sharing economy is introduced.

As usual, when questions about the future arise, the prospects are littered with concerns. The first set of concerns relate to productivity. The report “Is Finland about to miss the platform economy train?” (Ailisto ym. 2016) summarizes the worries about the insufficient interest in utilizing the latest digital technology by Finnish companies. As the name of the report indicates, in the era of the Nokia hang-over, Finland is no longer at the forefront of new technology. Despite its name, the report makes only marginal references to the labour market.

In addition to concerns about low productivity, there are concerns linked to employment. The sharing economy is seen as a tool to pull up the employment rate. Even fragmented work can be a stepping stone out of unemployment and inactivity. This is a reason for promotion of the new forms of work. In terms of policy recommendations, increasing deregulation is certainly the predominant tendency (e.g. Vartianen 2016). Alternatively, the new labour market trends are seen as a return to the miseries of pre-modern forms of wage labour (Siltala 2016). There is something common to these mind-sets: both seem to be more based on the inner desires or fears of those making the recommendations than on empirical evidence.

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Iceland

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1. Introduction

Rachel Botsman (2015) defines the sharing economy as “an economic system based on sharing underused assets or services, for free or for a fee, directly from individuals.” The term ‘sharing economy’ is often used in a wider context and in fact, many terms are being used, often interchangeably, such as ‘gig’ economy, ‘digital’ economy and ‘platform’ economy. In most cases what we consider the sharing economy makes use of existing resources, especially capital, in new and inventive ways. The sharing economy usually does not require additional investment, but a way for individuals to generate income from items such as housing and automobiles, using this investment to generate revenues while not in private use. The sharing economy is not limited to the use of physical capital, it also entails possibilities for alternative uses of an individual’s human capital.

This development would be unthinkable without the use of latest technology which reduces the transaction cost, often by providing platforms in the form of computer programs that are easily accessible and user friendly in the form of apps. Furthermore, the deep recession that hit Iceland in late 2008 triggered a change in attitude among Icelanders. While ownership of things had until then been very important, the recession led to it becoming more accepted to utilize your ownership and offer services to others. This, coupled with the rising tourism in Iceland as the number of tourists visiting quadrupled between 2000 and 2015 (Iceland Tourist Board, n.d.), Iceland would have quickly reached saturation point were it not for the additional flexible capital stock in the form of private homes, that has allowed the growth in tourism to continue.

Firms operating in the sharing economy are often based on low fixed cost, i.e. their capital is limited, and reputation in the sharing economy is valuable. The sharing eco-

nomy takes on many different forms, there are social media, peer to peer, platforms, crowd sourcing, electronic market places, and collaborative consumption. The supplier is often referred to as a micro entrepreneur and as he or she can be both producer and consumer, a new term has been coined, prosumer (Jónsson and Sæmundsson 2014). The sharing economy consists of buying and selling of used goods (Craig's list, Ebay, Bland), direct rent of property (Airbnb, Uber, Lyft), direct sale of goods and services (Etsy, Feastly) and as a platform to exchange favors or pay for minor jobs (TaskRabbit, Timebank).

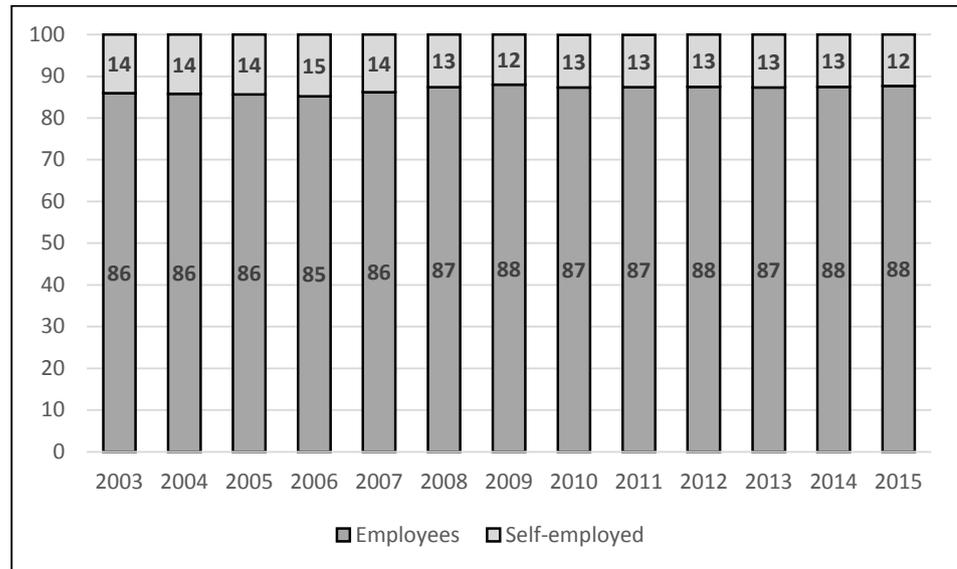
All those that have discussed the effects of the sharing economy seem to agree that the sharing economy is here to stay. None of them suggest that policies should aim at getting rid of the sharing economy, rather that regulators make sure that there is a level playing field. This requires a new way of thinking as in the sharing economy the lines between individuals and firms, employees and employers, have become blurred.

2. Size of the sharing economy

The sharing economy has been around for a long time as people have been helping each other out with favors throughout history. Only with the latest technology, with the Great Recession playing a part, has this type of operation become more widespread. Also, many transactions that previously were without remuneration, have now become lucrative, especially for the middleman who provides the platform technology that matches provider and consumer.

Very little is known about the size of the sharing economy in Iceland and estimates are hard to come by. Whether the sharing economy is captured by the traditional measures of labor force participation and work hours is hard to say. Labor force participation rates are very high in Iceland (88%) and average work hours are 39-40 hours a week (Statistics Iceland, n.d.). One possible indicator of an increased participation in the sharing economy is whether a growing share of the labor force is classified as self-employed. There is no indication of this development in the Icelandic labor market as a constant or even falling share of the labor force is classified as self-employed as shown in figure 1. However, it is not uncommon for Icelanders to have more than one job and thus, individuals might participate in the sharing economy on a part-time basis in addition to their regular job.

Figure 1. Forms of employment in Iceland 2003-2015.



So far the operation of the sharing economy in Iceland seems to be limited to utilizing previously unused capital. That type of operation does not have large effects on the labor market as few new jobs are created.

Icelanders make use of various websites when participating in the sharing economy, some are Icelandic, some are international and some are Icelandic adaptations of international websites. The potential for participating in the sharing economy is high as housing and automobiles, two items often offered for use in the sharing economy, account for 40% of household outlays in Iceland on average (Kristjánsdóttir 2015). These are also in great demand due to the growth in the tourism sector.

A widely used website in Iceland by Icelanders is Bland.is, where goods and services are offered for sale. The website carries mostly used good for sale, similar to ebay. There are also many pages on Facebook where individuals can sell or give things away, even pages where they can give their leftover food.

There are various websites that offer the use of automobiles. There are at least two websites, Caritas.is and Cario.is, that offer private cars for rent. These websites work just like a car rental agency, but using cars owned by individuals who offer their cars when not in personal use. There is an Icelandic website samferda.net where people

can get together for carpooling, either for free or where the passengers share petrol costs. Furthermore, there are groups on Facebook (Skutlarar) that offer rides to people, often for payment, although most of this operation is not covered by law. Uber, however, which is available in over 500 cities worldwide (www.uber.com) does not operate in Iceland.

Airbnb is probably the best known company in Iceland that belongs to the sharing economy. Rooms and apartments are on offer all around the country. The number of beds offered on Airbnb in Reykjavik increased from 1.200 in December 2014, to 2.700 in November 2015 or by 125% in less than a year (Íslandsbanki 2016). From November 2014 to November 2015 it is estimated that overnight stays booked through Airbnb numbered 358 thousand in Reykjavík. In comparison, overnight stays in hotels in Reykjavík were 1.782 thousand during the same period. Thus, overnight stays in Airbnb amount to 20% of overnight stays in hotels. During high season in August 2015, this share was higher or 33% (Íslandsbanki 2016). Thus, the sharing economy bore the brunt of the increased demand in high season, showing the advantages of flexible capital stock.

With the wide-spread offering of housing on Airbnb, there are now companies in Iceland (for example Rvk Apartments, Umsjón and Leigðu út) which offer to take care of the services required for offering overnight stays, such as meeting guests, changing bedding and cleaning the apartments.

The sharing economy has recently ventured into the financial sector in Iceland as a company, Aktiva, now offers peer-to-peer lending, where individuals can offer their funds for borrowing while others can borrow funds. This is a novelty, while crowdfunding is widely used in Iceland. One of these sites is Karolina Fund. According to their website (www.karolinafund.com) they have since September 2012 funded 245 projects, with a success rate of 74% and 25.840 participants. The website has funded all kinds of startup firms and projects, including book publishing and music making.

There is one project that deserves a special mention. That is the initiative Hæg breytileg átt or Slowly Changing Course (www.haegbreytilegatt.is). It was a housing development project conducted by Aurora Design Fund in collaboration with the City Council of Reykjavik, Federation of Icelandic Industries, Iceland Design Centre, four major Icelandic Housing Associations and the Iceland Academy of the Arts, bringing together individuals from various disciplines. The aim of the project was "to define innovative housing options for future development of high-density living areas in the

far north with the intention to present ideas that bring about environmentally friendly, socially aware, economic and progressive solutions to the classical challenges of urban development". The project aimed at rethinking housing in terms of reusing existing structures, while also considering the needs of the modern family where housing needs are often variable.

3. Macroimpact and impact of the sharing economy on pay, working conditions, and employment relations

On a macro level, the impact of the sharing economy in Iceland has been quite substantial. With the surge in tourism in Iceland in recent years, sharing economy sites such as Airbnb have been able to accommodate the increase in demand for overnight stays that traditional hotels would not have been able to provide. In the absence of Airbnb or similar services the pressure on the factors of production would have been much greater, with price increases leading to higher inflation and a risk of collapse in the tourism sector. With the sharing economy the traditional economy is not as dependent on factors of production, or rather the factors of production have become more variable when it comes to measures of capital stock. A part of the capital stock that previously was considered non-producing can now easily be converted into producing capital stock. During the economic cycle, this share can easily increase or contract depending on demand conditions, thus reducing the pressure or slack in the economy leaving inflation and wages less vulnerable to fluctuations.

So far the sharing economy in Iceland has worked as a buffer which kicked in when demand increased to the extent it put pressure on supply. Under those circumstances, the sharing economy can meet the demand while supply catches up or until the demand reduces again. This, however, is a short-term view while it is harder to envision what happens in the long run.

The sharing economy is here to stay, adding to the flora of the market by offering greater choice in various services. Although the effects on the labor market in Iceland are very small so far, the sharing economy will become a fixture of our economy and thus will impact working conditions and employment relations in the future.

In the sense that the sharing economy makes better use of resources, it could have the effects of reducing demand for goods and thus reducing the number of production jobs. However, the sharing economy has improved the situation of those that are self-

employed in terms of their working conditions and ease of finding work. While there are no signs of an increase so far, this could expand the pool of self-employed individuals in the future. Whether those will be new jobs or whether it is work previously done by wage earners is hard to determine.

There will certainly be individuals who value the flexibility that participating in the sharing economy has to offer, being able to work when they choose and for as long as they choose. As of now, individuals have the choice of participating in the sharing economy, by for instance driving for Uber in their spare time. Studies have shown that self-employed individuals place value on autonomy, independence and control over work (Valenduc and Vendramin 2016). Furthermore, the sharing economy could open job opportunities for groups on the margin, disabled individuals, physically or mentally, those with mobility issues, or residing in developing countries (ibid.).

From a business perspective the flexibility offered by the sharing economy can be attractive and organizations might start to move the risk of fluctuations in their operations on to their employees. Organizations may decide to adapt their operations and instead of hiring employees on a full-time basis, they will invite their employees to become microentrepreneurs and work only when the organization requires.

To what extent will the traditional relationship between employer and employee be changed through the sharing economy? None of the challenges of the sharing economy are new, however, the share of self-employed is likely to increase and some of the self-employed perhaps do not have a choice of being fully employed. Jobs in the sharing economy may lack many of the benefits and protection afforded by traditional jobs (such as retirement benefits, workers compensation coverage and eligibility for unemployment insurance benefits). It is also possible that firms may circumvent employment regulation by operating informally in traditionally regulated markets (Aloisi 2016). The dilemma facing unions as the sharing economy develops is whether and how to redefine their operations to accommodate those participating in the sharing economy. The challenge lies in that the line between an employee and a microentrepreneur has faded and will perhaps disappear.

The gender aspect of the sharing economy can not be ignored. The development of the sharing economy takes place in the technology sector and women are historically underrepresented in that sector. Hence, they might have little say in the development of new programs and applications. This could lead to further widening of gender differentials in the labor market in the future.

Many questions remain unanswered. What will be the consequences for work-life balance? Where does a new balance between employment and self-employment lie? It will depend on what individuals value in the work. Is it the company of colleagues? Is it the work itself, or the pay?

4. Government and social partners' approach to the sharing economy

The sharing economy requires policymakers to rethink rules and legislation as the sharing economy tends to blur many of the lines that previously were quite bold. For instance, the line between hotels and guesthouses on the one hand and private homes, on the other, has been quite clear until now. With Airbnb and similar websites this line has become blurred. The line that previously could be drawn between car rentals and private cars has also become blurred as individuals have started to offer rides or rent out their private automobiles. This 'blurring of lines' requires a new way of thinking. There is no reason to resist the development of the sharing economy as it can benefit all, but at the same time policymakers need to ensure fair treatment, as well as safety of all producers and consumers.

With the large market share of Airbnb, the Icelandic government has instituted a new act on overnight stay in homes (Act No. 67/2016). The act attempts at making a distinction between individuals renting out rooms or apartments for a few days a year, and those that rent out for longer periods of time. Those in the latter group are considered as running a business as opposed to occasional renting. The line was drawn at 90 days per year.

Furthermore, the act on rental cars was revised in 2015 (Act No. 65/2015) and it now includes provisions on private rental of automobiles to account for the increase in individuals that want to rent out their automobiles, while making sure the automobiles have proper insurance.

While the legal system often lags behind the actual development, the public sector has made efforts to keep up with the times by sponsoring and participating in conferences and projects to promote understanding of the sharing economy. The city of Reykjavik was a co-sponsor of a conference on the sharing economy held in 2015 and a co-sponsor of the Slowly Changing Course project. The Ministry of Welfare was also one of the sponsor of the Slowly Changing Course project.

The only Icelandic political party that has a resolution on the sharing economy is the Left-Green party. In their resolution, they recognize the growth of the sharing economy. They emphasize that it is important that individuals can use the opportunities of the sharing economy as they see fit. Large scale merging of ownership of platforms and third-party charging of services should be avoided. Improving the ability of individuals to make use of the platforms should be supported with the accompanying organic growth and diversity. Thus, according to the resolution, the sharing economy can improve productivity and use of factors of production, be an environmentally sound way towards equality and improved use of natural resources (Vinstri-græn 2015).

The Icelandic Pirate Party has published a resolution on Iceland as an 'internet friendly country', which implies that the internet is one of the basic factors of economic growth which should be used systematically to increase investment, strengthen organizations and create jobs. Iceland as an 'internet friendly country' should attract the business of organizations worldwide.

As regards the social partners, discussions have taken place on the sharing economy, while neither unions nor employer associations have formed a policy on the sharing economy. When asked, representatives of union federations and individual unions reply that indeed they feel that there is need to discuss the effects of the sharing economy. They also follow the development abroad through international organizations to which they belong.

As an example of the international discussion, the European Federation of Food, Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions (EFFAT) has put forth their position on the sharing economy in the tourism sector (EFFAT, n.d.). A discussion which is quite relevant to Iceland with the growth of the tourism sector in recent years.

EFFAT warns that the sharing economy can easily turn into a shadow economy. They also note that if non-hotel short-term stay providers are operating at a bigger scale (e.g. a growing number of Airbnb hosts have multiple properties to let), surely jobs will be generated (e.g. cleaning, caretaking, administration), but jobs in conventional lodging establishments might get lost. EFFAT points out that extensive purchase of urban housing for the sole purpose to rent via online platforms leads to an increase of housing prices in many cities, and makes centrally-located housing increasingly unaffordable for individuals with low and middle income.

EFFAT underlines that the objective is not to stop the sharing economy, as it corresponds to consumers' demands, but transparency, legality and social justice should be sought for, to avoid that the sharing economy causes unfair competition and social dumping. They also note that it is important to regulate that duties are paid directly to the relevant national or regional authorities via the platform operators. It should also be ensured that in case the sharing economy service providers create jobs, they shall be bound by the same obligations with regard to their workers as regular hospitality businesses (EFFAT, n.d.)

A big part of the media coverage on the sharing economy in Iceland has focused on individual websites, such as Airbnb, often with the focus on its influence on house prices in Reykjavik.

5. Summary

So far, the sharing economy in Iceland seems to have had little effect on the Icelandic labor market. However, most people would agree that the effect will only grow with time. But although there is extensive discussion in international fora on the effects of the sharing economy, the local discussion has not yet taken place.

The development of the sharing economy in Iceland is somewhat different than in the other Nordic countries. The development is driven to a large extent by the sudden and large increase in the growth of the tourism sector leading to an increase in demand for overnight stays and rental cars. This has caused a boom in the growth of apartments and rooms on offer on Airbnb and private automobiles offered for rent. In the other Nordic countries the arrival of Uber has played a large part in the development of the sharing economy. However, Uber does not operate in Iceland.

A main issue that needs to be addressed when discussing the sharing economy is the lack of data on the size of the sharing economy. Efforts need to be stepped up worldwide to develop ways in which to define and measure the extent of the sharing economy. However, due to the nature of the sharing economy, traditional ways of measuring used by statistics offices worldwide do not adequately measure the true size of the sharing economy. International cooperation is thus needed to develop new ways and means for measurement.

Furthermore, due to the international nature of the sharing economy, international cooperation should be encouraged to develop the legal environment that will ensure fair treatment of individuals working within the sharing economy.

So far, we have only seen a few of the opportunities that the sharing economy offers. Only time will tell which ones we haven't seen yet. In addition, we don't know the long-term effects the sharing economy will have. Today we observe the sharing economy as an addition to the traditional economy, but how will the sharing economy develop into the future?

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Norway

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1. Introduction

The term sharing economy became a buzzword in the Norwegian media at the end of 2015, and has since been object of debates and controversies. The Norwegian social partners (LO, NHO Abelia, Virke), government authorities (Skatteetaten, Arbeidstilsynet), academics and other actors have engaged in the debate about what the sharing economy is, opportunities and challenges, and whether and how the sharing economy should be regulated.

The aim of this paper is to briefly review the knowledge about the sharing economy in Norway; what is it, how big is the phenomenon, different interpretations of the implications for working conditions and how different social actors are approaching the phenomenon.

The structure of the paper is as follows: First, we discuss the term sharing economy, and the size of the sharing economy in the Norwegian labor market. Second, we explore the possible implications of the sharing economy for working conditions, employment relations, and the wider functioning of the labor market (mobility, recruitment, staffing strategies etc.). Third, we look closer at the Norwegian government's and the social partners' approaches to the sharing economy.

2. Background

What is the sharing economy?

The Norwegian Productivity Commission notes that the sharing economy is "characterized....by mobile based applications that makes it easier, cheaper and faster for providers and customers to find each other. This is also referred to as intermediation

economy or platform economy, since it is the intermediation or platform, and not sharing, which particularly distinguishes these services from other services"¹ (NOU, 2016:3) Launching the term intermediation economy, Jesnes and Nesheim (2015) put forth three elements that characterize the sharing economy: (1) an intermediary in the form of a digital platform which helps (2) connect providers and consumers/clients (crowdsourcers), (3) to perform transactions (services, sharing of assets/property, skills or labor). Technology, increased trust, renting instead of owning, and lower transaction costs are also elements that are emphasized in attempts to define the sharing economy.

One important distinction is between sharing economy platforms involving some form of labor, and those not involving labor, but rather trading or renting of assets such as homes and cars. Andreassen (2016) divides the sharing economy platforms into labor and capital platforms; where the former is a platform where labor is placed at the disposal of others (examples: TaskRabbit, Finn.no småjobber, Upwork), and the latter is a platform where an underutilized asset (such as a car, boat or an apartment) is put at the disposal of others (examples: Airbnb, Nabobil).

3. Size of the sharing economy

What do we know about the magnitude, dynamics, composition, and economics of these emerging markets? What research and statistics is out there and what is lacking? When approaching these questions, one can either look at the sharing economy platforms (how many are there and how big are they), adopt a consumer perspective (how many companies/individuals buy services through platforms), or a worker perspective (how many provide work through these platforms). In this section, we will briefly review information relating to the size of the sharing economy from all three perspectives, but the main emphasis is on the worker perspective.

Consumer perspective

A study conducted by SIFO in 2015 revealed that 45 percent of Norwegians are familiar with specific sharing economy platforms such as Uber and Airbnb, while 19 percent

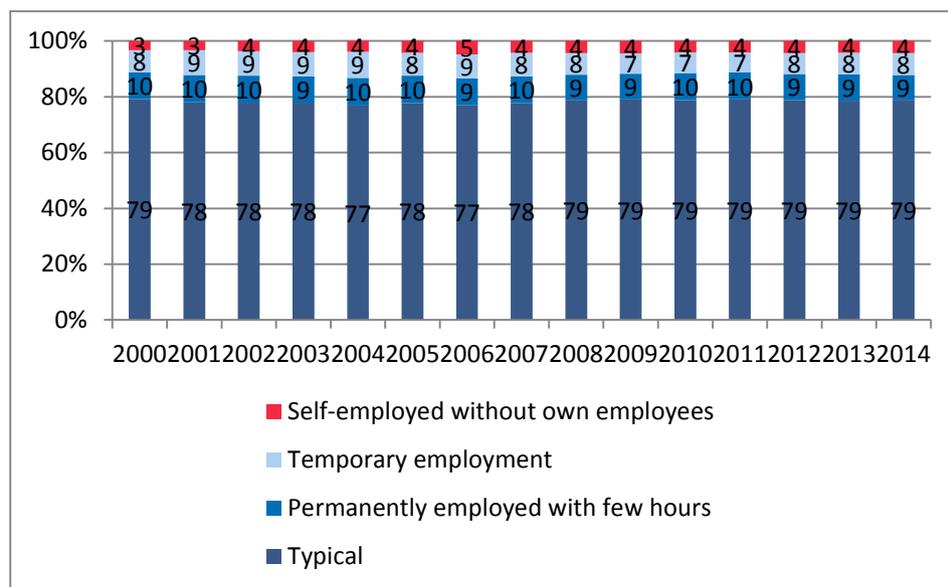
¹ Authors own translation

have participated as users in sharing economy initiatives (e.g. have shared a home or a car). Only 6 percent consider themselves as active users (Slette-meås & Kjørstad, 2016).

Worker perspective

Preliminary studies of the sharing economy suggest that the platforms' business model is based on recruiting self-employed (Sundararajan 2016: 159). Nergaard (2016) has explored Norwegian Labor Force Survey (LFS) data on the different types of non-standard forms of work and find that the rate of atypical work in Norway remains stable around 20 percent across the LFS-surveys years from 2000 to 2014 (see figure 1). The workers in the sharing economy companies will most likely be categorized as non-standard forms of employment, such as temporary workers, permanent employees with few working hours or, most likely, as self-employed without employees.

Figure 1: Forms of employment in Norway (Nergaard 2016/LFS). 2015.



Yet, the LFS data are not well suited to identify new and different types of atypical employment relationships. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, the phenomenon concerns few workers in Norway, and the likelihood is low that these workers will appear in the LFS. Secondly, studies suggest that many of the workers engaged in the sharing economy do this as a secondary and not a primary job, and the work might be irregular and task based (Huws and Joyce 2016a, 2016b). Grünfeld et al. (2016) argue that an increasing share of the workforce combines a permanent job with being self-employed. Many of the self-employed do not have their primary revenue from being self-employed, and this implies that many are self-employed on the side of their primary job. This is often the case for self-employed in general. Thirdly, some of the workers might not be registered as either of the categories mentioned above.

Fafo and Center for Applied Research at NHH (SNF), commissioned by the Labour and Social Ministry, conducted a survey in the fall of 2016 aiming at measuring the number of workers in the sharing economy in Norway. The survey included 1525 adults aged 18 and above, and about 10 percent answered that they sometimes work for online platforms. 2 percent of the respondents performed platform work on a weekly basis, 1 percent on a monthly basis, and 6 percent at least once during the last year. Having

interviewed platform companies giving much lower estimates of gig-workers connected to their platforms, the researchers warn against taking these figures too literally (Jesnes et al. 2016a). The survey will be reproduced by Fafo in 2017.

In addition, the companies themselves have published some numbers. Finn.no småjobber has, according to their websites, around 25 000 "helpers" of which some 3000 appear to have pursued at least one job. Uber Norway has less than 500 drivers in Oslo and 13 000 active riders, according to the company (data from January 2016). In 2015, Upwork Norway had 94 000 registered user companies and 9500 posted tasks. On the worker side, Upwork Norway had 7900 registered freelancers and 100 freelancers in Norway earning money through Upwork every month (Olsen, 2015). That is, only 1,3 percent of the registered Upwork freelancers in Norway get an assignment every month. Welance has 2500 freelancers and about 100 Crowdsourcers (60 big customer companies) (Jesnes et al. forthcoming). Konsus has about 200 freelancers, and 500 companies have used the service (Forbes 2016). These numbers, from some of the biggest and most known sharing economy platforms in Norway, indicate that the total amount of workers in the sharing economy might be less than what the numbers from the Fafo-survey indicate.

Company perspective - sharing economy initiatives in Norway

Are there many established platform companies, or are there mostly a lot of start-ups? In which sectors, occupations, and skill categories can such companies primarily be found today, and in which areas are they expected to flourish? A mapping of sharing economy platforms in Norway is currently being conducted by Fafo and Center for Applied Research at NHH (SNF), in collaboration with SIFO (National Institute for Consumer Research). So far, the mapping suggests that there are currently about 30 platforms involving labour in Norway (Jesnes et al. 2016a). Some of the platform companies are members of the employment organization NHO Abelia. Among these we find: Uber, Wecclean, Nabobil, Lotel, Gelatogroup, Yelpy, Doogy, Ework, Nyby.no). In addition, some are members of Virke.

As the sharing economy is still evolving and platforms are established and disappear rather frequently, it is difficult to be specific on the amount of sharing economy platforms at present. Jesnes et al. (2016a) also emphasize that some of the companies discussed under the heading of the sharing economy are start-up companies trying to find their desired business model. Some of these have already changed from hiring freelancers to hiring employees on open-ended contracts with few working hours.

4. Implications for working conditions and employment relations

Employment relations

Employment protection legislation in Norway – as well as collective agreement regulations – tend to take as a starting point the distinction between dependent employees and self-employed, and in the former group between fixed term and permanent contracts. The rights of the workers depend on the employment relationship, and the rights of an employee are considerably better than the rights of a self-employed. Some argue that those who provide work in the sharing economy are incorrectly classified as self-employed and that these workers might end up without the freedom of the self-employed and without the income security and job protection of an employee. Hotvedt (2016) has analyzed Uber Norway's contract, and on the basis of the contract, she discusses whether Uber has a responsibility as an employer or not. When evaluating the employment relationships, it is important to ask: Who are responsible for the product? What are the working tools and who do they belong to? Who are responsible for training, health and security? Hotvedt concludes that the contract implies that the form of employment relationship used by Uber Norway is in the gray area between an employee and a self-employed; there are elements pointing in both directions, of that of an employer-employee relationship and of that of a self-employed. If this spreads, it might lead to a blurring of standard employment relations.

According to Jesnes et al. (2016b), sharing economy companies that cater and intermediate labor to businesses do not necessarily have similar relations with the freelancers/self-employed that perform the work and this vary from platform to platform. Looking at the three labor suppliers – Konsus, Upwork and Welance – they all link freelancers with business users wanting a specific task to be accomplished, but some of them operate a stable, limited pool of agents and customers, while others service a wide range of actors on both sides. One of the companies, Konsus organizes pay, contracts and the company maintains enduring relationships with the freelancers and wants them to earn a high share of their income through their company in order to promote quality, skill formation, and work incentives. Another company, Upwork, operates in a slightly different manner (than Konsus) as it links a large number of actors on both sides world-wide, and it appears that the company itself serves a purely technical matching function with no responsibilities for pay and contracts. A third company, Welance falls somewhat in between the two previous cases as it provides freelancers with specialized skills and therefore engages in more tailored matching including contractual issues to ensure that the freelancers fulfil the specific skill re-

quirements of the user firm. These variations imply that it will be challenging for the authorities to evaluate whether a person is employed or self-employed, and it requires jurisprudence. Currently, no cases have been taken to court on this issue in Norway.

What is certain is that the platform companies seem to combine employment relationships in other triangular ways than what the regular systems have addressed so far. The distribution of risk and vulnerability in such triangular relationships are transferred onto the producers who ultimately are at the mercy of the unpredictable matching market when it comes to whether there is work and income to be found, and who is carrying the costs if not (Aloisi, 2016).

Working conditions and health, security and environmental issues

The working conditions of the producers in such contexts are as far as we are aware of not studied in Nordic contexts. However, the Norwegian think tank Agenda, together with Moods Qualitative Research, has in a report, commissioned by Samfunnsviterne, studied the situation of freelancers in general, which might be a useful point of departure in this context. In their qualitative study, they have interviewed 28 freelancers, and the results indicate that the freelancers value the freedom they have, however, this freedom is constrained by poor payment, extra work on administrative issues and worries about whether they will have a job tomorrow or not (Agenda 2016:12).

Eurofound (2015) usually underlines that the working conditions accompanied with the new forms of work are poor. Two issues stand out internationally: low pay and insecurity of payment and scant opportunities of voice. First, the earnings of crowd workers are very low, for instance the hourly rate on Amazon Mechanical Turk is less than 2 dollars (p. 115). The companies included in this study appears to pay the freelancers more than Amazon Mechanical Turk, one of them referring that they pay between 10 and 20 dollars an hour, which is definitely not much for skilled work in a Norwegian context. A related issue is insecurity with regards to payment; the crowdsourcer might hold back pay until satisfied with the result (Prassl & Risak 2016:8). In addition, the rating system in place in many companies, where the crowdsourcer and the freelancer rate each other after the job is performed, also raises some issues (Ibid: 8). The most attractive jobs are assigned to those with the best reputation, which leads to fierce a competition on prize and quality between freelancers that do not have information about what the others are offering. Second, as the most vulnerable contracting part, the producers have scant opportunities for voice regarding the content of the assignments, the quality required, or the terms offered for delivering it, not

to speak of the protections and rights associated with ordinary employment. Normally, there is no reliable dispute resolution system that can be invoked if the producer and the client disagree about the conduct of the task (Eurofound 2015: 115). The companies in Jesnes et al. (2016b) were not aware of the workers organizing through trade unions among those who provided work. In addition, crowdsourcers outsourcing tasks to freelancers abroad through intermediaries have little knowledge of the actual employment conditions of the producer. Hence, the preliminary studies clearly indicate that there are reasons for concerns with regard to payment, insecurity and scant opportunities of voice, so the working conditions of producers within companies in the sharing economy definitely need further scrutiny.

Implications for the broader labor market

Besides the direct impact of the platform economy on the employment conditions of the workers involved, one can envisage that a proliferation of platform work will have implications for the functioning of the broader labor market in affected industries and occupations. With the presently limited size of the phenomenon, no empirical studies of such effects are undertaken in Norway. Yet, if the platform economy “takes off” there are certainly questions arising as to how the new commercial forms of matching in the job market – simplifying outsourcing of tasks – influence employers’ willingness to hire equivalent labor on regular contracts in-house, their organization of work, and the terms offered. If internal work organization becomes more directly shaped by the dynamics and conditions of the platform markets, one can envisage strengthened pressures towards externalization of work, cutting of labor costs, and splitting of jobs into parcels of standardized tasks, or mini-jobs, suited for universal subcontracting. A consequence in such a scenario is that the labor market becomes more fragmented/segmented while those working in the customer companies become subject to stricter hierarchical control, supervision, and benchmarking of tasks with corresponding diminution of the scope for teamwork, learning by doing, and investment in long term skill formation – possibly spreading to other firms competing with those relying on short-term labor via digital platforms. In effect, product market competition between companies can be transformed towards more direct forms of competition on costs and quality between workers transcending the division between internal and external labor markets. Beyond the questions pertaining to the effects on job competition and matching of skills in the affected industries, a looming, overarching question is to what extent the new platform companies actually will contribute to creation of more jobs, employment, and production –or whether they will mainly contribute to a reshuffling of jobs, tasks and revenues/income between the involved parties. In

order to promote the former kind of effects and mitigate the obvious risk for the latter, there will certainly arise needs for renewed taxation rules and development of new modes of regulation of the terms for competition, remuneration, contract forms, employment conditions, dispute resolution, insurance, and, possibly, negotiating rights and other aspects of the platform economy.

5. Government and social partners' approaches to the sharing economy

How are government authorities approaching the regulatory dilemmas arising from these new business concepts? What role has the courts played in government strategies? In this section, we will first look at the government's approach to the sharing economy, regulatory regimes and the courts. Thereafter, we will look at the approach of the main trade union confederation, LO, and the employer organization NHO Abelia. Taxes and the issue of employment relationship seem to be the two issues that stand out as the core of the discussions in the case of Norway.

Government responses

A government appointed Committee for the sharing economy was established in March 2016 by the Ministry of Finance (Government of Norway, 2016). The social partners are represented in the Committee. The mandate of the committee is to²:

- Evaluate whether regulations should be adjusted to achieve a more level playing field between sharing economy companies and traditional activities, and to evaluate whether there are any regulations that some actors should be exempted from.
- Assess the potential impact of the sharing economy on the labor market, including self-employed and employees. The committee will consider the consequences of the increasing prevalence of self-employed, and the need for changes in the regulations for this group.
- Examine the regulations in individual markets where sharing economy actors are prevalent, and consider whether it is necessary to change the regulations as a result of new technologies or new business models.

² Authors own translation

- Assess the need to change regulations across markets, including consumer rights and performance standards.

The Committee has a deadline of 1st of February 2017 to submit its recommendations. The government is working in parallel with necessary regulatory changes and reforms. The Committee's work should not constitute an obstacle to this work, according to the government.

In the meanwhile, the Ministry of Transport and Communication is considering several changes in the taxi regulations. Two hearings papers were published in December in relation to the sharing economy and technology development. One of the hearings is a proposal to amend the Professional Transport Act, amongst others by making an exception from license obligation for carpooling/ridesharing ("samkjøring"), raising the upper age limit for having a taxi license and repealing the requirement for connection to a taxi dispatcher.³ The other hearing is a proposal to allow for testing of self-driving vehicles on roads, which is more about technology advancements than about the sharing economy.⁴ The Ministry is also looking at the possibility of using new technology to calculate prices (alternatives to taxi meters) and ways of ensuring that consumers are guaranteed better information on the prices of the service. Oslo Taxi has already started to develop new technology together with DNB (a major state-owned Norwegian bank) to compete with Uber and other sharing economy platforms. In December 2016 the Norway taxi federation reported 105 Uber drivers to the police (NRK 30.11.2016).

The director of the Norwegian Tax Administration (Skatteetaten), Holte, has stated that there is no reason to believe that the sharing economy will lead to tax evasion. The Tax Administration issued information on the sharing economy in the spring of 2016 whereby the phenomenon is defined as a business model where individuals sell services or rent out assets through an intermediary company. The Tax Administration raises questions about the boundary between hobby and business. To determine whether the activity is a hobby or business, the specific case must be evaluated. According to the Tax Administration, the following aspects are important to take into

³ <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/hoyring---ending-av-yrkestransportlova---unnatak-fra-loyveplikt-for-samkoyring-heving-av-ovre-aldersgrense-for-a-ha-drosjeloyve-og-oppheving-av-krav-om-tilslutning-til-drosjesentral/id2523420/>

⁴ <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/horing---forslag-til-ny-lov-om-utproving-av-selvkjorende-kjoretoy-pa-veg/id2523663/>

account: is the activity operated at own expense and risk, what scale is it, is it likely to make a profit over time, does it aim for certain duration? In addition, the Tax Administration has issued fact sheets/guidelines with limits on when you have to start paying taxes in various cases:

- Sharing a car (limit 10 000 NOK)
- Carpooling, rental of a car or similar assets (taxable beyond 10 000 NOK),
- Rental of apartments, rooms etc. (taxable beyond 20 000 NOK),
- Small assignments (småjobber) (revenue from paid labor is taxable),
- Other services and favors (taxable),
- VAT, in relation to the sale of goods or services, is compulsory.

This implies amongst others that people who rent out their home through AirBnb have to pay taxes when they earn more than 20 000 NOK a year through the platform.

The Labor Inspectorate (Arbeidstilsynet) has issued a fact sheet on when you should consider yourself an employer if you engage someone to perform a small assignment (ex. Garden work). The Labor Inspectorate has also conducted several inspections of sharing economy platforms, and notified some of them for not complying with rules regarding employment contracts, health and safety, etc. (Dagens Næringsliv, 09.06.2016).

The legality of Uber's operations is contested, also in Norway. Two questions have been raised: Are the Uber-drivers self-employed or employees? Is Uber a technology or a transportation company? The first question has implications for the rights of the drivers and the duties of the company vis-à-vis the drivers. However, there have not yet been any court cases on this issue. The second question has implications for which requirements and sector-specific regulations Uber has to follow, and this is the most crucial for continuation of Uber's operation in the capital Oslo. Uber Norway started its activity late 2014, and offers several services (UberPOP, UberBlack, UberEL). Among these, UberPOP, where individuals use their own cars and drive unlicensed, is the most controversial. The legality of UberPop's operations in Oslo is still under scrutiny. More than 70 Uber drivers have been stopped by the police and suspected of illegal taxi operation, and the police has also taken legal proceedings against two drivers who had acted as Uber chauffeurs on a regular basis. Recently they were found guilty of breaching transport legislation by being involved in professional transport services without the required licence. The police has started to temporarily withdraw driving licenses from Uber drivers (Aftenposten 20.10.2016). In a recent court case a number

of drivers lost their driving licences and had to pay fines and cede their earnings from Uber driving (Aftenposten 16.12 2016).

The social partners' responses

How are the social partners approaching the regulatory dilemmas? Have they gone to court (to protect their interests), do they call for legislative adjustments or do they rather prefer to resolve the issues through collective bargaining and organization? In Norway, several of the social partners (e.g. LO, NHO Abelia, Virke) and others have engaged in a debate on how to define and react to the sharing economy since the fall of 2015.

LO about the sharing economy

The sharing economy is an issue of concern among trade union's shop stewards. A survey conducted by Fafo among the shop stewards in LO (the main trade union confederation) shows that one out of three shop stewards believe that the sharing economy will undermine labor rights (Ødegård, 2016). In a newspaper article in Dagens Næringsliv the 11.11.2015, the President of LO, Gerd Kristiansen, said that she fears the sharing economy will lead to a society of casual work.

In the spring of 2016, LO established a working group on these issues and the working group published a paper on the collaborative economy ("samhandlingsøkonomien") in June 2016. In the document, LO stresses that the organization is positive to technological developments, but points to some elements LO considers to be important when considering what regulations should apply for the sharing economy. Firstly, LO uses the term collaborative economy, in lack of a more appropriate term, and points to the fact that the phenomenon is not about sharing, but about transactions. Secondly, technology neutral rules are important for the trade union confederation, in order to ensure that the companies in the sharing economy pay taxes and compete on the same level playing field as other companies. The issue of employment relationship is of course the most important for LO, and they underline that the laws should be clear on when you are an employee and when you are a self-employed. In the document on the collaborative economy, LO Norway has suggested amendments in current labour law aimed to provide an unambiguous definition of what it means to be an employee (LO 2016a). In the document, the trade union confederation has also suggested other measures to make sure that the rights of the employees are safeguarded. It is likely that some of these measures will be raised as suggestions in the sharing economy commit-

tee. LO has also established a group “LO selvstendige” that will address the issue of freelancers and whether and how LO should approach the freelancers.

NHO about the sharing economy

NHO, the main employer confederation held its annual conference in 2016 on the topic of the new working life, where the technological developments and the sharing economy was a central part of the conference. NHO is positive to the sharing economy, but the President Kristin Skogen Lund also underlines that the most people in Norway are permanently employed and that is what most companies want. This form of employment is considered as an investment in the competence of the workers (in Agenda 2016:29).

NHO Abelia organizes tech companies, and organizes most of the sharing economy platforms today. Some of the platform companies asked NHO Abelia for help on a range of issues, including taxes, in the fall of 2015. As a follow-up, NHO Abelia organized round tables with the CEOs of the companies, and the Ministry of Finance and the director of the Norwegian Tax Administration also attended the roundtables. NHO Abelia’s approach to the sharing economy is to first embrace the opportunities that the sharing economy gives, and then tackle the challenges. The main issue of concern is related to taxes and how to make transaction-based solutions. NHO Abelia seems not to be concerned with the employer-employee issue, and they do not think the spread of the sharing economy will lead to a considerable increase in the share of self-employed. Yet, the organization stresses that better safety nets for self-employed are needed.

6. Summary and final remarks

The sharing economy was first put on the agenda in Norway in the fall of 2015. Various ministries and public authorities have since then been quick in addressing problematic related to the sharing economy. The social partners have also been active in addressing the issue from various angles. The main issue of common concern related to the sharing economy in Norway is taxation. Especially the trade unions are also concerned with the blurring of the employer-employee relationship, and have argued for legal clarification of the boundaries between employees and self-employed/freelancers. The need for adjustment in regulation of the preconditions for access to different branches is a third issue, where most actors apparently see a common interest in de-

veloping “technology neutral rules”. In this vein, some changes seem on their way, for instance in the transport sector, in order to allow for actors applying new digital technologies.

When it comes to employment issues, at the moment, this phenomenon only includes a tiny part of the Norwegian labor market. But if it gains momentum, it might have significant implications for employment relations, working conditions, and the functioning of the labor market in parts of the Norwegian economy. The Norwegian working life is often regarded as highly organized, but the rates of organization in most private services where the platform economy is supposed to expand are relatively low and most self-employed tend (with a few exceptions) to be unorganized. The social partners have thus far also shown limited capacity to regulate earlier forms of triangular employment relationships – such as temporary agency work – through collective bargaining. If an increasing share of the working population becomes self-employed and subject to market-driven triangular service relationships, it will pose challenges to the Norwegian model that are likely to call for novel forms of organization and joint regulation.

At present, the employer associations seem eager to attract the emerging platform companies as members – offering legal, political, and organizational support – while major trade union organizations are preparing initiatives to organize freelancers and provide services that can be of help in their striving to obtain proper contracts, remuneration, employment conditions, social security, and so on. In some of these issues, employer and labour organizations as well as politicians may see joint interests in searching for political solutions, while in other issues – for instance pertaining to pay and employment security – complex conflicts of interests are likely to occur both across and within the traditional dividing lines (e.g. between employer associations of companies competing with or buying work-based services mediated by platform and those organizing the platform companies.) Whether the social partners will prove more apt to negotiate agreements suitable to govern such complex relationships than they have been when it comes to leasing of labour through temp agencies, remains to be seen. Sure, however, is that the sharing economy will test the collective actors’ capacity for organizational adaptation and renewal of their tool-kits.

Looking ahead, contrasting scenarios can be envisaged. It is not hard to foresee that the market-driven, individualized organization of work characterising the platform economy can reinforce existing tendencies of fragmentation in the Norwegian model, and in the longer run, if it gains momentum, can usher in broader, disruptive change.

On the other hand, given the historical adjustment capacity of the Nordic countries models and their legacy of negotiated self-regulation, one can easily imagine a path of slow, evolutionary change where platform work is pragmatically incorporated in the associational, regulatory machinery of the Nordic models. So, whether the Nordic model, with its high levels of collective organization and regulation, is particularly vulnerable to the sharing economy or is especially well equipped to bring the new concepts of business and work into its institutional folds, is a matter for further discussion and elaboration.

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Sweden

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1. Introduction

The Swedish discussion about the sharing economy and its impact on work life draw on a specific way of understanding new digital technology (SOU, 2015:91). New digital tools are said to facilitate extensive brokerage or mediation of relations, as well as providing extensive access to different resources or sources of data. In many cases, this development is also associated with a rather conventional market-liberal approach, in which the threshold for setting up business is lowered and individual entrepreneurs are enabled to set up new innovative business by using this digital technology (Unionen/Söderqvist, 2016).

A nexus of partly tense practices and functions can also be tied to the Swedish debate. In particular, the debate depicts complex combinations of business driven entrepreneurial practices, and different voluntary sharing practices within communities or networks – often resembling an older discussion about businesses drawing on openness, open source software or knowledge sharing (Rolandsson et al., 2011; Unionen/Söderqvist, 2016). This complex nexus of contradictory practices is sometimes also labeled by using other partly overlapping concepts such as e.g. gig-economy, User [nyttjande]-economy, platform-economy, collaborative economy. Many of these latter concepts down-play the importance of sharing as an altruistic exchange of assets, and stress the importance of improving efficiency in brokerage and business transactions person-to-person, or how easy it is for individuals to start making business out of their own belongings by the help of digital platforms (SOU, 2015:65; Insightlab, 2015). Nevertheless, in most cases we may still identify prevailing ideas about positive loaded practices demanding a certain measure of “sharing” without any costs (Codagnone et al., 2016; cf. Benkler, 2006).

It can be stressed that the tendency to refer to complex and partly tense combinations of different practices also may cause confusion in the discussions about what the “sharing economy” really is. For instance, a Swedish commission initiated by the state, recently delivering an investigation expected to sketch some possible futures due to the increasingly pervasive digitalization, define the sharing economy in the following way (authors’ translation:):

Rather than being about companies renting out their resources to consumers (company-to-consumers), the sharing economy is about peer-to-peer interaction. It could be about opportunities to pay a certain sum that allows you to borrow skates or any other types of outfit; it could be about co-driving or the opportunity to use other peoples’ houses. Thus, it includes both commercial and non-commercial forms of sharing, about renting, exchanging, borrowing, to give and to get (SOU, 2015:91).⁵

It is true that this definition, used by the Swedish commission, include components that could be understood as both “sharing” and “economy”. However, the way it states that the sharing economy is about paying for being allowed to borrow somebody else’s skates may appear difficult to grasp. Is it really possible to claim that you are borrowing the skates if you pay for them, or are you hiring the skates (i.e. conducting a rather conventional market transaction)? It can also be mentioned that the Swedish union Transport and Uber have been arguing along similar concerns, disagreeing about whether the service in UberPop should be understood as an illegal service on the black market or as co-driving among peers that are enabled to share costs and thus should not be taxed.

In other words, the idea of a sharing economy is characterized by vague definitions, which is something that has to be kept in mind while looking at studies, research and statistics. It can also be pointed out that it in many cases is said to be more accurate to describe the phenomenon in focus as a “platform economy” based on digital platforms facilitating peer-to-peer relations that are of economic importance. These platforms may have the shape of an ordinary company, but the transactions or relations that they enable are established between individuals. As such, we may state that the-

Delningsekonomi handlar om interaktionen individer emellan (peer-to-peer), snarare än företag som hyr ut sina resurser till konsumenter (företag-till-konsument). Det kan t.ex. handla om att man betalar för att låna skridskor eller annan utrustning av någon, för att samåka eller för att använda andras bostäder. Detta innefattar såväl kommersiella former för delande som icke-kommersiella, det vill säga hyra såväl som byta, låna, ge och få. (SOU 2015:91)

se platforms are mainly associated with ideas about the individual entrepreneur, capable of finding new and alternative sources of income (SOU, 2015:91).

2. Size of the sharing economy

Difficulties in defining what we mean by the sharing economy, obviously makes it difficult to measure the magnitude of it. In addition, quantitative studies are rare. However, some statistics can be found trying to describe how common, whom, and to what extent different groups/actors take part in the sharing economy emerging in Sweden (Uni-Europa, 2016). For instance, University of Hertfordshire have during 2016 together with Ipsos, Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS), and unions like Uni-Europa and the Swedish union Unionen, conducted surveys in different countries. In Sweden the survey included 2146 adults aged 16-65 and it found that 12% of the population is engaged in platforms such as Upwork, Skjutsgruppen, Uber, AirBnB etc. that can be associated with the sharing economy. Confirming the idea that the sharing economy is about private persons finding new ways to capitalize on their own belongings during their spare time, the survey also comes to the conclusion that this type of work is occasional. Only 4% of the population engages in this type of work as often as once a month, and only 3% of the men and 2% of the women engage on a weekly basis. An interesting conclusion also is that Swedish males are more likely to engage in this type of "crowd work" than women (13% of the men and 10% of the women). Given that the sharing economy often emerges as a way to capitalize on the private sphere, traditionally perceived as female sphere, women could have been expected to reach a higher number (which also is the case in for instance Britain).

It can be pointed out that this survey frequently mixes concepts like "the gig-economy" (implying that this new economy consists of entrepreneurial crowd-workers shouldering short term projects or gigs), and "the sharing economy" (implying that peers are helping each other out). This makes the report appear a bit vague in its definition - a vagueness further underscored by their interest in mapping to what extent the examined population is selling private belongings on internet (something that can be considered as rather different from offering work on the net). By looking at the figures, however, it can be claimed that emphasis in the study is on so-called crowd-workers that are offered or able to pick a gig every now and then. Thus, the sharing economy is conceptualized as a phenomenon that draws on new digital means enabling individuals to make use of their own belongings (preferably by the help of a digital platform that is run by a company) to start their own business. It is

conceptualized as an economy allowing anyone to conduct entrepreneurial projects characterized by more or less low intensity, in which they offer other individuals different preferably customized services (Uni-Europa, 2016).

There are other studies drawing on a similar definition of the sharing economy as a matter of person-to-person businesses, mediated by companies that take the shape of being platform-owners or brokers. Insightlab (2015), representing a HR and employer-perspective, stress that the new digital technology will further nurture this development, by referring to a study by The Swedish Agency for Economical and Regional Growth (Tillväxtverket) showing that the amount of companies in Sweden without employees have increased from 310 000 during 1993 to 850 000 during 2014 (recent figures from Statistics Sweden/SCB show that 2015 the number of companies without employees have increased even further to 865 122). To begin with, it seems as if this new digital economy enable an increasing amount of freelancers, engaged in more creative and qualified tasks to set up their own projects. This stress on freelance-work is further underscored by referring to statistics from one of the leading actors providing freelancers with assignments, showing their increased demand on e.g. projects demanding free-lancers doing video-editing, programming, translations, copywriting have increased immensely. Nevertheless, they also stress that individuals are starting to earn money on micro-tasks that do not necessarily demand experience or education. This latter emphasis on unqualified micro-tasks is associated with for instance young people who are about to enter the labor market, or old people who wants to “cling on” to work life by doing different jobs every now and then. In addition, the idea that these new digital platforms lower the barriers for anyone who wants to work and earn an income is further confirmed in public inquiries presented by mentioned Swedish commission (SOU, 2015; 91), and international reports pinpointing how individuals are starting to see micro-tasks as alternative sources of income, as a broader global/western trend (OECD, 2016).

Mentioned public inquiries initiated by the Swedish state, also connect the sharing economy with further aspects of digitalization, while referring to an increasingly polarized labor market, where competition about simple tasks and pressure on salaries increases (Frey & Berger, 2015; SOU, 2015: 91). In particular “middle” and “low-qualified” jobs are told to be increasingly squeezed by this development, and jobs that demand creative and competent labor are said to become more attractive.

3. Impacts of the sharing economy on working conditions, pay, and employment relations

It should be underscored that the public/political debate about the sharing economy has mainly addressed issues about taxation and consumer protection (Skatteverket, 2016). Work life issues have so far been less present. Public inquiries and existing policy documents often also stress that this is a phenomenon that should be understood within a broader digital development, and that the Swedish workforce is well equipped to manage the new emergent digital work-life. By having a highly educated population, with generally good IT skills, and a high penetration of high speed internet across the country, Sweden in general is said to be well prepared (SOU, 2015:65; SOU, 2015:91). Nevertheless, there is an emerging discussion about the need to create new kinds of jobs, and to tackle the loss of jobs due to increased capacity to produce more with fewer personnel, associated with the sharing economy (Ekman & Summer, 2015). For instance, it has been argued that loss of jobs due to digital automation and robotization can be compensated by entrepreneurs and freelancers creating new jobs while taking advantage of the opportunities caused by the emerging sharing economy (Unionen/Söderqvist, 2016). Here it has also been highlighted how the entrance to a global market through the internet will make it easier for employers all around the world to access highly educated individuals and their expertise. This assumption draws on the premises that experts and employers wanting to use their services now can find each other frictionless on the internet. For instance, digital platform companies may provide a “square” for the selling and buying of goods and services, creating the perfect match between supply and demand (Fellman, 2015).

At the same time, the automatization and robotization is also said to affect the number of jobs for middle range employees with higher education. In this case, the sharing economy have been presented as a possibility for this group to find new kinds of jobs by for instance exploring ways of finding and developing niches of potential interest to employers. But, the debate has also pointed to the possibility that this middle range group might very well be forced into the segment of the sharing economy consisting of low skilled, low payed, routine micro work tasks as associated with companies such as Amazon’s Mechanical Turk, TaskRabbit and TaskRunner (Insightlab, 2015; Unionen/Söderqvist, 2016). In the latter case the traditional form of permanent employment in Sweden is subsided, not by the skilled entrepreneur, but by involuntarily self-employment.

Even if it is too early to tell in which direction the development is heading it has also been pointed out that Sweden, compared to for instance the USA, have high initial wages, and that this prevents employees from employing. In association with the sharing economy the argument has been made that Sweden might benefit from expanding the number of low skilled/low paid jobs. Sweden's high reception of refugees has then also been pointed out as a reason to expand its share of these types of jobs (Fellman, 2015). The survey carried out by the University of Hertfordshire do also provide statistical data implying that people are increasingly associating themselves as providers in the gig/sharing economy. Even if the income that Swedes earn through this type of labor can be described as modest, many of those who partake more frequently see themselves as dependable on it. According to the survey this challenges a common understanding that this kind of work is only done for altruistic reasons, or is seen as an occasional income. Furthermore, the report states that many of these individuals are stepping out of their normal occupational role, offering themselves to do a variety of work, both from home (online) as well as offline, e.g. gardening work, cleaning etc. (Uni-Europa, 2016).

Another theme in the discussion on the sharing economy concerns the larger and ambiguous social process of individualization (SOU, 2015:65; SOU, 2015:91). Stress is on entrepreneurs in this process, which on one hand is associated with neo-liberal ideas about the free market, and on the other hand concerns how individuals are increasingly made responsible for constructing their own lives (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). These entrepreneurs are both drawing advantage of the sharing economy as a self-made, resource-rich person, making most of the opportunities offered by the possibility to compete on a global scale, and being struck by stressful demands on being able to sell him/her self instead of being employed. In many cases these are also circumstances that are said to increase the need for the individual to develop social skills, thinking in terms of networking and to see themselves as a personal brand (Insightlab, 2015). One of the frequently mentioned effects in line with these developments is the use of personal ratings in the sharing economy (Fellman, 2015; Insightlab, 2015). Clients and customers are increasingly in a position where they use social media to inform others about their dis/satisfaction by using various rating systems, including systems that rate performance on the individual level.

Other aspects of this development put forward in the debate, are strongly associated with the welfare system and its social insurances and social security entitlements. In particular, there is a concern associated with the strong increase in the number of people in Sweden earning an income as self-employed (*egenanställd*), paying specific

companies for taking care of social security fees without being employed by them. There is a fear that this group will become even more vulnerable in the sharing economy, and that insurances and entitlements in the labor area therefore have to be revised (SOU, 2015:65; Unionen/Söderqvist, 2016). Studies do also indicate a quick raise in the number of self-employed. For instance, the industrial organization Egenanställningsföretagens Branschorganisation, representing this sector, has conducted a study showing an increase between 2012 and 2014 in the number of self-employed from 5402 to 11230 (www.egenanstallning.org). According to a recent study by Novus the number of self-employed has increased even further, reaching 18000 during 2015. Studies and policy documents do often also state that today's social security system is a product of the Swedish tradition of permanent employment, and have to be adjusted to changes toward a sharing economy characterized by more flexible modes of employment (cf. Braunerhjelm et al., 2014).

4. Government and social partners' approaches to the sharing economy

The governmental approach to the emerging sharing economy in Sweden can be described as dominated by a concern for how to regulate and tax these new digital platforms and the business activities they make possible (Regeringskansliet, 2015; Skatteverket, 2016). At the moment, the governmental debate also tends to be rather ambivalent, framing the activities on these platforms as entrepreneurial business conditioned by a certain amount of "altruistic" sharing. This might be due to the extensive focus that have been on the already mentioned case in which Uber have been struggling in court with concerns about whether UberPop should be seen as an illegal service on the black market or as co-driving that should not be taxed (SOU, 2015:91)

The sharing economy is however often approached in a rather liberal spirit, as a technological development that should not be hampered. It is even pointed out that this type of economy may very well become important to the Swedish business climate, infrastructure and ability to innovate and compete both on a regional and global scale. Still, it is important to identify how different activities in the sharing economy can be regulated and taxed so that sustainable conditions for the economy and for the consumers may be maintained. We may also point out that the sharing economy is then seen as a new ingredient in a wider digitalization, and that it is recurrently suggested

that the Swedish government should await EU-initiatives concerning taxation and consumer protection before any resolutions is put forward (Regeringskansliet, 2015).

Governmental initiatives have so far been less occupied by regulations on the labor market. The commission that most recently presented the first public inquiries that explicitly addresses the discussion about the sharing economy, even states that labor law and social insurance issues is not their main topic (SOU, 2015:91). Nevertheless, during October 2016 the government still initiated a new public inquiry, assigned to start looking further into how legislation about work environment will be affected.

If we continue by looking at the Swedish employer associations, they often focus on similar issues and approve on a more liberal approach. Instead of stressing regulations they underscore the importance of encouraging people to take part in the sharing economy as a platform for peer-to-peer business and innovation. In the long run, this is said to contribute to both national and global growth. In concrete action, emphasis seems to lay on being part of state commissions and shaping the public opinion. In accordance, several seminars, reports and discussions have been initiated by employer associations. Reports published by The Confederation of Swedish Enterprises (Svenskt Näringsliv) do also stress the importance of finding a way to avoid regulations and tax that hampers potential innovation (Blix, 2015), and to analyze emerging demands on competence and possible regulations concerning consumers' rights, integrity and trade. Of particular interest, is the fact that business relying on a three party arrangement - the seller, the buyer and the company owning the digital platform – may end up blurring copy-right and ownership legislation in a way that constrain small business (Svenskt Näringsliv, 2016).

Compared to above, the unions approach the sharing economy as an act of balance between a classic stress on the importance of embracing new technology (cf. Rolands-son, 2003), and a concern for members that might become exposed to either unprofessional or unfair competition, threatening both quality and salaries. For instance, the verdict in mentioned court case against UberPop, have been greeted by the Swedish union Transport, seeing it as a confirmation of their view on Uber as untaxed and unfair competition. Judging from different web-material, unions within the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (TUC/LO) also seem to be more inclined to call for measures regulating the emergence of simple services that leave staff that are less qualified without job-security and unemployment allowance. So far, Swedish TUC (LO) has not published any formal reports on the subject. Due to the fact that they will be part of the state initiated public inquiry about the impact on work environment

legislation, they have however formed a group that are about to look closer at the consequence of the sharing economy. In contact with the authors of this report, the coordinator of the group have referred to the status of self-employed, the responsibilities of the company running the platform and its relation to anyone conducting work on their platform, as topics that will be discussed.

The discussion is slightly different among unions that belong to The Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees (TCO). The sharing economy still emerges as part of a broader digitalization fostering demands on restructuring and challenges to the psycho-social work environment (Unionen 2016). However, unions like Unionen (the biggest white collar trade union in the private sector), have an ongoing discussion about what the sharing economy actually may mean to the working conditions in the future if former employed staff increasingly end up as freelancers or self-employed. The fact that Unionen are one of the biggest unions that have started to organize self-employed and free lancers in Sweden explains their engagement in the topic. In a recently published report, they do also stress the importance of achieving a platform economy, enabling self-employed/freelancers to engage in both innovative and sustainable modes of working. To do so, the report states that it is important to develop procedures by which it becomes possible for them as a union to protect their members' interests and rights in relation to the platform owners (Unionen/Söderqvist 2016). In addition, they have initiated collaboration with the German union IG Metall, to develop services that also allow them and their members to scrutinize different platform owners (www.unionen.se; see e.g. faircrowdwork.org).

When it comes to concrete measures that are taken, we may eventually conclude that the Swedish unions, as well as the employer associations, mainly focus on influencing the public opinion and being part of state initiated commissions. Thus, there seem to have been a strong emphasis on uni-lateral measures, publishing reports and on arranging e.g. seminars and webinars about entrepreneurship or labor law in the sharing economy. Unionens collaboration with the German union IG Metall, may however indicate that further and perhaps more international measures will be taken.

5. Summary

A recent EU-report identifies four different narratives about the sharing economy (also referred to as the Collaborative economy). To begin with, they talk about the idea of a great transformation stressing a development that is community-led and optimis-

tic (green, social, and fair economic prosperity). This is a path that does not require major regulatory intervention. Secondly, they refer to an idea about regulated sustainability, in which governments push for regulatory and traditional intervention to steer society toward sustainability and resolve unfair effects of the 'sharing economy'. The third idea often put forward, stresses a growth-oriented globalization in which minimal government intervention leads to increasing inequality, social polarization, and a negative impact on sustainability. The fourth and final idea is described as a concern for barbarization, where traditional firms and work appear to be dis-intermediated, decentralized, and parceled, before being re-intermediated through algorithms allowing robots to substitute work, and forcing workers to perform routinized, repetitive micro-tasks. The Swedish debate can be said to draw on ideas of how to achieve conditions making it possible to maintain regulated sustainability in times where growth-oriented globalization based on 'sharing' platforms fosters human capital specialization and 'virtual labor migrations' (Codagnone et al., 2016).

Furthermore, the Swedish debate often depicts the sharing economy as a new component within a broader and more extensive digital development. This means that the sharing economy appears to be a phenomenon on the fringe of the labor market that still has not shown its full potential. In other words, the sharing economy is at this stage (i.e. during the end of 2016) emerging as a frontier or phenomenon to be explored and debated rather than regulated. A stress on being cautious with implementing new regulations is further confirmed by governmental actors, employer associations and unions underscoring that it is important for Swedish legislators to await EU-measures. Nevertheless, it can be pointed out that this type of economy and the work life it fosters is still seen as something that is becoming increasingly more common, and as such should be considered as an increasingly more important phenomenon for governmental bodies to start tackle on a policy level. We may also point out that concrete initiatives concerning work life conditions are starting to emerge – such as the recent initiation of a public inquiry assigned to look into work environment legislation and mentioned European collaboration between Unionen and IG Metall.

Eventually, we may conclude that the debate in many respects revolves around public inquiries and initiatives taken by the government and public authorities. However, employer associations and unions are trying to influence the debate by taking unilateral measures such as being part of commissions. In addition, most of them take a variety of communicative measures aiming at influencing the public opinion.

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