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Paper Proposal

For the 15th Jean Monnet Seminar “The EU and Trust in the Online Environment”, Dubrovnik

**Tentative title: “In algorithm we trust? – on online platforms, their offline implications and how sharing economy challenges the existing regulatory framework”**

The rapid expansion of sharing economy, has caught regulators worldwide by surprise. Facilitated by technological innovation, fuelled by the social consequences of the economic crisis on the one hand, and by the growing commitment to more sustainable lifestyles on the other, sharing economy platforms mushroomed across a number of economic areas ranging from housing and tourism to a large array of everyday services.

Notwithstanding the evident benefits of sharing economy, the new practices also bring along a number of considerable risks and challenges. Not all of those risks and challenges can be captured within the existing regulatory framework and governance structure. Increasingly, we realise that regulatory concepts we have developed our understanding of in the context of traditional economic model, do not carry the same value, meaning or applicability in the new digital marketplace. Notions such as “transaction”, “consumer” or “trust” seem to neither capture the online setting, nor its offline implications.

Moreover, the current diversity of sharing economy practices coupled with constant expansion of different variations, applying different degrees of goodwill and market logic, makes the regulatory response specifically challenging.

This contribution aims, firstly, at mapping the variety of online sharing practices and their real-life offline implications. Secondly, against this background, it will analyse the challenges this poses to the regulatory structure developed for the traditional economy, and the conceptual apparatus it applies. The contribution will focus particularly on the EU context, where the recent Commission communication on collaborative economy does not carry a perspective of harmonisation, but instead encourages the individual Member States to consider necessary national measures. This poses an additional risk of Internal Market fragmentation, both geographically (between Member States) as well as within individual economic sectors (between traditional and sharing economy), which the contribution aims to address.