

**CROWD  
SOURCING<sup>®</sup>  
WEEK**

**CSW<sup>2</sup>**



**BNP PARIBAS  
FORTIS**

POSITIONING PAPER: DAY 2 – NOV. 22, 2016

# COLLABORATIVE SOCIETY



## INTRODUCTION: FRAMING THE DISCUSSION, CLARIFYING THE CHALLENGE

Ahead of Crowdsourcing Week (CSW) Europe 2016, in the current context of the digital revolution with massive disruption and the unprecedented global challenges, a heterogeneous group of people (with institutional, corporate and entrepreneurial backgrounds) engaged in a lively discussion on **“How to foster/boost collaboration beyond traditional silos?”**.

Silos as such are not a problem. Departments, task forces and project teams enable organisations to be efficient and to foster know-how, expertise and experience. However, the walls surrounding the silos and the lack of porosity between different entities and groups are problematic. They lead to - whether actual or perceived - impoverishment, frustration and fear of the unknown, impacting negatively the agility and effectiveness of any organisation. The issues at stake are absolutely essential. For institutions and organisations, it is a matter of adapting to change in a fast moving environment. For our societies, it is about collaboration in order to overcome the challenges of the 21st century, be they growing inequalities, global warming, migration, terrorism or the worrying rise of populist parties. Digital technologies which have emerged over the past decade

have allowed a more inclusive debate than ever before, therefore posing a tremendous opportunity for boosting collaboration beyond traditional silos. However, the challenge is to ensure the debate is enriched by popular rather than populist ideas; ones which preserve tolerance, respect, and do not undermine our democratic values.

## IDENTIFIED ISSUES AND LEVERS FOR IMPROVEMENT


### 1. At individual level

In the first place, one needs to reflect on whether or not our **education systems** encourage collaboration and respect of diversity. Whereas passive and repetitive methods and teacher-led instruction seem to efficiently create an elite that has the intellectual capabilities to assimilate concepts, they do not always succeed in encouraging collaboration and inclusion. Social mix, active and project-based learning seem to have more positive effects in teaching youngsters the ability to cooperate, as we see in Nordic countries.

Secondly, **'classic' or 'linear' career paths** - as we know them in many Western countries - are often linked to the level of rigidity of our labour markets. Beyond the positive intentions, over-protective systems do not encourage flexible career paths and transition between different domains. Given that it is often the collision between creativity, sciences and professional

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fields which generates innovation (applying technology from one field on a problem in another), such non-linear career paths hold tremendous societal value.

Language skills play a paramount role in professional flexibility. Political correctness and the aspiration for cultural diversity have called for the promotion of as many languages as possible, often at par. At the same time, markets seem to function more efficiently when at least one common second language is well mastered. Although there is a certain tension between promoting multilingualism and a single international working language, a common working language would create a level-playing field for everyone, wherever they come from, especially countries where English is currently not widely or well spoken.

## **2. At organisational and institutional level**

Traditionally, whether they are public or private most organisations are hierarchical and pyramidal, favouring authority over empowerment. The acceptance of this type of organisations reaches its limits with the transition towards a knowledge economy:

- multiple levels of decision-making hamper communication flows and cross-disciplinary/cross-functional collaboration towards achieving common objectives

- nowadays, notables and authorities within multiple fields, e.g. politicians, priests, academics, business leaders etc. suffer from a growing disconnection or even mistrust from their communities

Alternative forms of organisations that tend to be flatter and more decentralised allow for more agility, participation and involvement. In socioeconomic terms, front-runner countries in innovation often have in common a culture of social dialogue at local level, often enjoyed by a relatively small population (Estonia, Denmark, Israel etc.). There are currently a number of initiatives to turn the role of politics into a role of facilitator among stakeholders rather than a 'top-down authority'.

## **THE UNFULFILLED PROMISES OF GLOBALISATION AND DIGITISATION**

Many myths have been spreading over the past few decades, attempting to convince us we were entering an era of prosperity and harmony. Certain futurists still claim that some of humanity's greatest challenges (extreme poverty, global warming) are likely to be solved soon.

Indeed, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War have made it easier for individuals and companies around the world to exchange ideas and do business.

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Technology has made such exchanges incredibly easy and fast. The combination of these radical geo-political, economic, and technological changes is now well known as **globalisation**. Yet, the new globalised market is still not accessible to all, for many of the reasons mentioned above. Urban cosmopolitan populations from different countries are indeed better connected to each other, yet not necessarily to their own blue-collar countryside, who are often left behind or do not see the fruits of globalisation. Given the prevalence of the market economy over the former Communist model, the global market has also seen the rise of **neo-liberalism** with **unprecedented inequality levels**. These crises and imbalances increase the high pressure on our democratic model, in Europe and elsewhere, with dramatic resurgence of nationalistic discourse and the rise of populist movements.


Digital technologies can help mitigate these effects, bringing on-board new voices which have not been heard before – as long as such technologies are accessible to wider classes around the world. Yet even the **Internet**, which came in to our lives with the promise to be an anonymous, democratic and equal system turned out to be neither. Whereas the Internet preserves freedom of expression, de facto, few gatekeepers have gained tremendous power over the content we are exposed to (e.g., Google, Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn

Pulse algorithms) and the reputation of products and services we buy (e.g. comments on Amazon, Ebay, Bookings, Airbnb and Uber). The fact that digital information is shaped by content aggregators through sophisticated algorithms means is it not quality or accuracy which determines the visibility of a post, it is its likelihood to keep an internet user on the respective platform (therefore exposing us to more advertisements). We therefore see more of what we are likely to agree with and less of what often really matters. For example, high quality scientific studies are treated on the same footing as hate speech. This poses a real challenge not only for our democratic model but also for the ability of the Internet to serve as a valid neutral platform which enlightens us, rather than reaffirms our prejudices.

## MOVING FORWARD

The paradox of our time is, on the one hand, the feeling that many have to be “wired” on a global scale. Indeed “connected classes” from major cities throughout the world increasingly feel part of a certain unity, facing similar global challenges and witnessing an increasing number of initiatives to open organizations, collaborate and contribute to positive change (sustainable development, respect of diversity, innovative entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship etc.). But on the other hand, the “unconnected peripheries” suffer from the speed of innovation, and are increasingly

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left behind, with too little opportunity to adapt to the profound changes brought by globalisation and new technologies.

Over the past few years, the pace of change has accelerated. But whereas information and communication technology can be powerful tools to build communities and enable cooperation, we will only reach the 'promised land' as long as technology is coupled with political and citizen will to reinvent the way we cooperate, live together and build our future. Whereas technology is essential, true collaboration is cultural and behavioural: it requires 'to care', caring for others, caring for shared purpose.

Find on **Wooclap** the work-group's [concrete proposals](#) to address the challenges explained in this positioning paper. Everyone is invited to contribute with his/her own opinions and ideas.

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Disclaimer. The views and opinions expressed in this positioning paper are those of the individuals working as a group and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any company or institution they represent or work for. This paper is lead by CSW/CSW2 and its partners and is scheduled to be delivered and presented at CSW Europe 2016.

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