

## 74 A - How to conceive Corporate Social Responsibility in the collaborative economy?

**Conference facilitated by:**

World Forum for a Responsible Economy

**Moderator :**

Geert DEMUIJNCK  
EDHEC, France

**Speakers :**

- Nikhil SINHA  
CEO of Coursera, USA
- Vincent HUGUET  
CEO of Hopwork, France
- Taoufik VALLIPURAM  
Head of Partnerships  
of Ouishare , France

**CONTEXT**

*Internet has profoundly revolutionized the economy. The disruptive nature of this revolution is both fascinating and a source of concerns. On one hand, the platforms allow for optimization of resources previously underutilized (Blablacar, Leboncoin etc.)... but at the same time, entire sectors of the economy can be “uberized” overnight! In this session, we will hear from active entrepreneurs at the forefront of this “collaborative economy” based on pooling resources and creativity. We will discuss this phenomenon from the stance of responsible economy with French and International actors. Beyond any ideological prejudice, we will analyze the economic, environmental and societal implications of replacing traditional business models (in various sectors as illustrated by the speakers) by these new designs.*

**SYNTHESIS OF DEBATES AND/OR CONCRETE PROPOSALS**

Coursera’s aim is to radically change the face of higher education and develop the workforce of the future through the online revolution introduced by MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses). Coursera’s mission is to close the global skills gap providing “anyone, anywhere [with] the opportunity to transform their life by accessing high quality education.” Nikhil Sinha identified three main issues in higher education: meeting the huge demand (300 million new learners expected in next 10 years), maintaining high quality of education, and the issue of affordability.

One debate carried out by Hopwork’s CEO dealt with the responsibility of platforms ; they revolutionized some sectors of activities while jeopardizing others at the same time. One could wonder if in the long run, the traditional model of “doing business” will be replaced by platforms (“platformisation” of the economy). The idea to bear in mind is that there is no standard answer to this question. Vincent Huguet believes the future workforce will be predominately freelance. If this is verified, then individuals will have the upperhand when seeking employment.

The concepts of liberty and collective decision-making fed the conference all along. The collaborative economy answers a willingness of individuals to be more free and able to choose their missions and their education. In addition, companies like Hopwork and OuiShare have demonstrated the power of putting decisions in the hands of many people from diverse backgrounds, over decision-making in the hands of a few, high-powered individuals. When many people are actively engaged in decision-making, it is much easier for issues of social responsibility to be brought up and addressed. These concepts will greatly impact how governments conceive work & education in the future.

Finally, the issue of how to conceive CSR today is gaining momentum. In the past, CSR could be seen as a mean to appease shareholders and governments. Nowadays, being socially responsible is fundamental to sustainable profitability. The recent emphasis on CSR can be tied to the rise of the collaborative economy. The collaborative economy is composed of individuals who each have the power and agency to generate a profit based on their specific set of skills. Looking forward, expanding companies engaged in the collaborative economy will need to balance revenue margins with socially responsible actions in order to achieve sustainable growth that continues to benefit all.

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