

Utilizing Sharing Economy to Foster Social Capital and Economic Growth in Baton Rouge

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The Sharing Economy has become a main facilitator of socioeconomic growth and shared prosperity in modern-day societies.

The project will utilize modern forms of the Sharing (gig) Economy as a vehicle for fostering economic growth and social capital in the city of Baton Rouge. Our target communities include the socially and economically marginalized groups in our city. According to the US Census Bureau, the economic gap between rich and poor in Baton Rouge is the fourth-highest in the country, with close to 25% of Baton Rouge population living below the poverty line.

The project will use methods of quantitative and qualitative research to, **a)** explore the landscape of underutilized services and assets in our target communities, **b)** identify fundamental shortcomings and socio-technical barriers to participating in, and benefiting from, the Sharing Economy, and **c)** develop, evaluate, and deliver systematic solutions to lower these barriers.

- We have recruited co-PIs from the department of Entrepreneurship & Information Systems and the College of Business. This will increase the breadth of expertise in our team and enable us to understand more complex dimensions of the relation between people in our target communities and modern forms of the Sharing Economy.
- We have collected pilot data through interviews with individuals in our target communities, including the general public as well as several key opinion leaders. This data will help us to get a sense of the challenges facing individuals in our communities when participating in Sharing Economy activities.
- So far, our pilot interviews have revealed that one of the most common problems facing people in our target communities is the lack of a systematic approach for making the right decisions in the current Sharing Economy market. In other words, there is an urgent need for a framework to help people make more informed decisions when it comes to participating in Sharing Economy activities. Based on these observation, we tweaked our research agenda to include the design of such a framework as one of our expected deliverables.

The project will target the deep racial and regional disparities in the city of Baton Rouge by lowering the socioeconomic barriers that are holding back individuals in disadvantaged communities from reaching their full potential.

The project will deliver data products and systematic software design strategies to help software engineers to develop sustainable Sharing Economy platforms that are optimized to overcome barriers to adaptation, increase engagement, and enhance economic growth in underprivileged communities worldwide.

Our next step will be focused on collecting more pilot data from our target communities, establishing more collaboration relations with local industry partners, and preparing our IRG proposal.