

Creating the Everyday Commons; Sharing as a means of self-organization versus business as usual

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[ABSTRACT]

Sharing practices have increased over the last decade as a byproduct of the economic recession and the wider use of the internet and online services, creating what is called the hype of the “*Sharing Economy*”. People rent out empty spaces in their house, their couch for couch-surfing, their tools through tool libraries, their driving skills on Uber and Lyft, their bikes through Cycleswap. It seems like online sharing economies have found a fertile ground in urban centers, where both supply and demand for such practices are abundant, by just providing security to users through online platforms and a system of review on performance. With the rise of such trend, contradicting cases of renting, sharing, commoning, collaboration, solidarity, DIY practices and typical businesses all have been put under the same umbrella of the sharing economy and have resulted in certain share-washing.

However, there is significant difference based on who owns, manages and uses the shareables and what their intentions of sharing are. Sharing on a global scale unfortunately can become a tool of capitalization on decentralized, individual resources and labor by large corporations, as we have seen in the cases of Uber and AirBnB. Nevertheless, sharing on a local scale has the potential to become a great tool for residents to manage local resources and create social support networks; to co-create the everyday commons. The difference between the two is that the former constitute alternative forms of capitalism while the latter alternative forms to capitalism.

This paper intends to define the arena of the “Sharing Economy” by exploring different cases of so-called sharing practices based on several variables: the shareholders involved, their intentions, the relationships created, the type of shareable, the scale, if there is monetary exchange or not and the cost of ownership alternative. In that way, the paper will reveal if and how can practices of “Sharing Economy” assist in the citizens’ self-organization and co-management of the urban commons.

[INTRODUCTION]

With the rise of sharing practices through the use of online networks and the development of even more start-ups that are using peer-to-peer systems, there has been a certain need to define what exactly we mean when we refer to the “Sharing Economy”. The definition should not only focus on the current reality but also be future oriented and visualize how sharing systems could become an equitable means of production, distribution and management of public and private goods within our societies.

As of today there are about 31,000,000 websites giving answers to that exact same question and exploring the possibilities of such a framework. Based on the top 20 online searches, the definition of “sharing economy” is a *new* phenomenon that includes mainly *people, platforms, business(es), services, governments, time and work*. One of the most common shareables (goods to be shared) is that of the car and homes, with AirBnB and Uber being the most common examples by which the Sharing Economy is defined¹. Different definitions exist to describe alternative

¹ A word cloud was generated based on the text of the top 20 Google search results of “Sharing Economy” in September 2015. The word cloud was generated in Wordle (<http://www.wordle.net/>). The repetition of terms is as follows: “people” 180 times,

economic movements are often used interchangeably and at times mistakenly creating a greater confusion around the topic; some example terms are *sharing economy*, *collaborative consumption*, *collaborative economy*, *circular economy*, *peer economy*, *solidarity economy*. (Botsman 2015).

Figure 1 - Word cloud generated by the top 20 Google search results for Sharing Economy (September, 2015)

Indeed, sharing economy is based on the use of the excess capacity of goods and services (Benkler 2004), which can only happen through decoupling use and ownership (Tonkinwise 2011). Nevertheless, such definitions are quite limiting and narrow the spectrum of possibilities. Limiting for two main reasons:

What will be argued in this paper is that the above mainstream interpretation of the sharing economy is very limiting and vague, and that “*sharing*” or “*collaboration*” among peers is not a new concept but can vary significantly based on who is involved and under which terms such practices are taking place. Due to the rise of sharing trends over the last couple of years cases of renting, sharing, commoning, collaboration, solidarity, DIY practices and typical businesses all have been put under the same umbrella of the “sharing economy”. However, seemingly similar sharing practices can differ based on who owns, manages and uses the shareables and what their intentions are. Hence, there is an imperative need for area definition in order to reveal which sharing practices could provide opportunities

for citizens and communities to produce, distribute and manage resources equitably while creating social support networks. Towards that end, this paper will explore a broader definition of sharing through the set of the following diverse variables; *stakeholders, ownership, usership and management, stakeholder intentions, monetary exchange, type and function of shareable, scale and physicality of system*, in order to establish the term of “Sharing Culture” and how that can offer an opportunity to transforming everyday economic relations between urban dwellers, rather than “Sharing Economy”.

[DEFINING THE SHARING ECONOMY]

Stakeholders Involved

The first variables to be explored, towards a clearer definition of what is sharing, are the stakeholders involved and the system’s intentions. Sociologists and researchers currently working within the arena of Sharing Economy, such as Juliet Schor and Maurie Cohen, highlight the importance of the type of stakeholders / providers and their motivations (Schor 2014)(Cohen 2014). There is considerable difference in sharing based on who owns the assets, who can use it and how is the process of sharing managed or regulated.

If a good is owned by the state, municipality or city and is being provided to and shared by the citizens, it is considered a *public good* and the users are accounted by paying taxes in order to contribute for the shared good provided. Even though we might not think of them as such, streets, parks and public spaces, public institutions, urban infrastructure and other public amenities are some examples of shared assets among communities of citizens. Generally, the main intention of the state is to provide as many public goods of quality to citizens, in order to increase livability, sustainability, jobs, economic activity, attract new residents and create a desirable place to live in the respective locality (community, city, county, borough etc). The management of public goods is realized usually by public institutions and often enough citizens themselves or citizens’ organization can help manage and maintain the quality of public goods. However, with the gradual retreat of the welfare state and the privatization of otherwise defined public assets, such as water infrastructure, open spaces, and natural resources, there has been a certain shift of how these resources are being managed and if their management serves the public benefit.

Accordingly, a shareable good or service owned and provided by a private (for profit) institution / corporation to a variety of users usually has a direct cost and it can be considered as a form of renting. The users rent the excess capacity of or buy access to the goods that the private corporation has to offer for an aggregated lower cost compared to the ownership alternative. An example for this category could be Zipcar, shared bikes infrastructure, taxi services, hospitality services, coworking spaces etc. Here the intentions are based on a more business-driven model and the owners of the “shareables” intend to extract economic profit by the provision of services to the users. Even if some of those business models might use new and alternative business models and methods of interacting with their clientele, such as on-demand mobile applications or online platforms, the transaction between the owner of the good and the user is as basic as renting. (Botsman 2015) Here, the management and maintenance of the shared goods are usually a responsibility of the private institution with direct fees to the users in case of extreme situations of destruction of the shared goods at hand.

In other cases, and usually on a smaller scale, goods and services can be owned and provided by non-profit private institutions directly to users. In such cases, these non-profit organizations might be organized by the users themselves, or it can be an institution that has as its main goal the improvement of a community of users and the provision of shared goods that might not be offered by the state. Such cases include community organizations, Community Development Corporations (CDC), cooperatives etc. Examples of shared goods provided or managed by such organizations working closely with the users (in this case residents of a certain locality) can be community gardens, community managed shared tools libraries, community libraries, community centers, food coops,

cooperative renewable energy districts etc. These types of shareables can vary in structure, but in general have as main intention the benefit of the group to be served. They can be free-of-charge, or require small membership fees that are invested back into the maintenance of the system. In these cases, the provision of goods through a coop model is meeting a greater demand of the participants that cannot be served on an individual level; neither is it being provided by the state, just by creating economies of scale.

Finally, there are goods that can be shared between individual users; peer-to-peer. The idea here is that the users can access some of these goods or services without actually buying and owning them. The main intentions of the users can vary from affordability to environmental beliefs, alternative lifestyles and social interaction. Also, these interactions might vary based on the relationships between the parties interacting and whether trust is established. Is sharing taking place among friends and relatives or people who do not know each other at all? In the first case where people know each other very well and they are in *communal relationships*², sharing can happen naturally and usually in an unregulated manner. In cases of acquaintances and strangers where *exchange relationships*³ are identified, regulation and management of the act of sharing as well as the shareables is almost mandatory in order to establish or substitute the trust missing among shareholders and secure a fair system overall. In this case who is managing the practice of sharing becomes important, and if their interest is for profit or non-profit. For example, in a large cohousing or cooperative community, communal relationships are not mandatory, but the regulation of the shared goods is managed by consensus among all residents. However, in the case of peer-to-peer sharing through business-models like AirBnB, Lyft, Uber and Task Rabbit, the model differs. Even though sharing happens between individuals, and the goods shared are owned by the individuals themselves, the management of sharing happens from for-profit corporations. What those external parties offer in general are regulations and the security among users of good behavior among everybody. So in this case, trust does not need necessarily to be established, but can be substituted by the security that the network and the business model offers and goods can be distributed literally across the globe.

Ownership, Usership and Management

Based on this last case of peer-to-peer systems with managing third parties, it is interesting to investigate what happens when ownership and management are decoupled. Just by simply introducing an external party that manages the shareables owned and used by the system's participants can significantly alter the practice of sharing itself. Ergo issues of who owns, uses and manages become of critical importance within the "sharing economy". Most importantly the propensity of the system can completely shift based on the intentions of the stakeholders involved; and specifically if those intentions are monetary ones or not.

Such differences can be identified in three seemingly similar systems where the actual shareable is almost the same; (01) *Couchsurfing*, (02) *Craigslist* and (03) *AirBnB*. All three of them deal with the same shareable; excess capacity of a certain part of a household that could be offered as temporary lodging to non-related users. In the first case the system works peer-to-peer with an online platform that offers a certain security through a system of peer reviews from users. In this case there is no monetary exchange; as a couchsurfer and part of the network, you can be hosted

² Communal Relationships in Social Psychology are defined the relationships between people who "are concerned less with the benefits they will receive by helping others and more with simply satisfying the needs of the other person".(Aronson, Wilson, and Akert 2009)(Clark, Dubash, and Mills 1998)

³ Exchange Relationships in Social Psychology are defined the relationships between people who "are concerned with what they are getting in return from other people rather the welfare of the other person." (Aronson, Wilson, and Akert 2009)(Clark, Dubash, and Mills 1998)

and in return host someone at your own couch at some point. The shareable here is owned by the individual peers, used by them and managed on a larger scale through the platform. Couchsurfing.org as a previously non-profit and currently B-Corp, has as its goal to keep the platform free in order for people to have access to free lodging around the world (Couchsurfing 2015). Couchsurfing has been for quite some time now an alternative system to capitalism (the mainstream option would be renting rooms in private hotels) and works within a radical movement framework that avoids the market relationships (Nelson 2013). However, couchsurfing is targeted to a relatively niche group, usually of younger age, as there is inherent insecurity involved in the process.

The second case of Craigslist (or other similar online repositories), has been used as a method of finding accommodation at other people's houses (either long-term or short-term) in exchange for money for almost 20 years now. Here the platform is global, localized websites exist in different cities, and they are not actually managed (at least for the real estate sector); they just act as repositories for classifieds. In lack of a review system and because the intentions of the hosts are usually economically driven there is an exchange of money. This more organic system includes shareables that are owned, used and managed by the peers themselves. It could be described as a form of microenterprise that helps residents deal with economic burdens of increasing rents and can be categorized as a reformist approach that works within monetary systems. Because of the existence of monetary exchanges and in the lack of external management from a third party, frauds are more common in this scenario compared to the free, peer-reviewed system of Couchsurfing.

The last case of AirBnB is a fusion of the two aforementioned systems that creates a profitable business model. Here the shareable is owned and used by the participants, but the way sharing happens is managed and appropriated by an external entity in exchange of money. This leads to an increase in potential costs, as now the exchange value charged for the shareable is loaded with an extra cost for the security that the system provides. Sharing systems like this do not offer in reality an alternative to capitalism, but are rather alternative forms of capitalism. While being the first hospitality service to own no real estate at all; just a year ago, AirBnB cofounders were considered to be the first "sharing economy" billionaires as the company reached \$10 billion in valuation (Konrad and Mac 2014) (Schor 2014). With the current transformation of the "Sharing Economies" to profitable entrepreneurial business models it is important to understand some of the potential problems that have recently risen.

Intentions and Monetary Exchange

The mere understanding of who are the stakeholders that own, use and manage resources within a sharing system is not enough to truly reveal its nature; it is important to explore what their intentions are, what relationships are built between them in the process and if the system uses monetary exchanges or not. Anitra Nelson on an article she wrote for the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), argues the difference between solidarity economy and monetary economy based on differences in intentions and level of integration with the existing market-based exchange (Nelson 2013). Based on her research, usually *radical movements* who argue for solidarity economies, have as their main goals the social and/or environmental benefits of such an alternative system. On the other hand, more *reformist approaches* that try to place themselves within the current system of economic exchanges are trying to balance the economic benefits with the environmental ones. In such an approach, she debates that often enough the monetary values replace or even twist the environmental and social ones.

That is also confirmed by social psychology theories and specifically the overjustification effect. When people get involved in sharing practices in their everyday life, there are different reasons and motives that lead them to that decision. The incentives can be *social*; because they want to interact with others and build social relations,

environmental; because they want to minimize their footprint and resource consumption, or economical; they want to save money or they would like to have access to resources that they don't necessarily need to own. All of the above are intrinsic motivations that lead people to get involved in sharing practices. However, when there is a monetary exchange, there is suddenly an additional extrinsic motivation that acts as a reward; that of making extra profit. Social psychology has shown that such extrinsic motivations (for example money and prizes) to people performing a task are backfiring by weakening the intrinsic motivations in the long run. (Deci, Koestner, and Ryan 1999) The overjustification effect has been proven to be consistent across all ages especially when the reward is expected. (Tang and Hall 1995) Further research has been realized specifically on incentives to share in a young age and how that affects the kids' prosocial behavior⁴ in the future and the possibility of them to keep on sharing in the long run. In reality, preschoolers are more prone to keep on sharing as adults if they are just given the choice to share their toys rather than been given a reward. (Chernyak and Kushnir 2013) Similarly, when people are participating in a sharing system based on intrinsic values rather than monetary rewards, it is more probable that they will continue sharing in the long run. Hence, exploring if different sharing systems have monetary exchanges and place themselves within the existing market can reveal insightful details relative to the stakeholders' intentions and the system's proliferation.

Monetary exchange is a significant variable not only due to the stakeholders' intentions and motivations, but also because it is one of the most argued areas relevant to the field and the confusion mainly derives from the phraseology itself. When coupling two inherently different terms such as sharing and economy together, confusion is bound to happen. The act of sharing is generally defined as having or giving a portion of something with others, or to possess, use, occupy and enjoy something jointly with others (Oxford Dictionary 2015b). Sharing is not necessarily based of economical values but rather social ones. However, economy refers to the relationship between production, trade, management and consumption of resources through the use of monetary exchanges (Oxford Dictionary 2015a). When combined together, the term prompts towards models of renting rather than sharing; giving a portion of a resource to someone else in exchange of money. In that sense, the additional third party stakeholders that offer online platforms for such exchanges to happen take the form of middlemen that empower such exchanges by making the procedures easier, more accessible and secure. Even though this new process of facilitated micro-renting can leverage environmental benefits by the use of resources' excess capacity, it cannot and should not be confused with sharing. Unfortunately, the businesses and start-ups that are part of the so called "Sharing Economy" do continue to promote such misconceptions. In a recent comprehensive overview of the "sharing economy" realized by one of the involved companies, most of the services included are based on monetary exchanges in the form of renting (*The Guardian* 2015) (JustPark 2015). Specifically, under the category "*You can stay in my spare room*" all of the services are renting rather than sharing while Couchsurfing, which is free of charge, is not included as an option.

Intentions and Type of Shareable

Other important variables that relate to the intentions of the stakeholders and should be explored are the type and function of the shareables. What is being shared can reveal intentions of the stakeholders as well as better define the field and the terminology used. Firstly, the function that the shareable serves is going to be explored and what type of needs they satisfy. Shareables can be broken down to three main categories based on the function they serve; *necessities*, *utilities* and *recreational* resources. Necessities are considered the basic things a human being needs in order to live such as food, shelter etc. These kinds of needs would fall under Maslow's physiological fundamental needs or Max Neef's subsistence needs. (Maslow 1943) (Max-Neef 1989) Utilities on the other hand are necessary

⁴ "*Prosocial behavior is any act of performed with the goal of benefiting another person*" (Penner et al. 2005)

things and services that facilitate our modern everyday life, like transportation, education, etc. They related to needs of protection, understanding and participation based on Max-Neef's taxonomy and go further than the bare minimum "survival". (Max-Neef 1989) The boundaries between necessities and utilities can be soft and reliable on cultural context and human development index (HDI). (UNDP 2014) Finally, recreational resources can be considered resources of tertiary aspirations; needs of idleness and creation, from Max-Neef's taxonomy, could be a part of this category.

It needs to be highlighted that the function is not dependable on the type of shareable but on the user's objectives; what type of need the shareable satisfies. For example, clothing can be either a necessity or a recreational resource based on the context of sharing. For example, clothing shared between young siblings or even children of friends / cousins etc. serve a basic everyday need, so they can be considered as a necessity. Sharing platforms for pieces of clothing from famous brands is considered more of a recreational resource. (Thredup 2015) Here, it is not the need of clothing itself that is necessarily addressed, but rather that of identity or idleness. Moreover, attention needs to be brought on such shareables that act as a recreational resource as they might not address issues of overconsumption, which as mentioned before should be one of the main objectives of sharing, but rather support over-consuming lifestyle choices. Revisiting the terms that are used interchangeably to describe Sharing Economy, serving certain recreational needs through sharing can be placed under the umbrella of "*Collaborative Consumption*" rather than sharing.

Apart from the function of the shareable and the need it satisfies, we need to explore the type of shareable; is it a service, an asset/good or a space? Services are usually offered between users and include the dedication of time and skills; baby-sitting, dog-walking, skills-exchange, tutoring are some among the many services that can be offered between users, either as service exchange or even as a low-cost alternative to hiring an expert. Such services do happen either formally or informally within existing communities or cities and their setup depends again on the intentions of the stakeholders. When we have exchange relationships between the stakeholders and direct exchange of service for money, then the act itself cannot be considered as sharing but rather as some sort of employment. You are employing someone to do a certain work for you in exchange for money. However, when such services are offered within a communal relationship for free or in return of some other skills then we can say that there is skill / time-sharing or exchange. In order for such 'communal relationships' to develop within urban communities beyond stakeholders who are family, relatives or friends, norms of trust and reciprocity need to be established as well as a sense of belonging.

Goods are shareables that encompass excess capacity when they are not being used by their owners and hence can become available to other users. Here it is important to take into consideration issues of granularity, renewability, decay speed and rivalry of assets being shared as presented in the work of Yochai Benkler "*Sharing Nicely*". (Benkler 2004) *Granularity* refers to how much can the functionality of an asset be broken down in small pieces in order for the user to have access to the right amount based on his/her needs. For example a cup of coffee is a fine-grained good, as it can be accessed in the right amount and by a reasonable price. Large industrial facilities on the other hand are large-grained goods that essentially need to be shared for users to be able to access them. (Benkler 2004) *Renewability* refers to how much of the functionality shared is renewable or if it is highly depleted after being used. A good example here is the car vs the car-ride. The car is a renewable asset as it can be used over and over again, while a specific car-ride happens once and if it is not used as a carpooling opportunity, its functionality is depleted. Here the idea of *decay speed* is very relevant as the car-ride is an asset with a high decay speed while car is not. (Benkler 2004) Finally, *rivalry* refers to how exclusive is an asset or not while it is being used. For example a piece of clothing is highly rival, as only one person can use it at a time. On the other hand an online music library is non-rival

as it can be used by different users at the same time. (Benkler 2004) Those characteristics need to be taken into consideration as they will help define how different assets can be used and shared. Moreover, they can be an insightful way to look into the types of goods societies produce in order to meet our human necessities. Is there a way to move away from the perpetuation of rival, high decay goods that lead to higher consumption rates and waste accumulation?

The last category of shareables to be described is physical spaces. Spaces fall under the category of goods, but as they are large-grained assets and can be non-rival depending on the use, culture and situation, they are separated to their own category. Physical space can be considered both as a shareable itself, as well as a host for sharing activities too. For example, a spare bedroom in a household offered to someone for lodging, is physical space considered as a sharing good itself. However, a space used to host a sharing activity, such as a shared community tool library, is not necessarily the shareable itself but rather acts as a means that facilitates sharing. A shared tool library could still exist as an online network of distributed tools across households within a certain area. The shareables would be still the same, tools that are not being used 100% of the time and hence have excess capacity to be captured by other users who do not own such an asset. The way of access to the tools and the relations built between the users are completely different in the two aforementioned cases. Moreover, the models of management and usership unravel in a completely different way in the two cases; in the case of a centralized facility that holds the tools, there is a certain demand for a consensus between tool owners and how the tools are accessed, while in the case of the online network that functions peer-to-peer each user of the network is personally responsible for the resources he offers. Moreover, how and if the network grows depend heavily on how far it extends, how often some of those tools are used and what levels of trust are built between users. In that sense the existence or lack of physical space within a system can play a significant role, even if space is not the shareable itself. How space is directly influencing sharing systems whether it is the shareable itself or not will be explored further later on.

Scale, Physicality and Access

The last variable to be explored is that of scale, and along with it issues of physicality and access. Sharing from a pool of common resources can differ considerably based on which scale it happens; *home, building, street, block, neighborhood, city, region, country or globally*. Firstly, the types of shareables change as we move up on scale; we can share information and digital material on a global scale easily which might fall under the categories of utilities or recreational resources, but in practical terms necessities and primary utilities are easier to be shared on a smaller, local scale as there can be more direct access. However, it is not just a matter of what we share on different scales, but we need to consider how different factors of trust, regulations, technology and physicality change as we move through different scales.

For example, it is within the home, the human microsystem, that people develop the higher levels of trust. (Bronfenbrenner 1977) It is through the family that trust is cultivated and where sharing happens naturally and unconditionally. Moving from the home to larger scales such as the building, the street, neighborhood, city and so on, the levels of trust start decreasing as the social context becomes unknown. This is based on the *effect of propinquity*; people tend to trust and form friendships with those whom they encounter more often. (Festinger, Schachter, and Back 1950) Because of that trust tends to decrease in higher scales and the need for some sort of regulations or review system arises in order to secure the proliferation and fairness of the system. As in many online platforms of sharing systems that function on a global scale, the use of profiles, verification of identity, two-way reviews and recommendations are necessary to ensure that the system is working fairly for all users and that those who don't play according to the "rules" are slowly eliminated. It is often argued that this system of reputation building is actually

assisting in the process of building trust. (Botsman 2012) However, monetizing reputation in an online free-market competition system does not have anything to do with trust building; but rather is a system for developing safety valves within a context where face-to-face interactions are absent. Within this context regulations and review systems are not necessarily building trust among users, but rather take over in the lack of it. Consequently, it is understood that regulation needs to increase as a sharing system goes up in regional and global scales.

The second inverse dyad to highlight is physicality and technology. In smaller scales like a housing building, street or neighborhood, sharing practices can take place both formally and informally in physical space; families share resources every day in their homes, neighbors share the same street, sidewalk, sometimes a garden, car-rides, children's toys, and people who live in the same neighborhood can share the same amenities like a gym facility, school, transportation, a place of worship, a park and so on. Sharing in smaller scales mostly happens in physical space and through every day human interactions. How much or how little people share locally in their everyday lives is directly related to what social relations are built within a certain locality and hence it is affected by the nature of physical space. For example, areas with increased natural elements are shown to provide more opportunities for social interactions to take place. (Coley, Sullivan, and Kuo 1997) In general, features of the urban environment do affect people's mental health and satisfaction, as well as their capacity to participate in community activities. (Baum and Palmer 2002) In addition, issues of access become a key factor affecting social interaction on a local scale and thus sharing. Different types of ownership indicated by different levels of access to a space can be manifested physically or in cognitively in diverse ways, promoting or inhibiting certain kinds of social activities. In that sense transactional, semiprivate spaces, such as yards or porches that have visual access but are not necessarily open, have been proven to promote interaction between residents. (Skjaeveland and Garling 1997) Even though, studies have been realized on spatial factors and social interaction, there has been limited research on how such factors directly influence sharing in such local settings and thus further research should be realized in that area.

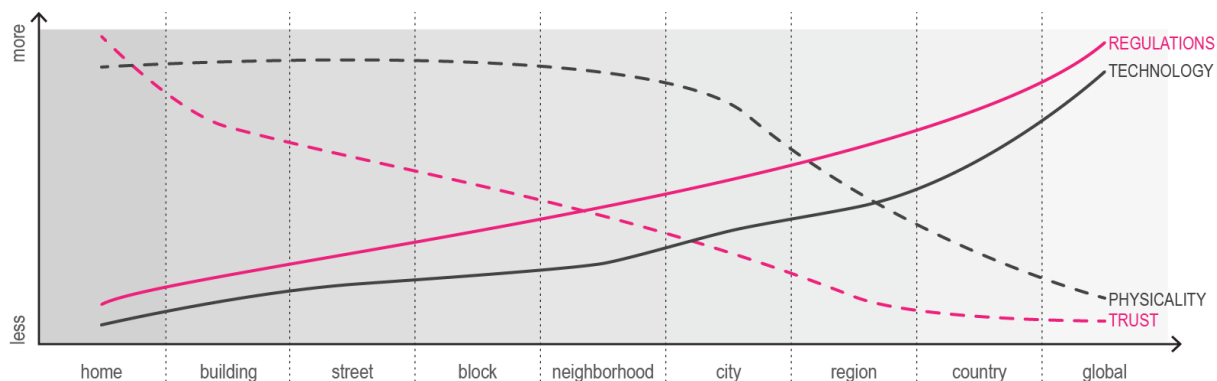


Figure 2 - Scale in relation to Trust and Regulations, Physicality and Technology

What happens though when we move up in scales? Even though sharing can flourish within tight knit communities, it seems like a challenging undertaking on a city, region or even global scale. Global sharing systems today, like couchsurfing, use technological means and online platforms in the lack of direct physical proximity. Online spaces can be a way to create online communities across the globe. Nevertheless, online communications do not support the level of trust and cohesion that face-to-face, everyday interactions do. (Furumo and Pearson 2006) Another method for sharing to take place and specifically a manner of managing the commons that has been explored are the nested structures. Elinor Ostrom, the great Nobel winning political economist who advocated for collective ways of organization and management of the commons, when the examples of greater communities of people come up, she turns to the theory of "nested structures" of organization; *"governance activities are organized in multiple layers of*

nested enterprises” (Harvey 2013; Ostrom 1990; Katrini 2014). Accordingly, different sharing opportunities can be offered on different scales in a nested-structure manner. There are goods that people would possibly go no further than their own house-building or street in order to use, others that they might be willing to walk within a 5-10 minute distance in order to acquire and others that they might travel across city or country to access.

Finally, there are assets that are needed on a global scale and thus created global economies (technology, national assets etc.). Nonetheless, such resources are more and more demanding, in terms of energy and physical resources. Hopefully, by implementing alternative economic models as means for people to serve their needs on a local level, practices that operate on a global scale and are environmentally detrimental can be minimized.

[SHARING CULTURE vs SHARING ECONOMY]

The above discussion on different parameters of sharing practices gives certain insights on the area definition of what sharing is. So the question is; *which sharing practices can truly facilitate the transition of our urban communities towards places that are socially interactive, environmentally conscious and resource sustainable? How can sharing assist in the citizens’ self-organization and co-management of the urban commons?* Three main variables from the above presented will assist in giving answers to the aforementioned questions and defining what Sharing Economy is and what is not; the stakeholders’ intentions, if there is monetary exchange or not, and scale.

Firstly, when an external (profit-oriented) stakeholder appropriates a sharing system, the system’s evolution will be significantly affected by the stakeholder’s decisions, which will be made based on a cost-benefit analysis. A good example of that is the Uber’s decision to collaborate with Carnegie Mellon University’s Department of Robotics towards driverless cars (Fontaine and Kerlik 2015). Even though Uber has not been promoting the social interaction as a key feature to its service like Lyft does, the company has been considered to offer a ride-sharing service that uses the excess capacity of existing cars. In a recent effort to minimize the hustle and extra costs of the drivers, the company has embarked on the development of a new type of transportation product, the driverless car, which does not necessarily have to do anything with either the environmental or the social benefits deriving from true ride-sharing.

The above is an extreme example in order to argue that business models acting as external managing parties of a sharing system, in exchange of economic profit, can become definitely detrimental to the system itself. When the primary goal of the system’s managing agency is growth and profit, the participants’ benefits become secondary. Models like AirBnB, Uber and Lyft, provide parallel systems to traditional methods, those of hospitality (hotels, hostels) and private transportation (taxis), offering to users more affordable options, often easily accessible through the use of smartphone technology. Consumers’ freedom, and abundance of options have been the two the main arguments of such models at the beginning of their foundation (Woskow 2014). However, a few years down the line, issues of precarity for those participants offering the services have started to emerge; casualization of workers, de-unionization, and lack of necessary legislation that will regulate and protect users, owners and workers (Light and Miskelly 2014).

Apart from the paradox insecurity to those offering their services within a system like this, there is a fallacy in stating that those systems add to the variety of the consumers’ options in the long-run. When the stakeholder managing the shareables is external, there is a significant amount of economic investment flying out of the system and the community they should be benefiting. Moreover, similar local businesses within individual localities where these sharing services are offered run the risk of a high competition that they cannot win and eventually have to close

down. Eventually, business is concentrated in the hands of stakeholders who already own a significant amount of resources and capital.

Finally, one last crucial point to underline in such sharing systems is issues relative to inclusivity and social segregation. On a first tier, as these systems usually act on a more global scale, they depend on informational technology and online systems in order to connect the users; by doing so they exclude populations that do not have access to such resources (e.g. elderly, low-income populations etc). Even more class-partition and segregation can take place in those kinds of systems, which depend heavily on users profiling and reputation, as people use branding methods to include or exclude others leading eventually to more and more homogeneous sharing groups (Tonkinwise 2011).

Looking at the bigger picture, the physical concentration of those homogeneous online communities in localities where those systems are offered, can lead to issues of gentrification and physical segregation. AirBnB, acting as an alternative form of capitalism, cannot possibly avoid the trends of the economy when is scaled up; people join AirBnB to make their places more affordable by earning an extra income on the side, the economy adjusts to the new situation, and eventually prices are adjusted to a new balance. When that happens renting out a part of their premises on AirBnB may not be optional anymore but mandatory. It is daunting to imagine that just the concentration of cheap opportunities for accommodation in a neighborhood through AirBnB could cause issues of gentrification, without altering the existing physical space and real estate at all (Speri 2014). In even worse case scenarios of system abuse by certain users with the goal of increasing their personal profit, the negative effect of gentrification could be multiplied exponentially. Cases of brand new developments exclusively built for AirBnB lodging, or even evictions of regular residencies for the sole purpose of their exploitation as AirBnB apartments have recently been mentioned.(Hill 2015)

Consequently, sharing systems that are using monetary exchanges and have profit making as one of the main intentions of their stakeholders, they generally constitute *alternative forms of capitalism* and they do not focus on the environmental and social benefits of the community of participants they are serving. Those systems and practices are part of what we call “Sharing Economy” today but do not necessary offer new opportunities and innovative ideas for citizens to create an equitable commons-based urban economy. The above predicaments of such alternatives of capitalism showcase that those systems will not benefit urban communities in the long run, but rather external stakeholders and might lead to issues of gentrification and exclusion.

On the other hand, systems, which focus on the intrinsic environmental and social values of the participants and are based on exchange of knowledge, resources, information and support rather than on monetary exchanges, provide an alternative to capitalism for producing, distributing and managing goods in a democratic way. Such systems should not be addressed by the term of “Sharing Economy” but rather “*Sharing Culture*”. *Sharing Culture* relates to social networks that grow informally and spontaneously within a region between diverse stakeholders (related or not) and have as their main goal to co-produce, manage and share resources, time, knowledge, information and support based on solidarity and reciprocity rather than economic profit. The ultimate goal of Sharing Culture is to create an alternative pathway for citizens to serve their daily needs in a more sustainable, less resourceful and socially engaging manner by tapping into resources within their region.

In their paper “*Sharing Economy vs Sharing Cultures? Designing for social, economic and environmental good*”, Ann Light and Clodagh Miskelly make the case for the importance of scale and space where social relationships can be built as an indicator that separates Sharing Culture from Sharing Economy. (Light and Miskelly 2015) By comparing

local initiatives that have flourished in Brockley, London, to online platforms of Sharing Economy, they highlight how true Sharing Culture goes beyond just efficient resource management to sharing as a collective initiative that has environmental, economic and social benefits for all stakeholders involved. Based on their research, Sharing Culture on a local scale can promote the social case but it is not easily replicable; moving towards a Sharing Culture can happen only through replicability of ideas rather than scalability. (Light and Miskelly 2015) In that sense, the location, physicality and geography of neighborhood social networks play an utmost role to the success of such local sharing culture systems.

Building a Sharing Culture

The local scale and character of Sharing Culture demand for two main areas of definition; firstly what are the possibilities and limitations of a sharing culture and secondly how can the physical space accommodate and build such a sharing culture among neighbors and residents within a region. Understanding the possibilities and limitations of Sharing Culture relates directly to what such local sharing systems can and cannot do. If Sharing Culture provides an alternative way for communities to serve their everyday needs by sharing resources; those needs should be identified. Through a wide exploration of current systems and based on the variables of type and function of shareables presented earlier, Sharing Culture systems are organized based on the following taxonomy; 'Food and Perishable Resources', 'Household Appliances and Utilities', 'Transportation', 'Family', 'Health and Well-Being', 'Education and Empowerment', 'Recreation' and 'Professional Resources'. The following diagram gives also insights and examples of ideas of sharing systems that fall under each category, without being exhaustive.

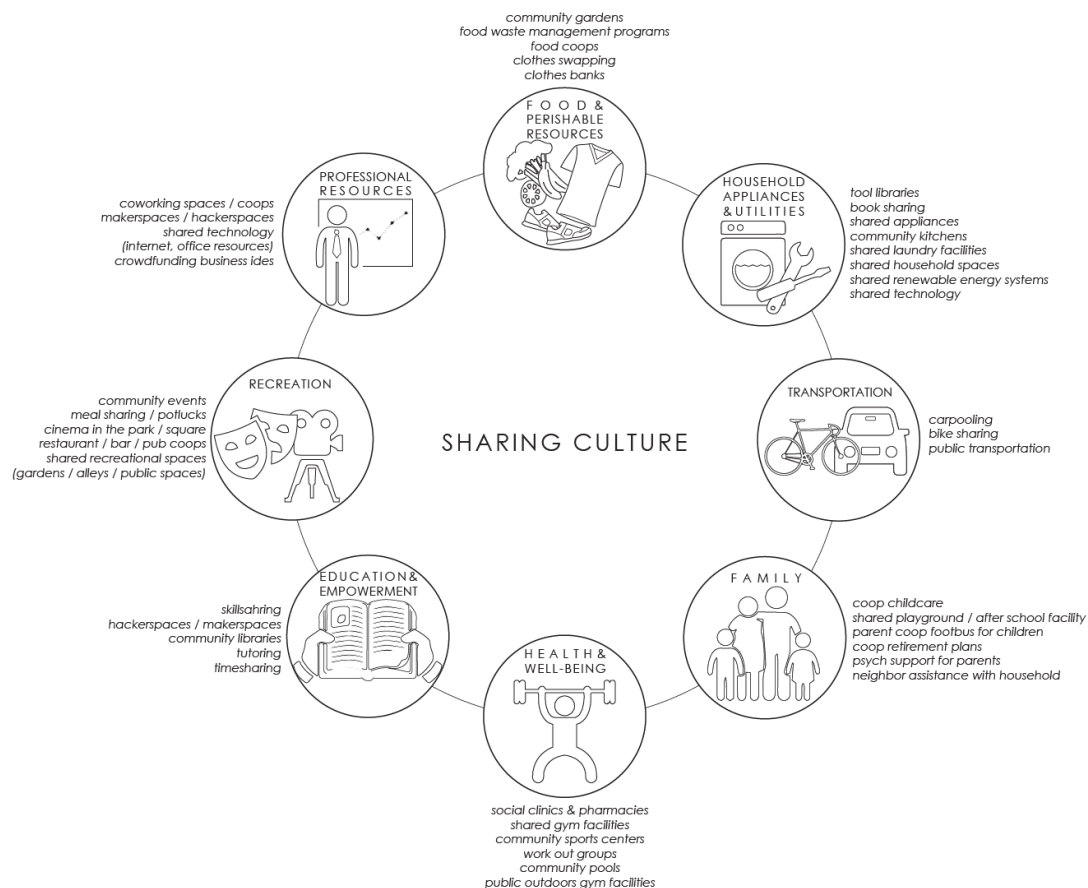


Figure 3 - Sharing Culture Taxonomy

Based on the nature of each one of those categories, different approaches on how those systems are built within communities need to be developed. For example, '*Food and Perishable Resources*' and '*Household Appliances and Utilities*' are systems for which vicinity and colocation is of high importance; people would probably not travel more than 5-10 minutes (walking) to have access to such resources. On the other hand, for "Recreation" and "Education & Empowerment", people probably might be willing to go further up to 30 minutes walking to have access to such resources. Apart from accessibility in terms of time travelled, those systems need to be designed in a way that they are open and visible within a community; and hence equitably available for all. Systems that are hidden away from the public eye and difficult to join, or advertised only through online networks, become eventually exclusive to certain parts of the population. In that case placemaking and physical branding within the community become of great importance in order to create awareness within a community. Finally, tapping into existing resources, infrastructures and locales of a community in order to develop such systems create a more natural evolution of those systems rather becoming disruptive. Further research will need to identify what are the physical dimensions of Sharing Culture that can build stronger systems based on trust and reciprocity.

Why is sharing culture important?

Despite the great advancements that have been made in the area of sustainability over the last decades, spaces and practices of our everyday life have still a lot of ground to cover. In theory, the base of sustainability has been the triple bottom line of people, planet and profit; however more focus has been given on profit and growth with environmental tools and systems gently pushing towards that same direction. Less attention has been given on achieving environmental sustainability goals through social change in the places and practices of everyday life. Even though environmental awareness has increased since the 1970s and people have recognized that overconsumption is detrimental to the environment, we have not yet drastically changed our lifestyles in order to promote a less resourceful way of living. (Meltzer 2005)

The term sustainable development in itself as a concept is an oxymoron; how can the growth implied by the word "*development*" be aligned with as something as reverse as "*sustainability*"? (Stavrides and De Angelis 2010) So, is it a matter of changing our ways rather than growing more? Sharing goods and assets along with community building has been shown - in a smaller scale - to have great environmental and social benefits; it promotes a less resourceful and more socially engaging way of living. (Katrini 2015) Through sharing, ideas of degrowth can sprout and citizens can adopt more environmentally conscious lifestyles. Moreover, building social relationships within a community by establishing trust and reciprocity can lead to decrease of fear, intolerance and isolation, while increasing a sense of belonging and prosocial behaviors. Robust support networks based on sharing and collaborative practices have been shown to nurture higher levels of happiness and satisfaction leading to an improved mental health of participants. (Light and Miskelly 2014) The local nature of Sharing Culture increases agency and sense of belonging within a community, which supports individual behaviors that act for the common benefit of the group, in contrast to sharing economy systems which are usually based on more individualistic motives. It can increase meaningful social relations and dense networks of social support within a certain area have the power to increase resource to collective action and hence social capital. Therefore Sharing Culture increases the potential of local communities to build the necessary trust in order to self-organize and co-manage local urban resources.

Examples of such intentional sharing practices can be found in cohousing projects and eco-villages, but those communities can be rather exclusive and self-referential. On the contrary, the initiatives of sharing culture (*Figure 3*) that have started sprouting within cities over the last decade can be inclusionary and open to all and provide an alternative to over-consuming lifestyles. Such sharing culture practices grow within urban communities as a way for

dwellers to develop means of dealing with their everyday lives. While, citizens across the globe have stopped waiting for top-down developments towards a more socially and environmentally sustainable lifestyle, they have started creating solutions themselves. (Tonkinwise 2010) It is indeed this type of practices that hold great potential for our cities to move towards a more sustainable future, and it is exactly those citizen-driven initiatives that can reveal great social and environmental benefits in the long run. Sharing Culture practices offer an alternative to capitalism and a way of creating sustainable, inclusive and empowered communities from the bottom up.

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