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The Future of Sharing? A Roundtable for Horizon Scanning on Sharing Cities

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The Future of Sharing?

A Roundtable for Horizon Scanning on Sharing Cities



**Sharing
Cities
Sweden**



**SHARING
CITIES
ALLIANCE**

Organised on the 16 November 2020, the roundtable on “Sharing Cities – Shaping Tomorrow” focused on sharing insights and ideas on the future of sharing in our cities and communities. The roundtable gathered over 40 people from around world and formed part of the Smart City Live Conference. This report pulls together the conversations at the roundtable and distils the key findings.

Title: The future of sharing? A Roundtable for Horizon Scanning on Sharing Cities

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Collaborators: Sharing Cities Sweden and Sharing Cities Alliance

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 01** SUMMARY - KEY MESSAGES
- 03** INTRODUCTION
- 05** PART 2 – WHERE ARE WE RIGHT NOW?
- 09** PART 2 – WHERE DO WE WANT TO GO?
- 13** WHAT NEXT?

SUMMARY - KEY MESSAGES



1. When it comes to consumers there is still a largely untapped potential for them to start voting with their euros and dollars on the sharing market, in the same way we all do when choosing sustainable or ecological products.
2. Importantly, in urban sharing the role of consumers is shifted from passive consumers to active co-producers of value, who can contribute to co-creating sustainable lifestyles in cities and communities.
3. We need to continue reducing the barriers to integrate more sharing in our daily lifestyles. And the best way to change behaviour is almost always by controlling the environment, by simply making it easier to share through infrastructure.
4. It is of course important to foster a culture of sharing where social interaction and empowering our citizens is key. Sharing as a concept in Gothenburg also includes how we can share knowledge and co-create our city.
5. Sharing hubs are never going to break out of the eco-niche unless they have an excellent user experience. The behaviour of ownership is too strong and if it cannot be made easy to use and aspirational (rather than sensible) then sharing practices will remain on the margins.

6. The sharing economy can help us overcome a crisis and strengthen urban resilience by: activating idling resources and prolonging their lifetime, reducing dependence on global supply chains, and activating people and communities.
7. In times of crisis come times of opportunity. Although dramatically affected by the pandemic, many sharing organizations provide essential services to the public together with other actors in society. The value of sharing to society is clear.
8. We are exploring how sharing can enable a greener, more liveable and climate neutral city. We need to set a clear mission in the transition and through sharing we can enable that no one is left behind!
9. We need to build trust between different stakeholders and make space and infrastructure for sharing in our cities. Through the visibility of sharing we can show a different way of consuming goods and services.
10. There is a tendency to focus on the benefits of sharing and equal attention should also be focused on the costs (and investments) needed to support safe, sustainable sharing in a re-configured urban system.
11. There is a lot of talk about 'system change' for sustainability, but innovations such as sharing often emerge within the current (unsustainable) 'system' (and the attended policies, regulations, and tax regimes). We need to continuously consider transitional futures.
12. The sharing economy can contribute to social, environmental and economic sustainability, and sharing cities can unlock new opportunities and solve urban challenges – but only by design and through active and robust governance.

Horizon scanning is an approach for identifying early signs of potentially important developments through a systematic examination of potential threats and opportunities. The method calls for determining what is constant, what changes, and what constantly changes. It explores novel and unexpected issues as well as persistent problems and trends, including matters at the margins of current thinking that challenge past assumptions.

A roundtable is a way to organise discussion in groups. Participants agree on a specific topic to discuss and debate. Participants are equally involved and asked to contribute to sharing understanding on the topic in focus, as illustrated by the idea of a circular layout referred to in the term roundtable. Horizon scanning in groups through a roundtable allows a wider and deeper investigation and discussion of a topic.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the conversation

The purpose of this report is to share insights and ideas on the future of sharing in our cities and communities. In this time of pandemics and crises (including the impacts of the corona virus and how we emerge from this pandemic as well as the global climate and biodiversity crises), it is not only about finding short-term answers to all the challenges we face today, but also about developing robust and engaging long-term visions to find our way towards a better and brighter future than before.

We need to see opportunities (including the growing momentum for building back better and bolder as well as accelerating transformation processes) as much as thinking of challenges. This report aims to provide a creative and refreshing opportunity to focus on “chances” more than only “challenges”. It explores how to think of opportunities, of ways forward, of hope and ambition. It also investigates how sharing cities are connecting and merging with different agendas and topics in Europe and around the world. The report is divided into two parts.

The sharing economy can contribute to social, environmental and economic sustainability, and sharing cities can unlock new opportunities and solve urban challenges by facilitating and applying the sharing economy. In broad terms, the sharing economy offers innovative solutions for sharing, renting and replacing under-utilized assets, often using digital platforms, visualization technology and ICT that connects individuals and organisations in the sharing economy by informing about supply and demand.

PART 1 Where are we right now?	PART 2 Where do we want to go?
... challenges, opportunities, trends	... strategies, visions, collaborations

Sharing economy organisations vary in terms of size (from global home sharing platforms to local clothes libraries), market orientation (from for-profit car-sharing companies to non-profit tool pools) and organisational form (from municipal bicycle sharing schemes to umbrella sharing businesses to community-based toy libraries). All these initiatives are transforming production and consumption systems in cities around the globe, in both positive and negative ways.

Sharing cities often refer to when municipalities or community-based organisations are playing a leading role in engaging with sharing economy organisations or enabling citizens to share by including sharing principles in the planning and design of cities and communities. Sharing cities facilitate those sharing economy organisations that deliver public good and urban sustainability, while restricting those that bring risks for urban citizens. But it is imperative that the sharing economy is shaped and designed to advance these goals.

“We need to understand how sharing is connecting and merging with different agendas.”

– Kes McCormick, Sharing Cities Sweden

“We need to see opportunities for sharing as much as thinking of challenges.”

– Harmen van Sprang, Sharing Cities Alliance

PART 1 – WHERE ARE WE RIGHT NOW?

... challenges, opportunities, trends



“We need to be very careful about the assumption that there is only one circular or sharing economy approach. In fact, a circular economy with sharing and repairing would be very different socially and politically from a corporate circular economy based on a shift to services and commercially viable innovative start-ups.”

Duncan McLaren, author of a sharing cities book on smart and sustainable cities



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When it comes to consumers there is still a largely untapped potential for them to voting with their euros on the sharing market, in the same way we all do when we choose sustainable or ecological products. In order to help consumers choose environmentally and socially sustainable sharing offers, we need to develop assessment and communication tools that can help consumers compare sharing organisations based on their sustainability performance.



I see sharing as an important way for our society to slow resource loops through sharing cycles, reduce idling time of existing assets through intensifying their use and as a way to institutionalise and normalise the idea of reuse and shared use. It is not a panacea per se, but a necessary approach for reducing impacts of consumption, if, and only if, existing and idling products, services and capacities are being shared, not when new products are produced in order to be offered through 'access over ownership' arrangements such as leasing and renting.

Urban sharing puts a spotlight on social and business model innovation that is vital for driving significant changes in the ways we currently live and for shaping sustainable lifestyles that rely on more localized and circular production and consumption systems. Sustainable lifestyles cannot be achieved by passive consumers, who are used to passively receive products on the market. Importantly, in urban sharing the role of consumers is shifted from passive consumers to active co-producers of value, who can contribute to co-creating sustainable lifestyles.

I would also like to highlight inspirational features among sharing cities that offer ample room for cross-fertilisation: 1) Some cities see sharing as a strategic opportunity for solving sustainability challenges cities are facing, and not just reactively responding when negative effects of sharing organisations become too large. 2) Cities that support local sharing organisations because they understand the importance of social innovation and empowering individuals as co-producers of value inspire me. 3) It is also inspirational to see when cities are working hard to normalise sharing, shared use and reuse in different organisational forms as part of everyday life, thereby shaping sustainable lifestyles today.

Oksana Mont

Lund University, Sweden

In Gothenburg, we have pointed out several areas we need to focus on in order to scale up urban sharing solutions over the coming years. One of them is the infrastructure. We need to continue reducing the barriers to integrate more sharing in our daily lifestyles. And the best way to change behaviour is almost always by controlling the environment, by simply making it easier to share. In a way, we already have the smart digital solutions to make sharing more convenient. Now it is about implementation and scaling up the local ecosystem.



When it comes to infrastructure, we have identified the real estate sector as important facilitators. What many local non-profit sharing initiatives need the most is simply access to premises at an affordable cost. In collaboration with both public and private real estate owners we try to develop new financing and organizational models for how the city can boost more sharing initiatives in order to leverage their value creation.

In addition to building the infrastructure, it is of course important to foster a culture of sharing where social interaction and empowering our citizens is key. Sharing as a concept in Gothenburg also includes how we can share knowledge and co-create our city. We see that local sharing, supporting healthy, communal, low carbon lifestyles has the potential of building trust and more resilient communities, which is exactly what we will need to transform the challenges ahead into opportunities and regenerative cities for all.

Tove Lund

City of Gothenburg, Sweden



At the roundtable, it was interesting to hear about the conflict between "commercial" and "community" when talking about sharing. The perception seemed to be that the commercial approach is only ever going to be about maximizing profit and the community approach is much more focused on inclusivity. However, we do not see such a wide separation of goals and our main aim at Aalto University is to promote the elements of sustainable lifestyles that sharing can support.



We have been researching items as a service here in Helsinki and we are also trying to pilot a start-up service. There have been some pilots before we got involved and they were funded by our local innovation agency (called Sitra). The feedback from Sitra was that community sharing hubs are never going to break out of the eco-niche unless they have an excellent user experience. The behaviour of ownership is too strong and if it cannot be made easy to use and aspirational (rather than sensible) then the services will continue to attract only the most dedicated consumers.

Sharing platforms do not have to be overly commercial but from a user experience point of view they can learn a huge amount from Uber, Foodora, and Wolt. From our point of view, it would be very interesting to hear more about: "How can commercial sharing platforms be designed so that they keep the user experience of a successful digital service while also retaining the important elements of community sharing services (such as affordability and inclusiveness)?"

Ken Dooley

Aalto University, Finland



PART 2 – WHERE DO WE WANT TO GO?

... strategies, visions, collaborations

“The circular economy is not a new concept, but still an incipient one, because the fiscal, regulatory systems in particular, are set to sustain linear economies. The difference consists of a complex system whereby people, policies and places interact using resources without wasting them in combination with sharing and repairing.”

Oriana Romano, leader of the OECD circular economy in cities and regions initiative



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A key question that I am exploring right now with colleagues is how sharing organisations respond in pandemics (and crises). While many of them fight to survive, many also help cities by providing essential public services. For example, ride-hailing and scooter sharing organisations take health workers to hospitals for free or at a discount price. Some ride-hailing services deliver food for free to healthcare facilities and foodbanks. Space sharing organisations shift from short term to long-term home rentals. Goods sharing organisations, which are mainly these physical spaces for non-profit sharing, contribute to social resilience by keeping open for social networking when possible, for example outdoors.



The sharing economy can help us overcome a crisis and strengthen urban resilience by: activating idling resources and prolonging their lifetime, reducing dependence on global supply chains, and activating people and communities. At the same time, there is a need for municipalities to leverage the actions by sharing economy organisations and amplify their value. In our research, we have developed a framework of how municipalities govern the sharing economy. We have structured their actions in 5 governance mechanisms, which are broken down into 11 roles.

To build post-pandemic resilience, municipalities may **REGULATE** by imposing norms for resilient urban infrastructure with outdoor services. They may **PROVIDE** infrastructure for safe sharing of idling resources, for example expand bike sharing infrastructure, or provide grants for start-ups like Oriana has mentioned. They may **SELF-GOVERN** by opening up city-owned assets to many, for example their premises closed during evenings or weekends. Municipalities may **ENABLE** sharing by mapping idling resources in cities and engaging people and platforms to activate them. Lastly, they may **COLLABORATE** with sharing organisations to provide essential services.

In times of crisis come times of opportunity. Although dramatically affected by the pandemic, many sharing organizations provide essential services to the public together with other actors in society. To build resilience in our cities, we see it important for municipalities with support from knowledge institutes: identify the gaps in services that sharing platforms are currently filling; leverage the services of sharing organisations, and help amplify the value through agile governance structures for long-term resilience.

Yuliya Voytenko Palgan

Lund University, Sweden

The roundtable was for me a reminder of the wide diversity of actors that are included in the sharing economy. Each city is unique, but at the same time similar. We are exploring how sharing can enable a greener, more liveable and climate neutral city. We need to set a clear mission in the transition and through sharing we can enable that no one is left behind!



We need to keep having a trans-national knowledge on sharing between international, national and local actors to be successful. I was therefore happy, that among others, the OECD program for circular economy in cities and regions was taking part in the event. Showing that the circular economy and sharing economy are very much connected. It is also a statement that these solutions will be the next step of sustainable growth and job creation.

We need to build trust between different stakeholders and make space and infrastructure for sharing in our cities. Through the visibility of sharing we can show a different way of consuming goods and services, that is more climate-friendly and make more space for human interactions. We are on a mission to transform our society to sustainability in less than 10 years. Sharing will play a major role in that transition!

Philip Näslund

City of Umeå, Sweden



Urban sharing under the pandemic has really highlighted the value (of many kinds) of collaboration, social interaction and infrastructures (physical and otherwise) – efforts to ‘build back better’ need to pay careful attention to these values in order to support safe, sustainable sharing.

However, there is a tendency to focus on the benefits of sharing and equal attention should also be focused on the costs (and investments) needed to support safe, sustainable sharing in a re-configured urban system. The question of how to finance urban sharing which is not commercially viable (for example, social enterprise) remains.



There is a lot of talk about ‘system change’ for sustainability, but innovations such as sharing often emerge within the current (unsustainable) ‘system’ (and the attended policies, regulations, and tax regimes), which it could be argued goes some way to sustain/prop-up the current unsustainable system. Futuring exercises also need to consider transitional futures as well as ideal/sustainable visions of urban futures.

Anna Davies

Trinity College Dublin, Ireland



WHAT NEXT?

Join the Sharing Cities MOOC - Massive Open Online Course

- Gain increased knowledge on the sharing economy in cities.
- Gain deeper understanding of the relationship between the sharing economy, cities, governance and urban sustainability.
- Gain improved critical thinking on the opportunities and challenges for governing sharing cities to contribute to urban sustainability.



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www.coursera.org/learn/sharing-cities/home/welcome



The sharing economy can contribute to social, environmental and economic sustainability, and sharing cities can unlock new opportunities and solve urban challenges by facilitating and applying the sharing economy in urban contexts. But it is imperative that the sharing economy is shaped and designed to advance urban sustainability.

This course is created by Sharing Cities Sweden, which is a national program for the sharing economy in cities in Sweden. It aims to put Sweden on the map as a country that actively and critically works with sharing cities. It brings together leading thinkers and practitioners from government, business, academic and civil society.

Sharing Cities Sweden is developing world-leading test-beds for the sharing economy in Stockholm, Gothenburg, Malmö and Umeå, and coordinating a national node to significantly improve national and international cooperation on sharing cities. The underlying aim is to create sustainable, resilient and prosperous cities and urban areas.

This course covers a diversity of knowledge and experiences to present and explore sharing cities in a holistic perspective with examples from Sweden, Europe and around the world. In this course, we combine a mix of films and concise readings on sharing cities with interactive forums and practical assignments to create an online learning community!





We need to see opportunities as much as thinking of challenges.
We need to contribute to momentum for building back better
and bolder as well as accelerating transformation processes
towards sustainable and prosperous futures.

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