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Inside the sharing economy: material-discursive enactments of lending and borrowing in consumer culture

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“Why buy when you can borrow?” This slogan comes from a Swedish digital platform intended to facilitate loans between neighbours. Together with a number of similar initiatives it makes up the “third generation” of the sharing economy. Hopes are high that sharing will promote socio-economic and environmental sustainability and present solutions to the effects of an advanced consumer culture, as well as strengthening a feeling of community and mutual trust. “Sharing” appears as an ideologically and politically contested practise, with no inherent meaning in itself. In this paper I want to critically and ethnographically scrutinize its use and practises through looking at material-discursive agency and different enactments, especially concerning the affective turmoil of lending and borrowing. In reality the sharing economy faces an uphill struggle.