

## Executive summary

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## SUMMARY

The 'Sharing Cities Shaping Cities' international research symposium (5-6 March 2018, DASTU at Politecnico di Milano) addressed how the contemporary urban landscape is and is being reshaped by the socio-technical phenomenon referred with the umbrella name of 'sharing economy'.

Nearly 50 delegates (including researchers, practitioners and municipalities representatives) debated on key themes and features characterizing the phenomenon from multiple perspectives and drawing on insights from fieldwork activities in Europe, Asia and Oceania.

The key themes of investigation were:

1. governance, municipalities and policies
2. collaboration forms, platforms and the commons
3. citizens' sharing practice and data
4. office sharing
5. housing and accommodation sharing.

A brief (non-comprehensive) summary of main topics of debate emerges during the symposium is reported below.

### 1. Governance, municipalities and strategies/policies

The two comparative studies presented on the governance of several European cities reveal the possible roles that municipalities play upon practices and strategies of sharing economy.

Drawing on former categorizations, cities may enact as:

- regulators, with top-down strategies intended for supporting or restricting (e.g. Berlin, London, Genth)
- providers, with actions of hosting, investing, granting, withdrawing (e.g. Amsterdam, Malmo)
- enablers (e.g. London, Barcelona)

- consumers, with actions of self-governing and even with own sharing projects (e.g. Antwerp).

Such roles may take place at the same time and require optimal balance.

Lies van den Eijnden (Sharing Cities Alliance) highlights main differences of governance across the analysed cities. Two are the main wicked aspects resulting from the investigation:

1. Controversial relation of scarcity and abundance
2. Blurred boundaries, namely about ownership.

Lucie Zvolska focuses on processes of institutionalisation of sharing practices by their organisations through processes of creation and disruption. The main suggestion for policy maker to maximise a sustainable impact by urban sharing organization is to regulate larger organisation on a case-by-case basis, and to introduce supportive mechanisms for smaller, bottom-up ones.

The panel discussion raised also issues regarding:

- The redefinition of meanings and structures of the long standing practice of sharing (see libraries) by the intervention of the novel sharing organizations
- The risks for the commodification of sharing practices and initiatives, as witnessed through commercially driven platforms promoting assets sharing, to which municipalities react differently (see the case of Berlin with AirBnB).

### 2. Collaboration forms, platforms and the commons

Sharing applies also to collaborative communities, who cooperate to make a change often for local impact. Different forms of collaboration were presented, specifically through platforms, cooperatives and professional mediators.

Letizia Chiappini focuses on civic crowdfunding platforms with cases in Milan and Amsterdam (e.g.

eppela, Amsterdam Voor je Buurt, 1% Club; civicmonitor.nl) to highlight the roles of the municipalities and the generated impact for the citizens. In her presentation she argues that civic crowdfunding may help in solving local problems but its inclusivity and right to the city is still open to debate.

Mayo Fuster Morell and Ricard Espelt describe forms and dynamics of platform collaborative economy, drawing on outcomes from fieldwork research. Three macro-models are identified (i.e. open commons, unicorn, platform coops) and 10 case studies in Barcelona collaborative economy ecosystem deeply analysed according to 6 democratic commons qualities, which constitutes the Star Framework.

Lidewij Tummers and Heidrun Wankiewicz stress the importance of collaborations specifically between local authorities and grassroots self-organised initiatives to enable the achievement of sustainability goals and targets. Drawing on co-housing and energy cooperatives cases in both the Netherlands and Austria, the researchers bring forward the role of professionals (e.g. engineers, planners and designers) as mediators – or middle agents – between the two actors above. Necessarily rules for the commons need to be defined, also to ensure that the self-organised initiatives match with local policies and objectives, thus enabling the achievement of both short- and long-term goals.

### 3. Citizens' sharing practice and data

Sharing in urban context redefines territories and reshape their syntax. Citizens make use of the city and the assets by drawing on local knowledge, carrying on daily dynamics, uptaking socio-technical innovations to accomplish their routines. This determines how cities are made. These dynamics are reflected by data emerging from the engaged digital and online services. The presenters of citizens sharing panel reported their studies on how data sharing reveal or may reveal such novel urban forms, with the audience questioning if the same may predict patterns.

Jesús López Baeza draws on social media (esp. Foursquare) to map activity patterns in several cities and thus defining social spatial information (and their variation in time) through data. The research group develop a metamorphology approach to define the awareness of city life through sense. The study reveals how social activities do not match with conventional spatial syntax, thus informing urban planners.

Katharine Willis and Afif Fathullah address the role of emotional data and their crowdsourcing to understand the experience of places. Using physiological wearable devices, human body alterations (Galvanic Skin response device) are proxies for emotional variations. These are identified while Plymouth citizens navigate in the city, thus depicting the emotional landscape and stress hotspots.

Yiyun and Hassan report the insights from a study on dockless bike sharing (DBSS) user experience in Beijing, China. Social and environmental sustainability result to be key issues. Lowe is the access for low-income and older people; furthermore bike sharing seems to use new resources rather than existing ones. Optimal governance of DBSS is to be distributed and coordinated between government (infrastructure and regulations), companies (qualities and maintenance) and citizens (education and culture).

### 4. Office sharing

The urban form is reshaped also by more or less novel practices of sharing living space, particularly intended for work or accommodation. These result to be fundamentally urban phenomenon, with limited applicability to smaller size contexts. Therefore a duality between global cities and marginal contexts (either periphery or smaller cities) emerge in the symposium as an area of necessary investigation. Economic sustainability and performance are key elements of investigation for co-working space necessarily.

According to Ilaria Mariotti and Fabio Manfredini (part of a larger authorship from Politecnico di

Milano), the increased economic performance of co-working spaces - revealed by country scale questionnaires to their managers - may be framed through the key of proximity types, in particular organizational (i.e. services), social (i.e. trust) and cognitive (i.e. knowledge).

On the other hand, Durante's investigation provides a low performance output from questionnaires to co-working space managers at the same scale, possibly related to the dimension and number of service provided.

Also Durante stresses the relevance of the urban spreading of coworking spaces as an opportunity to add value and recover existing buildings or neighbourhoods, thus influencing and reshaping the urban environment.

Plenarily optimal economic and performance metrics are hoped for as a means to adequately analyse phenomena and inform stakeholders accurately.

## 5. Housing and accommodation sharing

Housing and accommodation are amongst the recurrently cited practices of sharing economy possibly because of the visibility and debated cases of AirBnB. In fact, illegal accommodation conditions (e.g. hygiene regulation, fire safety) and restricted housing access for locals (e.g. higher rent prices) are detrimental consequences of shared accommodation abuses.

Jacqui Alexander reports emerging housing typologies in Melbourne, with a densification of sharing room standards, often shrinking in size and reshaped in suboptimal conditions (e.g. room with no access to natural light) within supersized houses to escalate profit. Therefore, she conceptualises novel forms for houses to be shared, meeting comfort.

Mark Hammond interprets sharing accommodation as a process of citizen engagement in the house design process, with a social focus, applied to two UK based co-housing cases for older people. In this view, the shared house for vulnerable people not only reshapes the urban fabric (to meets the

user needs and preferences) but also the role of the architect (making the design process open).

Francesco Sebregondi and Rokmaniko Maksym propose to overcome the inequality of raising housing prices which may limit the accessibility to lower income citizen by conceptualising a platform cooperativism system based on blockchain based smart contract. The type of contract takes a shape in between ownership and rental, making use of tokenization strategies for equity.

## Transversal themes

### a. Need of definitions and glossary

First, variability and coexistence of multiple definitions of sharing economy were acknowledged. However, reaching consensus was not the objective of the symposium to enable the participation of diverse perspectives in the description of reshaped urban dynamics. A common glossary instead was welcome in general, to enable the dialogue.

### b. Sharing beyond the city scale

Sharing economy practices are recurrently and also by literature considered as a quintessentially urban phenomenon. However, reframing the interpretation and objective of sharing assets strategies may enable its application and diffusion from the 'global' cities towards their peripheries and smaller cities.

### c. The environmental sustainability of sharing

The potential of intensifying the use of existing assets by sharing is often contradicted by the replication of assets to ensure flexibility and adaptability, leading to a dualism between scarcity and abundance.

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