

# **Investigating the Applicability of the ‘Sharing Cities’ Discourse and Approach to Urban Contexts in the Global South: A Preliminary Case Study of Hanoi, Vietnam**

Deike Peters, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor,  
Environmental Planning & Practice  
[dpeters@soka.edu](mailto:dpeters@soka.edu)

with

Thuy Ngoc Nguyen  
Undergraduate Class of 2019

---

## **Table of Contents**

Introduction: The Relevance of the “Sharing City” Approach .....	1
The Research Context: Premises and Guiding Questions.....	2
Literature Review .....	4
Definitions of Sharing and Collaborative Consumption.....	4
Sharing Cities .....	9
Sharing, Smart Cities, and Urban Governance.....	12
Sharing the Urban Commons .....	14
Solidarity versus Sharing .....	15
Summing Up.....	16
Urban Sharing and Collaborating in Southeast Asia: The Case of Vietnam .....	17
General Overview of Sharing Economy Sectors in Vietnam.....	19
Money.....	20
Learning.....	21
(Housing / Living / Work) Space.....	22
(Personal) Services.....	22
Mobility Services .....	23
Logistics .....	23
Food.....	24
Sharing and Collaborating in the Digital Age: Makerspaces & FabLabs in Hanoi.....	24
Concluding Remarks.....	26
References .....	27

## Introduction: The Relevance of the “Sharing City” Approach

Three years ago, Duncan McLaren and Julian Agyeman published “*Sharing Cities: A Case for Truly Smart and Sustainable Cities*.” They argued that “the world’s cities, where the majority of the people now live, could become more socially just, more environmentally sustainable and more innovative through the twenty-first-century reinvention and revival of one of our most basic traits: sharing.” (McLaren and Agyeman 2015:1). With their book, McLaren and Agyeman were able to catapult themselves atop a rapidly growing academic literature within urban and environmental studies centered around the ambiguous notion of “shared cities.”

Human settlements have of course always been prime sites for resource sharing and collective consumption, and debates over private versus public goods and realms have always been at the heart of urban policy and planning. Yet with the advent of modern technologies, and with cyberspace in particular, the possibilities of sharing became endlessly amplified: people in possession of certain goods, services, knowledge and know-how could now be cheaply and effortlessly connected within and across neighborhoods with people seeking those very items. The necessity for urban markets as physical places where humans came to interact and engage in exchange activities was vastly diminished. The implications of this new phenomenon are broad and multi-faceted.

In this working paper, we argue that there are two distinct entry points into this discussion, located at opposing ends of the sharing spectrum, namely 1) a discourse centered around the rise of a “sharing economy” where our new world of collaborative consumption is primarily dominated by profit-seeking peer-to-peer exchanges in which new apps or online tools enable individuals to rent or borrow assets that belong to someone else and 2) an alternative discourse that understands sharing as a communal activity that specifically circumvents and stands *outside* profit-seeking existing market economic exchanges.

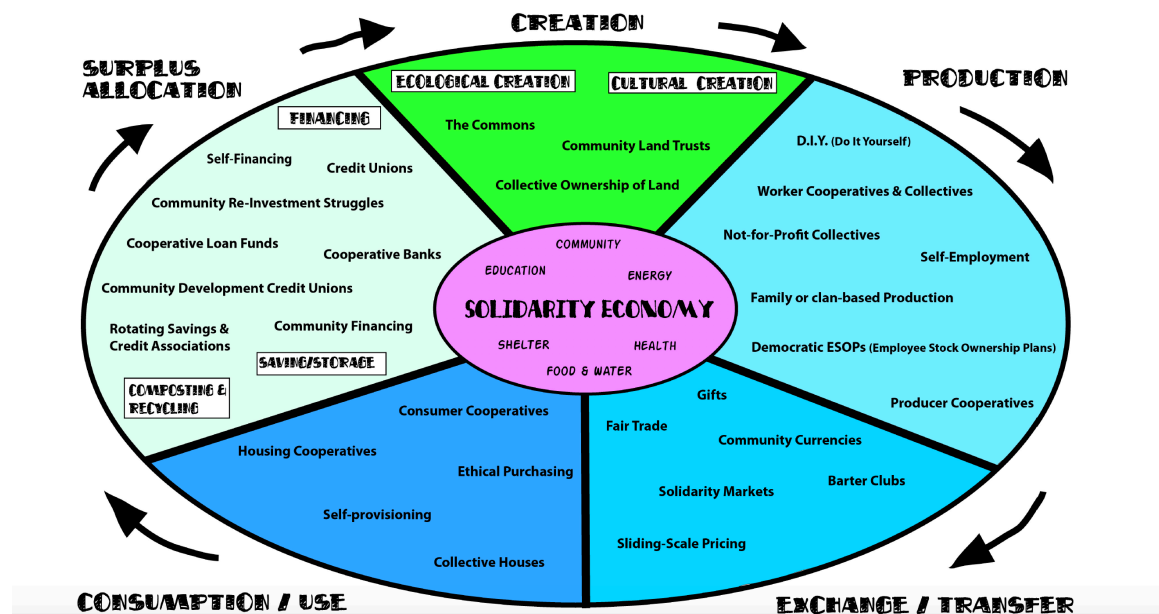
So on one hand, we find “sharing” companies such as the online home-rental platform AirBnB or ride-sharing apps like Uber and Lyft who quickly morphed into multi-billion dollar tech giants while on the other hand there are internet-based sites such as FreeCycle.org or the BuyNothingProject.org that remain locally and communally run and do not seek profits. In reality, many sharing activities are located along a continuum between these two sides, of course, and there is a broad array of activities beyond ridesharing, couchsurfing and crowdfunding that can be said to fit into the universe of “sharing cities,” including many activities that do not require the internet as the matchmaker. Examples include clothes swapping, bartering, gifting, childcare-pooling, or time banks.

Our key interest in this initial foray into the literature is mostly concerned with the latter of these two discourses, i.e. non-rent or -profit-seeking sharing activities in urban environments. We aim to critically investigate the potential of various new sharing approaches to foster humane and peaceful exchanges between people. We will thus follow McLaren and Agyeman’s framing of sharing activity not just as an economic but also a social, cultural and political activity, resulting in

[a] sharing paradigm<sup>1</sup> [that] foregrounds ways of thinking based on sharing resources fairly, rather than ability to pay; treating resources and the environment as the common property of humankind; nurturing the collective commons of human culture and society; and stimulating human flourishing by establishing and enabling the expression of individual and collective capabilities. (McLaren and Agyeman 2015:9)

McLaren and Agyeman rely on Miller (2010) for their overview of solidarity economy activities as visualized in Figure 1. In this wheel, some of the most important arenas where new organizations have now firmly established themselves with their (for profit) sharing economy services, are conspicuously absent, especially in transportation and leisure, including vacation rentals. (Community gardening also has no clear place in the wheel.) They do, however, explicitly highlight the importance of collaboration and solidarity not just on the consumptive side of the economic cycle but also on the productive side, where Do-It-Yourself workshops, cooperatives and other collectives further contribute to “re-circularizing” the economy without an explicit aim of profit-extraction.

**Figure 1: The “Solidarity Economy” Wheel**



Source: Miller (2010:5), also see McLaren & Agyeman (2015:11)

## The Research Context: Premises and Guiding Questions

For various reasons, both the academic literature on and the practical examples of “sharing cities” are both still heavily biased towards the Global North. For example, in 2017, the list of participating sharing cities listed and mapped on the activists networking site *sharable.net* includes 35 North American (3 Canadian), 12 European, 4 Australian and

<sup>1</sup> We actually dislike the use of the term “paradigm” in this context (preferring using it in its stricter, Kuhnian sense), hence our use of the term “approach” in the title of my proposal.

only 1 African, 1 South American and only 2 Asian cities, one of which, Istanbul, is not in the Pacific Basin. The one sole Asian Pacific Basin city listed on *shareable*, Seoul, meanwhile, is generally considered *the* world's leading "sharing city," embracing the concept from the top down, with a mayor promoting humanistic-inspired acts of *jeong*.

Contrary to this reality, the social and environmental benefits of sharing are arguably potentially even more consequential in the much more resource-constrained, densely populated cities in the Global South. At the same time, "sharing" is likely to take on slightly different forms and emphases in contexts where informality still reigns and internet access is low.

Consequently, this project asks the following sets of questions:

1. How do scholars and practitioners currently define sharing? How are commercial and communal urban sharing activities distinguished from each other? Is the concept of the "sharing city" conceived in synch with or in opposition to the neoliberal, capitalistic city?
2. In how far is the current academic literature on "sharing cities" applicable to non-industrialized PacBasin countries in the Global South, and specifically Vietnam? That is, can we find academic contributions that use Vietnam or even Hanoi as their case study?
3. What concrete examples of "sharing city" approaches currently exist in Hanoi? How might these be classified (e.g. informal/sociocultural sharing vs. intermediated sharing)? How might these be classified within the "solidarity economy" wheel? Which discernable social & environmental benefits do people derive from sharing?

Our sense going into this initial investigation was that definitions might still be somewhat in flux and that it might at times be difficult to determine what constitutes a truly non-profit-seeking activity. We also expected that literature on (formalized) sharing activities in developing cities in the Global South would be much harder to find than on North American and European cities and that sharing city approaches in Hanoi could mainly be found and classified in the mobility/transportation, housing and work space sector.

## Literature Review

### Definitions of Sharing and Collaborative Consumption

In one of the early full manuscripts on collaborative consumption, Rachel Botsman (2010) assigned the practices of bartering, lending, renting, gifting and swapping to three broad categories, namely ‘product service systems’ (PSS, i.e. access to products or services without need for owning the underlying assets), ‘redistribution markets’ (RMs, i.e. re-allocation of goods) and ‘collaborative lifestyles’ (CLs, i.e. exchange of intangible assets).

While PSS’ would include any number of sharing companies, RMs would include both large commercial platforms such as Ebay.com and more grassroots networks such as Freecycle.com, and so-called CLs are centered around the sharing of, ostensibly, less tangible assets such as time and space. The latter distinction can get murky really quickly, with some folks including both multi-billion dollar companies like AirBnB and grassroots urban gardening sharing schemes in this category (e.g. Dlugosz 2015:17).

Codagnone and Martens (2016), meanwhile, clarify that the sharing economy has been variously referred to as “collaborative consumption,” “access-based consumption,” “the mesh,” and “connected consumption.” In a recent EU report, they then aptly summarized current debates by asserting that

[t]here has been some debate as to why people participate in the ‘sharing economy’ and whether these activities generate social capital and generalized trust. According to some critics of current developments, large companies such as Uber and Airbnb have adopted the values of the traditional community-based sharing movement to pursue economic self-interest. There has been much speculation about the socio-economic and environmental benefits produced by the ‘sharing’ platforms, and about their impact on labour rights and distributional issues. The regulatory debate has been polarised between the libertarian slogan ‘hacking the regulatory state’ and moderate proposals to introduce innovative and smart forms of regulation. Exchange among strangers – as opposed to local community-based exchange - is one of the salient characteristics of contemporary online ‘sharing economy’ platforms. Building trust to get both sides of a market on board has been a key challenge and driver of success, even for the biggest players.  
(Codagnone and Martens 2016a/b?:4)<sup>2</sup>

There is an important distinction in that with collaborative consumption, people coordinate the acquisition and distribution of a resource for a fee or other compensation whereas with “true” sharing, the focus is on temporary access rather than ownership, and there are usually no fees or compensation and, at least traditionally more limited use of digital platforms. Nevertheless there is no firm consensus on the definition of sharing and the various categories of sharing developed in the literature leave a lot of room for overlap. How should we categorize, for example, the sharing of food via platforms such as Leftoversaw or EatWithMe which are about the non-commercial recirculation of goods and an exchange of services to build social connections?

---

<sup>2</sup> Available online at: <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/327c/40f025fbd78df2ad8605ed5a76206b49ed25.pdf>

Matzler, Veider and Kathan (2014) remind us that there is an environmental argument for sharing economy: The more we share, the fewer of Earth's resources will be consumed, making it an efficient and sustainable mode of consumption. This is what is commonly referred to the 'circular economy.' However, they correctly assert, the recent proliferation of sharing does not stem from ecological awareness or ideological motivations but is more self-interested. Consumers prefer the lower costs that the leading companies in the sharing economy tend to provide. For example, Ikea launched used furniture marketplace to support its environmentally friendly ethos and entice customers serious about environmental stewardship, while allowing selling customers to create space in their homes for new Ikea items.

In 2013, Rachel Botsman published a self-reflective article in *Fast Company* musing how quickly the whole sharing economy and its related scholarship had evolved since her publication of her 2010 book, while at the same time returning to the theme that "The Sharing Economic lacks a shared definition" (Botsman 2013). She then outlines the following four definitions:

*Collaborative economy*: an economy built on distributed networks of connected individuals and communities versus centralized institutions, transforming how we can produce, consume, finance, and learn.

*Collaborative consumption*: an economic model based on sharing, swapping, trading or renting products and services, enabling access over ownership. It is reinventing not just what we consume but how we consume.

*Sharing economy*: An economic model based on sharing underutilized asset from spaces to skills to stuff for monetary or non-monetary benefits. It is currently largely talked about in relation to P2P marketplaces but equal opportunity lies in the B2C models.

*Peer economy*: Person-to-person marketplaces that facilitate the sharing and direct trade of assets built on peer trust.

A common theme is the notion of "distributed power" away from big institutions to distributed networks of individuals and communities and from passive consumers to active and connected creators, collaborators, producers. In that sense, technological innovation, shifting values, new economic realities and environmental pressures can be seen as "disruptive drivers" and new innovative and efficient asset utilization can be accomplished via new technologies and new social, mobile and location-based technologies.

Also note how the fourfold definition above is broadly aligned with Schor's (2015) fourfold categorization of sharing economy activities into

- 1) the recirculation of goods,
- 2) the increased utilization of durable assets,

- 3) the exchange of services and
- 4) the sharing of productive assets.

The first category would include the early pioneer sharing sites eBay and Craigslist while the second includes many vehicle sharing and lodging companies. The third category has its origins in time banking schemes which has since graduated to monetized schemes such as TaskRabbit. Lastly, the fourth category “consists of efforts focused on sharing assets or space in order to enable **production**, rather than consumption.” (Schor 2015:2, emphasis added). The most obvious historic examples are cooperatives but Schor also explicitly mentions makerspaces which provide shared tools or hackerspaces which provide shared computers, printers, software and digital assets, along with other co-working spaces in this category – and these are indeed an important set of shared spaces that we will return to in our case study research.

Meanwhile, there is another important three-part division of “sharers” into

- 1) Non-profits (food sharing, seed banks, tool library...) to serve needs at a community scale vs For-profit (commercial profits)
- 2) Non-profits and P2P (peer to peer) structures that can be democratically organized
- 3) P2P (exchanging or trading) or B2P (business to peer) to maximize revenue per transaction as of traditional businesses.

Obvious reasons for sharing are lower cost, green and reduce carbon footprints, social connections, a commitment to social transformation, thus linking the impetus for sharing directly to carbon emission reduction, information transparency and genuine democracy while frequent problems associated with sharing relate to the fact that sharing networks often reproduce class, gender and racial biases as well as social hierarchies and that they can, possibly, exploit laborers (for-profit) and even break (labor and other) laws.

Meanwhile, besides concerns over ecological, societal and developmental impacts, Hamari, Sjöklint, and Ukkonen (2015) also note that there is simple enjoyment in sharing.

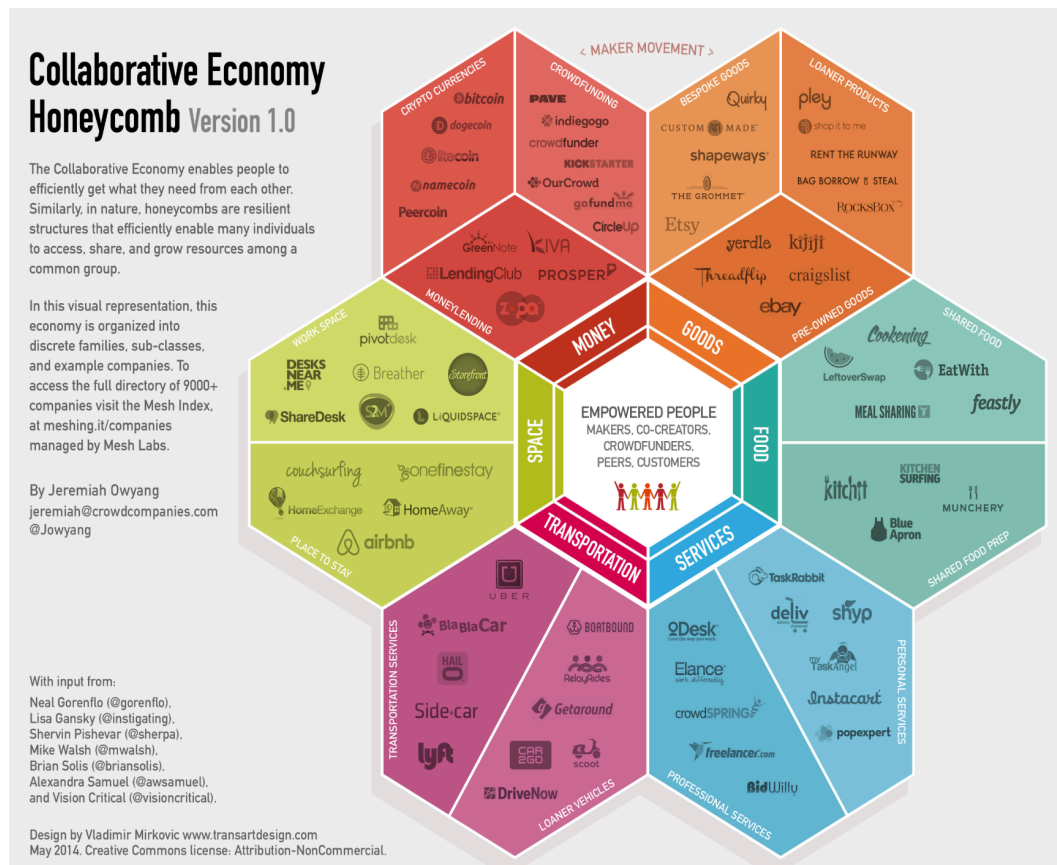
Another important distinction between “sharing in” and “sharing out” is provided by Belk (2014). Whereas “sharing” is a nonreciprocal pro-social behavior, *sharing in* is when sharing is an inclusive act that is likely to make the recipient a part of a pseudo-family and our aggregate extended self (e.g. sharing with family, close kin and friends) and *sharing out* is considered an act of dividing something between relative strangers or when it is intended as a one-time act such as providing someone with spare change, directions or the time of day. This leads to a further distinction between *demand sharing* when we fulfill the needs asked by someone and *open sharing*, sharing simply openly with others.

Sharing platforms are often credited with being new ways to increase trust and collaboration between strangers and to (re-)enhance social contacts to the point where sharing and collaborations ends up (re-)creating both virtual and actual local communities that had otherwise been lost or were difficult to sustain in fragmented, individualistic post-industrial urban societies (Botsman & Rogers 2010, Agyeman and McLaren 2013)

In seeking to categorize the “what” of sharing, Jeremiah Owyang came up with the often cited “Collaborative Economy Honeycomb” framework whose 1.0 version classified sharing start-ups into just six main classifications, namely money, goods, food, services, transportation, space. Interestingly, by 2016, the 3.0 version of his honeycomb had now ballooned into a sixteen-field version that successfully kept track of many new sharing app companies and websites while, more of less by design, continuously turning a blind eye to the many also ballooning collaborative initiatives dealing, mainly, with shared goods, services and spaces seeking to set themselves apart from the monetized urban economy.

So despite its complexity, the honeycomb makes no mention of gifting sites such as the “Buy Nothing” Facebook groups now prevalent across many US communities (<https://buynothingproject.org/>) or urban /community garden share sites such as Karsten Roth’s Datschlandia site (<https://www.datschlandia.de/english/>).

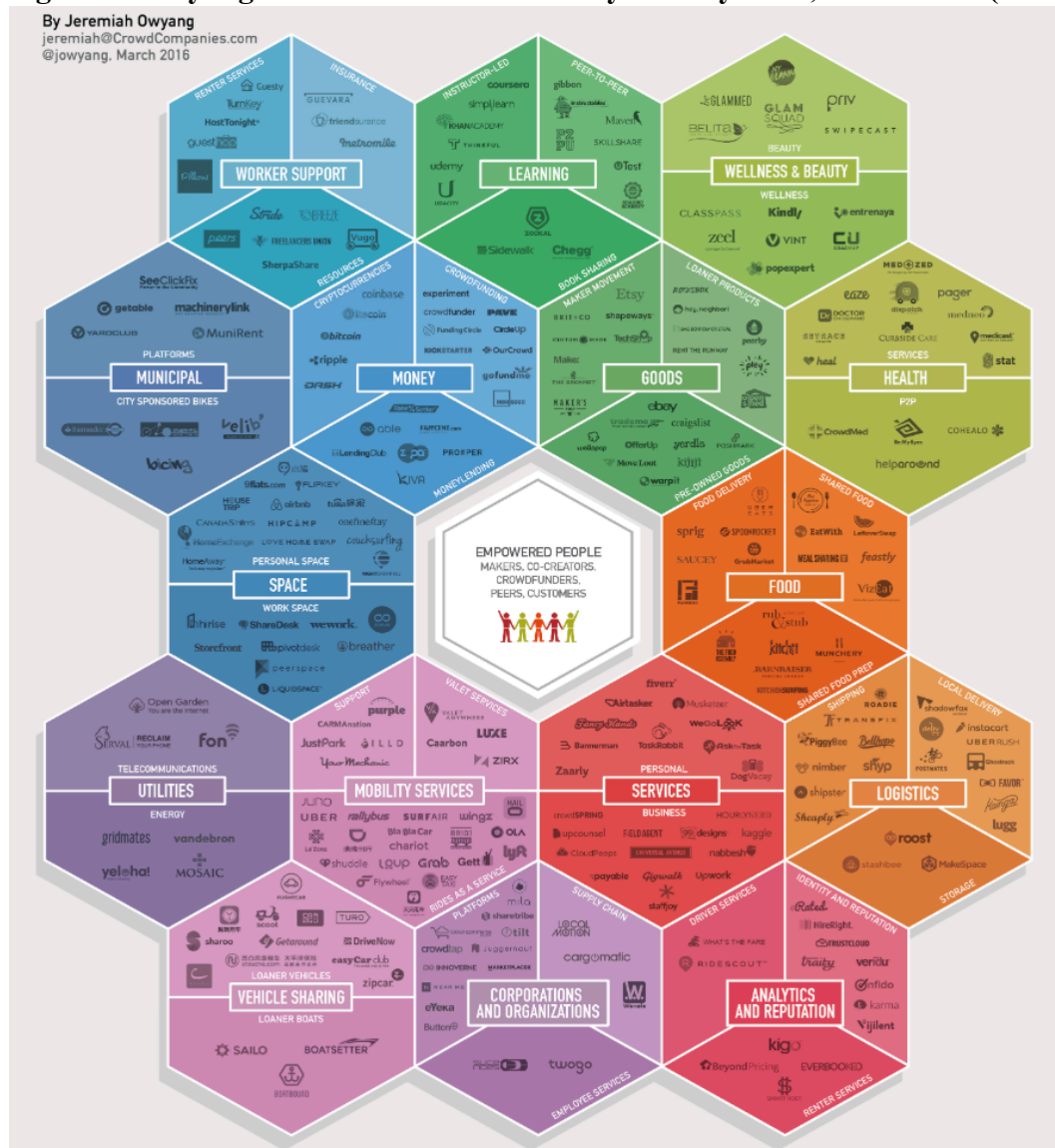
**Figure 1: Owyang’s “Collaborative Economy” Honeycomb, Version 1.0 (2014)**



Source: [http://www.web-strategist.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/honeycomb\\_collab\\_econ.jpg](http://www.web-strategist.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/honeycomb_collab_econ.jpg)



**Figure 2: Owyang's “Collaborative Economy” Honeycomb, Version 3.0 (2016)**



Source: [http://www.web-strategist.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Honeycomb3\\_highres.jpg](http://www.web-strategist.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Honeycomb3_highres.jpg)

A more useful and more inclusive overview summarizing the “what” of sharing is provided by Agyeman, McLaren and Schaefer-Borrego (2013:6) when they present a “sharing spectrum”, presented in table 1, that presents a scale of increasingly tangible items that can be shared, moving from materials, products, and services to “well-being” and capabilities.

**Table 1: The Sharing Spectrum**

What is being shared	Concept	Examples	Participants (typically)
Material <i>tangible</i>	Recovery and recycling	Glass and paper banks, scrapyards	Many suppliers, few users
Product	Redistribution markets	Flea markets, charity shops, freecycle	Single provider to single user
Service	Product service systems	Zipcar, Netflix, fashion and toy rental, libraries	Single provider to many users
Wellbeing	Collaborative lifestyles	Errand networks, peer to peer travel (eg AirBnB)	Many single providers to many single users (P2P)
Capability <i>intangible</i>	Collective commons	The internet, safe streets, participative politics	Collective providers to collective users

Source: Agyeman, McLaren and Schaefer-Borrego (2013:6)

It should be noted that sharing habits are not the same across all cultures. Western children will seek equal distribution of resources by early elementary age, yet they tend not to exhibit the same level of altruism, and later, concern with reciprocity as children in Eastern cultures which place higher emphasis on collectivity (Belk 2007, Tomasello et al. 2008). Individualistic and consumerist behavior and an increasing emphasis on individual self-reliance and “bowling alone” (Ivanova 2007, Putnam 2000) has been associated with late capitalism, along with a tendency of over-privatization that may now have reached its breaking point. In this context, wealth, and a concurrent over-accumulation of private assets, thus reduces sharing, and in fact sharing capability. According to this view, poorer, more resource constrained community members are likely to have more intense and more meaningful social contacts with their neighbors with whom they may have an incentive to share resources (Volkner and Flap 2007, Crocker and Linden 1998). Parallel to this, many observers remind us that many previously shared spaces in the public realm have become increasingly privatized – so while a community pool in a gated community may still constitute a version of a shared space, it is certainly a space that has been removed from the public commons. In the realm of the urban, public access is thus an important criterion to uphold against the “neoliberal onslaught” that brought about a “trenchant reregulation and redaction of public space” (Low and Smith 2006:1).

## Sharing Cities

Sharing is a cultural act that has happened throughout history through act of gift exchange or commodity exchange. And cities are of course the original market places for commodities exchanges and for services as well as for the exchange of cultural and political ideas. As an in-home activity among members of a family or clan, sharing tends to be taken for granted (Cohen, Boyd and Pablo Munoz, 2016). Sharing today is also driven by a convergence of numerous factors including the global economic recession, growing environmental consciousness and the growing ubiquity of information communication

technologies (ICTs). The Sharing Cities Network, launched by Sharable in 2013, counts more than 50 cities on six continents. As Sharp (2018:1-2) explains

This transnational network was created to inspire community advocates to self-organise across dozens of local nodes and run MapJams (asset mapping) and ShareFests (sharing festivals) to make community assets more visible, help convene local actors, offer policy solutions to local governments and re-frame the sharing economy's potential to drive transformational urban change (Johnson 2013). At the same time "sharing cities" ... have gained formal support from various municipal governments including Seoul ... (Johnson 2014) and Amsterdam (Miller 2015) through policies and programs that leverage shared assets, infrastructure and civic participation to create economic and social inclusion. ...The Sharing Cities Network has developed a narrative of the sharing economy as a transformational global movement founded on inclusive sharing and support for the urban commons to address social justice, equity and sustainability.

Davidson and Infranca (2016) characterize the sharing economy as an urban phenomenon and as "a solution to crowded urban areas" where "the rise of companies like Uber and Airbnb represents a reaction to urban regulatory regimes that exacerbate the frictions of urban life" (p.219). Sanyal and Ferreri (2018:2) note that cities have become "key sites for the development of digitally mediated sharing, and particularly of short-term letting which straddles the divide between housing and hospitality." Not surprisingly, a number of authors have recently concentrated on spelling out the consequences of urban sharing for planning and governance (also see Hult and Bradley 2017). Examples of regulatory areas that need adapting to the sharing economy and its associated new technologies are zoning, building code inspections, local transportation, licensing as well as police reports, property tax records, school district data etc. There are also wider implications for business operations (costs to market entry may be lowered by sharing schemes) and human interaction (short-term visitors may be enticed by the availability of short-term rentals). This, in turn, can lead to physical transformations of entire neighborhoods, leading to, for example, an excessive touristification of historic neighborhoods and the displacement of lower-income minority residents. At the same time, platforms such as AirBnB and others have been cagey about sharing their listing data to improve accountability.

When Agyeman, McLaren and Schaefer-Borrego (2013:1) first outlined their "Sharing Cities" Brief for *Friends of the Earth*, they used "a significantly broader conception of sharing that includes multiple dimensions," namely "sharing 'things' ... cars, tools, books etc, sharing services ... premises, places to sleep, etc., and sharing activities [such as ...] political activity [and] [...] leisure" as well as "sharing between private individuals, and collective provision of resources and services for sharing: e.g. green space, sanitation, city bikes, child care." Additionally, they recognized that sharing could be "material or virtual, rivalrous or non-rivalrous, of consumption (e.g. digital music) or production (e.g. community gardens) and either simultaneous (e.g. green space) or sequential (e.g. recycling material)."

**Table 2: The broad territory of (urban) sharing**

	Things	Services	Experiences
<b>Individual</b>	Swapping, bartering	Ride sharing, AirBnB	Skill sharing
<b>Collective</b>	Car clubs, tool banks	Child care, Credit Unions, time banks	Sports clubs, social media
<b>Public</b>	Libraries, Freecycling	Health services, public transit	Politics, public space

Source: Agyeman, McLaren and Schaefer-Borrego (2013:2), available online at [https://friendsoftheearth.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/agyeman\\_sharing\\_cities.pdf](https://friendsoftheearth.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/agyeman_sharing_cities.pdf)

We thus end up with a table that instantly includes collaborative and collective activities that are not inherently profit-seeking but instead primarily aimed at community-building.

Agyeman, McLaren and Schaefer-Borrego (2013:6-) also identify four different dimensions which they use to define the Collective Commons in the city, namely:

*Exchange of Goods and Services.* This includes traditional collective and collaborative activities, such as banking but of course also car, bike or tool sharing and some aspects of re-emerging urban food systems.

*Public Realm.* Cities encourage physical clustering and interaction as well as the sharing of ideas as part of cultural events. Then there is also the political reclaiming of public spaces as part of a resistance against (perceived) unjust power dynamics, such the Occupy Movement which spread from Zuccotti Park in New York City's Wall Street district to all corners of the globe or the assemblies at Cairo's Tahrir Square in 2011 and in Istanbul's Gezi Park in 2013.

*Infrastructure.* Urban infrastructures are a mix of public and private assets, including not just streets and power grids but complex infrastructures for education, childcare, healthcare, retail and financial services.

*Environmental Resources.* Resources such as water and air are classically understood to be part of the global commons, even though, they, too have been increasingly "owned" i.e. privatized. Agyeman, McLaren and Schaefer-Borrego (2013:6) make special mention of the issue of land sharing of which high-rises and complete (multi-purpose) streets are particularly efficient examples. They do not make particular mention of Community Land Trusts (CLTs) although they obviously come to mind here. Recovery and recycling of resources can of course also happen in many smaller dimensions.

Dlugosz (2014:III) has characterized the sharing city as a concept that recently emerged and "combines the benefits of [the] Sharing Economy and Collaborative Consumption with urban development and community building."

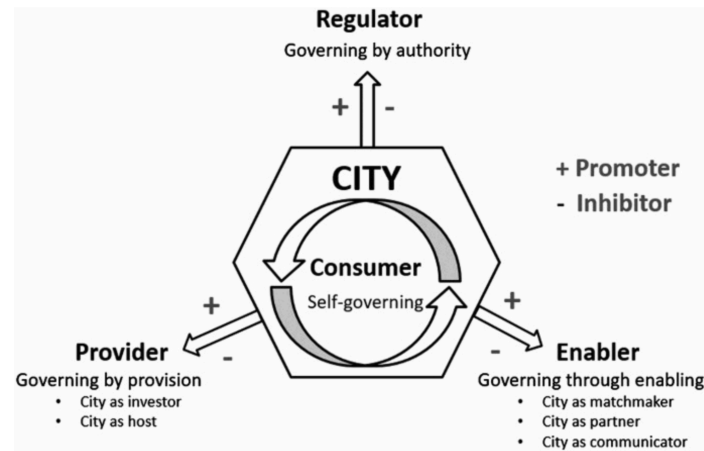
## Sharing, Smart Cities, and Urban Governance

In the last few years, we have also witnessed the explosion of a new wave of academic literature looking at the urban governance dimensions of sharing, often somewhat conflating “sharing city” approaches with “smart city” approaches.

Definitions for what a “smart city” is are even less clear cut than those for those for the “sharing city” – although the term is widely used in both scholarly and journalistic circles. The Guardian newspaper, for example, has an entire tab dedicated to ‘smart cities’ at <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/smart-cities>. In the dismissive words of Bruce Sterling (2018), writing in *The Atlantic*, “[t]he term ‘smart city’ is interesting yet not important, because nobody defines it. ‘Smart’ is a snazzy political label used by a modern alliance of leftist urbanites and tech industrialists.” While it is true that the term is often misused, scholars and promoters of the concept would generally agree with the assertion that the concept implies the use of “scalable solutions that take advantage of information and communications technology (ICT) to increase efficiencies, reduce costs, and enhance quality of life” (Zvolska 2018:2). A 2014 European Parliament report provides a working definition of a smart city as “a city seeking to address public issues via ICT-based solutions on the basis of a multi-stakeholder, municipally based partnership.” (EP 2014:9). Höjer and Wangel (2015, in Zvolska 2018:2) similarly associate smart city approaches with the utilization of solutions based on ICT that increase efficiencies and bring together public actors, citizens and private companies. Promoters are hoping that the use of modern internet-based tech solutions, including sharing apps, will somehow lead to a digitally-enhanced, smartly-resourced green urbanism. Critics correctly ask who this “smart city” is for and remind us that there is still a significant digital gap, especially in cities of the Global South, and that internet-omnipresence keeps children away from nature. A digitally enhanced city is also typically one that hands informational and decision-making power over to internet firms, meaning that, contrary to the ideal of a truly shared and collaborative city, “smart” cities in fact represent a corporatization and entrepreneurialization of the urban, even – or especially so - if urban administrations forge public-private partnerships with such firms. Krivy (2016) even argues that the smart city is really a Deleuzian urban embodiment of the society of control that turns citizens into “sensing nodes” (Krivy 2016).

We can thus see that the “smart city,” similarly to assessments about the “sharing city,” is fraught with contradictions and that much indeed depends on how individual cities define and shape their “smart city” agendas and whether officials are indeed able to leverage modern ICTs to the direct benefit of all of their citizens. Looking at Berlin and London as case studies, Zvolska et al. (2018) develop a useful fourfold typology seeing cities as regulators, enablers, providers but also as consumers of sharing models, e.g. when they adopt urban sharing models in their procurement. In the end, they find that “both cities indirectly support urban sharing through smart agenda programmes, which aim to facilitate ICT-enabled technical innovation and emergence of start-ups” yet that “programmes, strategies, support schemes and regulations aimed directly at urban sharing initiatives are few” (Zvolska 2018:1).

**Figure 3: Roles and modes of municipal governance**  
 (Zvolska et al. 2018, after Bulkeley and Kern 2006, Bulkeley, H., and K. Kern. 2006.



Source: Zvolska et al. (2018:4) <https://doi.org/10.1080/13549839.2018.1463978>

In a recent contribution in *Urban Studies*, Sanyal and Ferreri (2018) also use London as a case study to trace how sharing platforms like AirBnB force local governments to update their existing regulations, which in the British capital ultimately resulted in a deregulation of short-term letting (the same is true of Berlin as of May 2018). They also document local councils' struggles "to balance corporate interests with public good" around the enforcement of these new regulations, ultimately concluding that "the schism between regulation and enforcement is opening up new digitally mediated spaces of informal practices in cities" (ibid., p.2).

Sharp (2018:2) also puts it succinctly when he notes that

Airbnb claims to "democratise capitalism" to support the "middle class" in its story of the sharing economy and uses this to mobilise hosts to influence urban regulatory regimes amidst a growing backlash against commercial home sharing's impact on housing affordability (van der Zee 2016), racial discrimination and "corporate nullification" or intentional violation of the law (Pasquale and Vaidhyathan 2015) arising from its business practices.

These recent contributions ultimately echo Slee's (2015:26) quotable statement that "the Sharing Economy is a movement: it is a movement for deregulation."

## Sharing the Urban Commons

There are several legal scholars that have seized upon the idea of “urban commoning” as an opportunity to “re-collaborize” public institutions and functions. For example, in a paper on “governing the urban commons,” Iaione (2015:174) asks the following:

In the “sharing”, “peer to peer” “collaborative” age, there might be space for a new design of public institutions? Can urban assets and resources or the city as a whole be transformed into collaborative ecosystems that enable collective action for the commons?

The starting point of the discussion is similar to that of the above scholars: the city is seen as the original and the ultimate shared space, as the essence of a local commons whose public and shared value and access is in need of being re-evaluated. Public spaces and public services, including roads and public transit systems, are all re-conceived as “common goods” that must be adequately shared by all citizens:

In other terms, object and subject cannot be separated when you speak about common goods. You don’t have a common good, you share in common good. You cannot expect to “have” a square, a public garden, a park, you can only aspire to “be” active part of an urban ecosystem. [...] [A] square is not a common good in and of itself only because it is a simple urban space, but it becomes a common good given its nature as «place for social access and for existential exchange». It is not possible to separate the physical features of an urban space considered as a common good from social ones. And so it would not be possible to exclude certain groups of people from an urban space that is subject to the principle of universal access, as a common good. (ibid.)

This sounds very nice in principle but what the author then proposes in order to improve “civic care” for public spaces is a curious mix of advocating for legal walls for street art and graffiti for local youth, the expansion of public-civic partnerships, including Business Improvement Districts - whose agents are notorious for harassing and excluding ‘undesirable individuals’ such as homeless populations from spaces in their areas - as well as improved “habits of subsidiarity” and an expansion of internet 2.0 type applications aimed at promoting “wiki-cracy,” “open government” and “we-gov” of the type that “the Obama administration in the USA and the Cameron administration in the United Kingdom [practiced] to gain and maintain the confidence of citizens” (Iaione 2015:200). Again, these are nice information- and power-sharing concepts in principle, yet we now of course live in an era where the current US administration is actively engaged in censoring scientific information about global commons (notably climate change) on its official websites, instead promoting bizarre propaganda videos (Barron 2018, Selk 2018).

In a more recent piece co-authored with U.S. legal scholar Sheila Foster, Iaione is then more careful to acknowledge the normative and regulatory challenges of “commoning.” Together, they offer this insightful summary:

The openness of cities, and the urban agglomeration that results, is a double-edged sword for many urban communities. Cities are being shaped and reshaped to meet simultaneously the increasing demands of rapid urbanization and, as in the case of struggling cities, the need to more strategically attract new urban dwellers ... capable of revitalizing urban life. In addition to the more traditional

concerns about congestion and rivalry, the openness of cities also brings with it the threat of dispossession and displacement from places of deep attachment and meaning for residents. (Foster and Iaione 2016:301)

This leads us, then, to our final sections in our literature review, where we return to the crucial issue of solidarity versus individuality as well as the idea of the (urban) public good.

### **Solidarity versus Sharing**

The overall idea of solidarity and of an entire “Social and Solidarity Economics” (SSE) in opposition to current neoliberal market economics is a much broader concept than sharing, of course, even under a broadened Agyeman-type vision of sharing. And SSE has its own distinct academic literature that is to some extent separate from the smart city/urban governance literature reviewed above. Numerous scholars and activists in the Global North and South propose different ways of establishing exchange value, constituting, as Ould Ahmed (2015:425) states, “an implicit denunciation of the strictly economic approach to trade that considers the prices of goods to be simply the result of competition (in many cases unfair) between national economies, the outcome of which is the progressive marginalization of the poorer economies, with working and living conditions being pressed downwards in the process of readjustment.” Alternatively, NGOs and even certain local authorities strive for a “new model of economic valorization” where production is based on fair prices that take ethical, social environmental and public health criteria into account and organize wage-labor relationships in new ways and where consumption moves from a pure economic issue to being “a civic act opening up an area of public interest” (ibid.).

Concrete examples of alternative valorization systems are community currency systems such as the Local Exchange Trading Systems (LETSystems) most prominent in Canada and the United Kingdom, the time banks found in various European countries or Argentinian barter clubs. Ould Ahmed (2015:426) also names “the Ithaca Hour in the United States, the Regiogeld and the Chiemgauer in Germany, the community development banks in Brazil, the SOL in France, the Brixton pound and the Bristol pound in the UK, the WIRtype systems in Switzerland and the Accorderies in Quebec and in France” but gives no examples from developing Asia.

What is interesting to note here is that there is a distinctly separate, about three-decades old literature on the SSE and the so-called in the ‘economía popular’ (popular economy) in French and Spanish-speaking academic circles that only later spread to the UK, the US and other English-speaking countries after the 2001 World Social Forum (WSF) in Porto Alegre, with additional movements spreading to Africa and Asia. Miller (2010) is providing a more detailed history of the emergence of these movements and their connections. Ould Ahmed points out that the whopping ~450 page English-language resource book on the SSE put together by Allart, Davidson and Matthaei (2008) after the WSF does not seem to be based on a dialogue with the French, Spanish and Portuguese-language movements and academics although by then, an international conference on SSE had been held in Dakar, Senegal in 2005 and the first Asian Forum on the Solidarity



Economy held in Manila in 2007 had marked the birth of the Asian Alliance for Solidarity Economy (Miller 2010:2).

Different regional and national movements are obviously still colored by their historical, geographical, sociocultural and political contexts. On the other hand, the website for the international RIPESS network (named after the Spanish/French acronyms for Intercontinental Network for the Promotion of the Social Solidarity Economy) aims to give a global overview of initiatives, with distinct tabs for movements in all six continental regions (in Africa & Middle East, Europe, North America, Latin America & the Caribbean, Africa, and Oceania). When browsing the site it quickly becomes clear that Vietnamese scholars and activists do not have a strong presence within this network (see <http://www.ripest.org/continental-networks/asia/?lang=en>).

## **Summing Up**

The sharing economy literature is still rapidly evolving, with a flood of new publications tracing the impact of various sharing economy apps and companies. Entire urban scholar careers are now made by doing research on AirBnB and other home sharing companies and the upheaval they cause in certain highly desirable neighborhoods in major cities around the globe, mostly criticizing this type of for-profit sharing as yet another permutation of the neoliberal city heading towards additional deregulation and squeezing long-term low-income residents out of affordable options for finding their private and public spaces in the city. Scholars such as Agyeman and others, meanwhile, continue to spread optimism that sharing can be beneficial and sustainable while yet other communities of scholars and activists lump sharing into a larger set of anti-capitalist stances designed to move us towards a more compassionate and more equitable ‘solidarity economy’ not dominated by profit-seeking behavior. In the end, when returning to the initial question about how scholars and practitioners currently define sharing, it is clear that the term “sharing” is indeed still marred by “contrasting and contradictory framings” oscillating between being a “pathway to sustainability or a nightmarish form of neoliberal capitalism” (Martin 2016). Commercial and communal urban sharing is not always clearly distinguished, and to some degree, different scholarly communities who view sharing as being in synch with neoliberalism or in opposition to it simply exist side-by-side.

In terms of the current literature’s applicability to less industrialized countries in the Global South, we find that there is a solid tradition of a more Marxist-inspired solidarity economy literature that has drawn inspiration from multiple iterations of World Social Forums but that even here, specific contributions on Vietnam are hard to find. Furthermore, as expected, fast emerging new research on collaborative economy organizations is concentrated around case studies in North America and Europe, with Seoul typically being the major Asian city featured as a key local for collaborative, smart city initiatives.

## Urban Sharing and Collaborating in Southeast Asia: The Case of Vietnam

Although we initially intended to not focus as much on profit-oriented sharing companies and initiatives, we found that there is no strong (English-language) online presence of more solidarity-, non-profit-oriented organizations and networks for Vietnam, and our ability to do in-country surveying was very limited for this initial pilot research. Consequently, we initially resorted to assembling an overview of sharing economy sectors in Vietnam following Owyang's collaborative economy honeycomb. The research was mainly based on internet research and, whenever appropriate, Vietnamese-language sites were translated into English.

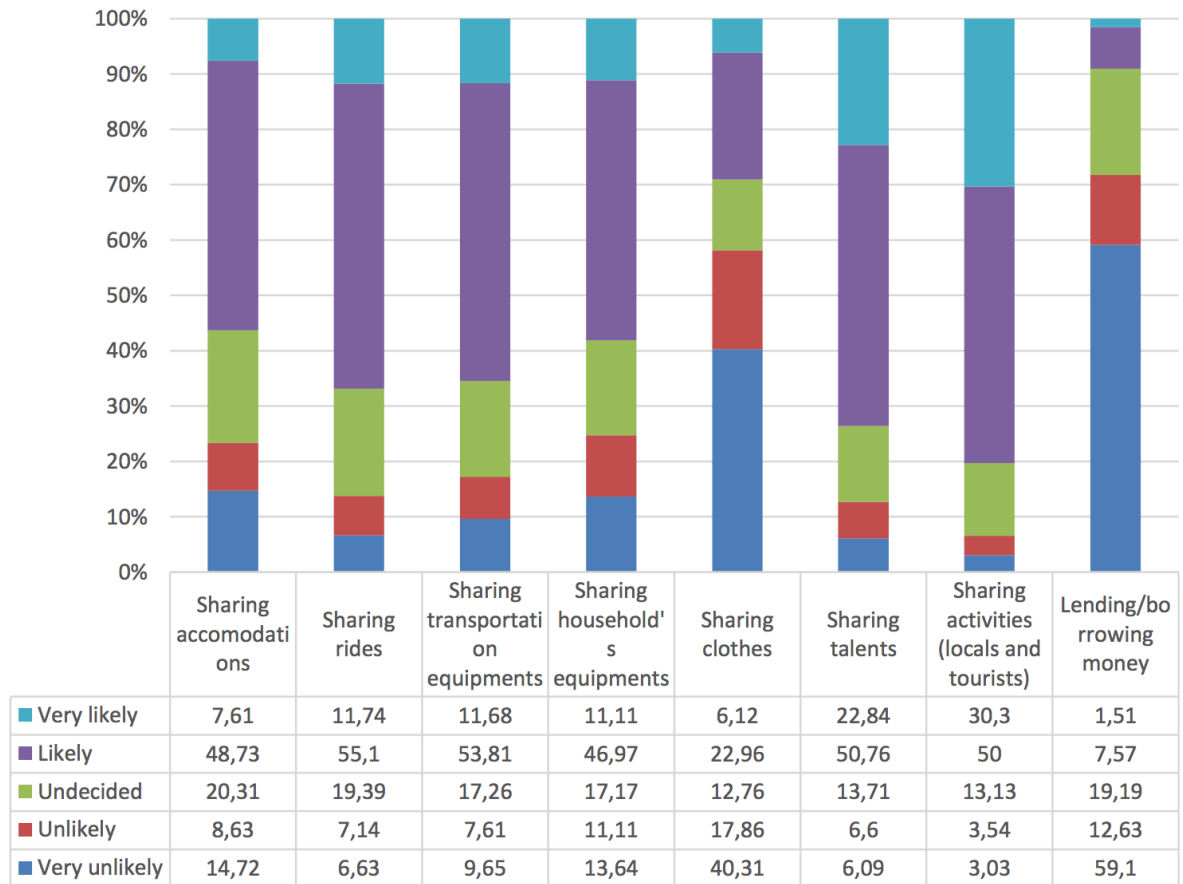
We also surveyed the academic sharing / collaborative / solidarity economy literature for specific case study contributions on Vietnam, and more specifically Hanoi, but mostly came up empty. One of the few available recent academic contributions comes from Bao Dung (2015) who wrote an undergraduate thesis for the Lahti University of Applied Sciences discussing the challenges sharing companies might face in entering the Vietnamese market. As part of her primary research, she was able to distribute a survey to residents in Ho Chi Min City and collect 206 valid responses regarding various aspects of the sharing economy. It should be noted, however, that while the sample size was relatively balanced by gender, about half of the respondents were between 18 and 25 years old, compared to Vietnam's general population with only 16% being between 15 and 24 years old (see [https://www.indexmundi.com/vietnam/age\\_structure.html](https://www.indexmundi.com/vietnam/age_structure.html)). Some of her conclusions are as follows:

A little more than half of the respondents say they have heard of one or some of [the main sharing companies present in Vietnam such as] Airbnb, Uber, WithLocals, Zaarly, TravelMob, I Like Local, Triip.me, TaskRabbit, RelayRides, Bla Bla Car, Lyft while nearly 40 percent are unaware of those companies and slightly more than 10 percent have already used the services offered by those companies. ... The concept of sharing economy is almost unknown with 80 percent of respondents [sic] answer[ing] that they have never heard of the term. ... Paying less for a product or service and making profits from own assets are the two most appealing characters of the sharing economy model. ... Sharing activities between locals and travelers are the most favored by the respondents ... among many other common types of service in the sharing economy ... [but] [t]rust is the main problem, followed by the unwillingness [sic] to give up their privacy and the worries of quality of services. ... Safety, legal and tax issues concern the respondents.  
[Bao Dung 2015:65-66]

One particularly interesting survey question was with regard to respondents' likelihood to use different types of sharing companies. Interestingly, the respondents were first asked "whether they would trust a stranger in their cars, in their houses or to use their things" and only 6 percent (n=13) of total respondents said that they would while 23 percent (n=47) said they would definitely not (Bao Dung 2015:61). However, the author then described the current services offered by various sharing companies in Ho Chi Minh City and asked the respondents to rate how likely they will use these services.

Figure 4 provides an overview of responses, indicating that while over 80% said they were likely or very likely to share activities with both locals and tourists and solid majorities were also likely to share talents, accommodations, rides, transport and household equipment, only about a third were likely to share clothes and less than ten percent were likely to use sharing companies for lending or borrowing money.

**Figure 4: Likelihood of Residents in Ho Chi Minh City to Use Different Sharing Company Services**

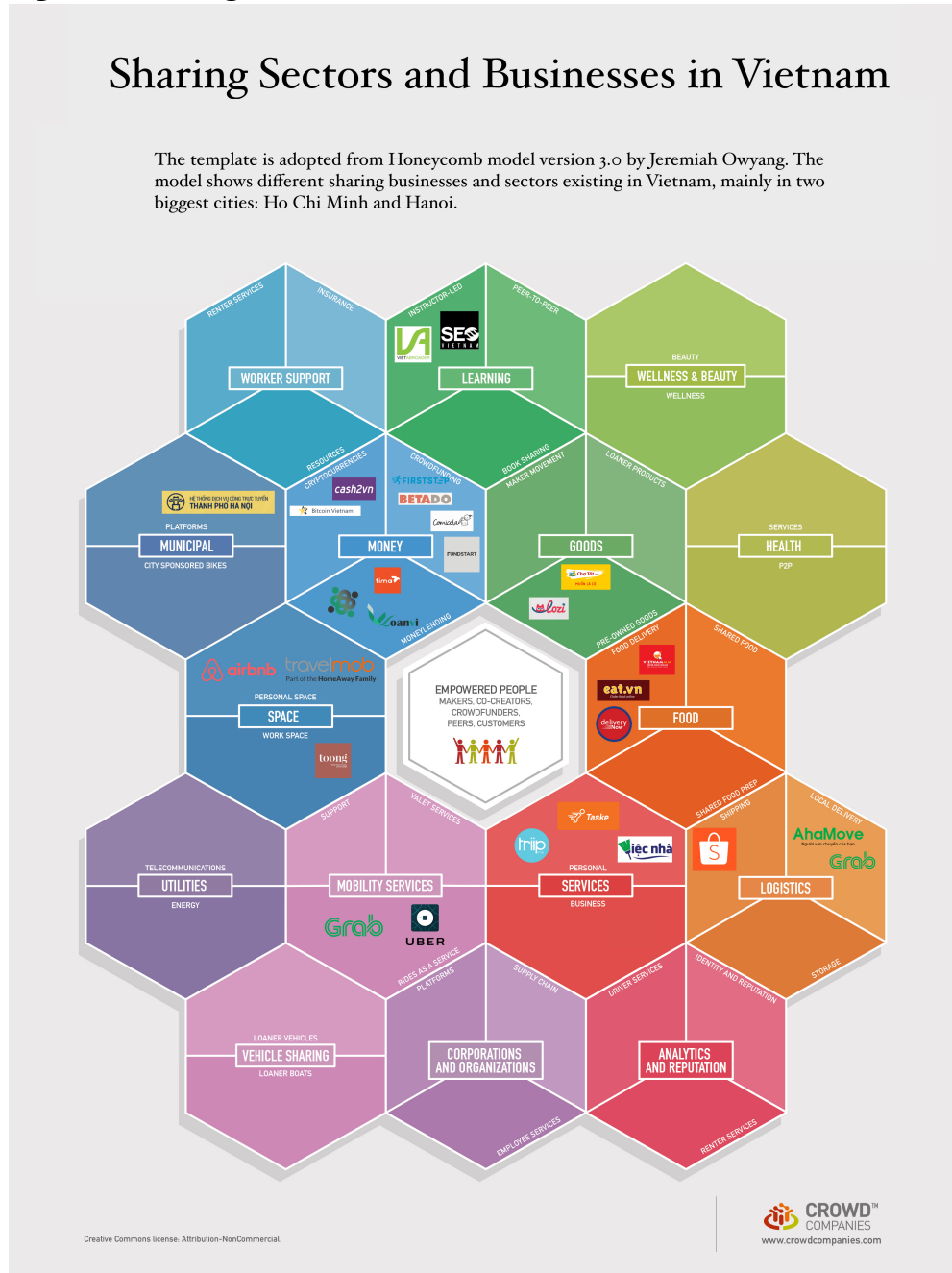


Source: Bao Dung 2015:62

## General Overview of Sharing Economy Sectors in Vietnam

Figure 5 provides an overview of sharing sector businesses in Vietnam. The section below goes through the various categories in turn. It is not a fully comprehensive list but provides a snapshot of some of the main sharing companies currently in business in the country.

**Figure 5: Sharing Sectors and Businesses in Vietnam**



Source: Authors, after Owyang (2016)

## Money

*Crowdfunding.* Crowdfunding is not as popular in Vietnam as it is in the West. As two local Vietnamese websites summarize in 2016:

Crowdfunding in Vietnam is not popular. Because of the cultural differences between the East and the West, the views on crowdfunding are very different. In Vietnam, not many people are ready to share their ideas openly or ask for funds, as they are scared to receive criticism, not support. Particularly, in a working environment with a strong focus on relationships in Vietnam, donating to help a stranger online is not easy. Moreover, the limitation of online transaction and a lack of governmental regulations on crowdfunding are great challenges. However, many crowdfunding websites (FirstStep, Comicola, Fundstart, Charity Map, FundingVN, etc.) have emerged and received strong support from the Vietnamese community. Each platform has its own unique strength. (Accessed at and translated from <https://news.firststep.vn/crowdfunding-o-viet-nam-thuc-trang-va-buoc-tien/>).

Many Vietnamese people believe that crowdfunding is a matter of time and trust. The reason why people do not support such platforms is because not many people know about this. People can't support what they don't know. However, with the advance of online transactions in Vietnam, people will gradually get used to the concept. (Accessed at and translated from: <http://oivietnam.com/2016/04/15341/>).

**Firststep** was founded in 2014. It is a Vietnamese reward-based crowdfunding platform “assisting projects or start-up companies which benefit the society on any aspect (charity, entertainment, games, programs, agriculture, etc.) in raising funds.” If the project is successful, donators will receive the gifts in accordance with the amount of money they donate. It uses virtual wallet/electronic payment methods in a “transparent, flexible and manageable way” and it claims to have successfully raised funds for many projects. **Betado** is another Vietnamese crowdfunding platform founded in 2015 that “aims to help projects bring innovative products to the Vietnamese market” while **Comicola** constitutes “a successful and trustworthy crowdfunding website for comics” and its co-founder Hoang Anh Tuan, stresses that among the three success criteria of “community, commercial viability and a harmonious startup ecosystem” the former is of “utmost importance.” Finally, **Fundstart** was organized in 2015 supporting “people with creative ideas and help[ing] them raise funds from the community. It helps small to big projects in different fields including art, design, music, games, etc.” (Fintechnews 2016)

## *Cryptocurrencies*

**Cash2vn** is a resource of Bitcoin Vietnam Company. It enables users to buy and sell Bitcoin in a secure manner. **Bitcoin Vietnam** is the first Bitcoin exchange market in Vietnam and was approved legally by the government to operate. It provides many bitcoin-related products and services such as remittance solution Cash2VN, and trading platform VTBC. Bitcoin is a platform that involves many risks. No legal departments hold responsibilities for the failure of any Bitcoin transactions. In Vietnam, Bitcoin is still illegal. The Vietnamese market is still based on legal paperwork and governmental regulations on competition. Demands of the new generations and the progress of

technologies do not stop, so many sharing platforms will still join the market. This poses a great challenge to the Vietnamese government.

#### *Money lending:*

**Tima** was first operated in 2015 and is a peer-to-peer money lending platform. Consumers can register an online loan and will receive the amount once it is approved.

**Huydong.com** is the first peer to peer financial model in Vietnam. IT connects investors and consumers without the need for banking services. According to the World Bank, in Vietnam, 69% of the Vietnamese population have yet to get access to banking services. Meanwhile, 53 million workers have difficulties in calling for financial funds in Vietnam. Therefore, HuyDong creates a new future for self-investment. They still require a small interest.

**LoanVi** was founded in 2015 and is a peer-to-peer money-lending online market for personal loans in Vietnam. It aims to provide simple and transparent transitions. The company hopes to shorten the differences between the unbacked and underbanked people. Meanwhile, investors can still earn a fixed-income returns.

*(Information taken from and translated from <http://fintechnews.sg/4793/vietnam/fintech-startups-ho-chi-minh-city-vietnam-watch/>)*

#### Learning

**SEO-Vietnam** is a non-profit organization founded in 2009. It aims to create and support a network of professionals who will make a difference in Vietnam. The organization wants to inspire the young Vietnamese to develop their intellects, personalities, social responsibilities for the sustainability and progress of the nation. The organization establishes many workshops, training programs, and connects selected participants with valuable internships so that they can further develop their careers. The whole process is completely free.

**VietAbroad** is a non-profit, student-led organization striving to empower the Vietnamese youth studying abroad in the U.S and to prompt the development of Vietnam. The organization establishes various educational and professional programs to equip the Vietnamese youth with knowledge and a strong network that will help them thrive in academics and future careers. They also upload many webinars on tips of getting into U.S colleges or future careers on youtube. Almost every material offered by VietAbroad is free. The camp summer projects cost a small amount of money, but only to pay the cost of transportation and venues.

**AIIESEC Vietnam** is a branch of the largest non-profit youth-led organization of the world. It provides the youth with conferences, leadership programs, internships and volunteer exchange experiences all around the world to encourage the youth to contribute and make a positive impact on the society.

### (Housing / Living / Work) Space

**Airbnb** has witnessed strong growth in Vietnam. The listings grew from 1,200 in 2015 to 3,500 in 2016 in Ho Chi Minh City. In Hanoi, there were 2,100 listings in 2016. The concept is perfect for Vietnam because of a strong entrepreneurial spirit in the country. Besides running their day jobs, almost everyone has their own business or a side occupation. Another trend in Vietnam is to have multiple Airbnb properties. Some individuals indeed turn Airbnb into their full-time job. Landon Carnie, a university lecturer living in Vietnam for more than a decade, owns three Airbnb properties both by himself and with some others (<https://www.forbes.com/sites/davisbrett/2016/10/24/vietnam-embraces-airbnb-but-market-is-increasingly-crowded/#250d4e8612bb>). Airbnb collects a sum of money both from hosts and consumers. For hosts, Airbnb will get 3% of the total value of the stay. For consumers, the fee is 6-12%. Even though the fee is considerably high, consumers will still benefit more from Airbnb compared to traditional booking with hotels.

**Travelmob** is a platform similar to Airbnb, but it joins the market earlier than Airbnb (2013 compared to 2014). Travelmob allows people to rent their houses or just sleeping rooms for a short time period. Hosts can post information about their houses for free online, and only have to pay a small service fee once the transaction is complete. It was founded in 2012 in Singapore and is present in many Southeast Asian and Asian countries. It joins the Vietnamese market and people can seek stays at [vn.travelmob.com](http://vn.travelmob.com). (<http://dulichbui.org/cam-nang/7338-nhung-mo-hinh-kinh-te-chia-se-o-viet-nam.dlb>)

**Toong Co-working Space** is a professional co-working space in Vietnam organized on a big scale. Toong has many offers of services for users to choose from: flexible desks to virtual offices. Users can go to Toong anytime they want or go there regularly and be charged a monthly sum. This flexibility allows consumers to choose freely what suits them the most instead of sticking to renting and maintaining a traditional fixed office. Toong is also unique in its choice of location. Toong is located in a place where an old French building used to be. It is only some kilometers away from the old street and many other famous Hanoi destinations. The team members of the project chose the place specifically to promote the values of Hanoi's old street. Furthermore, the facilities chosen at the co-working space all have intrinsic traditional values (<http://vneconomy.vn/doanh-nhan/toong-khong-gian-moi-cho-nhung-nguoi-thich-lam-viec-tu-do-20150720082658323.htm>).

### (Personal) Services

**Triip.me** is a travel platform that links local guides in Vietnam with travelers. It was founded by Ms. Ha Lam and now the platform has more than 7,000 users with 800 guides worldwide. It allows travelers to experience local experience crafted by local people. The company provides its staff with salary, housing and food. It promises to treat the staff like family. The webpage does not aim merely for financial profits, but for the connection between people, the sharing of experience of each trip, cultural preservation, etc. At first, it was hard to attract investment for startups in Vietnam because the Vietnamese ecosystem for startups hasn't developed yet. Because of a limited budget, the advertisement for



triip.me is from word-of-mouth. (<http://www.wsj.com/video/startup-in-vietnam-shows-promise-triipme/17437D79-C0F9-4F3A-B41B-453FF6178ACA.html>) +  
(<http://dulichbui.org/cam-nang/7338-nhung-mo-hinh-kinh-te-chia-se-o-viet-nam.dlb>)

**Btaskee.com** was operated and organized by a group of Vietnamese people. It is an app on smartphone allowing users to call housekeepers without service fee for the app. There are no contracts needed. bTaskee uses GPS to provide users with the locations of nearby housekeeping services. Users just need to choose the suitable services and pay the fee. Housekeepers are chosen by bTaskee and have gone through various interviews and tests examining their skills. bTaskee also signs contracts with many top insurance companies in Vietnam and promises to reimburse 100% the paid fee if consumers are not satisfied with the services. The app intends to help busy people who cannot find time to do household chores and people who want to earn extra money.

### Mobility Services

**Uber** was present in Vietnam but always had strong local competition from **Grab**. The two were already similar in that they both a) use GPS on smartphone to know users' locations and connect consumers with nearest drivers, b) calculate fare according to GPS and the fare will automatically go up approximately three times during peak time periods, c) benefit 20% from each trip, d) allow either cards or cash, e) have multiple ways of transporting (motorbikes, cars...) and f) award drivers who run more than set standards. In the spring of 2018, Uber was taken over by rival Grab but regulatory concerns over the merger still persist with no clear end outcome in sight as Vietnam's Ministry of Industry and Trade on Friday officially launched an investigation into the takeover (see <https://techcrunch.com/2018/04/24/grab-uber-deal-southeast-asia/> and <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/05/18/vietnam-formally-launches-investigation-into-uber-grab-merger.html>).

### Logistics

**AhaMove** is an app allowing users to call lightweight trucks or motorbikes to transport goods. Users can manage the transporting process and get access to drivers' information, license plate, transporting route, etc. Ahamove is considered as a solution to the waste of resources in Vietnam. Each year, the scope of the ground transportation environment in Vietnam is 7 billion USD. However, Ho Chi Minh city only reached 700 million USD per year while Hanoi reached 600 million USD per year. Most of the transportation do not use up to their potentials. 70% of lorries are empty on the way back. AhaMove attempts to solve this problem. AhaMove collects 20% of the driver's benefit from each trip. The company says that AhaMove is a technological product and drivers have to pay fee to use the product. The company does not involve in any legal issue. The only two requirements are that products have transparent origins and that drivers and their trucks are registered (<http://cafebiz.vn/cau-chuyen-kinh-doanh/ceo-giaohangnhanh-va-loi-giai-cho-bai-toan-7-ti-usd-20150811154840918.chn>).



## Food

Food waste apps such as Olio seem not to have taken hold in Hanoi as a local search revealed no sharers. There are a variety of food delivery services that take online orders, with **Vietnammm** seeming to beat out the competition, but delivery service is not really a sharing service.

There was an interesting “Designing a World with Zero Waste” initiative in the summer of 2016 by the South-East Asian Makerspace Network (SEAMNET) where a Hanoi initiative focused on tackling food waste (see <https://makezine.com/2016/09/12/tackling-food-waste-in-hanoi-with-sea-makerthon/> and also below.)

## **Sharing and Collaborating in the Digital Age: Makerspaces & FabLabs in Hanoi**

While a comprehensive assessment of collaborative & solidarity economy initiatives is beyond the scope of this initial exploratory working paper, the above example shows that there are indeed some connections to regional collaborative networks, including some connecting with the Sustainable Living Lab (<http://www.sl2square.org/>) in Singapore that actively worked to spread the Maker Movement across South East Asia.

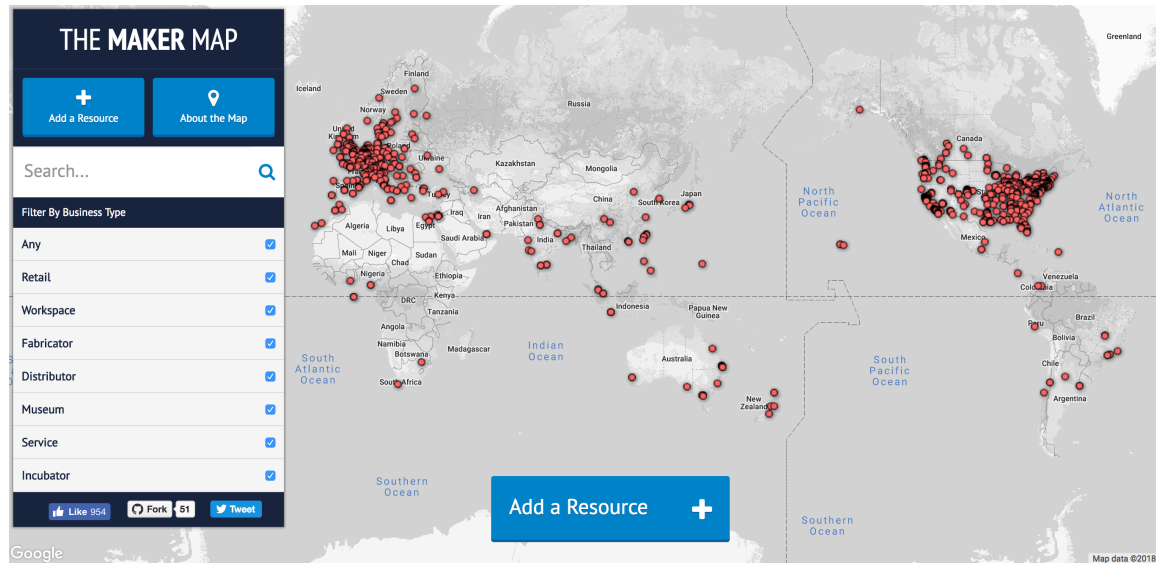
Likely the most interesting examples of “collaborative economy” initiatives that also align with smart city discourses, various “makerspaces” have recently emerged in Hanoi. According to the Makerspace.com website,

A makerspace is a collaborative work space inside a school, library or separate public/private facility for making, learning, exploring and sharing that uses high tech to no tech tools. These spaces are open to kids, adults, and entrepreneurs and have a variety of maker equipment including 3D printers, laser cutters, cnc machines, soldering irons and even sewing machines. ... Makerspaces have been called everything from a [FabLab](#) to a [Techshop](#) to a [hackerspace](#). ... At the core, they are all places for making, collaborating, learning and sharing. [see <https://www.makerspaces.com/what-is-a-makerspace/>]

The online MakerMap.com provides a global listing of makerspaces around the world. Its “about” tab notes that “[t]he Maker Map is an ongoing open source project which aims to create a global database of maker resources - from workspaces to incubators - which is powered by the maker community and easily searchable on any device.” (themakemap.com)

However, as Figure 6 shows, there are currently no makerspaces listed on this map in Vietnam, although several clearly exist.

**Figure 6: The Maker Map global listing of Makerspaces**



*Source: Screenshot of [themakermmap.com](http://themakermmap.com) (last accessed June 28 2018)*

According to a *Makerzine* article, there were at least three makerspaces in Hanoi in 2016 that participated in a 2016 Makerspace Marathon encouraging Vietnamese college and high school students to develop various smart phone sharing apps to avoid food waste. As Tan (2016) explains:

[Fablab Hanoi](#) believes in empowering young makers to make a positive change in their country. Frustrated by the lack of hands on skills in the current education system, Thanh Phuong Nguyen set up Fablab Hanoi to encourage younger Vietnamese to try their hand at new technologies and craft [while] [Maker Hanoi](#) which was founded by Tuan, has committed members consisting of engineers and researchers. They set up the makerspace to continue their interest in developing their own personal projects. ... [Hackanoi](#) was set up by Duy to focus on attracting white hat hackers to his hackerspace. As a Vietnamese who grew up in Germany, he was inspired to set up the space to nurture the next generation of coders and programmers in Vietnam.

A quick updated search reveals that there are now other digital sharing spaces, for example, FabLab Bachkhua (<https://www.fablabs.io/labs/fablabbachkhua>) and FabLab HaUI which calls itself a mini-FabLab (<https://www.fablabs.io/labs/fablabhaui>). FabLabs are small scale workshops offering digital fabrication.

There is also an open online Facebook invitation for an AngelHack Hackathon on Smart Mobility for July 2018 (<https://www.facebook.com/events/253177091908110/>) and other online hints that there is a vibrant, fledgling maker / hackerspace movement present in Hanoi. Further research with members of these spaces and groups would have to be done to evaluate where along the sharing cities spectrum they see themselves. Yet without being able to do any additional extensive on-site fieldwork, these various makerspaces, hackerspaces and FabLabs in Hanoi emerge as the clearest expression of “sharing city” sites where the providers of the spaces are actively aware of the social and economical benefits of sharing. There is not really a strong environmental dimension here, though.

## Concluding Remarks

Discourses around the collaborative economy and the sharing city have had many scholars abuzz with excitement about new ways to create an urban commons apart from the neoliberal capitalist economy that is usually design to squeeze innovation and creativity for profit. The above literature review shows that the verdict about the true novelty and the innovation potential of various sharing networks is still out – yet there is little question that the networking power of modern information technologies has truly transformed the way we think of “community,” with many people now connecting online with neighbors and local vendors and service providers more frequently than they speak or interact with them in person. Digital platforms and apps are used both to connect people to other people but also to connect people to a variety of services and information provided by for-profit companies, all designed to optimize the use of often scarce resources.

Vietnam recently launched an ambitious “smart city” initiative designed to catapult its major cities, and especially Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi, forward with the rapid development of e-government and administrative reforms. In Hanoi, the Department of Information and Communications proclaimed that the four priority sectors chosen to build the smart city are health, education, transport, and tourism. This includes the future expansion of electronic ‘iparking’ zones where users pay for spaces using their mobile devices as well as a the deployment of a digital traffic map to provide status information on traffic and to better manage public passenger transport in the city. In the education sector, schools and universities will have online enrollment systems and electronic school reports, the health sector will provide e-documents and the government has reportedly built up a database of 7.5 million people “to set up an application to serve people, enterprises, and city management.” (VIR 2018). There will also be a high-level conference on the subject of smart cities in July 2018. It should be noted, however, that none of these new “smart city” initiatives articulate a vision of a collaborative economy that is explicitly designed as an alternative to current market sector developments. Rather, quite the opposite is the case: the official discourse is all about tech investment and growing the digital economy. The word “sharing” rarely appears in connection with these initiatives except when broadly referred to information sharing apps.

Meanwhile, although not yet on the radar of Anglo-American scholars, there is clearly a budding conversation about collaborative economy spaces in less developed countries like Vietnam and certain creative thought leaders in Hanoi and Ho Chi Min City are aware of the potential of (true) sharing economy initiatives. The emergence of several makerspaces over the last few years is only one potential arena for future research here.

## References

- Agyeman, J. (2014). "Moving Beyond the Sharing Economy: The Case for Sharing Cities." *Just Sustainabilities*. Available from <http://julianagyeman.com/2014/07/beyond-sharing-economy-case-sharingcities/> [Accessed 31 July 2017]
- Agyeman, J., McLaren, D., & Schaefer-Borrego, A. (2013). Briefing: Sharing Cities. Friends of the Earth. 1–32.
- Barron, Laignee. (2018) "Here is what the EPA Website Looks Like after a Year of Climate Censorship." Time. Available from: <http://time.com/5075265/epa-website-climate-change-censorship/> [Accessed 12 June 2018]
- Belk, R 2007. "Why Not Share Rather Than Own." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 611: 126-140
- Belk, R 2010. "Sharing." *Journal of Consumer Research* 5: 715-734
- Crocker, DA and T Linden, eds. 2008. *Ethics of Consumption: The Good Life, Justice and Global Stewardship*. Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Edelman, B., Luca, M. and Svirsky, D., 2017. Racial discrimination in the sharing economy: evidence from a field experiment. *American economic journal: applied economics*, 9 (2), 1–22
- European Parliament, Directorate General for Internal Policies, Policy Department. (2014) *Mapping Smart Cities in the EU*. Available from: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/etudes/join/2014/507480/IPOL-ITRE\\_ET\(2014\)507480\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/etudes/join/2014/507480/IPOL-ITRE_ET(2014)507480_EN.pdf) [Accessed June 12 2018].
- Fintechnews Singapore. (2016) Crowdfunding in Vietnam: An Overview. August 5. Available from: <http://fintechnews.sg/4376/crowdfunding/crowdfunding-in-vietnam-an-overview/> [Accessed 12 June 2018]
- Ferreri, M and Sanyal, R (2018) Platform economies and urban planning: Airbnb and regulated deregulation in London, *Urban Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098017751982>
- Foster, S. R., & Iaione, C. (2015). The city as a commons. *Yale Law & Policy Review*, 34, 281.
- Gabriel, R (2013). *Why I buy: Self, taste, and consumer society in America*. University of Chicago Press
- Höjer, M., and Wangel, J. (2015). "Smart Sustainable Cities: Definition and Challenges." In: *ICT Innovations for Sustainability. Advances in Intelligent Systems and Computing 310*, edited by L. M. Hilty and B. Aebischer. Springer.
- Johnson, C., (2013). We gathered, we mapped, we shared: a #MapJam follow-up [online]. *Shareable*. Available from: <http://www.shareable.net/blog/we-gathered-we-mapped-we-shared-a-mapjam-follow-up> [Accessed 14 December 2016]
- Johnson, C., (2014). Sharing city Seoul: a model for the world [online]. *Shareable*. Available from: <http://www.shareable.net/blog/sharing/-city-seoul-a-model-for-the-world> [Accessed 15 December 2016].
- Krivý, Maroš (2018) Towards a critique of cybernetic urbanism: The smart city and the society of control. *Planning Theory* 71(1), pp. 8-30
- Low, S and N Smith, 2006 (eds.) *The Politics of the Public Sphere*. London: Routledge
- Martin CJ (2016) The sharing economy: A pathway to sustainability or a nightmarish form of neoliberal capitalism? *Ecological Economics* 121: 149–159

- McLaren, D. and Agyeman, J. (2015) *Sharing Cities: A Case for Truly Smart and Sustainable Cities*. Cambridge, The MIT Press
- Miller, A., (2015). Amsterdam is now Europe's first named sharing city [online]. *Shareable*. Available from: <http://www.shareable.net/blog/amsterdam-is-now-europes-first-named-sharing-city> [Accessed 15 December 2016]
- My Hanoi. (2017) "Vietnamese Consumers Favor Sharing Economy." March 2017. Available from: <https://www.myhanoi.info/2017/03/vietnamese-consumers-favour-sharing-economy-survey/> [Accessed 21 June 2018]
- Niaros, V., Kostakis, V., & Drechsler, W. (2017). Making (in) the smart city: The emergence of makerspaces. *Telematics and Informatics*, 34(7), 1143-1152.
- Pasquale, F. and Vaidhyanathan, S., (2015). Uber and the lawlessness of 'sharing economy' corporates [online]. *The Guardian*, 28 July. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2015/jul/28/uber-lawlessness-sharing-economy-corporates-airbnb-google> [Accessed June 2, 2017]
- Putnam, Robert D. (2000) *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster
- Selk, A. (2018) "Reporters thought this Video was North Korea Propaganda. It Came from the White House." *Washington Post*, June 12, 2018. Available from: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2018/06/12/reporters-thought-this-video-was-north-korea-propaganda-it-came-from-the-white-house/?utm\\_term=.d8cfb68eacfc](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2018/06/12/reporters-thought-this-video-was-north-korea-propaganda-it-came-from-the-white-house/?utm_term=.d8cfb68eacfc) [Accessed 12 June, 2018]
- Sharing Cities Network. n.d. <http://www.shareable.net/sharing-cities> [Accessed 12 June 2018]
- Slee T. (2016) *What's Yours is Mine: Against the Sharing Economy*. New York and London: Or Books.
- Sterling, Bruce (2018) "Stop Saying 'Smart Cities.'" *The Atlantic*. Online. Available from: <https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2018/02/stupid-cities/553052/> [Accessed 12 June 2018]
- Tan, M. (2016) "Tackling Food Waste in Hanoi with SEA Makerthon." *Makezine* Online Magazine. Available from: <https://makezine.com/2016/09/12/tackling-food-waste-in-hanoi-with-sea-makerthon/> [Accessed 12 June 2018]
- Tomasello, M and F Warneken. 2008. Share and Share Alike: The happy tendency to share resources equitably. *Nature* 454.7208: 1057.
- van der Zee, R., (2016). The 'Airbnb effect': is it real, and what is it doing to a city like Amsterdam? [online]. *The Guardian*, 6 Oct. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2016/oct/06/the-airbnb-effect-amsterdam-fairbnb-property-prices-communities> [Accessed 13 June 2018]
- Vietnam Investment Review (VIR) 2018. "Hanoi to become a Smart City by 2030." Available from: <http://www.vir.com.vn/hanoi-to-become-a-smart-city-by-2030-56447.html> [Accessed 13 June 2018]
- Volker, B and H Flap, 2007. Sixteen Million Neighbors: A Multilevel Study of the Role of Neighbors in the Personal Networks of the Dutch. *Urban Affairs Review* 43: 256.
- Zvolska, L., Lehner M., Voytenko Palgan, Y., Mont, O. & Plepys, A. (2018): Urban sharing in smart cities: the cases of Berlin and London, *Local Environment*, DOI: 10.1080/13549839.2018.1463978