

Sharing is Caring – Will Users Comply with the Current Smart City Approach?

Claudia Kaefer, Martin Eder.

(Dr. Claudia Kaefer, MIM, Frink GmbH, Austria, Schrankgasse 14/3, 1070 Vienna)
(Mag. Martin Eder, MSc., Kapsch TrafficCom AG, Austria)

1 ABOUT THE NATURE OF ‘SHARING’

‘Sharing’ refers to the voluntary act of giving something out that belongs to one self with good intentions. The term sharing belongs to the definition category of separation; such as ‘to keep’ and to ‘to give’ belong. In contrast, ‘to share out’ or ‘to steal’ belong to a different category, since the subject is a different one: usually, one does not own the items. In turn, if one keeps or gives items, they are usually part of one’s assets or fortune and therefore, are self-referring.

‘To give’ can be further fragmented into two terms: (1) ‘to give a gift’ and (2) ‘to exchange’ (Lempar 2008). (1) Known in social sciences as the gift economy, it is the habit of exchanging goods and services without formal agreement about it. Depending on cultural circumstances, giver and receiver are connected through social indebtedness or other forms of social interaction (Mauss 1968). The concept of quid pro quo as well as barter trade and money exchange are not in place (yet) and therefore, is considered the forerunner of (2) exchange. In a perfect economic world, commodity exchange is handled with either money or with other commodities with no space left for personal feelings of feeling indebted. Balanced reciprocity can be characterized by the equivalence of tit-for-that, whereas in a negative reciprocity one exchange partner wants more than he is willing to give (Sahlins 1972).

Following the concept of Belk (2007: 128), “sharing is the third form of distribution”, which differs from the commodity exchange as from the gift economy. Belk argues, that a few things can only be shared instead of traded or given. He takes positive sharing experiences such as a sunset, communication, as well as negative ones like “[...] guilt, shame, and proceeds of a crime in which we participate”.

Subjects of sharing

When ‘sharing’, two or more people enjoy the benefits or costs that derive from possessing a thing. They forgo the label of mine and yours and define it as ours instead. Our sharing may be exclusive for just our use or include others in the use. One lends, allocates or pools resources and authorizes its use; usually for a prescribed amount of time. Renting out an apartment, leasing a car as well as theft or illegal trespassing are not considered sharing, since they either belong to an exchange or stealing. And of course, people share a language, cultural habits and heritage, but this happens more on an incidental than on an intended and conscious level (Belk 2007).

Looking at tangible goods, people share apartments, car rides or XXL popcorn at the cinema, whose duration is determined. In contrast, we all share architecture or famous landmarks, which will not become less even if 1000 other individuals look at it. On an intangible level, executive boards share power and responsibility. The open innovation scene is characterized by sharing knowledge, ideas and implementation time.

2 INCENTIVES & BARRIERS TO SHARE

When writing about ‘sharing’ incentives, it makes sense to distinguish between intangible and tangible goods. Open innovation and in particular, the internet made it possible to retain the good while giving it away (Weiner 1992); resulting in some sort of ‘cheap altruism’ (Coyne 2005). In this paper, the focus is on an infrastructural environment and therefore, will not be considered further in this paper.

The incentive to share tangibles was originally to offer unconditional hospitality to strangers and those in need. Nowadays, communal sharing can be found primarily in the immediate family with direct allocation of resources (Fiske 1991). Another incentive could be to be able to afford goods one would not have the resources for; in other words: leverage a lifestyle beyond individual possibilities (Belk 2007). This applies for time-share vacation homes, collectively shared cars or boats and other goods that might not appeal to a tight budget. A nice lifestyle example in this context is the online subscription model, where one can rent designer dresses and then return them when not needed anymore. When donating money to a charity or pick up friends’ stuff on the way from somewhere, we feed our self-image of being a good person and helpful. Another option might be that one feels he has to give something back to society since he has been lucky in his life. As discussed above, the keeping-while-giving concept can be extended in the sense that one borrows

a driller and is expected to return it when not used anymore (Belk 2007). As Foster (1969) pointed out, the ‘unlimited good’ makes us believe that there is an unlimited supply of goods. Belk (2007) comes up with the example of a child admiring our collected shells on a beach and we give them to the kid without thinking about it twice. The potential determination of supply seems to indicate a decline to share; unless the good would turn bad. This may be a non-refundable ticket to a concert one is not able to go to or food leftovers that would become non-eatable the next day.

Obstacles to sharing involve many aspects, however, all of them need some sort of possession as a base. As defined above, sharing requires ownership that enables us to share with others. The feeling of possession and attachment toward our things make us less inclined to share (Belk 1992, 2007). “To the extent that we feel a possession is a part of our extended self, we are more likely to wish to retain it” (Belk 2007: 131 and as cited: Belk 1988; Kleine, Kleine and Allen 1995). Belk (2007) defines another impediment to sharing; materialism, defined as the value a person gives its possessions. “Materialists believe that possessions are the key source of happiness or unhappiness in life” (Belk 2007: 131). Despite the fact that materialism is not associated with positive values, study participants sought for a higher salary, a faster car, a bigger house and other materialistic issues (Ger and Belk 1999). Coming back to the shell example mentioned above, limited resources or the belief that resources are fixed are probably a widespread reason not to share. As far as intangibles are concerned, intellectual property rights and their competitive advantage is a major reason not to share. Hence, the coca-cola formula is still well protected as are a lot of pharmaceutical mixtures.

3 URBAN MOBILITY & SHARING

- Short introduction into individual and public transport within the framework of ‘sharing’
- Exploration of multimodal transportation within the framework of ‘sharing’
- STATUS: data collection

4 EMPIRIC APPROACH & DATA

- 10-15 expert interviews from various sectors (urban mobility, automotive, city planner, human factors...)
- In-situ research across different cultures and “mobility circumstances”
- STATUS: data collection

5 CONCLUSION & OUTLOOK

- The theoretical and field research undertaken so far indicate a potential gap between current user behavior and required future user behavior however, more in-depth analysis needed
- STATUS: following data collection

6 REFERENCES

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