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The Sharing Economy in Cities

Institutionalisation and Sustainability

LUCIE ENOCHSSON | IIIIEE | LUND UNIVERSITY



The Sharing Economy in Cities

Institutionalisation and Sustainability

Lucie Enochsson



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DOCTORAL THESIS

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Institutionalisation and sustainability

Lucie Enochsson



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MADE IN SWEDEN 

In loving memory of those who left us during the course of my PhD

My amazing, tree-climbing landlady Elsa

and

Mitt änglabarn Amelia

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HAPPINESS IS



...working with great people.

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Abstract

The sharing economy is a novel way of distributing physical resources facilitated by online platforms where temporary access is given to goods owned by peers or organisations. It has become prominent in urban areas where a large accumulation of resources in close proximity and the ubiquity of information and communications technology enable it to grow. Its emergence has had various impacts on existing urban systems that are essential for the well-functioning of cities. There is therefore value in exploring its institutionalisation in specific urban contexts.

This PhD dissertation aims to advance understanding on (i) how two key actor groups, urban sharing organisations and municipal governments, work to shape the development of the sharing economy in cities, and (ii) which sustainability claims they use to shape this process. The study draws on 150 interviews with key sharing economy actors collected during mobile research labs in six cities: London, Berlin, Amsterdam, Malmö, San Francisco, and Toronto. The research gaps are further assessed by combining four theoretical angles: institutional work, governance theory, framing theory, and sustainability science.

It was found that urban sharing organisations engage in both institutional creation and disruption when attempting to institutionalise sharing practices in cities. These modes of institutional work vary among the different organisations, and impact which sharing practices become institutionalised and which existing institutions become disrupted. As a response to the emergence of the sharing economy in cities, municipal governments have developed a portfolio of governance mechanisms. When they steer the development of urban sharing organisations, they engage in outward governance. When they define who they are in relation to the sharing economy, and direct their efforts towards their own actions, it is referred to as inward governance. Often, urban sharing organisations and municipal governments use sustainability framings to co-create the sharing economy in cities. These framings are also explored in this thesis.

The study underlines that the diversity of sharing economy business models, existing institutional arrangements in cities, urban sustainability issues, and institutional work of key actors are some of the key factors influencing institutionalisation of the sharing economy in cities. These factors also determine how the sharing economy will impact urban sustainability in the future.

Popular science summary

The sharing economy, also known as collaborative consumption, peer-to-peer economy, on-demand economy, or rental economy, began to emerge in the early 2000s. Central to its development are online platforms, such as Airbnb, HomeExchange, Peerby, JustPark or Zipcar, and mobile phone apps. These sharing organisations allow people to rent, lend, borrow, or swap items. Almost anything can be accessed, from lawnmowers and skateboards to cars, bicycles, and homes.

The sharing economy is most prevalent in cities, where people live close to each other and where most of the resources are. This thesis examines how the sharing economy becomes normalised in cities as a way for urban citizens to access resources. Since there are disagreements about its sustainability impacts on cities, the thesis also explores how municipalities and sharing organisations argue, using sustainability claims, about its development.

This study can be used by sharing organisations that want to learn how to upscale sharing practices in collaboration with city governments. Municipalities can also benefit from it because it introduces a toolbox for governing sharing platforms. Cities are encouraged to explore how the sharing economy can enhance their environmental sustainability, liveability, economic growth, equity, and service quality. At the same time, they are advised to pay attention to the potential negative effects.

When sharing organisations emerge on the market, they change the way people access resources. For example, there is no need to own a car and worry about insurance and maintenance when it can be easily rented with a sharing app. Conversely, a privately owned car sits idle most of the time, so money can be earned by renting it to strangers when it is not being used by the owner. By creating this new way of accessing resources, however, sharing organisations are disrupting old, established systems. Shared cars may start slowly replacing privately owned cars, and shared accommodation may replace hotels. At the same time, these changes do not happen automatically just because a new technology has entered the market. It takes a lot of work by sharing organisations to explain how their platforms work, why they are beneficial to society, why they should be supported, and why they are better than the old systems. Only then can they become accepted. This thesis shows what sharing organisations can do to normalise the sharing economy, and how they can disrupt the old practices. Based on data from London, Berlin, and Malmö, it

finds that many large, for-profit organisations engage in lobbying or filing lawsuits. For example, the accommodation sharing giant Airbnb has sued several cities with the aim of avoiding regulation. They also educate people about their potential benefits, or teach users how to lobby on their behalf. Non-profits, on the other hand, try to appeal to users by calling themselves ‘the true sharers’ and making a distinction between ‘genuine’ sharing and for-profit sharing. This might appeal to people who are looking for alternative economic systems or who are open to meeting strangers and strengthening the feeling of a community.

An important aspect in normalising sharing is earning the support of municipal governments that can enable (or disable, for that matter) their growth. But how can municipalities react when sharing platforms start popping up in their cities? This study explores how municipalities deal with the arrival of sharing platforms and explains why they support or resist some of them. It shows that municipal governments react to sharing organisations by regulating them, promoting them, or enabling them, or they may even set up their own sharing initiatives to cover a specific demand.

Municipalities have a lot of power to steer the sharing economy in a certain way. For this reason, sharing organisations try to befriend them by illustrating how they support their sustainability strategies. For example, a bicycle sharing company in London argued that their operations are aligned with the Mayor’s strategy to reduce air pollution. In Berlin, a car sharing organisation demonstrated how it reduced car use in the city. But do municipal officials believe their claims and, more importantly, do they think the sharing economy in all its forms can bring positive, sustainable change? This thesis shows that the environmental, social, and economic benefits of the sharing economy have become a contested issue. When municipalities and sharing organisations argue how the concept should develop, they often use sustainability claims to back up their standpoints. This study explains how sharing organisations and municipalities argue about the benefits and threats of the sharing economy. It finds that a sharing platform needs to prove its benefits for cities and their citizens, otherwise it may face regulations that restrict its operations.

List of peer reviewed publications

- Paper I **Zvolska, L.**, Voytenko Palgan, Y., & Mont, O. (2019). How do sharing organisations create and disrupt institutions? Towards a framework for institutional work in the sharing economy. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 219, 667-676
- Paper II **Zvolska, L.**, Lehner, M., Voytenko Palgan, Y., Mont, O., & Plepys, A. (2019). Urban sharing in smart cities: the cases of Berlin and London. *Local Environment*, 24(7), 628-645
- Paper III Mont, O., Voytenko Palgan, Y., & **Zvolska, L.** (2019). How institutional work by sharing economy organizations and city governments shapes sustainability. In R. Belk, G. M. Eckhardt, & F. Bardhi (Eds.), *Handbook of the Sharing Economy*: Edward Elgar
- Paper IV Voytenko Palgan, Y., **Zvolska, L.**, & Mont, O. (2017). Sustainability framings of accommodation sharing. *Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions*, 23, 70-83
- Paper V **Enochsson, L.**¹, Voytenko Palgan, Y., Plepys, A., Mont., O. (2021). Impacts of the sharing economy on urban sustainability: The perceptions of municipal governments and sharing organisations. *Sustainability*, 13(8).

¹ I changed my last name from Zvolska to Enochsson in 2021

Contribution to papers

- Paper I As the first author, L.E. developed the idea and research design. She wrote sections 1-3: introduction, literature review and methods. Together with Y.V.P and O.M., she co-authored sections 4 and 6: analysis, and conclusions and future research. L.E. also dealt with the review processes.
- Paper II L.E. led the writing of the paper. She wrote the research design, literature review, and collected all primary data from London. She structured the findings sections together with Y.V.P. L.E. wrote the findings from London, as well as the analysis. She also dealt with the review process and revised the paper together with co-authors.
- Paper III L.E. (third author) contributed to data collection in Berlin, London and San Francisco, and to writing the analysis.
- Paper IV L.E. drafted the first research design, wrote the literature review, collected all primary data, and wrote the findings.
- Paper V As the first author, L.E. designed the research framework and methodology. She contributed to the literature review and to primary data collection in both cities, Amsterdam and Toronto. Furthermore, she wrote the majority of introduction, findings, analysis and discussion.

Other publications

Conference papers

Zvolska, L., Lehner, M., Voytenko Palgan, Y., Mont, O., Plepys, A. 2017. Urban sharing in smart cities: the cases of Berlin and London. 4th International Workshop on the Sharing Economy, Lund.

Zvolska, L., Mont, O., Voytenko Palgan, Y. 2018. How do sharing organisations create and disrupt institutions? Towards a framework for institutional work. 5th International Workshop on the Sharing Economy, Manheim.

Voytenko Palgan, Y., Zvolska, L., Mont, O. 2018. Sharing and Cities – Roles, Relations and Governance Mechanisms. Sharing Cities Shaping Cities, Milan.

Mont, O., Zvolska, L., Voytenko Palgan, Y. 2019. Does the sharing economy gain legitimacy through sustainability? 4th International Conference of the Global Research Forum on Sustainable Production and Consumption. Hong Kong.

Zvolska, L., Singh, J., Plepys, A. 2019. Unintended consequences of the sharing economy. 4th International Conference of the Global Research Forum on Sustainable Production and Consumption. Hong Kong.

Zvolska, L. 2021. Of conflicts and alignments in the sharing economy: How do key actors view the impacts on urban sustainability in Amsterdam and Toronto? Shaping Cultures: 7th International Workshop on the Sharing Economy. Barcelona, Spain [online].

Book chapter

Voytenko Palgan, Y., O. Mont, and L. Zvolska. 2019. 'Sharing and the City: Roles, Relations and Governance Mechanisms.' In *Perspectives on the Sharing Economy*, edited by D. Wruk, A. Oberg, and I. Maurer, 173–82. Mannheim: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Editorial

Mont, O., Voytenko Palgan, Y. V., Bradley, K., & Zvolska, L. (2020). A decade of the sharing economy: Concepts, users, business and governance perspectives. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 122215.

Reports

Mont, O., Plepys, A., Voytenko Palgan, Y., Singh, J., Curtis, S., Zvolska, L., Velez, A.M.A. 2019. *Urban Sharing in Amsterdam. City report #1.* Urban Sharing Team.

Mont, O., Plepys, A., Voytenko Palgan, Y., Singh, J., Curtis, S., Zvolska, L., Velez, A.M.A. 2020. *Urban Sharing in Toronto. City report #2.* Urban Sharing Team.

Abbreviations

B2C	business-to-consumer
EU	European Union
GHG	greenhouse gas
MRL	mobile research lab
ICT	information and communications technology
P2P	peer-to-peer
RQ	research question
SE	sharing economy
UK	United Kingdom
USO	urban sharing organisation

Introduction

In light of urbanisation, world cities are facing many sustainability challenges, including, but not limited to, climate change (Birkmann, Garschagen, Kraas, & Quang, 2010), air pollution (Leung, 2015), emerging diseases (Hall & Tewdwr-Jones, 2019), lack of affordable housing (Arman, Zuo, Wilson, Zillante, & Pullen, 2009), gentrification (Smith, 1996), and socio-economic inequality (Sugrue, 2014). Various measures are being proposed to alleviate these issues, however, transitions to sustainability take place over long periods of time (Van Den Bergh, Truffer, & Kallis, 2011) and require systemic changes and economic transformations (Haberl, Fischer-Kowalski, Krausmann, Martinez-Alier, & Winiwarter, 2011). The idea of a ‘sharing economy’ (SE) has been discussed for its potential to contribute to such urban sustainability transitions. The SE is in this thesis understood as a novel way of physical resource distribution facilitated by online platforms where temporary access is given to goods owned by peers or organisations. The SE platforms where these exchanges take place are online-based websites or mobile phone applications that reduce transaction costs by connecting people and organisations who own shareable resources with those who wish to access them. Products are temporarily accessed by consumers without involvement of multiple middlemen who have traditionally played a vital part in the market. The resulting reduction in transaction costs has brought about a global uptake in sharing platforms, which has attracted the attention of scholars. They have studied various features of the SE, such as management (Lim, 2020), trust (Hawlitschek, Teubner, & Weinhardt, 2016), sustainability (Plewnia & Guenther, 2018), institutionalism (Mair & Reischauer, 2017), and governance (Zvolska, Lehner, Voytenko Palgan, Mont, & Plepys, 2018)².

In this thesis, I study the institutionalisation - the emergence and diffusion of innovation through the maintenance, disruption and change of institutions - of the SE by exploring how two key actor groups - urban sharing organisations (USOs) and municipal governments³, work to exert their influence on its development. To achieve this goal, I combine theories of institutional work, governance, and framing.

² For an overview of the various theories applied to study the SE see Hossain (2020).

³ USOs and municipal governments are the two main actor groups shaping the SE in cities (Davidson & Infranca, 2015). Other actors also play a role in institutionalising the SE, but are not the focal point of this thesis. See Chapter “Problem definition and research gaps.”

As the SE is most prominent in urban areas where large population density is coupled with resource accumulation (Zvolska et al., 2018), its effects on cities are widely discussed (see for example: Cohen & Munoz, 2016; Davidson & Infranca, 2015; Finck & Ranchordás, 2016; McLaren & Agyeman, 2015; Vith, Oberg, Höllerer, & Meyer, 2019). The literature indicates a large complexity regarding these effects, as there are many uncertainties about the SE's potential to contribute to a sustainable urban transformation. My second focal point concerns the arguments around economic, social and environmental impacts of the SE on cities, and how they are used by USOs and municipal governments to drive the institutionalisation⁴ of the SE in urban contexts.

Defining the sharing economy

The SE epitomises a digitally enabled market transformation that enables resource distribution in a novel, more affordable way. Its significance is demonstrated by its exponential growth in the past decade (Mont, Palgan, Bradley, & Zvolska, 2020). In 2015, global revenues from the SE were estimated at \$USD 15 billion and were projected to rise to \$USD 335 billion by 2025 (PWC, 2015). A more recent report indicates an even higher economic impact – the transaction volume in Chinese SE sector was valued at \$USD 474 billion in 2019 (Zheng, 2020). Although these calculations are based on a loose definition of the SE, and there are serious methodological and conceptual obstacles in evaluating its actual value and growth, the increasing attention from scholars, policy makers, and other actors also indicates its importance. Figure 1 illustrates the growth of scientific publications in the past decade, demonstrating the growing interest among scholars⁵.

⁴ The emergence and diffusion of innovation through the maintenance, disruption and change of institutions (Lawrence, Winn, & Jennings, 2001).

⁵ The figure includes articles listed on Scopus published between the years 2010 and 2020 with the term 'sharing economy' in the title, abstract or keywords. The figures are likely to be even higher, as not all articles about the SE include the term 'sharing economy' in the title, abstract, or keywords.

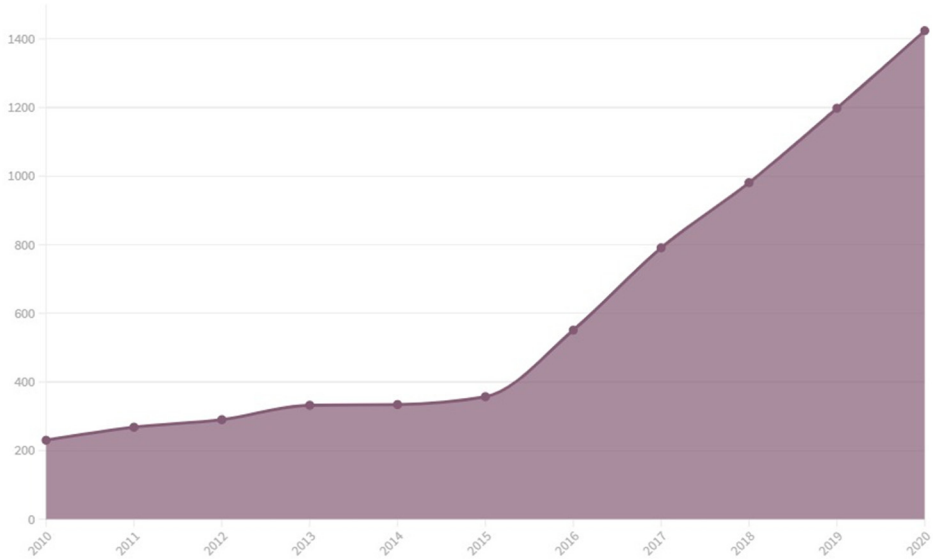


Figure 1. Number of published scientific articles on the sharing economy

Despite the large number of research papers on the topic, the SE lacks definitional precision. In fact, one of the few points scholars seem to agree on is that they disagree on how the concept should be defined (Acquier, Daudigeos, & Pinkse, 2017). As a result, they interpret it in different ways, and it is not uncommon that the conceptual boundaries put forward by some contradict those set up by others. This is not surprising given the plurality of the term and its practices (Mair & Reischauer, 2019). The lack of a unified definition brings difficulties to all stages of research design and makes the comparison of results challenging. For example, there are considerable challenges in selecting research cases, as sharing economy business models vary greatly and span many sectors (Muñoz & Cohen, 2018). For example, Muñoz and Cohen (2017) identified 12 categories of sharing sectors, including space, logistics, goods, and transportation. In their attempts to categorise the SE, many researchers have proposed their own definitions (see for example: Acquier et al., 2017; Curtis & Lehner, 2019; Frenken & Schor, 2017). Paradoxically, these attempts have not brought consensus to what the sharing economy is, but they have made useful observations on the semantics of the term, or the types of business models that could possibly be included under the umbrella concept.

In his seminal work on the growth of the SE, Belk (2014) proposes that the practices associated with the SE have two similarities: 1) they give temporary access to consumer goods and services, and 2) they can be found on the Internet. He argued that organisations as diverse as Facebook, Wikipedia, Airbnb, and Zipcar were considered the SE. Over the years, there have been many attempts to further delimit

the boundaries proposed by Belk (2014). Alternative terms have emerged that imply a specific deviation from the umbrella term ‘sharing economy’ to make a clear distinction of what is being shared or which online community they cater to. Among the alternative terms are ‘shared mobility’, ‘collaborative consumption’, ‘gig economy’, or ‘peer economy’. The gig economy, for example, encompasses new forms of employment facilitated by mobile applications (Prassl, 2018). It includes food and parcel delivery and manual labour, and thereby excludes the sharing of goods.

In another seminal work, Frenken and Schor (2017), excluded the gig economy from the SE equation, arguing that the SE encompasses the temporary access to physical goods, provided by/to consumers, which is referred to as a ‘consumer-to-consumer’ or ‘peer-to-peer’ (P2P) business model. This form of transaction is, in turn, referred to as ‘peer economy’. Recent works are generally more inclined to eliminate services, as the gig economy has spun off the SE and became its own research area. Second-hand markets and online content (social media) have also been eliminated from the SE equation. Instead, the SE is understood as facilitating temporary access to goods via online platforms. Common practice is for each researcher to develop their own definition, as indicated by an analysis of 152 papers by Schlagwein, Schoder, and Spindeldreher (2020) that found 36 original definitions. In this thesis, the SE is understood as a novel way of physical resource distribution facilitated by online platforms where temporary access is given to goods owned by peers or organisations.

The online platforms that facilitate the transactions often operate in cities and are therefore referred to in this thesis as urban sharing organisations (USOs). They play the role of a middleman by connecting peers and organisations who own resources with those who wish to access them. The consumers are often peers, but virtually anyone, including other businesses and organisations, can access the resources. This two-sided market model is also referred to as the triadic business model (Andreassen et al., 2018; Kumar, Lahiri, & Dogan, 2018) – see Figure 2.

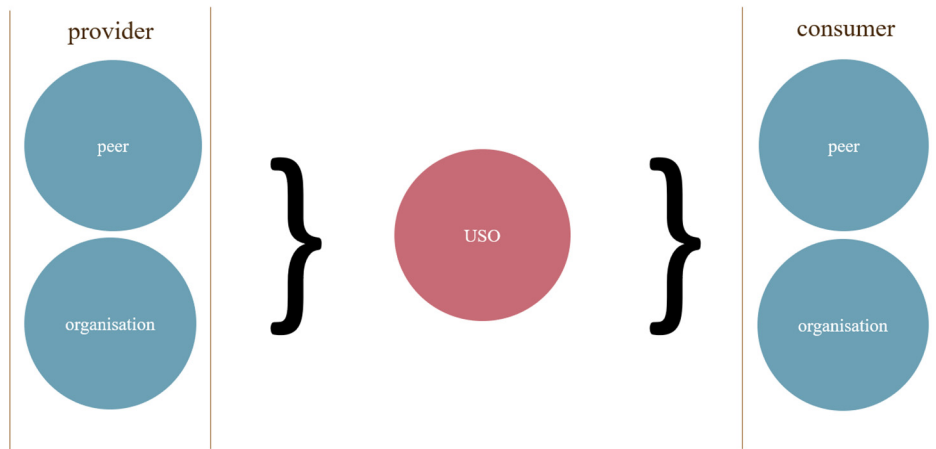


Figure 2. The sharing economy as a triadic business model

Sustainability potentials and impacts on cities

USOs have been associated with a market transformation that promises to be more environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable than the status quo. In fact, the topic of sustainability has gained increased interest among SE scholars in recent years (Ertz & Leblanc-Proulx, 2018). Some believe that the more efficient use of resources with high idling capacity will bring a socio-technical transition that will (1) directly impact production volumes, thereby lowering the negative environmental impacts associated with manufacturing (Botsman & Rogers, 2011); (2) enhance social cohesion and strengthen the feeling of community as people meet to exchange resources (Schor, 2014); and (3) bring a fairer economic system, reduce inequality, and enable marginalised groups to avoid the high costs associated with ownership and capitalise on their assets by fostering ‘micro-entrepreneurship’. (Sundararajan, 2016). At first glance, the SE might seem like a panacea to all sustainability problems faced by society today.

However, the initial euphoria has mostly subsided, as many scholars are questioning whether the SE is instead reinforcing “the current unsustainable economic paradigm” (Martin, 2016). This dilemma carries societal significance, as the SE is impacting existing systems that are essential for the well-functioning of cities. For example, accommodation sharing platforms increase the cost of housing for urban citizens (Barron, Kung, & Proserpio, 2021; Lee, 2016; Monroe, 2014) and lead to a loss of unionised jobs and employee benefits (O’Regan & Choe, 2017). Car sharing has a potential to reduce car traffic and the related air pollution in urban areas, but

its rebound effects are largely unknown (Reyes, Cansino, Román-Collado, & Mundaca, 2020).

The sustainability impacts are especially evident in cities because they have become testing grounds for the SE (Davidson & Infranca, 2015). The emergence of the SE as an urban phenomenon is also demonstrated by the rise of third-party organisations – both national and transnational – whose aim is to build bridges between USOs and cities, explore how cities could harness the advantages of the SE, or help them in addressing the issues. Among them are Sharing Cities Alliance, Sharing Cities Sweden, Sharing City Action, and Sharing Cities Network. Another related trend is the emergence of a ‘sharing city’, which refers to cities that work actively with the SE to take advantage of its potentials to tackle sustainability challenges, and to curb the negative effects associated with it. Berlin (Germany), Seoul (South Korea), or Amsterdam (the Netherlands) are examples of cities that have declared themselves ‘sharing cities’. The development of the SE in cities is also referred to as ‘sharing cities’. The development of the SE in cities is also referred to as ‘urban sharing’⁶ (Mont, Plepys, et al., 2020; Zvolska et al., 2018). At the same time, given that the SE is such a wide umbrella concept, how it enhances or aggravates economic, environmental, and social sustainability in cities is far from straightforward.

Hira and Reilly (2017) argue that the potential negative or positive contribution of the SE on urban development will depend on how it is negotiated by governments, industry, and civil society. The ambiguity surrounding the impacts of the SE on cities catalyses a variety of opinions among SE actors, including SE entrepreneurs and city-level policy makers. In turn, these opinions shape the development of the SE in cities (Enochsson, Voytenko Palgan, Plepys, & Mont, 2021; Zvolska, Voytenko Palgan, & Mont, 2019). For example, a number of cities, such as Amsterdam, are supporting car sharing initiatives in hopes it will curb private car use, open up public space previously occupied by car parks, boost public transportation ridership, and reduce air pollution, while enabling citizens to gain access to cars when needed (Enochsson et al., 2021). To support car sharing initiatives, car sharing companies may be provided with parking space for free or at a reduced price, and the municipality can work to restrict private car ownership, which in turn benefits car sharing (Zvolska et al., 2018). A contrasting example is that of for-profit accommodation sharing, which has been regulated in many cities due to the belief that it transforms housing units to illegal hotels and leads to gentrification, overtourism, and shortage of affordable housing.

⁶ In this thesis, the terms ‘sharing economy’ and ‘urban sharing’ are used interchangeably. The focal point is on the sharing economy in urban contexts, which is emphasised when the term ‘urban sharing’ is used.

It has become apparent that the support of municipalities is essential for upscaling USOs. To gain their approval, USOs engage in institutional work to gain legitimacy⁷ (Zvolska et al., 2019), often justifying their existence with sustainability arguments (Enochsson et al., 2021; Mont, Voytenko Palgan, & Zvolska, 2019).

Problem definition and knowledge gaps

When new technologies and innovations, such as the SE, emerge, they follow an institutionalisation curve consisting of different stages. For example, Lawrence et al. (2001) write that objects are first recognised, then accepted by relatively few actors, and then widely diffused and broadly accepted (legitimised) within a field. Similarly, Tolbert and Zucker (1996) argue that the initial formation of institutions consists of these stages: habituation (the development of patterned problem-solving behaviours), objectification (the movement toward a more permanent and widespread status), and sedimentation (the full institutionalisation involving historical continuity of the structure and its survival across generations of organisational members). The SE is growing both horizontally (multiplicity of USOs) and vertically (size of USOs), which signifies that it is going through a process of institutionalisation before it possibly becomes fully legitimised (Zucker, 1987). If the SE becomes institutionalised as a legitimate way of distributing resources, it will enjoy institutional stability. However, it must be taken into consideration that there is great diversity in the levels of institutionalisation among the many segments and business models of the SE. Thus, these need to be recognised when studying how the SE becomes institutionalised. It could be argued that, for example, car and accommodation sharing are legitimised to a greater extent than tool sharing because they are more widely diffused. Furthermore, given that the development of the SE is being continuously shaped by different actors, its institutionalised form is likely to be different from its current form. For this reason, studying the pressures exerted on the development of the SE is a timely task.

The institutionalisation of the SE raises questions about its effects on socio-economic and environmental systems, and the overall institutional changes it brings about. Institutional change is understood as the change to the “formal rules and taken-for-granted cultural frameworks, cognitive schema and routinised processes of reproduction” (Campbell, 2004). It takes place when new institutions are created or when old ones are disrupted (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). In discussing institutional change in relation to the SE, scholars have explored the institutional disruption brought about by the SE (Geissinger, Laurell, & Sandström, 2020;

⁷ Legitimacy is defined by Suchman (1995) as “a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are socially desirable, proper or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions” (p. 574).

Laurell & Sandström, 2016), while institutional creation (or how actors work to institutionalise the SE) has been researched to a lesser extent⁸. It is important to understand the pressures influencing the institutionalisation of urban sharing because it affects many institutions associated with unsustainable consumption and therefore has potential to make a positive impact on liveability in cities. At the same time, there is also risk that new forms of consumption practices introduced by the SE (institutional creation) will exacerbate urban unsustainability.

The institutional changes caused by the emergence of the SE have been investigated from several angles. For example, a number of studies have explored the transformation of regulatory frameworks in reaction to the SE (Katz, 2015; Miller, 2016); or the responses of incumbent sectors to new SE business models (Matzler, Veider, & Kathan, 2015). Another important contribution is investigations into the effects of these institutional changes on sustainable development (Geissinger, Laurell, Öberg, & Sandström, 2019). However, more research is needed to better understand how the concept of the SE is being co-created by key actors, and what role sustainability plays in the legitimisation⁹ of the SE¹⁰.

When studying how the SE is co-created, the following questions arise: ‘Who is negotiating the development of the SE?’ or ‘Which actors should be studied?’ Davidson and Infranca (2015) offered an answer when they pinpointed USOs and municipalities as the two main actors shaping the SE in cities:

“As sharing enterprises and local governments confront each other, each side is iterating and adapting amid a rapidly changing landscape of innovation. This distributed clash is not just shaping the sharing economy and local regulatory responses to it. It is also spurring broader changes to the urban environment.” (p. 219)

The authors make two important points. One, they highlight the importance of the ‘clash’ between USOs and municipalities in negotiating the development of the SE and, two, they highlight that the uptake of the SE will inherently impact the urban environment. Studies show on how the SE affects, for example, urban mobility (McKenzie, 2020) and the housing market (Barron et al., 2021). Vith et al. (2019) make an important contribution to this topic by studying how cities interpret the opportunities and challenges of the SE and demonstrate how similar framings are

⁸ In this thesis, institutional creation refers to the legitimisation of the SE as new form of accessing resources. Institutional disruption focuses on the disruption of existing institutions – such as asset ownership. More on this topic can be found in the chapter ‘Theoretical and conceptual foundations’.

⁹ Legitimacy is defined as a “generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions” (Suchman, 1995)

¹⁰ The significance of USOs and municipalities in institutionalising the SE is explained below.

coupled with similar governance responses. However, they highlight that more research needs to be done on the *position of municipalities towards specific companies / SE sectors*. In addition, there is a lack of empirical knowledge on this issue as extant studies mainly explore secondary materials. This thesis contributes to filling this gap by building on empirical material collected in seven cities in the Global North. The gaps described in this section, i.e. how USOs and municipalities co-create the SE in cities, are further elaborated on below.

Institutional work of urban sharing organisations

The SE is becoming increasingly embedded into existing urban systems but, at the same time, it is being contested by institutions and actors with contrasting interests. The influence of all actors plays an important role in how it develops. As various actors steer the development of the SE in their preferred direction, they often justify their views and actions with sustainability framings (Enochsson et al., 2021). This is shaping the development of the SE in cities and influencing the policy approaches that are employed towards it (Zvolska et al., 2018). However, little is known about which strategies and approaches they use to steer the SE. The main aim of this thesis is to explore how two major actors, USOs and municipalities, work to institutionalise and steer the development of the SE in cities. Special attention is given to how they use sustainability framings in these attempts.

The *first* knowledge gap, therefore, concerns the strategies that USOs undertake when they work to institutionalise the SE. This must be investigated against the backdrop of the existing institutions in the cities where USOs operate. Given that each city is made up of a distinct set of regulatory, normative, and cultural-cognitive institutions (Scott, 1995), the strategies of USOs are customised for each city in order to gain legitimacy (Uzunca, Rigtering, & Ozcan, 2018). Legitimacy-building strategies of USOs have been explored in a handful of papers. For example, Marton, Constantiou, and Lagoudakos (2017) studied how Couchsurfing gained legitimacy through appealing to its stakeholders with a vision of openness. Uzunca et al. (2018) researched how Uber and Airbnb gained legitimacy in institutionally diverse environments – Egypt, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. Their study demonstrates that USOs are faced with complex institutional constellations, but they can shape their institutional environments and, in turn, gain legitimacy. Their paper calls for more studies on the institutional strategies of USOs to explore how they work when they shape the SE. One stream of research that remains underdeveloped in this regard is the institutional work of USOs, which can be understood as “the purposive action of individuals and organizations aimed at creating, maintaining and disrupting institutions” (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006, p.215). Institutional work concerns the strategies carried out by organisations to gain legitimacy and become established on the market. Mair and Reischauer (2017) laid out an agenda for capturing the dynamics of the SE through institutional studies and highlighted

several research gaps. Among them was the lack of knowledge on the forms of institutional work carried out by USOs. Exploring this gap is therefore of academic relevance.

Institutional work of municipalities

While the first gap concerned the initiatives of USOs to gain legitimacy, the *second* gap is the lack of knowledge about which strategies municipalities implement to steer the development of the SE. Davidson and Infranca (2015) explain that unlike with other disruptive technologies, which are typically managed on the state level, the regulatory response to the SE has been mainly on the municipal level (although national authorities have also been involved, for instance, involving tax or employment regulations). This is because the impacts of USOs are mainly on a city level. As municipalities are facing the constantly evolving forms of the SE, they are learning how to respond to them appropriately. New governance mechanisms are being adopted continuously to steer the SE in a way that benefits urban citizens while protecting them from possible negative effects (Miller, 2016; Ranchordas, 2015). A few studies have explored these municipal governance responses to the SE. The most discussed policy approach is regulation (see for example: Katz, 2015; Miller, 2016; Ranchordas, 2015; Sinclair, 2016), but (municipal) ‘governance’ of the SE, which is much more nuanced because it encompasses all “non-hierarchical modes of coordination, steering and decision-making” (Cattacin & Zimmer, 2016), has not been explored. There is clearly a gap in understanding how the SE is governed. When work on this thesis commenced, existing studies did not offer many insights into the large number of governing mechanisms implemented by municipalities, nor how cities differ in governing the SE¹¹. Addressing these gaps would add new knowledge not only about other forms of municipal governance than regulation, but also about the role of municipalities in institutionalising the SE. This is because municipalities have agency to influence the development of the SE in cities (Zvolska et al., 2018).

Role of sustainability in institutionalising the sharing economy

The *third* research gap centres around the use of the concept of ‘sustainability’ in institutionalising the SE. Sustainability, which comprises economic, social, and environmental dimensions, often takes centre stage in debates on how the SE should become embedded in existing systems (Wu & Zhi, 2016). On the one hand, the SE

¹¹ These gaps have since been addressed by the author (Zvolska et al., 2018), and by, for example, Bernardi and Diamantini (2018); Hong and Lee (2018b); Vith et al. (2019); Palm, Smedby, and McCormick (2019); Palm, Södergren, and Bocken (2019); and Voytenko Palgan, Mont, and Sulkakoski (2021)

is often framed as beneficial to economic growth, environmental protection and social cohesion, but on the other, some actors disagree with such propositions, instead cautioning of negative impacts. Martin (2016), Gruszka (2017) and Leung, Xue, and Wen (2019) found that the SE is framed in contrasting and contradictory ways. However, there are gaps in understanding *how actors differ in their framings of the SE in terms of sustainability*. While research has been done on how USOs frame the SE (Gruszka, 2017; Leung et al., 2019; Uzunca et al., 2018), little is known about how their framings differ from those of municipalities. Exploring this gap would be useful in studying the ‘clash’ between USOs and municipalities described by Davidson and Infranca (2015) that shapes the SE and municipal responses to it. To exemplify, accommodation sharing USOs such as Airbnb lobby to stay operational in the city centres of major cities which are lucrative tourist destinations. However, many municipalities have opted to regulate these short-term rentals due to believes that they cause a housing crisis by removing long-term rentals from the market, or because they cause nuisance to neighbours. Learning how issues are framed is an important tool in conflict resolution (Donohue, Rogan, & Kaufman, 2011; Drake & Donohue, 1996) and this could aid in the discussions between USOs and municipal governments about how to develop the SE in a way that is beneficial for cities and their citizens.

Bearing in mind that the SE is not homogenous but is instead made up of a plethora of business models, each impacting urban environments in a unique way, another gap in knowledge is about how specific SE segments are framed in terms of sustainability. Given that the SE develops in cities with different socio-economic institutions and sustainability issues, it is likely that there are differences in how its sustainability impacts differ across cities. However, this has also not been explored.

Framing is useful in understanding what arguments key SE actors use to construct the SE. Given that the sustainability of the SE is a contested issue, studying how it is framed by different actors brings an understanding to how their frames “affect the development of a conflict, as well as how they can be used to influence it” (Schon & Rein, 1995). Finally, the perceptions about the SE’s contribution to sustainability (or lack of sustainability, for that matter)¹² play an important role in the institutionalisation of the SE and determine the course of institutional change (Dewulf et al., 2009).

To summarise, new technological innovations, such as the SE, are not inherently (un)sustainable; instead, their impact is determined by actors who shape their development. The institutional practices currently taking place in forming the SE will define their future impacts on the environmental and socio-economic systems, so there is value in exploring how key actors frame the SE in terms of sustainability,

¹² These perception are informed to varying levels. In addition, it should be considered that the perceptions about the sustainability impacts of the SE and the actual impacts are not always aligned.

and how they argue when they attempt to steer it in a certain way. However, there are gaps in knowledge about the differences and similarities in how the sustainability of SE sectors is framed by USOs and municipalities. The importance of understanding the co-construction of the SE in a way that contributes to sustainability was also highlighted in an influential debate authored by Schor (2014):

(...) technologies are only as good as the political and social context in which they are employed. Software, crowdsourcing, and the information commons give us powerful tools for building social solidarity, democracy, and sustainability. Now our task is to build a movement to harness that power. (p. 12)

Objective and research questions

In light of these research gaps, the objective of this thesis is to advance understanding on how the SE becomes institutionalised in urban contexts, and which sustainability claims are used to shape this process. These conceptions – sharing economy, urban context, sustainability and institutionalisation - are all interlinked. The central part is played by the sharing economy, which is a concept co-created by key actors, such as USOs and municipal governments. The emergence of the SE disrupts the existing institutional arrangements in cities, but its development is at the same time influenced by existing institutions. How the SE becomes institutionalised in cities is dependent on the pressures exerted by key actors and existing institutions, on the location of USOs in the field, and their relations with other key actors. These multilevel effects of actors on the institutional field of urban sharing are depicted in Figure 3. When urban government officials and USOs make claims about the sustainability of the SE, they interpret ‘sustainability’ in different ways. These interpretations are also influenced by existing institutional arrangements, infrastructures and cultural aspects of each city.

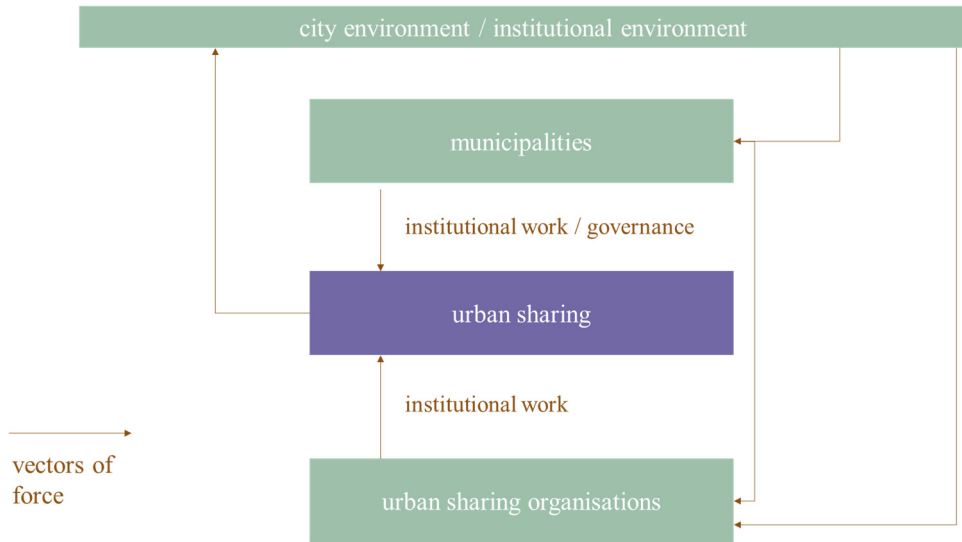


Figure 3. Institutional field of urban sharing involving two key actor groups: municipalities and USOs

This study explores the institutionalisation of the SE through the following research questions (RQ):

RQ1: How do USOs engage in institutional creation and disruption?

This RQ was addressed by carrying out interviews with the representatives of USOs, municipal organisations, and third-party organisations in Berlin, London and Malmö. The analysis focused on the purposive actions of USOs to create and disrupt institutions, and was guided by a framework for institutional work developed by Lawrence and Suddaby (2006). The findings uncover what actions USOs take to mould the SE in a way that is beneficial for them (Zvolska et al., 2019).

RQ2: How do municipalities steer the development of the sharing economy?

The aim of this RQ is to explore the purposive action of municipalities to create and disrupt institutions surrounding the SE, and their approaches of governing USOs. Two case studies were carried out in London and Berlin to learn city-specific details about the governance and compare the two cases. The outcome is a comparative analysis combining two theories: institutional work and municipal governance.

RQ3: How is the sustainability of the SE framed?

Whether the SE is a more sustainable form of resource distribution is widely debated. To provide an overview of the diversity of opinions regarding this issue, I explored how the SE is framed in the literature in terms of its sustainability potentials and threats. Due to the SE being an umbrella concept comprising a myriad of business models, it is unreasonable to make all-encompassing claims about it.

Furthermore, since it involves diverse actors, opinions about the sustainability impacts of the SE are nuanced. For example, it became evident through field work that key actors did not share the same perspectives. To reflect this development, I explored how the sustainability of the SE was framed by the two main actor groups across SE sectors and cities.

Research scope and limitations

This section presents the scope and boundaries of this thesis. They are presented under three categories: sharing economy, geography, and actors.

Sharing economy

The boundaries of the SE are defined for the purpose of this study. The SE is understood as *a novel way of physical resource distribution facilitated by online platforms where temporary access is given to goods owned by peers or organisations*. **Figure 4** visualises these criteria.

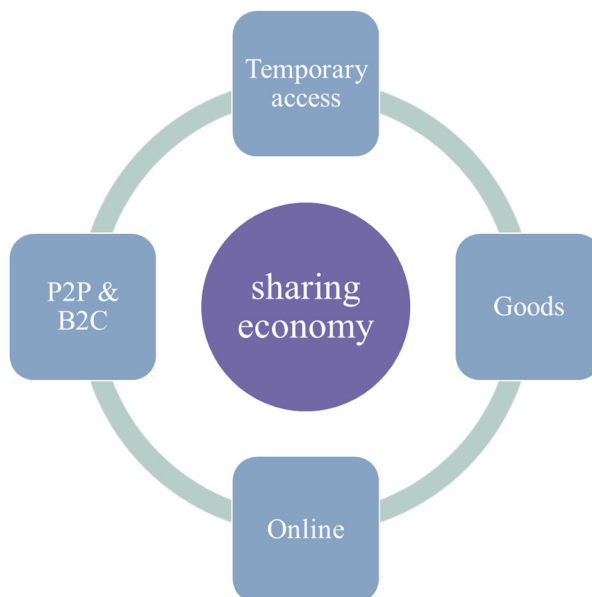


Figure 4. Sharing economy boundaries

Online platforms refer to both mobile phone applications and websites that facilitate access to resources in a selected geographical location, often in close proximity of the consumer. Sometimes, this is made possible with a built-in global positioning system (GPS). Sharing, renting, swapping and other forms of exchange without an online presence are excluded.

The *goods* are accessed for a limited period of time, that is, there is no change of ownership. This means that labour (e.g. TaskRabbit) or delivery services (e.g. Foodora) are excluded, as are goods that change ownership (e.g. second-hand markets, including ebay, Facebook Marketplace, or Blocket). Food sharing is also not part of this thesis.

While some authors (Curtis & Lehner, 2019; Frenken & Schor, 2017) consider only P2P platforms as being part of the SE, here, both P2P and business-to-consumer (B2C) organisations are included because they have significant impact on city infrastructures. They are included because they carry societal, economic and environmental significance. A pertinent example is B2C mobility platforms offering short-term rentals of cars and bicycles. According to Palm, Smedby, et al. (2019), they can promote a more sustainable form of mobility in cities. They offer interesting cases for studying the disruption of existing institutions that make up city fabrics (such as car ownership or public transportation), which was the main reason for incorporating them into this thesis. B2C platforms comprise for-profit companies (e.g. Zipcar, Obike).

The USOs that appear in this thesis can be summarised under three sectors: accommodation, mobility (bicycles and cars), and other forms of asset sharing (such as tools and equipment). **Figure 5** visualises the business models that were included, and exemplifies them with a selection of the USOs incorporated in this study.

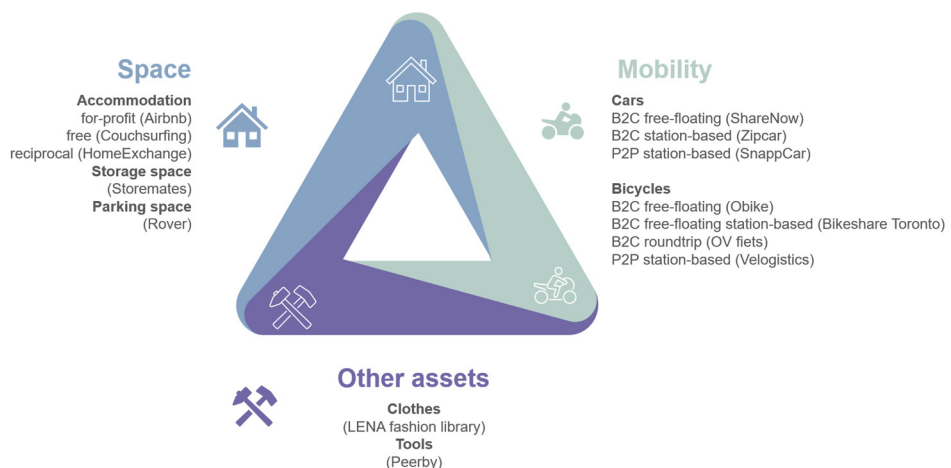


Figure 5. Overview of sharing economy segments included in this thesis

Accommodation sharing is among the most discussed SE sectors, as it includes the SE giant Airbnb, a for-profit platform where people can list and book homes. However, accommodation sharing also refers to free of charge and reciprocal business models (Voytenko Palgan, Zvolska, & Mont, 2017). Free of charge platforms are either non-profits run by volunteers (e.g. BeWelcome), or membership-based, for-profit companies (e.g. Couchsurfing). On reciprocal home sharing sites, the exchange can take place simultaneously, especially when primary family homes are exchanged, or at different times, often when second homes are shared. Despite this variety of business models, the most frequently discussed accommodation sharing company is Airbnb. This form of P2P, for-profit sharing is also referred to as ‘short-term rentals’.

Storage space refers to platforms where peers and businesses offer spare storage space for the purpose of storing personal items (such as when students need to vacate their rooms over the summer), or luggage.

Parking space encompasses the sharing of, for example, private driveways where people can park their cars. It is popular in city centres where parking is difficult and expensive.

The *mobility sector* encompasses car and bicycle sharing. Most of the business models are business-to-consumer (B2C), which means that a business owns the resources (cars and bicycles) and rents them out to the end consumer. Niche P2P organisations can also be found, but on a much smaller, local scale. In a free-floating system, a car or a bicycle is rented at one location and can be dropped off anywhere else (within limits). In a one-way station-based system, it is returned to same spot, while two-way station-based systems have designated pick-up and drop-off spaces. For the sake of completeness, it must be noted that Uber is excluded from this thesis because it is considered a service.

The most prominent platforms included under *other assets* are tool sharing platforms, where for example drills or gardening equipment are shared.

Geographical boundaries

This thesis builds on data from six case cities to offer a nuanced perspective on the SE in the Global North. Mobile research labs (MRL) (see Methodology chapter) that informed this thesis and the included publications were conducted in London (UK), Berlin (Germany), Amsterdam (Netherlands), Malmö (Sweden), San Francisco (USA), and Toronto (Canada)¹³. A graphic overview of the MRLs included in this thesis is shown in Figure 6.

¹³ I also took part in an MRL in Shanghai, China, which further shaped my knowledge about the SE, but the data is not included in this thesis.

These cities are part of the Urban Sharing project¹⁴ and were selected for their contrasting institutional contexts shaped by various actors and socio-economic factors. The data collected in these cities is sufficiently diverse to allow for a broad understanding of the urban sharing concept. In each city, a broad cross-selection of interviewees, including representatives of municipal governments, USOs, third-party organisations, or academia, offered a variety of perspectives from each city. Below is further justification of why each city was selected.

Amsterdam was the first European city to become a Sharing City. It has a mix of cultures and strong tourism industry. The municipality supports the SE through several agendas and policy documents, and has, for example, adopted an Action Plan on the Sharing Economy, a Circular Innovation Agenda, and two agendas on car sharing. It is also a founding member of Sharing Cities Alliance, a foundation connecting cities with USOs co-founded with the knowledge and networking organisation ShareNL, headquartered in Amsterdam. Given that Amsterdam is a Sharing cCty, there are many USOs based there. While the support of car sharing is evidenced by the aforementioned agendas and policy documents, accommodation sharing was capped at 30 days per calendar year, which is some of the strictest rules. The car sharing segment is represented by a P2P company Snappcar and B2C companies MyWheels, Green Wheels, ConnectCar, Buurauto, and Car2Go. Bicycle sharing offers less variety and only OV-fiets, a station-based form of bicycle sharing, was present at the time of the MRL¹⁵. The usual accommodation sharing companies, such as Airbnb and HomeExchange, also operate in Amsterdam. Tool sharing is represented by Peerby, a global P2P sharing platform based in Amsterdam. The MRL in Amsterdam was conducted in April 2019.

Berlin was the first city where an MRL was conducted. The SE was represented predominantly by accommodation and mobility sharing USOs. Mobility sharing, in particular, was significant in Berlin – station-based and free-floating car sharing and bicycle and cargo-bike USOs were available in the city. It must also be noted that Berlin has a rich history of car sharing as the first car club in Berlin was established already in 1988. The city supported free parking space for station-based car clubs, but not for free-floating car sharing companies as these were viewed as unwanted by the city representatives. An industry association Bunderverband Carsharing is headquartered in Berlin. However, no city-level agendas nor policies supporting car sharing were present at the time of the MRL. The rules for accommodation sharing were strict – users were allowed to rent out 50 per cent of their apartments, thereby banning entire-home rentals, but the regulation was not enforced. The MRL in Berlin was conducted in April 2017.

¹⁴ www.urbansharing.org

¹⁵ Free-floating bicycle sharing was banned by the Amsterdam municipality, but there were discussions about allowing it again, in a strictly managed way.

London is an example of a strong entrepreneurial city that supports innovative start-ups, including USOs. It is home to many USOs, both P2P and B2C, distributed across the three sectors included in this thesis– mobility, accommodation and tools. Mobility sharing is exceptionally well-represented in London with station-based (Zipcar, EasyCar, Carplus), free-floating (DriveNow) and P2P (Getaround, hiyacar) car sharing organisations. A car parking app (JustPark) is also available. Bicycle sharing is represented by both station-based (Santander cycles) and free-floating (oBike, Ofo) USOs. London-based tool sharing organisation included Library of Things and Freegle. In addition to this large variety of USOs, a trade association, Sharing Economy UK, that unites USOs, and the SE think tank The People Who Share, are also based in London. Accommodation sharing is limited to 90 nights per calendar year. The MRL in London was conducted in October 2017.

Malmö is the smallest city included in this thesis. Its population is only around 350000, but it is located in the Öresund region, which is a Danish-Swedish metropolitan region encompassing Copenhagen, Lund, Helsingborg, and Helsingör with a total population of nearly 4 million. The region is famous for its state-of-the-art bicycle infrastructure. In Malmö, there are several bicycle sharing USOs, including the station-based, city-led scheme Malmö by bike, or the semi-free-floating company Donkey Republic. In addition, a cargo bicycle can be borrowed for free from the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation. As the city is aiming to improve social justice, equity, integration, and unemployment, it supports a number of non-profit sharing initiatives that have positive social impact and where resources are shared with people free of charge. These include Garaget (a makerspace where computers or books can be borrowed), Bicycle Kitchen (bicycle repair tools), or Fritidsbanken (sports equipment). Accommodation sharing platforms do not have to be regulated in Malmö, as most housing units are cooperatives with strict rules about subletting. The MRL in Malmö was conducted in March 2018. I did not participate in it but could access the data. In addition, I have used many of the USOs myself as I live in the city.

San Francisco has a strong entrepreneurial culture and is a global centre for technology and innovation. It is a unique city in regard to the SE, as it is where many USOs originated. There is an abundance of sharing platforms, including the famous for-profits, such as Airbnb, as well as lesser-known non-profit organisations (e.g. Tool Lending Library in Oakland). The city welcomes all types of sharing organisations. However, to avoid negatively impacting the already low affordability of housing, the municipality has implemented strict rules on short-term rentals and established the Office of Short-term Rentals with the aim of regulating accommodation sharing. Airbnb (headquartered in the city), VRBO and Home Away took legal action against the city amid the newly introduced regulations. The lawsuit has been settled and the regulations remain. Several bicycle sharing (Bay Wheels, Jump, Lime) and car sharing (Zipcar, Getaround, U-Haul, Traqit, GIG)

companies are also operating in the city. The MRL in San Francisco was conducted in April 2018.

Toronto makes an interesting SE case because the Government of Ontario, which Toronto is a part of, used to have an integrative framework to support the SE. It also published guiding documents to help municipalities deal with issues associated with the SE. However, these documents were scrapped by a new government led by the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario. This proves that the SE is a highly politicised topic in the region. At the time of the MRL, the municipality had minimal involvement with the SE, but there were still several USOs similar to those found in the other cities. For example, Airbnb and other accommodation sharing platforms were operating in the city. What differed from the other cities was that they were operating without any restrictions¹⁶. As a result, there was a strong opposition against short-term rentals organised by the coalition of hotels, property owners and concerned citizens (Fairbnb). Such an organised initiative was not found in any of the other cities. There were only a few other types of sharing organisations in Toronto. Due to unfavourable weather conditions, only one bicycle sharing scheme was available in Toronto – Bikeshare Toronto. Several car sharing companies were operating there – Maven, Turo, Enterprise CarShare, Communauto and Zipcar. Tool sharing was represented by the Toronto Tool Library. The MRL in Toronto was conducted in November 2019.

¹⁶ The municipality has since introduced two new regulations –hosts may let out their property for a maximum of 180 nights per calendar year and all hosts have to be registered with the municipality, which is similar to the requirements in other cities.

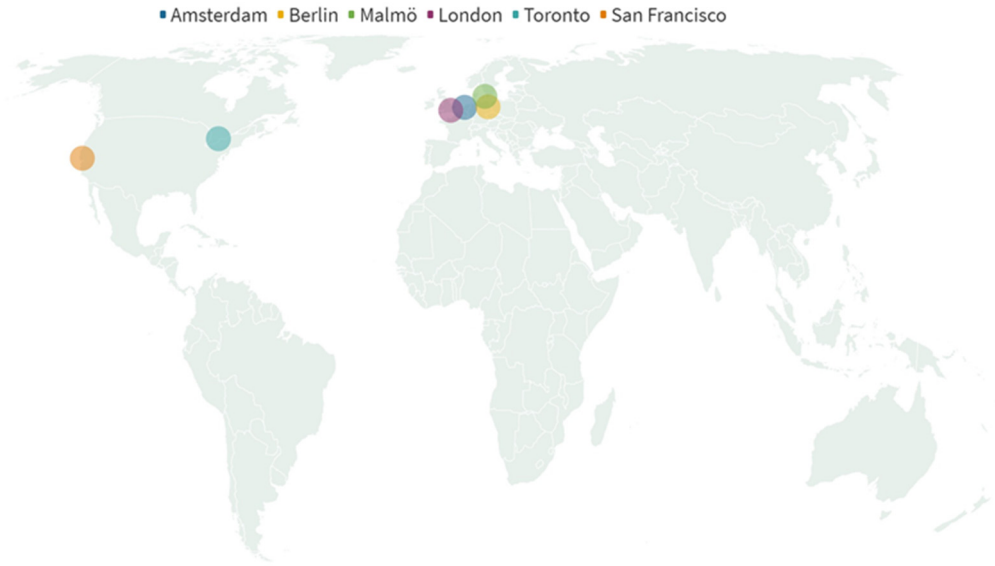


Figure 6. Geographical boundaries

Actors

Many actors shape the development of the SE in cities. This thesis focuses on two of them – USOs and municipal government officials, who are considered the main actor groups shaping the SE (Davidson & Infranca, 2015). All other actors (who also play an important role in institutionalising the SE) do not constitute a focal point of this thesis. These include the users of USOs; third-party organisations such as SE lobby groups, or organisations that make up the incumbent sectors affected by USOs (such as car manufacturers or hotels). While the focal point is on USOs and municipal governments, it should be noted that other actors were also interviewed as part of the mobile research lab methodology, as I interacted with actors involved in the SE directly on site. These actors included the users of USOs, researchers, representants of third-party organisations (e.g. ShareNL) or industrial organisations (e.g. Sharing Economy UK). Interviewing other actors produced additional knowledge about the SE scene in the case cities, and facilitated a deeper understanding of the actions of USOs and city governments associated with their attempts to institutionalise the SE.

Research process and overview of papers

Despite the increasing volume of publications, the SE remains a novel research field. As an emerging field, it calls for exploratory research. The aim of exploratory research design is to study the topic of interest at varying levels of depth, and to form the basis of more conclusive research (Singh, 2007). Interviews are a common research method in exploratory research. To reach an adequate level of depth, scholars have been drawing on existing theories and on concepts from other research fields, including business models (e.g. Muñoz & Cohen, 2018), institutionalism (e.g. Acquier, Carbone, & Vasseur, 2020), regulations (e.g. Katz, 2015), or social innovation (e.g. Acquier & Carbone, 2018). To gain an understanding of the institutionalisation of the SE and the of role sustainability in this process, an interdisciplinary approach is needed. The interdisciplinarity of this thesis lies in the use of several theoretical approaches - institutional theory, sustainability, and governance.

The research questions introduced above are addressed through four peer-reviewed journal articles and one book chapter. To bring depth to this exploration of the SE, the publications utilise a mix of research methods and a wide selection of data sources (see the 'Data collection' chapter). Empirical data was collected primarily through in-depth, semi-structured interviews conducted during mobile research labs (see 'Methodology' section), which integrate desktop research, site visits, and discussions with key stakeholders. **Table 1** provides a summary of publications and the methods used for data collection and analysis.

Table 1. Overview of papers

#	PUBLICATION	METHODS FOR DATA COLLECTION	METHODS FOR DATA ANALYSIS	CITIES INCLUDED + NO. OF INTERVIEWS
1	How do sharing organisations create and disrupt institutions? Towards a framework for institutional work in the sharing economy.	Semi-structured in-depth interviews (67) + mobile research labs	Literature review + institutional work framework	Berlin (33), London (23), Malmö (12)
2	Urban sharing in smart cities: the cases of Berlin and London.	Semi-structured in-depth interviews (24)	Literature analysis of city initiatives + municipal governance modes as analytical framework	Berlin (14), London (10)
3	How institutional work by sharing economy organizations and city governments shapes sustainability.	Semi-structured in-depth interviews (80) + mobile research labs	Literature review + institutional work framework	Berlin (24), London (23), Malmö (16), San Francisco (17)
4	Sustainability framings of accommodation sharing.	Semi-structured in-depth interviews (14) + survey (86)	Literature review + framing theory and core framing tasks	Global North, no particular city (14)
5	Impacts of the sharing economy on urban sustainability: The perceptions of municipal governments and sharing organisations.	Semi-structured in-depth interviews (54) + mobile research labs	Systematic literature review + framing theory + sustainable city framework	Amsterdam (34), Toronto (20)

Paper I

How do sharing organisations create and disrupt institutions? Towards a framework for institutional work in the sharing economy.

Paper I explores which micro-institutional practices USOs use to create new institutions and disrupt existing ones. It therefore contributes to answering RQ 1, *How do USOs engage in institutional creation and disruption?* A framework for institutional work designed by Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) was applied to analyse empirical data collected in London, Berlin, and Malmö. USOs were found to use a mix of mechanisms to create and disrupt institutions, and there were differences in the mechanisms used by for-profit and non-profit USOs. For example, for-profit USOs were more likely to engage in a variety of institutional work mechanisms, including lobbying. On the other hand, non-profit USOs' ability to engage in institutional work was restricted by their resources.

Paper II

Urban sharing in smart cities: the cases of Berlin and London

In order to complement the attempts of USOs to institutionalise the SE studied in Paper 1, Paper 2 explores how a different actor group, municipal governments in London and Berlin, shapes the process of institutionalisation through governance mechanisms. This paper therefore contributes to answering RQ 2, *How do municipalities govern the SE?* Adapting a governance framework by Bulkeley and Kern (2006), the study found that municipalities choose to regulate “the big and the loud,” while at the same time assuming other roles – those of a provider, enabler, and consumer of sharing services. Larger USOs were more likely to be regulated by the municipalities, but also to receive support, endorsement, or promotion. In contrast, non-profit USO were often unsupported, and ignored by municipal governments.

Paper III

How institutional work by sharing economy organizations and city governments shapes sustainability

This paper combines the approaches from Papers 1 and 2 by exploring how both USOs and municipal governments engage in institutional work to normalise the SE, so the study answers both RQ 1 and 2. New empirical data is added from San Francisco. Paper III also bridges institutional work and sustainability by linking governance modes with sustainability challenges faced by cities, and the institutional work of USOs with public awareness of sustainability issues. It finds that USOs use sustainability framings to legitimise sharing practices in cities.

Paper IV

Sustainability framings of accommodation sharing

This paper contributes to answering RQ 3, *How is the sustainability of the SE framed?* by exploring how operators and users frame accommodation sharing platforms in terms of their sustainability potentials. Existing literature was reviewed on the sustainability potentials of the SE to construct a summary of what is known about the sustainability claims about the SE. A typology of accommodation sharing platforms was developed, dividing them into free, reciprocal, and for-profit platforms. This typology served as data collection framework, and interviews with

SE operators and a survey of SE users across the three platform types was conducted. Drawing on framing theory, the study shows differences in how platform owners and platform users frame the sustainability potentials of the three accommodation sharing platform types. Framing in turn reflects how platforms justify their presence on the market, and plays an important role in legitimising the SE.

Paper V

Impacts of the sharing economy on urban sustainability: The perceptions of municipal governments and sharing organisations

This paper departs from the findings in Paper 3 that municipal government mechanisms employed towards urban sharing are conditioned by the sustainability challenges faced by cities. Similarly to Paper IV, it contributes to RQ 3, *How is the sustainability of the SE framed?* by exploring how USOs and municipal government officials in Amsterdam and Toronto frame the sustainability impacts of three SE sectors – accommodation, bicycle, and car sharing. The study finds that the framings of sustainability impacts differ across actors, sectors, and cities. For example, car sharing is actively supported by the municipality in Amsterdam because it is framed as an environmentally sustainable activity, but not in Toronto. Accommodation sharing (of entire apartments) is discouraged in both cities, but for different reasons – overcrowding in Amsterdam and lack of affordable housing in Toronto. In addition, it is the least likely SE segment to be framed in terms of environmental sustainability. Bicycle sharing is marginal in both cities, but for different reasons. Amsterdam has a high percentage of private bicycle ownership coupled with state-of-the-art cycling infrastructure which contribute to an overall cycling culture in the city. There is therefore little demand for additional bicycles. The opposite is true in Toronto, where the cycling infrastructure is underdeveloped and where the weather conditions are unfavourable for cycling.

To put these publications into the context of this thesis, Figure 7 provides a comprehensive overview of the research process.

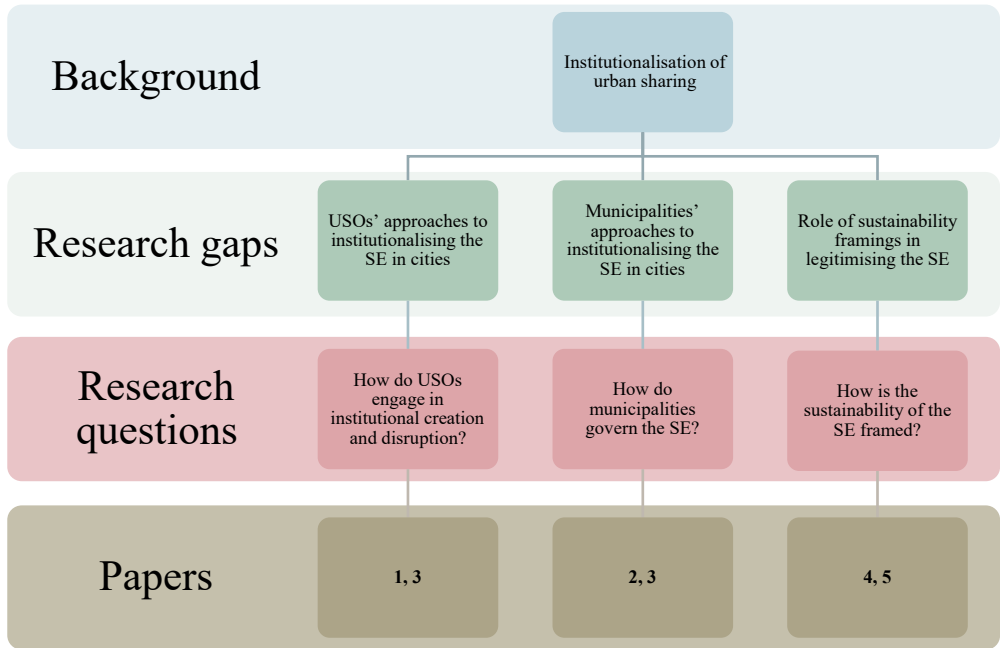


Figure 7. Comprehensive overview of research approach

Target audience

The findings of how the SE becomes institutionalised in cities and which sustainability framings are used in this process can be of interest to several actor groups. Policy makers and government officials (municipal as well as other levels involved in governing the SE) will learn which mechanisms are available to govern the SE in a way that enhances their sustainability agendas. How USOs frame economic, environmental, and social sustainability of the SE may help facilitate discussion between USOs and municipalities. They will also gain an understanding of how USOs work to create and disrupt existing institutions. This knowledge may be useful in their city planning endeavours, as it provides insights into the institutional changes that are taking place in their cities. Learning how issues are framed is an important tool in conflict resolution (Donohue et al., 2011; Drake & Donohue, 1996), so this study could facilitate a starting point for discussions regarding the development of the SE between city governments and USOs.

USOs will gain knowledge about the strategies of other USOs for creating institutional change in cities. This may be helpful in their attempts to create new institutions around the SE concept, disrupt existing institutions, and overall work to institutionalise urban sharing. As for-profit, powerful USOs use a wide variety of

these mechanisms, this study can be especially useful to non-profit USOs that wish to expand their portfolio of institutional work mechanisms. USOs will also learn how cities frame the sustainability potentials of the SE, which is hoped to facilitate a discussion about how they can collaborate with them to support urban sustainability.

The primary academic audience are SE scholars who might find value in the analysis of two the institutional work carried out by actor groups, USOs and municipal governments, and their combination with sustainability studies. Specifically, it might bring value to scholars exploring the SE in combination with governance, institutionalisation, urban studies, and sustainability. Institutionalists might find value in the testing of the institutional work framework first introduced by Lawrence and Suddaby (2006).

Thesis outline

This thesis consists of six chapters and five articles, which are attached as appendices. The first chapter, Introduction, presents the SE concept, reviews the literature on the SE and presents knowledge gaps and the related research questions. A short overview of the appended articles is also provided. The second chapter introduces the theoretical foundations of this thesis – institutional theory and institutional work, municipal governance, sustainability, and framing theory. The research design and methodology along with research positioning are presented in the third chapter. The fourth chapter presents key findings based on the five appended articles. The fifth chapter synthesises the results in a discussion about the significance of the research results. The final chapter presents the contributions of this thesis, makes recommendations about the SE to policymakers and USO, and suggests areas for future research.

Theoretical and conceptual foundations

This thesis draws on several theoretical concepts to explore how the concept of the SE is being co-created by USOs and municipalities, and what role sustainability plays in this process. The overarching theory that connects the research questions is *institutional theory*, which studies “the processes and mechanisms by which structures, schemas, rules, and routines become established as authoritative guidelines for social behaviour” Scott (2004), p. 408. It is adopted because it enables studying how key actors help to embed the SE into societal structures, and, ultimately, to institutionalising the SE. I make use of four related concepts and theories to contribute to the institutional perspective. I draw on *institutional work* to explore the deliberate work of USOs to create new and disrupt existing institutions. I also adopted this theoretical framework, along with *governance*, to explore which approaches municipalities employ to shape the development of the SE.

When USOs and municipalities negotiate the development of the SE, they often argue about its sustainability impacts (see for example Ma, Lan, Thornton, Mangalagu, & Zhu, 2018; Zvolska et al., 2018). It is through sustainability that I explore how municipalities and USOs understand the social, environmental and economic impacts of the SE, which in turn shapes their actions when co-creating the SE. Finally, the actors’ understanding of the sustainability issues associated with the SE is explored through framing theory.

Figure 8 provides an overview of the key concepts and theories used in this thesis and shows how they connect to the research questions. The following sections further elaborate on this. All key concepts and definitions are summarised at the end of this chapter, in **Table 4**.

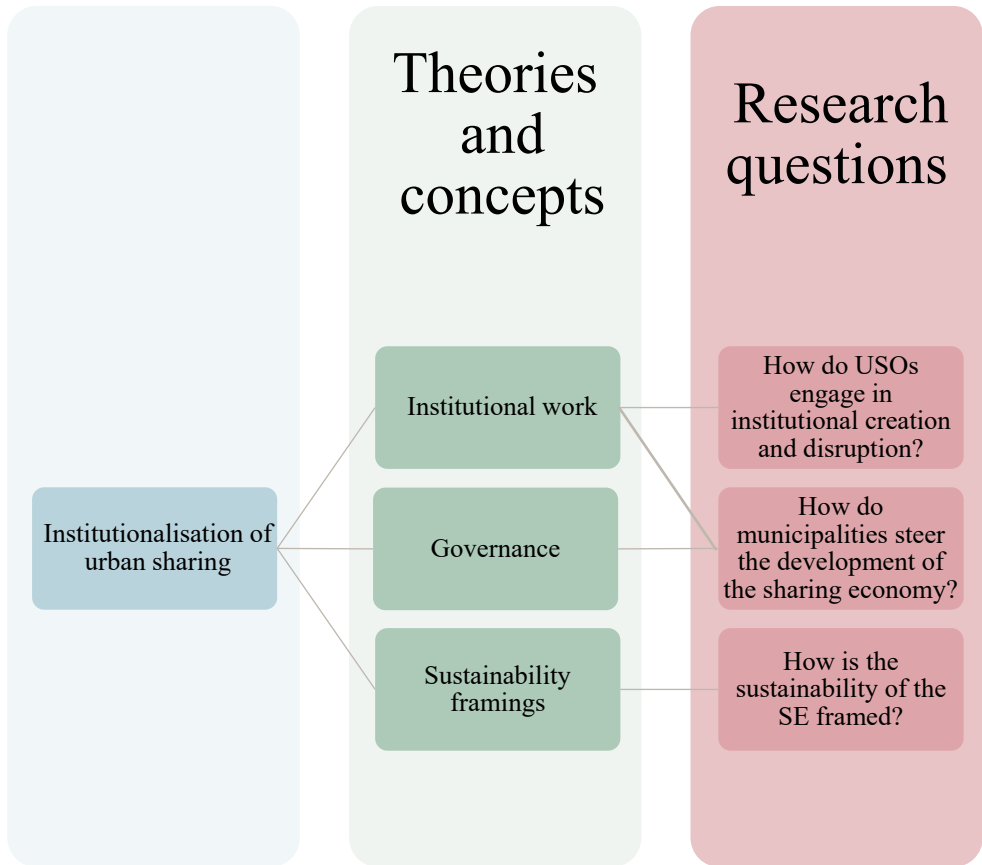


Figure 8. Theories and concepts adopted to answer research questions

Institutional theory

One of the aims of this thesis is to study how actors work to shape the SE. The approach looks for explanations in institutional theory, which studies “the processes and mechanisms by which structures, schemas, rules, and routines become established as authoritative guidelines for social behaviour” (Scott, 2004, p. 408). If and when the SE becomes institutionalised, it will become and remain “diffused across an organizational field” (Lawrence et al., 2001). However, it is still being shaped by key actors who exert power on its development, so it can be argued that its institutionalisation is still ongoing. This process of institutionalisation is “a relatively fixed sequence that involves a period of time in which an innovation emerges and is diffused” (Lawrence et al., 2001).

As the SE is becomes institutionalised, it is challenging the established, unsustainable practices connected with accessing resources. These practices are associated with specific ‘structures, schemas, rules, and routines’ that constitute existing institutions, defined as a “reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by types of actors” (Berger & Luckman, 1966, pp. 70-84). Since an institution is perceived as a habit and a ‘taken-for-granted routine’ it is external of the actors, albeit constructed by them (Berger & Luckman, 1966). A major institution being affected by the SE is, for example, car ownership.

The disruption of existing institutions by USOs has been discussed (Drahokoupil & Fabo, 2016; Laurell & Sandström, 2016), but an equally important question is how SE actors work to shape, mould, and ultimately, institutionalise the SE itself (Wruk, Schöllhorn, & Oberg, 2020).

Institutions are “comprised of regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive elements” (Scott, 2007, p. 48). This classification is useful in unpacking the institutionalisation of sharing practices. The SE can be considered institutionalised when the rules and structures associated with it become “established as authoritative guidelines for social behaviour” (Scott, 2004, p. 408). When people no longer question the existence of the SE, and it is considered normal, then it is institutionalised.

Institutional theory is built on a number of founding assumptions. A key assumption is the pervasive role of existing structures in determining the behaviour of actors and organisations. Organisations that conform to the existing structures are rewarded with legitimacy, which accelerates the embeddedness of structures and makes institutional change difficult (Battilana & D’Aunno, 2010; Scott, 2004; Suddaby, Bitektine, & Haack, 2017). While this ‘institutional inertia’ keeps existing rules and structures stable over long periods of time, neo-institutionalists have recognised the role of actors in inciting institutional change (Battilana, Leca, & Boxenbaum, 2009). The key premise is that, since institutions were constructed by humans, they can also be altered and destroyed by them (Hampel, Lawrence, & Tracey, 2017; Hardy & Maguire, 2008; Lawrence, Suddaby, & Leca, 2009; Smets & Jarzabkowski, 2013). Institutional theory has therefore expanded from the study of institutional complexity to the study of institutional change, entrepreneurship, and work.

The SE is institutionalised to different degrees, depending on the business model, and key actors are constantly attempted to shape it. SE actors whose agendas align with existing institutions, or those who can convince others that their actions are desirable, will influence the development of the SE. How the SE becomes embedded into existing systems depends partly on the work of key actors in shaping the development of the SE, and partly on the ‘institutional inertia’ – the power of existing institutions in determining the development of the SE. Institutionalisation of the SE is explored here by studying the attempts of USOs and municipalities to

shape the development of the SE. This is done when, for example, municipalities regulate certain SE segments, when USOs lobby municipal governments, or when both actor groups engage in framing.

USOs aim to survive on the market and become embedded as institutions in the SE. Their access to resources, which determines how agentic they are (their power to change institutions), varies considerably, depending on their size, sector and city they operate in. *Municipalities* are powerful actors whose power is embedded in their high level of institutionalisation (that is, they are institutionalised on regulatory, normative, and cultural-cognitive levels). Depending on their jurisdiction, they influence the development of USOs, and in turn, the SE.

Institutional work

When discussing institutionalisation, scholars tend to adopt a retrospective point of view by focusing their attention on already established “structures, schemas, rules, and routines” (Scott, 2004). This poses challenges to this thesis, which aims to study the current, ‘messy,’ attempts of key actors to institutionalise the SE. Applying the concept of institutional work is well suited for this challenge, as it “...explore[s] the practices and processes associated with actors’ endeavours to build up, tear down, elaborate and contain institutions, as well as amplify or suppress their effects” (Hampel et al., 2017, p. 558). Institutional work explores the relationship between institutions and actors by studying how, why and when actors shape institutions (Hampel et al., 2017). Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) presented a framework for institutional work whereby actors purposefully change institutions by political engagement, reconfiguring actors’ belief systems, and changing the boundaries of meaning systems. This framework builds on Scott’s (1995) classification of institutions as regulatory, normative, and cultural-cognitive.

In institutional work, the emphasis is on both agency and structure, meaning that actors construct institutions and are constructed by them (Figure 9). The unit of analysis is micro-institutional practices of actors (Zilber, 2013), rather than macro-level institutions. The actors who engage in institutional work tend to be powerful, and have access to a pool of skills and resources. They can be individuals who act as leaders or take on the form of a collective (Lawrence, Leca, & Zilber, 2013). They have different dimensions of agency (Battilana et al., 2009), but what connects them is a reflective purposefulness with which they work to create, maintain and disrupt institutions (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006).

This thesis explores how USOs and municipal governments create and disrupt institutions. Institutional maintenance is left out because it does not constitute institutional *change*, and because it is mostly carried out by the traditional organisations, which are not part of this study. A prominent example is that of

workers' unions and taxi drivers protecting traditional taxi services from the rise in ride hailing services epitomised by the company Uber (Pelzer, Frenken, & Boon, 2019). However, Uber is not considered goods sharing (rather, it is labour) and is therefore outside the scope of this thesis. Municipalities and third-party organisations sometimes engage in institutional maintenance, for example when they protect the incumbent sectors, existing regulations, institutionalised systems (such as affordable housing and public transportation) and other institutions from change. Often, this is done in cooperation with the incumbents.

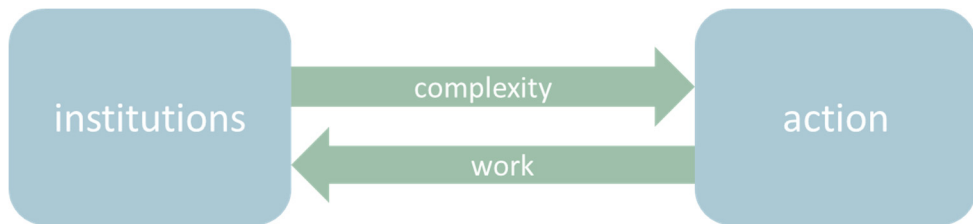


Figure 9. The relationship between actors and institutions (Adopted from Lawrence et al. (2009))

Institutional creation

The creation of institutions is a lengthy process rooted in cultural and historical contexts, and actors do not create or recreate institutions instantaneously (Berger & Luckman, 1966). Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) outlined nine forms of institutional work that actors undertake in their endeavours to create institutions. Their overview is shown in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Creating institutions. Source: Lawrence & Suddaby (2006)

	Forms of institutional work	Definition
political engagement	Advocacy	The mobilization of political and regulatory support through direct and deliberate techniques of social suasion
	Defining	The construction of rule systems that confer status or identity, define boundaries of membership or create status hierarchies within a field
	Vesting	The creation of rule structures that confer property rights
reconfiguring actors' belief systems	Constructing identities	Defining the relationship between an actor and the field in which that actor operates
	Changing normative associations	Re-making the connections between sets of practices and the moral and cultural foundations for those practices
	Constructing normative networks	Constructing of interorganizational connections through which practices become normatively sanctioned and which form the relevant peer group with respect to compliance, monitoring and evaluation
reconfiguring actors' belief systems	Mimicry	Associating new practices with existing sets of taken-for-granted practices, technologies and rules in order to ease adoption
	Theorizing	The development and specification of abstract categories and the elaboration of chains of cause and effect
	Educating	The educating of actors in skills and knowledge necessary to support the new institution

The authors describe this type of work as the phases of conflict and cooperation between actors, where the outcome typically reflects the values and interests of dominant actors. Some actors, i.e. city councils or professional bodies, can create new institutions more effortlessly than others, as this ability is vested in them by formal rules and institutions. When powerful actors, e.g. municipal governments, perform institutional work, they typically engage in a rule-based institutional creation (i.e. vesting, defining or advocacy) that has a potential to create significant institutional change. Another form of creating institutions focuses more on changing norms and belief systems (i.e. constructing identities, normative associations or normative networks). According to Lawrence and Suddaby (2006), this type of work creates institutions that complement or run parallel with existing institutions.

Institutional disruption

Institutional creation and disruption are closely connected because when a new institution is created, the existing ones are affected. Academic literature has discussed the institutional disruption caused by USOs. For example, Cohen and Sundararajan (2015) and Martin, Upham, and Budd (2015) have examined how sharing organisations disrupt established markets, and Drahokoupil and Fabo (2016) explored the disruption of employment relationships. However, the disruption brought about by the SE extends beyond market disruption – for example, the disruption of existing legal frameworks or of values and beliefs.

Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) state that institutional disruption “involves attacking or undermining the mechanisms that lead members to comply with institutions” (p. 235). They identified four forms of institutional work that disrupts institutions, which are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3. Disrupting institutions. Source: Lawrence & Suddaby (2006)

	Forms of institutional work	Definition
political engagement	Disconnecting sanctions	Working through state apparatus to disconnect rewards and sanctions from some set of practices, technologies or rules
reconfiguring actors' belief systems	Disassociating moral foundations	Disassociating the practice, rule or technology from its moral foundation as appropriate within a specific cultural context
reconfiguring actors' belief systems	Undermining assumptions and beliefs	Decreasing the perceived risks of innovation and differentiation by undermining core assumptions and beliefs

Municipal governance

Municipal leadership has gained in significance, as municipalities are playing an increasingly important role in solving complex socio-economic and environmental problems. Cities are responsible for 80% of world's energy consumption, 75% of resource consumption, and 75% of carbon emissions (UNEP, 2013), so cities have a unique opportunity to become centres of sustainable transformation. The responsibilities of municipal governments¹⁷ include such broad tasks as provision of services, including housing and transportation; curbing greenhouse gas emissions and the related environmental degradation; and urban revitalisation (Hohn & Neuer, 2006). Utilising their power to enact change, municipal governments strive to find appropriate ways to govern urban development in a sustainable way. They are expected to use various instruments, standards and approaches, collectively called 'governance' (Borraz & Le Galès, 2010). Governance is defined as "a process of co-ordinating actors, social groups, and institutions to attain particular goals, discussed and defined collectively in fragmented, uncertain environments" (Le Galès, 1998, in Borraz and Le Galès (2010)).

Municipal governance is a subset of urban governance that is defined as the "processes through which collective goals are defined and pursued" (Betsill & Bulkeley, 2006, 144). The approach taken in this thesis focuses on the "actions taken by municipalities when governing SEOs [sharing economy organisations]" (Voytenko Palgan et al., 2021).

When discussing governance of the SE, mostly 'regulation' is mentioned (see for example: Cao, 2016; Liu & Chen, 2020; Sinclair, 2016; Williams & Horodnic, 2017). However, regulation is only one mechanism of governance, and municipalities can also govern urban sharing in other ways. An analytical framework developed by Bulkeley and Kern (2006) is used in this thesis to study what mechanisms municipalities use to govern the sharing economy. The authors developed the framework by studying local governance of climate change strategies, and identified four governance modes.

Self-governing encompasses the municipalities' strategies to govern their own activities. It includes the procurement of green products and services, or investments in energy-efficient technologies in municipal buildings. This form of governance does not require much effort in bringing together various public and private actors as the other governance modes, but may result in only marginal changes.

Governing by authority refers to the traditional ways of regulation that use sanctions to ensure compliance. Examples include the imposition of stricter rules and standards. Although governing by authority is effective because it tends to be

¹⁷ Municipal government is defined as the local administration of a city (Silva & Buček, 2017).

accompanied with enforcement measures, it is often the last applied measure, as regulations are typically not welcomed from the industry.

Governing by provision relates to the delivery of services and resources. These may include financial incentives or the provision of infrastructure. Examples include the provision of public transport services to support environmentally friendly modes of transport, or recycling stations. Since municipalities lack sufficient financial resources, this mode of governance is often used sparingly.

Governing by enabling facilitates partnerships and cooperation among actors in a non-demanding way, such as persuasion, incentives, and arguments. It includes information and education campaigns, promotions, and guidance.

The sharing economy as an issue field

Understanding how the SE develops first requires defining its institutional field, which is used interchangeably with ‘organisational field,’ and is one of the pillars of institutional theory. The concept was developed to expand the term ‘industry’ by including all related actors (Greenwood, Oliver, Lawrence, & Meyer, 2017). DiMaggio and Powell (1983) understand organisational field as “...those organizations that, in the aggregate, constitute a recognized area of institutional life: key suppliers, resource and product consumers, regulatory agencies, and other organizations that produce similar services or products.” (p. 148). However, defining the SE as an organisational field is difficult, as the SE operates across several sectors, such as car, bicycle, holiday, or tool rentals, each of them having a distinct set of suppliers, consumers, regulators, and other related actors. Another drawback to delimiting the SE as a field is the lack of a commonly agreed upon definition. Despite this, the concept remains interesting from an institutional perspective because there are continued attempts to define it, to determine who is a part of it and who is not, and it has an indisputable impact on existing organisations and fields (Geissinger et al., 2020; Laurell & Sandström, 2016), as well as on institutionalised consumption and production practices. Hoffman (1999) pointed out that organisational fields do not have to revolve around markets; they can connect actors involved in the shaping of an issue:

“The notion that an organizational field forms around a central issue – such as the protection of the natural environment – rather than a central technology or market, introduces the idea that fields become centers of debates in which competing interests negotiate over issue interpretations.” (Hoffman, 1999, p. 351)

The ‘issue’ here is the SE – there are debates about what it is (Frenken & Schor, 2017; Schlagwein et al., 2020), how it should develop and be regulated (Heinrichs,

2013; Lines, 2015), what impacts it has on existing institutions (Mair & Reischauer, 2019; Zvolška et al., 2019), and, importantly, how it will affect environmental, social and economic sustainability (Plepys & Singh, 2019; Schor, 2017; Sundararajan, 2014). The SE clearly exhibits features of a so-called issue field (Meyer & Höllerer, 2010), as it lacks institutional infrastructure, formal governance structures, and informal infrastructure elements (Hinings, Logue, & Zietsma, 2017). In an issue field, “proponents and opponents equally need to mobilize consensus for their world view (...) [in] highly political and intense struggles over which group’s symbolic definition of an issue will prevail” (Meyer & Höllerer, 2010, p. 1253)

A study by Wruk et al. (2020) also identifies the SE as an issue field with disruptive effects on existing organisational fields. What unifies an issue field are debates surrounding contested societal issues, such as sustainability (Wruk et al., 2020)¹⁸. Therefore, the sustainability lens offers an appropriate way to study the SE as an issue field.

The SE has become an issue field in two ways – when USOs themselves engage in discussions on societal issues (Mont, Voytenko Palgan, et al., 2019; Zvolška et al., 2019) and when issues surrounding the SE are discussed by other actors and organisations, such as the media or academia (Wruk et al., 2020) or municipalities (Zvolška et al., 2018). In this thesis, both approaches are studied through an exploration of the sustainability framings employed by USOs and municipalities. In addition, a single sector, accommodation sharing, is also examined.

Sustainability

The SE’s potential to contribute to a sustainability transition is widely discussed (Daunorienė, Drakšaitė, Snieška, & Valodkienė, 2015), and has become an emerging area of research within the SE research field (Ertz & Leblanc-Proulx, 2018). Researchers have, for example, explored the social (Michellini, Principato, & Iasevoli, 2018; Schor & Attwood-Charles, 2017; Tyndall, 2017) economic (Barron et al., 2021; Martin, 2016; Sundararajan, 2014) and environmental (Plepys & Singh, 2019; Schneider, Folkens, Meyer, & Faulk, 2019) impacts of the SE. Advocates of the SE argue that it is part of a greater socio-technical transition that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions, generate income through micro-entrepreneurship, facilitate access to resources, and increase social cohesion (Botsman & Rogers, 2011; Hamari, Sjöklint, & Ukkonen, 2013; Mi & Coffman, 2019; Sundararajan, 2016). Since environmental degradation, income inequality, lack of social inclusiveness, and uneven access to resources are among the most pressing urban

¹⁸ Social, environmental and economic sustainability are topics of constant debates surrounding the SE (Ertz & Leblanc-Proulx, 2018).

problems (UN-Habitat, 2020), the SE has a potential to contribute to sustainable urbanisation.

At the same time, the SE has been accused of reinforcing “the current unsustainable economic paradigm” (Laukkanen & Tura, 2020; Martin, 2016). The sustainability or unsustainability of the SE is contested, because the concepts of sustainability and sustainable development themselves are among the most disputed ideologies of our time (Arman et al., 2009). The vague definitions that largely incorporate environmental, social, and economic dimensions are too broad to operationalise without raising profound ethical and political dilemmas (Owens, 2003). Much like the concept of the sharing economy might be considered an oxymoron since ‘sharing’ implies altruistic intentions and ‘economy’ capitalist tendencies, environmental protection may be seen as incompatible with economic growth in the concept of ‘sustainable development.’ How these concepts are eventually operationalised depends on the embedded institutional complexity of the field in which they are co-created, and on the institutional work of actors involved in these concepts.

While it is generally accepted that sustainability is a desired outcome of urban governance, sustainability strategies can be manipulated to reinforce existing agendas. This is evident in the context of the SE where sustainability *claims* play a major role in its institutionalisation. As an example, car sharing schemes are being implemented by city governments to reach their climate goals (Arsenault, 2021), although their wider rebound effects are largely unknown (Plepys & Singh, 2019). Similarly, the battle for institutionalising accommodation sharing in large cities is taking place within the realms of housing crises, social cohesion, income inequality, and energy saving measures (see for example: Airbnb, 2014; Barron et al., 2021; Cheng et al., 2020; Farmaki & Stergiou, 2019; Lee, 2016).

Since the sustainability impacts of the SE have become a politicised topic, the *perceived* sustainability impacts have taken a central stage in debates about how the SE should develop in cities (Zvolska et al., 2018). This thesis applies an institutional theory perspective to sustainability that builds on a constructivist perspective, and views the SE as being formed by behavioural and cultural factors (including sustainability), rather than by technological and economic activity (Hoffman & Jennings, 2015).

Framings

Although cities deal with similar sustainability issues, no one city is like any other, and the SE follows different developmental pathways everywhere. How the SE becomes institutionalised is contingent upon the institutional work of key actors and the existing institutions in each city (Hong & Lee, 2018a; Lawrence, Suddaby, &

Leca, 2011; Zvolška et al., 2019). Consequently, frames are devised by actors, but are grounded in existing institutions.

One way SE actors engage in institutional work is by framing the SE and its consequences, because frames are powerful tools in the process of institutionalising new and contested phenomena (George, Chattopadhyay, Sitkin, & Barden, 2006). To exemplify, there is a direct link between how the sustainability of the SE is framed and how it is governed (Vith et al., 2019). Some forms of SE platforms are restricted in cities where municipalities believe they cause negative impacts, but are supported in others. Sharp (2018) also supports this proposal when he states that “narrative framing of the sharing economy by different actors plays an important role in shaping urban policy” (p. 514). However, when the agendas of USOs and municipalities do not align, conflicts arise. Since the SE is disrupting existing institutional constellations in cities, conflicts are not uncommon (Del Romero Renau, 2018; Yang, Hu, Qiao, Wang, & Jiang, 2020). According to Schon and Rein (1995), it is important to understand which frames are in conflict and how they are constructed because they can help us “understand how these frames affect the development of a conflict, as well as how they can be used to influence it.” Similarly, Donohue et al. (2011) suggest that learning how issues are framed is an important tool in conflict resolutions. Understanding how the social, economic, and environmental impacts of SE are framed by various actors can therefore improve understanding of different actors’ agendas, priorities, goals, and visions. Ultimately, this might facilitate collaboration and bring SE actors together to resolve the sustainability issues surrounding the SE in cities.

A core focus of institutionalism is on how ideas, such as that of the SE, are theorised, adopted, adapted, and diffused (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). For the purpose of examining how concepts become institutionalised, institutional theory has made use of framing theory, which examines how social phenomena are constructed and conceptualised (Snow, Benford, & Others, 1988). In this thesis, framing theory is used to tie together the sustainability narratives of the SE and the work of actors to institutionalise the SE.

Framing “select[s] some aspects of a perceived reality and make[s] them more salient (...), in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation.” (Entman, 1993). Framing is used to make sense of complex issues, to recognise aspects that are key to understanding these issues, and to communicate individuals’ interpretation of the issue to others (Schon & Rein, 1995). Attitudes are a central concept in framing research, as they underlie and determine framings. These attitudes comprise a series of evaluative beliefs (Chong & Druckman, 2007). For example, an actor’s attitude towards accommodation sharing might consist of positive (e.g. “good for tourism,” “facilitates extra income”) and negative (e.g. “nuisance for the neighbours,” “gentrifies neighbourhoods”) evaluations. Their overall attitude towards accommodation sharing will depend on the relative

magnitude of each evaluation. This will also influence how they frame accommodation sharing.

According to framing theory, a problem can be viewed from different perspectives by different actors and be interpreted in different ways (Entman, 1993). Previously, framing has been used to analyse how specific sustainability issues are viewed by different actors (see for example: Diedrich, Upham, Levidow, & Van Den Hove, 2011; Jensen, Goggins, Røpke, & Fahy, 2019; Kusmanoff et al., 2016; Mino & Kudo, 2020). Snow et al. (1988) devised three core framing tasks – diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing – to form a comprehensive overview of an issue. Diagnostic framing identifies the issues at hand; prognostic framing proposes strategies to solve the issues and sets targets; and motivational framing encourages actors to take action in solving the issue.

In summary, this thesis explores the institutionalisation of the SE by drawing on four key theories and concepts: institutionalisation, governance, framings, and sustainability. An overview of key definitions related to the four theories and concepts is shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Overview of key concepts and theories

Concept	Definition	Reference
Sharing economy	"A novel way of physical resource distribution facilitated by online platforms where temporary access is given to goods owned by peers or organisations."	Enochsson et al. (2021), p. 1
Urban sharing	The sharing economy as embedded into urban systems.	Zvolska, Voytenko Palgan and Mont, 2019
Institutional theory	Studies "the processes and mechanisms by which structures, schemas, rules, and routines become established as authoritative guidelines for social behaviour"	Scott (2004), p. 408
Institution	"Reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by types of actors."	Berger and Luckman (1966), p. 70-85, esp. 72
Institutionalisation	The emergence and diffusion of innovation through the maintenance, disruption and change of institutions.	Lawrence et al. (2001), p. 627
Legitimacy	"A generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are socially desirable, proper or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions."	Suchman, (1995), p. 574
Institutional field	"A recognized area of institutional life: key suppliers, resource and product consumers, regulatory agencies and other organisations that produce similar services or products."	DiMaggio and Powell (1983), p. 148
Issue field	"Fields become centers of debates in which competing interests negotiate over issue interpretations."	Hoffman (1999), p. 351
Institutional work	"The sets of practices through which individual and collective actors create, maintain and disrupt the institutions of organizational fields."	Lawrence and Suddaby (2006), p. 219
Municipal government	The local administration of a city.	Silva and Buček (2017)
Municipal governance	The decision-making of municipal governments made in cooperation with other actors that aims at "increasing the quality of life of the population of the municipality".	Bondaletov, Makushkin, Bondaletova, and Kozyrev (2016)
Sustainability	"An overarching paradigm (...) which simultaneously addresses the interlinked aspects of economy, environment and social well-being."	Santillo (2007), p. 60&65
Framing	"Select[s] some aspects of a perceived reality and make[s] them more salient (...), in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation."	Entman (1993), p. 52

Research design and methodology

This chapter reflects on the research positioning within the philosophy of science, and elaborates on the methods used to answer the research questions outlined above. It first reflects on the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of this study, on the research methods used for data collection and data analysis. Finally, reliability and validity are discussed.

Research positioning

Before plunging into ontological and methodological positioning and justifications of the methods used in this research, a few reflections on the purpose of this study. Leavy (2017) identifies six purposes of conducting social research, which are helpful in identifying the kind of knowledge this research creates. These are summarised below, and their relevance to this research is contemplated.

When a research topic is new and under-researched, and research questions, audience, participants, and methods for data collection are unknown, a researcher may engage in an **exploration** of the topic (Leavy, 2017). Given that the SE was a novel field of research at the start of this PhD, an explorative approach was undertaken, particularly at the start. I took part in Mobile Research Labs (MRLs) (see above) in London, Berlin, Amsterdam, San Francisco, Toronto, and Shanghai to explore the urban sharing scene in the cities, network with relevant SE actors, and learn about the challenges surrounding the SE. The research questions emerged from these MRLs, and they also identified relevant participants.

Another purpose of conducting research is to provide a **description** of the individuals, participants, groups, activities, or events essential for the topic. The aim of this type of study is to provide “thick descriptions of social life (those that provide details, meanings, and context), typically from the perspective of the people living it” (Leavy, 2017, p. 5). This thesis aims to (1) provide descriptions of the actions of SE actors in their endeavours to steer and influence the development of the SE, and (2) to explore in a descriptive manner how they frame the sustainability impacts of SE on cities. The quality of these descriptions is ensured by the utilisation of mixed concepts and theories (see Ch 2).

Explanation aims to find causal and effectual correlations, seeking to explain why things are the way they are (Leavy, 2017). While the main purpose of this study is not to confer causalities – very few studies on the SE do – it does offer possible explanations of, for example, why municipalities govern the SE the way they do, or why they frame it in a certain way.

When a need for a systemic change is identified by relevant actors, the purpose of research may be to engage in **community change or action**. This type of research aims to impact policies, public opinions, or incite behavioural changes. At the same time, when the purpose of a study is to bring about community change, the researcher may conduct exploratory, descriptive, or evaluative research (Leavy, 2017). The initial interest in carrying out this study was to explore an alternative to unsustainable consumption and production. The SE is, however, shrouded in conflict, and there is little explanation as to how it impacts environmental, social, and economic sustainability, or liveability and service quality in cities. Even the results of existing quantitative studies are restricted by the selection of system boundaries (Baumann & Tillman, 2004). In addition, quantitative evaluation studies of the environmental impacts of the SE can benefit from including actors' perspectives as they bring understanding to how unsustainable situations can be improved (Baumann et al., 2011). By exploring the perceptions of municipalities and USOs on the impact of the SE on urban areas, I aim to provide an overview of the perceived issues associated with urban sharing, and to facilitate discussion between USOs and municipalities. This knowledge could be used in the design of participatory policies aimed at curbing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, enhancing social cohesion, and fostering entrepreneurship, while mitigating the negative impacts of the SE.

Evaluation studies assess the effectiveness of policies or programmes. This is not the purpose of this study, although it does deal with municipal policies that govern the SE. An evaluation of these, especially of the effectiveness of curbing illegal holiday rentals, can be explored in future studies.

Lastly, studies whose purpose is to **evoke, provoke or unsettle** encourage actors to see issues differently, challenge stereotypes, or create awareness about issues. Researchers may turn to exploratory or descriptive research to do this (Leavy, 2017). While not the focal point of this study, I hope this thesis and the attached papers stimulate discussions about the impact of the SE in cities.

Now that I have established that the purpose of this research is to explore and describe the development of urban sharing, and by doing so, to probe community change, the rest of this chapter will connect these purposes with ontological, epistemological, and methodological underpinnings.

Delving into the philosophical foundations of one's research is important because it brings clarity to the research processes and their outcomes. Being aware of the different ontologies and epistemologies encourages researchers to ask fundamental

questions about their research and helps them improve in a number of ways. They may question what phenomena can be observed, if they can be observed at all, who can observe them, or how to deal with conflicting views on reality (ontology). They may also wonder to what extent their own personal beliefs and thoughts shape the design of their research, whether any biases exist and if and how they need to be addressed, as well as how their research methods can be improved (epistemology). Consequently, this next section aims to discuss how my ontological and epistemological positioning influences this thesis.

Reflection on ontological position

Ontology is a branch of philosophy that deals with the nature of the knowable, what exists, and what makes up reality (Lewis-Beck, Bryman, & Liao, 2003). Reality can be understood through a spectrum of views, with realist or relativist views on each end of the spectrum. A realist worldview posits that reality exists independently of the human mind, and can be observed and quantified. Realists therefore believe that the truth is objective. In contrast, a relativist worldview departs from the belief that reality is socially constructed by those who study it, and is therefore subjective. A construction of reality is not inherently right or wrong, true or false, only more or less informed (Bryman, 2012). A relativist positioning further assumes that there are multiple understandings of reality dependent on the people who construct it. This study contains both realist and relativist elements in that it assumes that reality exists and can be observed, but is at the same time co-constructed in a defined time and space by the researcher and the research subjects. For example, by exploring how actors frame the SE, I describe how issues are constructed by others.

Epistemological reflection

Epistemology asks what we can know about reality. It concerns how knowledge is created, and is closely intertwined with ontology because determining what exists is a prerequisite for deciding how we know that it exists. Epistemology can be viewed on a spectrum between positivism and interpretivism. A positivist epistemology maintains that phenomena can be measured quantitatively (Bryman, 2012). An interpretivist epistemology beliefs are guided by the rule that “knowledge is a compilation of human-made constructions” (Raskin, 2002), so it is concerned with interpreting human action. The research questions in this thesis lean towards constructionism because they aim to examine how social actors, i.e. USOs, city officials, or policy makers, interpret reality. It does not examine whether their positions are right or wrong, but it gives accounts about their multiplicity and, in doing so, tries to understand their views about the SE and how it informs their actions.

Constructionism posits that social reality is socially constructed. This does not mean that it only exists in our heads, but that it is constructed by us. For example, the institutions guiding our behaviour are real and they exist, but they were created by us and can also be changed by us. By adopting a constructionist perspective, the research problem is understood from multiple perspectives because it allows me to see the world through the eyes of the research subjects (USOs and municipal officials) (Rashid, Rashid, Warraich, Sabir, & Waseem, 2019). Emphasis is placed on an observable phenomenon, in this case the SE, and views the data and findings as co-created by myself and the research participants (Charmaz, 2006). Constructionism is also embedded into the main theories and concepts used in this thesis. Neoinstitutional theory originated in social constructionism, as it posits that institutions are co-created by actors, which makes them social constructions (Berger & Luckman, 1966) that can be created, maintained and disrupted by actors (Battilana et al., 2009; Hampel et al., 2017). Framing theory, too, is based on constructionist epistemology, as it observes how phenomena are understood by actors. Framing “refers to the process by which people develop a particular conceptualization of an issue or reorient their thinking about an issue.” (Chong & Druckman, 2007).

At the same time, this thesis has a third focal point – how actors view the SE in terms of sustainability. While sustainability is considered the ultimate goal of development, here it is also understood as a social construction, as it has different meanings for each actor. The aim is to achieve a deep understanding of how the research subjects view the sustainability aspects of the SE, and how their views on the sustainability of the SE steer their actions.

Research design frames

Mobile Research Labs

The methodology guiding this PhD is called ‘mobile research lab,’ MRL (Mont, 2018). It was developed for the research project ‘Urban Sharing: Sustainability and Institutionalisation,’ under which I conducted my PhD studies. The MRL methodology combines deductive and inductive research and a multi-disciplinary approach to studying the SE as an urban phenomenon.

An MRL comprises four stages.

(1) Desktop research is carried out to collect available information about the SE in a chosen city. Policy briefs, reports, academic articles, online media content, books, websites, and other related material on the SE are reviewed. Relevant stakeholders are identified, and interviews are conducted with them online. These initial

interviews also uncover other relevant actors, who are then interviewed. This stage takes at least four weeks.

(2) A five-day study visit is carried out in the chosen city, where information about urban sharing is collected through additional interviews, focus groups, site visits, guided tours, observations, and attendance of fairs and exhibitions. Workshops with local researchers are also organised.

(3) The interviews are recorded and impressions from the visits are discussed among team members daily to find overarching themes, drivers, and barriers to sharing, and its sustainability implications on the city. Reflections are written by each team member, including myself.

(4) Upon return from the site visit, the recorded material is transcribed. A report is written which reflects on the sharing of space, mobility, and physical goods, and on the role of the city government in governing urban sharing.

The aim of an MRL is to investigate “a more complex and broader societal phenomenon manifested in activities of a variety of organisations and societal actors” (Mont, 2018). The actors’ understanding of urban sharing and its impacts on social, environmental, and economic fabrics of the city often differs from the perceptions of other actors, so an MRL aims to record the multiplicity of these understandings and perceptions.

The data for this thesis was collected through MRLs in Berlin, London, Amsterdam, San Francisco, and Toronto, which I attended in person. It also builds on an MRL in Malmö, which I did not conduct myself, but I had access to the data. I also took part in an MRL in Shanghai, which was conducted online due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Data from this MRL is not included in this thesis.



Photo 1. Urban Sharing Researchers conducting an interview at Toronto Tool Library (courtesy of the author).

Case study research

This thesis is based on a number of case studies that together provide an in-depth analysis of how the SE becomes institutionalised in cities. Case studies were selected as the research approach because they provide a holistic, in-depth understanding of a phenomenon (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009), such as the SE. The generation of in-depth knowledge is highlighted in the following definition of case studies by Simons (2009):

“Case study is an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, programme or system in a ‘real life’ context. The primary purpose is to generate in-depth understanding of a specific topic (...)” (Simons, 2009, p. 21).

The in-depth knowledge is typically achieved by exploring a subject (= the institutionalisation of the SE) from several directions – something Foucault (1981, p. 4) calls ‘a polyhedron of intelligibility.’ This is applied in this thesis by exploring the institutionalisation of the SE through the inclusion of (i) two actor groups – USOs and municipalities; (ii) data collected in six cities around the world: London, Berlin, Amsterdam, Malmö, San Francisco, and Toronto; and (iii) three segments of the SE – accommodation sharing, mobility sharing (car and bicycle sharing), and tool sharing.

The main unit of analysis is the two actor groups – USOs and municipalities in their related city contexts. It is through their lens that urban sharing is explored in the

different cities and across the three segments. The selection of these actors as a unit of analysis is in line with Bryman (2012), who posits that cases are commonly associated with a location or an organisation.

As is common in case studies (Thomas, 2021), the aim of this thesis is not to generate findings that are generalisable to the general population. Instead, it is to gain rich understandings of the activities of USOs and municipalities influencing the institutionalisations of the SE, the beliefs and motivations that drive these actions, and the conflicts and alignments that exist between them. It is hoped that this analysis will provide a deeper understanding of how actors work to institutionalise the SE in cities, and highlight the issues that need to be solved and the potentials of the SE to contribute to a sustainable urban development.

Yin (2009, in Bryman (2012, p. 70) distinguishes between five types of cases: the critical case; the extreme or unique case; the representative or typical case; the revelatory case, and the longitudinal case. Here, the actor groups, the cities and the SE segments were selected because they constitute typical cases of (i) who influences the development of the SE (USOs and municipalities), (ii) where the SE develops (the cities), and (iii) the segments (accommodation, mobility, and tool sharing).

Paper I is a case study that explores how various USOs in London, Berlin, and Malmö work to create and disrupt institutions. To gain in-depth knowledge, 70 interviews were conducted not only with USO representatives, but also with municipal officials and third-party organisations that form the organisational field of urban sharing in the three cities. *Paper II* analyses the modes of urban governance in relation to urban sharing in two case cities, Berlin and London. The cities were chosen for this case study because they have an abundance of both for-profit and non-profit USOs, which allowed for a collection of rich and nuanced data. At the same time, they have distinct ways of engaging with the SE; London is a testbed for business innovation projects, while Berlin is known for grassroots projects. Although *Paper III* is not a case study per se, it includes empirical data from the case studies of USOs and municipalities in London, Berlin, Malmö, and San Francisco. *Paper IV* constitutes a single case study of the sustainability framings of accommodation sharing, and includes eleven accommodation sharing organisations. *Paper V* is a case study of the SE in Amsterdam and Toronto, and explores the similarities and differences in how municipalities and USOs frame the sustainability of the SE.

The data in case studies often derives from documents and interviews (Yin, 1994), which is the case in the papers that constitute this thesis. These methods are further elaborated on below.

Data collection

A mix of methods was employed to answer the research questions, the main ones being document reviews (secondary data collection) and interviews (primary data collection). This section reflects on these methods.

Literature and document reviews

A literature review is important, to keep up to date with the topic of interest, to identify gaps in knowledge, and to develop an argument about the significance of my own research (Bryman, 2012). To engage in scholarly review, I reviewed existing literature on the SE continuously during the course of my studies, and wrote summaries. I received daily Google Scholar updates by email to keep up to date with new publications. When I started writing a new paper, I conducted additional literature reviews. These combined the topic of the SE and the respective theoretical lens used for each of the papers. Literature on institutional work was reviewed for Papers I and III, on urban governance for Paper II, and on sustainability impacts and framing theory for Papers IV and V. To search for relevant literature, I used online databases, such as Google Scholar, EBSCO host, and Research Gate.

The SE is a topic widely debated also outside academia, so I also reviewed ‘grey’ literature to complement the information found in the academic literature and to obtain an overview of the SE landscape in the case cities. The grey sources reviewed included the websites of relevant SE actors, including USOs – municipal governments (e.g. Amsterdam, Toronto), third-party organisations (e.g. Fairbnb.ca, sharenl.nl), or industry and trade organisations (e.g. sharingeconomyuk.com). In addition, I have read reports and policy documents about the SE, such as ‘Green Deal Carsharing’ (Greendeals, 2020), ‘Harnessing the Power of the Sharing Economy: Next Steps for Ontario’ (Holmes & Mcguinty, 2015), ‘Maximising the Gains from Sharing: An Analysis of National and International Best Practices’ (Alwani & Urban, 2019), or ‘Environmental impacts of home sharing around the world’ (Airbnb, 2014). Information from various online newspaper articles was also gathered. The exact sources that were reviewed depended on the individual articles.

Overall, the literature reviews served the purpose of obtaining information about the SE in the case cities, learning about theory, and uncovering existing research gaps.

Interviews

Interviews contributed to answering all of the research questions in this study. The interviewees were actors knowledgeable about the SE in the case cities, such as representatives of USOs (founders, CEOs, managers, or volunteers if the USO was volunteer-led), municipal and regional government officials, trade and consumer

protection bodies, industrial associations, lobby organisations, SE think-tanks, neighbourhood and labour activists, and other third-party organisations. The interviewees were recruited during the MRLs after secondary data had been gathered, from which the key actors and organisations began to emerge, and through snowball sampling. The majority of them were in-depth, semi-structured interviews (Harrell & Bradley, 2009; Raworth, Sweetman, Narayan, Rowlands, & Hopkins, 2012). The advantage of conducting semi-structured interviews, as opposed to structured or unstructured, is that they are “sufficiently structured to address specific dimensions of [the] research question while also leaving space for study participants to offer new meanings to the topic of study” (Galletta, 2013, p. 2). Questions were prepared in advance and were guided by theory, but flexibility was given to the interviewee to provide answers and to ask additional questions.

The interview guides were designed in a way to gain insights into the daily operations of the organisation represented by the respective interviewee, the drivers and barriers to the SE, the interactions between USOs and municipal governments, the landscape of the SE in each city, perceptions of the sustainability impacts of specific SE business models, and the strategies used to steer the development of the SE / SE segment or a specific SE organisation. The questions were structured in a way to elicit detailed information, and began with how/what/what kind of/in what way, as recommended by Leech (2002).

Semi-structured interviews explore “how the interviewee frames and understands issues and events – that is, what the interviewee views as important in explaining and understanding events, patterns, and forms of behaviour” (Bryman, 2012, p. 471). They were therefore considered an appropriate method for contributing to answering all three research questions. Specifically, they elicited details about how actors view the potentials and threats of the SE to urban sustainability, or how they work to institutionalise the SE.

This thesis draws on 150 interviews, conducted by me and the rest of the Urban Sharing research team. They were carried out in person during MRLs, over videocall or by phone, and each interview lasted around an hour. Exceptions were four interviews in Paper IV and one in Paper II, which were conducted by email. Many of the interviews carried out in person were combined with site visits, which allowed for a collection of additional data and insights and strengthened the understanding of actors’ positions.

A detailed overview of the interviews conducted for each paper is presented in Table 5, which shows how many interviews were conducted for each paper, in which cities, who was interviewed, and what form the interview took (videocall/in person/how long they took).

Table 5. Overview of interviews.

#	Paper	No. of interviews	Actor groups interviewed	Form
1	How do sharing organisations create and disrupt institutions? Towards a framework for institutional work in the sharing economy.	68 (23 in London 33 in Berlin 12 in Malmö)	USO representatives (founders, top management and operations representatives), city government officials, third-party organisations	In London, 12 interviews were conducted in person and 11 by phone. In Berlin, 18 interviews were conducted in person and 15 by phone. In Malmö, 11 interviews were conducted in person and one by phone. The interviews lasted between 30 min and 2h.
2	Urban sharing in smart cities: the cases of Berlin and London	24 (14 in London 10 in Berlin)	USO representatives and city government officials	All but one interviews were conducted by phone. They lasted between 30 and 90 minutes. One interview was conducted by email. The interviews were carried out in German in Berlin and in English in London.
3	How institutional work by sharing economy organisations and city governments shapes sustainability.	80 (23 in London 24 in Berlin 16 in Malmö 17 in San Francisco)	USO representatives, city government officials, representatives of industry associations, experts, users and third-party organisations.	68 of the 80 interviews were the same as in Paper I. The additional interviews (17 in San Francisco) were all conducted in person, lasting approximately 1 hour.
4	Sustainability framings of accommodation sharing	10	Accommodation sharing platform operators	6 interviews conducted over videocall (lasting between 30 and 120 min). 4 were conducted by email.
5	Impacts of the Sharing Economy on Urban Sustainability: The Perceptions of Municipal Governments and Sharing Organisations	51 (31 in Amsterdam 20 in Toronto)	USO representatives, city government officials, SE experts, third-party organisations	In Amsterdam, 14 interviews were conducted in person and 20 over videocall. In Toronto, 12 interviews were conducted in person and 8 over videocall. Each interview took approximately 1 hour.

Data analysis

The semi-structured interviews were recorded and transcribed using the transcription software Happy Scribe. The transcripts were then double-checked and cleaned. The interviews, together with the document reviews, were analysed using qualitative content analysis, which is the most common qualitative approach to analysing documents (Bryman, 2012). This analytical technique is “*a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns*” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). Searching for underlying themes in the collected data is key to conducting qualitative content analysis (Bryman, 2012).

There are three approaches to identifying the themes and patterns, as described by Hsieh and Shannon (2005). In a *conventional* approach, coding themes and

categories are derived from the collected data. When an existing theory or relevant findings guide the collection of codes, this is referred to as the *directed* approach. A *summative* approach entails counting and comparison of keywords, followed by interpretation of underlying context (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

The papers included in this thesis followed the directed approach to qualitative content analysis (i.e. starting with a theory), except for Paper V, which used a combination of conventional and summative approaches.

Papers I and III examined how USOs and municipalities work to create and disrupt institutions associated with the SE. The approach in both papers followed the predetermined categories from a framework of institutional work developed by Lawrence and Suddaby (2006). Paper II utilised a framework for municipal governance introduced by Bulkeley and Kern (2006) to present findings about the governance mechanisms that municipalities employ to govern the SE.

Paper IV drew on the triple bottom line (see for example: Elkington, 1997) and on a typification of framing tasks established by Snow et al. (1988). to analyse how the environmental, economic and social impacts of the SE are framed in the literature. Finally, Paper V combined a conventional and a directed approach. **Table 6** summarises the coding approaches used in each of the papers, the frameworks and theories that were drawn upon when applying the directed approach, and the type of data that was coded.

Table 6. Approaches to qualitative content analysis

	Coding approach	Framework/theory	Data coded
Paper I	Directed	Institutional work (creation and disruption) by Lawrence and Suddaby (2006)	68 interview transcripts
Paper II	Directed	Municipal governance modes by Bulkeley and Kern (2006)	24 interview transcripts
Paper III	Directed	Institutional work (creation and disruption) by Lawrence and Suddaby (2006)	80 interview transcripts
Paper IV	Directed	Triple bottom line (environmental, economic and social impacts) and core framing tasks by Snow et al. (1988)	Literature on the SE and 10 interview transcripts
Paper V	Conventional	N/A	99 peer-reviewed articles
	Directed	Framework of impacts of the SE on urban sustainability which emerged from the inductive coding process	54 interview transcripts

When following the directed approach, the transcripts or the literature were coded with the predetermined codes as they were being read. Data that could not be coded because they did not fit the predetermined codes but contributed to answering the research question were given new codes. Conversely, when no data was found to support a certain code (such as ‘vesting’ when studying how USOs create institutions), possible explanations were offered. The data analysis thereby

contributed to theory development. For example, the framework for institutional work by Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) was adjusted to reflect the institutional work of USOs (Paper I and III) and municipal governments (Paper III). The original theories and frameworks also guided the structure of findings, which is typical for directed, qualitative content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

A conventional (inductive) approach was applied in Paper V. Literature on the SE was reviewed to look for what is known and assumed about the impacts of the SE on urban sustainability. To complete this task, the qualitative data analysis software NVivo was utilised to find the most relevant papers and paragraphs. The findings from the literature review were clustered into four framing themes and 16 framing categories. This classification constituted a framework that was subsequently used to code interview transcripts and to structure findings. This means that the interviews were coded following a directed approach, the guiding framework for which originated in the reviewed literature.

The outcomes of the coding processes were communicated by presenting the data in tables (Papers I, III and IV) and visualisations (Papers II and V), which are available in the main text or the appendices of the individual papers.

In conclusion, the data (interview transcripts and documents) was analysed using directed and conventional approaches to qualitative content analysis, which allowed for both theory building and theory testing.

Reliability and validity

This section provides a reflection on the reliability, replicability, and validity of this research. According to Bryman (2012), these are the most prominent criteria for the evaluation of the quality of social research. Reliability refers to the transparency of research methods, replicability to the ability of other researchers to arrive at the same results, and validity to the integrity of conclusions. These terms are used predominantly to assess quantitative research. Alternative terms better suited for the evaluation of qualitative research were proposed by Guba and Lincoln (1994). These are reflected upon below.

Lecompte and Goetz (1982) distinguish between internal and external validity, which corresponds to credibility and transferability (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). These are reflected upon below.

Credibility questions whether the observations match the theoretical ideas that are developed and whether the findings are accepted by others. I made the research credible through triangulation, by interviewing multiple actors and actor groups, such as the representatives of USOs, municipal governments, third-party organisations, SE experts, or academics studying the SE. The research data was also triangulated across different geographic locations. For example, when studying how

municipalities govern the SE, I drew on secondary data sources and on interviews with multiple actors in Berlin and London. Where possible, my research papers were sent to the interviewees for comments before they were published. The participants were asked whether they agree with my interpretations of their quotes.

Transferability refers to whether a study's findings can be applied to other social settings. This is also known as generalisability. Much has been written about the generalisability of case studies, which the papers included in this thesis adopted as a research methodology. Although case studies have been criticised for not being generalisable because they are based on a small number of cases, Flyvbjerg (2004) posits that this is a misconception. He argues that knowledge derived from case studies can be influential and can contribute to the process of knowledge accumulation in a field. He highlights the value of context-specific case studies in scientific innovation. Similarly, Giddens (1984) argues that case studies can be generalised if the study "*serves to elucidate the nature of agents' knowledgeability, and thereby their reasons for action, across a wide range of action-contexts.*" This corresponds with the aim of this study to provide "thick descriptions" (Geertz, 1973) of reality by studying actors' knowledge about various aspects of the SE in different geographical contexts.

At the same time, it must be acknowledged that the findings of this research are dependent on existing institutional and socio-economic factors of the cities where the research was carried out. For example, the findings of Paper V make it clear that the impacts of the SE on urban sustainability are viewed differently by key actors in Amsterdam and Toronto, which is attributed to the differences in their contexts. Despite this context-dependence, the findings provide valuable insights regarding how the sustainability impacts of the SE are politicised and used to further the existing agendas of key SE actors. The factors on which the papers are based likely change across time and space, but the research frameworks and research models developed in the papers can be applied to other geographical contexts and actors, or to the same geographic contexts and actors in the future. The findings are therefore not generalisable, but the frameworks can be of use in future studies, since they were developed by synthesising data from several case studies. This study may not be generalisable to the wider context, but its strength lies in the provision of in-depth insights that can be useful when studying the SE in other contexts.

Guba and Lincoln (1994) propose the use of the term 'dependability' to further assess the trustworthiness of qualitative studies. Several measures were taken to ensure that the findings are trustworthy. For example, members of the Urban Sharing research team shared field notes and engaged in discussions and brainstorming sessions to agree with what was observed as part of the Mobile Research Lab methodology (see the methodology section). The findings were also strengthened by publishing co-authored studies in which knowledge was co-created by members of the research team. The trustworthiness of this research was further ensured by subjecting the publications to rigorous peer-reviews.

Ethical considerations

All interview subjects were adults, and I did not have access to, nor store their sensitive personal data as defined by the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). However, I collected information on the organisations that they represent, which could be viewed as sensitive. I ensured research integrity and informed the interviewees about my research, by providing them with information about the research plan, the purpose of the research, what methods are used, and who the research leader was. They were also informed that their participation was voluntary, and they could withdraw their participation anytime without providing a reason.

According to section 4 in the *Swedish Ethical Review Act*, I did not have to provide information about the potential risks and consequences of the research, as the interviewee is not affected physically nor mentally. Nevertheless, measures were taken to minimise any potential risks. Primarily, the collected data (interview recordings and interview notes) was pseudonymised, and identifiable characteristics were removed before any paper was published. The interviews received a code number and were referred to as, for example, “Interviewee #12”. In some cases, and where appropriate, identifiable description was given, such as: “a representative of a station-based carsharing company.” However, the name of the company was not disclosed in the publications, unless the data was collected from secondary sources and was publicly available. The interview notes, recordings and transcripts are kept safely in the LU Box data cloud and can only be accessed with LU credentials by members of the Urban Sharing research team.

I followed four core principles of conducting research in an ethical way – reliability, honesty, respect, and accountability. These principles are included in the Lund University guidelines on Good Research Practice and the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity.

I ensured that my research is *reliable* by using proven research methods and drawing on existing theories. When interviewing people about a contested issue, there is a risk I could take sides and my research would become biased. I countered this issue by ensuring that my research was carried out in an *honest* way, and refrained from using unsubstantiated claims. All interviewees and research parties were treated with *respect* and dignity. I claim *accountability* for my research. The quotes I use in my publications belong to my interviewees, but I am responsible for the way they are presented and analysed, and how my research can be used by third parties. By evaluating the possible ethical issues associated with my research, I am aware about its wider impacts.

Findings and analysis

This chapter presents the main findings of this thesis, drawing on the five research publications. The findings are guided by the three RQs, i.e. (1) How do USOs engage in institutional creation and disruption? (2) How do municipalities steer the development of the SE? and (3) How is the sustainability of the SE framed?

Papers I and III are used to address RQ 1. They explore how USOs engage in regulatory, normative, and cultural-cognitive work to stay operational and normalise the SE. Empirical data to answer this research question was collected in Berlin, London, Malmö, and San Francisco.

Papers II and III contribute to addressing RQ 2, as they study how municipal governments in Berlin, London, Malmö, and San Francisco react to the emergence of sharing platforms. Their reactions are explored in this thesis by combining two theoretical streams – governance theory and institutional work.

Finally, the notion that urban sharing is commended as a more sustainable form of resource distribution is investigated in RQ 3. The sustainability frames gathered from existing literature show that the sustainability potentials of the SE are contested. This contestation is also studied empirically by exploring how USOs and municipal government officials in Amsterdam and Toronto frame the impacts of the SE on urban sustainability.

The findings contribute to theory building about the SE by adapting a framework for institutional work to the realities of the SE, by testing the modes of municipal governance developed by (Bulkeley & Kern, 2006) in the context of sharing, and by summarising the perceived impacts of the SE on urban sustainability.

How do USOs engage in institutional creation and disruption?

The efforts of actors and organisations to “*cope with, keep up with, shore up, tear down, tinker with, transform, or create anew the institutional structures within which they live, work, and play, and which give them their roles, relationships, resources, and routines*” is a process called institutional work (Lawrence et al., 2011). In institutional work, the emphasis is put on both agency and structure,

meaning that actions construct institutions and are constructed by them (Fig. 1). However, the unit of analysis is micro-institutional practices of actors (Zilber, 2013), rather than macro-level institutions. The actors doing institutional work may be individuals who act as leaders or who take on a form of a collective (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). In this thesis, it is the latter, as I explore how the representatives of USOs work to change institutions. Actors who change institutions have different dimensions of agency (Battilana et al., 2009), but they tend to be powerful, which means that they have access to skills and resources (Lawrence et al., 2013).

The SE has been associated with institutional disruption (Ciari, 2017; Geissinger et al., 2020; Guttentag, 2015), and scholars have explored the effects of large, for-profit USOs on incumbent businesses, sectors, and institutions. For example, studies exist on the effect of Airbnb on the hotel industry in London, Paris, Sydney, and Tokyo (Dogru, Hanks, Mody, Suess, & Sirakaya-Turk, 2020), Toronto (Mohamad, 2016), Paris, Barcelona, Berlin, and Warsaw (Gyódi, 2019), Singapore (Koh & King, 2017), and Austin (Zervas, Proserpio, & Byers, 2015). Research has also examined its impacts on neighbourhoods (Gurran & Phibbs, 2017; Levendis & Dicle, 2016; Yrigoy, 2016).

However, this form of disruption is accidental – it is not the aim of the USOs to disrupt existing markets or neighbourhoods; rather, it is an effect of the new institutions that they purposefully build, but little is known about the purposeful work of USOs to change (both disrupt and create) institutions. A framework for institutional work by Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) was adopted to examine the issue. Based on empirical findings from Berlin, London, and Malmö, it was adapted to the realities of the SE (Zvolska et al., 2019). The revised framework guides this chapter.

Institutional creation

USOs work to create institutions by engaging in regulatory, normative, and cultural-cognitive work. Regulatory work tends to be carried out by powerful SE actors, and has a potential to create significant institutional change. Actors engaging in regulatory work can create new institutions more effortlessly than others because they abide by existing formal rules and institutions and have access to resources (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). This could comprise, for example, knowledge of the market, human resources, or capital. Normative work is associated with changing norms and belief systems. According to Lawrence and Suddaby (2006), this type of work creates institutions that complement or go in parallel with existing institutions. Cultural-cognitive work is aimed at creating new meaning systems whereby actors work to create new assumptions and beliefs about the SE. The framework for the creation of institutions that guides this section is presented in Figure 10.

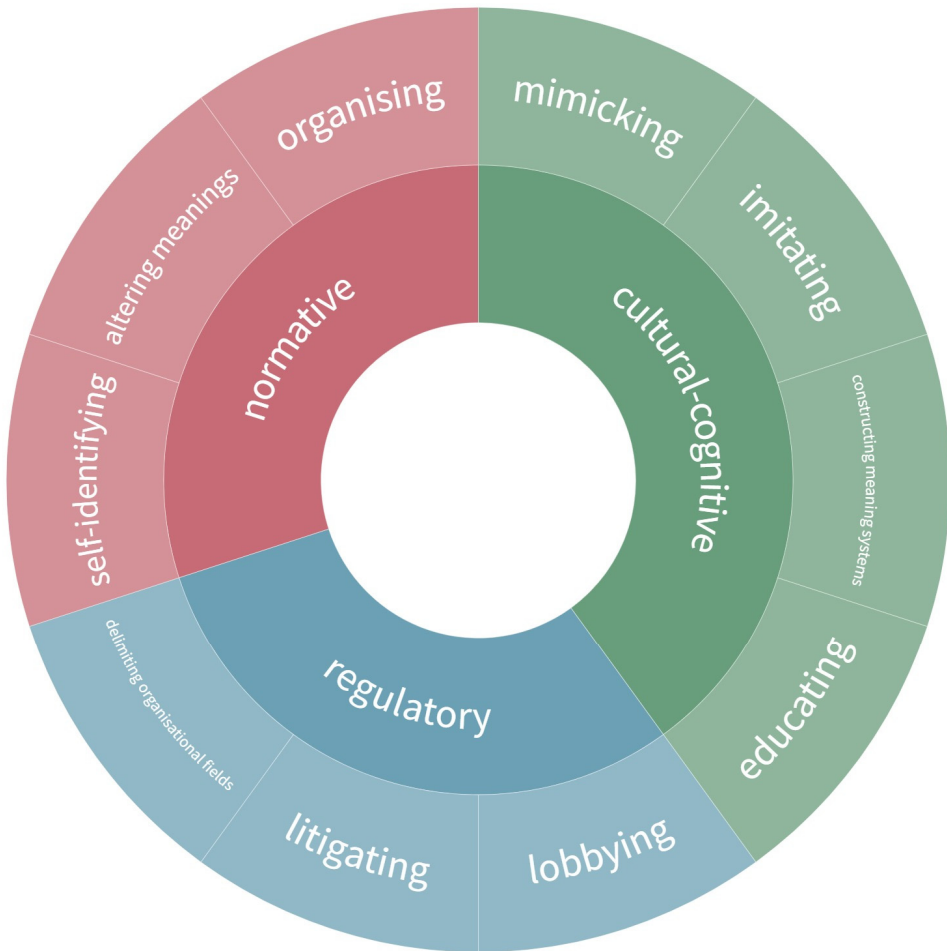


Figure 10. Institutional creation (adapted from Lawrence & Suddaby (2006) by Zvolcka et al. (2019))

Regulatory work

USOs engaging in regulatory work were found to lobby, litigate, and delimit organisational fields.

Many USOs have gained acceptance among users, but they have yet to convince municipal governments of their appropriateness. USOs engage in *lobbying* to secure a favourable position and convince (municipal) government officials of the benefits of the SE to cities and their citizens. Lobbying is also used to oppose planned legislations and bans regarding sharing practices, typically short-term rentals or free-floating bicycle sharing. Some USOs lobby alone, while others join industry associations to lobby alongside other USOs for favourable conditions. Sharing Economy UK (SEUK) is an example of such association. When engaging

in lobbying, USOs target municipal governments and often frame their contribution in terms of alleviating a city's sustainability challenges¹⁹. For example, a London-based car sharing company argued that car sharing contributed to meeting London's climate goals because it reduced the use of private cars. The goal of their lobbying was to be integrated into the Transport for London's²⁰ mobility strategy, which would make it easier to access public parking spaces. Lobbying was essential for their operations. Another example of lobbying came from a London-based bicycle-sharing company that wanted to be welcome in the city by pointing out how their positive impacts align with the goals of the municipality. Specifically, they highlighted that bicycle sharing improved air quality in the city and supported exercise. In both Berlin and London, an accommodation-sharing company lobbied the local governments with the aim to lift various bans on short-term rentals. They argued that accommodation sharing allowed urban citizens to earn extra money and meet the rising costs of living in cities.

Litigation is sometimes used by USOs when they fail to convince municipal governments of their benefits and face unwanted regulation. For example, in San Francisco, the accommodation sharing companies Airbnb, VRBO and HomeAway filed a joint lawsuit against the city government to avoid registering their hosts. The lawsuit was later settled and short-term rentals now require registration (Somerville & Levine, 2017). Similar lawsuits were filed in other US cities. In Europe, lobbying was a more common form of regulatory work among USOs. Overall, litigation was only found to be done by powerful, for-profit USOs from the accommodation sharing segment.

Delimiting organisational fields defines boundaries of membership or practice standards (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). When delimiting the organisational field of the SE, USOs work to define what the SE is, and who the members are. How USOs are defined and how they fit within new or existing structures is important for their existence because it determines how they are regulated. Several USOs have opposed to being defined within existing boundaries and structures as this would mean that existing rules and regulations designed for the incumbent sectors would apply to them (e.g. hotels, private cars, taxis). For example, Airbnb argued against being subjected to the same rules as real estate agents at the European Court of Justice. The ruling classified accommodation sharing as an "information society service" (Fox, 2019). This established a new organisational field, meaning that the existing, stricter rules for real estate agents did not apply to it.

Another question that is often brought up is which USOs are considered part of the SE, and which are not. For-profit USOs were found to embrace being part of the

¹⁹ How USOs frame their sustainability potentials is further explored by answering RQ 3.

²⁰ Transport for London is a government body responsible for the transport network in London.

SE, while some non-profit USOs did not want to be associated with it because they opposed being grouped together with for-profit USOs.

Normative work

USOs engaged in normative work with the objective of changing the values, roles, and norms that underpin normative institutions (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). In addition to delimiting the organisational field of the SE, USOs engaged in *self-identification* to further construct who they were, create their image and use it to gain users, market advantage, or convince others of their appropriateness. Both for-profit and non-profit USOs wanted to be seen as a more sustainable form of accessing resources and as bringing people together through community building. However, there were also some differences between them. The for-profits identified themselves as forward-thinkers who take advantage of modern technology to facilitate goods and services for urban citizens. They associated themselves with the terms ‘smart,’ or ‘new technology.’ In contrast, non-profit organisations identified themselves with the following sets of values – ‘making friends,’ ‘social justice,’ and ‘community building’. The technological dimension was missing from their self-identification.

Another form of institutional work that USOs engaged in was *altering meanings*. They did this by, for example, altering the traditional meanings associated with the notion of sharing or with resource ownership. People would traditionally ‘share’ both for functional reasons, such as survival (Fine, 1980), and for altruistic reasons (Belk, 2014). However, the advent of the SE has changed these institutionalised practices (John, 2017), as ‘sharing’, at least in the English language, now also includes exchanges for money. As USOs allow people to capitalise on their underused resources, they are changing how people value their assets. USOs are also engaging in altering meanings when they explain how their business models are different from traditional practices. For example, a tool library in Malmö has had to explain that libraries were not just for books. Many car sharing companies also have instructional videos on their websites to explain how to access shared cars as an alternative to private ownership.

A number of USOs have created or joined various inter- and intra-industrial associations in their attempts to *organise*. Such associations allow them to become more agentic as they act as an entity, create a common identity, and are also able to lobby together. Such attempts at organising through these associations strengthens their legitimacy and helps them to become normalised in a society. Some examples of inter-industrial associations are the London-based lobby group SEUK, The People Who Share, or Oui-share. Intra-industrial organisations include Carplus, which promotes car sharing as a sustainable mobility alternative, or its subsidiary Bikeplus. Together, they promote car and bicycle sharing in the city, and provide accreditation.

Cultural-cognitive work

USOs engaging in cultural-cognitive work draw on existing beliefs, assumptions and frames that inform action (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006) in order to upscale the SE.

USOs *mimic* taken-for granted rules, practices, and technologies, which helps them ease the adoption of sharing practices. For example, pictures of homes listed on the accommodation sharing platform Wimdu were standardised by using the same pillowcases and towels, which made them look like a hotel chain. Such standardisation increases the level of trust and reduces uncertainty among potential users. Although USOs have created new forms of consumption and business models, a number of them mimicked traditional companies when they employed lobbyists and policy advisors, or moved their headquarters to Dublin to pay low corporation tax, thereby mimicking other tech giants.

In addition to mimicking established companies, USOs also *imitate* each other's business models. For example, a large number of accommodation-sharing platforms now exists around the world, and many cities have their own car, bicycle, or tool sharing schemes.

USOs were found to engage in the *construction of new meaning systems* by creating new terminologies and meanings associated with the SE. An example of this is the verbalisation of a company name, such as “to Airbnb” – “we are Airbnbing”. Some USOs also created new currencies for use on their platforms. Constructing new meaning systems was found to be rather difficult for USOs, as there are challenges associated with how the new terms and meanings will be interpreted by others.

Both for-profit and non-profit USOs were found to *educate* their stakeholders (users, municipal officials, the media, etc.) about their platforms, which helped to raise awareness about the SE. As the SE comprises of novel business models, USOs are required to constantly explain how they operate and what their benefits are. Educating is therefore an everyday practice of USOs, and it shapes the general beliefs and assumptions about the SE.

Institutional disruption

Like the chapter on institutional creation, this chapter is guided by the adapted framework of Lawrence and Suddaby (2006). When USOs disrupt institutions, they impact the existing markets, but also the taken-for granted practices associated with resource distribution (Zvolska et al., 2019). To do so, they engage in three mechanisms of institutional work – removing privileges from the incumbents (regulatory work), undermining existing moral grounds (normative work), and undermining assumptions and beliefs (cultural-cognitive work).

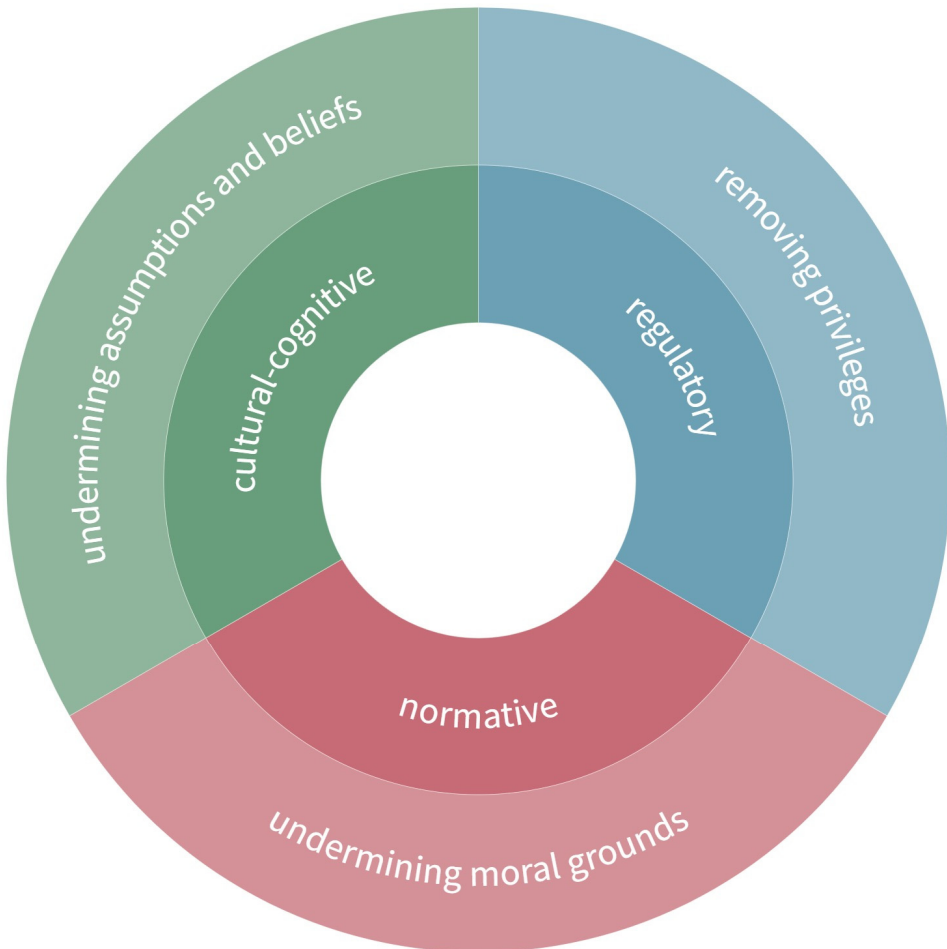


Figure 11. Institutional creation (adapted from Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006)

Regulatory work

USOs engage in regulatory work primarily by *removing privileges* from established companies and institutionalised practices. Removing privileges is often coupled with lobbying, as the privileges were granted by higher instances and they are the ones who can remove it. In the car sharing segment, for example, USOs work actively to remove the rewards enjoyed by car owners on the grounds that they, unlike shared cars, lead to air pollution and congestion in the city. In addition, one B2C car sharing company lobbied the London government to introduce congestion charges and higher taxation of private vehicles. USOs often use sustainability frames to convince municipal policy makers of disadvantaging traditional consumption practices.

Normative work

When USOs question normalised practices, they often engage in *undermining moral grounds*. For example, they question the institution of ownership. Some car sharing companies ask whether everyone should own a car when it can be borrowed. As mentioned above, they work to remove privileges from car owners on the grounds that car sharing is better for the environment and should therefore be preferred. Some USOs also question whether it is moral to own resources without ‘sharing’ them with others.

Cultural-cognitive work

USOs *undermine assumptions and beliefs* about prevalent practices associated with resource distribution by removing existing transaction costs. For example, people might hold assumptions about sharing their homes with strangers, not owning a car, or borrowing tools rather than owning them. These assumptions have been undermined by USO with the help of information and communications technology (ICT), which allows sharing of resources that were never shared before, reduces transaction costs, and can facilitate trust among people.

How do municipalities govern the SE?

The previous chapter explored how USOs work to institutionalise the SE. When engaging in institutional work, especially in lobbying and removing privileges, they interact with municipal governments and try to convince them of their benefits to cities and their citizens. For example, car sharing and bicycle sharing USOs demonstrate how they reduce GHG emissions and contribute to a ‘greener’ urban mobility mix. As city governments are powerful actors who can enable or inhibit the SE, keeping good relations with them is important for USOs.

It was found that municipal governments react to the development of the SE in two ways. The first, when they work to steer the development of the USOs operating in their cities, I call outward governance. It encompasses governance mechanisms aimed at inhibiting or supporting various forms of urban sharing. The most known outward governance mechanism is regulation whereby municipalities introduce new rules for sharing practices. However, building on a framework of urban governance by Bulkeley and Kern (2006), other mechanisms were also found among municipalities. These included the provision of tangible resources or support for USOs, or lobbying higher governing bodies.

The second is called inward governance in this thesis – municipalities define who they are in relation to the SE, and direct their efforts towards their own actions. Inward governance draws on the institutional work literature (Battilana & D’Aunno, 2010; Lawrence et al., 2013; Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006), and includes measures

taken by the municipalities that are not aimed directly at USOs. They include the creation of their own sharing initiatives, or defining the field of the SE for their own purposes. The mechanisms of inward and outward governance are visualised in Figure 12.

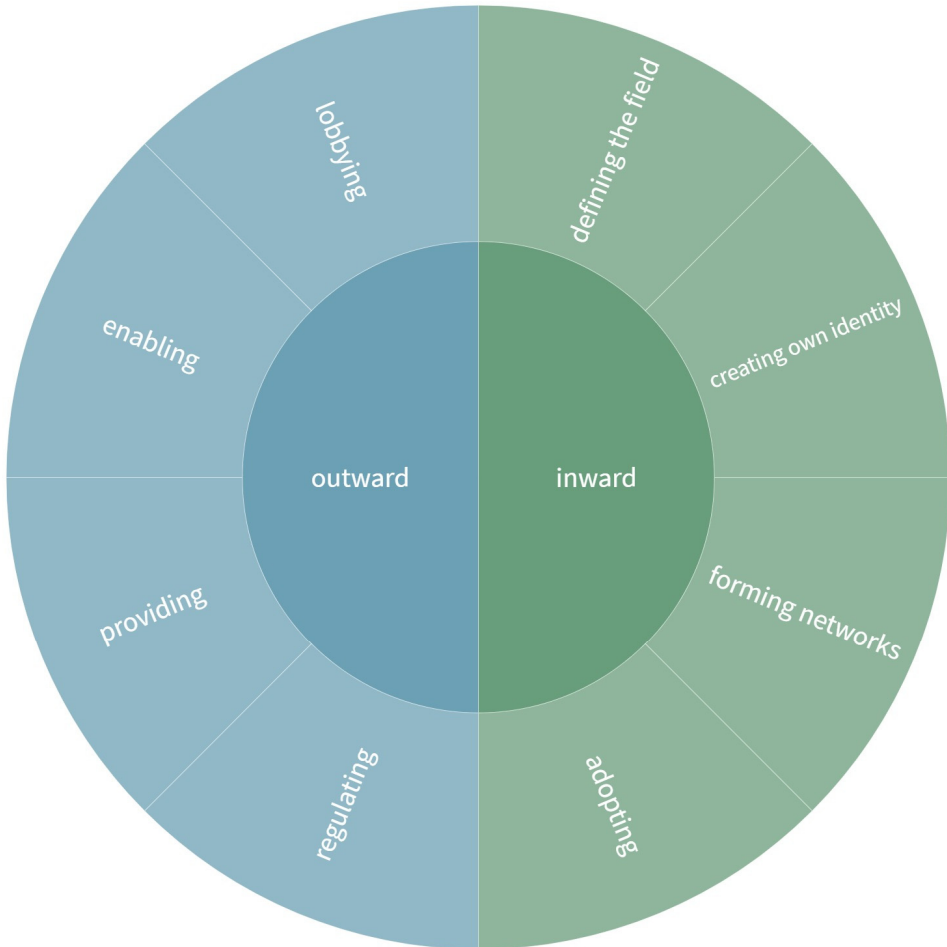


Figure 12. Inward and outward governance

Outward governance

Outward governance refers to how municipal governments react to the emergence of USOs in their cities.

Regulating

As some USOs are associated with negative impacts on cities, a number of municipalities have introduced regulatory measures to reduce them. A prime example is the work of municipalities in curbing short-term rentals facilitated by accommodation sharing companies such as Airbnb. Among the reasons for the regulation are beliefs that short-term rentals are removing housing units from the long-term rental markets, increasing rents, triggering gentrification, and causing overtourism (see for example: Gyódi, 2019). These issues have also captured the attention of the media and academia, and the regulation of USOs is perhaps the most discussed governance mechanism. It must be noted, however, that there are differences in how legislative power is delegated in each city. Some cities have regulatory power, while in others, it is resting on regional or national governments. The power may be delegated to individual municipal entities and neighbourhoods, such as the 'Bezirks' in Berlin. In others, it may rest on a united governing body that is responsible for example for zoning laws.

At the same time, it is unlikely that a municipal government will regulate USOs directly, as this would be in breach with free-market laws decided by national and supra-national governments. To exemplify, the European Court of Justice ruled in 2019 that USOs cannot be held responsible over their hosted content. In practice, this means that cities can design regulations towards the users of USOs, but not the organisations themselves. In the case of B2C car and bicycle sharing organisations, which require parking space, municipalities can decide whether public space can be used by them for parking, and issue licences to them. For this reason, 'regulating the SE' refers to regulatory measures taken towards the users, rather than the USOs themselves, and to measures taken to protect the use of public space.

A specific example of regulations are caps on the rental of entire apartments: 90 nights in London, in secondary residences in Berlin (no cap on primary residence, but a permit is required), in primary residences in San Francisco (a registration is required, and the rental of secondary residences is not allowed), 180 nights in primary residences in Toronto (a permit is required), and 30 nights in primary residences in Amsterdam. Amsterdam also banned short-term rentals in three central districts, but this ban was overturned by the Court of Amsterdam during the writing of this thesis (Reuters, 2021). There is no cap on short-term rentals in Malmö, but the prominence of housing cooperatives with their own, rather strict rules in all of Sweden makes it difficult to rent entire homes on sharing platforms.

In London, car sharing companies must have permits to operate, which are issued by the individual London boroughs. Different car sharing companies operate in different parts of London, and it may not be possible to pick up a shared car in one borough and return it in another.

An example of a city regulating bicycle sharing is Amsterdam, which has temporarily banned all free-floating bicycle sharing schemes as they were clogging the streets.

Some larger USOs expressed discontent with lack of regulations, as they would like to be acknowledged by the municipality and given a clear indication of whether or not their sharing activities are allowed, and under which conditions. In contrast, some of the smaller P2P USOs hoped to avoid being regulated by the city, as they would like the chance to develop their business models.

Overall, it was found that cities tend to regulate ‘the big and the loud,’ while not paying much attention to smaller USOs. In many instances, USOs, especially in London, collaborate on the development of regulations, which means that they have strong lobbying power. This is discussed in more detailed in how USOs engage in institutional work.

Lobbying

While USOs engage in lobbying local governments, local governments can lobby higher governing bodies, specifically when they seek support in regulating USOs. This can be a way to govern the SE when the municipal government lack regulatory power, and when such power rests at national level or supra-national level. An example of this is a joint letter of ten European cities released by the City of Amsterdam (Amsterdam, 2019). In this open letter, the cities asked the EU Court of Justice to reconsider The Advocate General’s opinion on granting short-term rentals freedom to provide services in accordance with the E-commerce Directive of the European Union. Such a decision meant that accommodation sharing platforms were exempted from providing municipalities with information about their hosts. The cities lobbied to avoid such a decision as it would prevent them from enforcing their regulations and caps on entire-home rentals.

Providing / tangible support

While the above mechanisms relate to inhibiting certain forms of the SE in cities, ‘providing’ and ‘enabling’ relates to how cities support urban sharing. ‘Providing’ refers to the provision of financial incentives, premises/space, and other tangible resources to USOs. As cities operate on tight budgets, however, financial incentives offered to USOs are rare, and centre primarily around giving awards and prizes to ideas that help improve liveability in cities. An example of this is funding available through a London-based charity, Nesta, which supported USOs when it launched the ShareLabFund with the aim to offer funding to sharing organisations that deliver public service and social impact receive. Nesta receives funds to support innovations, including from the municipality, so this is how the city of London provided funds to USOs indirectly.

The provision of space is specifically relevant for car and bicycle sharing USOs. Typically, station-based car sharing is promoted by municipalities, while free-floating is welcome to a lesser extent, as it requires a comprehensive allocation of parking spaces. This is controversial, as cities are struggling to manage public space in a sustainable way, and the overall trend is to remove car parking spaces from

urban areas in attempts to encourage more sustainable forms of transportation. At the same time, it was found that municipalities are open to providing office space to those USOs they deem beneficial to the citizens. Many tool sharing USOs (for example, in Malmö) are operating from municipal-owned buildings.

A last mechanism for municipalities to provide tangible support is to offer tax breaks to users of sharing platforms. While taxation lies in the hands of national regulators, it was found that the UK government introduced a tax-free allowance of GBP 2000 p.a. to the users of USOs (Rahim et al., 2017), which was based on the needs of London citizens.

Enabling / intangible support

The intangible support provided to USOs by municipal governments was found to include the organisation of workshops and networking events for USOs, providing information about sharing activities in the city, and issuing reports on the SE. The support to USOs is provided on both city-wide and district-level. The latter was common in Berlin, where the ‘Bezirks’ have more autonomy. Insights from Berlin and London also show that small-scale, not-profit USOs would welcome municipal support, but it was not given to them. At the same time, intangible support is a rather cost-effective way of supporting innovation and, for that matter, small-scale sharing initiatives (such as tool sharing and other niche USOs) in the city.

The provision of intangible support was more widespread in the past when the SE was at its peak and was not surrounded by as much controversy. For example, the City of Berlin organised workshops with SE actors in 2015, but its interest in the SE waned after that. Since the SE takes advantage of ICT, some USOs found it helpful to attend hackathons and coding workshops organised by the City of London, where they could learn from each other. London, overall, was found to be active in fostering start-up culture and ICT knowledge as part of being a ‘Smart City’. This means it is using ICT to transform the city infrastructure and services in areas such as the economy, mobility, environment, and governance (Bakıcı, Almirall, & Wareham, 2013). USOs could take advantage of ICT and Smart City-related networking events, although they were not directly aimed at SE start-ups.

Another example of intangible support is the provision of information about sharing initiatives on official city websites. This is practiced by several cities, for example, Amsterdam (Amsterdam, 2021) and Berlin (Berlin.De, 2021). Malmö lists its sharing initiatives on the website smartakartan.se, but it lists mostly parks, libraries, and outdoor gyms, but these are areas not considered a ‘sharing economy’ in this thesis.

Finally, a number of municipalities have issued reports on how to foster the SE in their cities. Such reports were available in, for example, Toronto and Berlin. Again, these reports were commissioned during the peak of the SE around the year 2015 and have no requirements on implementation. In Berlin, the report was written but

was never published. In Toronto, it was abandoned by a new municipal government (Enochsson et al., 2021).

Inward governance

Inward governance draws on institutional work, and summarises how municipalities make sense of the SE for their own purposes.

Adopting

Municipalities were found to directly adopt the SE in two ways – they either became customers of existing USOs, or initiated their own sharing initiatives. An example of a city becoming a customer of a USO is when the council of one of London’s boroughs, Croydon, procured shared cars for its employees. This was done to reduce the council’s car use and the related carbon emissions and costs associated with car ownership.

Since municipalities run on limited budgets, it is not always possible for them to start their own sharing initiatives. A rare example is that of the City of Malmö, which runs a sports equipment library where locals donate old sports equipment that others can borrow it for free for a short period of time. The London Waste and Recycling Board is another example. It took advantage of a sharing platform created especially for the City of London, which allowed the boroughs to share high-value, low-use machinery and tools.

Forming networks

In order to share experiences about the SE, many cities have become partners under various SE networks and foundations developed for the purpose of bridging the gap between USOs and cities. Joining such networks unites cities and allows them to share experiences and advice on how to take advantage of on the SE or how to curb the negative impacts of USO. Examples of such networks are Sharing Cities Alliance, Sharing Cities Sweden, and Sharing Cities Action. Sharing Cities Alliance has been helping cities harness the SE to resolve urban problems since 2017. They also organise frequent webinars, seminars, and roundtables to connect urban professions and allow cities to learn from each other’s experiences. Sharing Cities Sweden is a test bed for the SE connecting four cities – Stockholm, Gothenburg, Malmö, and Umeå. It aims to promote an exchange of experiences about the SE among cities. Sharing Cities Action brought together almost 50 city officials to work on the Common Declaration of Sharing Principles and Commitments. All three initiatives have hosted the Sharing Cities Summit, where city officials could further network.

Creating their own identity

Another way for cities to influence the development of the SE is to define who they are in relation to the SE by creating an identity around sharing. For example, some

cities embrace the idea of sharing and present themselves as sharing cities (see above), while others might be more hesitant or even resistant. This is usually related to how they present themselves to the outside world, and what sustainability problems they struggle with. They might also identify with the values of some USOs, but not with others. For example, Malmö takes advantage of sharing initiatives to be seen as a city that values integration, and London supports sharing start-ups because it helps it further develop an image of an ICT-driven city that values innovation. However, this delineation is not clear-cut, and cities could be reacting to various sharing initiatives in different ways, for different reasons – this is elaborated on below by answering RQ 3.

Defining the field

A related way of reacting to the SE is to define who is part of it, and who is not, and, more importantly, which USOs are seen as beneficial to individual cities, and which are not. Defining is an important mechanism in institutionalising the SE as “the way that society and policymakers define the sharing economy will influence how we choose to regulate its activities” (Erickson & Sørensen, 2016). Each city defines the SE for its own purposes, and supports or restricts individual USOs accordingly. How cities understand three SE segments – accommodation, car, and bicycle sharing – is elaborated on below

How is the sustainability of the SE framed?

When exploring how USOs and municipal governments work to steer the development of the SE, it was found that they often used sustainability claims. For example, USOs lobbied municipal governments to negotiate better conditions for themselves on the grounds that they alleviated urban issues, such as air pollution or income inequality. At the same time, municipalities rewarded those USOs they believed enhanced economic, social, or environmental sustainability in the city, but they also pushed for restrictions on the USOs they perceived as having negative impacts. The perceived sustainability impacts have taken a central stage in discussions about the development of the SE, but there is no consensus on these impacts, and research is often also inconclusive. A question arose whether these two actor groups use the same claims across all cities, or whether they differed, and why.

How the SE is framed influences its uptake and the form in which it will eventually become institutionalised. Framing “select[s] some aspects of a perceived reality and make[s] them more salient (...), in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” (Entman, 1993). By analysing how the SE is framed, key problems (and benefits) associated with the SE emerge. Framing analysis is used in this thesis to explore causal interpretations, why actors frame the SE the way they

do. A synthesis of framings provides the basis of recommendations on how USOs and municipalities could work together to ensure that the SE brings positive impacts on urban sustainability. This section first explores how the sustainability of the SE is framed in the literature and then analyses how it is framed by municipal governments and USOs across three sectors and two cities.

How the sharing economy is framed in terms of its sustainability impacts in the literature was studied in Paper IV. The frames were systematised following a framework by Snow et al. (1988), which identified three core framing tasks – diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational (Table 7).

Table 7. Statements collected in the literature (Voytenko Palgan et al., 2017)

	Environmental	Economic	Social
Diagnostic	Increases environmental pressure through rebound effects	Exists in unregulated markets	Is built on desperation
Prognostic	Enables more efficient resource use	Creates opportunity for new micro-entrepreneurs to capitalise on underused assets	Create a sense of empowerment and trust
Motivational	Is a more environmentally sustainable way of lodging away from home	Generates incomes and creates jobs	Anyone can benefit from accommodation sharing

From this analysis, it is apparent that the sharing economy is associated with both positive and negative sustainability impacts, and that some of them even contradict each other. At the same time, the discussions have become more nuanced over the years, as sharing economy sectors matured, the discussions among key actor groups developed and new studies and reports were published about the SE’s impacts. There is value in exploring how the frames differ across different sectors. Paper V followed up on Paper IV four years later and explored how the impacts of accommodation, bicycle, and car sharing on urban sustainability²¹ were framed in the literature, which provided sector-specific findings. These findings are presented in **Figure 13**, **Figure 14** and **Figure 15**.

²¹ The following framing themes were used to explore the framings of impacts on urban sustainability: environmental issues, liveability, economic growth and equity, and service quality.

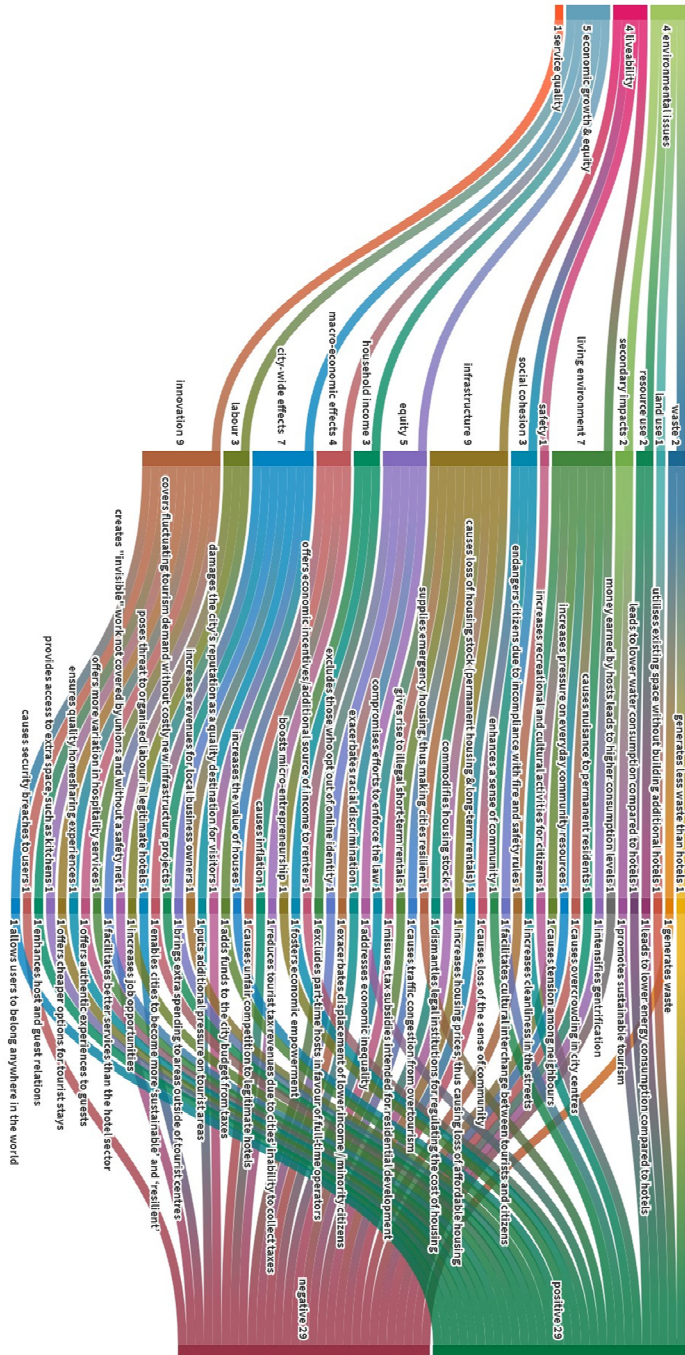


Figure 13. How are the impacts of accommodation sharing on urban sustainability framed in academic literature?

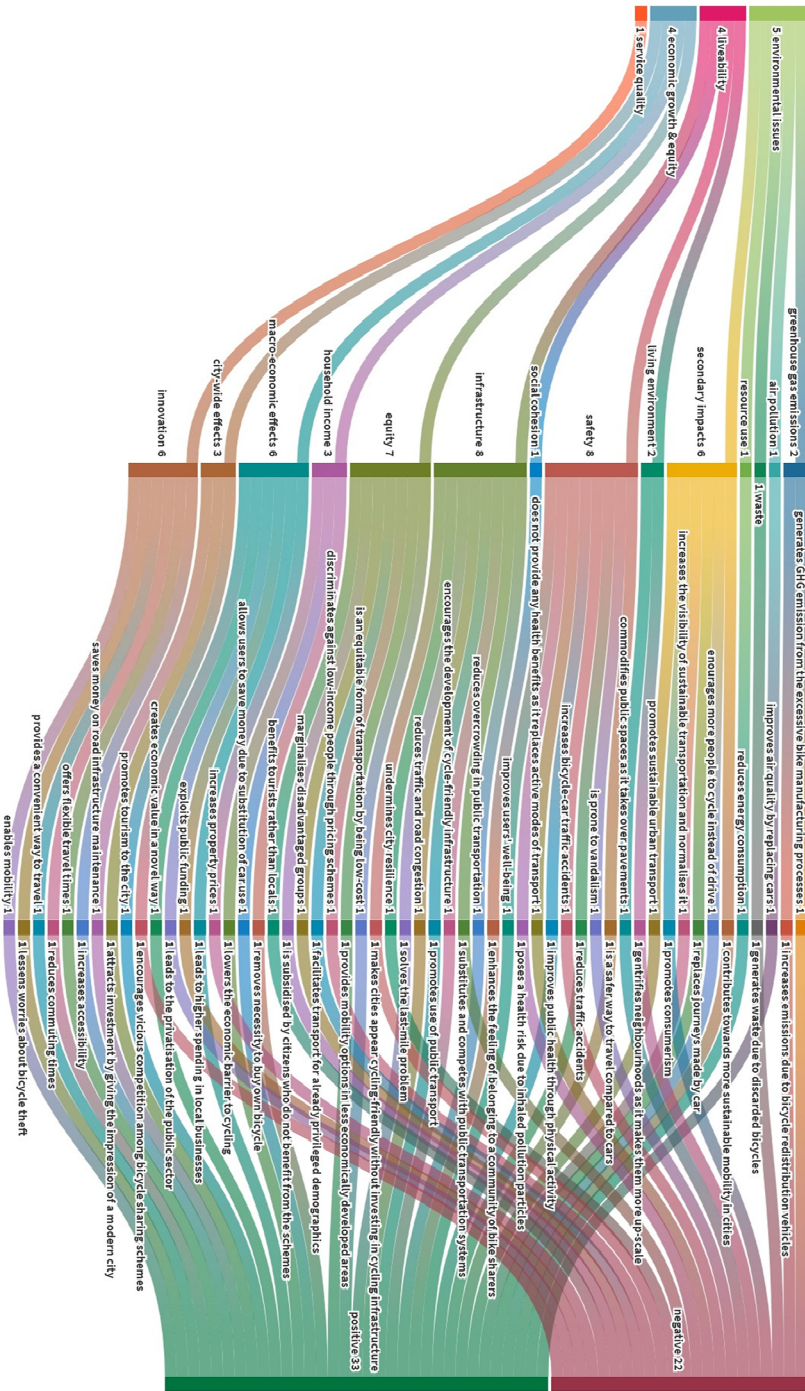


Figure 14. How are the impacts of bicycle sharing on urban sustainability framed in academic literature?

Overall, liveability and economic growth and equity were mostly negatively framed in relation to accommodation sharing, but mostly positively in relation to bicycle sharing and car sharing. Some academic papers only warned of negative consequences, while others highlighted the positive impacts. This is especially true for those studies that did not explicitly study the social, environmental, or economic impacts of SE. Those that did were more cautious about the framings they used.

Framing sustainability impacts across actors, sectors, and cities

Papers I-III found that USOs used positive sustainability framings to gain market advantage, and municipal governments either agreed with their claims, presented counterarguments, or framed the SE in other ways. This diversity in claims between USOs and municipalities was further confirmed in Papers IV and V. The multiplicity of frames has created conflicts when the frames are not aligned or contradict each other, which has direct implications on the institutionalisation of the SE.

Research question 3 addresses how USOs and municipalities frame the impact of accommodation, bicycle and car sharing on urban sustainability. The findings can aid conflict resolution and help in negotiating the future development of the SE, and navigate it in a way that contributes to urban sustainability.

A case study on how USOs and municipal officials view the sustainability impacts of the accommodation, bicycle and car sharing was devised in Amsterdam and Toronto. To systematise the results, their statements were coded, labelled as positive or negative, and classified following a sustainable city framework, which emerged from a systematic literature review presented in the section above (Figure 16). The framework consists of four framing themes and 16 framing categories. Following this framework, the findings on how accommodation, bicycle and car sharing are framed by USOs and municipal officials in Amsterdam and Toronto are organised. Overall, it was found that perceptions on how the SE impacts environmental issues varied significantly across SE sectors and across cities.



Figure 16. Framing themes and categories

Environmental issues

In the *accommodation sharing* sector, where the sharing platform Airbnb is dominant, environmental impacts were discussed very little, and were exclusively brought up by Airbnb for marketing purposes. It is interesting to note that in 2014, Airbnb issued reports to demonstrate the benefits of accommodation sharing for the environment, but the discussion has since moved from environmental impacts to the impacts on liveability.

Contrary to accommodation sharing, the environmental impacts of *bicycle sharing* were frequently discussed by both USOs and municipalities. Surprisingly, in a city with an extremely well-developed cycling culture, suitable topography, and a high level of bicycle ownership among citizens (Amsterdam), municipal government officials believed that bicycle sharing could bring few additional benefits to alleviate environmental issues. In contrast, in a city with marginal cycling culture and infrastructure, unfavourable weather conditions, larger trip distances and the dominance of car ownership (Toronto), bicycle sharing was framed as contributing towards sustainable mobility by both the municipal government and the USOs.

The environmental impacts of *car sharing* were also often discussed by USOs and municipalities. Specifically, its impacts on decreasing car use and the related reduction in GHG emissions were mentioned. A potential for alleviating urban air pollution due to greener, electric fleets was also acknowledged. On the other hand, the municipal governments cautioned about increased car use and the associated

increased air pollution when car sharing is used as an addition to privately owned cars, or when it constitutes a modal shift from more active forms of transportation. Car sharing should become part of a mobility mix that encourages citizens to shed their cars and does not compromise the existence of public transportation. It was found that in a city with a rich mobility mix including excellent cycling infrastructure and public transportation (Amsterdam), car sharing was officially supported by the municipality by signing several deals that committed the city to institutionalising car sharing. However, in a city where car ownership was a necessity due to long distances and where public transportation was of lower quality (Toronto), car sharing and its environmental benefits did not stand out in the discussions. Rather than being viewed as a means of solving environmental issues, it was framed as a way to gain access to cars.

Liveability

Liveability was among the most framed issues across the three segments, which demonstrates a high level of interest in how the SE impacts urban living environment, safety, social cohesion, and infrastructure. While bicycle sharing and car sharing were framed mostly positively in both cities, *accommodation sharing* stood out as being framed overwhelmingly negatively in both cities, but the framings differed depending on the city context. The negative impacts were mostly highlighted by municipal government officials, pointing to a conflict between the municipality and accommodation sharing platforms. In Amsterdam, which is dealing with overtourism, the dominant frame was overcrowding, which was addressed not only by the municipality, but also by the USOs. The negative framings associated with overcrowding included the loss of the sense of community or touristification of local shops. This was further aggravated by the unwillingness of USOs to follow a 30-day cap on holiday rentals, and municipalities claiming that USOs compromised efforts to enforce the law. To overcome these issues, USOs should encourage the spreading of tourists across and outside the city, which is aligned with the strategy proposed by the national government. In Toronto, the issue of overcrowding was not at all prominent. Instead, accommodation sharing was framed as exacerbating the existing lack of affordable housing. This issue was also significant in Amsterdam, but more so in Toronto. The municipal government believed that accommodation sharing gives rise to illegal rentals, which commodifies the housing stock and increases housing prices. In cities where accommodation sharing is believed to have these negative impacts, competent bodies are needed to introduce and enforce clear rules.

Although *bicycle sharing* consists of free-floating, station-based and P2P models, in both Amsterdam and Toronto, only one major station-based system was in operation. In Amsterdam, free-floating bicycle sharing was temporarily banned because it was framed by the municipality as commodifying public space and attracting more tourists, as the schemes were believed to be used mostly by visitors. In Toronto, the lack of free-floating schemes was attributed to bad weather

conditions and lack of cycling culture and infrastructure. While the actors in both cities believed that bicycle sharing schemes complemented public transportation systems, some also cautioned that it might compete with it. Therefore, it is necessary to design and implement these systems in a way that contributes to a well-functioning, sustainable mobility mix.

Overall, the impacts of station-based bicycle sharing on liveability were framed mostly positively. The USOs and municipalities claimed it alleviates the last-mile problem and reduces traffic congestion and traffic accidents. In Toronto, it was also believed to improve public health through the promotion of exercise. A possible reason why this was not mentioned in Amsterdam was the highly institutionalised practice of cycling, which already leads to positive health impacts. Bicycle sharing was generally viewed as beneficial in Toronto, where other affordable, reliable, and sustainable mobility options were lacking. In Amsterdam, which has a well-developed public transportation and bicycle infrastructure, it was seen as a nice addition to the mobility mix, but was considered inferior to the existing mobility systems.

The municipal officials in both cities credited *car sharing* with solving the last-mile problem. However, they were unclear whether it reduces traffic congestion, complements public transportation, and how it impacts traffic accidents. Otherwise, the impacts on liveability were framed differently in each city. In Amsterdam, both the municipality and the USOs appreciated that car sharing secures an efficient use of public space, because it allows new housing units to be built on smaller land areas, as car sharing replaces the need for parking spots for private cars. In Toronto, there were discussions whether cities with better public transportation systems were more likely to benefit from car sharing schemes, as it is more easily integrated into the existing, low-carbon mobility system. If these schemes are to improve urban mobility services while maintaining the qualities of public transportation systems (low-cost, equitable, reliable), municipalities should ensure that car sharing schemes complement, rather than replace, public transportation.

Economic growth & equity

The only impact of *accommodation sharing* on economic growth and equity mentioned by both actor groups in both cities was its potential to bring additional income to renters. Otherwise, the framings vastly differed across the cities and the actors.

In Toronto, three main conflict areas between accommodation sharing providers and the municipality arose. Firstly, the impact on the tourism industry was widely debated. USOs claimed that they attract tourism to the city, cover fluctuating tourism demand without having to build new hotels, and bring extra spending to local business owners and to areas outside of the city centre. The counterarguments presented by the municipality included the inability of accommodation sharing platforms to host large events, thus threatening congress tourism and business travel,

as well as its negative impact on the city's reputation as a quality destination for tourists. Secondly, there was a disagreement whether accommodation sharing supports local jobs, and whether it poses a threat to organised labour in legitimate hotels and creates invisible work without a safety net. Thirdly, whether local economic gains might be offset by tax evasion and the incumbent hotel industry's loss of revenue was also discussed by the municipality. In Amsterdam, the discussion was dominated by USOs that highlighted a large number of positive impacts without closely explaining how they arrived at them. The main conflict between the platforms and the municipality arose from the USOs' ability to bring in more tourism and municipal government officials' efforts to stop overtourism, which is in contrast with the efforts of the actors in Toronto, who were interested in boosting tourism.

In both cities, USOs framed *bicycle sharing* as having positive impacts on economic growth and equity. In Amsterdam, a conflict arose regarding who benefits from bicycle sharing schemes – whether anyone can use them because it is low-cost, or whether it caters mostly for tourists, rather than locals. However, it must be noted that the negative statement referred to free-floating bicycle sharing schemes, which are currently not in operation in Amsterdam. In Toronto, USOs highlighted that bicycle sharing is an equitable form of transportation because it provides low-cost transportation, and that it removes the necessity to own a bicycle, allows users to save money, and promotes tourism to Toronto.

The economic factors of *car sharing* were understood predominantly as positive by both actor groups. In both cities, the actors agreed that car sharing allows consumers to save money because it reduces household costs associated with private car ownership. In Amsterdam, municipal government officials tended to agree with USOs about the positive impacts of car sharing on economic growth and equity, which is not surprising given that Amsterdam promotes car sharing. There was overall agreement that car sharing is an equitable form of transportation because it is available to all demographic groups. In Toronto, USOs highlighted that car sharing provides disadvantaged groups with access to cars, and that it is available to all demographic groups.

Service quality

Both actor groups in both cities overwhelmingly agreed on the benefits of the SE to service quality. This was the least-contested sustainability theme. *Accommodation sharing* was credited with enhanced consumer experience by expanding hospitality services and offering authentic experiences. *Bicycle sharing* was appreciated for its accessibility, flexibility, convenience and for saving time. Finally, the two actor groups believed that *car sharing* facilitated access to cars, promoted new technologies, such as hybrid or electric cars, and made parking easier.

Final remarks

In Amsterdam and Toronto, actors across the three SE sectors generally agreed that the SE enhances service quality for consumers, is financially beneficial, and brings cheaper service options. Otherwise, several conflict areas regarding the impacts of SE on urban sustainability were discovered. This demonstrates that the SE is not homogeneous, and its impacts are sometimes framed vastly differently among cities, actors, and sectors (and, in some instances, even within one actor group).

How new concepts, such as the SE, are framed, reflects the existing infrastructures and institutionalised practices in each city. For example, much of the discussion on accommodation sharing in Amsterdam revolved around the negative socio-economic impacts of tourism on local citizens and infrastructures. In Toronto, overtourism was not an existing issue, and although actors still framed accommodation sharing mostly negatively, their arguments centred around the lack of (affordable) housing in the city.

Car sharing was viewed as predominantly positive in Amsterdam because there were strategies in place to support electric mobility and electric car sharing as a climate neutral mode of transportation. In contrast, electric, shared mobility has not reached such a high degree of institutionalisation in Toronto, where opinions about car sharing were not as strong as in Amsterdam. Bicycle infrastructure is much more developed in Amsterdam than in Toronto, where weather conditions are also unfavourable to cycling. Since Amsterdam is the cycling capital of the world and most citizens own a bicycle, only station-based bicycle sharing that caters to local citizens was considered appropriate by the municipal government officials. Again, arguments were made about free-floating bicycle sharing systems only benefiting tourists, and concerns were raised about the crowding of pavements. In Toronto, all efforts to promote bicycle sharing were welcomed as a way to improve health and reduce car use, the latter being much more common in Toronto than in Amsterdam.

When negative opinions about a certain form of sharing were strong among municipal governments, USOs were more likely to produce a large variety of arguments in their defence. Therefore, conflicts are likely to result in ‘share-washing’ or ‘green-washing’ by the USOs, whereby they make statements or publish studies with positive results as a reaction to the backlash they receive from municipal governments. Although the outcomes of these conflicts are difficult to predict, those actors who can mobilise political and institutional power are more likely to succeed. Given that the framings are different in every city, and that they influence the institutional pathways for the SE, it is likely that there are going to be differences in how the SE becomes institutionalised in cities in the future. Overall, the results demonstrate that sustainability framings play a key role in these institutional processes. Since the sustainability framings differ so greatly among the different sectors, they might also differ across individual business models or even individual sharing platforms.

Discussion

This chapter discusses the main findings and puts them into a wider perspective. First, it reflects on the SE as a concept and argues about rethinking the term “sharing economy”. Second, the significance of sustainability framings in the institutionalisation of urban sharing is contemplated. Finally, the measures taken by key actors in institutionalising the SE in cities are reflected upon.

Reflection on the SE concept

The aim of this PhD thesis was to explore how key actors work to institutionalise urban sharing, and which sustainability claims they use in this process. This was achieved by studying the actions and perceptions of municipal governments and USOs, who were established as the key actors co-creating the SE (Davidson & Infranca, 2015). It was found that the mechanisms of institutional work (Zvolska et al., 2019) the modes of governance (Zvolska et al., 2018), and the sustainability framings (Enochsson et al., 2021) differed greatly based on the USO or the SE segment in focus. In this section, I argue that it is time to abandon the idea of the SE as an overarching umbrella concept of for-profit, non-profit, reciprocal, P2P and B2C platforms, and instead re-focus attention to specific business models and USOs in particular urban contexts. This is because USOs and SE segments are too different from each other to be summarised under the same term²².

The variety of USOs also exacerbates the contestation surrounding the SE as a concept, as discussed in the chapter ‘Defining the Sharing Economy’. Generalisable claims about the SE should not be made without acknowledging the diversity of sharing practices (Curtis & Lehner, 2019; Daunorienė et al., 2015). This negatively impacts the usability of the term ‘sharing economy,’ which is reflected in its worldwide decline since it peaked in 2015-2016 (Figure 26). Instead, the focus has shifted to individual sharing platforms or specific SE segments. To demonstrate, the terms ‘Airbnb’ and ‘car sharing’ are used more frequently than the term ‘sharing economy’ (see Figure 27).

²² For an overview of the multiplicity of SE business models see, for example, Ritter and Schanz (2019), Muñoz and Cohen (2018), or (Curtis, 2021).

● sharing economy

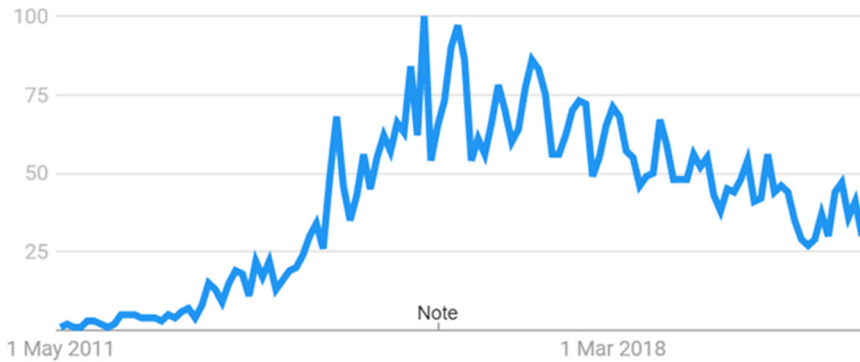


Figure 17. Worldwide web search for the term 'sharing economy' in the period 12 April 2011 - 12 April 2021. Source: Google Trends.

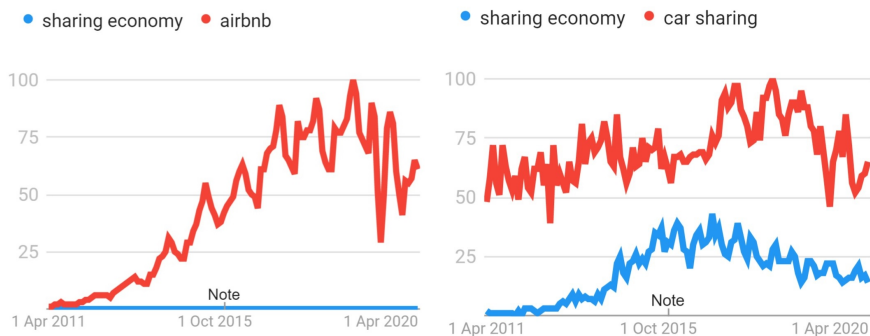


Figure 18. Worldwide web search for the terms 'Airbnb' and 'car sharing' versus 'sharing economy' in the period 12 April 2011 - 12 April 2021. Source: Google Trends.

Initially, the SE was associated predominantly with smaller-scale, P2P platforms, such as tool sharing, which were hoped to catalyse a sustainable transformation in cities (Botsman & Rogers, 2011; Heinrichs, 2013). However, the SE has since become synonymous with the SE flagship platforms Airbnb and Uber whose negative impacts and litigation efforts negatively impacted its image. Some argue

that this shift from small-scale, P2P initiatives to large, multi-national platforms has essentially meant the ‘death’ of the SE (Kessler, 2015).

Despite the criticism SE vanguards receive, they can be credited with normalising the SE concept, although the SE they have helped institutionalise differs from the initial visions. It could even be argued, based on Figure 27, that these large USOs have outgrown the SE term because they are drawing much more interest. At the same time, there is a large variety of SE platforms in cities, both large and small scale and spanning many different segments, as demonstrated by the data collected during the MRLs. This indicates that the SE is not ‘dead’, as proposed by (Kessler, 2015). However, I argue that the term ‘sharing economy’ is problematic and no longer valid as an umbrella concept encompassing all sharing practices because 1) it has become synonymous with the large, for-profit sharing platforms, and 2) it is too overarching to offer any meaningful framework of the diverse USOs.

The shift away from the SE was also registered in the cities included in the MRLs. For example, Amsterdam’s work on the SE was among the most developed out of the cities included in MRLs. However, the city’s interest in the SE has dwindled due to restructuring, political decisions at municipal level and an overall move from the SE to platform economy to focus its engagement on the regulation of for-profit platforms. Similarly, in Berlin, a report on the SE was commissioned, but never published. In Toronto, it was published in 2016, but not operationalised. Whether the negative perceptions associated with the large USOs were accountable for this shift is up for debate.

The need for a new direction in conceptualising urban sharing was also evident in the findings of this thesis. Specifically, municipal governments did not govern all USOs in the same way; instead, they supported or restricted them based on how they perceived the sustainability impacts of individual platforms or SE segments (Zvolska et al., 2018). It was also found that municipalities perceived the sustainability impacts of SE segments overwhelmingly differently (Enochsson et al., 2021). Another indication of the non-homogeneous nature of the SE is the finding that USOs engaged in different forms of institutional work, and there were stark differences between for-profit and non-profit USOs (Zvolska et al., 2019).

In conclusion, when assessing the SE, its diversity should be recognised. It is also important to take into consideration specific geographic contexts, as what might bring social, economic, and environmental benefits in one city could have the opposite effect somewhere else.

Institutionalisation of the SE through sustainability claims

Cities are facing various environmental, economic, and social issues, but are also an important player in (urban) sustainability transitions. The SE has been heralded as a potential catalyst of such transitions, although its actual impacts are largely unknown and context dependent. This thesis found that there were many conflicts about the SE's impacts on the environment, liveability, economic growth, equity, and service quality (Enochsson et al., 2021). While USOs believed in their overwhelmingly positive effects on urban sustainability, municipal governments tended to be more cautious about the SE's contributions. The sustainability of the SE is a highly contested topic, yet it has taken a central stage in the discussions about its institutionalisation. To illustrate, many municipalities have introduced caps on accommodation sharing due to concerns about the negative impacts on, for example, the housing market or overcrowding. In contrast, car and bicycle sharing were supported by municipalities when they believed that they would alleviate traffic congestion, air pollution or other urban issues (Enochsson et al., 2021).

At the same time, assessing these impacts is difficult due to their far-reaching rebound effects (Plepys & Singh, 2019). For example, money earned through sharing platforms (positive economic impact) could be used on energy-intensive activities (negative environmental impact), and since people who already own resources are more likely to capitalise on their underused assets, the SE could also exacerbate income inequality (negative social impact). These impacts are complex, context-dependent, and unpredictable, but being aware of them is important for understanding the SE's implications on urban sustainability. This thesis offered an overview of the perceived impacts of accommodation, bicycle, and car sharing, but what is their significance in institutionalising the SE?

The accounts of perceived impacts demonstrated that there are both similarities and differences in how accommodation, bicycle and car sharing are framed by USOs and municipalities. For the sake of completeness, framing was seen as a form of institutional work because it embodies the purposive actions of actors aimed at creating, maintaining, and disrupting the SE. It was found that when the key actors reflected on the benefits and threats of the SE, the existing sustainability issues in the city played a role in how they framed the SE. I use Amsterdam as an example to provide a specific account of this phenomenon. One of the major issues in the city is overtourism, which emerged as a recurrent theme during interviews and when reviewing policy documents and online and printed media. When municipal officials discussed accommodation, bicycle, and car sharing, they often reflected on how they affect overtourism. USOs that catered to tourists were perceived as exacerbating overtourism and were assessed negatively by the municipality, predominantly accommodation sharing and free-floating bicycle sharing. USOs

belonging to these segments were heavily regulated by the municipality, which inhibited their operations in the city. This illustrates how sustainability perceptions and framings are important in institutionalising urban sharing.

It has become apparent that, for USOs to become successful in institutionalising sharing practices in cities, they must gain the support of municipalities, or at the very least, avoid being perceived as exacerbating existing issues²³. Lobbying, membership of industry associations, and education about the positive impacts of the SE were some of the measures USOs took to institutionalise the SE in cities. While their efforts sometimes resulted in regulatory change or in averting restrictions, there is little evidence that they led to an approval of sharing practices by municipal governments. Since municipalities are powerful actors that can support or inhibit the SE, demonstrating how cities benefit from USOs is essential to the institutionalisation of sharing practices. However, USOs should refrain from making unsubstantiated claims about their sustainability potentials, as this was not met with acceptance of the municipalities – especially if their perceptions were different.

I suggest that, if USOs are to become successful in institutionalising sharing practices, and in contributing to urban sustainability, they should be aware of the environmental, economic and social issues in the city they aim to operate in. USOs that are viewed as having a positive impact on cities are more likely to benefit from municipal support, and avoid restrictions. An example of this is a London-based USO JustPark where private driveways can be rented to park a car²⁴. The company was selected by the Mayor of London to represent the city at a Smart City Expo World Congress due to its potential to reduce emissions from cars circling around in search of parking spots. It addressed a pressing sustainability issue in London – air pollution, and was able to explain how it contributed to its alleviation.

If they are to fulfil the initial sustainability promises of the SE, USOs should strive to collaborate with municipal governments on co-creating and institutionalising sharing practices. By entering a dialogue about the city's needs, they can learn about the sustainability issues in the city, and collaborate on alleviating them, alternatively, avoiding their exacerbation. While this approach may be time and resource demanding, it could ensure a long-term success of USOs.

²³ It must be noted that the data was collected in cities in the Global North that possess power and resources to govern USOs. In other cities that lack regulatory power, resources to govern, or are unable to enforce regulations, USOs are less likely to be steered (inhibited and supported) by municipalities, or their efforts can be ignored. In such cases, USOs might be left to develop on their own, without the involvement of municipalities. This is one example of context-dependency in the institutionalisation of the SE.

²⁴ The platform has since expanded to offer public parking spaces.

Institutionalisation of SE segments

There are a number of indications that sharing practices are becoming institutionalised in cities, in accordance with Scott's (1995) classification of elements that constitute institutions (regulatory, normative, and cultural-cognitive). First, new rules and regulations have emerged that prescribe how USOs should behave. Some examples of this are various caps on short-term rentals, restrictions on free-floating bicycle schemes, or on parking spots granted for car sharing vehicles. Secondly, sharing practices are becoming normalised and upscaled, as a myriad of sharing platforms have emerged with identical business models. Some examples of for-profit accommodation sharing platforms are Airbnb, VRBO, 9keys; free-floating car sharing platforms include Zipcar, Car2go, Communauto, Didi or ShareNow; and P2P tool sharing Peerby, Fat Lama, Neighbourly, or Hygglo. Thirdly, an example of their embeddedness into cultural-cognitive institutions is demonstrated by some of their names being verbalised, such as 'airbnbng'.

USOs often justify their existence and demonstrate their usefulness by positively framing their impact on the environment, liveability, economic growth, equity, and service quality. However, their impacts on urban sustainability are complex and likely have diverse rebound effects. By studying how they engage in institutional work and how municipalities react to their emergence, it is revealed how they attempt to establish sharing practices as institutions, how they work to dismantle old institutions, and how municipalities exert their power on them. Following the recommendation that the SE is not homogeneous and should be differentiated by its segments, the rest of this section reflects on the institutionalisation of accommodation, car, bicycle sharing and the sharing of other assets. It discusses how USOs in these segments attempt to establish the sharing of resources as an institutionalised consumption practice and how they work to disrupt existing institutions, and it also summarises findings on how municipalities react to development of these segments. Implications of their institutional work for urban sustainability are also highlighted.

Accommodation sharing consists of for-profit (e.g. Airbnb, VRBO), reciprocal (e.g. HomeExchange, LoveHomeSwap) and free (e.g. Couchsurfing, Warm Showers) business models (Zvolska, 2015), but it is mostly the powerful for-profit USOs, especially Airbnb, that engage in institutional work (Zvolska et al., 2019). For example, they lobby municipal, national, and supra-national governments for better conditions, claiming they allow urban citizens to capitalise on the resources they own, and enhance the sense of community. One way of gaining better conditions is by delimiting their organisational field to avoid the strict rules set up for traditional tourist accommodation. Where lobbying was unsuccessful, they engaged in litigation against municipalities, especially in the US. To appear more powerful in negotiations, they joined various inter- and intra-industrial associations.

They worked to institutionalise accommodation sharing by identifying with positive terms, such as ‘sustainable’ or ‘community’ or ‘home sharing’. They were also found to work on changing existing regulations for short-term lettings. This indicates that for-profit accommodation sharing platforms are powerful SE actors with considerable resources. It is likely they will continue to work on normalising short-term rentals. As a result, municipal governments have designed new rules, but this might become an issue where local governments lack resources to ensure enforcement.

Car sharing platforms consist of free-floating, station-based, and P2P business models. Station-based car sharing, the oldest business model, was generally welcome in cities because it was not associated with illegal parking and clogging city centres. Responses to free-floating car sharing were mixed. It was both supported for its potential to curb GHG emissions in cities, and blamed for traffic congestion. P2P car sharing remains marginal. Car sharing companies were found to lobby municipal governments on the grounds that car sharing reduces private car use, thereby reducing air pollution. One of the strategies to institutionalise car sharing was to lobby at a municipal level to become part of municipal transport plans. Like accommodation sharing platforms, car sharing USOs joined inter- and intra-industrial associations, such as Carplus in the UK, which presented car sharing as a sustainable urban transport option. They also spent their resources on educating citizens on how car sharing works, which also contributes to its institutionalisation. Car sharing companies were also active in dismantling the institution of a private car. Some of them actively lobbied local governments to discourage private cars in city centres by higher taxes and fees. Car sharing is therefore directly competing with private car ownership, which might be a welcome measure in many cities struggling with air pollution and congestion. However, more city-specific studies on the environmental effects of car sharing (such as by Arbeláez Vélez and Plepys (2021)) are needed to determine whether it has the desired outcomes.

Bicycle sharing business models are similar to those of car sharing. They, too, consist of free-floating, station-based, and P2P platforms. There are differences in how municipalities react to free-floating and station-based bicycle sharing. While the former is often regulated in urban spaces because of littering the streets, the latter is generally supported. At the same time, station-based bicycle sharing is often initiated by the municipalities themselves, and/or given access to public space where the bicycle stations are placed, so it is unlikely that municipalities would react negatively to it. Free-floating USOs were found to lobby municipalities using claims that bicycle sharing leads to lower GHG emissions (which is on the agenda of many cities), and to increased exercise among urban citizens. In London, they joined the industry association Bikeplus, which collects data on bicycle sharing and lobbies on their behalf. However, a thriving bicycle culture or lack of thereof is not a prerequisite for their success. The Amsterdam municipality, which has a well-developed cycling infrastructure, did not support free-floating bicycle sharing

because most local citizens already owned private bicycles, so the sharing schemes would not cater to locals but to tourists, in addition to competing with them for parking spots. Consequently, there are potential negative rebound effects associated with bicycle sharing schemes, which are often seen as an environmentally sustainable mode of transport in cities.

The sharing of other assets encompasses the sharing of all other goods not covered in the categories above. In this thesis, data was included from clothes and tool sharing USOs. Clothes sharing was rather marginal, but tool sharing USOs were present in all MRLs. These were mostly offline, which means that they lacked platforms where the individual tools could be selected and borrowed. The survival of these USOs sometimes depended on municipal support, which they received in the form of funding, premises, and other tangible and intangible resources. In order to win their support, they had to explain their benefits to the city and the citizens. Often, they argued that tool sharing enhances social cohesion in the city and leads to a positive social impact on urban communities by providing access to tools. Online-based, P2P tool sharing USOs, like P2P car and bicycle sharing, were not found to interact with municipal governments. This indicates that it is mostly B2C forms of sharing (including large-scale accommodation sharing where one owner rents out multiple units) that attract municipalities' attention. Their attention could have both positive and negative consequences for the USOs, depending, again, on how their impacts are perceived by the municipality.

Conclusions

This thesis explored the institutionalisation of the SE in cities by studying how it is shaped by two key actor groups, USOs and municipal governments. It combined four theoretical angles to study the pressures exerted in its development: institutional work, governance theory, framing theory, and sustainability science.

The findings show that the key actors employed a variety of mechanisms to influence whether and how the SE becomes “established as authoritative guidelines for social behaviour” (North, 1991). While USOs engaged in institutional work by legitimising the SE in its current forms and by disrupting competing institutionalised practices, municipalities governed it on the basis of its perceived benefits and threats. It was also found that the perceptions of SE’s impacts on urban sustainability play a key role in discussions between the two key actor groups, USOs and municipal governments, about the institutionalisation of the SE.

This chapter presents the theoretical and practical contributions of this thesis. The main contribution to theory development lies in the combination of four theoretical perspectives to bring an understanding about the institutionalisation of the SE. The results of this study can be used by practitioners and municipal government officials in their endeavours to develop a SE that contributes to sustainable urban development.

Contributions to theory

By triangulating different theories and drawing on a rich data set, this thesis has made four key contributions to research and theory.

First, by collecting data directly from the representatives of SE platforms, municipal governments, third-party organisations and other related actors, this thesis produced empirical evidence about how actors work to institutionalise sharing practices. By doing so, it has contributed to the existing body of literature concerning the development of the SE in cities.

Secondly, this thesis addressed the lack of understanding about how actors exert power to steer the development of the SE by applying and testing two theoretical frameworks – institutional work by Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) and urban

governance by Bulkeley and Kern (2006), and adapting them to the realities of the SE. Using empirical data from MRLs, they were modified to offer revised frameworks that can be used by other researchers to study how specific USOs create and disrupt institutions in defined city contexts, and how municipalities govern the SE. The frameworks are not to be seen as definitive, and, if used in other studies, it is encouraged that new mechanisms of institutional work and governance are added. The usefulness of the revised governance framework for future research was demonstrated by its adaption in the follow-up work in the Urban Sharing project and in studies authored by other SE researchers. See for example Voytenko Palgan et al. (2021), Mont, Plepys, et al. (2019), Palm, Södergren, et al. (2019), Vidal and Morell (2018) or van den Eijnden (2017). The adoption by other researchers studying the SE supports an earlier claim made in this thesis that, while the findings of this study are not generalisable, the frameworks can be used in future studies because they were developed by synthesising data from several case studies and cities.

Thirdly, the contribution to institutional work lies in combining it with governance theory when analysing how municipal governments steer the development of the SE. The initial framework proposed by Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) was originally developed by the authors by collecting accounts about institutional work from empirically-based institutional research. Since institutional research is largely based on studying organisations (companies), application to governing bodies was limited. The power relations are different in the sense that governing bodies (in this case, municipal governments) exert power on (sharing) organisations and steer them in a desired way. As this research shows, ‘steering’ means influencing USOs so that they contribute to urban sustainability, or lower their negative impacts. Nonetheless, if institutional work relates to “the purposive action of individuals and organizations aimed at creating, maintaining and disrupting institutions” (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006, p. 215), this means that it can encompass the governing measures undertaken by municipalities. When studying how municipalities shape the SE, in this thesis urban governance is considered part of institutional work. The two theoretical lenses are combined to create a new framework for how municipal governments can actively influence the development of the SE. It involves two forms of governance. Outward governance refers to the actions of municipalities undertaken to influence USOs, and inward governance summarises how municipalities make sense of the SE for their own purposes. Inward governance presupposes outward governance, but they are both needed in governing the SE and in bringing institutional change. The new framework can be applied to understand how municipalities govern the SE in other cities, or how they govern other novel concepts and innovations.

Fourthly, despite the contestation about the sustainability impacts of the SE, the literature offered no consolidated summary of what these impacts might be. This thesis closed this gap by compiling accounts of what the impacts of accommodation, bicycle, and car sharing might be on urban sustainability. This exhaustive overview

could be used in future studies exploring the direct impacts and rebound effects of the SE in specific city contexts.

Contribution to practice

This section summarises the usefulness of the findings to industry practitioners and municipal officials.

First, this thesis provides new knowledge on how the impacts of the accommodation, bicycle and car sharing on urban sustainability are perceived by USOs and municipalities. It highlights main conflict areas, as well as where their values are aligned, which can help communicate a way forward, and ensure that USOs enhance urban sustainability.

Secondly, by studying how municipalities react to the emergence of USOs, the thesis lifts the diversity of governance approaches used to steer the development of the SE. Municipalities can benefit from these findings by learning how other cities deal with USOs. This can inspire them in their endeavours to support the sharing practices they deem sustainable, or constrain those that are associated with negative impacts. They can regulate USOs, provide tangible support (e.g. premises, funding), support them by enabling their operations, procure goods (and services) from them, or start their own sharing initiatives. The findings can be used as a toolbox for municipalities for how to deal with the SE. They can also be useful as a communication tool such as when they map their activities and communicate them to policy makers.

Thirdly, by drawing on institutional work, the thesis studies how USOs work to institutionalise sharing practices in cities. SE practitioners can therefore learn which strategies they can use to normalise urban sharing. They can work to create new and disrupt old regulatory, normative, and cultural-cognitive institutions. They can, for example, lobby municipal governments to gain their support, educate society about the benefits of sharing, teach people about how to get involved in the SE, or join industry associations. They can also remove privileges from institutionalised practices that directly compete with them, or frame them as undesirable. However, it is recommended that these strategies be combined with collaboration with municipal governments who are aware of the sustainability challenges in their cities. This could help ensure that the institutionalised sharing practices catalyse a transformation towards urban sustainability.

Limitations

The strength of this thesis lies in the triangulation of three theories – institutional work, governance theory, and framing theory, and in an analysis of rich data sets consisting of 150 interviews. Paradoxically, this is also associated with some of its weaknesses. First, the findings are contingent to the cities where the data was collected. Considering the rapid changes surrounding the SE, not least due to the Covid-19 pandemic (Mont, Curtis, & Palgan, 2021), the validity of these results is also limited to the space and time in which the interviews took place. However, the aim of this thesis was not to provide generalisable findings, but ‘thick descriptions’ of how key actors work to institutionalise the SE in various cities, and how they understand its sustainability impacts. By drawing on data collected in six cities, these descriptions provide a rich overview of the institutional work undertaken by USOs and municipalities in their attempts to steer the development of the SE. They also offer an exhaustive summary and analysis of sustainability framings employed by the two actor groups. Despite the findings being context-specific, the frameworks can be used in future studies as explained in the section ‘contributions to theory’.

Secondly, this study centres around the work of USOs and municipal governments in institutionalising the SE. The focus on USOs and municipalities was selected because they were named in academic literature as the two most important actor groups in influencing the development of the SE (Davidson & Infranca, 2015). However, other actor groups also influence the form in which the SE will become institutionalised. The incumbent segment, SE users, third-party actors, researchers or the media are some of the important actor groups not studied here. Although I did conduct interviews with SE users, third-party organisations and researchers and their views influenced the writing of my papers, they were not the focus of this study. It is suggested that these actors be explored in future studies. I acknowledge that, specifically, the inclusion of incumbent sectors would have been beneficial in exploring how they influence the institutionalisation of the SE. However, these actors were not the focus of this study.

Thirdly, I explored how USOs and municipalities engage in the co-creation of sharing practices as new institutions, and how they attempt to disrupt old institutions, with most of the focus being put on institutional creation. I excluded an important part of institutional work, institutional maintenance, because it did not centre around the development of the SE per se, nor around institutional change. Rather, it addresses how key SE actors work to maintain the status quo.

Future research

The SE is attempting to change the way resources are accessed in cities, which has already affected some of the existing institutional arrangements. With the SE continuing to have impact on urban sustainability, there is need for more research to understand how it develops and becomes institutionalised. This thesis aimed to address these issues by exploring i) how USOs engage in institutional creation and disruption, ii) how municipalities govern the SE, and iii) how the sustainability of the SE is framed by USOs and municipalities. Answering these RQs has opened up some areas for future research, which are addressed below. Suggestions on how the analysis in this thesis could be improved in future studies is also highlighted.

First, the findings indicate that each city is unique regarding how a municipality governs the SE, and which sustainability frames dominate the discussions. This is determined by the existing institutional arrangements in each city. In this study, I draw on data from six cities, but future research could replicate this study and explore the institutionalisation of the SE in other cities.

Secondly, I argue in favour of refocusing attention from the umbrella term ‘sharing economy’ to individual SE segments and USOs. Although trying to differentiate between different SE segments, this thesis adopts a rather broad understanding of the SE – the sharing of goods that is facilitated by online P2P or B2C platforms. Future research could explore how individual SE business models (such as, for example, station-based car sharing or for-profit accommodation sharing) are institutionalised in a specific city context. A comparative case study investigating how a single business model is institutionalised in different cities would also bring valuable insights.

Thirdly, in this thesis, institutional maintenance was excluded because it does not constitute institutional change. However, it can be argued that municipalities engage in a great deal of institutional maintenance to protect, for example, urban space, affordable housing, or public transportation. Institutional maintenance can be explored by interviewing the representatives of the incumbent sectors that are being disrupted by the sharing economy, as these were omitted from this study. Future studies could take on this endeavour.

Fourthly, the data in this thesis was collected during each of the MRL, thereby presenting a view of the issue in a particular time, across space. There would be great value in following the evolution of the SE both across space *and* time, so future studies could consider longer time frames.

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The Sharing Economy in Cities



Cities are facing many sustainability challenges, including climate change, lack of affordable housing, or socio-economic inequality. By proposing a novel way of redistributing resources, the sharing economy has a potential to solve these problems. Or does it? This study shows that the sustainability impacts of the sharing economy have become a contested issue and play a major role in the development of sharing practices in urban areas. It centres around two key actor groups, urban sharing organisations and municipal governments, when it explores how the sharing economy becomes institutionalised in cities.