Introduction: Sharing Economies in Times of Crisis

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'Sharing is caring'... 'a problem shared is a problem halved'... 'share and share alike'...

Sharing is used as a means of moral measurement; of people and society. It is positioned as so inherently beneficial that its innate goodness is rarely questioned. Yet, real-life manifestations of sharing, whether it be skills, stuff or stories, are far more complex and contested than we might think. This is, we posit, especially the case in those situations where sharing has become instituted as a driving factor of economic systems and a means of getting by in times of crisis - and is the inspiration for putting together this collection.

Sharing can be understood as a socio-economic practice and principle, although in recent years sharing has been increasingly described as a more formalised economic arrangement. These so-called 'sharing economies' have emerged across a range of capitalist, alternative-capitalist and non-capitalist economic fields (Bradley 2014; Germann Molz 2012; Richardson 2016), partly as a response to the growing instabilities and vulnerabilities in the present political-economic fabric. Especially in the business world, these new sharing economies have been perceived by many as exciting new innovations promising to transform our economic and social lives (e.g. Gansky 2012).
This volume interrogates such optimism and definitional narrowness, and undertakes a constructive critique of sharing as practice, politic and possibility. We consider sharing as a mode of political-economic organisation, investigating political, social and ethical dimensions of a range of its diverse forms. In the midst of neoliberal capital’s reinvention and reassertion post-2008 (Christophers 2014), we argue that it is important to consider the ways in which ‘purely’ economic processes – usually focused on capitalism – intersect with other forms of valuing, exchanging, producing and consuming. Sharing is one such form, though of course it is not entirely removed from circulations of capital – they can intersect, overlap and irritate.

Deconstructing and questioning sharing as practice and politic serves to reminds us that the political economy does not exist in a vacuum, hence this collection seeks to rethink both sharing and economy, in conversation with one another. The interdisciplinary collection of authors and their empirical topics are in many ways quite different from one another, but herein they coalesce around a unique and timely question: what is the role of sharing in a contemporary period characterised by crisis and turbulence?

Current scholarship within and beyond the field of political economy indicates how non-financial economies can produce counternarratives to the dominance of formalised capitalism, and generate spaces of economic alterity that sit within, against and beyond capitalist economies (Gibson-Graham 2008). In particular, getting by in times of crisis often requires connectedness and inter-relationality (Hall 2016a); support that includes but commonly transcends purely financial transactions. However, what remains to be asked is how sharing and shared economic practices and relationships are altered, proliferated, co-
opted or entrenched in times of crisis. What do sharing economies mean for these crisis-stricken times of ecological, political and economic uncertainty? In what ways are sharing economies resisting, evading, recuperated by, or entangled within, spaces of dominant political-economic order? To what extent can sharing practices be seen as re-shaping social, economic or moral values? And how might we take inspiration from these sharing economies to address the profound challenges that societies now face?

By raising and addressing these questions, this collection interrogates the complex and overlapping relationships between various coexisting forms of sharing within the economy, and the broader socio-political relations that intersect through them. Differing motivations such as need, convenience and ideology cut through dynamic classed, gendered and racialised relations in particular contexts, and at particular times. In this sense, constructions of superficially ‘non-economic’ relationships and institutions - such as kinship, authority and nation - also have a bearing on the way subjects and objects of economic life are understood, appreciated and replicated.

The Sharing Economy

With the unwavering dominance of neoliberal globalisation, the recent collapse of global financial markets, growing energy demand, pan-European humanitarian crises, and a growing cohort of so-called ‘failed states’, contemporary economic life for many is now characterised by multiple uncertainties and vulnerabilities. Amidst this instability, new or renewed forms of 'more-than-capitalist' economic practice have surfaced, variously challenging, deflecting or destabilising the underlying economic relationships that underpin
contemporary crises. These variously-named ‘sharing’ (Gold 2004), ‘moral’ (Wilson 2013) or ‘gift’ (Mauss 2002 / 1954) economies are not only ‘alternative capitalisms’ – many of which circumvent or transgress capitalist relations of production altogether – but also they may offer hints of an alternative future to the crisis-prone present. Indeed, some of the most powerful examples of sharing economies are the everyday, informal practices of mutuality, solidarity and resourcefulness that all-too-easily go unnoticed (e.g. White 2009). In this collection we therefore seek to explore and expand these multiple ontologies of sharing economies, broadening the scope of current scholarship.

The growth of the so-called ‘sharing economy’ in the context of crisis has produced significant shifts in the ways that resources, products and services are distributed and used. The sharing economy has been positioned by its supporters as a practical ‘win-win’ solution to various societal challenges, especially those related to community cohesion, ecological sustainability and economic resilience. To share in this context, we are told, is to address our individual needs while also generating positive externalities beyond the economic realm; forging meaningful connections with others and minimising wasteful overconsumption (Richardson 2015). Often drawing on recent developments in peer-to-peer and collaborative online technologies (Bradley 2014), businesses such as Uber, Lyft and AirBnB demonstrate that the sharing with others of intellectual and physical resources that would otherwise be privately used has become a viable mode not only of managing and distributing those resources but also extracting profit from them.

Within this new, formalised sharing economy, a range of economic forms coexist through a “semantic confusion” (Belk 2014). For instance, start-ups, entrepreneurs, multinational
corporations, co-operatives, social enterprises, informal voluntary networks and not-for-profit models have found themselves awkwardly bundled together, occupying ostensibly the same economic and discursive spaces. Within this multiplicity of economic and organisational forms, the universally positive idea of sharing has, however, acted as a smokescreen for sharing-focused businesses to undertake various strategies of capital accumulation that impact negatively on their clients, workers and broader economic environments.

The meteoric rise of the spare room rental platform AirBnB is a prominent – and commonly cited – example. On the surface, the platform assists people renting out their spare rooms to guests, often at a cost lower than hotel prices. But it has simultaneously become a vehicle for undermining hospitality workers’ pay and conditions (Kann 2015), facilitating aggressive entrepreneurial property speculation and forcing up rental prices (New York Communities for Change 2015), while also undermining free and non-profit alternatives such as Hospitality Club and Couchsurfing (Ince 2016).

Nevertheless, although prominent examples of sharing economy businesses are increasingly identified as problematic, other initiatives are beginning to use these technological innovations to develop modes of supporting, stabilising, and up-scaling socially progressive causes (Scholz 2016). Given that the technological innovations of the sharing economy in fact drew their narratives of ‘democratising access’ to resources from decentralised and grassroots peer-to-peer experiments among alternative programmers and hackers (e.g. Andersson 2011), it is unsurprising that these technologies have recently begun to feed back into new projects rooted in social justice, such as the emerging ‘Platform Co-op’ movement.
Alongside technological change, then, the crisis in the Fordist mode of production and subsequent emergence of deregulated neoliberalism has paved the way for the growth of the capitalist sharing economy, yet it has also rendered the production and circulation of valued things open to alternative sharing economies outside, at the peripheries of, or even in opposition to, the capitalist commodity form.

As such, the formal sharing economy has been constitutive of diverse currents, making it difficult to define its borders with much accuracy. The technological model on which it is based merges as easily into open-source and wiki-based information sharing as it does into online platforms for vast corporations; its organisational model can produce both social integration and disintegration; its ecological outcomes can blend into circular and low-carbon futures as easily as resource-intensive ones; and its relationship to its growing workforce can be one of empowerment or exploitation. The chameleon-like character of the sharing economy thus belies its superficially unified and coherent identity.

Sharing and Economies

Although the sharing economy might be considered a contemporary phenomenon - at least by current understandings as originating in technological innovations (see Benkler 2002) - it is not the only way that sharing and the economy intersect. There is an implicit political economy to the notion of sharing, defined in its most basic terms as the division and distribution of something - be it profits, goods or knowledge - between several people. And, while not our intended use of the term, 'shares' are also a form of company capital in financial markets, entitling shareholders to a proportion of business profits in exchange for
their investment, which may in turn be exchanged for money. Economies are also built on trade and exchange with others, whether near or distant, and therefore also on inter-subjectivity and varying degrees of connectivity.

While inter-relationality and communicability form the basis for sharing-as-practice, familiarity is not necessarily a prerequisite to sharing, as the explosion of online sharing platforms have shown. Beyond kinship, friendship or community relations, there are various means of sharing that constitute economic practice but likewise do not entail personal or sustained interaction. While sharing certainly can be conducive to powerful encounters of difference (Ince 2015), it may equally include online interactions at a distance, as well as forms of face-to-face voluntarism, donation, and hand-me-downs that do not require emotional closeness or even meaningful interactions. The everyday geographies of sharing therefore do not necessarily revolve around inter-subjectivity, but can assume affective and material forms.

Longer-standing, perhaps more subtle shades of sharing economies – or, rather, sharing-as-economic-practice – also exist beyond or at the edge of the commodified sphere. Here the ethic of sharing, as it were, places the exchange or contract on alternative forms of transaction, rather than a purely monetised exchange value. Instead, the inherent worth of the economic interaction is founded on the provision of conviviality, commensality, time, effort or labour. Examples of these more informal sharing economies include hitchhiking, time-banks, local currency schemes, community dinner clubs, or jumble sales (e.g. Ince 2016; Seyfang and Longhurst 2013). There are, of course, social dimensions that cut through these sharing practices, shaping how (and by whom) they are encountered and the types of economic relations that are produced. The geographically intimate and trust-bound means
of sharing in the form of couch-surfing and hitchhiking are, for instance, also gendered encounters; for women, these activities can be associated with fear of physical and sexual violence, and can in fact constrain personal mobilities (Falconer 2009).

In a quotidian sense, sharing is also a likely component of most economies, as an endemic practice within and beyond the formal economic sphere. In their research on the 'second economy', Smith and Stenning (2006, p.206) argue that the practices associated with informal economic transactions, such as sharing, are often 'seen to be useful only in times of crisis, when the market can no longer provide for well-being and sustenance, when there is simply no other choice, or they are associated with people "on the make", "grabbing" at informal and/or illegal economic opportunities'. Similarly, in a discussion of friendship, Bowlby (2011) points out that the sharing of activities and ideas can involve transactions and reciprocities that might not be considered typical of sharing economies, or economies in general. As she explains, 'reciprocation does not need to be immediate..., nor of the same form, nor involve a precisely calculated scale of obligation. I may "pay back" the friend who gave me a lift to the station by listening to their tales of trouble with their daughter. This "pay back" may be removed in both time and space from the incident of the lift and neither of us may think about the equivalence or otherwise of these two incidents' (Bowlby 2011, p.612).

However, and as these contributions identify, while sharing can contribute to resistance and mutual aid, it should not be romanticised or assumed to be an always successful fix (e.g. Williams et al. 2016). For instance, in our own empirical work we have revealed the tensions encircling sharing within families, whether material, emotional or financial, as not always or
necessarily reciprocal (Hall 2016a), and of the contested terms of shared identities through which communities are constituted (Ince 2011). We therefore must think of sharing as a pervasive and contested practice which can bring to light multiple, contradictory dimensions of contemporary economic life.

As should now be apparent, sharing economies are diverse – even contradictory – in their various manifestations. This plurality indicates that we cannot see sharing economies in isolation from one another, nor from the orthodox capitalist economy. In many cases, different economies of sharing overlap and intersect, especially those forms of sharing that are unarticulated or that operate under the radar of formal economic structures. For example, as Germann Molz (2012) and others (e.g. Ince 2016) have indicated in the context of tourism, our economic ‘gaze’ might register a formalised online system of hospitality exchange but overlook the multiplicity of informally shared spaces, intellectual and physical resources, and other solidarities that operate through and beyond formal initiatives. This volume embraces and interrogates the diversity of economic forms that fall under the broad umbrella of sharing, yet it also explores kinds of sharing that arguably operate outside, and in spite, of the economic realm altogether.

It is therefore important to sensitise our economic ‘radar’ to these pluralities and the dynamic interactions between different forms, spaces and scales of sharing. What they all have in common is their emphasis on unmediated forms of exchange and value circulation – or, what has been increasingly referred to as peer-to-peer systems. This autonomy and fluidity has generated intense debate regarding the fine line between democratisation of access and infringement of legal ownership rights. Thus, the plurality of sharing economies
is underlined by a plurality of political and ethical questions that reach into the very core of economic (in)justice, the neoliberal state, and social reproduction. Our task, then, is to unravel some of these questions in relation to the contemporary period characterised by entanglements of the gradual decomposition of binary certainties (owner/user, producer/consumer, formal/informal) and the omnipresent threat of crisis.

**The Politics of Crisis**

Crisis is a multifaceted and ever-changing concept, and one that has become part of everyday lexicon. Despite its apparent singularity, much like *sharing*, the term has diverse meanings, is riddled with contradictions, and must be understood in terms of human agency (Featherstone et al 2015). Crises can take different forms, and may coexist or overlap in time and space. They can be felt at multiple scales, within and between nations and societies, bodies and experiences; both localised and endemic (Hall 2016b).

The term itself derives from the Greek *krasis*, meaning ‘decision’, suggesting a meeting of particular circumstances, an accumulation of specific events that intersect around a common focal point. Crises might be typified by a critical mass of activity or anticipation, the crescendo of a situation that reaches a tipping point requiring urgent attention. Crises are in this sense always realised; the commotion caused by the momentum of a looming or unfolding crisis means that crises do not – indeed, cannot – go unnoticed. More often than not, crises are also *shared*; drawing people together through common experiences, material conditions and anxieties. Even in the case of personal crises, these are articulated into internal narratives about the world and one’s place in it.
While there are no temporal parameters to what may constitute a crisis, the concept is somewhat defined by what is not crisis. Crises by definition ultimately pass, are resolved, or can merge and separate into new (or newly defined) crises. Moments and incidents during the ‘lifecourse’ of a crisis can accelerate, dissipate or change its trajectory and tempo. Despite the longevity of some crises, for a situation to be understood as a crisis, it must be somewhat extra-ordinary, since crises by their very definition are not constant or all-encompassing. Crises are nonetheless experienced in and as part of everyday life, and can also reverberate as memories, habits, policies, materialities and other legacies. Indeed, crisis is as much an embodied phenomenon as it is a systemic one. In this sense, lived experiences of crises are charged with ethical and political currents that relate to how they are experienced and negotiated by differentially-situated groups, institutions and individuals. One’s experience of a crisis is heavily shaped by class, gender, race and other dimensions of social difference. This also affects the nature and effectiveness of an individual or group’s response to crises, since structural inequities can be amplified in such situations (e.g. Elliot and Pais 2006).

In terms of its recent uses, the notion of crisis has represented a wide range of often unconnected instabilities, be they economic, ecological, cultural, moral, political or personal. The diversity of crises shows how the notion can have wildly different spatial and temporal stories and trajectories, and it is worth briefly exploring some examples to unpack how crises emerge, develop and are manifested in many ways. While multiple definitions of crisis proliferate, notions of economic and financial upheaval often dominate. Triggered by a crash in the US subprime mortgage market, the so-called
'credit crisis' began when a large flow of credit in the virtual economy ‘spilled over into real markets’, resulting in ‘a restriction to the amount of credit available to both industry and consumers’ (Hinton and Goodman 2010, p.256; Hall 2016a). Emmel and Hughes (2010, p.178) explain that ‘the collapse of Lehman Brothers on the 16 September 2008 is widely accepted as a marker of the start of the recession’, leading to panic and the steady disintegration of confidence in the global economy. Anticipation and the build-up of momentum often associated with crises is evident in this example; in the UK as early as 2007 ‘banks stopped lending to each other’ and one bank, Northern Rock, was nationalised by the UK government to prevent its collapse (Edwards and Irwin 2010, p.120; Thain 2009). The impacts of the Global Financial Crisis of 2008-2009 still resonate, particularly in the US and Europe. Indeed, as we write, a fresh round of austerity policies is being arranged for the Greek economy, and senior politicians and financial institutions in the UK are pronouncing stark warnings of the severe economic shocks that may hit the UK economy following its citizens’ vote to leave the European Union. Thus, even threats of economic crises can 'regulate everyday life' (Pollard 2013, p.413), and are 'simultaneously personal and provocative' experiences (Hall 2016b, p.7).

An example which speaks to the urgency that is constitutive of both political and environmental crises, is the so-called 'energy crisis'. In the last decade, energy generation and use have become increasingly politicised, with growing 'concerns over security of supply, rising prices and climate change' (Hall et al. 2013, p.413). Energy thus represents an intersection of multiple crises; not only as finite fuel resources deplete, but also as a key indicator of social and environmental inequality, with many consumers now faced with the dilemma of whether to 'eat or heat'. Moreover, it is through the example of energy that the
‘knottiness’ of crises can be realised. For example, Ukraine’s struggle over the sovereignty of Crimea following a Russian insurgency exposed instabilities in energy supply and security, with concerns that Russia may restrict gas supplies into Europe. Indeed, ‘this crisis marked a fundamental shift from an era characterised by more orderly market functioning to a less organised scramble for resources’ (Goldthau and Boersma 2014, p. 15). In amongst this complexity of crises a significant environmental crisis is argued to be afoot; the Russian economy is reportedly one of the most energy intensive, and yet there is a substantial lack of policies ensuring environmental protection or sustainable development (Crotty and Hall 2014).

Another of the foremost crises facing the Global North, especially Europe, is the mass movement of refugees and migrants, most notably from parts of Africa and the Middle East experiencing political instability, poverty and war. For example, between April 2011 and November 2015 there were an estimated 807,337 asylum applications in Europe from Syrians alone (UNHCR 2015), most of which were made in 2015. These growing human mobilities, combined with ongoing neoliberalisation, an ageing European population, high levels of internal mobility among Europeans, and continued economic uncertainty, has produced a sense of crisis through multiple vectors, including intensified labour market competition and segmentation (e.g. Ince et al 2015) and increased pressures on rapidly dwindling welfare structures and social housing stocks (e.g. Hedin et al 2012). Migration crises are also evident in the Global South, with displaced populations settling in formal camps or informal shanty towns in urban and rural areas of neighbouring states (Crisp et al 2012), often experiencing significant levels of exclusion (e.g. Amisi 2006).
These political-economic dimensions of migration have co-articulated with parallel debates about perceived cultural vulnerabilities and a so-called ‘crisis of multiculturalism’ in regions experiencing high rates of in-migration, especially Western Europe (Lentin and Titley 2012). According to media and government discourses across the Global North, state-led multicultural policies of the past two decades have produced a situation in which ‘native’ ethno-cultural norms have been marginalised. Such cultural anxieties have often been manifested through a rightward shift in political discourse, promoting ever-stricter migration and labour controls and a return to an idealised cultural homogeneity that never really existed (e.g. Ince 2011; Koefoed and Simonsen 2007; Moore and Forkert 2014). In some states, such as the UK, these rather ‘utopian’ imaginaries of cultural unity have, ironically, found a home in new forms of far-right politics that present inclusiveness and respect for difference as inherently British (Copsey 2010). Against this is counterpoised a menacing (and usually Islamic) Other which threatens this delicate fabric of ‘native’ culture with ‘foreign’ or ‘imported’ theocratic uniformity.

Amidst these diverse crises and crisis-tendencies cross-cutting contemporary societies, the state and other supra- and sub-national institutions of government are perceived as under increasing strain. The difficulties of balancing and managing competing demands, conflicts and crises have been compounded by increasingly complex landscapes of governance, with growing numbers of non-state actors intersecting with radically restructured and rescaled states (e.g. Anderson 2016; Stark and Taylor 2014). The result is a complex, “variegated” (Brenner et al. 2010) meshwork of governance relations within neoliberal political systems, highly vulnerable to changes and ruptures in the societies they seek to manage. So-called ‘failed states’ represent the sine qua non of these anxieties about state stability (Hill 2005);
perceived as but one crisis away from losing their monopoly of violence to (different factions of) their subjects. There is therefore a growing mistrust of government and its ability to cope with a crisis-prone world, including at macro-regional scales of governance (e.g. the European Union), where a sense of democratic deficit often compounds this mistrust further.

Additionally, there are many types of crises on the political landscape that we have not discussed here, not for lack of interest, rather for lack of space; moral crises, housing crises, food crises, care crises, personal crises – some of which are discussed by our contributors, some are not. However, this serves to illustrate our point that crises have become a normative expectation in contemporary societies. And while diverse and discriminating, what all these examples have in common is that crises can bring together both very real and imaginary geographies that can be personally, socially, nationally or even globally affective - at the same time and at different times. Therefore, to denote a situation as a 'crisis' is to acknowledge the spatio-temporal situatedness of a particular moment or event; a moment that will eventually pass but will inevitably leave traces and remnants that long outlive the crisis itself.

**Seeing Sharing and Economies Anew: Practices, Politics and Possibilities**

We are interested in what these varied and precarious social, political, economic and environmental conditions mean for sharing economies, and what it means to share in and through crisis. To unpack the complexities of sharing, economies and crises, we posit that a
three-part focus - on practices, politics and possibilities - provides a useful conceptual foundation.

Viewing sharing as a practice can foreground the embedded, active and engaged nature of sharing, the economy, and indeed crisis. It is all too easy to think of such abstract concepts or processes as existing ‘over the heads’ of people, when in fact they are produced by individual and collective forms of everyday agency. Sharing is very much a lived practice; it is done for and with others, building direct connections between individuals and groups through common purpose and common use of resources. Sharing economies may also occupy shared spaces, in that they do not necessarily sit in isolation, but individuals and groups may participate and benefit from multiple sharing economies and at different scales. Indeed, pluralising understandings of sharing and the economy is a key aim of this collection. Furthermore, in the context of crisis, sharing practices might be understood to challenge, circumvent, and destabilise economic relationships underpinning current crises, as well as providing possible modes of mitigating risk or ‘retrofitting’ economic systems to adapt to changing circumstances.

Sharing can also be understood as a form of politics, whether as a result of sharing, or by considering sharing as a political stance. This can include sharing as a means of redistributing public goods and services, such as through taxation and public amenities, or in charitable acts such as sharing food or volunteering time or labour. And yet, many, if not most, of the examples of sharing economies in this collection are not political in an explicit sense. By this we mean they are not necessarily ‘noisily’ or ‘disruptively’ political, but instead bring to light a 'quiet politics': small acts and kind words (Horton and Kraftl 2009),
'everyday activities in quotidian spaces which are part of a broader continuum of movements for change' (Askins 2015, p.475). They are, however, undoubtedly normative, mobilising ways of being and relating to things, nature and people in a globalised, crisis-prone world that do not conform to the confined visions of neoliberal elites. Instead, they may point towards a “politics of economic possibility” (Gibson-Graham 2006).

As a practice with political and normative dimensions, sharing also presents various possibilities: some likelier than others, some more radical, but all within the scope of the imagination. We consider sharing economies not as extraordinary, but as embedded in everyday politics, ethics and relationalities, and as open to change and contestation. The ‘everydayness’ of these economic practices foregrounds a tension between the ordinary and the extraordinary; a tension that brings to light how everyday productions of space are inflected with alternative political imaginations. This echoes notions of the prefigurative in contemporary political economic thought – of creating ‘ordinary’ spaces, relationships and structures in the here-and-now that make pathways to envisioned ‘extraordinary’ future worlds. Suffice to say, our own understandings of what might be considered sharing have expanded in the crafting of this collection. While already broad in temporal framing (whether sharing be historical, current, or futurist), expanding the remit to include personal or collective memories, other-worldly experiences, national imaginaries, ideals, and alternative futures, for instance, adds colour and texture to the possibilities of sharing.

The remainder of this collection critically yet constructively interrogates the practices, politics, possibilities and pitfalls of applying sharing economies to contemporary crises and crisis tendencies. In doing so, it offers a diverse yet focused, and politically-engaged yet
rigorous series of studies into these questions, developing new critical understandings of
the politics, spatialities, temporalities, relationalities and practices that constitute sharing as
a possible element of our responses to or prevention of crises.

The chapters that follow are richly illustrative of the ambiguous practices, politics and
possibilities running through sharing economies, and the exclusions and inequities that
sharing can engender and aggravate. But what connects them is an underpinning notion
that the context(s) of crisis requires us to see sharing economies anew. This involves moving
beyond, yet representing and extending formal and informal understandings of the sharing
economy. It necessitates a reconsideration of what sharing economies are and what they
can do, and of the implications of context in these reconceptualisations. We argue that it is,
therefore, important not to be confined by established ideas of ‘the sharing economy’ but
instead by retracing the intricate socio-economic relationships between sharing and the
economy.

In doing so, we have been motivated by two key goals for this collection. Firstly, to mark a
major theoretical, conceptual and empirical contribution to scholarly understandings of
contemporary sharing economies; and, secondly, to open up innovative new research
agendas and questions in the theoretical and empirical study of the intersections between
eyeveryday practices, alternative economies and crises. Towards these ends, the book is
organised across three interlinked and overlapping themes, each of which encompasses the
practices, politics and possibilities of sharing in different ways.
In our first theme, *Sharing In and Through Crisis*, we present four chapters that deal most explicitly with the intersections of sharing and crisis, and how the two interweave in deeply politicised ways. Laura Pottinger’s ethnographic study of seed exchanges sheds light on how the threat of ecological crisis (in this case, biodiversity) may draw together diverse collectivities which not only have profound social and emotional impacts on participants but also generate material challenges to the underlying commodification of our relationships with food. Chris Gibson, Natascha Klocker, Erin Borger and Sophie-May Kerr’s chapter on extended family life explores the ways in which family and personal crises are managed and addressed through families’ relationships with materialities and micro-spatialities of the home, drawing out the complex role that shared domestic space plays in mediating social and economic relations. Juliana Mansvelt then investigates the obligations and limitations of sharing among older people in the context of rapid social and economic change in New Zealand, picking through the complex tensions embedded within the process of aging and its economies. In the final paper of this theme, Mark Jayne, Gill Valentine and Sarah Holloway foreground in their discussion an understanding of how the delicate, embodied negotiations and meanings of shared drinking experiences might be reframed as an antidote to perceptions of mass alcohol consumption as constitutive of an “urban crisis” of disorder and violence.

In the second theme of the book, the simmering tensions and compatibilities of sharing economies and the sharing economy, noted earlier in this introduction, are brought to the fore. Paula Bialski opens the section with a critical reflection on the renting of home-space as part of the sharing economy, and the commodification of the domestic, material and otherwise. Based on ethnographic accounts, she troubles common dualisms such as
public/private, home/work, leisure/labour, whilst simultaneously offering new ways of thinking about home-space through the lens of sharing. In her chapter unpacking of the phenomenon of nearly-new sales of children’s clothes and toys among middle-class mothers, Emma Waight explores the complex classed dynamics of consuming the second-hand objects that are shared and circulated among parenting networks, and the subtle meanings embedded within the objects themselves. Nicola Livingstone’s chapter on UK food banks offers a powerful critique of the ways in which multiple scales of economic crisis (global, state-level, and domestic) can be weaponised by governing elites to construct punitive regimes that ultimately harm the most vulnerable. To round off this section, Katharina Hellwig, Russell Belk and Felicitas Morhart then compare and contrast the “shared moments” constituted through for-profit and free hospitality platforms. Their comparison of participants’ experiences of AirBnB and CouchSurfing foregrounds the role of spontaneity and the unexpected in encounters, and calls for us to reconsider the role of money in sharing relations.

The third and final theme of the book contains chapters that engage more directly with how sharing economies might signal the possibility of alternative futures in the way we live, work, distribute resources, and relate to one another more generally. The growth of cohousing, in which residents form democratically and co-operatively controlled housing communities, is the subject of Lucy Sargisson’s chapter, which she argues indicates a promising and viable, if imperfect, solution to housing crises in the Global North rooted explicitly in shared ownership, control and responsibility. Nicole Gombay’s contribution is an exploration of the interweaving of Indigenous and settler-colonial land claims in northern Canada, considering how Indigenous populations have sought to maintain and promote
their collective, sharing-oriented understandings of land use in the face of intense pressure from the Canadian state to conform to commodified, Eurocentric models of property ownership. Lastly, Richard White and Colin Williams conclude the volume on a deeply hopeful and transformative note, using their analysis of non-commodified forms of sharing and mutual aid in households to argue that another society organised along non-hierarchical and co-operative lines is not only necessary to challenge capitalism’s destructive crisis-tendencies but also already living among us today.

Taken together, the collection makes distinctive theoretical and empirical contributions to understanding the everyday practices, politics and possibilities of sharing economies in an uncertain and volatile world. How people and communities cope, survive, or even thrive in crises is a pivotal question of contemporary society. By critically engaging with sharing-based economies as an increasingly prominent and innovative field of everyday economic practice, this volume ultimately considers the possibilities and challenges to the development of equitable and just relationships among people and with the turbulent world around them.

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