"Sharing Cities" – A new hype or true potential for sustainability transitions in urban and economic systems?

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Abstract

A growing number of official "Sharing Cities" have adopted political programs built on visions of the potential role the sharing economy might play in urban development. These visions include hopes for achieving environmental sustainability, social inclusion and a more equitable – and digitally modernized – economy. However, Sharing City programs and underlying visions are spatially diverse and build upon heterogeneous concepts of the sharing economy. From a sustainability transitions perspective, it is thus interesting to observe current developments and adopt a critical perspective, assessing the way the sharing economy is framed in different urban contexts. A narrative conceptual framework will be used in this paper to analyze press coverage and official documents on the two "Sharing Cities" Seoul and Amsterdam. The potential of Sharing Cities to contribute to transitions to more sustainable urban and economic systems will be discussed and future research perspectives will be identified.

Introduction

Sustainability transitions require fundamental change and the reconfiguration of entire systems, two prominent examples being 1) the economic system and the way we organize production and consumption; 2) cities as places where many sustainability challenges originate, various socio-technical systems are intertwined and momentum for change can be created. With regard to a transition of economic systems, the sharing economy is discussed as a way of reducing emissions and resource use by radically changing production and consumption patterns. However, it has also been discussed controversially as a form of "platform capitalism" with negative environmental and social effects (Martin, 2016). Nonetheless, and due to current momentum in this field, activities towards merging the megatrend of urbanization with the shift towards a sharing economy have been identified as a window of opportunity for deep structural change away from current unsustainable development paths (McLaren & Agyeman, 2015). A growing number of cities have adopted political programs built on visions of the potential role the sharing economy might play in urban development, some have officially been proclaimed "Sharing Cities" and they have formed a "Sharing Cities Alliance" (sharingcitiesalliance.com). From a sustainability transitions perspective, it is thus interesting to observe current developments and critically assess the way the sharing economy is framed in different urban contexts, the plurality of pathways emerging in different local contexts and whether or not these pathways lead to sustainable outcomes. Thus, the following research questions are addressed:

> (1) What variations can we observe in different Sharing City programs and what are the underlying narratives shaping them?

(2) What are the concrete initiatives and policy measures adopted in different Sharing Cities and how do they reflect the underlying narratives?

(3) How do these programs contribute to fundamental change or regime stabilization, respectively?

In order to address these research questions, a narrative approach will be adopted for analyzing two prominent examples of Sharing Cities: Seoul and Amsterdam. Building on a brief overview of the current debate within transition studies regarding the sharing economy (section 1), an analytical framework will be developed (sections 2 and 3), based on narrative approaches to the study of (urban) transitions. In section 4, the case studies of Seoul and Amsterdam will be presented. In section 5, the results will be discussed and conclusions will be drawn regarding the role of narrative analysis within transition studies and especially for studying the sharing economy in an urban context as a relevant field for transition scholars.

1. The current debate on the sharing economy in transition studies

Some recent articles and Special Issues (in EIST and TFSC) indicate that transition scholars have identified the sharing economy as a relevant phenomenon to study from a sustainability transitions perspective. While sharing itself is not a new phenomenon and has always been practiced in various communities, among family and friends, what is new is "stranger sharing" (Schor, 2014) enabled by the internet and smart technologies. The sharing economy is emerging as a potentially disruptive niche building on societal mega-trends such as digitalization, globalization and the transformation challenges related to sustainable development – albeit with very unclear implications regarding the direction of change and its effects on people and planet. As a "catch-all label with strong normative underpinnings" (Acquier *et al.*, 2017 p.1), it has been used to describe a broad range of concepts, activities and business models by users, companies, the media and scholars alike.

In order to deal with this complexity, Frenken and Schor (2017) propose to delineate the sharing economy along three defining characteristics, i.e. (1) peer-to-peer sharing, (2) granting temporary access to (3) physical goods. In this view, the core and the novelty of the sharing economy are the platforms, i.e. the technological innovation enabling sharing among strangers. This delineation of the field seems helpful to study more closely the new patterns of consumption and emerging consumer cultures around online platforms. However, as argued by Acquier *et al.* (2017), it leaves out many activities that are being (labelled as) part of the sharing economy and thus a lot of critical aspects and relevant problems. In this paper, we follow the authors' approach, who propose an organizing framework for mapping different *perspectives*

on the sharing economy (rather than defining what it is) associated with three foundational cores or new/alternative types of economies, i.e. the access economy, platform economy and community-based economy. An ideal-type sharing economy would combine elements of all three cores, while initiatives that combine only two of the three core elements are considered variations within the sharing economy (p.6). As also argued by Frenken and Schor (2017), the sharing economy is a term that is itself performative and a very rampant umbrella concept, because a lot of different actors position themselves as part of the sharing economy and want to benefit from the positive symbolic value attached to it (p.4). In our view, it is important especially from a sustainability transitions perspective to observe these dynamics, without being too rigorous in these early stages to set definite boundaries, because it can help us understand "how innovations are shaped and framed by discursive practices, roles and positions" (Frenken & Schor, 2017 p.4).

A similar approach has been followed by Martin (2016) who analyzes the online sharing economy discourse to identify potential pathways the sharing economy may take in the future. From this perspective "a rigorous definition of the sharing economy is not needed, rather competing definitions within discourse are analysed as alternative framings" (p.151). As a result of this analysis, six distinct ways of framing the sharing economy have been identified, i.e. as either an economic opportunity, a form of sustainable consumption, a new type of decentralized economy, an unregulated marketplace, a reinforcement of the neoliberal paradigm, and an incoherent field of innovation (p.149). In line with transitions thinking, these competing frames can be seen as typical for an early stage in a potential transition, where a niche (or competing niches) begin to emerge and struggle with opposing regime structures, form alignments or become co-opted . It is not yet clear what the dominant rules and practices of the sharing economy will eventually be and how it will affect existing regime structures and various socio-technical systems. However, what can be observed is frames and

> "narratives [that] represent different interpretations about what the sharing economy is, what it can and can't do. The mere existence of sharing economy activities has opened up the field allowing for interpretative flexibility. From this perspective, the sharing economy has already had a lasting impact on society in the sense that it has helped generate meaningful discussion regarding the role of the economy in society, peer to peer business models and alternatives to traditional capitalism" (Cohen & Muñoz, 2016 p.33)

The different narratives, interpretations or frames can be analyzed and traced over time to see what particular stories emerge as dominant, and to what extent specific pathways become more or less likely. So far it seems that while the sharing economy niche has emerged from a critical perspective on modern forms of capitalism and consumer culture, associated with high hopes on the decentralizing and democratizing powers of the internet (Botsman & Rogers, 2010), it has more and more become mainstreamed into the dominant economic culture, exemplified by

the global success stories of Uber, Airbnb and others (Frenken, 2017 p.2; Martin, 2016 p.157f.). This is not surprising from a transitions perspective – innovation processes are always contested, they are no automatic evolution of somehow objectively superior technologies, but essentially an outcome of socio-technical co-evolution. In line with Martin (2016), we argue that therefore transition research can offer relevant insights for the study of the sharing economy, the way that regime and niche forces are apparently struggling against each other, and it offers a critical perspective on processes of niche capture by corporate and other powerful interests.

A very interesting development in this respect can be found in the context of so-called "Sharing Cities" and the global "Sharing Cities Network" (launched by Shareable in 2013). Many cities have been challenged by the success of sharing companies like Uber and Airbnb. Simultaneously, alternative visions of sharing have emerged in these urban contexts centered around "smaller" and less commercial forms of sharing, on solidarity, inclusiveness, democracy and sustainability (McLaren & Agyeman, 2015). In some cases, city governments have officially endorsed such a holistic sharing agenda and launched policies and programs (Sharp, 2018 p.1f.). Two prominent examples are the cities of Seoul and Amsterdam, which will be looked at in some more detail in this paper.

2. Theoretical background – urban transitions and narrative approaches to studying transitions

We position our research in the context of the study of urban transitions and will apply a narrative approach to analyze the framing of "sharing" and the related policy measures in two "Sharing Cities".

2.1. Urban transitions and local discourses

In studies on transitions and systemic change, issues of place and space and specifically the urban scale have long been neglected (Hodson & Marvin, 2010; Bulkeley et al., 2011). In recent years however, spatial contexts in general and cities in particular have been increasingly recognized. Efforts towards a geography of transitions have stressed the role of space and scale in socio-technical transitions and shed a light on the spatial heterogeneity of interactions between actors and structures as well as regimes and niches (Coenen et al., 2012; Raven et al., 2012; Hansen & Coenen, 2015). In this debate cities have been a key focus, and urban transitions have emerged as an interdisciplinary research field, rooted in both urban studies and

studies of systemic change (Wolfram & Frantzeskaki, 2016; Wolfram *et al.*, 2016; Hodson *et al.*, 2017).

Reflections on the role of cities in transitions have shown that the relationship between the two is, at best, complex. On the one hand, cities can be understood as places or nexuses where multiple systems overlap, and the nature of urban sustainability challenges is itself multi-facetted. Thus, urban transitions and reconfigurations cut across multiple systems and sectors, resulting in a need to transcend sectoral and advance multi-system approaches, integrating different domains such as energy, transportation or food (McCormick *et al.*, 2013; Wolfram & Frantzeskaki, 2016; Wolfram *et al.*, 2016; Hodson *et al.*, 2017). On the other hand, there are multiple ways to operationalize cities and the urban scale in concrete research (as evident e.g. by the approaches assembled in Bulkeley *et al.*, 2011). Cities can be understood, for example, as embedded entities within the analysis of transitions on the national scale, e.g. as primary actors or locations of initial innovations (Geels, 2011). However, individual cities can also be understood as specific spatial contexts for transitions, influencing transition processes in place-specific ways resulting in a heterogeneity of transition pathways that can be comparatively studied and interrogated in terms of differences and similarities (Hodson & Marvin, 2010; Hodson *et al.*, 2013; Rohracher & Späth, 2014; Ehnert *et al.*, 2018). It is this second perspective that we adopt in this paper.

Attempts to systematize the complexity of urban contextual factors have, from the very beginning, taken into account the influence of heterogeneous and shared concepts and understandings shaping the local perception and consequential governance of sustainability challenges (Hodson & Marvin, 2010; Hodson *et al.*, 2017). From a broader perspective, studies drawing on urban sociology have shown that "differences between places in terms of discourses, cultural frames and identity result to be critical factors for transition governance [...]." (Wolfram & Frantzeskaki, 2016 p.8) The formation of these influential local discourses can be understood as an interplay between broader discourses on societal challenges and the geographical contexts with their specific local cultures and patterns of interaction to which they are adapted – a process of collective sense-making which is inherently political, involving competing understandings and connected to questions of dominance and power (Späth, 2012; Wittmayer *et al.*, 2014; Hodson *et al.*, 2017).

In this paper it will be analyzed how specific framings of the sharing economy are adopted locally in the context of Sharing Cities. The aim is to understand what particular understandings of the sharing economy are referred to and how they are adapted to local contexts and inform urban governance and concrete policy measures. Eventually, the aim is to

better understand how sharing can become part of urban transitions towards sustainability. To access the content and sustainability implications of Sharing City visions, as well as to shed a light upon the political function that the visions serve the respective city, we draw upon the analysis of narratives.

2.2. Narratives in transition research

A *narrative* or a story is the oral or written "symbolic presentation of a sequence of events" (Scholes, 1981 p.205). Narratives can be analyzed as the medium through which actors make sense of complexity and deal with uncertainty. By telling stories human beings create coherence and order in their perceptions and experience. This is done by arranging specific events or elements of a story into a sequence of events, a chronological order (beginning, middle and end of a story) and connecting them by a causal pattern or a logical course of action. Narration is thus a very basic human activity employed to interpret and structure reality (Bruner, 1990; Czarniawska, 1997; Pentland, 1999; Prince, 1982; Somers & Gibson, 1993). Scientific interest in the study of narrative has developed during the 20th century with the "linguistic turn" in the social sciences and humanities. A new perspective on language as such emerged, recognizing that language is not simply a tool for describing an objective reality, but rather a powerful and creative means of (re-)producing and influencing physical realities. What characterizes narratives (outside of literature) is that they contain a constructive and referential element: they interpret and thus construct reality, while at the same time refer to an experienced reality and concrete social practice (Klein & Martínez, 2009). The analyst's task is to relate those two aspects and study how the narrative production of reality interacts with agency in a concrete social context (Hajer, 1993).

When studying the role of narratives in governance (of urban transitions), three distinct functions of policy narratives can be identified: 1) creating meaning and legitimacy through framing a problem in specific ways, assigning responsibilities and delineating possible solutions; 2) expressing power relations in the process of competing for dominant interpretations and chances to articulate positions; 3) fictionality and polyphony as a way of irritating, questioning established certainties and leaving room for ambiguities (Gadinger *et al.*, 2014 p.10ff.). Typical elements of policy narratives are the problem setting and characters, connected by a plot, resulting in a "moral of the story" (Jones *et al.*, 2014).

Narrative analysis has increasingly also been adopted as a promising perspective in transition research (Bosman *et al.*, 2014; Garud & Gehman, 2012; Hermwille, 2016; Wittmayer *et al.*, 2015) that can shed light on the way regimes are reproduced through the use of language

and stories, and how stories can also re-frame problems and guide transformative action – in this case, towards sustainability-oriented Sharing Cities. While Martin (2016) criticizes that the study of narratives in transitions research is underdeveloped and a focus on the analysis of frames is more fruitful for his analysis of the sharing economy discourse, we argue based on Sharp (2018) and Wittmayer *et al.* (2015) that a focus on narratives could be a useful next step, because "[n]arratives are key to making sense of how frames are applied through storytelling to enact social change" (Sharp, 2018 p.7). The process of narrating can itself be understood as a social practice, a creative act with the potential to change discursive structures (Gadinger *et al.*, 2014). In terms of the MLP, a narrative analysis focuses on the way that regime structures are reproduced through language in dominant narratives, while at the same time emphasizing the duality of agency and structure (Giddens, 1984) by looking into the way that actors draw on dominant frames and creatively re-frame them through alternative stories.

2.3. A narrative perspective on Sharing Cities

Drawing upon these strands of literature, we develop a framework to analyze the current development of "Sharing Cities" according to our research questions. We propose an analytical approach focusing on the process and content of narration:

(1) Analyzing the *process of narration*, i.e. identifying the key narrators of a story, their networks and power relations and the specific patterns of storytelling activities in the respective cities, can help understand how frames or visions of sharing are being enacted in the form of narration as social practice. Relating these narrators to the governance arrangements in the respective cities can also help to assess the political function of Sharing City visions in the different urban contexts.

(2) Analyzing the *narrative content*, we focus on three aspects: The overall plot, the specific problem-setting and the main characters of the stories. Assessing how settings are constructed in terms of challenges and opportunities and what roles and responsibilities are being assigned to different actors when it comes to causing and solving problems, can help to understand the direction of pathways, the potential involvement of regime actors and dynamics, and the specific governance approach picked up in the different contexts.

3. Methodology

In this paper, we present results from two case studies – Seoul and Amsterdam. These cases have been selected because they have adopted comprehensive Sharing City programs, they are internationally acknowledged best practice examples – regularly referred to as "official Sharing

Cities" – and they are fundamentally different regarding their geographic location, cultural background and history. Potentially, our proposed approach can take into account competing narratives of and discursive struggles over what sharing comes to mean in specific cities. For the purposes of this paper, however, we are interested in the "official" accounts shaping the Sharing City programs. (1) For each case, as a first step, based on literature and desktop research, the overall development of the Sharing City programs has been reconstructed. (2) The role of key actors in the creation of the specific Sharing City narrative has been analyzed. (3) Based on this actor constellation, "official" accounts of the "Sharing Cities" Seoul and Amsterdam have been selected for a deeper analysis of narrative content, concentrating on official documents and public statements by key actors. This analysis is focused on the overall plot, challenges and opportunities as well as roles and responsibilities constructed in these narratives. (4) Some of the most prominent policy measures adopted in the context of Sharing City programs have been analyzed.

4. Case Study Results

4.1. Sharing City Seoul

In September 2012, the Seoul Metropolitan Government (SMG) officially launched the "Sharing City Seoul initiative" (SCS). This comprehensive and ambitious program has been initiated by Park Won-soon, a former human rights activist and since 2011 Mayor of Seoul, who embraced the concept of sharing as a way of dealing with a number of challenges emerging after a period of rapid industrialization and modernization. Successful economic development has made Seoul a modern capital city with one of the world's highest rates of internet and smartphone penetration. At the same time, Seoul is facing a number of environmental, economic and social challenges resulting from its successful development and typical for many large cities, e.g. pollution, congestion, demand for space and rising costs of living. The SCS initiative rests on three basic principles for developing the sharing economy, i.e. through 1) creating favorable regulation, by 2) supporting sharing startups, and by 3) actively involving citizens (Cohen & Muñoz, 2016). To that end, a broad range of measures has been adopted: Shortly after the declaration of the SCS initiative by the mayor, in December 2012, the "Ordinance on the Promotion of Sharing" has been enacted as an official piece of legislation by the SMG. It lays out the overall goals of SCS as well as a number of measures to achieve them. In 2013, a corresponding Enforcement Regulation and in 2014 a further amendment have entered into force. In 2013, a Sharing Promotion Committee has been established made up of city officials and experts from various sectors. This was followed by the launch of the Advisory

Committee on the Improvement of Sharing Institutions in 2014 and the Sharing City Task Force in 2015. Also in 2015, the online platform "Sharehub" was launched in cooperation with Creative Commons Korea, which connects and provides information on all sharing activities in Seoul. Another key measure is the provision of funding to a growing number of designated sharing organizations and enterprises. Public awareness and citizen participation are addressed by a broad range of activities and initiatives, ranging from festivals and conferences to public contests for developing Sharing City slogans and designs (Sharehub). Overall, the SCS initiative has steadily been developed further since its official launch six years ago and it has become a global best practice example.

4.1.1. *Actors, narrators and storytelling in Seoul*

The process of narration is dominated by the city administration and its officials as the key actors promoting the SCS initiative. Especially Mayor Park Won-soon plays a central role as a narrator and has advocated sharing as a promising approach for dealing with the city's challenges. He emphasizes it as a way to rebuild a sense of community among citizens and a vision for the future of Seoul in a rapidly changing, globalized and digitalized world economy. Another key actor or narrator apart from the city administration is Creative Commons Korea. This organization has been active in Seoul since 2005, promoting sharing activities and especially the use of the Creative Commons License. It has also been active in lobbying for open government and the introduction of open data programs (CC Korea, 2015 p.63). In 2013, it joined the SCS initiative and together with the SMG launched the website Sharehub, which serves as an information platform and a directory regarding all kinds of sharing projects in Seoul. Its major aim is to raise public awareness, but also to serve as a connecting hub between the SMG, companies, initiatives and citizens to show "that Sharing City was not just a policy pursued by SMG but also something that should be built as a culture by us all" (CC Korea, 2015 p.10). However, at the end of 2016, CC Korea "had to pull out of the sharing hub operation to stay true to its original commitments" (Share Hub, n.d.). With the launch of the Sharehub website, a communication platform has emerged. Numerous events and initiatives have been developed to raise public awareness and include citizens. However, more in-depth research would be needed to identify and analyze other narrators and stories apart from the official storyline.

Based on this constellation of actors, the following key documents have been selected for a deeper analysis:

Document	Actor	Title	Description
SMG (2012)	Seoul Metropolitan Government	*Seoul Metropolitan Government Ordinance on the Promotion of Sharing*	Key policy document delineating goals, involved actors and measures of SCS
SMG (2017)	Seoul Metropolitan Government	*The Sharing City Seoul Project*	Official project information on the SMG websites
CC Korea (2015)	Creative Commons Korea	*Seoul draws a city through sharing*	Official publication on SCS history and projects
Share Hub (n.d.)	Share Hub	*sharehub.kr*	Official website and information hub connecting SCS actors and activities

In addition, statements by Mayor Park Woon-Soon and other city officials in online news and articles, e.g. on the Shareable homepage (Johnson, 2013; Johnson, 2014), have been taken into account.

4.1.2. Overall plot of the Sharing City Seoul narrative

The story of Sharing City Seoul emerges from the city's turbulent past, it's rapid urbanization and economic development after the Korean war. Seoul has managed to build itself up as one of the most modern and technologically advanced mega-cities today. However, this has also produced negative effects, especially with regard to the city's social structure and culture: hyper-capitalism has led to rising social inequality, excessive consumption levels, high suicide rates, anonymity and isolation especially among the elderly. Other challenges come with an extremely dense population, such as congestion, need for space, high costs of housing and environmental pollution. The concept of sharing emerges in this context as a promising solution to address these challenges in a holistic way – and as an innovative and technology-oriented concept that builds on the strengths of Seoul as a digitalized and connected urban society. This potential solution is advocated by the SMG and Mayor Park Won-soon who as a former civil rights activist is a credible narrator of a holistic vision of SCS. Consequently, the basic narrative of the SCS initiative is built on the idea of a "social innovation" that can "create new economic opportunities, to restore reliable relationships, and to reduce waste of resources with a view to resolving economic, social and environmental problems in urban areas all together" (Share Hub, n.d.). It includes the revival of traditional Korean values of community (that seem to have been somewhat lost during a period of rapid economic development) as a way forward into a future, more globalized and connected digital economy, where Seoul can be a frontrunner (again). Leading the way towards this future as a Sharing City are the city administration and the mayor: they "introduced a blueprint […] a sketch in the imagination before being presented

on canvas. […] Seoul had to explain why it had to declare to become a Sharing City […]. Then, people would get the drawing" (Creative Commons Korea, 2015 p.9). The city administration and the mayor are leading this process, but they aim for it to be a shared endeavor, firmly building on public-private partnerships with the city enabling and supporting activities by business and citizens. SCS is emerging as a success story because of this combination of "strong will" by the city government and the "public-civil cooperation model" (Share Hub, n.d.). The narrative also contains an economic agenda with the sharing economy potentially reducing the need for public spending, offering citizens a possibility to earn extra incomes, supporting Korean sharing businesses and shielding them from global competition. However, all efforts and activities are embedded in a social/cultural idea with "[t]he ultimate goal of Seoul Metropolitan Government's Sharing City […] to share lives among dispersed people, recover trust and relationships, and shape a warm city in terms of people's heart" (Kim Tae Kyoon, Director of Seoul's Social Innovation Division, quoted in Johnson, 2013).

4.1.3. Construction of challenges and opportunities in the Sharing City Seoul narrative

Looking at challenges and opportunities as typical elements of the plot of a narrative, they can also be found in the story of Sharing City Seoul. The characteristic pattern in the documents and official communications analyzed is that there are challenges emerging from Seoul's development and the sharing economy appears as an opportunity and solution to these challenges. The challenges that are central to the narrative are those connected to the current economic system and rapid urbanization, i.e. environmental as well as economic and social welfare concerns. The city has been struggling with these issues, it became clear that the public sector would have to step in, but did not have the resources to really solve all these issues by traditional ways of public spending (CC Korea, 2015 p.8). Another key challenge is the rising social inequality and a feeling that traditional values and community are being lost. The sharing economy then appears as an ideal solution to all of these challenges: "The Sharing City not only creates new jobs, increases income and efficiently uses resources, but it will reproduce communities that disappeared, due to rapid urbanization and industrialization, in a modern mode using information technologies and social networking services" (Kim Tae Kyoon, quoted in Johnson, 2013). As expressed here, another opportunity lies in the fact that the sharing economy relies on modern information technology and social networks. Seoul is well prepared as a technological frontrunner and a densely populated city, it is being compared to San Francisco in this respect: "Models of sharing economies which emerged and were activated in San Francisco are also emerging one after another in Seoul" (SMG, 2017). So, the potential for

technological innovation and economic success are clearly seen as a major opportunity. This quote also hints at the fact that even though critical aspects of the sharing economy and especially the role of global corporations are not explicitly mentioned or problematized, the SMG's agenda is to support Korean versions of sharing economy businesses (such as e.g. BnBHero). Economic opportunities arising from this ideal fit between Seoul's existing conditions and the sharing economy are then expected to benefit the city as a whole: more government services can be provided with less resources, new jobs will be created, the environmental burden of excessive consumption will be reduced, citizens can benefit from a greater variety of cheaper and more convenient services, and a new sense of community will emerge (Share Hub, n.d.; SMG, 2017). This is summarized in the SMG's Ordinance on the Promotion of Sharing, the basic aim of which is "to maximize the utilization of resources, recover communities and revitalize the regional economy through the promotion of sharing" (SMG, 2012 Art. 1).

4.1.4. *Roles and responsibilities in the Sharing City Seoul narrative*

In the Ordinance of the Promotion of Sharing, Article 3 spells out the responsibilities of the mayor, which basically is to promote the sharing of public resources and support sharing activities of businesses and citizens (SMG, 2017). The city government positions itself as a sort of facilitator that provides the necessary conditions, infrastructure and startup funding for the people and businesses to take the lead in developing the Sharing City (Share Hub, n.d.; SMG, 2017). In fact, the city has itself introduced sharing services, such as carsharing, bikesharing, tool-libraries and giving access to public buildings, but this is seen as merely a necessity during the early stages (Share Hub, n.d.), the approach of the city is to be seen as an innovative third way between traditional top-down or bottom-up strategies. As In-dong Cho, Director-General of the Seoul Innovation Department puts it: "It is not desirable for government to directly intervene in the market to promote the sharing economy. The city needs to build infrastructure such as law, institution and social trust capital – the city needs to pave the way and strengthen the ecosystem for the sharing economy to thrive. […] This is a creative, private-public partnership model of Seoul's own" (quoted in Johnson, 2014). The innovativeness of the role of the city as a key actor is also attributed to the idea that it is not (only) engaging in traditional infrastructure building, but also focused on infrastructures of the future, such as space or talent (SMG, 2017). So, a key role in the narrative is awarded to businesses and citizens (while it is not clear where their voices are featured in any direct way in the narrative). Apart from being encouraged to develop the sharing economy, the citizens are also positioned centrally in terms

of citizens' rights. In the context of the city's open data programs it is argued that citizens have a right to this kind of information and are the actual owners of that data (CC Korea, 2015 p.50).

4.1.5. Concrete initiatives and policy measures in Seoul

The concrete initiatives and policy measures adopted reflect the three main strategies of the SMG, i.e. improving the legal basis for supporting the sharing economy, supporting sharing businesses and organizations, involving citizens. The legal basis for SCS has been created through the Ordinance on the Promotion of Sharing, which specifies a continuous process of monitoring and adjusting laws and regulations that hamper the sharing economy. Legal measures have also been taken to ban Uber and regulate Airbnb in Seoul. The SMG supports sharing businesses and organizations through providing administrative and financial support. It also cooperates with private businesses, e.g. in the case of a childrens' clothes and toy sharing service. However, the city has itself stepped in and operates car- and bikesharing systems (with more than 1.5 mio. And 500,000 members, respectively) as well as lending libraries. The city has also opened public spaces (such as municipal parking lots and buildings) for private uses during off-hours. The involvement of citizens is achieved to varying degrees: A very strong tool is the participatory budgeting system, where citizens can direct parts of the city's budget to specific projects. Other activities are more "passive" and focused on making information available, e.g. through the city's open data program, various SCS festivals, conferences or the Sharehub website (McLaren & Agyeman, 2015; Share Hub, n.d.).

4.2. Amsterdam Sharing City

In February 2015, Amsterdam was declared Europe's first named "Sharing City", but the city's reputation for being a pioneer and hub for sharing reaches back till the 1960s, when the world's first bike-sharing program launched (and failed). Other innovations like the world's first "Repair Café" in 2009 followed (McLaren & Agyeman, 2015; Cohen & Muñoz, 2016). Amsterdam is home to a lively scene of sharing start-ups like the peer-to-peer rental platform Peerby. Local government involvement followed foot only after a wide variety of services had developed in the city (Mazzucotelli Salice & Pais, 2017).

The initiative towards becoming a "Sharing City" was not driven by the municipality of Amsterdam, but advocated by the founders of the network ShareNL together with the Amsterdam Economic Board, a public-private organization engaging with strategy for the economic development of the metropolitan area. Faced with the perceived opportunities but also challenges of the sharing economy in Amsterdam, ShareNL's co-founder Pieter van de

Glind carried out a survey which confirmed the population's willingness to participate in collaborative consumption practices (van de Glind, 2013). According to ShareNL, Seoul Sharing City was an inspiration, but a bottom-up process was adopted to allow for Amsterdam's specific circumstances. In what co-founder Harmen van Sprang dubbed a process of "co-developing" (quoted in Amsterdam Marketing, n.d.), the network worked closely with the representatives of the municipality and other "ambassadors", i.e. actors from civil society and business, to bring together a joint initiative called "Amsterdam Sharing City" (ASC). The initiative launched on 2 February 2015 as a form of "public-private partnership" (ShareNL, n.d. b). ShareNL has remained an important partner in Amsterdam's engagement with sharing and also become a key actor in developing the international network "Sharing Cities Alliance", in which Amsterdam plays a central role.

Part of the launch of ASC was the claim to make Amsterdam Europe's "first official 'Sharing City'" (Amsterdam Economic Board, 2015), backed by the involvement of city officials as "ambassadors" in the initiative and the presence of Kajsa Ollongren, Amsterdam's Alderman of Economic Affairs, at the launch event. This labelling so far has been successful, as Amsterdam is prominently referred to as Europe's first "Sharing City" (McLaren & Agyeman, 2015; Bergen Miller, 2015). The Municipality embraced its pioneering role and in March 2016 officially adopted a far-reaching policy program formulated in the "Action plan sharing economy" (City of Amsterdam, 2016a).[1] However, the municipality took a first noteworthy policy step in December 2014 before the launch of ASC, agreeing on a memorandum of understanding with Airbnb which was renewed in January 2017 for another two years.[2] In its action plan, the municipality did not identify itself as a "Sharing City", but still committed itself to "Putting Amsterdam on the map as Amsterdam Sharing City" (City of Amsterdam, 2016a), and, among other activities, together with ShareNL built a network of cities that formalized itself with the founding of the "Sharing Cities Alliance" in New York in Mai 2017.[3]

4.2.1. Actors, narrators and storytelling in Amsterdam

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[1]   https://www.amsterdam.nl/nieuwsarchief/nieuws-0/nieuws-2016/nieuws-9-maart-2016/
[2]   https://www.iamsterdam.com/en/our-network/media-centre/city-hall/press-releases/2014-press-room/amsterdam-airbnb-agreement
https://www.iamsterdam.com/en/our-network/media-centre/city-hall/press-releases/2016-press-room/amsterdam-and-airbnb-announce-new-unique-agreement
[3]   https://sharingcitiesalliance.com/the-story/

The main actors involved in the creation of "Amsterdam Sharing City" are: (1) the network ShareNL as the original driving force behind the "Amsterdam Sharing City" project, (2) the local government (here referred to as "the municipality" or "City of Amsterdam"), and (3) a group of public-private actors entrusted with official representation, advocacy and networking in Amsterdam. These actors include, among others, the Amsterdam Economic Board, an influential advisory council concerned with strategy for the Amsterdam metropolitan area, and Amsterdam Marketing, a public-private foundation charged with the marketing of Amsterdam to both visitors and business. In the creation of ASC, these actors are intertwined, because they are all represented as ambassadors in the initiative, the Economic Board played an important role in partnering with ShareNL to create this initiative in the first place, and finally the City of Amsterdam itself is an influential partner in the public-private entities. This constellation has also taken into account when analyzing what can be called the "official narrative" around Amsterdam as a "Sharing City." ShareNL and the different public-private actors have been collaborating in the narration, Harmen van Sprang and Pieter van de Glind featuring as cited speakers or authors on official channels.[4] While the municipality's "Action plan sharing economy" in contrast is clearly authored by just one actor – the City of Amsterdam –, the work of ShareNL as well as the branding of Amsterdam as a "Sharing City" through the ASC initiative are still a key point of reference in this document (City of Amsterdam, 2016). Bearing this constellation in mind, the following sources have been selected for a deeper analysis of narrative content:

Document	Actor	Title	Description
City of Amsterdam (2016)	City of Amsterdam	*Action plan sharing economy*	Key policy document outlining political approach to sharing (economy), approved in March 2016, published in Dutch as well as English.
van Sprang & van de Glind (2014)	Amsterdam Economic Board Website*	*Amsterdam: Sharing City!"*	News from the Amsterdam Economic Board website, authored by Harmen van Sprang and Pieter van de Glind, first publication of survey results (Feb 2014), first public statement concerning Amsterdam as a Sharing City
Amsterdam Economic Board (2015)	Amsterdam Economic Board Website*	Amsterdam wordt eerste 'Sharing City' van Europa	News from the Amsterdam Economic Board website from 5th February 2015, adapted on the City of Amsterdam website on 11th March 2015.

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[4] e.g. Amsterdam Marketing (n.d.), van Sprang & van de Glind (2014) and on the municipality's Youtube channel: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EAb2bCC2kb0&feature=youtu.be

Document	Actor	Title	Description
Amsterdam Marketing (n.d.)	Website iamsterdam.com*	*Amsterdam Sharing City*	Official presentation on website of Amsterdam Marketing
ShareNL (n.d. a)	ShareNL Website	*Amsterdam Sharing City*	Presentation on ShareNL website and sub-pages.

In addition, statements by city officials in online news and articles have been taken into account.

4.2.2. Overall plot of the Amsterdam Sharing City narrative

The narrative of Amsterdam as a "Sharing City" starts in *medias res*: The rise of the sharing economy in Amsterdam is a disruptive development that is relatively autonomous from political action, changing and challenging the city in positive and but also potentially negative ways. Sharing has been a trend for quite some time and is now exploding because of technological innovations. Amsterdam as a city with a "sharing DNA" (Amsterdam Marketing, n.d.) is a focal point of this development. This situation puts pressure on actors in Amsterdam to take action and actively steer the development so as to shape the sharing economy, seize its opportunities and find solutions for its possible negative effects, for the benefit of the city and its people. As Harmen Van Sprang puts it: "The sharing economy won't go away, so you must address it" (ibd.). The city needs a uniting vision, guiding policy and piloting projects. Amsterdam accepts this challenge and embraces its role as a pioneer of the sharing economy. In turn, Amsterdam is named "Europe's first Sharing City" (ibd.) that also has a responsibility to guide the way for other cities.

Concerning the question how and by whom this challenge is accepted, two variations can be found: (1) On the side of ShareNL and Amsterdam Marketing, prominently represented on the official city marketing website, the launch of "Amsterdam Sharing City" is the key intervention. In this intervention, ShareNL seizes the opportunity by bringing together politics, civil society and companies in the spirit of cooperation. This is directly identified with "making Amsterdam Europe's first Sharing City", and "a key ingredient in Amsterdam's journey to becoming a sharing city is the cooperation of the municipality", reflected in the City's action plan (Amsterdam Marketing, n.d.). (2) In this action plan, the municipality itself is actually a bit more reluctant, distancing itself from ASC in the formulation that "Amsterdam is known as a Sharing City" since its proclamation by ShareNL.[5] Still, the city embraces its responsibility and commits itself to the goal of "Putting Amsterdam on the map as Amsterdam Sharing City" (City of Amsterdam, 2016).

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[5]   To the knowledge of the authors the municipality has also not commented the launch of ASC via an official press release or website news.

4.2.3. Construction of challenges and opportunities in the Amsterdam Sharing City narrative

In Amsterdam, the focus is clearly on the opportunities of the sharing economy, which are of economic, social and ecological nature. The sharing economy is seen as a possible answer to urban challenges. The narrative emphasizes the prospect of a more humane and equitable economy, increasing citizens' incomes and offering chances for economic empowerment. Another potential benefit is the innovation of products and services, as well as an improvement of social ties. Finally, the sharing economy is seen as a way to enable more sustainable consumption patterns. In the words of Harmen Van Sprang of ShareNL, these opportunities are condensed in the goal of "A sharing society where everyone has access to all products and services that lead to a happy, sustainable and connected life" (Amsterdam Marketing, n.d.). The municipality's action plan takes a slightly broader and more "conventional" perspective, also acknowledging potential benefits in terms of growth and competitiveness.

As they are a key motivation for pro-active action, challenges of the sharing economy are stressed in both variations of the narrative. Challenges are identified in a variety of fields, and the municipality goes into greater detail, listing e.g. the disruption of traditional businesses and markets, dangers to fair competition, and to regulation of social security, as boundaries demarcating traditional regulated forms of work and economic activities are dissolved. Rebound effects are also acknowledged as possible detrimental effects.

4.2.4. Roles and responsibilities in the Amsterdam Sharing City narrative

The two main variations of the plotline convey different versions of the roles ascribed to different actors, most significantly regarding the protagonist of the story: (1) In its action plan, the municipality frames itself as the single most important protagonist with the responsibility to act in the best interest of its citizens, and the key intervention towards embracing this role is the action plan, in which the municipality's role is clearly defined:

> The College of Mayor and Alderpersons has adopted a proactive attitude towards the sharing economy. The College is committed to making the most of this new form of economy. [...] The College welcomes the disruptive nature of the sharing economy wherever this strengthens the city and can benefit its inhabitants. [...] The College will intervene when unwelcome situations arise as a result of particular initiatives. This means that the approach to the sharing economy is not a matter of permitting or prohibiting aspects of it, but rather one of closely monitoring and actively responding to certain developments and of utilising opportunities wherever these occur. (City of Amsterdam, 2016 p.2)

In this variation ShareNL has only a supporting role in providing information and in drawing attention to Amsterdam's prominent role in the sharing economy.

(2) In the version of ShareNL and Amsterdam Marketing, the creation of the ASC project is framed as the main intervention and both ShareNL and the municipality as entangled in a "co-developing"-partnership. ShareNL appears as the initiator, and as a facilitator of vision, collaboration and mutual learning in Amsterdam, as well as a promotor of the idea of the "Sharing City" worldwide (Amsterdam Marketing, n.d.; ShareNL, n.d. a).

In both variations, citizens appear as beneficiaries of the sharing economy, but also as strong supporters, whose openness for sharing and innovation lays the foundation for Amsterdam's pioneering role. The municipality therefore sees the sharing economy as a way "to tackle urban challenges hand in hand with Amsterdam residents" (City of Amsterdam, 2016). Companies and initiatives providing sharing services have no pre-defined role in this narrative. They are part of the overall dynamics of the emerging sharing economy, and as such, they are potential supporters of the well-being of the city and its inhabitants. However, it is up to the protagonists of the narrative to enable them to become "co-protagonists" by adopting a collaborative stance. The city of Amsterdam itself has an important role to play in this narrative, which crystallizes in the concept of Amsterdam's "sharing DNA" put forward by Harmen Van Sprang . This "sharing DNA" both creates the setting for a strong local dynamics of the sharing economy and equips the actors with the fitting overall approach to act upon it. Thus, Amsterdam is, at the same time, a unique setting and a collective of all local actors involved in the narrative, whose agency is structured by their affiliation to the city. There seems to be no contradiction between Amsterdam's pioneering role and the fact that ASC is in fact inspired by Seoul Sharing City, as openness is a part of Amsterdam's "sharing DNA".

4.2.5. Concrete initiatives and policy measures in Amsterdam

In its action plan, the municipality derives key policy actions in five fields: (1) stimulating the sharing economy, (2) leading by example, (3) making sharing inclusive for all residents of the city and (4) adjusting rules and regulations and (5) promoting Amsterdam as a Sharing City worldwide. As ShareNL elaborates on its website, in each of these fields, the City of Amsterdam has in fact taken policy steps (ShareNL, n.d. a): Amsterdam has joined the Green Carsharing Deal that brings together municipalities with car sharing providers and other companies working with mobility to expand (and thus *stimulate*) car sharing.[6] It has begun to share its own meeting rooms, limited to non-profit-organizations so as to avoid competition with commercial platforms (thus *leading by expample*). It has also, in collaboration with local startup WeGo

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[6] http://www.sharenl.nl/green-deal-carsharing/

enabled sharing of its fleet of vehicles to municipal employees.[7] In a number of piloting programs, the city has integrated sharing services by local platforms Thuisafgehaald and Peerby into its City Pass (Stadspas) that offers discounts to low-income and elderly residents (thus contributing towards *inclusiveness* of services).[8] The most widely recognized policy measure is Amsterdam's agreement with Airbnb (*regulation*) that in fact dates back before the ASC initiative and action plan. Finally, as laid out in the beginning of the Amsterdam section, the municipality has engaged in a number of networking measures, including the launch of the "Sharing City Alliance", thus fulfilling its commitment of "putting Amsterdam on the map" (*promoting*).

Discussion and conclusions – Sharing Cities compared

In the concluding section, the results of the two case studies of Seoul and Amsterdam will be compared and discussed along the research questions. As a first step the aim of the analysis has been to identify variations across the two Sharing City programs as expressed in the underlying narratives. It can be shown that the overall plots in Seoul and Amsterdam share a lot of similarities: In both cases, the sharing economy is framed as a potentially positive force contributing to the well-being of the city in environmental, economic and social terms. In both cases, municipalities feature centrally (in Amsterdam, together with ShareNL) as main protagonists. At the same time, sharing businesses and initiatives as well as citizens are positioned as important characters in both narratives. They are essential to making the sharing economy work and they will eventually benefit from it. The municipality, however, has to enter the stage as a leader or facilitator and enable them to realize this positive potential. This inherently positive potential in turn justifies the protagonist taking action in the respective settings. Both narratives also stress that the whole endeavor is to be understood as an innovative form of collaborative urban governance, transcending traditional fault lines of top-down or bottom-up policy-making.

These similarities emerge from somewhat different plot lines reflecting the specific local contexts and history of the two cities: In Seoul, the modern urban setting is framed as problematic, and well-being as threatened by forces of rapid urbanization. In Amsterdam, the same urban setting is framed as healthy, and thus a resource to draw upon. In both settings,

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[7]   https://www.amsterdam.nl/wonen-leefomgeving/amsterdam-innovatie/nieuwe-economie-1/practice-what-you/
      https://www.inverse.com/article/29471-amsterdam-sharing-economy-world-leader
[8]   https://www.amsterdam.nl/wonen-leefomgeving/amsterdam-innovatie/nieuwe-economie-1/deeleconomie-voor/

there is a past of rich social values, but in Seoul these appear as threatened, while in Amsterdam they are presented to be alive and abundant. This results in a different framing of the sharing economy and the basic rationale why the two cities adopt Sharing City programs: In both cases sharing is framed as a means to solve urban problems. However, while in Seoul the main problem is one of rapid urbanization itself, in Amsterdam the focus is more on challenges concerning the sharing economy. The Amsterdam narrative presents the sharing economy as an emerging force of its own that needs to be shaped, while in the Seoul narrative the sharing economy features as a solution and the challenges connected to it have no central part in the narrative. This is important to note, especially against the background of the overall sharing discourse, where critical issues are increasingly being raised. This is not to say that Seoul is not dealing with these issues (e.g. regulating Uber or Airbnb), but in the narrative, the idea of sharing itself is not presented as something problematic. Arising from this divergent framings, however, are slight variances in the role of the protagonists: While in Seoul, they act as an initiator of change, in Amsterdam, they take on a more moderating role.

Table: Comparison of Narratives in Seoul and Amsterdam

	Seoul	**Amsterdam**
Main Plot	Seoul has successfully ascended as a leading modern mega-city. (**Past**) Now the effects of rapid urbanization and hyper-capitalism challenge the city, traditional community values are threatened. (**Presence**) Sharing can be a solution to migitate the challenges of growth and recover the threatened communities. (**Future**)	Amsterdam has always been open, innovative and sharing. (**Past**) The sharing economy is already there, disrupting traditional economies. (**Present**) If the city reacts, seizing opportunities and addressing challenges, the development can be shaped for the benefit of the city and its residents. (**Future**)
Overall goal	"to share lives among dispersed people, recover trust and relationships, and shape a warm city in terms of people's heart"	"A sharing society where everyone has access to all products and services that lead to a happy, sustainable and connected life"
Challenges and Opportunities		
Challenges	*Challenges are framed concerning the overall setting:* **Economic:** Social inequality, lack of housing **Social:** Loss of community and values **Ecological:** traffic, pollution, excessive consumption	*Challenges are framed concerning the sharing economy:* **Economic:** Disruption, unfair competition, social insecurity **Political:** Outdated regulation **Sustainability:** Rebound effects
Opportunities	**Economic:** Empowerment of individuals, reduction of public spending, creation of jobs, support Korean economy **Social:** Restoration of social ties and values **Ecological:** Reduce waste of resources	**Economic:** Empowerment of individuals, innovation; (*Variant of Municipality:* Economic growth) **Social:** Strengthening social ties **Ecological** More sustainable consumption
Roles and Responsibilities		
Municipality	Lacking economic resources, providing conditions and strengthening ecosystem	Accepting policy challenge, encouraging, monitoring and intervening

	for the Korean sharing economy to solve challenges	
Civil Society Networks	-	(*Variant of ShareNL*): Enabling vision, collaboration and mutual learning
Citizens	Beneficiaries Co-protagonists	Beneficiaries Potential Co-protagonists
Commercial sharing providers	Co-protagonists	Potential Co-protagonists
Non-commercial sharing providers	Co-protagonists	Potential Co-protagonists
City as a setting	Frontrunner of digital innovation	City with "Sharing DNA" Collective actor (V. of ShareNL)

Apart from the narrative itself it has also been analyzed who the key narrators are, how they tell the story and what concrete policy measures have been adopted embedded in the respective narrative context. In Seoul, the key narrators are the SMG and especially Mayor Park Won-Soon who shape the dominant narrative. Challenging counter narratives have not been identified (which should be the subject of further research), the only other more prominent narrator is CC Korea, which has so far functioned more as a "co-narrator" spreading the official storyline through various outlets. In Amsterdam, there is a tension between two variants of the narrative. ShareNL's version suggests a more prominent role of social innovators providing a platform for collaboration among different actors from the city. Through the notion of the "sharing DNA", these actors are partly merged into the "city" as a collective actor – a narrative device by which the formation of ASC and Amsterdam becoming a "Sharing City" become interchangeable. However, the differences between the two variants of the narrative should not be overstated, they may even hint at the possibility of divergent but still compatible framings in a governance arrangement that is characterized by public-private collaboration.

In Amsterdam, the comparison of narratives and policy measures confirms the observation that "policies revealed to be closely in line with discursive framings" (van den Eijnden, 2017 p.74). In this context, two policy fields of *regulation* and *promoti*on deserve a closer look, as they appear to be characteristic of the specific policy and governance approach adopted and reveal insights on the function of the narrative of Amsterdam. As Finck and Ranchordás (2016) point out, the municipality's agreement with Airbnb is an important case in point for an experimental and collaborative approach to regulation. Furthermore, the first agreement with Airbnb is older than the ASC initiative and serves as a point of reference for the policy stance advocated for and the open attitude ascribed to the city within the narrative. Through the process of storytelling, this agreement *ex post* becomes part of a bigger story, being justified as an actualization of the universality of Amsterdam's "sharing DNA", as well as providing narrative fuel for a story that might in the future serve as justification for similar policy measures. It remains to be seen, however, if the government remains faithful to this

approach in the light of future developments. Regarding the networking activities around the "Sharing City Alliance", the leading role of ShareNL shows that the municipality is indeed going along with the collaborative policy and governance approach. At the same time it shows that the two narrative variations laid out above seem to be, for the time being, compatible.

In Seoul, the narrative focuses on the SMG as an enabler of the sharing economy and in line with this a large part of the adopted policy measures focus on providing support for start-ups and sharing initiatives as well as creating the legal basis for various sharing services. Among these legal measures has also been banning Uber and regulating Airbnb, while at the same time supporting the development of similar Korean businesses. Even beyond these legal and supporting measures, the SMG takes a very proactive stance: Many sharing services (e.g. bike- and car-sharing) are operated by the city itself, rather than private actors enabled by the SMG. So, in practice, the role of the SMG is in fact even more proactive, and arguably a lot more top-down, than specified in the narrative. This may be due to the SCS initiative still being in its early stages and more in-depth research is needed to trace the interrelation between the narratives in the programs and official communications and how they are taken up in policy-making.

A combined overview of the narratives and policy measures adopted in these two prominent examples of Sharing Cities can provide insights on their potential towards sustainability transitions when reflected against the background of the critical discussion of the sharing economy as such. Building on Acquier *et al.* (2017) it can be shown that all core elements of the sharing economy – platform-based, access-based, community-oriented – are part of the Sharing City initiatives in Seoul and Amsterdam. The narratives also reflect a basic economic paradigm in which these core functions are being embedded. In Seoul, the economic paradigm informing the vision is one of a tamed version of capitalism, learning from past mistakes and dealing with the challenges resulting from the recent past's hyper-capitalism and excessive consumer culture. Technological innovation and a focus on economic progress remain central cornerstones though. Community-building and social innovation are emphasized as central goals, but it seems that they can be achieved within the traditional economic paradigm that has become smarter due to the rise of information and communication technologies – achieving "adding value with zero budget" (Creative Commons Korea, 2015 p.50). The overall economic paradigm of the Amsterdam narrative is one of a self-organized society in which a plurality of – market-oriented but also more socially motivated – actors create products and services to serve the population's needs. It is characterized by a strong believe in the creative force of economic processes, but also by an acknowledgement that, without a shared vision of

how to steer this creative forces, challenges to the common good can arise. The economy is thus framed both as a key force contributing, but at the same time subordinate to societal well-being. The sharing economy is part of this overall setting, and subject to both its potentials and drawbacks. In what can be called a pragmatic and utilitarian approach, the narrative bothers little with analyzing in detail what sharing is or how it works, but on the extent to which it can contribute to the greater good of the city and its inhabitants. Both narratives can be grouped among the framings of the sharing economy typically adopted by its advocates, as identified by Martin (2016), i.e. as an economic opportunity and a pathway towards an overall more sustainable and just economy. This is not to say that a critical perspective is completely neglected. The more critical framings of the sharing economy as a reinforcement of the neoliberal paradigm and an emerging unregulated marketplace identified by Martin (2016) do only implicitly feature as an (avoidable) possibility in the Amsterdam narrative. However, many of the critical issues related to this framing have been addressed by both Seoul and Amsterdam (e.g. regulating Uber and Airbnb).

The two most prominent "Sharing Cities" therefore show promising potential with regard to identifying sustainable pathways towards sustainable cities and more sustainable systems of production and consumption. Both Amsterdam and Seoul have embedded their narratives in a broader, global story of Sharing Cities, which is materializing in global networks, such as Shareable and the Sharing Cities Alliance. In our case, Seoul was followed by Amsterdam as the first European Sharing City in 2015. Seoul, in turn, was inspired by the early work of the Shareable network in San Francisco (Sharp, 2018). This points to the importance of global networks and mutual learning, but also shows that local differences matter: For instance, while Seoul was influenced by San Francisco developments and ideas, the focus has been much more on promoting a still very small and emerging sharing economy (Johnson, 2013) (unlike San Francisco where many global players of the sharing economy originated), coupled with a focus on community-building and citizen participation.

In our view, the "Sharing City" can be understood as a new emerging iteration among evolving guiding visions of "sustainable cities", that transport different notions of the relationships between economy, environment and urban society, in turn putting divergent emphasis on specific sustainability challenges and transition pathways (de Jong *et al.*, 2015). With Sharing Cities emerging around the globe, it is important to understand the underlying paradigms, the governance approaches and thus the potential and risks with regard to sustainability transitions.

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