

Editorial: Sharing Economy Pathways to Government Innovation

Shenja van der Graaf and Carina Veeckman

Welcome to the May edition of the Technology Innovation Management Review.

This special issue explores research questions at the intersection of *sharing economy* and *governability*, particularly, public governance and broader social benefits.

The concept of “sharing economy” has become an umbrella term increasingly relevant to both the daily lives of private individuals, and to the direction and operation of social and political systems. It thereby covers a large number of peer-sharing behaviours across several sectors, such as accommodation (Airbnb, couchsurfing), delivery and home services (Instacart), and transportation (Lyft, Uber) (Hassan, 2020). One of the key elements among the multiple definitions of the sharing economy concept is the sense of community implied in the sharing behaviours of involved actors (cf. Vith, Oberg, Ho llerer & Meyer, 2019; Mallison et al., 2020). The operation of sharing transactions via collaborative platforms, such as online connecting platforms, which are owned and controlled by the consumers or “users” themselves, is the main driver behind the sense of community surrounding the concept of the sharing economy (Hamari et al., 2016). Consequently, sharing with no true sense of community, collaboration or cooperation among the actors, even when sharing is not at all accompanied by economic transactions, or sharing via for-profit intermediaries, as in the case of Uber, do not count as examples of a genuine sharing economy (Belk, 2014).

The opportunities within a sharing economy are enormous and are not just for big businesses. For many, and in particular young people and women, the sharing economy allows them to save money by accessing goods and services, rather than buying them, or only paying when they need to. The democratization of access to resources, accompanied by the development and implementation of more sustainable economic and environmental models is the main outcome expected by the engagement of people in peer sharing behaviours (see, for example, Woskwo, 2014). A sharing economy, however, not only creates opportunities, it also presents various governance challenges. One of them is the creation of inequality in a ‘renting’ economy. Although the sharing economy claims to de-emphasize

ownership, it is mostly those who have assets that will accumulate money from them. If government agencies would partner here with sharing economy platforms, it could only further deepen economic complexities along with possible class divisions (Ganapati & Reddick, 2018). Another factor involves governance of new working forces, which operate as independent contractors, and typically do not get the work security of full-time workers. This might lead to unfair competition in the market, such as was seen in the recent protests of taxi drivers against ride-sharing platforms such as Uber.

Against this backdrop, we witness that to date governments have not fully embraced the opportunities offered by the sharing economy, although it could make their operations more efficient and lead towards better usage of their public resources. Therefore, it was our intent to invite articles that examine both outcomes and challenges of government innovations in the sharing economy.

First, the article of **Ruben D’Hauwers, Jacobus van der Bank** and **Mehdi Montakhabi** from imec-SMIT, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium, highlights an upcoming domain in the sharing economy: peer-to-peer electricity trading. They present two use cases, one based on blockchain technology and the other a platform for industrial symbioses. Their study focuses on the role of the government in facilitating and enabling data sharing between various actors, and more specifically on the notion of trust. The article reveals interesting results to support policymaking, by identifying trust building options for governments in sharing economies. From both case studies, we learn that the government can play a significant role in trust creation between parties as a market-neutral and non-competitive player. Further, blockchain technology and digital platforms were shown as helping to contribute to trust creation by ensuring proper access rights for each player.

In the second article, **Eva Pallesen** and **Marie Aakjær** from University College Absalon, Denmark, present an interesting study about the influence of the sharing economy on the public sector, and specifically on the welfare sector, which until now has received little combined research attention. Ethnographic data collection methods were used to examine how a digital platform operates for sharing of care and welfare

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services among citizens with chronic lung disease. The platform is supported by the local municipality and works hand-in-hand with the goals of the public healthcare unit. By actively facilitating sharing among citizens, the public sector opens up a space in-between formal organisations and private relations, in which other forms of welfare are enabled.

Next, **Mika Westerlund** from Carleton University in Canada, explores citizen perceptions of governmental resistance to shared parking in Ottawa. Even without adequate parking spaces provided by federal government employers, the City of Ottawa does not allow the rental of residential driveways, and also prevents sharing parking platforms from entering the market. Through a quantitative analysis that applies “topic modelling”, a dataset of 414 online news reader’s comments from a local article about parking in the city were analysed. By identifying and discussing key topics in the readers’ comments, a conceptual framework was created that shows how some citizens perceive their government’s resistance to sharing resources. The article is a timely illustration of particular governance challenges in introducing and managing what he calls “sharing economy services” in a (smart) city context, vis-à-vis the inventiveness and co-creation of accessible public services by citizens.

Following that, **Gianluca Schiavo, Chiara Leonardi** and **Massimo Zancanaro** from Fondazione Bruno Kessler (FBK), Italy, investigate new forms of socializing care through a case study of the Families_Share platform, which provides collaborative childcare services in a workplace setting. Families are increasingly searching for alternative forms of childcare provisions, and experience challenges in balancing the work-life balance. The article presents a case study whereby employees of a medium-sized knowledge-based organisation, arranged educational and entertaining activities for the employees’ children, while others were at work. The on-site participation of employees was supported by the HR Department, as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility Plan. The results discuss the challenges and benefits from the company’s approach, such as the time, effort, and emotional involvement of employees, versus the creation of greater organisational well-being and a sense of community.

The final article, by **Bastiaan Baccarne, Tom Evens** and **Lieven De Marez** from imec-mict-Ghent University, Belgium, describes participation inequalities on a civic crowdfunding platform from the perspective of

campaign instigators and citizen-funders. Participation inequalities, such as access and skills, are not evenly distributed among society and could reinforce existing power imbalances. A case study of the crowdfunding.gent platform is presented, with the help of interviews, and a large-scale survey. The article reveals that community altruism is an important factor in predicting civic crowdfunding behaviour. Participation is driven by societal goals, such as helping others and feeling part of a community, and therefore seems to be able to reach out to diverse audiences. Income and education do not seem to be predicting variables for participation behaviours, although age does. The article contains several lessons learned.

Taken together, the contributions to this special issue of the TIM Review provide some important pointers and insights into the governance challenges, as well as opportunities for governmental actors in the sharing economy. The articles represent important cases in several sectors (welfare, energy, mobility, etc.), with various types of analyses, and a rich combination of research methods. They illustrate that nowadays we witness that governments are not fully embracing the opportunities offered by the sharing economy, although it can make their operations more efficient and lead towards a better usage of their public resources. The current set of articles indicate the tensions that can be involved, along with a large set of benefits that can be yielded when sharing economy opportunities are embraced.

We are curious to see how the sharing economy will further develop towards the management of public services, and hope that you enjoy reading this set of articles as a productive start into a new and promising research area.

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Guest Editors

Editorial: Sharing Economy Pathways to Government Innovation

Shenja van der Graaf and Carina Veeckman

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The TIM Review currently has a Call for Papers on "Aligning multiple stakeholder value propositions: the challenge of new companies committed to scale early and rapidly" on the website. See here: <https://timreview.ca/article/1349> with further information for prospective authors. For future issues, we invite general submissions of articles on technology entrepreneurship, innovation management, and other topics relevant to launching and scaling technology companies, and solving practical problems in emerging domains. Please contact us with potential article ideas and submissions, or proposals for future special issues.

Stoyan Tanev, Editor-in-Chief
 Gregory Sandstrom, Managing Editor

About the Guest Editors

Shenja van der Graaf (PhD LSE, 2009) is a Professor and Senior Researcher in the strategic & innovative cluster 'Governance and Communities' (previously, known as 'Smart Cities') at imec-SMIT, VUB (Belgium). Her current work is concerned with social, economic, and policy issues arising from innovations associated with the ICTs. Specific lines of inquiry include the integration of new technologies into society; management of technological innovation in firms, cities and communities; (new) media users and 'cultures of expertise'; government affairs/EU (EMEIA) relations; more recently, the focus is specifically on examining the dynamic of systemic change between public values and public organisations.

Carina Veeckman is a senior researcher and project coordinator at SMIT since 2011. Carina has been working on several European-funded projects within the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme, such as Citadel...On the move, Open Transport and ECIM. During these projects, she stipulated the Living Lab research framework, and co-created the city solutions (in mobility) together with the city stakeholders. Her current research interests are related to measuring impact and outcomes of social innovation, citizen science, engagement and behavioral change research in several collective awareness raising projects around environmental issues, such as hackAIR, SavingFood and FloodCitiSense.

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