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Shaping the *sharing city*: An exploratory study on Seoul and Milan

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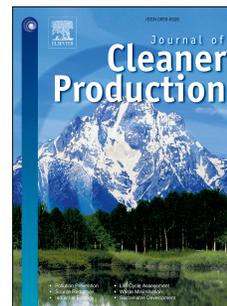
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## Shaping the *sharing city*: an exploratory study on Seoul and Milan

### *Abstract*

An increasing number of cities are engaging with the sharing economy, exploring how it may be integrated into the urban agenda, fostering its positive aspects whilst avoiding its negative externalities. The paper focuses on two cities, Milan and Seoul, that are internationally considered to have a conscious and tailored approach that lies in the vanguard of this effort. The paper seeks to understand how local authorities govern the sharing economy in order to shape a real *sharing city*, taking insights from the *sharing paradigm* concept and looking to the collaborative version of the urban governance paradigm. The paper uses a mixed method approach to develop case studies of the governance models employed. The analysis shows that both cities work along the three dimensions (economic, technological and human) of the sharing paradigm to create a sharing city, with slightly different governance approaches, but both lack institutionalized mechanisms of collaboration. Nevertheless, both are pioneering examples of engagement with the sharing economy. The paper proposes a graphic conceptualization of the two governance models to better highlight their contribution to knowledge.

Key words: sharing economy; sharing paradigm; sharing city; social innovation; urban governance; collaborative governance; smart city.

### 1. Introduction

The *sharing economy*<sup>1</sup> has been recognized as a new economic model with the potential to drive economic development, strengthen social cohesion, and reduce environmental impacts (Botsman and Rogers, 2010; Botsman, 2013; Parsons, 2014; Schor, 2014; Pais and Provasi, 2015). At the same time, numerous experts have pointed out the risks associated with the corporate forms of this phenomenon (Slee, 2015; Scholz, 2016; Srnicek, 2016), from the human impacts of the gig economy to housing shortages. The sharing economy has thus become a contested topic (Finck and Ranchordás, 2016). This divide in public and academic opinion is explained by the multifaceted nature of the sharing economy, which is constantly evolving and can take unexpected directions that distort or depart from the original concept of “sharing” (Malhotra and Van Alstyne, 2014; Martin, 2016).<sup>2</sup>

For this reason, a growing number of cities are striving to assess its real potential in urban contexts (McLaren and Agyeman, 2015), following a variety of approaches (Rinne, 2014, 2015; McLaren and Agyeman, 2015; Mainieri and Pais, 2015). In some cases, local government chooses to play a *supportive* role, as in the City of Portland, Oregon, which announced its “Shared City” partnership with Airbnb as early as 2014, and adopted an open and proactive approach to enabling the sharing economy (Interian, 2016). In other cases, local authorities have proved highly *resourceful*, as in Seoul, South Korea, which in 2012 launched the “Sharing City, Seoul” project to facilitate sharing businesses and make the city’s underutilized assets available for shared use (Johnson, 2013). Some cities are increasingly *committed* to issues related to the sharing economy. For example, Milan and Amsterdam, but also Barcelona and Copenhagen have launched public consultations on the topic and propose to introduce sharing policies into their political agendas; they have also mapped city-owned assets and educated the public about what is locally shareable.

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<sup>1</sup> *Sharing economy* is an umbrella term that covers a variety of platforms and initiatives in different sectors (Hamari *et al.*, 2015), profit or not-profit oriented. Given its vastness both conceptually and in practice, no common definition has been accepted to date nor has theoretical consensus been attained, despite many attempts to develop a shared universal typology that reflects the variety of possible signifiers (see for example: Codagnone *et al.*, 2016; Schor and Fitzmaurice, 2015; Woskowsky, 2014). In the present work we use a broad definition referring to Botsman (2013) who considers the sharing economy “an economic model based on sharing underutilized assets from spaces to skills to stuff for monetary or non-monetary benefits” made possible thanks to the spread of information and communication technology. However we are aware that this definition has been criticized as too broad since it includes marketplace exchanges, gifts and sharing interchangeably (Belk, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> We witnessed in the exponential growth of a few large commercial sharing platforms, such as Airbnb, Uber and TaskRabbit, which are disrupting traditional marketplaces and practices, and posing legal and normative questions in terms of insurance, taxation and job conditions. Some authors talk in particular of rental economies (Kallis, 2013), on-demand economies and the gig economy, and there is today considerable debate about what is termed “platform capitalism” (Srnicek, 2016; Kenney and Zysman, 2016).

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