
Studying the “Sharing Economy”: Perspectives to Peer-to-Peer Exchange

Airi Lampinen

Mobile Life Centre
Stockholm University
Kista, Sweden
airi.lampinen@iki.fi

Victoria Bellotti

Palo Alto Research Center
Palo Alto, CA 94304 USA
bellotti@parc.com

Andrés Monroy-Hernández

Microsoft Research
Redmond, WA USA
mail@andresmh.com

Coye Cheshire

School of Information
University of California, Berkeley
Berkeley, CA USA
coye@ischool.berkeley.edu

Alexandra Samuel

Vision Critical
Vancouver, BC, Canada
alex@alexandrasamuel.com

Abstract

A number of technological platforms, that have come to be known as the “sharing economy” or “collaborative consumption,” are disrupting established industries with new decentralized peer-to-peer marketplaces. While peer-to-peer exchange and co-use practices are a relatively new research area, they are rapidly developing in both commercial and nonprofit variants. In this session, we bring together people from different disciplines to explore these issues, and to present future directions for research on sharing economies in the CSCW community. Our aim is to widen the “sharing economy” debate in CSCW. In order to better situate this stream of work within CSCW, we will connect “sharing economy” research to broader topical issues and concerns, such as networked coordination of peer-to-peer activities and the future of work and labor.

Author Keywords

sharing economy; collaborative consumption; collaborative economy; local online exchange; network hospitality; timebanking; ridesharing

ACM Classification Keywords

H.5.m. Information interfaces and presentation (e.g., HCI): Miscellaneous.

Permission to make digital or hard copies of part or all of this work for personal or classroom use is granted without fee provided that copies are not made or distributed for profit or commercial advantage and that copies bear this notice and the full citation on the first page. Copyrights for third-party components of this work must be honored. For all other uses, contact the Owner/Author.
Copyright is held by the owner/author(s).
CSCW '15 Companion, Mar 14–18 2015, Vancouver, BC, Canada
ACM 978-1-4503-2946-0/15/03.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1145/2685553.2699339>

Introduction

A number of technological platforms, that have come to be known as the “sharing economy” or “collaborative consumption,” are disrupting established industries with new decentralized peer-to-peer marketplaces. For instance, Uber, Airbnb, and TaskRabbit have challenged dominant, traditional businesses and their practices in hospitality, transportation, and staffing industries. Advocates laud the sharing economy as a (at least partial) solution to the challenges posed by the ongoing financial and environmental crises and as a welcome way to help people connect with others in their neighborhood and beyond. Others, taking a critical perspective, call for a careful consideration of the social implications of this technology-driven phenomenon. For instance, the ongoing scholarly debate regarding the labor conditions of those taking on crowdsourcing tasks [8] is now being extended to on-demand mobile work [10]. As another example, Edelman & Luca [4] point out discrimination as an important unintended feature of online marketplaces.

While peer-to-peer exchange practices are relatively new as a focus for research, services and corresponding technology platforms are rapidly developing in both commercial and nonprofit variants. This phenomenon creates new opportunities to enable more efficient markets, maximize utilization of available resources, and enable novel localized crowdsourcing modalities. Simultaneously, the sharing economy challenges legal regulations that are intended to protect safety, health, and labor rights. More broadly, the term “sharing economy” itself can be problematized as many of these platforms are more about monetizing underutilized resources, such as possessions or skills, than about what we would traditionally think of as “sharing”. At the

same time, other platforms, ranging from timebanking to the recycling of used goods, are encouraging less mercenary forms of peer-to-peer exchange.

This session brings together people from different disciplines to unpack these issues, and present directions for future research. It is an opportune time to highlight this new area and attract research interest and innovation. The inclusion of papers on different aspects of the “sharing economy” in recent CSCW proceedings [2,5,6,7,10] and related conferences [1,3,9], as well as an upcoming special issue on peer-to-peer exchange and the sharing economy in the *Interaction Design & Architecture(s) journal (IxD&A)*, suggest the increasing interest in and relevance of this topic. Our aim is to widen the “sharing economy” debate in CSCW. In order to better situate this stream of work within CSCW, we will connect “sharing economy” research to broader topical issues and concerns, such as networked coordination of peer-to-peer activities and the future of work and labor.

Panelists

Victoria Bellotti is a Research Fellow at PARC. She studies people to understand their practices, problems, and requirements for future technology, and designs and analyzes human-centered systems, focusing on user experience. Her research currently focuses on understanding practices and motivations for participation in peer-to-peer transactions and opportunities for context-aware technology, analytics, and machine learning to streamline marketplaces.

Andrés Monroy-Hernández is a researcher at Microsoft Research and an affiliate faculty at the University of Washington. Andrés holds a PhD from the

MIT Media Lab. His work focuses on the study and design of social computing systems for creative collaboration and collective action. Andres has been surveying providers on Uber, TaskRabbit, oDesk and Airbnb, and building systems that make use of these platforms.

Coye Cheshire is Associate Professor at the UC Berkeley School of Information. He studies social exchange, trust, and interpersonal relationships in computer-mediated environments. His ongoing research includes mixed-methods studies of human motivation, social psychological incentives, organizational structure, and paths of participation in online sharing economies.

Alexandra Samuel is the Vice President of Social Media at Vision Critical, a customer intelligence software company. She holds a PhD in Political Science from Harvard University and has two decades of experience as an online community researcher and strategist. In collaboration with Jeremiah Owyang of Crowd Companies, she authored Vision Critical's *Sharing is the New Buying*, the largest study of collaborative economy participation to date.

Airi Lampinen will chair the panel. She is a postdoctoral researcher at Mobile Life Centre, Stockholm University. She holds a PhD in social psychology from University of Helsinki. Her areas of expertise include boundary regulation and interpersonal privacy in the context of social network sites and the "sharing economy". She has conducted research on network hospitality and local online exchange.

Structure and Format of the Panel

We present a range of perspectives to how participation in peer-to-peer exchange should be studied and designed for. We will pay special attention to methodological and ethical challenges. We will begin by presenting different aspects of the "sharing economy" in a short-presentation format. The chair will do a brief overview of the panel's aims, followed by a short presentation of 5-10 minutes by each panelist. We then continue with a conversation in which we welcome the audience to take part. We plan to facilitate the discussion with a small set of targeted questions and prompts. In inviting questions from the audience, we will introduce and monitor a Twitter hashtag to support broader audience participation in the course of the conversation. Moreover, we intend to publish a blog post on the panel afterwards to disseminate insights in a broader and more lasting way.

Alexandra will kick off the round of panelist talks by addressing the implications of the sharing economy for established and emerging businesses. Drawing on the *Sharing is the New Buying* study, which surveyed more than 80,000 respondents in three countries, she will map out the scale and drivers behind collaborative economy participation, including eleven different types of sharing behavior. As a practitioner working with companies to understand and address these large-scale shifts in consumer behavior, Alexandra will map out the implications of the "sharing economy" for business planning and strategy.

Andrés will then address participation in dominant peer-to-peer marketplaces that foster micro-entrepreneurialism such as TaskRabbit, Airbnb, Uber, and Lyft. When contrasted with prosocial exchanges,

such as those taking place in the realm of timebanking and recycling systems, the entrepreneurial exchanges taking place on these platforms have come under fire as less truly representative of the ideal of the “sharing economy.” Andrés will consider this tension and its implications for research in the CSCW community. Moreover, he will discuss methodological challenges of studying these socio-technical and economic practices.

Victoria will offer a contrasting perspective by discussing participation in peer-to-peer systems that focus on prosocial action. For example, timebanking and Couchsurfing have been established to foster a mutually supportive community of service or resource exchange. Other systems such as Freecycle and Yerdle promote the exchange of goods rather than buying new and sending unwanted items to landfill. Victoria will address motivation for participation in exchanges, both as a provider or receiver of a service or good, in discussing when or in what situations money is less or not at all involved in transactions, and what aspects of system design and user experience can help such non-monetary, possibly altruistic, exchanges enjoy the same success and growth as commercial services.

Coye will then conclude with a discussion of paths of participation in these technology-mediated social participation systems overall. For example, participation can be examined as a funnel-like process in which new users begin their career as “lurkers”, who at first do not contribute directly. Some of them later become more active and make minor contributions, and some of these active participants go further and take on leadership and facilitative roles. New and forthcoming research is beginning to combine multi-method research to better understand (1) the social

and motivational factors that underlie online sharing behaviour in systems with varying structures and arrangements, and (2) the features that structure online environments and encourage or discourage various paths of participation.

Requirements

The panel requires a projector as well as microphones for the panelists and for audience participation.

References

- [1] Bellotti, V. M., Cambridge, S., Hoy, K., Shih, P. C., Handalain, L. R., Han, K., & Carroll, J. M. (2014). Towards community-centered support for peer-to-peer service exchange: rethinking the timebanking metaphor. In *Proceedings of the 32nd annual ACM conference on Human factors in computing systems*.
- [2] Carroll, J. M., & Bellotti, V. M. (Forthcoming in 2015) Creating Value Together: The Emerging Design Space of Peer-to-Peer Currency and Exchange. In *Proceedings of the 18th ACM conference on Computer supported cooperative work*.
- [3] Chaube, V., Kavanaugh, A. L., & Perez-Quinones, M. A. (2010). Leveraging social networks to embed trust in rideshare programs. In *System Sciences (HICSS), 2010 43rd Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences* (pp. 1-8). IEEE.
- [4] Edelman, B., & Luca, M. (2014). Digital Discrimination: The Case of Airbnb.com. *Harvard Business School NOM Unit Working Paper No. 14-054*.
- [5] Lampinen, A., Lehtinen, V., Cheshire, C., & Suhonen, E. (2013). Indebtedness and Reciprocity in Local Online Exchange. *Proceedings of the 16th ACM conference on Computer supported cooperative work*.
- [6] Lampinen, A. (2014). Account sharing in the context of networked hospitality exchange. In *Proceedings of the 17th ACM conference on Computer supported cooperative work*.

[7] Ikkala, T., & Lampinen, A. (Forthcoming in 2015) Monetizing Network Hospitality: Hospitality and Sociability in the Context of Airbnb. In *Proceedings of the 18th ACM conference on Computer supported cooperative work*.

[8] Martin, D., Hanrahan, B. V., O'Neill, J., & Gupta, N. (2014). Being A Turker. *Proceedings of the ACM 2014 conference on Computer supported cooperative work*.

[9] Suhonen, E., Lampinen, A., Cheshire, C. & Antin, J. (2010). Everyday Favors: a case study of a local online gift exchange system. *Proceedings of the 16th ACM international conference on Supporting group work*.

[10] Teodoro, R., Ozturk, P., Naaman, M., Mason, W., & Lindqvist, J. (2014). The Motivations and Experiences of the On-Demand Mobile Workforce. *Proceedings of the ACM 2014 conference on Computer supported cooperative work*. ACM.