CREATING THE EVERYDAY COMMONS

ELENI KATRINI

Doctoral Dissertation • School of Architecture • Carnegie Mellon University
Thesis Committee: Vivian Loftness • Cameron Tonkinwise • Matthew Mehalik
CREATING THE EVERYDAY COMMONS

spatial patterns of sharing culture

Eleni Katrini

Doctoral Dissertation • School of Architecture • Carnegie Mellon University
Thesis Committee: Vivian Loftness • Cameron Tonkinwise • Matthew Mehalik
ABSTRACT

People in neighborhoods across the world, come up with creative ways to satisfy their daily needs through sharing and collaboration, by creating alternative solutions that are resourceful and socially engaging. These creative communities based on sharing, provide local solutions through a more substantial use of human, environmental, and economic resources. Since the mid-2000s, sharing and collaborative practices have received increased attention mainly because of socio-economic rapid changes within cities and the wider use of online services.

This thesis recognizes sharing culture as a potential pathway towards more inclusive and environmentally sustainable societies and identifies three main lines of inquiry based on research areas that necessitate further investigation. The first line of inquiry relates to the semantics and value of sharing culture. The rise of sharing economy has led to an ideological contestation over the meaning of sharing, placing under the same umbrella contradicting practices and thus demanding further examination. The second line of inquiry aims to investigate how sharing practices emerge and evolve over time, what challenges they face, and identify transitional pathways towards sharing culture. Finally, and most importantly, the third line of inquiry seeks to identify spatial patterns of sharing culture. Within the fields of sharing culture, collaboration, and urban commons, the relationship between space and sharing practices within urban contexts has been studied from sociological, political, and geographical perspectives. Nevertheless, there is room for further investigation from an architectural and urban design perspective, on how sharing practices emerge in urban neighborhoods and how space influences them. Specifically, this thesis aims to uncover spatial patterns on three distinct spatial scales: building, threshold, and urban. On the building scale, spatial patterns are explored regarding the relationship between the practices and the spaces they occupy; on the threshold scale, spatial patterns that relate to the interaction between the practice and the broader community; while on the urban scale, patterns of urban dynamics, land use, exposure, and local networks are investigated regarding the practices’ locale.
Along these three lines of inquiry, this dissertation offers four main contributions. The first one is a theoretical framework of sharing culture identifying: a taxonomy of how it can embed in everyday life, the value it brings to both communities and individuals, and the ways that sharing practices can amplify their impact by scaling-from-within. This framework was developed through a semi-systematic literature review on sharing, combined with findings from fieldwork, and by using Max-Neef’s model of human needs’ satisfaction.

The second contribution is building an interdisciplinary research framework to study sharing culture and reveal its spatial patterns through a situated approach, which synthesizes methods from social sciences and theories of practice, architecture, urban design and planning. Specifically, the research framework proposes a combination of qualitative analysis of participants interviews and online documents, with observations, architectural drawings, and extensive cartography to study spatial conditions across all three scales.

The third contribution is the application of the interdisciplinary research framework on sharing culture practices in London, UK, and Athens, Greece, resulting in four in-depth case studies with thick description and spatial findings across all three scales: building, threshold, and urban. The findings from the case studies are further substantiated by additional literature review on theories of social change, transition design, and sharing practices to create the fourth and last contribution of this thesis: a series of actionable spatial patterns. The spatial patterns of sharing culture showcase – both in a descriptive and propositional manner – spatial conditions that enable sharing culture. They aim to prompt designers and communities to view sharing practices through a spatial lens and help them leverage space as a catalyst for sharing culture.
AKNOWLEDGMENTS

in English

I would argue that no piece of work is an individual one, and neither is this one. During this journey, and in great alignment with the research topic, many people have shared with me their time, advice, knowledge, values, stories, strength, meals, books, notes, emotional and financial support, and so much more. For all this support along the way, I have considered myself very lucky and I am eternally grateful. Each and every person mentioned below has helped shape both this work and myself on either a personal or professional level.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my doctoral thesis committee for their constant support; their diverse expertise and background has given great wealth to this piece of work. I would like to express my deep gratitude to my main advisor and chair of my doctoral thesis committee, Vivian Loftness. This work would not have been possible without her expertise, as well as support and belief in me. I am forever grateful for her guidance and challenging discussions as an advisor, but also for being a strong female role model for me throughout these early steps in academia. I am also deeply indebted to Cameron Tonkinwise for he has significantly expanded my field of knowledge and way of thinking beyond architecture, to theories of design, transitions, systems, and societal change. His ‘monstrous grumpiness’ has greatly aligned with my constant questioning of eternal optimists and practitioners with quick solutions at hand. Finally, I am profoundly thankful to Matthew Mehalik for his critical and detailed feedback, which really helped me ground my work. His vast knowledge of research methods and his expertise on sustainable communities has helped me greatly to structure my work and provided me with confidence to continue along the way.

I also wish to acknowledge those within and outside of CMU, who have provided me with inspiration and feedback, and helped me stay reflective along the way: Christine Mondor, Stavros Stavrides, Dan Lockton, Stefan Gruber, Theodosia Anthopoulou, Ramesh Krishnamurti, Azizan Abdul-Aziz. Moreover, I would like to thank Martin Aurand, Darlene Covington-Davis, Steve Lee, and David Koltas for providing me with administrative and organizational support during my studies at CMU.

I would like to thank the Alexander S. Onassis Foundation, the Gerondelis Foundation, and Carnegie Mellon’s School of Architecture, for financially supporting my doctoral studies at CMU.

This research would not have been possible without the initiatives that were involved in my study. I would like to thank Thanos Andritsos for sharing his local knowledge and connecting me with initiatives in Greece. Most importantly, I would like to deeply thank the people I interviewed for sharing with me their time, stories, and experiences. The sharing and collaborative initiatives they have built and their dedication to them, have been the greatest inspiration for this work and provided me with great hope that a better world is possible.

For those who have undergone the process of a PhD or who have supported someone who has, know that it is an emotional rollercoaster, even more so when you are an international student away from home. For that reason, I want to thank all my friends who have support-

Finally, I am deeply thankful to my family. I want to thank my parents, Christos and Giota Katrini, for giving me the opportunity to expand my horizons beyond my own imagination and for supporting me along the way, even though I know they deeply wished I was closer to them. For all the very precious time lost, I dedicate this work to both of you. To my sister Vasso, my brother Konstantinos, my brother-in-law Angelos, my nephew Iasonas, and my sister-in-law Maria for all their empowering unconditional love and constant encouragement. To my parents-in-law, Kyriaki and Georgios Komninos for their great love and support.

Last but not least, I am forever grateful to my partner Aris for constructively challenging me on every argument I’ve made, reviewing almost every text I’ve written and visual I’ve created, lifting me up when I felt down, sharing the excitement with every new discovery, taking up most of the burden of everyday chores when needed, and making sure I was always full of snacks. Thank you for always being there and sharing life with me.

in Greek

Θεωρώ ότι όπως κανένα έργο δεν είναι ατομικό, έτσι ούτε αυτή η διατριβή είναι. Από πίσω της κρύβει μια σειρά ανθρώπων, οι οποίοι κατά τη διάρκεια αυτού του ταξιδιού και σε συνάρτηση με το ερευνητικό πεδίο της διατριβής, μοιράστηκαν μαζί μου χρόνο, συμβουλές, γνώσεις, αξίες, ιστορίες, υποστήριξη, γεύσεις, βιβλία, σημαιώσεις, συναισθηματική και οικονομική υποστήριξη και άλλα πολλά. Για τη στήριξή αυτή που έλαβα καθ’ όλη τη διάρκεια του διδακτορικού, θεωρώ τον εαυτό μου τυχερό και είμαι αιώνια ευγνώμων. Ο καθένας απ’ τους ανθρώπους που αναφέρω παρακάτω έχει συνεισφέρει τόσο στη διαμόρφωση της διατριβής, αλλά και στη προσωπική και ακαδημαϊκή μου πορεία.

Πρώτα απ’ όλα, επιθυμούμε να ευχαριστήσουμε από καιρό στην ακαδημαϊκή επιτροπή της διδακτορικής διατριβής για τη συνεχή υποστήριξή τους. Θα ήθελα να εκφράσω βαθιά ευγνώμοσύνη στην υπεύθυνη καθηγήτριά μου, Vivian Loftness. Αυτό το έργο δεν θα ήταν εφικτό χωρίς την καθοδήγησή της, την υποστήριξή και την εμπιστοσύνη της σε μένα. Είμαι για πάντα ευγνώμων όχι μόνο για την επίβλεψή της, αλλά και για το γεγονός ότι αποτέλεσε για μένα ένα ισχυρό γυναικείο πρότυπο σε αυτά τα πρώτα ακαδημαϊκά μου βήματα. Είμαι επίσης υπόχρεος στον Cameron Tonkinwise, γιατί διεύρυνε σημαντικά τον τρόπο σκέψης μου σε πολλά γνωσιακά περιβάλλοντα, συστηματικά σε ακαδημαϊκά επιπέδη, σε ιστορίες, συναισθηματικά, κοινωνιολογικά και ακαδημαϊκά πεδία. Η ερμηνεία από τον ίδιο «σπερματοζόους γκρίνια» του ταύρα σε μεγάλο βαθμό με την προσωπική μου συνεχή ακριβεία και συνεχή συνεισφορά σε πολλά προβλήματα. Είμαι επίσης ευγνώμων στον Matthew Mehalik για την κριτική και τα επανάληψη στοιχεία του, τα οποία μας βοήθησαν να ειδοποιηθούμε την άψογη μου. Η ευγνώμοσύνη μου στην ακαδημαϊκή επιτροπή και στον προσωπικό του, αλλά και στους με τους οποίους και θα είμαστε πάντα ευγνώμων.

Θα ήθελα να ευχαριστήσω θερμά το Ίδρυμα Αλέξανδρος Σ. Ωνάση, το Ίδρυμα Γεροντέλη, και την Σχολή Αρχιτεκτονικής του Carnegie Mellon για την οικονομική υποστήριξη κατά τη διάρκεια των διδακτορικών μου σπουδών.

Αυτή η έρευνα δεν θα ήταν δυνατή χωρίς τις πρωτοβουλίες που συμμετείχαν στη μελέτη μου ως μελέτες περιπτώσεων. Θα ήθελα να ευχαριστήσω τον Θάνο Ανδρίτσο ο οποίος με έφερε σε επαφή με τις πρωτοβουλίες στην Αθήνα. Επιπλέον, θα ήθελα να ευχαριστήσω βαθιά τους ανθρώπους που δέχθηκαν να πάρουν μέρος στις συνεντεύξεις και μοιράστηκαν μαζί μου το χρόνο, και τις εμπειρίες τους. Οι πρωτοβουλίες που έχουν δημιουργηθεί, καθώς και η αφοσίωσή τους συνεπώς, αποτέλεσαν την μεγαλύτερη πηγή έμπνευσης για αυτό το έργο και με κάνουν να ελπίζω ότι ένας καλύτερος κόσμος είναι δυνατός.

Αυτοί που έχουν πραγματοποιήσει διδακτορικές σπουδές ή που έχουν στηρίξει κάποιον από το οικογενειακό ή φιλικό τους περιβάλλον που τις έχει πραγματοποιήσει, γνωρίζουν ότι όλη η διαδικασία είναι ένα συναισθηματικό σκαμπανέβασμα, και ιδιαίτερα όταν είναι διεθνής φοιτητής μακριά από την πόλη σου. Για τον λόγο αυτό, θα ήθελα να ευχαριστήσω όλους τους φίλους μου που με υποστήριξαν, και με έκαναν να νοιώσω ότι ήμουμε σπίτι και όταν ήμουμε μακριά. Οι φίλοι στο Πίτσμπουργκ: Βαρβάρα, Olaitan, Vikram, Rohini, Annie, Ahmed, Pedro, Dimeji, Μαρία, Βαγγέλη, Chris, Ken, Rene, Karlee. Οι φίλοι στο Λονδίνο: Τσούκ, Ευφροσύνη, Άννα, Viki, Edward, Πάνος. Οι φίλοι στην Αθήνα: Αντωνία, Λυδία, Βάσω, Δημήτρη, Νίκο Π., Ελένη, Μαρία, Χάρη, Αλέξανδρα, Νίκο Μ. Φίλοι ανά τον κόσμο: Melissa, Katharina, Georgia.

Τέλος, είμαι βαθιά ευγνώμων στην οικογένειά μου. Θέλω να ευχαριστήσω τον Χρήστο και τη Γιώτα Κατρίνη, γιατί μου έδωσαν την ευκαιρία να επεκτείνω τους ορίζοντές μου, πολύ περισσότερο από ότι είχα καν. Τους ευχαριστώ από καρδιά για την αμέριστη αγάπη και τη συνεχή ενθάρρυνσή τους. Θα είμαι για πάντα ευγνώμων στον Άρη για την εποικοδομητική αμφισβήτηση του σε κάθε μου επιχείρηση, για το διάβασμα σχεδίου κάθε κειμένου που έχω γράψει, την ψυχολογική υποστήριξη, την ενθουσιασμό του με κάθε νέα ανακάλυψη, την καθημερινή στήριξη, ψυχοθεραπεία, και αγάπη. Σε ευχαριστώ που είσαι πάντα εκεί.
CONTENTS

ABSTRACT iv

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS vii
  in English vii
  in Greek viii

01 INTRODUCTION 15
  01.01 Motivation 15
    On environmental, social, and economic crises 15
    Towards Societal & Environmental Transformation 16
  01.02 Research Outline & Hypotheses 19
    Three Lines of Inquiry 19
    Statement of Purpose; Contributions & Audience 21
    Dissertation Outline 21

02 ON SHARING PRACTICES 23
  02.01 Introduction 23
  02.02 Towards a Sharing Culture rather than a Sharing Economy 25
  02.03 Sharing Culture Taxonomy 33
  02.04 The Value of Sharing Culture 34
    Sharing Culture and Everyday Human Needs 34
    Sharing Culture, Sustainability, and Degrowth 38
    Benefits of Sharing Culture 39
  02.05 The Emergence of Sharing Culture 42
    Understanding Sharing Culture Emergence through Theories of Social Change 42
    Emergence of Sharing Culture Practices 44
    Importance of spatial patterns 46
  02.06 From sharing to space 48

03 ON PHYSICAL SPACE 49
  03.01 Introduction 49
  03.02 Spatial Designs for Sharing 49
    Social Utopianism Typologies 49
    From the Kitchenless City to Cooperative Communities 52
    Spatial Elements of Cooperative Models 58
  03.03 Theories of Space and Sharing 58
    Beyond Architectural Determinism 58
Spatial Findings 157
Conclusion & Limitations 170

05.03 Shelter 173
  On Shelter 173
  Case Study: City Plaza 176
  Value of Refugee Collective Housing 182
  City Plaza’s Spatial Documentation 186
  Spatial Findings 194
  Conclusion & Limitations 203

05.04 Work 205
  On Work & Economic Transactions 205
  Case Study: Brixton Pound 209
  Value of Community Currencies 219
  Brixton Pound’s Spatial Documentation 222
  Spatial Findings 231
  Conclusion & Limitations 239

06 SHARING CULTURE TAXONOMY, TRANSITIONS & SPACES 241

06.01 Introduction 241

06.02 Findings on Sharing Culture Practices & Taxonomy 241
  Sharing Culture Practices Spectrum 242
  Sharing Culture Taxonomy 244
  Synergistic Nature of Sharing Culture 246

06.03 Findings on Sharing Culture Transitions 248
  Scaling from within 248
  Factors challenging sharing practices’ sustainability 248

06.04 Findings on Sharing Culture Spaces 249
  Spatial Findings on Building Scale 250
  Spatial Findings on Threshold Scale 252
  Spatial Findings on Urban Scale 253
  Spatial Findings & Sharing Culture Taxonomy 256

06.05 Setting Sharing Culture, Transitions, and Space into existing theoretical frameworks 257
  Common, Enclosed, and Unregulated Space 257
  Transitions over a ‘Practice – Space’ Field 258
  Transition models towards diffusion 262
  Towards Spatial Patterns of Sharing Culture 263

07 SPATIAL PATTERNS OF SHARING CULTURE 265

Introduction to the Patterns 265
Using the Patterns 266
Pattern Layout 266
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Building scale</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eating together</td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>identifying minimum capacity</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>being adaptable</td>
<td>272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ensuring spatial granularity</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reflecting identity in the making</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>making governance visible</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Threshold scale</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>communicating visually</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gathering outdoors</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>expanding beyond enclosures</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>being transparent</td>
<td>288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enabling porosity</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Urban scale</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>achieving spatial stability</td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maintaining exposure</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>becoming embedded</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reclaiming public space</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>building a support network</td>
<td>302</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**08 CONCLUSION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>08.01 Research Overview &amp; Contributions</td>
<td>307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributions to Knowledge</td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08.02 Limitations &amp; Future Research Directions</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

**GLOSSARY**

**APPENDICES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A: Recruiting Study Participants &amp; Ethics Review Application</td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Subject’s Contact Emails</td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Studies contacted</td>
<td>341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Subjects’ Consent Form</td>
<td>342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Review Board (IRB) Application Approval</td>
<td>346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B: Interviews Guide</td>
<td>347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of Interview Process</td>
<td>347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C: Case Studies Qualitative Data Analysis Networks</td>
<td>349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 01: Caregiving</td>
<td>349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 02: Leisure</td>
<td>351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 03: Shelter</td>
<td>352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 04: Work</td>
<td>353</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 01: Introduction

01.01 Motivation

On environmental, social, and economic crises

Since the 1800s and the Industrial Revolution, population growth has been steadily increasing, along with the standards of human living. Due to industrialization, urban population has increased significantly, so much so, that in 2008 the tipping point occurred with urban global population surpassing the rural one.1 Our urbanized population which is heavily based on the consumption side rather than production, in combination with the fact that since 1960s we are supporting human living mainly on non-renewable resources rather than renewable ones, highlights the crisis of climate change and resource depletion that we are facing today.2 And of course, exploitation of natural resources and environmental pollution are not equally distributed across the globe, but are tightly connected to global politics and markets. The economies of the global north tend to benefit more by increasing their ecological footprint as they go, while trying to reach higher standards of living3; a standard of living that is connected to a throw-away mentality of overconsumption and disposability. In the meantime, this standard of living we have set for ourselves is such that it is impossible to meet within nature’s biocapacity and hence impossible to sustain. And even though we do realize now more than ever the effects of an overconsuming lifestyle and economy,4 we are still feeling numb and unable to react. As Naomi Klein mentions in her book “This changes everything”:

(1) UN_HABITAT, Bridging the Urban Divide, State of the World’s Cities 2010/2011 (London, UK: UN-HABITAT, 2010), https://books.google.com/books?id=broGtXylVF8C&pg=PA12&dq=urban%20rural%20tipping%20point%202008&source=bl&ots=BNDkws-0Kr&sig=cMmUS6hwG8UM-RVv89RT782I2SU&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjSj7uYspzxPAhUJ1h4KHQsSAXkQ6AEIUjAI#v=onepage&q=urban%20rural%20tipping%20point%202008&f=false.
“Living with this kind of cognitive dissonance is simply part of being alive in this jarring moment in history, when a crisis we have been studiously ignoring is hitting us in the face – and yet we are doubling down on the stuff that is causing the crisis in the first place.”

Even with high standards of living, which are not attainable by all, and the extensive environmental pressure they cause, we are still not creating great societies to live in. Social inequality has been steadily growing globally, especially in regard to income, which triggers course inequalities related to health, education, employment, self-actualization, happiness. Based on a globalized dysfunctional economic system, which creates continuous crises (2000 dot-com bubble, 2007 housing bubble in the US, 2008 financial crisis in Europe), disparities between individuals, cities and countries tend to grow wider. And as we grow further apart, alienation, xenophobia and many more social ills tend to grow. The crises that we face today are not singular or compartmentalized, but rather interconnected and complex.

“The crisis of global capitalism that has unfolded since 2008 is not merely economic. It is structural and multidimensional. The events that took place in its immediate aftermath show that we are entering a world with very different social and economic conditions from those that characterized the rise of global, informational capitalism in the preceding three decades.”

The question is how can we aspire towards change within this multidimensional complexity? What are societal shifts currently under way and how can we as designers, researchers, and citizens help towards this transformation?

Towards Societal & Environmental Transformation

Environmental Movement

One of the main shifts within the last century has been the rise of the environmental movement and the realization that we need to alter our posture towards nature and our relation to it. The ways that our human societies have affected the environment started to become evident after World War II; industrialization, population increase, and intense urbanization have led to a series of symptoms such as air and water pollution and imbalance in natural ecosystems. Environmental pollution will be one of the first issues to attract attention and lead to the beginnings of the modern environmental movement. In 1962 for example, Rachel Carson’s “Silent Spring” highlights the destructive symptoms of the DDT use, which will lead to policy changes ten years later. As the environmental issues continue to grow, in the 70’s there is a shift of attention towards resource scarcity. With the book “Limits to Growth”, the Club of Rome made catastrophic predictions regarding the sustainability of humanity, based on population, economic growth, and natural ecosystem’s limits. Even though the publication was deemed controversial, it slowly shifted the attention towards the emergency of energy and resource scarcity. In 1987, the United Nations World Commission

(5) Naomi Klein, This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate (Penguin, 2015).


Chapter 01: Introduction

on Environment and Development published the Brundtland Report, in which “Sustainable Development” is defined for the first time as “Human development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” A slightly vague definition and an oxymoron, “sustainable development” has been used since late 20th century on a policy level to create public awareness, invent alternative renewable ways of energy production and promote an economy and consumption based on ‘environmental-friendly’ solutions.

Even though sustainability as a discourse is fairly accepted today by the industry and the wider public, it is still under definition and there are still questions to be answered regarding what exactly it is that we are sustaining and for whom. With a focus of ‘doing less environmental harm’, the industry built around sustainable development was oriented towards mainly improving the production side of energy and resources in the beginning, while in the past decades there has been a rise of interest targeting sustainable consumption. However, such approaches of ‘less harm’ are controversial; less than what and how much less is enough? The most recent IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) report dictates for significant changes in many aspects of society to keep global warming within a 1.5°C increase in comparison to pre-industrial levels and ask for the UN Sustainable Development Goals to be met. To better situate this thesis, we need to define sustainable development and how it relates to a socio-environmental transformation towards a better future.

Sustainable Development

The definition of sustainable development by the Brundtland Report can be slightly controversial; as to what needs exactly should be met and how to manage human and economic growth that is conservative enough to save resources for future generations. However, in order to deal with the socio-environmental challenges we are facing today, our societies cannot be separated from the environment or consider it as just a resource. A living systems theory approach needs to be adopted, where phenomena are explored through the dynamic relationships of organisms to their environments. As argued by Gallopín, the only reasonable option is to talk about the sustainability of the whole socio-ecological system, that encompasses the social and ecological components as integrated into one. Within this


framework, sustainability does not mean constancy, or a fixed state of a perfect situation as perceived by humans; all living systems are ever-changing, dynamic and adaptive. On the contrary, it means “avoid the destruction of the sources of renewal, from which the system can recover from the unavoidable stresses”.¹⁴

As far as the development side of the definition is concerned, the term relates to the idea of progress, change, and improvement of the socio-ecological system, but it should not be confused with growth.¹⁵ In certain cases, development and specifically human development, has been tightly correlated to economic growth and consumption; targeting the market towards more environment-friendly products and boosting the economy for ‘a good cause’.¹⁶ In other cases, we measure human development based on per capita income, making it of course seem impossible to achieve a good life with a low ‘ecological footprint’.¹⁷ Development should mean “the improvement of human condition” but not “indefinite growth in consumption of energy and materials”.¹⁸

Under the lens of ‘living better with less’ then it is essential to explore practices of sharing. Sharing practices of goods and resources offer a great potential for materials and energy intensity reduction, without negating or lowering the improvement of human life. Quite the opposite; they can have substantial social consequences towards a reformation of human life.¹⁹

Sharing & Sustainability

How sharing fits within the framework of sustainability needs to be further explained. Typically, the market aims to increase the efficiency of certain infrastructure and equipment; such as appliances, cars, tech gadgets etc. By doing so the goal is to decrease the individual energy consumed per person and hence the cumulative energy used by all. However, most equipment we use nowadays in our everyday lives tend to stay idle for a long period of time. If we took advantage of the objects’ idleness in order for them to become useful to a great number of users, then we would be able to minimize the number of devices used overall and hence reduce the necessary energy used in the production process since we would need to produce fewer devices (decrease in overall embodied energy and material resources). In that sense having fewer devices but used fully and more productively would result in greater performance gains compared to the cumulative benefits of objects sold and used individually.²⁰ Nevertheless, apart from the obvious benefits of minimizing materials and embodied energy consumption by using fewer objects and devices, there is additional value to sharing that can be brought on an individual, community, and societal scale. Taking a step back, the

---

(14) Gallopín.

(15) Gallopín.


(18) Gallopín, A Systems Approach to Sustainability and Sustainable Development.


(20) Tonkinwise.
recent rise of interest in the social and environmental benefits that sharing practices can offer at large reveals a great opportunity for both societal and environmental transformation. The motivation of this thesis is to establish sharing practices as a distinct area of research within the framework of social sustainability that goes beyond ideas of economic growth and to investigate how to best support sharing through spatial design.

**01.02 Research Outline & Hypotheses**

**Three Lines of Inquiry**

This dissertation investigates a diverse range of sharing and collaborative practices that can be transformative for communities and citizens’ everyday lives, examines their emergence within the city and reveals spatial patterns that influence them. It hopes to tie them into a general conversation regarding the urban commons, sustainability, everyday life, and examine their emergence and diffusion within the city. The dissertation is built based on three main lines of inquiry and consequently three main hypotheses and sets of research questions as follows:

**INQUIRY 01: Define Sharing and Value**

The dissertation’s first objective is to define sharing and sharing practices to focus on. Within the last two decades the definition of sharing has become contested, with a wide field of practices that can be explored. This research will focus specifically on identifying sharing practices that have a more local character and can directly benefit current urban communities and dwellers.

**Hypothesis:**

A taxonomy of sharing practices that form part of everyday life can be established and the value sharing brings to citizens and urban communities at large can be identified.

**Research Questions:**

- What types of sharing practices are there and how can they be part of everyday life?
- What are the benefits of sharing practices on an individual and community level?

**INQUIRY 02: Investigate Transitions of Sharing Culture**

This dissertation recognizes that space is just one of the variables influencing the emergence and transitions of sharing culture. To go beyond an architectural deterministic approach, the second inquiry of this research explores sharing practices through the lens of the transition design frame-
work\textsuperscript{21} and theories of social change to understand how they emerge within cities and what factors influence their sustainability over time. Sharing practices are interpreted initially through the theoretical underpinnings of “social practice” by Elizabeth Shove et al, and the “multi-level sociotechnical framework” by Geels.

**Hypothesis:**
There are non-spatial factors that influence the transition of sharing culture.

**Research Questions:**
- How can we understand the transformation of sharing culture practices through the lens of transition design framework and theories of social change?
- What are non-spatial conditions that can enable sharing culture?

**INQUIRY 03: Identify Spatial Patterns of Sharing Culture**

The third objective of this research is to explore how sharing culture can be enabled and amplified. Within the architectural discourse, research is needed to provide a better understanding of how physical space influences sharing culture. Until now there has been no such approach to sharing practices, hence, the last and main objective of this dissertation identifies spatial patterns on three scales, that can afford and amplify sharing practices within existing urban neighborhoods.

**Hypothesis:**
There are spatial patterns on a building, threshold, and urban scale that can enable sharing culture practices.

**Research Questions:**
- What are the spatial patterns on a building scale that influence sharing culture and how? (The scale includes all the indoors and outdoors spaces the sharing practice uses.)
- What are the spatial patterns on a threshold scale that influence sharing culture and how? (The scale includes the building along with its immediate adjacent surroundings.)
- What are the spatial patterns on the urban scale that influence sharing culture and how? (The scale includes an area of a ½ mile radius around the practice.)

Chapter 01: Introduction

Statement of Purpose; Contributions & Audience

This dissertation has the following contributions and target audiences:

A. **A theoretical framework and taxonomy of sharing culture** based on everyday life that contributes to existing research realized on sharing, collaborative communities, and the urban commons. The audience for this framework is academics, designers, sharing culture practitioners.

B. **An interdisciplinary methodological approach** for studying and investigating space as it relates to sharing culture practices. The audience for the methodological approach is academics, designers.

C. **A series of ethnographic case studies** of sharing investigated and documented with thick description through the lens of space. The audience for the case studies is academics, designers, sharing culture practitioners.

D. **Actionable spatial patterns of sharing culture** that can be used both by designers and sharing communities on the ground. The audience for the spatial patterns is academics, designers, sharing culture practitioners.

Dissertation Outline

In pursuing the above three lines of inquiry, the dissertation expands in eight chapters. Beyond the introduction, chapter 02 ‘ON SHARING PRACTICES’ presents the literature review on sharing practices, definitions, value, and transitions. The majority of chapter 02 is from the author’s peer-reviewed journal article ‘Sharing Culture: On definitions, value, and emergence’ published as part of the Sociological Review Journal monograph ‘Unboxing the Sharing Economy’. Chapter 03, ‘ON PHYSICAL SPACE’ explores existing literature on the relationship between sharing and space through two main sections. The first section explores ‘03.02 Spatial Designs for Sharing’ from an architectural and urban design point of view, whereas the second delves into spatial theories on sharing, urban commons, and social interactions. These two chapters of literature review help build the research framework of this dissertation, which is proposed in chapter 04 ‘ON RESEARCH METHODS’. Chapter 05 documents the fieldwork of this research through the detailed documentation of four case studies of sharing culture in the following areas of everyday life: caregiving, leisure, shelter, and work. Chapter 06 presents the cross-case analysis findings following the structure of the three lines of inquiry: findings on sharing practices, transitions, and space. In chapter 07, the spatial findings are translated into actionable spatial patterns for sharing culture practices and can operate as a stand-alone piece for those interested in catalyzing sharing practices. Finally, chapter 08 is the conclusion of this dissertation, framing the main contributions of this dissertation, along with its limitations and future research directions.


ON SHARING PRACTICES

02.01 Introduction

People in neighborhoods across the world frequently adopt creative ways to satisfy their daily needs through sharing and collaboration, often by creating alternative solutions that are resourceful and more socially engaging. Groups of people who immerse themselves in these practices have been defined as ‘creative communities’, and are successfully providing solutions to everyday needs on a local scale through a more substantial use of human, environmental, and economic resources. The economic and environmental benefits of sharing, along with a series of rapid socio-economic changes within cities and the wider use of online services, have led to an increased attention and popularity of sharing and collaborative practices over the last decade. Within that period and due to the latest technological advancements, new models of sharing practices have risen on both global and local scales and have led to the rise of what we call today ‘sharing economy’. Included under the umbrella of ‘sharing economy’ are contradicting models of practices, from renting and typical businesses, to sharing, ‘commoning’, collaboration, solidarity, and DIY practices. Moreover, the term has also usually been confused with ‘on-demand economy’. On-demand economy, however, is not always necessarily related to sharing; it is best defined as economic activity that is facilitated by online marketplaces and platforms. Sharing can be facilitated by online platforms, and in that sense, be considered as part of the wider on-demand economy landscape, but not all on-demand economy necessarily involves sharing.

Through a semi-systematic literature review, this chapter proposes a new framework that distances itself from the mere economic transactions of sharing ‘on-demand’ economy and focuses on examples of social networks between diverse stakeholders whose main goal is to co-produce, manage, and share, resources, time, services, knowledge, information, and support based on solidarity and reciprocity rather than economic profit. These social networks,
and the practices they create, are referred to here as ‘sharing culture’, based on the term coined by Light and Miskelly and referred to by McLaren and Agyeman, which will be further defined here. The goal of sharing culture is to create an alternative pathway for citizens to serve their daily needs in a more sustainable, resourceful, and socially engaging manner by tapping into resources within their region. Sharing culture practices can be conceptually related to what Forno and Graziano refer to as Sustainable Community Movement Organizations (SCMOs), where ‘politically concerned consumers’—or citizens—are mobilized to create alternative means of production and consumption. Through SCMOs, citizens are intentionally mobilizing against the market. Yet sharing culture includes a wider spectrum of practices that goes beyond a mobilization against the market and focuses on groups of people with the intention of dealing with the everyday. Thus, the main objective that brings people together is meeting their everyday needs and sustainability might not always be the outset goal but a subsequent outcome.

There has been significant research trying to define sharing and collaborative practices in the everyday, how they can affect future societal and environmental change on a larger scale, and what policies are necessary to support them. Moreover, research has also been carried out on how such practices, within the spectrum of local communities, can create models of diverse, more sustainable lifestyles and how the design practice can help amplify such models through a participatory process. In an effort to bring the above theories together and make the case for a sharing culture framework relating to the first line of inquiry of this dissertation, this chapter first investigates a plethora of current sharing practices through a series of variables, contrasting what is defined here as sharing culture with what is currently perceived as sharing economy. Moving beyond a mere contradiction, the sharing culture framework is supported by the development of a taxonomy of focus areas and identifying principles that are based on human values and everyday needs derived from Max-Neef’s Human Scale Development model. Finally, in line with the second line of inquiry of this dissertation, this chapter first investigates a plethora of current sharing practices through a series of variables, contrasting what is defined here as sharing culture with what is currently perceived as sharing economy. Moving beyond a mere contradiction, the sharing culture framework is supported by the development of a taxonomy of focus areas and identifying principles that are based on human values and everyday needs derived from Max-Neef’s Human Scale Development model.

quiry of this dissertation, this chapter maps through theories of social change, the different elements that trigger, enable, hinder, and sustain sharing culture, looking at physical space as an intrinsic part of this process. This last section will set a starting point for understanding transitions of sharing culture.

02.02 Towards a Sharing Culture rather than a Sharing Economy

A recent definition for sharing economy by the Oxford Dictionary describes it as follows: ‘Sharing Economy is an economic system in which assets or services are shared between private individuals, either for free or for a fee, typically by means of the Internet’. Yet when the term is further defined by businesses that identify themselves as part of the sharing economy, the focus is based more towards the marketplace rather than sharing as a practice (Figure 2.1). For example, Airbnb specifically describes the sharing economy as ‘trusted community marketplaces for people to list, discover and book’ their assets. In that sense, the sharing economy is defined more by the ‘economy’ part rather than the ‘sharing’ one. In this thesis, sharing economy is distinguished as a marketplace, heavily based on the use of online platforms which facilitate transactions between individuals to share their assets.

Indeed, the sharing economy is based on the use of the excess capacity of goods and services, which can only happen through decoupling use and ownership. Nevertheless, such definitions can be quite limiting and narrow the spectrum of possibilities that sharing offers. They are limiting for two main reasons. First, they present the information technology and use of online platforms as an indispensable characteristic of the sharing economy rather than a means to a goal, and second, they define the sharing economy as something that usually involves exchange value of ‘shareables’.

For this reason, in their work Ann Light and Clodagh Miskelly attempt to differentiate the sharing economy from local sharing practices that take place in communities and that

---

(15) Benkler, “Sharing Nicely.”
(17) Assets being shared.
(18) Light and Miskelly, “Design for Sharing.”

Figure 2.1: Word cloud generated by the top 20 Google search results for Sharing Economy (September, 2015)
usually do not involve neither monetary exchanges, nor the use of internet as a prerequisite. They broadly define such practices as sharing culture and they highlight how notions of sharing culture and sharing economy are different and somewhat contradictory: ‘The very talk of marketplaces runs contrary to definitions of sharing held previously (…), which highlight why sharing is not part of the market, even if it involves the management of resources, i.e. economics.’ The difference then between sharing economy and sharing culture is that the former is an alternative within the current economic systems, while the latter provides an alternative to them.

This brings to question which sharing practices can truly facilitate the transition of communities towards these alternative systems and transform them into places that are socially interactive, environmentally conscious, and resource sustainable. Also, it is important to consider how sharing can assist the citizens’ self-organization and co-management of their common resources as well as the practices that they create. To facilitate this exploration on sharing, a card deck was developed as a tool for sorting, categorization, and evaluation of diverse sharing practices (Figure 2.2). As part of this exploration, three main variables are investigated: the stakeholders’ intentions, the presence of monetary exchange, and the scale of the operation.

Regarding the stakeholders’ intentions, Juliet Schor and Maurie Cohen in their analysis of sharing systems highlight significant differentiation based on who owns, manages, and uses the shareables, meaning the goods that are being shared (Figure 2.3). In certain cases, it might be that everyone has an equal part in both the ownership, management, and usership, and in other cases the stakeholders who manage the shareables and sharing process might be different from the ones who use and own them. When an external (profit-oriented) stakeholder manages a sharing system, the system’s evolution can be significantly affected by this stakeholder’s decisions, most probably based on a cost-benefit analysis. In one of

Chapter 02: On Sharing Practices

her articles, Anitra Nelson argues the difference between solidarity and monetary economy based on distinctions in intentions and level of integration with the existing market-based exchange. Based on her research, radical movements defending solidarity economies aim for the social and environmental benefits of such an alternative system, whereas more reformist approaches, which are part of the current economic system, aim to balance economic benefits with the environmental. Nelson debates that in the latter case monetary values tend to replace or twist environmental and social ones. A good example of this process is Uber’s decision to collaborate with Carnegie Mellon University’s Department of Robotics for the development of driverless cars. Although Uber has not been promoting social interaction as the key feature to its service — unlike, for instance, Lyft —, the company is still considered a ride-sharing service that uses the excess capacity of existing cars driven by their owners. However, as a company, Uber intends to provide its customers with a standardized service, while minimizing their expenses by ‘algorithmically’ managing the drivers in a highly controversial manner and nudging them towards desired behaviors. In a further effort to minimize the hustle and extra costs of those drivers and increase profits, the company has embarked on the development of a new type of transportation product, the driverless car, which does not seem to deliver either the environmental nor the social benefits deriving from most common forms of ride-sharing.

Uber is an extreme example of a company creating a completely new product and eventually eliminating the social impact sharing has on its revenue through automation. Of course, not all sharing economy practices reach this end, but this can be predicted when they are based on economic exchanges and typical business models with hierarchal structure and power asymmetries. In these economically driven sharing practices, people who participate in the ‘sharing’ process do not have the power to define the terms under which this sharing


takes place, as that is managed by an external party. When this external party is focused solely on economic profit and growth, then the system can become detrimental for the participating constituents as their interests and values become of secondary importance. Currently, sharing economy models, like Airbnb and Uber, do provide parallel systems to traditional methods, those of hospitality (hotels, hostels) and private transportation (taxis), that offer to users more affordable options, often easily accessible via the use of on-demand technology. The two main arguments in favor of such models, at the beginning of their foundation, have been consumers’ freedom and abundance of options. However, as these systems grow and take a path of their own, issues of precarity for those participants offering the services have started to emerge; casualization of workers, de-unionization, and lack of necessary legislation regulating and protecting users, owners, and workers. Those issues highlight the lack of participants’ empowerment to decide cooperatively how the sharing experience best fits their own everyday life and needs.

Apart from the insecurity of those offering their services within a system like this, there is a fallacy in stating that those systems add to the variety of the consumers’ options in the long run. When the stakeholder managing the shareables is an external party to the community of those who share, for example a company that provides the platform in exchange of profit, there is a significant amount of economic investment that leaves the system and the community it could be benefiting. Moreover, similar local businesses within individual localities where these sharing services are offered, run the risk of high competition that they cannot win leading to business closures. Hence, business is concentrated in the hands of stakeholders who already own significant amount of resources and capital.

Finally, one last crucial point to underline in sharing economy systems is the issue of inclusiveness and social segregation. On a first tier, as these systems usually act on a more global scale, they depend on informational technology and online systems to connect users; by doing so they exclude populations that do not have access to these resources (e.g. elderly, low-income populations etc.). Even more class-partitioning and segregation can take place because the systems depend heavily on user profiling and reputation, as people use branding


(26) Light and Miskelly, “Design for Sharing.”
methods to include or exclude others leading eventually to more and more homogeneous sharing groups.²⁷

Looking at the bigger picture, the physical concentration of those homogeneous online communities in localities where those systems are offered, can lead to issues of gentrification and physical segregation. Airbnb, acting as an alternative form of capitalism, cannot possibly avoid the trends of the economy when it scales up. What this means is that initially people join Airbnb to make their homes more affordable by earning an extra income on the side; financial gains are one of the main reasons people participate in the sharing economy.²⁸ However, in places where short-term, peer-to-peer rental becomes the norm through similar platforms, real estate prices eventually go up adjusting to a higher ‘normal’.²⁹ This is especially evident in places that attract a lot of visitors and tourism.³⁰ Therefore, there is an increase in land values and rents without necessarily having an increase in wages and incomes, or even a change in real estate value. When that happens, renting out a part of one’s house on Airbnb may no longer be optional but becomes mandatory to make ends meet. Hence, the concentration of cheap opportunities for accommodation in a neighborhood through Airbnb could be interpreted as a form of gentrification, without even altering the existing physical space and real estate stock at all.³¹ In the worst scenarios of system abuse in order to increase personal profit, the negative effect of gentrification can increase exponentially. Cases of brand-new developments exclusively built for Airbnb lodging (even by Airbnb itself),³² or even evictions of regular residencies for the sole purpose of exploitation as Airbnb apartments have recently been reported.³³

Consequently, it may be argued that sharing systems where profit is one of the main intentions of the stakeholders generally constitute alternative forms of capitalism and they do not focus on the environmental and social benefits of the community of participants they are serving. Those systems and practices are part of what we call ‘sharing economy’ today, but do not necessarily always offer new opportunities and innovative ideas for citizens to create an equitable commons-based urban culture.

From the above explorations of who manages sharing, what their intentions are, and if these are based on economic profit, it may be sustained that cases of sharing economy

(27) Tonkinwise, “Sharing Trust.”
are mostly focused on opportunistic economic exchanges. As such, they abide by the rules of the existing capitalistic system without offering a substantial alternative to its inherent predicaments explored above, such as gentrification and exclusion, even though they may provide temporary solutions for certain individuals. However, there seems to be a rise in another type of sharing cases, which differ from such defined sharing economy, and focus on the intrinsic environmental and social values of the participants, while taking place at a more local scale in communities.

These local sharing practices are based on exchange of knowledge, resources, information, and support rather than on monetary exchanges, and participants are actively involved in the decision-making, usually through direct democracy or a similar approach. Consequently, they provide an alternative to capitalism for producing, distributing, and managing goods in a democratic way. Due to their fundamental cultural shift, these systems should not be referred to as ‘sharing economy’ but rather as ‘sharing culture’. As defined by Light and Miskelly, “‘Sharing Culture’ might be called when ‘not only are there many communal assets; (but) there is the local relational asset of having a rich culture to draw on and to use for support.’”

More specifically, I will define sharing culture as follows:

‘Sharing culture’ relates to social networks that grow informally within a region between diverse stakeholders and have as their main goal to co-produce, manage, and share resources, time, services, knowledge, information, and support based on solidarity and reciprocity rather than economic profit. The goal of sharing culture is to create an alternative pathway for citizens to serve their daily needs in a more sustainable, resourceful, and socially engaging manner by tapping into resources within their region.

From now on in this dissertation, when sharing (culture) practices are mentioned, this is the definition one should refer to. Based on this definition, ‘sharing culture’ can be interpreted as the aggregation of dispersed practices of ‘commoning’ as defined by Linebaugh. Linebaugh describes ‘commoning’ as the process through which communities co-produce and co-manage shared resources, i.e. the commons. The importance of his contribution here is that of ‘commoning’ as an actionable verb. What Linebaugh highlights is that the commons in themselves do not exist without ‘commoning’; the constant co-production and co-management by the communities themselves. Communities that are sharing common assets need to actively work together and constantly negotiate the terms under which the sharing is taking place. Going beyond sharing resources, they need to share power to achieve egalitarian sharing.

---


Finally, Light and Miskelly\(^{(38)}\) make the case for the importance of scale and space where social relationships can be built as an indicator that separates ‘sharing culture’ from ‘sharing economy’. By comparing local initiatives that have flourished in Brockley, London, to online platforms of sharing economy, they highlight how sharing culture goes beyond just efficient resource management, to represent sharing as a collective initiative that has environmental, economic, and social benefits for all stakeholders involved. Based on their research, sharing culture on a local scale can promote the social case but it is not easily scalable; moving towards a sharing culture can happen only through replicability of ideas rather than scalability.\(^{(39)}\) Based on the same principles of ‘scaling out’ rather than ‘scaling up’, the work of Ezio Manzini and Anna Meroni on ‘collaborative services’ within ‘creative communities’ brings forward the idea that those social practices and values ‘are collaboratively produced and cultivated by the community itself’.\(^{(40)}\) In that sense, the location and physicality of the community’s social networks play a crucial role in the success of sharing culture systems.

Forno and Graziano also differentiate practices based on scale —and more specifically based on global and local ones— when defining Sustainable Community Movement Organizations (SCMOs) as social movements driven by citizens/consumers.\(^{(41)}\) On the local scale, they include groups like ‘community food networks’ and ‘time banks’ that can be part of what is defined here as sharing culture, as those examples necessitate the cooperation of local stakeholders to serve daily needs.\(^{(42)}\) However, and with no intention in providing another new term, sharing culture does not share the key characteristic of SCMOs, which are intentionally aimed at consumption. Sharing culture practices, despite providing alternative options that act away from the mainstream market, do not always intentionally seek to create anti-consumerist or alter-consumerist approaches. As a broader category, they are more reflective practices in a manner, with the intention to provide alternative options from the

---

\(^{(38)}\) Light and Miskelly, “Sharing Economy vs Sharing Cultures?,” 2015.

\(^{(39)}\) Light and Miskelly.


\(^{(41)}\) Forno and Graziano, “Sustainable Community Movement Organisations.”

\(^{(42)}\) Forno and Graziano.
Figure 2.6: Sharing culture taxonomy: definition & some examples of sharing practices per taxonomic category

- **FOOD**
  - collective practices of food production, processing, shared distribution, & consumption
  - Community gardens
  - Shared meals
  - Collective kitchens
  - Food waste salvaging
  - Cooking together
  - Cooking & gardening skillsharing

- **SHELTER**
  - shared temporary or permanent housing & living spaces
  - Shared households
  - Cohousing
  - House exchanges
  - Shared temporary lodging
  - Refugee hosting networks
  - Couchsurfing

- **WORK**
  - creative economies, alternative services & ways of doing business together
  - Worker cooperatives
  - Coworking spaces
  - Community currencies
  - Time banks & barter
  - Pay-what-you-can services

- **CAREGIVING**
  - collective practices of mutual care with shared resources
  - Childcare cooperatives
  - Informal playgroups
  - Elderly support from youth centers
  - Care cooperatives & neighbors assistance

- **KNOWLEDGE**
  - sharing knowledge & exchanging skills
  - Skillsharing groups
  - Trade School
  - Makerspaces
  - Hackerspaces
  - Informal peer-to-peer learning

- **WELLBEING**
  - shared amenities & collective practices for wellbeing, health, & physical exercise
  - Social pharmacies
  - Social medical centers & clinics
  - Care cooperatives
  - Exercise groups
  - Outdoors shared gym facilities

- **RESOURCES**
  - shared amenities & resources necessary for everyday life
  - Tool libraries
  - Libraries of things
  - Clothes sharing, swap, & upcycling
  - Communal laundries
  - Renewable energy cooperatives
  - Autonomous wireless district coop

- **MOBILITY**
  - shared infrastructure & collective practices facilitating mobility
  - Bike sharing
  - Ride sharing
  - Carpooling
  - Children’s foot bus

- **LEISURE**
  - collectively organized & managed spaces, events & activities
  - Community organized events
  - Cooperatively-managed parks
  - Neighborhood open cinemas
  - Arts & crafts groups
  - Local theatre
  - Leisure activities groups
bottom-up, when the top-down systems, either public or private, fail or do not completely satisfy them. Based on that notion, we can define them as ‘grassroots innovations’ based on the terminology by Seyfang and Smith,43 “solutions that respond to the local situation and the interests and values of the communities involved” with a key characteristic of sharing and collaboration. Below I will further explore sharing culture as a concept and highlight focus areas of investigation around every-day human needs to better understand their value.

02.03 Sharing Culture Taxonomy

Most sharing culture practices, as ‘grassroots innovations’, do emerge in relation to everyday human needs and innovative ways conceived by people to satisfy them. Sometimes, people come up with solutions for needs that cannot be met via available mainstream approaches due to service scarcity by the state or the market.44 Other times citizens create new available options just by going about their everyday lives and interacting with friends or reaching out to neighbors. These collaborative practices can extend to different sectors of everyday life, and hence the sharing culture taxonomy proposed here is created based on grouping everyday habits and practices. The nine taxonomic categories of sharing culture proposed are food, shelter, work, caregiving, knowledge, well-being, resources, mobility, and leisure. The definition for each taxonomic category along with a non-exhaustive list of examples of sharing culture practices are given in Figure 2.6.

What all sharing culture practices have in common across taxonomic categories are the following identifying principles, explored in Table 2.1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sharing</th>
<th>Users share peer-to-peer or use a common pool of resources instead of owning them.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Co-management</td>
<td>The participants collaborate in the management of the practice with a range of capacities, and ideally power asymmetries are avoided through a series of organizational mechanisms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>The practice helps build certain social relationships over time between the participants that go beyond a one-time interaction for the sharing of resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>The model of the practice is sustained through time, is agile and resilient.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resourcefulness</td>
<td>The practice uses fewer resources compared to the mainstream alternative and can generally be environmentally conscious.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>The practice has a social goal to benefit and meet the needs of the people involved, is based on solidarity, and does not aim for profit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incentive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Economy</td>
<td>If the practice includes monetary exchanges, they all directly benefit those involved and are targeted towards the sustainability of the practice, while creating a local economy. This means that the assets involved are highly specific to avoid opportunism by external stakeholders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility</td>
<td>The practice strives to be open to all, and its identity is redefined as people join.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physicality</td>
<td>The practice takes place in the physical space and has spatial manifestations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Eleni Katrini, “Sharing Culture: On Definitions, Values, and Emergence.”

Even though the taxonomic categories are presented in an isolated manner as shown in Figure 2.5, in fact they work in the exact opposite way. The most successful initiatives of sharing culture seem to be the ones whose practices and activities, albeit starting from one taxonomic category, tend to expand and bleed into other categories over time. For example, a cooperative childcare might be initiated by parents who are friends and start babysitting for each other to save money or to support socializing while taking care of their kids. The practice of taking care of children can expand to leisure activities, as well as practices of teaching children different skills or providing older children’s clothes to the youngest of the group. Hence, in this scenario, caregiving eventually extends into leisure, knowledge, and resources. This synergistic approach to meeting one’s daily needs is at the heart of the definition of sharing culture and the emergence of such practices. To better understand sharing culture practices and how they emerge, we need to understand everyday human needs and how people satisfy them.

To further define and understand sharing culture, as well as explore how people satisfy their everyday needs through these practices, I will use four examples of sharing culture practices from two different cultural contexts. One of these cases is further investigated as part of the four in-depth case studies of Chapter 05. All four examples started in an informal, bottom-up manner by a group of citizens; some of them evolved further into more formalized organizations, while others stayed informal in nature.

The first two case studies are located in London, a daycare cooperative and a library of things. Both began as informal practices and further developed into organizations that can sustain a small number of staff; the former case formed a cooperative and the latter a non-for-profit organization. The daycare co-op falls under the sharing culture taxonomical category of caregiving, while the library of things belongs to the category of resources. The following two case studies are in Athens, a community-managed park and a neighborhood collective for organizing events, skill-sharing, and engaging with the neighbors. Both have retained an informal character without forming any legal entity. However, both have been also running for a long time; the former for 8 years and the latter for 5 years, which highlights their agility and sustainability over time. The neighborhood collective and the community-managed park fall under the taxonomical category of leisure, even though both go way beyond leisure with significant political underpinnings. These case studies will be used to showcase how sharing culture practices can meet one’s daily needs in a synergic manner and explore how they emerge and evolve over time.

02.04 The Value of Sharing Culture

Sharing Culture and Everyday Human Needs

In order to explore the breadth of sharing culture practices and understand why they are important, they are evaluated through the lens of Max-Neef’s Human Scale Development framework and the way people satisfy their everyday human needs. Unlike Abraham Maslow, Max-Neef, Human Scale Development Conception Application and Further Reflections.

who favored the theory of needs in hierarchical levels, Max-Neef differentiates his framework in two fundamental ways (Figure 2.7). First, human needs are not put into a hierarchical model. Cognitive needs relating to knowledge or love needs are as important as physiological needs. For Max-Neef, the fact that one’s subsistence needs are satisfied, does not mean that this person does not seek to fulfill need for love or safety; in other words, there are no primary and secondary needs. Max-Neef describes nine human needs; subsistence, protection, affection, understanding, participation, idleness, creation, identity, and freedom.

Secondly, Max-Neef differentiates human needs from satisfiers; this is to say that the need itself is different from the way it is satisfied and, more importantly, that there are lots of different ways to satisfy one’s needs. Specifically, he presents five different types of satisfiers; the ‘violators or destroyers’, the ‘pseudo-satisfiers’, the ‘inhibiting satisfiers’, ‘singular’, and ‘synergic satisfiers’.

Based on this framework, Max-Neef describes the first four categories of satisfiers (violators, pseudo-satisfiers, inhibiting, and singular) as exogenous, as they are usually institutionalized and prescribed from the top-down—as human needs are satisfied in a centralized manner. A good example of an exogenous, top-down violator-satisfier is provided here regarding the need of protection. According to Max-Neef, when countries undertake authoritarian regimes to supposedly protect citizens from an external threat, under such a regime they tend to inhibiting the citizens’ need for protection in the long run while simultaneously harming the adequate satisfaction of other human needs such as participation, freedom, creation, and identity.

Another example regarding pseudo-satisfiers is to see representative democracy as a top down satisfier for participation. As Max-Neef argues, representative democracy is an example of a pseudo-satisfier that can give temporarily the sense of satisfying the need for participation, but, it does not fulfill the need in its entirety. Within representative democracy, citizens can participate up to a certain point by selecting representatives, but their participation in specific decision-making that might affect them directly is limited.
Hence, trying to serve needs in such a large scale manner unfortunately leads to satisfiers that are singular, inhibiting, or pseudo-satisfying human needs, because they are created to meet needs of a unified, homogenous, and singular representation of citizens, while failing to grasp the complexity and multiplicity of values, cultures, ethics, and commitments each citizen holds.\(^\text{(49)}\)

On the other hand, synergistic satisfiers are treated by Max-Neef as endogenous, as they are the ones provided by grassroots, bottom-up initiatives. For example, self-managed food production by a community not only satisfies the main need of subsistence, but also synergistically addresses needs of participation, identity, creation, understanding, and freedom.\(^\text{(50)}\)

These synergistic satisfiers are usually created by citizens themselves within their communities while trying to meet their everyday needs. Sharing culture practices represent exactly those grassroots structures generated by citizens to satisfy their everyday needs that result in synergistically satisfying more than one need at a time, creating certain community ‘self-reliance’.\(^\text{(51)}\)

\(^{(49)}\) Tonkinwise, “Transitions in Sociotechnical Conditions That Afford Usership.”

\(^{(50)}\) Max-Neef, Human Scale Development Conception Application and Further Reflections.

\(^{(51)}\) Max-Neef.
The illustration of Figure 2.8 shows the four different sharing culture cases with the primary needs they satisfy and the synergies they create. For example, in the case of the daycare co-op in London, even though the main need it sets out to satisfy is the care provided to the children (protection) while also helping them build some initial skills in preparation of standard education (understanding), it also satisfies a series of other needs for everyone involved, parents, children, and caregivers included. It creates stronger friendships among adults too (affection), who also engage with other activities such as yoga classes in the space (idleness). Caretakers feel a greater sense of achievement as well as stability through their work as they are included in decision-making and the co-op avoids changing staff often, as it becomes disruptive for the group (protection, creation, participation). Furthermore, it becomes a place for parents to learn more about child development from experts, something that does not happen in a typical nursery (understanding). Parents, through their ongoing involvement in the nursery, also help with other activities, such as gardening, space configuration, and children’s exercises, that help them feel a sense of accomplishment (creation). Finally, parents are encouraged to actively participate in decision-making regarding different issues around the daycare, from spatial issues, to staff’s wages (participation). Hence, a daycare co-op allows for the satisfaction of a diverse set of needs for everyone involved, children, parents, and staff alike, and it goes beyond the child-caregiver relationship of a typical nursery.

In the case of the community-managed park in Athens, neighbors turned an abandoned parking lot into a park with the intention of actively having a say on the development that happens within their neighborhood. Acting within a tight urban context with few opportunities for green spaces, they decided to squat on the park to prevent development and hence meeting their need for active participation, as well as freedom through emancipation. By lifting the concrete, planting trees, creating a community garden for vegetables as well as a playground and a meeting space, they also met their need for creation and understanding. The park is an open space to all, allowing for meetings, events, and socialization (leisure) and has become part of the community identity of the neighborhood (identity). Finally, decision-making occurs through open general assembly and communal consensus (participation).

In these spaces, individual and social development grow together and not separately from each other. Taking the example of the community growing vegetables locally, if the same need for food were to be satisfied via an exogenous, centralized satisfier, such as a chain grocery store, the opportunities for other needs to be met would be significantly fewer, people wouldn’t participate and collaborate with each other for a common goal, that of growing food, and thus they would have less opportunities for meaningful social encounters that can create identity and lead to opportunities for idleness. Moreover, by buying the food rather than growing it, opportunities of understanding, learning, and developing knowledge on food issues are lost.

(54) Max-Neef, Human Scale Development Conception Application and Further Reflections.
Even though sharing culture initiatives do increase a community’s self-reliance, a state retreat should not be implied, where citizens are left alone to serve their own needs. Often enough, there seems be policy agenda that tends to “outsource traditional welfare state functions to community groups”. As Max-Neef states: “The role of the state and public policies is to identify these embryonic initiatives, reinforce them and help them to multiply.” This means that, per Max-Neef, on a higher socio-technical level the state is supposed to provide fertile environments by means of policies and infrastructure that will help such initiatives grow. With significant effects on social and individual well-being and environmental sustainability as I will review below, this is a fertile ground for collaboration between the top-down (state) and the bottom-up (citizens).

**Sharing Culture, Sustainability, and Degrowth**

Looking at sharing culture initiatives through a macroscopic view, rather than just at the benefits they can provide for their local communities, sharing culture examples provide a different perspective on sustainability. Despite the great advancements made in the area of sustainability over the last decades, spaces and practices of our everyday life still have a lot of ground to cover. In theory, the base of sustainability has been the triple bottom line of people, planet, and profit; however, more focus has been given on profit and growth with environmental tools and systems gently pushing towards that same direction. Less attention has been given on achieving environmental sustainability goals through social change in the places and practices of everyday life. Even though environmental awareness has been increasing since the 1970s and there is more evidence of the detriments of overconsumption on the environment, we have not yet drastically changed our lifestyles to promote a resourceful way of living. The term sustainable development as a concept could be considered an oxymoron, as the growth implied in ‘development’ seems to be misaligned with something as opposite as ‘sustainability’. So, there is a need to question if what is at stake here is a matter of changing our ways rather than just growing more.

Exploring the body of work of SCMOs mentioned earlier, we see a mobilization towards practices of less growth, by promoting movements of alternative conscious consumerism or even anti-consumerism. However, SCMOs have been focusing mostly on mobilization through the ‘purchasing power’ of citizens, rather than issues of local culture, active participation, and citizenship. Sharing culture provides pathways towards sustainability that relate directly to everyday life practices. Sharing goods and assets along with community building has been shown — on a small scale — to have important environmental and social benefits,

---

(55) Seyfang and Smith, “Grassroots Innovations for Sustainable Development.”
(56) Max-Neef, *Human Scale Development Conception Application and Further Reflections*.
(58) Irwin.
(61) Forno and Graziano, “Sustainable Community Movement Organisations.”
(62) By citizenship here, I refer to the right and duty of actively participating in the commons rather than the legal sense of being a member of a sovereign state.
promoting a resourceful and more socially engaging way of living.\(^{63}\)

It is worth looking at sharing practices through the lens of wider economic theories, such as degrowth. Degrowth is a sociopolitical and economic movement that aims for equitable social and natural well-being. It advocates for "equitable downscaling of the overall capacity to produce and consume" that can be achieved only through strong cultural shift and deep economic structural change to achieve socio-ecological transformation.\(^{64}\) People who engage in the degrowth movement usually hold anti-consumerist positions and thus intend to live better with less. Looking at sharing culture through the wider lens of the degrowth movement, one can find meaningful common ground; we can understand those practices as ways of shifting "the conception of human beings as economic agents driven by self-interest" as understood in traditional economics, towards "economic relations based on sharing, gifts, and reciprocity, where social relations and conviviality are central".\(^{65}\) Ergo, sharing culture practices can be considered part of the degrowth movement, as they involve people who are 'building alternatives' away from the mainstream market, with the main objective of advancing everyday life and creating a shift in values. Degrowth specifically focuses on the 'meaning of life' and draws from research on happiness and the disconnect between income, consumption, and life satisfaction.\(^{66}\) Even though sharing culture practices that sprout from everyday needs might not always have as their starting point the strong political and ideological framework of degrowth, they do have the same outcomes, social and environmental advancement by building relationships of reciprocity and minimizing consumption by decoupling ownership and use.

**Benefits of Sharing Culture**

Both the environmental and social benefits of sharing culture in everyday life can be significant, especially when reviewing literature on collective housing, which supports collaboration and sharing in everyday life of residents. Building social relationships within communities by establishing trust and reciprocity can lead to decrease in fear, intolerance, and isolation, while increasing a sense of belonging and pro-social behaviors.\(^{67}\) Robust support networks based on sharing and collaborative practices have been shown to nurture higher levels of happiness and satisfaction leading to an improved mental health of participants.\(^{68}\) The local nature of sharing culture increases agency and sense of belonging within a com-


\(^{65}\) Demaria et al., “What Is Degrowth?”


\(^{68}\) Light and Miskelly, “Design for Sharing.”
munity, which supports individual behaviors that act for the common benefit of the group. Therefore, sharing culture increases the potential of local communities to build the necessary trust between citizens, to self-organize, co-manage local urban resources, and become resilient. It can increase meaningful social relations and dense networks of social support within a certain area and has the power to increase collective action and social capital. Based on an extensive report on social capital indicators by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, social capital is defined as follows:

“Social capital relates to the resources available within communities in networks of mutual support, reciprocity, and trust. It is a contributor to community strength. Social capital can be accumulated when people interact with each other in families, workplaces, neighborhoods, local associations, interest groups, government, and a range of informal and formal meeting places.”

Within that framework, the definition of community is and should remain loose. Community boundaries are often placed around common interests, identities, values and/or certain localities. For this dissertation, communities can be related in some ways closely to a certain locale, but should cut across different groups, backgrounds, and be inclusive. As sharing practices create opportunities for people to interact and participate, they do open up the possibility for the creation of new and deeper relationships among people, leading to denser social networks and increased social capital. By increasing social capital, safety, health, participation, support, integration, social cohesion, trust, and neighborhood prosperity increase as well.

Beyond the social benefits on a community level, sharing culture can have significant impact on an individual level as well. It can create opportunities for individual development and education through collective learning. Moreover, it increases the levels of active neighboring and allows for opportunities of mutual assistance, especially for populations most in need such as the elderly. In certain cases introducing sharing culture models in traditional public services has been done intentionally and has been quite successful as well. A great example are the care cooperatives in the Netherlands, where residents can become neighborhood assistants, offer help and make sure that everyone is doing well in the neighborhood by going around and ring neighbors’ doorbells. Finally, health benefits have also been identified.

---


(73) Barnds et al., “Affordable Housing Cooperatives, Conditions and Prospects in Chicago.”


(75) D. S. Kringos, J. van Riet Paap, and W. G. W. Boerma, “The Netherlands,” in Building Primary Care in a Changing Europe; Case Studies, ed. A. Hutchinson and R. B. Saltman, Observatory Studies Series 40 (European Observatory on
Chapter 02: On Sharing Practices

specifically with sharing meals and adopting healthier eating habits.\(^76\)

Sharing culture increases the potential of local communities to build trust between citizens, which is needed to self-organize and co-manage local urban resources. The agency created from self-organization can also lead to happiness, increased well-being, and life satisfaction.\(^77\) Moreover, when that happens, small initiatives of growing food, taking care of children, or providing resources and services locally can grow, and thus engage larger parts of the community. By doing so, they create alternate structures for the satisfaction of everyday needs that hack the current centralized ones, which have economic profit and growth as their main objectives. At the same time, they provide the community with options that are more socially engaging, environmentally resourceful and affordable.

The environmental impact that sharing can have on urban communities is also quite noteworthy. Shared and collective housing has been proven to lead to significant energy savings compared to the US average, especially within urban areas.\(^78\) Furthermore, sharing can create economies of scale within urban communities, that allow them to incorporate renewable energy infrastructure; something that might not be feasible to do on an independent household basis.\(^79\) Savings in energy as well as materials, resources, and space have been proven to be quite high within communities who share.\(^80\) Specifically, research on cohousing has shown that savings can reach up to 31% in space, 57% in electricity, and 8% in goods.\(^81\) For example, Table 2.2 showcases an energy demand comparison between communal laundries versus in-house unit, based on a life cycle analysis taking into consideration both manufacturing and usage phases.\(^82\)

Overall, strong social networks combined with communal facilities can enable residents to share resources that extend in different areas of daily life allowing not only energy and materials saving, but also minimizing food waste and developing pro-environmental behaviors.\(^83\)

---


\(^79\) Williams.

\(^80\) Williams, “Predicting an American Future for Cohousing.”


\(^83\) Williams, “Predicting an American Future for Cohousing.”
Finally, sharing can also create economic benefits for those involved. First, the opportunities for people to serve their needs through collaboration and based on alternative economies can be more affordable. Usership and access to resources and amenities – rather than ownership – can allow for significant savings to households and families. Moreover, it can create opportunities for educational and professional opportunities, especially for younger populations. Finally, building businesses around sharing and collaboration, such as worker cooperatives, can increase people’s economic stability and boost the local economy.

**02.05 The Emergence of Sharing Culture**

**Understanding Sharing Culture Emergence through Theories of Social Change**

Sharing culture practices can become highly embedded in the everyday and thus it is important to understand their emergence and evolution over time. In order to explore how sharing culture practices emerge and sustain themselves, how they disappear, and which are the

---

(84) Williams; Barnds et al., “Affordable Housing Cooperatives, Conditions and Prospects in Chicago.”

(85) Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy, *Take Back the Economy.*
different variables that affect them, theories of social practice and socio-technical change will be introduced as well as theories of the social production of space, and how they relate to sharing culture. These theories were selected because they focus mostly on ‘practices’ as a concept and how they can be inhibited, afforded, or changed under the influence of wider systems and structures, taking the focus away from practitioners themselves and, in a way, decontextualizing practices from specific actors.

Shove et al. describe that social practices in general consist of three main elements; materials, competencies, and meanings. Materials are the physical infrastructures that allow for practices to happen, competencies are the information and know-how necessary to realize practices, and meanings are the semantics that we associate with a certain practice. This means that practices are evolving and changing through the evolution of these elements, and take place when specific connections are made between those elements, to then disappear when those connections are lost. Practices themselves can also be integrated with each other due to relations of co-existence and co-dependence and create bundles or complexes. Although this approach focuses on the practice itself, it would be problematic to completely deny the role of the practitioners and how through the performance and reproduction of the practice over time they change and affect those elements themselves.

Based on this simplified theory, the emergence of new elements or practices can provoke or be caused by the death of other elements. Furthermore, elements that become part of practices are not necessarily created anew for the specific practice, but they might be elements of previous practices that fell into disuse. Within this framework, we can understand the emergence of sharing culture practices in correlation to the demise of relevant services provided by the state or the market within specific contexts. In some cases, these are changes in policy and lack of support, as the state lacks the competencies and/or materials to provide good quality services to citizens; in other cases, conversely, the meanings and materials necessary to access services provided by the market are not there, making them inaccessible. Citizens might not be able to afford certain services provided by the market either because of lack of money, resources, time, or even simply because they are not satisfied with the options available. In this context, within communities that hold the necessary elements and connections are made between them, an alternative sharing practice can potentially emerge to fill the gap in the market or the lack of support by the state.

As supported by the multi-level theory of innovation, when instances of those innova-
tive practices emerge, they are niche practices that are geared towards solving problems of existing regimes.\(^{(94)}\) Niche practices are identified by actors, who are willing to work within specific limitations and put extra effort and time to solve problems as they arise.\(^{(95)}\) More specifically, within the spectrum of sustainable development, niche grassroots practices become “experiments in society in which participation is widespread, and the focus is on social learning”.\(^{(96)}\) These niches usually grow within ‘protected spaces’.\(^{(97)}\) What Geels means by ‘protected spaces’ of niche innovations, is that they usually receive support from external sources to help them evolve and they are places where deviating from existing regimes and rules is possible. By avoiding abiding by mainstream rules and structures, everything is possible and hence innovation takes place. Moreover, because of the flexibility in structure, the actors involved tend to invest a lot of work and dedication to make the niche practices happen and, in some cases, they imitate successful models from elsewhere. They tend to use and adjust already available material and through the practice itself, the model and structure of the group tends to evolve and stabilize over time.

However, such niche practices can remain forever limited and never become part of larger socio-technical regimes. Based on Geels,\(^{(98)}\) the only opportunity for niches to become part of the mainstream is when existing regimes are undergoing certain tensions or misalignments; pressure from climate change, user dissatisfaction with existing options, and the negative externalities of systems are some examples of such pressures. So, within that framework, the key question inquires into the possibility of sharing practices scaling up, or scaling out, to become part of mainstream regimes. To explore further how the above theories of change relate to sharing culture, below I use the small selection of case studies presented earlier and investigate how they emerged and stabilized, and what possibilities they have of scaling up.

**Emergence of Sharing Culture Practices**

Based on the previous section’s exploration, in cases when there is a certain gap in service provision by the state and/or the market, niche practices emerge with citizens collaborating to fill that gap by pooling their own resources, materials, and skills. However, niche practices will not necessarily emerge in every place where such service vacancies exist. As Shove et al. explain, this will be more likely to happen in places where the elements necessary for the practice are available, and where the necessary connections between them are made.\(^{(99)}\) So, if

\[^{(94)}\] Geels, “From Sectoral Systems of Innovation to Socio-Technical Systems.”


\[^{(96)}\] Seyfang and Smith, “Grassroots Innovations for Sustainable Development.”

\[^{(97)}\] Geels, “From Sectoral Systems of Innovation to Socio-Technical Systems.”

\[^{(98)}\] Geels.

Chapter 02: On Sharing Practices

If this is the case, we need to explore what triggers the connections needed for sharing culture practices to begin in the first place. Moreover, it is important to identify possible obstacles that inhibit the practice from taking place and investigate the factors that assisted in sustaining the connections between the elements of a sharing culture practice. The goal here is to firstly understand how sharing culture practices emerge and how they become sustainable over time; and most importantly which factors influence them along the way.

Sharing culture practices can be triggered within a community through collective values, meanings, and human needs. When these are combined with local resources (materials) and skills (competencies), then the practice is enabled and comes to life. Table 2.5 shows the two case studies of the daycare co-op in London and the community-managed park in Athens, highlighting the elements that were there for the practice to emerge, as well as how they changed, and which other elements were needed to sustain the practice over time. In the first example of the daycare co-op, in a neighborhood where the daycare facilities available...
were not accessible or satisfactory, a group of parents who had enough capacity, time, space, and knowledge, decided to create an informal childcare setup among themselves. Beyond the lack of a service within the neighborhood, the trigger here was that the services provided were not attractive to the parents, and hence they preferred to create a new practice that better fit their own needs and ideology. They used their houses as the basic material for their practice, their own pooled knowledge and time, and they valued their involvement in their children’s upbringing. Over time the practice grew beyond the initial group of friends, and there was the need to find a space and financial support, to create an official daycare co-op with a small group of staff. An informal practice among friends that initially came together temporarily to satisfy the need of caregiving, scaled up to a more formalized sharing practice among strangers. The identity of the child-led daycare co-op and the ideology on which it was created, with a focus on arts and outdoors activities, are now what attracts more parents to the nursery rather than its cooperative nature. Thus, we can see that even though some groups can start as niche practices, they can evolve into more mainstream ones that attract a wider demographic. However, it is important to mention that as practices become more mainstream, material elements gain increased importance; this practice had to move from the parents’ houses to a space appropriate for a nursery, complying with certain rules and regulations. For a cooperative group like this, with a limited budget, it can be a challenge, leading to a series of adaptations of the practice to the available space.

In the case of the community-managed park, the collective identity and common values of the community were again notably strong; together with the negative views towards the physical space, it created the necessary capacity for the residents to transform the empty lot into a park.

**Importance of spatial patterns**

Needs, values, and identities are not enough to get practices started; as claimed by Shove at al., connections need to be made between elements100 and based on Geels, sometimes support is provided exogenously to the practice, such as public policies, space provision, and funding.101 More specifically, the factors that enable sharing culture practices can vary; these can be existing organizations, structures, or policies that provide the necessary resources and support for the practices to take place. For example, in the case of the daycare co-op, a church was the one to provide the first space they rented, and a local educational institution provided support and guidance. Within dense urban communities, there is a wealth of resources, meanings, competencies, and actors, which also adapt and are in constant change. Due to that wealth, sharing culture practices are more easily enabled in dense communities. Dense communities are defined here as places where multiple and diverse practices co-exist. The mere collocation of such practices creates a wealth of elements that can potentially trigger new sharing practices to emerge and evolve when the connections between them are made. For example, the abandonment of an old parking lot and the disregard shown by the owners, combined with the overall lack of green spaces and the radical identity of the neighborhood, afforded the action of the residents to turn it into a park.

(100) Shove, Pantzar, and Watson, *The Dynamics of Social Practice.*

(101) Geels, “From Sectoral Systems of Innovation to Socio-Technical Systems.”
The mere availability of physical space can trigger sharing practices to emerge because it holds cultural meaning which the community strongly relates to. This is apparent in the example of the community-managed park, as the abandoned parking lot along with the meaning that the residents projected on it, was the trigger that started the whole practice. The space itself might also have physical characteristics that afford specific behaviors and lead to a certain practice.\footnote{Based on Lang’s work, which brings together behavioral sciences and environmental design, the physical properties of a space can create affordances that enable people to use that space in a specific manner. Lang adopts the term ‘affordances’ from psychologist James J. Gibson to describe properties of an object, or space in this case, both material or non-material, that enable individuals to use it in a specific manner. Moreover, those physical properties or patterns do not only allow for a practice or certain use to take place, but can also afford meanings relevant to them and aesthetic appreciation.} The space itself might also have physical characteristics that afford specific behaviors and lead to a certain practice.\footnote{Jon Lang, Creating Architectural Theory: The Role of the Behavioral Sciences in Environmental Design (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1987).}

Based on Lang’s work, which brings together behavioral sciences and environmental design, the physical properties of a space can create affordances that enable people to use that space in a specific manner. Lang adopts the term ‘affordances’ from psychologist James J. Gibson to describe properties of an object, or space in this case, both material or non-material, that enable individuals to use it in a specific manner. Moreover, those physical properties or patterns do not only allow for a practice or certain use to take place, but can also afford meanings relevant to them and aesthetic appreciation.\footnote{James J. Gibson, The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception: Classic Edition, Classic ed edition (New York, NY u.a.: Psychology Press, 1979); Lang, Creating Architectural Theory.} If the necessary spatial patterns, which allow for a sharing practice to take place and afford meanings that people can relate to, are absent, then the practice might be interrupted, or not happen at all. Hence, those physical characteristics and arrangements become essential elements for the practice itself.

Spatial patterns and physical affordances are an important factor influencing not only the emergence but also the evolution and overall sustainability of sharing practices throughout time. As soon as sharing culture practices begin to take place, some manage to evolve by overcoming obstacles, most of which are usually related to lack of resources, access to space, and financial stability. One way practices evolve is by changing or adapting spatial arrangements to better serve the practice. As seen in the two examples of the daycare co-op and the self-managed park, the space did change completely or adapted over time to meet the needs of the group. As space changes, its affordances also change, affecting the scaling and sustainability of the practice over time. Moreover, as space is often tightly related to politics and conflicts of interest by diverse stakeholders within the urban context, the practices might need to invest a lot of effort to sustain their presence within an area and at the same time create supportive alliances. Even though spatial patterns seem to be one of the main influential factors of sharing culture practices, the work currently being carried out on sharing and the urban commons lacks a more tangible connection to physicality, and design. As sharing culture practices are taking place within the urban context and are tightly intertwined with it, it seems of great importance that future research explores the connections between the two and highlights how the latter can afford or inhibit the former. This dissertation aims to put some of these ideas to test and expand on the connection between the two.
02.06 From sharing to space
This chapter firstly presented a framework of ‘sharing culture’ as a distinct area of practice, with the aim of enriching the current debate on sharing and collaborative practices, answering some of the questions included in the first and second lines of inquiry of this dissertation. The framework distances itself from economic transactions sustaining ‘sharing economy’ practices, while focusing on human needs and welcoming characteristics of solidarity and reciprocity. To further strengthen and develop the terminology of sharing culture, this chapter provided a definition and a taxonomy of practices by bringing together diverse literature on sharing, collaborative practices, creative communities, the degrowth movement, and Sustainable Community Movement Organizations (SCMOs). It highlighted the value of sharing culture practices by showcasing their synergetic nature in satisfying human needs while being resourceful and socially engaging, based on the theoretical framework of Manfred Max-Neef. Finally, and with regards to the second line of inquiry, it explored how and why sharing culture practices emerge and evolve over time, based on theories of social change and grassroots innovation. In doing so, it highlighted the importance of spatial patterns as one of the influential factors in the development of sharing practices and identified the need to further develop an approach of studying those spatial patterns which can afford sharing culture. In the next chapter, the same relationship between sharing and space is explored through literature review but in reverse. An investigation of relevant examples and theories of architecture and design towards sharing is realized, in order to further strengthen the framework on which the fieldwork of this dissertation is situated.
03 ON PHYSICAL SPACE

03.01 Introduction
This chapter focuses on exploring architectural and spatial theories that relate to sharing culture. As discussed in chapter 02, scale, space, and physicality are highly important in sharing culture. The way sharing culture is defined within the dissertation’s scope, is highly contextual and related to the locale within which it emerges.

The first part of the chapter will begin from intentional spatial designs for sharing and communality. For many years, designers and architects have been imagining and designing communities that promoted sharing in an intentional manner. From utopian models of cities and neighborhoods, to more contemporary realistic approaches of living together, such as co-housing, sharing is not unusual in these design models for social and environmental transformation. The first part of this chapter provides an extensive review of those models to understand the relationship between space and sharing, when space is designed through a top-down, prescriptive approach by a designer. This review provides a better understanding of successful spatial aspects that cultivated a sharing culture in a top down manner and highlights important aspects that are afterwards explored during the fieldwork of this research.

In the second part of this chapter, I review literature that focuses on a more descriptive and inductive analysis of space by understanding human behavior in regards to sharing, collaboration, and social interactions. Moving in the reverse direction of architectural determinism, where space is defined as the sole driver of social behavior; I review literature where space is understood and studied as just one of many variables influencing social behavior, and specifically sharing. This chapter helps build further the research framework I am using for my fieldwork from a spatial point of view.

03.02 Spatial Designs for Sharing

Social Utopianism Typologies
Alternative ways of living that incorporated the shared use of space and goods as a part of the everyday are not new ideas. This section reviews certain models mainly from the western context. As far back as the 1500s, the book ‘Utopia’ by Thomas More presented a neighborhood where residents would organize in groups to share dining and other living
areas. Such visions became even more alluring in the 1800s as the heavy industrialization of Europe spurred the imagination of a more egalitarian society where working and living were collectively organized by the people. Specifically, Robert Owen, one of the founders of utopian socialism, was one of the first to argue about the cooperative movement and imagine how a society of cooperation and equality for workers would look like. His radical at the time vision was the Parallelogram; a community of maximum 2,000 residents, where men and women had equal rights and were collectively producing necessary resources to meet the community’s needs. The Parallelogram had a series of spaces shared by and available to all; gymnasiums, school and infirmary, baths, dining halls, library, music rooms, theatre, bakehouses, laundries, kitchen, storage etc.

The design was inward-oriented, with buildings placed on the perimeter while creating a communal courtyard in the middle. At the perimeter of the buildings, there was a main area for agricultural production.

When Robert Owen migrated to North America in 1825, he planned to realize his vision of the Parallelogram in Indiana, by creating the “New Harmony”. The New Harmony was supposed to be a community of 1,000 residents based on the values of “Parallelogram” and representing a vision for a perfect society. Unfortunately, even though the social intentions of this experiment can be considered noteworthy, several issues arose. Social cohesion was a challenge as issues of inequality soon came up, while the economics of the model were not feasible. The community lasted for two years, before gradually shifting away from socialism towards individualism by 1828.

From the most prominent and well-known figures to promote similar ideas of utopian socialism is the French intellectual Charles Fourier. He wrote several books on the first half of the 19th century and envisioned an ideal society for which he developed a very specific design; the Phalanstère. The Phalanstère would house 500-2,000 residents, who would co-

---


operatively own the premises and the means of production. The architectural structure would consist of three main parts; a central one and two lateral wings. The central part was the residential part – the heart of the community – dedicated for quiet everyday activities such as dining, meeting, and studying. The two lateral wings were noisier and hosted the activities related to production, which allowed for the community’s sustainability and autonomy. Specifically, one wing was dedicated for labor (carpentry, hammering, forging etc.) and the other wing was provided as a host space for travelers and outsiders. Outsiders had to pay a fee when visiting the premises of the latter wing of Phalanstère. The income of those fees contributed significantly to the economic sustainability of the community’s autonomy.

It is interesting here to highlight the idea of the commoditization of space as a means of additional income for the community of Phalanstère. Fourier, in contrast with Robert Owen, outlines a clearer vision of the relationship between the proposed “ideal community” and the rest of the society. As such, he sets boundaries between the community and society and proposed an exchange relationship between them. Moreover, by “renting out” one third of the Phalanstère to outsiders, the community can sustain its economic stability and autonomy. This idea is very relevant today through practices of sharing economy; for example, Airbnb allows people to rent out part of their household to sustain its economic vitality. Yet, the management process differs radically, as the Phalanstère residents cooperatively own and manage the lateral wing they are subletting, while in the case of Airbnb the process is appropriated by a company that has no interest in the economic sustainability and autonomy of those involved. The model of the Phalanstère also expanded in various locations of the US through Fourierist Associations founded in 1940s, with the most prominent being the North American Phalanx in Colts Neck Township, NJ. Most of those quickly met economic failure and were disestablished within a few years.

The Parallelogram and Phalanstère are not the only utopian models experimenting with ideas of a more collective way of life towards autonomous communities. Many other utopian socialists and intellectuals, influenced by similar ideals, proposed new models of life,

(5) Vestbro, “History of Cohousing - Internationally and in Sweden.”

work, production, and communality throughout the late 1900s and early 2000s; among them Carl Jonas Love Almqvist with the model of Universal Hotel, and Jean Andre Baptiste Godin with the Familistere model. In 1984, King Camp Gillette published a book called ‘The Human Drift’, where he proposed a Skyscraper Metropolis. The Metropolis was a model for a massive cooperative city, with apartments laid out in a hexagon looking into an interior courtyard with communal services for dining, education, and amusement. In 1898, Sir Ebenezer Howard’s model of Garden Cities, also described a collective management approach with reinvestment back into the community. Driven by the ideology of a cooperatively owned and managed community with communal ownership and means of production, each one of them delineated in slightly different ways the boundaries between private, communal, and public. Analogous examples of egalitarian utopian communities can also be found in more religious approaches, such as the Oneida Community in New York and the Hancock Shaker Village in Massachusetts. Sadly, most of those models, which were designed and envisioned in a top-down manner, when tested on the ground failed to achieve a model of a sharing community that is sustainable in the long-run. This can be partially attributed to the totalitarian way in which they were designed, failing to adjust in scale and context.

From the Kitchenless City to Cooperative Communities

Towards the end of 19th century and beginning of the 20th, there are several sociotechnical changes that influenced the reformation of the European household. Industrialization brought to Europe a series of technical innovations from gas stoves, to water closets, and central heating. The industrialization of the household, along with a functionalist approach towards social issues of the time aimed to addressed them by offering optimized housing models. In the US, after the Civil War (1860-65), the increasing land prices in the city and inadequate housing stock led to the rise of multifamily and apartment buildings as a solution for the middle class. The middle class struggled initially with the idea of the apartment house, but even parts of the middle-class, who were better off, could still not afford the luxuries previously expected – such as house-maid or children nurse – and needed to cut down their costs significantly.

Within that context, the model of the Central Kitchen Buildings or kitchenless apartments

(7) Vestbro, “History of Cohousing - Internationally and in Sweden.”
(11) Hayden, Seven American Utopias.
(15) Vestbro, “History of Cohousing - Internationally and in Sweden.”
arose; it was an amalgamation of the apartment and the hotel building. Central Kitchen Buildings would have a main central kitchen, while the respective apartments would not have a private one, or it would be limited in size. The meals would be served in the common dining area or delivered to the individual apartments through dumbwaiters and a series of bells and pneumatic tubes. The idea was developed not on an ideological basis towards a communal society, but rather on addressing emerging needs of the middle-class. Being forced to cut down on any luxurious costs, the individual housemaid was substituted by the “collective maid”. These spatial models are quite different from the socialist utopian ones, as they didn’t hold the same idealistic principles – quite to the contrary; people believed that they resembled the services of a boardinghouse, which was looked down to. Moreover, the Central Kitchen models did not propose any kind of collaborative action among those involved, but they were heavily based on the idea of service and economies of scale through a denser residential urban setting. Furthermore, these models were focused mainly on the architectural scale, and did not propose wider urban models.

Towards the end of the 19th century and in parallel with the spatial and social changes highlighted, the women’s rights movement arose, leading to the Women’s Social and Political Union – the suffrage – in the beginning of the 20th century. In response to the changes brought to the household and the family dynamics by industrialization, cooperative models were also born for the upkeep of the household and women’s liberation. Melusina Fay Peirce developed the framework and coined the term ‘cooperative housekeeping’, through which women of all classes would form a cooperative association and collectively do the domestic work as a service in exchange for money. Peirce believed that women by taking control of their economic sustainment, they would be able to take control in the political sphere as well. Beyond the radical social change Pierce’s model proposed, it also introduced ideas that had a great impact on residential design and neighborhood planning. Even before the rise of the Central Kitchen housing models, she proposed a neighborhood plan with blocks

---

(18) Hayden.
(19) Hayden.
of simplified kitchenless houses served by cooperative housekeeping centers (Figure 3.4).

What is quite interesting in these designs from an urban design perspective is the idea of a network of cooperative housekeeping services within a residential area. On the architectural level, the idea of movable walls is significant in the cooperative centers, so that the space would change to accommodate different activities from the everyday work to special occasions such as a ball for the workwomen.20

Some of the ideas of the cooperative housekeeping, and specifically food preparation was taken further in the early 1900s and led to the idea of Public Kitchens. The work by Ellen Swallow Richards and Jane Addams, developed the idea of using new industrial technology, home economics, and social settlement ideas to develop Public Kitchens in collaboration with the state.21 These kitchens would provide food to households with working women, but also teach the lower classes about nutrition and clean processes of food preparation. These models lacked though the cooperation and collective organization of women around the housework and their financial compensation for it. More models arose in the 20th century, which promoted the liberation of families, i.e. women, from the domestic work, by promoting a service-like approach.

One of the widely-known models of “collective houses” or “services houses” is that proposed by Otto Frick in Copenhagen in 1903.22 This model responded to the increasing needs of employed women to be freed by the burden of the domestic work. Some service houses abandoned the model of dumbwaiters and instead provided just the common dining hall. Such an example is the Marieberg, built in Stockholm in 1945. The common dining hall functioned as a restaurant service with a superintendent, stuff, and a fixed menu.23 Ideas of compact apartment living with communal areas, continued well through modernism,

(20) Hayden.
(23) Vestbro, “History of Cohousing - Internationally and in Sweden.”
with the most well-known architectural design model being Le Corbusier’s Unité d’Habitation and its most recognizable development, Cité Radieuse, realized in Marseille in 1952. The massive multifamily residential development can accommodate 1,600 residents, and has communal areas such as a garden, running track, club, kindergarten, gym, and a pool, most of which can be found on the terrace.\(^{24}\) The Unité d’Habitation provided a design model for communality in high densities.

Even though, the early 2000s service models and later modernist designs did propose a more condensed type of living with shared amenities that contradicted the 18th century’s single-family houses, they did not necessarily propose for a collaborative framework between residents. On the other hand, the social models outlined by utopian socialists or by Melusina Fay Pierce and the cooperative housekeeping movement never fully materialized into fully working developments. Moreover, until the 1950s in several western countries, such as UK and Sweden, the cooperative housing models faced significant criticism, as part of the general resistance of the times against the increasing women’s rights. Social research published in UK at the time, supported that children are more likely to be mentally healthy if raised by their stay-at-home mother.\(^{25}\)

By the 1960s, the idea of women as significant part of the working force was becoming normalized, and thus societal shifts allowed for innovative cooperative housing models to emerge. The case of the Hässelby “family hotel” by the Olle Engkvist housing company in Stockholm is a great example of those societal shifts. It initially started as a private development with communal services, such as a restaurant, that had employed staff. Eventually, residents started to be dissatisfied with the meal service and increasing prices, leading to the restaurant’s closure. Upon closure, residents collectively organized, took over the kitchen, and started preparing the meals collaboratively. Although, they would eventually be thrown out of the kitchen by the police in 1979, they realized their collective agency to perfectly manage the kitchen by themselves. This eventually led to a new typology of collaborative housing, where the management of shared services and spaces was not realized anymore by an external stakeholder, but by the residents themselves. This resident-led model is what we

---


\(^{25}\) Vestroh, “History of Cohousing - Internationally and in Sweden.”
know today as cohousing, which emerged around 1965 in Denmark and eventually flourished across northern Europe in the ‘80s as well as the US in the ‘90s.\(^\text{26}\) Cohousing typologies vary significantly based on location and culture. In Sweden cohousing was developed by municipalities as an alternative to social housing, with multifamily buildings being prevalent. Apartments would share common spaces, such as a kitchen or laundry facilities. This typology was easily replicable instead of typical condos development and could act as a retrofit strategy for existing multifamily buildings.

In the US, cohousing typologies developed differently, due to the inherent preference towards suburban models of living. The 125 cohousing communities currently existing in the US\(^\text{27}\) are mainly suburban and consist of single-family units that are smaller in size compared to the US average. All units have access to a shared outdoors space and a common house with shared facilities. Another difference to the European model of cohousing is that American cohousing is mainly a private development endeavor, with groups of people forming early on and leading the development. American cohousing resembles intentional ecovillage communities with strong environmental ideology. Some cohousing, ecovillages, and intentional communities in the US have similar social and environmental ideologies to those held by utopian socialists. Nevertheless, when distancing themselves from the urban context, they struggle in having a larger impact on societal change.

In the ‘80s, Dolores Hayden highlighted how American urban planners and designers promoting the suburban single-family house were in part responsible for prolonging a patriarchic model that kept women trapped in the role of the housekeeper. Hayden demonstrated a counterproposal of urban development, based on cooperation and openness, aiming towards a ‘non-sexist city’.\(^\text{28}\) Hayden’s model was called HOMES, meaning Homemakers Organization for a More Egalitarian Society, and its goal was to reframe housework and residential com-

---

(26) Meltzer, Sustainable Community.


(28) Hayden, “What Would a Non-Sexist City Be Like?”
munities. For the model to be successful, she mentioned that it needed to do the following:

“(01) Involve both men and women in the unpaid labor associated with housekeeping and child care on an equal basis, (02) Involve both men and women in the paid labor force on an equal basis, (03) Eliminate residential segregation by class, race, and age, (04) Eliminate all federal, state, and local programs and laws which offer implicit or explicit reinforcement of the unpaid role of the female homemaker, (05) Minimize unpaid domestic labor and wasteful energy consumption, (06) Maximize real choices for households concerning recreation and sociability.”

To achieve the proposed programs goals, she highlights the importance of community diversity, which should be representative of the social structure of the US. Her vision of the HOMES promoted the idea that communities would consist of diverse private dwellings – addressing the needs of a diverse population – and would be combined with a series of cooperative spaces such as:

“(01) A day-care center with landscaped outdoor space, providing day care for forty children and after-school activities for sixty-four children; (02) A laundromat providing laundry service; (03) A kitchen providing lunches for the day-care center, take-out evening meals, and “meals-on-wheels” for elderly people in the neighborhood; (04) A grocery depot, connected to a local food cooperative; (05) A garage with two vans providing dial-a-ride service and meals-on-wheels; (06) A garden (or allotments) where some food can be grown; (07) A home help office providing helpers for the elderly, the sick, and employed parents whose children are sick. The use of all of these collective services should be voluntary; they would exist in addition to private dwelling units and private gardens.”

Hayden’s model did propose a revolutionary concept of living at the time, allowing for a spectrum of collective and private spaces within a residential area. The model could have both great social impact and specifically in empowering women, as well as having an environmental impact through sharing and the reduction of excess domestic resources. Nevertheless, the model was never fully materialized as the transition towards such a vision faced challenges.
significant challenges. A model like this with shared collective facilities would be more appropriate to a dense urban context rather than in the suburbs. Urbanites who were already sharing and living closer to each other would have a better profile in taking up the HOMES model. Moreover, for women living in American suburbs, movement was more challenging as they did not have means of transportation, and thus density of the HOMES development would be crucial.

**Spatial Elements of Cooperative Models**

The models reviewed from the early 19th century to today, reimagined ways of living that are based on sharing and collaboration and proposed quite specific spatial designs that could potential facilitate it. Even though most of them – all apart from cohousing – never fully materialized or became eventually obsolete, there are quite a few take-aways for the spatial design that are important to highlight. The internal courtyard or common open space is one of them, which was used as way to decrease functional distance and facilitate social interactions among residents. Spaces for sharing meals, as well as their cooperative preparation, was also a common characteristic. Prominent was also the idea of shared facilities in regards to everyday needs, from eating, to washing, caregiving, leisure etc., that would facilitate a distributed network of smaller residential units. Those shared facilities are generally located close to the residential units, allowing for cooperative maintenance and management. The idea of the shared facilities transforming through the use of moveable walls, based on the ideas of Melusina Fay Peirce, was also quite innovative in order to allow them to adapt to the group’s needs. Depending on the typology of the model, some can be considered more enclosed, while others are open can be applied in contemporary cities.

**03.03 Theories of Space and Sharing**

**Beyond Architectural Determinism**

The selection of spatial designs presented in section 03.02 showcased spatial forms that were specifically planned for sharing and collaborative ways of living. However, the designs proposed were based more on intuition and some empiricism, without testing on the ground for the most part regarding their success to facilitate sharing. In certain cases, architects and designers have misjudged the impact their design products have on people’s lives, and whether design intentions succeeded. A good example that highlights the gap between the intentions of architectural design and reality is Pruitt-Igoe in St. Louis. Pruitt-Igoe was a high-density public housing project realized in the 50s for middle class residents, with communal laundry facilities and spaces for interaction. Moreover, the design was introduced ‘skip-stop’ elevators that stopped only in some floors, forcing residents to take the stairs for the last part of the journey. This design decision was intentional and aimed at mini-

---

(31) Functional distance is the degree to which an arrangement of residential faculties will influence the probability of any unplanned social interactions by the residents Psychology Dictionary, “Definition of Functional Distance,” in Psychology Dictionary, 2015, http://psychologydictionary.org/functional-distance/. The physical distance and the placement of the housing entrances play a significant role in increasing or minimizing that probability.

mizing congestion, while increasing social interaction. The building decayed significantly, with many apartments left vacant, while violence increased. The building was eventually demolished in 1972.

Even though the project has been demonized and used to define the death of modernism, the reasons for presenting it here are different. First, this case study highlights that the simple provision of common space is not enough; appropriation and feeling of ownership by the occupants are necessary. In the case of Pruitt-Igoe, the landscaped open spaces over the buildings’ pilotis failed to create feelings of ownership by the residents.33 Secondly, the challenges the design faced were also reflected in the lack of inclusion of those who it was designed for. At a time of general turbulence throughout the city, the project also failed to take into consideration issues of racial segregation, population decay, urban and societal changes.34 Lastly and most importantly, this example highlights that the expectation of establishing cohesive social relations only through physical design of buildings and neighborhoods is unrealistic. Spatial design should be considered as one of many factors affecting communities and human behavior in everyday life. The question that this case then posits is how to move away from architectural determinism and move towards a more substantive theory of spatial design.

To move beyond architectural determinism, a more situated investigation of sharing through the lens of spatial design needs to happen, that follows a substantive theory approach, rather than a normative and prescriptive one. In the late ‘80s, Jon Lang, outlined the differences between the two approaches in his attempt to build a less prescriptive and deterministic approach to architectural theory.35 In his book, ‘Creating Architectural Theory’, Lang frames normative theory as an ‘action-oriented’ theory, which can be highly desirable in the fields of architecture, urban design, and engineering, as it is easier to work within specific guidelines and principles, but that unfortunately can often lead to failure.36 The reason why normative, prescriptive guidelines can fail, is because they try to predict spatial performance with regards to human behavior, instead of understanding how people use space and apply

---


(34) Bristol, “The Pruitt-Igoe Myth.”


value to it. On the other hand, Lang argues that a substantive theory framework can expand our perception of physical environments – natural or built – and how they can affect people’s lives. Substantive theory ‘is concerned with descriptions and explanations of the physical nature of the built environment (...) and what it affords organisms’ and ‘maybe constructed within the process of identifying differences and similarities of contextualized instances, and patterns, across and within case studies focused on a similar theme.’

This situated approach of understanding the space from the point of view of those using it and identifying relevant spatial patterns that afford them to share and collaborate is deemed more appropriate for the research of this dissertation. Studying sharing initiatives within their respective spaces is identified as the best approach in understanding how they interact with their environment and identify spatial patterns of sharing culture. Even though the designed models for sharing and collaboration presented in the previous section can provide useful information of what worked and what failed; understanding sharing and collaboration through the lens of space in a more situated approach is quite important. Towards that end, a relevant literature review on the urban commons and sharing was realized to identify existing theories on the relationship between physical space and sharing through a situated approach. What becomes evident is that even though space is identified as an important factor in the field, there is the lack of comprehensive research on the relationship between sharing and space. In the larger field of the commons, spatiality seems to be under-investigated as well. Nevertheless, the literature review that follows presents key aspects highlighted currently in the research of urban commons and sharing in regards to space. Due to the limited exploration of this topic in the field, certain concepts are further expanded through spatial theories on human behavior and social interactions. This investigation will further help to establish a framework for developing patterns of sharing culture that could be transferable under conditions to other sharing initiatives taking place in different contexts.

**Urban commons, sharing, and space**

Space seems to play a significant role, within the fields of urban commons and sharing. A sharing approach to the city is described as a ‘place-based’ approach, with space playing an important role in the process of sharing. At the same time, urban commons speak to an alternative way of life based on collective action and sharing, but who are operating within the

---


(38) Lang, “The Nature and Utility of Theory.”


(43) Chan and Zhang, “Sharing Space.”
contested dense space of the city with competing uses and capitalist development. Nevertheless, space remains quite vague as a concept; perceived just as a resource and a necessary condition for sharing to take place. Bollier illustrates how commoning practices ‘carve out protected spaces’ for their activities and interact with policies and larger institutions only when it is absolutely necessary. On the contrary, Foster and Iacono assess the potential of local government and policy to unlock public and vacant space within a city in order for commoning and sharing initiatives to grow. In that sense what they propose is an enabling and nurturing stance of the state towards the urban commons in developing a sharing city.

Within the concept of a sharing city, when Chan and Zhang discuss space as a shared good and how it relates to sharing behaviors and practices, they outline three vectors of sharing space: urban sharing, sharing a living space, and shared social spaces. These three vectors beyond highlighting different areas of sharing in everyday life, they also illustrate the different scales of sharing, from the home, to the neighborhood, and the city. From Chan and Zhang’s discussion of space and sharing is important to distinguish three elements: the precarity of the shared social spaces, the malleability of the space, and the reciprocal influence between space and sharing practices. Firstly, and in alignment with Bollier, Foster and Iacono’s approaches mentioned, the precarious existence of sharing practices within the city and its market-driven forces is highlighted. Secondly, Chan and Zhang distinguish spaces of sharing – especially in the sphere of living spaces – as malleable ones that give spatial agency and prompt those who occupy them, to change them. Moreover, they predict the reciprocal relationship between space and sharing, and how the altered malleable space can then catalyze further cooperation and sharing, while influencing the social interactions taking place in it.

This idea of the space not just as an infrastructure or host for sharing practices, but as socially constructed and appropriated is quite prevalent within the field of commons at large. Commons and their spatiality do not just exist, but are produced through constant social interaction and collective action. Nevertheless, that does not imply that we should be disregarding the material attributes of spaces, but that we need to find a more refined way of demonstrating the ‘complex and dynamic socio-material configurations and spatial embodiments’.

People occupy spaces in different ways than what designers and administrators intended.

(47) Chan and Zhang, “Sharing Space.”
(48) Chan and Zhang; David Harvey, Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution, 2013.
them to, and tend to appropriate them through use and daily interactions to make them their own. This appropriation and spatial transformation through sharing and commoning is not instant, but can be incremental and ad-hoc in nature.

Nonetheless, spatial appropriation can be considered as an act of domination over a space, which means the creation of parochial spaces that can lead to exclusion for some. De Angelis critiques this trap of shared spaces that can become an ‘identity based commons’ which limits the opportunities of expansion to ‘outsiders’. This can lead to spaces that are limited and enclosed, mainly because of two reasons: affordances and past experiences. Appropriation has a reciprocal character, which means that ‘what we touch, touches us’, and so the way a space or an environment is appropriated creates certain spatial organizations. These spatial organizations can persuade or afford people to act based on certain expectations. When referring to the definition of ‘environment’, Lang makes the distinction between potential and effective environment. A potential environment is what exists around us, built by designers, with all the potential behaviors it allows to people. On the other hand, an effective environment is the actual way that people use and appreciate space eventually. The dual concept of potential-effective environment is, of course, tightly related to and inspired by the concept of affordance, originally coined by James J. Gibson. Within the design field, affordances are understood as all the potential interactions that can take place between humans and specific object or their environment in general. Subsequently, when a space is appropriated by a group, then its affordances can potentially change based on the groups identity and limit its potentiality. Moreover, just because an environment can afford a specific human interaction or behavior, that does not mean that it will take place; affordances might or might not be perceived by humans, depending on their past experiences and the meanings they project to their environment. Hence the identity of a space, built through a group’s appropriation, in combination with ‘outsiders’ past experiences in familiar environments.

---


(59) Lang, Creating Architectural Theory.

(60) Gibson, The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception.
social and material environments\textsuperscript{61} can define how and if the latter will engage with the space. In that sense, spatial appropriation with a strong identity by the group can become a challenge for sharing, as it can lead to enclosed spaces, not widely shared by a larger audience. This tendency of enclosure comes in complete contradiction to the inherent nature of sharing spaces, which is to be open and accessible. Below, we will explore this imperative of openness and investigate what it means for the materiality of tangible spaces.

The imperative of threshold space

Spaces of sharing are inherently striving to be open spaces accessible to all, and fight enclosures. As explored in Chapter 02, sharing culture describes practices that are open to all, while the identity of the practice is redefined when new people join.\textsuperscript{62} That of course, can be quite challenging; Elinor Ostrom’s first principle for successful commons is the clear definition of boundaries.\textsuperscript{63} However, in contrast to economist approaches to the commons, and when talking about urban commons and commoning, sharing spaces need to be open and allow for different flows and modes of relations.\textsuperscript{64}

In this case, the process of commoning as a verb goes beyond the simple management and appropriation of a space as a commons, to the constant reproduction of both the space and the process.\textsuperscript{65} In regards to the social process through which a space can be transformed to ‘common space’ and kept open and accessible, Gibson-Graham et al. introduce the commoning identi-kit.\textsuperscript{66} Based on the identi-kit, for space to be considered ‘common’, access should be shared and wide, use should be negotiated by a community, the benefit coming

(65) De Angelis; Linebaugh, The Magna Carta Manifesto.
from the space should be widely distributed to the community and beyond, care of the space is performed by community members, and responsibility for the space is assumed by the community (Figure 3.9). This proposition by Gibson-Graham et al. for ways of commoning is significant; it demonstrates how space, as a common shared resource, can be used, taken care and be the responsibility of a community, while benefiting and being accessed by a wider audience. Through process of commoning, the space is thus resisting potential enclosures. Hence this allows us to imagine of a threshold spatiality as defined by Stavrides. Based on Stavrides, “threshold spatiality is a spatiality of passages which connect while separating and separate while connecting “and “Thresholds explicitly symbolize the potentiality of sharing by establishing areas of crossing, by opening the inside to the outside”. Thus, threshold spatiality has the characteristic that it is not limited to secluded communities, and connects the inside(rs) with the outside(rs). ‘Threshold space’ becomes a significantly important concept in understanding how spaces can create connections between sharing initiatives and their context and allow them to open to it.

If sharing spaces need to adopt ‘threshold’ qualities, we need to identify the material characteristics of threshold spatiality. Stavrides distinguishes some of the following characteristics of threshold space: porous with open boundaries, dynamic and always in the making, a unique and not homogenous space, a space where differences meet. Moreover, he illustrates how balconies, windows, staircases, and streets can hold threshold qualities that connect people and dissolve otherness. Even though Stavrides distinguishes ‘threshold space’ as an important condition for sharing and commoning, and he illustrates some of its elements, there is still great potential for further exploration of its material qualities that allow for connections among different people. Towards that end, and before the end of this chapter, it is important to briefly investigate spatial theories on social interactions.

Space and Social Interactions

Social interactions become an integral part of spaces of sharing. Stavrides explains how threshold spaces of sharing are dynamic places where different people meet and always invite newcomers. But, why should people decide to take part in sharing practices is a question worth asking. Manzini asks that question in his book ‘Design, when everybody designs’, and one of the parameters he explores to answer is social ties strength, a concept proposed by Granovetter in 1973. Based on Granovetter’s concept, the strength can be evaluated through time dedicated, level of affection and intimacy, reciprocity, as well as how long the relationship is being built; stronger ties take more time and energy to establish, while weaker ties happen more quickly. Manzini argues that all collaborative practices consist of a variety of both strong and weak social ties, and a balance between the two should be nurtured.

(67) Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy.
(68) Stavrides, “Chapter 3: Shared Heterotopias: Learning from the History of a Social Housing Complex in Athens.”
(69) Stavrides.
(70) Stavrides, Common Space; The City as Commons.
practice with mostly strong ties can slowly lead to an enclosed group, while one with only weak ties can be too loose with limited capacity to sustain itself in the long run. In establishing that both strong and weak social relationships are needed, we can then explore how physical space in urban environments can affect them.

Fleeting interactions of ‘see and hear contacts’ or else called ‘consequential strangers’ have been identified to have significant impact on the sense of belonging in a place. These weak social ties are mainly based on visual interactions, and do not necessarily constitute relationships, but they allow for people to know what is taking place in the places they usually interact with. Consequently, spatial permeability becomes an important part of social permeability. Spatial permeability then allows people to experience what is taking place in an urban context through visual contact in the public sphere as well as the adjacent buildings.

Beyond just visual contacts, proximity is identified as one of the main identifiers for having an impact on social relationships. The effect of propinquity highlights the important role physical proximity plays on social relationships; the closer people live and / or operate in their daily lives, all the more possible it is to be attracted to each other and build social relationships. Proximity relates not only to the mere physical distance but rather functional distance. Functional distance is defined as the degree to which a spatial, architectural arrangement will afford unplanned encounters between people who live, work or operate within certain urban areas. Even though functional distance is an important influencing factor on social relationships, it should be highlighted that social distance is also important, which relates to the type of social groups people are part of and how close they are perceived to be.

Finally, it is important to highlight dense environments with mixed land use as another potential factor that can allow not only social relationships to be built, but sharing and other innovative social practices to develop. Gehl partly illustrates this, by stating that if human

(77) Gehl, Life Between Buildings.
activity is accumulated in a place, then it is possible that events and actions will stimulate one another.\textsuperscript{82} Within that framework, it is important to understand urban environments not just as places where people live and work, but places that allow for other types of uses to take place. For example, Ray Oldenburg highlighted the idea of third places in the city, as spaces beyond home and work, where people come together.\textsuperscript{83} We could also argue, that third places, under conditions, could hold threshold qualities as they are spaces that are inclusive, sociable, and become places of encounter.

This section highlighted how the physical qualities of spatial permeability and proximity, as well as a dense mixed-use environment can allow for social relationships of different strengths to be developed and even lead to social activities of a larger impact. Nevertheless, it is quite clear that further investigation on the relationship between sharing culture practices and physical space is needed. Based on the literature review of this chapter the next section will highlight the ideas and concepts to be used in developing the methodology of the investigation within the framework of this dissertation.

\section*{03.04 Framework for sharing culture & space investigation}

Based on this chapter’s literature review on spatial designs for sharing and spatial theories of sharing, urban commons, and social interactions, I built a framework of areas that need further investigation in regards to sharing and space. The literature review highlights that the investigation on the relationship between sharing culture and space can be quite broad, and there is an emergent need to frame it around the variable of scale. Thus, I propose an investigative framework that recognizes different spatial scales and explores different areas of the topic on each scale. The scales are not bounded with specific limits, but rather frame the different areas of investigation around the topic. Below the three scales are presented along with topics of interest to be further explored:

\textbf{Building Scale}

Sharing culture practices emerging within urban environments do not necessarily inhabit spaces designed for them. On this scale, the relationship between the practice and the space it occupies is investigated.

\textbf{Investigative Focus Areas}

\begin{itemize}
  \item How does the space the practice occupies, influence it and its activities?
  \item How is the space used and possibly adapted by the practice?
\end{itemize}

\textbf{What is included?}

The building scale includes all spaces the practice uses, indoors and outdoors.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{(83)} Ray Oldenburg, \textit{The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Bookstores, Bars, Hair Salons, and Other Hangouts at the Heart of a Community: Cafes, Coffee Shops, ... Other Hangouts at the Heart of a Community}, 3 edition (New York : Berkeley, Calif.: Da Capo Press, 1999).
\end{itemize}
Threshold Scale
Here, the definition of ‘threshold’ by Stavros Stavrides is used. On the threshold scale, the contextual spatial conditions around the practices are investigated in regards to the opportunities they create for interaction between the practice and the wider neighborhood. The investigation on the threshold scale, intends to reveal how space is influencing the openness of the practices.

Investigative Focus Areas
• How does the practice use its contextual threshold space around it?
• How does the contextual threshold space around the practice influence its potential to develop ‘see and hear’ contacts with its neighbors?
• How does the contextual threshold space around the practice influence its potential to develop weak and strong social ties with its neighbors?

What is included?
Threshold scale is defined as the building’s envelope along with its immediate adjacent urban surroundings.

Urban Scale
Sharing culture practices emerge within an urban context with specific characteristics that can potentially influence them. On this scale, issues of land use, density, accessibility, integration, foot & vehicular traffic are explored.

Investigative Focus Areas
• How is the land use & amenities in the area surrounding the practice influencing it?
• How accessible and integrated is the practice within its urban context?
• How is exposure from foot & vehicular traffic in front of the practice influencing it?

What is included?
The urban scale consists of the area surrounding a practice and for this research, an area within a ½ mile radius from it will be studied. This area loosely defines the neighborhood unit around the practice and corresponds to a 10-minute walk. It is selected based on Clarence Perry’s Neighborhood Unit from the Regional Plan of New York, 1929 and its re-interpretation by Douglas Farr in his book Sustainable Urbanism.

(84) Michael Larice and Elizabeth Macdonald, The Urban Design Reader (Routledge, 2013).
04 RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODS

04.01 Introduction

This dissertation investigates a diverse range of sharing and collaborative practices that can be transformative for communities’ and citizens’ everyday lives, examines their emergence within the city, and reveals spatial patterns that influence them. As established through the literature review, sharing has been defined under the specific lens of sharing culture, and the emergence and transitions of sharing practices need further understanding. Chapter 03 highlighted the gap in literature of a systematic investigation of the relationship between sharing practices and physical space. As a result, this research follows three main lines of inquiry. The first line of inquiry seeks to better define sharing and its value, whereas the second one is to understand how sharing practices emerge and transform over time and what are several factors that influence them. The third line of inquiry investigates the relationship between sharing and space and identifies spatial patterns that enable sharing culture.

The first and second lines of inquiry are significant in that they construct the foundational framework upon which to explore the relationship between sharing and space. The relationship between sharing and space cannot be studied in a vacuum; it is highly contextual and influenced by other non-spatial variables and conditions as well. The semi-systematic literature review of chapter 02, provided some answers to the research questions of the first and second line of inquiry, among which was the definition of sharing culture, the sharing culture taxonomy, the synergistic value of sharing culture initiatives, as well as the emergence of sharing culture initiatives explored through the lens of social practice theory. Chapter 03 provided a model for studying the relationship between space and sharing on three different scales: building, threshold, and urban, with distinct areas of focus for each scale. Figure 4.1 highlights the three lines of inquiry with their hypotheses, research questions, theoretical framework, research methods, and contributions.

In this chapter, an interdisciplinary methodology is proposed in systematically studying the relationship between sharing culture practices and space. Specifically, this methodology can be used to identify spatial patterns that enable sharing culture on three scales: building, threshold, and urban, as identified at the end of chapter 03.
Figure 4.1: Diagram highlighting the three lines of inquiry with their hypotheses, research questions, theoretical framework, research methods, and contributions.

**Lines of Inquiry & Hypotheses**

**Define Sharing Culture, Taxonomy & Value**

There are certain sharing practices that can benefit citizens’ everyday lives and urban communities at large.

**Explore Transitions of Sharing Culture**

There are non-spatial factors that influence the transition of sharing culture.

**Identify Spatial Patterns of Sharing Culture**

There are spatial patterns on a building, threshold, and urban scale that can enable and diffuse sharing culture practices.

**Research Questions**

- What types of sharing practices are there and how can they be part of everyday life?
- What are the benefits of sharing practices on an individual and community level?
- How can we understand the transformation of sharing culture practices through the lens of transition design framework and theories of social change?
- What are non-spatial conditions affording the sustainment and diffusion of sharing culture?
- What are the spatial patterns on the building scale that influence sharing culture and how?
- What are the spatial patterns on a threshold scale that influence sharing culture and how?
- What are the spatial patterns on the urban scale that influence sharing culture and how?
Chapter 04: Research Design & Methods

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
- Urban Commons
- Commoning
- Sharing Culture
- Collaborative Services
- Human Scale Development
- Everyday Life

RESEARCH METHODS
- Literature Review
- Mini Case Studies
- Exploratory Research methods: card sorting & persona development

RESEARCH CONTRIBUTIONS
- Sharing Culture Definition & Taxonomy
- Value of Sharing Culture

Mapping Transitions of Sharing Culture
- Socio-technical Challenges in Sharing Culture Diffusion

- Urban Commons
- Spatial theories for social interactions
- Behavioral Sciences
- Pattern Language
- Architectural Phenomenology

Research Framework for studying sharing & space
- In-depth Case Studies of Sharing Culture
- Spatial Patterns of Sharing Culture

- Ethnographic Case Studies
- Documents Review
- Interviews
- Qualitative Data Analysis
- Observations, photo-inventory
- Spatial Documentation
- Mapping (GIS & Space Syntax)
04.02 Research Approach Rationale

Qualitative Research

The way sharing practices emerge and transition and the factors influencing them in the process are complex. Therefore, there is an emergent need to weave the theoretical framework together with empirical evidence. Moreover, sharing practices are highly contextual and to understand how physical space is affecting them, their natural settings become of great importance. To understand their emergence and how they have developed over time, it is important to explore the practices in their natural settings, through the practitioners themselves, their experiences, and the value sharing brings to their everyday lives. Qualitative research is the most appropriate approach for studying sharing practices and their relationship to space, within their natural settings and through the practitioners themselves.

The inherent characteristics of qualitative research that serve the purposes of this study, are summarized below based on the work of qualitative research experts Linda Groat, David Wang, and Sharan B. Merriam:

1. **Research Process is Inductive**, which means that gathering of data is necessary in order to build a theory and hypotheses inductively, rather than testing hypotheses deductively.
   This leads to the formulation of the research questions in an iterative research process as new information arises, data are being gathered, and new insights are becoming apparent. This signifies that in qualitative research the design might appear to be open-ended, or emergent, and flexible as the process might alter through fieldwork. This becomes apparent in the fact that the predefined hypotheses of this research are quite open-ended allowing for testing new hypotheses along the way.

2. **The natural setting** of the sharing practice plays a significant role; which means that the research subject must be investigated within its natural context.

3. **Researcher is the main instrument** for data collection and analysis and in the process of analyzing the data gathered, his/her interpretation and decoding of them is of utmost importance.

4. **Focus is given on meaning and interpretations** that people/human subjects give to their everyday lived experiences and how they make sense of them.

5. **Thick Description** is critical, and the data collected include texts, representations, mapping and images rather than numbers.

6. **Diversity in research tactics** is also part of the qualitative strategy to best address the

---


(2) Merriam and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research*.


(6) Groat and Wang; Merriam and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research*. 
research questions at hand and the context under study. This research brings together research methods from diverse disciplines such as the social sciences, architectural and urban design, and geography.

System of Inquiry
Given the topic of this research, there are multiple perspectives regarding sharing practices, their emergence, and further development that need to be understood individually. However, it is critical and possible to achieve a broader shared understanding. Hence, the system of inquiry of this dissertation is considered to be intersubjective, where the epistemological approach is that “knowledge is framed by understanding sociocultural engagement” and ontologically there are “diverse realities situated in the socio-cultural context”. The reason why this approach needs to be intersubjective is important because as argued by Bollier and Helfrich in their book “Patterns of Commoning”, when dealing with the field of “the commons”, it is impossible to design it from the outside based on a set of best practices or prescriptive rules. They argue that those practices need to arise by the engagement of the citizens themselves.

Case Study as a Method
Due to the significance of the context, where sharing practices are situated, in their evolution and the need to understand how space affects them on three different scales, studying the setting is as important as studying the practices themselves. For that reason, multiple case studies have been selected as the most appropriate research methodology for this thesis. Based on Groat’s adaptation of Yin’s definition of the case study: “A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.” The case study method has five main characteristics that apply within the goals of this research:

---

7 Groat and Wang, Architectural Research Methods.
8 Groat and Wang.
9 David Bollier and Silke Helfrich, eds., Patterns of Commoning (Lavellers Press, 2015).
1. Focus on (one or more) cases that can be investigated within their real-life setting,
2. Possibility to explain causal relationships,
3. Theory development as part of the research design,
4. Using multiple sources of data and triangulating between them,
5. Great capability of generalizing to theory.

In this dissertation, multiple case studies are used in an exploratory and descriptive manner, trying to identify the spatial patterns that enable sharing culture on three distinctive scales among many other non-spatial factors influencing them. Consequently, this thesis develops a rationale for the relationship between sharing and space, by investigating sharing practices within their real-life context. Data are collected in multiple ways and from multiple sources and are subsequently triangulated, ensuring validity and the overall quality of the research.

Multiple case studies are used for the scope of this research instead of one. Specifically, four cases are studied, each one selected from a different taxonomical category of Sharing Culture, as presented in Figure 2.5 (Chapter 02). The multiplicity of cases allows for an investigation of spatial influence to sharing culture practices beyond the specificity of the practice itself, leading to a generalized theory on how space influences such communal practices. Moreover, it allows an exploration of the influence of space on the scaling of sharing culture through the diversification of practices.

The method of multiple case studies is considered to follow a “replication” logic rather than a multiplicity of responses. Both a literal and theoretical replication will be achieved in order to identify spatial patterns to sharing culture across taxonomical categories. However, insights towards generalization of a theory can come as well from single cases themselves, which are paradigmatic in a sense, as argued by Bent Flyvbjerg in “Five Misunderstandings about case-study research”. What Flyvbjerg demonstrates is that exceptional cases can provide great insights and heuristics towards theory development, even though their characteristics might not be evident in other cases.

04.03 Research Design & Methods

Research Design Outline

Based on the literature’s framework and the research approach rationale, the methodology proposed for investigating the relationship between sharing culture and space consists of a series of in-depth ethnographic case studies that combine interdisciplinary research tactics and multiple types of data. The research design for this thesis follows Yin’s process model for multiple case studies, and it is presented in detail in the overall diagram (Figure 4.4). In the diagram, the ‘case study protocol’ is following Yin’s model (Figure 4.3) in that data are collected, analyzed, and doc-

---

(12) Groat and Wang, Yin, Case Study Research.
(14) Yin, Case Study Research.
umented in reports for individual case studies and afterwards a cross-case study analysis is realized. This methodological approach is appropriate as it achieves the following goals:

A. **The individual case studies** give a thick description of the sharing practices that goes beyond short summaries of similar models realized until today. The individual case studies reveal the value of the practices, their spatial characteristics, and deeply inform communities that are looking for ways to implement similar practices in their neighborhood.

B. **The cross-case study analysis** is used towards the development of the spatial patterns of sharing culture on three scales (urban, threshold, building), while identifying non-physical factors that influence the practices across taxonomical characteristics. By identifying spatial patterns across taxonomical categories, the patterns can be used as actionable tools for either designers or communities who intend to catalyze sharing culture. Finally, patterns are analyzed across taxonomical categories because sharing practices tend to develop over time more than one way of sharing and satisfy different types of everyday needs. Thus, the patterns need to be relevant to sharing culture practices beyond taxonomical categories.

**Role of Researcher & Unit of analysis**

The role of the researcher in this study is etic, which means the case studies were realized and documented with the researcher as an external observer. The unit of analysis in regards to this research, which is the ‘case’, is a sharing culture practice as defined in chapter 02. More specifically, a ‘case’ should be a loosely defined group of people that are involved in a sharing culture practice; they have as their main goal to co-produce, co-manage and/or share resources, time, services, knowledge, information and support based on solidarity and reciprocity rather than economic profit. The group’s goal is to create an alternative pathway for them to serve their daily needs in a more sustainable, less resourceful and socially engaging manner by tapping into resources within their region.
Research Steps

As described in the research design diagram (Figure 4.4), the research is separated in three main parts: A. framework development, B. single case study research protocol, and C. pattern development. This structure follows Yin’s process diagram for multiple case studies methodological approach (Figure 4.3) as first definitions and framework precede, where cases are identified, followed by data collection and analysis per case, concluded with a cross-case study analysis and documentation.

A. Framework and Case Selection

The first part of this research establishes the framework and the criteria based on which the cases were selected. There were a series of sampling criteria for selecting cases, with the first one being the criteria for identifying cases, as described in Chapter 02: Sharing, Co-management, Social Relationships, Sustainability over time, Resourcefulness, Social Incentive, Local Economy, Accessibility, Physicality. Diversity of practices was also important for the selection process of cases in regards to their taxonomical categories (Figure 2.5): Food, Shelter, Work, Caregiving, Knowledge, Well-Being, Resources, Mobility, and Leisure. Cases selected are as mentioned by Flyvbjerg ‘paradigmatic’ in a way; cases “that highlight more general characteristics of the societies in question (...) and set the standard.”

The way that this is interpreted in this research is that paradigmatic cases are practices that seem to be capable of becoming synergistic satisfiers for a great variety of needs for the participants involved.

An important selection criterion was proximity and accessibility to the researcher, which led to a cross-cultural selection of case studies. Case studies were realized in London, UK, and Athens, Greece. Hence, it should be highlighted that availability of cases was also a selection criterion; ten sharing culture initiatives were contacted initially, but only four were willing to participate in the research.

The table below summarizes all the sampling criteria for the case study selection:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sampling criterion</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sharing culture identifying criteria</strong></td>
<td>Sharing, Co-management, Social Relationships, Sustainability over time, Resourcefulness, Social Incentive, Local Economy, Accessibility, Physicality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Taxonomic diversity</strong></td>
<td>Each case should fall under a different taxonomical category (food, shelter, work, caregiving, well-being, utilities, mobility, leisure, services)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proximity to researcher</strong></td>
<td>Athens, Greece and London, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Paradigmatic</strong></td>
<td>Cases “that highlight more general characteristics of the societies in question (...) and set the standard.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Availability</strong></td>
<td>Willing to be part of the research</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(15) Flyvbjerg
B. Single Case Study Research Protocol

After the framework was established and the cases were identified, a strict protocol per case study is followed. Firstly, verbal and spatial data about the practice is collected from publicly available documents online. Further verbal and spatial data are collected through one or multiple on-site visits at the practice’s space. Verbal and spatial data are subsequently analyzed separately, and finally findings are triangulated and documented in the case study report. Verbal data are collected and analyzed based on an initially defined, but loose structure of the following codes: context, group structure, change, interactions, value, and space with the three distinct scales: building, threshold, and urban.

The exact data collection and analysis methods are described in detail in the following section. Each case was realized independently before moving to the next one, and at the end of each one, the process was refined. The case study reports are further substantiated through mini literature review on the case’s taxonomical category, i.e. the report for the caregiving case includes a review of different caregiving models. The case study reports are presented in Chapter 05 of this dissertation.

C. Development of Patterns for Sharing Culture

After all the single case study reports are finalized and documented, findings across all cases are analyzed. The cross-case findings are analyzed based on the three main lines of inquiry of the thesis: sharing practices and value, transitions, and spatial characteristics of sharing culture. The spatial findings are further structured and documented along the three scales: building, threshold, and urban. The aim is that the cross-case findings from the fieldwork further contribute and evolve the framework established around sharing culture in chapter 02. The overall cross-case findings are documented in chapter 06 of this dissertation.

The aim of this research is to develop spatial patterns of sharing culture that can be of value to designers and sharing culture practitioners on the ground. Hence, the spatial cross-case analysis findings are further developed into patterns. Towards that end, the cross-case analysis findings are further synthesized with literature review, knowledge from other cases studied in the early phases of this research, as well as experience on the field. As the research director at an organization in London, that aimed to scale participatory and sharing practices, I experienced firsthand the impact space can have on sharing practices, especially during early stages of emergence. The detailed pattern development process will be furthered explained in the following section.

04.04 Single Case Study Research Protocol

This section describes the single case study research protocol, with the diverse types of data to be collected, followed by a step by step process of the single case protocol as described in stage B of Figure 4.4.

01. Verbal & Spatial Data Collection

A critical part of this research is the collection and analysis of diverse types of data from multiple sources, which allows for triangulation and thus internal validity. Towards that end,
Chapter 04: Research Design & Methods

verbal and spatial data are collected both from online sources and on-site fieldwork. The types of data collected are presented in detail in Table 4.2.

Four main methods of data collection methods have been pursued towards identifying the relationship between sharing culture practices and space, as they provide a diversity of data from multiple resources and allow for a holistic representation of the cases studied.

01.a Publicly available data, documents, and maps:

Publicly available documents and websites that reference the specific sharing practice should be gathered and reviewed first, before visiting the practice on site. This allows for better identifying appropriate cases to be studied but can also be used as a springboard for framing targeted questions during the interviews. The early review of publicly available information allows for more leads and nuanced information to be gathered while on site. The data reviewed include articles written about the practice, the website and social media of the practice, as well as collection of demographic data for the neighborhood within which the practice is located. The latter allows one to identify potential differences or similarities between the practice and its context.

Moreover, for each case study, a series of maps should be realized within a ½ and ¼ of a mile around the practice’s space. The maps are used as heuristics and in combination with the data from interviews, they support findings in regards to how threshold and urban space influences the practice. Two types of maps are developed; the first category of maps captures percentage of built area, density, land use, and transit accessibility. The second category of maps include Space Syntax analysis, which will be described in detail in the following section, to provide information on the space’s location within the city.

The cartographic data needed to develop these maps are gathered online at the city or municipality databases available. Data for London were secured from the London Datastore, or Consumer Data Research Center. For Athens, Greece, digital cartographical data were gathered by the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT).

01.b. Semi-structured Interviews:

After a contact has been established with the practice, times and dates are booked for semi-structured interviews with at least 2-5 participants. The interviews follow a general outline of questions that can be found in Appendix B: Interviews Guide, but should remain open enough for more in-depth information to be revealed by the participants themselves. The first interview realized should be with a primary contact person for the practice. It is advisable that the primary contact is a long-time participant of the practice and has been in the group since its initiation. The introductory interviews are more exploratory; they outline the story and evolution of the practice. The follow-up interviews are shorter focus on the spatial attributes, challenges, changes, and value the practice brings to the participants’ everyday life. The interviews are audio recorded, consequently transcribed, and filed following the data security and confidentiality protocol established in the IRB approved application (Appendix A: Recruiting Study Participants & Ethics Review Application). The interviews were realized in English or Greek, depending the context and the language spoken by each interviewee.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Type</th>
<th>Data Code</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Data Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Spatial Data | Space; Building scale | On site | * sketches of the space with measurements & dimensions  
* photographs of the space’s interior  
* observational notes on the following: space layout, furniture and artifacts, seasonality and flexibility of space, how people move in and use the space |
|            | Online Sources |            | * photographs of the space’s interior from online sources, such as: the practice’s website, blog, social media etc. |
| Spatial Data | Space; Threshold Scale | On Site | * sketches of the context adjacent to the practice’s building / space  
* photographs of the context adjacent to the practice’s building / space  
* observational notes on the following: foot traffic, people around the neighborhood, functional distance, visibility, visual communication, artifacts, available public spaces, personal reflection on accessing the space |
| Spatial Data | Space; Threshold & Urban Scale (cartographic data) | Online Sources | * Google Maps snapshots (street view)  
* axial map of streets in ¾ mile radius from the practice’s space  
* figure-ground diagram (Noli map) in ¼ mile radius from the practice’s space  
* number of floors in buildings within ¼ mile radius from the practice’s space (in order to define built density of the area)  
* land-use geospatial data in ¼ mile radius from the practice’s space  
* transportation data in ¼ mile radius from the practice’s space  
* walkability score |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Type</th>
<th>Data Code</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Data Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group Structure &amp; Change</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td></td>
<td>• interview answers on being part of the group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• interview answers about the group’s beginnings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• interview answers about the group and its structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context &amp; Interactions</td>
<td>Online Databases</td>
<td></td>
<td>• demographics of the neighborhood within which the practice is located</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td></td>
<td>• interview answers about the group’s networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• interview answers on the relationships with the neighborhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value</td>
<td>Interviews &amp; Cultural Probes</td>
<td></td>
<td>• self-reported benefits of participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• need satisfiers cultural probe results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Structure, Context, Interactions, Change, Value</td>
<td>Online Sources</td>
<td></td>
<td>• the practice’s website / blog texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td></td>
<td>• selected published articles and interviews of the practice available online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space; Building scale</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td></td>
<td>• reasons for locating the practice in the specific space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• information on any potential adaptations made in the space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• description of the space’s infrastructures and details on how the space is used on a daily basis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• description of activities hosted in the space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• self-reported satisfaction on the fulfilment of the practice’s needs by the specific space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space; Threshold scale</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td></td>
<td>• information on potential interactions with the neighborhood: where do they take place and how</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• information on potential use of adjacent public spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space; Urban Scale</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td></td>
<td>• self-reported satisfaction with the location of the space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• information on participants’ distribution in the wider urban area and commute to the practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• information on potential use of other space in the wider urban area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• information on distribution of potential collaborative networks with other groups and organizations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2: Data Categories and Data to be collected
01.c. Cultural Probe: Need Satisfaction Wheel

To better facilitate the discussion around the value the sharing practice brings to participants, a colorful need satisfaction wheel was developed to be used as a cultural probe during interviews (Figure 4.5). The wheel contains all nine human needs as described in Max-Neef’s Human Development framework: subsistence, protection, affection, participation, idleness, creation, understanding, identity, freedom. The wheel contains each need as well as three synonyms for each one of them. The synonyms were added to expand the understanding and linguistic barriers of a single word. Each group of synonyms was marked with a different color. During interviews, participants are prompted to use the wheel by selecting the words for the corresponding needs they are satisfying through their participation in the sharing practice. The needs not fulfilled are then folded to the back of the wheel, leaving visible only the ones relevant. While using the wheel, participants are also asked to explain the rationale behind their selection. The wheel has been developed in English and Greek. Ultimately, the Human Needs Satisfaction wheels were collected from all interviewees and were aggregated per case, to develop a Human Needs Satisfaction diagram (Figure 2.8, pg. 36). The diagram showcases the needs that are satisfied the most through participation in the sharing practice.

01.d. Spatial and Photographic documentation:

To document and analyze the spatial attributes of each case on the building and threshold scale, sketches and photographs from the site are necessary. The interior spaces used by the practices are measured and documented in a draft sketch. The sketch should include all the

---

indoors and outdoors spaces used by the practice (example sketches in Figure 4.6). Photographs of all the spaces, the surrounding area and the streetscape should be taken that can be revisited afterwards. Following data protection protocols, no subjects will be included in the photographs. Other photos of the space should be collected from online sources, such as websites and social media, as well as snapshots from Google Maps and Google Street view. Photographs gathered from online sources can then be analyzed in regards to the activities of subjects in the space.

02. Qualitative Data Analysis

For each case study, the publicly available documents along with the transcripts of the interviews are coded in two phases, initially through ‘open coding’ and then through the process of ‘analytical coding’. Merriam and Tisdell describes open coding as a process of expansive analysis of the data and coding any section that might be useful. Analytical coding goes beyond simple grouping of data to descriptive categories, and is rather coding that comes from reflection and interpretation of the data. The combination of open and analytical coding created a structure of coding in which practices are understood within their context as described in Figure 4.7. There are six main families based on which information is coded: group and structure, context, change, interactions, influence (positive or negative), and space (with sub-codes for building, threshold, and urban). These coding families were used as a starting point and were supplemented with additional coding categories that arose.

(17) Merriam and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research.*

(18) Merriam and Tisdell.

(19) Merriam and Tisdell.
from the data. After the open coding process of the first case study, further interpretation and reflection on the data was realized that led to new sub-categories to emerge for further analytical coding. Moreover, connections and links between codes were developed for each case study, creating a coding network analysis. Examples of the final networks of the coding process are presented in Appendix C.

The analytical coding sub-categories were created for each case study based on two factors: significance for the trajectory of the practice, and repetition among interviewees. As case studies were developed, the emerging categories were further refined based on the criterion of repetition across cases leading to the final cross-case findings. The Qualitative Data Analysis was realized using the Atlas.ti software (versions 7 and 8).

03. Spatial Data Analysis

There are two levels of spatial data analysis as described in Figure 4.4, the space’s documentation and the urban context mapping. On the urban context, there are two types of mapping analysis realized, which will be presented separately: the first one is a typical urban context analysis and the second one is the Space Syntax analysis.

03.a. Spatial Documentation through Drawings

For each case study, the sketches realized on site as well as the photographs collected are used for the spatial documentation. The documentation consists of the development of one main axonometric view of the case (Figure 4.8), as well as supporting diagrams and
annotated photographs. The axonometric drawing for each case study is an exploded view of the building, documenting both the exterior of the building, as well as the interior layout, furniture, artifacts, and human activity. Drawings, such as plans and axonometric views, are embedded in the practice of architecture and they can go beyond the plain practice of representation. As argued by Ray Lucas in his book “Research Methods for Architecture”, drawings and sketches can be an important tool for dissemination of information as well as study.\(^{(20)}\) One of their greatest benefits is that apart from just communicating the researcher’s findings, they allow for the reader to develop further meanings and interpretations\(^{(21)}\); a characteristic very useful in the thick description of an in-depth case study.

The axonometric view is realized by building a 3D model for each case study, using the sketches, measurements, and photographs gathered during the data collection. Moreover, by building the model, the researcher develops a more holistic understanding of the space, which is further analyzed and filtered through the findings already gathered from the Qualitative Data Analysis. The deep understanding the researcher holds after building the 3D model is impossible to be achieved just by a few visits to the site. Thus, spatial drawing becomes a significant research tool towards identifying spatial patterns of sharing culture. Finally, the drawings and photographs are annotated with significant observations made on site, and aspects of the space that the interviewees discussed as most important in their practice.


\(^{(21)}\) Lucas.
03.b. Urban Context Mapping Analysis

Cartographic data is acquired in order to produce maps of the area within a ¼ mile radius around the space of the practice to understand the context within which practices emerge and evolve. These maps are used to capture the contextual land use, urban density, and transit nodes that might influence the sharing culture practices (Figure 4.9). They are used to further explain verbal data gathered through the interviews and online documents. Cartographic data are used to develop the following maps per case study:

- **figure-ground diagram**: showcasing the built and unbuilt areas of the urban context
- **density map**: showcasing the density of the urban context, through floor height and Floor to Area Ratio (FAR)
- **land use map**: showcasing the land uses of the urban context around the practice: residential, commercial, institutional, industrial, green and open space
- **transit map**: showcasing the transit stops (buses, subway, trains) around the practice

03.b. Space Syntax Analysis

To further support the initial urban context mappings, a series of analyses based on the Space Syntax methodology are also realized. Space Syntax is a geospatial research approach which “investigates relationships between spatial layout and a range of social, economic and environmental phenomena”. The Space Syntax methodology was introduced in this research for two main reasons. First, to be able to do a visibility analysis of the sharing practices’ spaces from their surrounding areas. This analysis helps triangulate with verbal data from the interviews regarding exposure and interactions of the practice with their neighborhood. Secondly, the additional analyses based on Space Syntax can provide a better understanding of the location of the practice within the urban context. Is the practice on a high foot and vehicular traffic road? Is the location well integrated? Is it accessible and easy to find? Space Syntax analysis maps were realized at a scale of ¼ mile radius from the practice to complement the urban context mapping analysis and better explain an urban context, which is unknown to the researcher.


Four types of analysis based on Space Syntax methodology was completed using the Depthmap software and producing five different maps for each case (Figure 4.10). The first four maps analyze the axial maps of the streets in the area around the practice. The last map analyzes the buildings’ footprints in the area to produce visibility graphs. Below, all four types of analysis are described one-by-one:

**Step Depth from Commercial Uses and from Transit Stops:** Step depth is a type of analysis that “follows the shortest angular path” from selected points of attraction “to all other segments within the system.”\(^{(24)}\) The way this is calculated is through the change of angle of street segments from one node to another; a 90° angle is considered one step, while 45° degrees is 0.5 steps. The steps are cumulative as you move from node to node further away from the point of attraction.\(^{(25)}\) Hence, this highlights how close any location of a map is to certain points of attraction, not just by mere distance but by the actual shortest angular paths in the neighborhood.

Two maps are realized using the step depth analysis; one by using the commercial uses in the area as a point of interest and the second one using the transit stops. The ‘Step Depth from Commercial Uses’ map means that the lowest the depth of the sharing practice’s location is, the easiest it is to access local commercial cores from the practice. This analysis was realized to further expand on the typical land use maps and understand if the practices are part of a mixed-use urban area with commercial uses that people visit often.

The ‘Step Depth from Transit Stops’ map means that the lowest the depth of the sharing practice’s location is, the easiest it is to access transit stops from the practice. This analysis was realized to further expand on the transit maps and understand how accessible the practices are by public transport.

**Segment Angular Choice:** Based on the Space Syntax theory and methodology, segment angular choice showcases the ‘movement-through’ an urban network or ‘betweeness’. More specifically, based on the space syntax glossary: “Segment angular choice measures how many least angular paths lie between every pair of segments within a given distance. Angular distance is defined as the cumulative amount of angular change between all adjacencies...”\(^{(24)}\)

![Figure 4.10: Examples of Space Syntax analysis maps on a 1/4 mile radius around the sharing practice’s spaces (from left to right: step depth, choice analysis, integration, visibility graph analysis)](image)


\(^{(25)}\) Al_Sayed et al.
cent segments along the path.” Choice highlights how likely someone is to pass through a specific street segment in an urban network compared to all other segments. This is based on the theory that people are more likely to prefer least angle change routes compared to just shortest-length routes. Choice analysis has been shown to produce a good “correlation with observed vehicular flow” thus becoming a good indicator of street segments that might have increased foot and automobile traffic. Spaces that rank higher in global choice, means that “they are located on the shortest paths from any origin to any destination” within a certain area. The segment angular choice analysis is used in this research to see where the practice is located compared to the general context’s through-movement and if the practice is located on a street that has high potential for foot and vehicular movement.

**Segment Angular Integration:** Global integration analysis is realized for the 1/4 mile radius area around sharing practices. Integration showcases how close each street segment is to all others within an urban network “in terms of the sum of angular changes that are made on each route” and is considered as the “to-movement”. Integration describes how easy it is to access a specific location in the network from all other segments within a network, how integrated or segregated it is, and thus can help define what land use is best for that area. Integration can indicate how many people are going to be in a space and it is believed that it can correspond encounters and commercial activities. Highly integrated spaces within a space are usually considered to be the core of the city with mainly commercial and communal uses, compared to more segregated spaces that turned to be more residential. For the purposes of this work, segment angular analysis is realized to showcase how well integrated or not the locations of sharing practices are in comparison to their contextual neighborhoods.

**Visibility Graph Analysis (VGA):** Finally, visibility graph analysis is an inter-visibility analysis of space. This process analyzes how visible each point in space is from every other point within an area and creates a ‘heat-map’ highlighting high, medium and low visibility areas.

**04. Case Study Reports**

After the data collection and analysis for each case is complete, a report is written documenting each case with thick description, following Yin’s model. All case studies are documented following the same documentation protocol and layout as follows:

---


(28) Al_Sayed et al., Space Syntax Methodology.


(31) Al_Sayed et al., Space Syntax Methodology.
• Sharing Culture Taxonomical Category General Information
• Quick Facts (name of group, year of initiation, location, brief description, size)
• Background (how and when did the practice emerge)
• Group Structure & Funding
• Governance & Decision Making
• Neighborhood Context & Interactions
• Value & self-reported benefits
• Spatial documentation & Analysis
• Spatial Findings; building, threshold, urban
• Conclusions & Limitations

04.05 Cross-Case Study Analysis & Pattern Development

This section describes the last phase of the methodology as presented in phase C of Figure 4.4. It includes the analysis of the data across case and the development of spatial patterns that enable sharing culture.

Sharing Culture Cross-case Study Analysis

The cross-case analysis identifies emergent themes along the three main lines of inquiry of this dissertation (Figure 4.1): define sharing culture taxonomy and value, explore transitions of sharing practices, and identify spatial patterns of sharing culture. The cross-case analysis used two main parameters in identifying findings across case studies: significance and repetition (Figure 4.11). Significance means that major findings were identified in one or more cases as important by most interviewees, they were critical in the evolution of the practice, and have potential value for the rest of the cases. Repetition means that a finding that has been identified in more than one of the cases and is an important element in the evolution of sharing practices. To further ground the findings, they are tested through a series of
mental mapping exercises against other cases reviewed by the researcher in the initial stages of the research.

Along the first two lines of inquiry, the cross-case analysis findings aimed to further refine and inform the framework of sharing culture, taxonomy and value, and develop a preliminary understanding of their transformation over time. For the last line of inquiry, and more central to this dissertation, findings on spatial elements of sharing culture practices are structured on the three main scales: building, urban, and threshold. The cross-case spatial findings are more descriptive and reflective in nature, are evaluated based on significance and repetition across cases, and become the basis for the development of spatial patterns of sharing culture.

**Sharing Culture Patterns Development**

This thesis demonstrates that there are several barriers to the sustainability and diffusion of sharing culture practices, some of which are spatial. There is a need to identify spatial patterns that enable and facilitate sharing culture practices. The aim of the patterns is to provide a tool to both design experts and non-designers, who are involved in sharing practices, to use space as a catalyst for sharing culture. Furthermore, the patterns become an initial spatial vocabulary for sharing culture to be used by designers and practitioners alike.

The development of the patterns is inspired by the well-known work of Christopher Alexander and his theory expanding over three different volumes: ‘The Timeless Way of Building’, ‘A Pattern Language’, and ‘The Oregon Experiment’. Alexander’s patterns are also a tool for designers, describing problems which occur over and over again in our environment, and then describe the core of the solution to that problem, in such a way that you can use this solution a million times, over without ever doing it the same way twice. Alexander’s patterns use a predefined layout to present the information in a structured and repetitive manner, allowing for easy use by the reader. His work has inspired many designers and scholars within different disciplines to develop different types of patterns and pattern languages, both spatial and non-spatial. Among them, and within the field of commoning and sharing, Bollier and Helfrich developed a book called ‘Patterns of Commoning’ and explored patterns of “commoning” structures (non-spatial ones). Driving inspiration from Alexander’s work, this thesis’ spatial patterns are also action-oriented and will follow a specific layout (Figure 4.12).

Nevertheless, there are two main aspects in which this work is different. Alexander’s work has been controversial and widely critiqued, mainly for its authoritarian tone and its lack of rigorous reasoning and evidence. To avoid similar challenges and pitfalls, these patterns are

---


(33) Alexander et al., *A Pattern Language*.

(34) Bollier and Helfrich, *Patterns of Commoning*.

developed through the rigorous analytical process of the case studies analysis presented earlier. Moreover, their tone remains dialectical, bringing to the attention of the reader several spatial issues and their impact on sharing culture practices, while allowing them to explore the many conditions — spatial and non-spatial — that influence each pattern.

The pattern layout to be followed for this work is the following (Figure 4.14):

**Pattern Name:** each pattern has a short title that describes it, which starts with an actionable verb, prompting the reader to take a form of spatial action in supporting sharing culture practices

**Pattern Image:** each pattern has a representative image, showcasing the spatial manifestation of the pattern preferably through the space of an actual sharing culture practice

**Scale:** each pattern has a pictogram identifying the scale of operation of the pattern (building, threshold, or urban)

**Impact on Practice:** each pattern has a series of pictograms that highlight its impact on the practice

**Relevant Patterns:** just like in Alexander’s pattern language, patterns are interconnected and can be combined in bundles — each pattern will have a list of relevant patterns

**Description:** each pattern has a brief description discussing the pattern

**Spatial Arrangements Diagrams:** a series of diagrams and drawings per pattern aim to visually present the pattern, while highlighting its important elements

**Creating the Conditions:** each pattern has a section that presents some of the conditions that can afford and reinforce the pattern; some of these conditions can be implemented by the sharing culture practitioners themselves, while some operate on higher levels of government, policy, market, technology, and culture
04.06 Research Quality Standards & Limitations

Quality Standards

Internal Validity & Credibility
Internal validity refers to the truthfulness of the concepts and representations of the subject of the study.\(^{36}\) Internal validity in this research with in-depth case studies is ensured by using multiple sources of data and triangulating between them. Moreover, the documentation of both the case studies as well as the patterns uses rich description in order to ensure proper documentation of the truth rather than use short abstractive descriptions.

External Validity & Transferability
External validity refers to the ability to generalize from the data collected and analyzed, and the ability to transfer the conclusions and suggestions to a different context.\(^{37}\) For the purpose of this research, external validity is important specifically for the development of the spatial patterns. To ensure external validity, the emerging patterns are tested with every new case. Towards that end, the case studies selected originate from different cultural contexts and across the taxonomical categories of sharing culture developed. In addition, the rich description of the case studies and their context allows the reader to assess conditions of transferability of the practices in a different context.\(^{38}\) Flyvbjerg’s piece on “Five Misunderstandings about Case Study Research” offers some critical insights regarding the critique that one cannot generalize from a few or even a single case study.\(^{39}\) What he argues, is when cases are carefully chosen, useful generalizations can be made even from a single case study and significant discoveries can take place from intense observation of single events. Similarly, the goal of this research is to develop a theoretical framework which allows to recognize correlations between sharing culture practices and space in a phenomenological manner rather than generalize. Moreover, this framework provides a methodological path to further investigate sharing culture’s spatial patterns in the future.

Reliability
Reliability of the research study relates to consistency in collecting, analyzing data, and producing results with the ability to replicate them.\(^{40}\) The realization of the case studies strictly followed the case study data collection, analysis, and documentation protocol. Recruitment of groups, interviews, data collection and analysis were realized using the IRB protocol presented in Appendix A and B. The methodological process followed is clearly documented in this chapter, describing exactly the steps followed from collection to analysis and conclusions.

---

\(^{36}\) Groat and Wang, *Architectural Research Methods*.

\(^{37}\) Groat and Wang.

\(^{38}\) Groat and Wang.

\(^{39}\) Flyvbjerg, “Five Misunderstandings About Case-Study Research.”

Objectivity

Objectivity of the study relates to overcoming the researcher’s personal biases. Groat and Wang mention that this can be achieved with “strict specification and administration of the relevant procedures”.

It is important to mention, that even though the researcher is keen to the subject of sharing culture, she has no preconceptions of how it can be affected by physical space. In this case the inductive process of open coding, as well as the strict documentation of the research methods used aim to eliminate personal biases. It is interesting to mention here that the researcher’s personal biases if properly identified and monitored can bring a distinctive contribution to the research itself as mentioned by Peshkin on issues of subjectivity in qualitative research. Nevertheless, Flyvbjerg argues that especially for in-depth case studies, such as the ones realized for this research, it is falsification rather than verification of preconceived biases that characterizes the case study as the researcher takes a “closer look” to reality rather than studying phenomena in a generalizable manner.


(42) Alan Peshkin, “In Search of Subjectivity—One’s Own,” Educational Researcher 17, no. 7 (October 1, 1988): 17–21, https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X017007017; Merriam and Tisdell, Qualitative Research.

05 CASE STUDIES

This chapter presents the case reports documenting in depth the four cases of sharing culture. The four cases studied expand on four taxonomical categories: caregiving, leisure, shelter, and work. The caregiving case is a cooperative daycare in London, the leisure case is a social café in Athens, the shelter case is a collective center and shelter for refugees in Athens, and finally the work case is a community currency in London. It is important to mention that the latter two cases have ended by the end of this dissertation, making their documentation even more valuable.

All case studies follow the same documentation layout:

- Sharing Culture Taxonomical Category General Information
- Quick Facts (name of group, year of initiation, location, brief description, size)
- Background (how and when did the practice emerge)
- Group Structure & Funding
- Governance & Decision Making
- Neighborhood Context & Interactions
- Value & self-reported benefits
- Spatial documentation & Analysis
- Spatial Findings; building, threshold, urban
- Conclusions & Limitations
05.01 Caregiving

On Childcare

Taking care of children is a practice intertwined with the nature of human species; due to physiological reasons, humans are born at an early developmental phase, making it necessary for the development to continue under parental protection to secure survival. That extended dependency of the human offspring leads to the family structure. However, childcare has not been primarily the mother’s responsibility, as considered in most Western countries, but rather the contrary. In present and past hunter-gatherers’ structures, child care has always been a cooperative strategy extending beyond the nuclear family. Today, there are controversies between academics and policy-makers on parental versus non-parental child care, and the benefits and pitfalls of each. Those controversies are basically based on cross-cultural variation. In reality, “there is no universally applicable recipe for high-quality childcare” and the appropriate typology depends on the cultural, historical, economic, and ideological context.

To better understand the role of culture in non-paternal childcare, a short review of ideological dimensions affecting childcare will be presented, as described by Lamb’s et al. in the book: ‘Child Care in Context: Cross-Cultural Perspectives’. The book debates that there are four main dimensions:

Men vs Women: The struggles of women’s equality and the economic forces that made them part of the labor force, led to a significant rise of childcare support programs. Non-parental childcare is thus influenced by a country’s ideology and culture on issues of sex equality. Nevertheless, even in countries, where women hold higher positions in the workplace and there are policies towards sex equality, women face significant earnings decline when they become parents. That is because they are still considered to bear the main responsibilities of raising a child. Looking at the global map of maternal versus paternal leave (Figure

---

(2) Lancaster et al.
(4) Lamb et al.
(5) Lamb et al.
Figure 5.1:  
Paid maternal and paternal leave per country: Only 33% of global countries provide paid paternal leave. In 53.5% of EU countries, mothers receive 100% paid leave. In some cases, salary is adjusted over time. The main reason of mothers not working or working part-time is the cost of childcare and lack of services available. 


5.1), only 1/3 of the world’s countries offer paid paternal leave, highlighting the cultural and social standing on parental responsibilities. The length of paid maternal leave, which even in some countries like US and UK is still limited, paints a vivid picture of the importance of childcare support in the life of women today.

**Individual vs Public Responsibility:** In different cultures, raising children can be perceived as either an individual or a public responsibility. In countries like US and UK, childcare is a concern mostly of the nuclear family; thus, childcare costs, type, and quality are set by market forces of supply and demand with little governmental involvement. On the other end of the spectrum stands Scandinavia and former communist Eastern European countries, where it is believed that children’s welfare is a societal responsibility and hence government intervenes with a series of programs. Perceptions on childcare beyond western cultures can vary even further.

**Social Welfare & Education:** When childcare has been promoted as a ‘social welfare program’ for low-income families, it usually receives less governmental support and is often labeled with a negative connotation leading to lower quality support. In cases where childcare is a part of the educational system (e.g. Italy, UK, and Netherlands), its perception as well as its quality has advanced, making it part of the mainstream. In some cases, that can lead to free provision of early education. In the case of UK, children are entitled to free nursery education at the ages between 2-4 years old. On the other hand, such programs raise controversy, as they are perceived to provide intense education at a very young age.

**Cultural Conceptions:** In general, Western countries tend to follow Freudian beliefs, which claim great importance of the early childhood experiences. Within those cultures

---

early childcare plays a far more significant role. In other cultures, such as Asia, there is more emphasis on the experiences after the age of reason at 6 or 7 years old. Therefore, early childcare focuses more on the custodial side rather than education.

These factors highlight that different systems work in different cultural contexts and of course not one childcare type is universally appropriate. Moreover, family structures also differ between cultural contexts; in some places the nuclear family is more prominent leaving paid non-parental childcare as the only option. In places where extended families are the norm, childcare can be taken over by older family-members. Next, types of non-parental childcare will be explored within a mainly western context, with a special focus on childcare coops, how they work, and what resources they need to be successful.

Non-parental childcare Typologies

Within a western context, we can identify the following types of childcare, for ages until 6 years old:

- **Informal Child Care** is when members of extended family take care of the children while parents are at work, with grandparents or siblings taking up the role. Most families with this support network will select it as their primary option early on for financial reasons.

- **Home Child Care** is when a person is hired to take care of children within the household. This type of childcare provides great flexibility for parents but is the most expensive and cannot be afforded by everyone. Moreover, it includes great risks as informal employment of nannies is not a certified process.

- **Childcare Centers** are the most common type of childcare in western countries. They can be either public or private depending on local policies; both types must be certified and have certified personnel. Private childcare centers can become a significant economic burden especially in countries with limited parental leave. Moreover, in dense cities with high demand for childcare services, finding a center in proximity to the household might be challenging.

- **Cooperative Daycares** are an option for families who can dedicate time rather than money. Daycare coops are formed by groups of parents with or without certified caretakers. The way daycare coops operate is affected by local policies and will be explored later.

Although there seems to be a great selection of options for childcare, there are significant challenges, such as cost, time, quality, lack of flexibility and ability to intervene. In countries, such as UK and US, where daycare centers are commercial businesses, the costs are prohibitive. In UK, families spend 27% of their household income in childcare, which is equivalent to 41% of the UK average wage. Mothers not working or working part time in Europe, identify childcare cost and lack of available time as the main reason for their working status.

---


Cooperative Daycare Model

The first daycare cooperative was introduced by Katherine Taylor in Berkeley California in 1927. Inspired by the coop models flourishing in Chicago, she organized mothers whose husbands where professors in the university. The goal back then was to create a community for children in a time when family ties were becoming fragmented. Today, there are a lot of childcare coops across the world (Europe, US, Asia, New Zealand etc.); their model is different and serves different purposes. They vary from weekly afternoon sessions to full-time nurseries. As members of the coop, parents can establish the policies for the nursery. The main reasons why parents get involved in coop childcare is either because of high costs of the mainstream alternative or because they are interested in participating more actively in their child’s development. Common characteristics among childcare parent coops are:

- Most childcare coops start informally as a form of babysitting for each other, between friends that takes place at home. If they reach a certain size, some groups formalize into a coop.
- Usually, parents are actively involved in the management of the nursery and in taking care of the children. Parents are bringing their own skillset to the group and time dedication is often necessary.
- To expand and attract parents who cannot dedicate time, childcare coops often offer a selection of fees depending on level of parent involvement, as well as attendance by the child.
- Formal daycare coops need to abide by local policies and employ certified childcare professionals. Nevertheless, parents are expected to get involved in the classroom and have an active say in the developmental processes and activities.

(11) Parker, Stephens, and Lownsbrough; Eleni Katrini, Story based on interviews realized with a daycare coop in London, UK (Grasshoppers in the Park), January 2017.
Case Study: Grasshoppers in the Park

Quick Facts
Grasshoppers is a daycare cooperative in Hackney borough, in London. In 2002, Grasshoppers started as an ad-hoc parent-led group, with members who babysat for each other from their homes. The daycare has since then evolved to a formal business and cooperative with 7 staff members, and approximately 30 families involved. Beyond their-day-to-day activities they run sessions open for other kids in the neighborhood, as well as ad-hoc sessions for parent-members.

Some specific facts of special interest to this specific case study:

- four members of the coop were interviewed: two staff and two parents
- six additional documents were analyzed and coded, which referred to the nursery and were found online; 3 articles, 2 reports, and the nursery’s website
- the nursery’s space was sketched on site and documented through photographs while empty – additional photographs were collected from the nursery’s website and Facebook page
- the data collection process took place within the period of one year (from Spring 2016 to Spring 2017), allowing observations of changes that happened over time.

Background
Grasshoppers is a cooperatively run nursery in London, UK. It started 15 years ago, when a group of parents came together and started baby-sitting for each other. Back then, they used to swap locations between their own homes. When the group became big enough, they decided to formalize; they had to find a space to rent and get a required inspection by the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted). This evolution is quite expected for informal playgroups that scale up, based on research by the New Economics Foundation.\(^\text{12}\)

---

\(^\text{12}\) Parker, Stephens, and Lownsbrough, “Co-Produced Childcare; An Alternative Route to Affordable, High Quality
In 2017, the group held a non-profit status and they had six paid staff: five caregivers and a kitchen coordinator. There are 27 children overall that are enrolled, with a daily attendance of 16-17. The group intends to grow, but they do not plan to overcome 35 children, to be able to provide the best quality of care, which is now rating as good at their Ofsted inspection status.\(^\text{13}\) The group is mainly white, middle class, with diverse European nationalities. A lot of parents have flexibility with their work schedule; they work from home, part-time, freelance, or not working. This allows them to be time-rich and be more involved in the nursery. The group has a focus on artistic and outdoors activities for children, that aligns with the initial strong identity of the founding group that involved families from an artistic background. All parents live in the borough, and many usually walk, bike or take the bus to the nursery.

### Group Structure & Funding

Even though the group started with an ad-hoc, horizontal structure, currently it holds a non-profit status with certain hierarchy, while creating opportunities of member involvement in the decision-making process. This structure ensures the cooperative’s sustainability as families can come and go, while the nursery as a structure remains and evolves. Moreover, the group’s non-profit status allows them to have external funding, beyond parents’ fees contributions, as cooperatives can’t apply for grants and funding in the UK.

The group’s expenses include operational costs such as staff’s salaries, space rent, costs of meals, etc. The income sources are made up 2/3 by parent fees and 1/3 from an entitlement by the Hackney Learning Trust, a local non-profit organization focusing on education.\(^\text{14}\) Parents pay childcare fees lower than London average costs, but instead they dedicate 1-2 hours weekly to the nursery and attend monthly meetings. Fees are scaled per household’s income, and parents can further decrease them by doing one ‘parent day’ per week. Hence, parents act as play-workers for at least 6 hours once per week, working together with the nursery’s trained staff. Parents, who do a ‘parent day’, are given a £120 discount and don’t pay for their child to attend that day. To be able to do that, parents are required to have a

---


\(^\text{14}\) Parker, Stephens, and Lownsbrough, “Co-Produced Childcare; An Alternative Route to Affordable, High Quality Provision in the UK?”
DBS check (Disclosure and Barring Service). Given their ability to dedicate the time, most parents start with smaller involvement and responsibilities, and tend to be more involved later, as they gain confidence and get to know everyone. Currently, about 70% of parents are involved in helping with the nursery at some level.

**Governance & Decision Making**

As far as how decisions are being taken, there are two levels of decision making: a committee meeting and a parents’ meeting, both taking place monthly. The committee consists of the manager, two voted directors from the staff and three parents. It discusses major issues
and then presents a curated selection of topics to the parents’ meeting. Issues are further discussed by all parents attending and decisions are being made accordingly. Topics of discussion vary from finances, management, children activities, space arrangements and necessary tasks to be done. Everyone receives an email with minutes from the parent meeting; in that way parents not able to attend are kept informed and are able to bring feedback to the group via informal streams of interaction at a later time. Currently, some parents are more actively involved in decision-making than others.

Apart from the formal group organization, there are also smaller decisions and tasks distributed ad-hoc among parents and staff through an emailing list and a ‘WhatsApp group’, such as fixing up the space, taking the laundry to do at home etc.

**Neighborhood Context & Interactions**

In Hackney Borough, where Grasshoppers is located, there were about 271,000 residents in 2015, with a median age of 33, and a mix of races, nationalities, and religions. Vacancy is low, 2/3 of the population are renting and 1/3 of the total households are family occupied. The average household income is £42,700, lower than London’s average income of £52,800.15

The area surrounding the nursery is mainly residential with few commercial uses; the nursery is in the middle of a housing estate. In regards to the demographics of the area, Hackney residents are defined with a strong ethnic identity. The area within a 400m radius around the nursery is defined by the following geo-demographics classification groups: ‘High Density & High-Rise Flats; Disadvantaged Diaspora’, ‘Multiethnic Suburbs; Affordable Transitions’, ‘Multi-Ethnic Suburbs; Public Sector and service employees’, ‘City Vibe; City & Student Fringe’ and ‘Intermediate Lifestyles; Struggling Suburbs’.16 These demographic groups show a diverse ethnic group of lower middle class, mainly employed by the public sector, transport, social work, health care, administration, accommodation or food services.

The above statistics show a slight difference in demographics between the nursery group and the adjacent neighborhood, which explains the difficulty the group has faced in en-

---

16 Consumer Data Research Center, Geodemographics for London Based on the 2011 UK Census (London, UK: Consumer Data Research Center (CDRC), 2011), https://maps.cdrc.ac.uk/.

Here the Geo-demographic definitions are provided (Source: www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/download/...) - High Density & High Rise Flats; Disadvantaged Diaspora: These neighborhoods are characterized by high numbers of Black residents, and of families with young children. There is high incidence of divorce. Employment is often found in transport, health care support, social work, administration and support services. / Multi-ethnic Suburbs; Affordable Transitions: These neighborhoods house large numbers of recent migrants from the EU, as well as students. Some of the more established and long-term residents have origins in the Indian sub-continent. Much of the housing is provided in the private rental sector. / Multi-Ethnic Suburbs; Public Sector and service employees: Many households in this Group rent within the social housing sector. Unemployment is higher than the London average and most employment is found in services such as transport and health care. / City Vibe; City & Student Fringe: Many members of this Group live in communal establishments, located in some of London’s less fashionable central locations. Employment is typically in accommodation and food services. Black British residents are much in evidence, and citizens of post 2001 EU countries are also well represented relative to the London average. / Intermediate Lifestyles; Struggling Suburbs: Populated by above average numbers of Black residents, these neighborhoods also have high unemployment by London standards. Above average levels of housing are provided by the social rented sector – often in terraces. Employment is found across a range of blue-collar occupations that are found within the Greater London area.
Chapter 05: Case Studies

Figure 5.7: Information on Hackney Borough’s demographics, Economy and Employment, and Neighborhood and Household statistics

Data source: Greater London Authority (GLA), London Datastore (https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/london-borough-profiles)
gaging with families from the estate. Based on the interviews realized, as well as relevant online documents, since the nursery moved to the housing estate, they have been trying to approach families who live in it. As mentioned online in their manifesto:

“The aim of Grasshoppers is to provide an enriching experience for the children who attend it and to be an asset to the wider community.”

Taking upon that statement, the relationship of the group with the adjacent community was discussed during interviews. Currently, this relationship was defined as weak, but also one that the nursery would like to further pursue. One of the participants interviewed mentioned:

“And (we are) trying to make it more for the community. You know the people in the estate, we’re advertising it, we have an outreach day on Friday, we’re talking to parents to come in, it’s very difficult. People can’t. We’ve got only one member from the estate.”

The following ways of outreach to a wider audience were mentioned during the interviews:

• Open Outreach Sessions every Friday from 11 am to 12 pm
• Advertising locally with a sign on their entrance and through word of mouth

Chapter 05: Case Studies

• Giving interviews to magazines and newspapers
• Providing three government-supported, free days to low-income families
• Fixing up the outdoors yard to make it more appealing

Based on the above, we can identify the group’s outreach activities mainly addressing the wider Hackney community, rather than specifically focus on the population of the adjacent housing estate. The nursery’s outreach tactics are also based on a ‘market approach’, meaning that they do keep open doors for everyone who would like to come in. Nevertheless, they have not yet identified a way to engage with specific families that might benefit by their proximity, such as the housing estate’s population. Consequently, most new members of the nursery are joining basically through the following streams:

• Word of mouth: most members learned about the nursery through friends who are or used to be members
• Friday Sessions: some people attend the Friday sessions before they decide to join
• Use of Public Spaces: some members learned about the nursery after seeing them at the park during their daily walk
• Website: people find the nursery’s website through online search
• Walk-ins: interviewees mentioned about some limited walk ins, but they didn’t specify if they led to people ultimately joining the nursery

Finally, missing the opportunity to become a great resource for the housing estate; currently only one child from the estate is enrolled in the nursery. During interviews, participants provided some insights on the reasons why the local community might not be engaging with the nursery as follows:

• Intimidation & socio-demographic differences (3 out 4)
• Difference in educational philosophies & culture (2 out of 4)
• Time limitation on the side of the local community (1 out of 4)
• Economic limitations / fees (2 out of 4)
• They haven’t been there long enough for people to know who they are (2 out of 4)
• They are not as visible / people do not know they are there (1 out of 4)

Quotes:

“I think I understand why, there is a kind…well, apart from time, maybe some of them might not have the time, there is a kind, I think people feel intimidated a little. (...) It’s hard to break in the group.”

“We had a party as well, and we tried to advertise it, but I don’t think many people from around here came, maybe two. And you could see them inside hiding away their child, in a way, somehow. It takes time.”
Figure 5.8: Promotional material from the nursery’s Facebook page for Open Fridays & Garden Party, along with events’ photos and communication material from the nursery’s social media.

Photo credits: Grasshoppers, from the group’s Facebook page.
Challenges & Sustainability

**Space Acquisition:** Finding a space has been a main challenge for the group, and one of the aspects that changed when they scaled up. Having to pay a rent completely changed the financial model and general nature of the group. Moreover, the group has also changed spaces along the way; finding a space that works for the group and its activities is not always easy to achieve from the get-go.

**Financial Challenges:** One of the group’s main challenges has been financial sustainability and access to resources. Sustaining a small group of knowledgeable and trained staff can create meaningful and educative experiences for children, but at the same time has repercussions on the cooperative’s economic sustainability. Grasshoppers had to make an informed decision regarding their fees’ increase to be able to sustain a good group of staff, acknowledging that at the same time they might be excluding people due to issues of affordability. External financial support has also been important for them; the Hackney Learning Trust provides them with free entitlement funding that makes up for about 1/3 of their operating budget. The Learning Trust also helped Grasshoppers to find space to rent from the council.

**Policy & Regulations:** Policies and regulations have also affected the group’s structure. Specifically, Grasshoppers offers a couple of ‘free’ government-funded childcare positions, which cover any three and four-year old kids for 15 hours per week. These are reported as challenging to sustain, but they support them to increase their group’s demographic diversity. Government plans to increase these hours to 30 per week which could become a great financial challenge for the nursery.

**Diversity & Neighborhood Inclusion:** Lack of demographic diversity was mentioned as one of the challenges of the nursery. Although the nursery could become a great resource for families living within the housing estate bringing diversity to the group, that is currently not happening. As they mention in their manifesto, Grasshoppers do want to be ‘an asset to the wider community’, but they haven’t yet managed to do so to the extent they imagined. Grasshoppers holds open-to-the-public events, but that alone has not been enough for people to engage with them. Potential reasons mentioned by interviewees were lack of confidence, class and race dynamics, cultural differences in educational approach, lack of time and money. To overcome some of the barriers relating to class and race issues, that might be misinterpreted when someone hasn’t interacted with the group, they are increasingly advertising the nursery to local and city media. While they do open themselves as much as possible to the outside, there are no incentives of specifically reaching out to the estate and learning more about their surrounding community.

**Value of Cooperative Caregiving**

Being part of a cooperative can reduce childcare costs, while increasing the quality. However, reduced cost is not the only benefit. Below the benefits of cooperative daycare are presented briefly from an economic, social, and environmental point of view, based on existing literature and then further supported by the self-reported benefits of parents and staff from the Grasshoppers nursery.

---

(18) Parker, Stephens, and Lownsbrough, “Co-Produced Childcare; An Alternative Route to Affordable, High Quality
Self-Reported benefits by Grasshoppers’ group

The self-reported benefits of the Grasshoppers’ members expand beyond just satisfying their need for childcare at a low cost. All interview participants were asked to identify needs they satisfy through their participation in the nursery through an engaging exercise (the results of which can be seen in Figure 5.9 and Figure 5.10), and talk about the benefits of being part of Grasshoppers. This is what they reported:

**Learning & Skills Development:** The most important benefit of being involved in a nursery coop is learning. As parents collaborate with staff to take care of the children, they learn new developmental and educational practices. Parents develop social, emotional, and language skills from professionals, they can then apply at home. Moreover, both parents and kids experience a different environment, where they interact within a group of other children, caregivers, and adults, shifting their perceptions and roles. These experiences create a new learning environment both for parents and children alike.

---

Provision in the UK?”, Boyle, “Why Co-ops Should Be the Future for Childcare.”
Feeling like Home: One of the things that was valued by parents was that the nursery feels like home. Being able to have a say on how the space looks like, what toys the kids use, and what the aesthetics are was vital to allow for their kids’ natural transition to the new environment. Beyond aesthetics, the activities and principles followed in the nursery also reflect and align with the families’ values.

Children Education & Parental Involvement: All parents valued the interdisciplinary educational approach the nursery follows, which is based on children’s creativity, freedom, and self-motivation. Parents appreciate that the nursery is not an overprotective space and supports children through innovative learning experiences. Some parents enjoy being able to make occasional suggestions about the educational approach. Parents’ involvement in their children’s education has been proved to have a great impact on their educational attainment later on.

Participation & democracy: Parents value the participatory and democratic approach among adults and children alike. Children are asked before they engage in activities and are prompted to decide for themselves. This highlights how the cooperative approach runs not only among adults but also children. Some parents appreciate that they can participate and feel part of a community. Parents’ involvement in decision making allows for greater flexibility based on their schedules; something not common in other nurseries. Through their participation, parents feel creativity and achievement, leading to a positive impact on their confidence.

Social Networks & Sharing: Similar to typical nurseries, in Grasshoppers parents have built relationships with each other and staff. However, due to the regular communications the cooperative nursery requires via either an emailing list or a WhatsApp group, a greater support network seems to have built that wouldn’t happen in a typical nursery. Thus, parents feel comfortable to engage in occasional informal sharing, such as babysitting, maternity or children clothes, toys etc. Staff might also be called to bring in their expertise, such as entertaining services at a children’s party. Finally, parents and staff have started doing yoga lessons together in the space during the evening. It seems the nursery’s cooperative nature

(19) Grasshoppers in the Park, “Grasshoppers In The Park Manifesto.”

has allowed informal sharing exchanges to take place, going beyond typical social ties emerging between parents whose kids go to the same school.

Beyond the value childcare cooperatives bring to families involved, there are also benefits for the wider community. Firstly, staff working at the nursery finds working at a cooperative more meaningful and fulfilling. It provides them with a sense of achievement and stability, as they are also involved in the nursery’s cooperative management. Secondly, the nursery offers events and sessions that are open to the public, which can become a community asset. On Friday mornings, they offer an open music and play session to families from the wider neighborhood. Moreover, they occasionally host swap shops, parties, and other events at their space or the near-by park.

**Grasshoppers’ Spatial Documentation**

**The Building**

Grasshoppers were housed initially in a church hall in Hackney with rent affordable for their budget. That space was approximately 75 m² with access to a 65 m² front yard. There also had access to a basement space, where the kids could play when the weather didn’t allow for play outside. When the church raised the rent in 2016, they decided to move to a new space, still in Hackney, about 10 minutes away. Another factor for their decision to move, was the small size of the yard and restrictions imposed by the church regarding its use. Their current space is on the ground floor of a two-stories-high community hall, located within a social housing estate. Hackney borough has about 88 similar community spaces, most of which are within housing estates and can be rented for short or long periods of time from the council.

Grasshoppers found the space with the help of the Hackney Learning Trust and they are renting the ground floor with a five-days contract. That allows them to use the space from Monday through Friday, from 8.00 am to 6.00 pm.

Their current space has 140 m² of indoors space and another 200 m² of outdoors space. The interior space has an office, a kitchen for meal preparation, separate children’s and grown-up toilets and the main nursery space, which is...

open plan. The space has a capacity of 100 people and has been occupied by a nursery in the past. The open plan of the main space allows for constant adaptation based on the group’s needs and the creation of ‘little corners’ for diverse children activities. Moreover, it allows for staff and parents to be able to observe children across the space easily. During the summer, the door is kept open, allowing for a constant flow between indoors and outdoors. The outdoors space is protected on the long east side by a tall brick wall with trees. Hence, the nursery’s yard is mainly visible from the outside through a wire door and fence on the south side. A series of structures, such as a tree house and other little corners were installed by parents and staff to facilitate children’s outdoors play. The community hall has a vacant second floor, that is not accessible by the nursery.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List of Rooms</th>
<th>Spatial Descriptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main Classroom</td>
<td>Spacious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen</td>
<td>Feels home like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office</td>
<td>Protected from noise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toilets</td>
<td>Open Floor plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cupboard</td>
<td>on the ground floor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courtyard</td>
<td>Natural light</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Threshold Space**

Beyond the building which Grasshoppers occupies, its location within the housing estate presents some notable qualities. Firstly, there is a playground directly adjacent to the west side of the building, that does not belong to the nursery, but it is open for the estate’s wider community. The playground was closed by the council during 2016 but has reopened. Even though the playground is not for the nursery’s benefit only, their back door has direct access to the playground, and they can use it. It was mentioned by the members of the daycare cooperative that the proximity of their space to the playground, gives the impression to pedestrians walking by, that it belongs to the nursery making them hesitant to use it.

There are two main entrances to the housing estate complex; one on the south further away from the nursery, and one towards south-west. Within the housing estate’s courtyard and on the north of the nursery, there is a basketball field with benches and trees, also a great resource to the housing estate. All the above amenities are surrounded by on street perpendicular parking for the estate’s residents.

To explore the visibility of the cooperative nursery from its surrounding area, a Visibility Graph Analysis (VGA) was realized on a 400m and 100m radiuses showcasing intervisibility within the estate (Figure 5.13). The VGA calculation was realized only based on built obstacles that reach the eye level, without taking into consideration vegetation and lower obstacles. Based on the analysis, the area at the nursery’s façade and entrance (Figure 5.13, location A) is of low to mid visibility compared to the rest of the housing estate courtyard. Moreover, the white dashed line on the 100m radius map showcases the isovist of the nursery.

---

(22) Hackney Borough.
Chapter 05: Case Studies

Figure 5.12: Plan of the housing estate and views of the nursery, the estate and the outdoors areas

1. main street with bus stops
2. main entrance to the estate
3. non-fenced outdoors seating areas
4. housing estate parking lots
5. basketball court
6. estate’s fenced playground
7. nursery
8. nursery’s courtyard
9. ramp to nursery’s entrance
10. secondary street entrance to the estate
11. garbage collection areas
12. surrounding housing buildings (5-stories high)
Figure 5.13: Visibility Graph Analysis on two levels: ¼ mile radius (on the left) and 100 m radius (on the right) (On the legend, the black rectangle highlights where the location of the nursery falls in the area’s intervisibility scale)

ery’s entrance. An isovist is defined as “the area in a spatial environment directly visible from one point” (23). The isovist of the nursery’s entrance highlights that only passengers walking by towards the south part of the estate could really look inside the garden and see what is happening, as the courtyard is hidden by high walls towards the east and west, and vegetation towards the north (Figure 5.13).

**Urban Context**

An extensive analysis of the adjacent to Grasshoppers urban neighborhood was realized on two scales: ¼ and ¾ mile radiiuses from the nursery (5 minutes and 15 minutes walking). The urban scale analysis explores potential attributes of the urban context that influence sharing culture initiatives’ emergence and evolution.

On the first scale (1/4 mile), four variables are explored: percentage of built area, current Floor to Area Ratio (FAR) to highlight built density, land use and transit stops. The maps are further supported by a spatial analysis using the Space Syntax methodology on a ¾ mile radius from the practice (24). The space syntax methodology is described in detail in chapter 04, but a brief description is provided below of the maps developed in Space Syntax and what they mean:

- **Step Depth from Commercial Uses:** highlights how close the practice is to a commercial core, not just by mere distance but by the actual shortest angular paths in the neighborhood. The lowest the depth of a location, the easiest it is to access the local commercial cores.

---


• **Step Depth from Transit Stops:** highlights how well connected is the area with public transportation and how close the practice is to transit stops based on the shortest angular path. The lowest the depth of a location from the transit stops, the better connected it is to public transit.

• **Segment Angular Choice:** highlights how likely someone is to pass through a specific street segment in an urban network compared to all other segments. Choice analysis has been shown to produce a good “correlation with observed vehicular flow” thus becoming a good indicator of street segments with increased foot and vehicular traffic. The highest the angular choice of a location, the higher its potential for vehicular and potential foot traffic.

• **Segment angular Integration:** highlights how integrated a location is; high integrated locations are usually considered to be the core of the city with mainly commercial and communal uses, while more segregated spaces tend to be more residential.

**Built Cover & Density:** Based on the maps of Figure 5.14, the adjacent urban area is of medium built density with a built coverage of 37% and a FAR of 1.69. That highlights a middle to low built density, and thus shows that the urban context does not bring residents in such close distances with each other.

**Land Use and Transit Access:** As far as land use is concerned, the neighborhood is mainly residential with a small commercial corner towards the south-west, some educational institutions, and some industrial uses on the east. The prevalent residential typology is social housing estates, with Grasshoppers being in the courtyard of an estate. At the edge of the 5-minutes walking radius, towards the north, there is Springfield park, an amenity highly used by the group almost daily. More specifically, the breakdown of the land uses for the ¼ mile radius is: 86% residential, 6% industrial, 5% educational/institutional, 3% commercial.

---

and 1% green space. The location of the nursery within a residential area seems appropriate, as it allows families living close to it to access it easily.

Generally, the area scores 90/100 on the walk score, which indicates that it is very walkable, and most errands can be accomplished on foot. Beyond on foot trips, there are 22 bus stops within 5-minutes walking from the nursery, and one overground station that is at the edge of the ¼ mile radius towards the south. Based on the Step Depth analysis from transit stops, the step depth of the location of nursery is very low, which means that the path to a nearby bus stop from the nursery is very short and with few angles, compared to other areas within a ¼ mile radius from it. Thus, it is very easy to access a public transit stop from the location of the nursery. Nevertheless, the area does not seem without the need for car-use, as becomes evident by the extended on-street parking within the housing estates.

Based on the Step Depth analysis from commercial uses, the Step Depth of the nursery is low (but not in the lowest category), which means that the path to the nearby commercial hub is short and easily accessible, compared to other areas within a ¼ mile radius from it. However, the nursery is not located on a commercial street or hub, close to a lot of pedestrian traffic, but rather on a quiet residential street.

---


(27) The step depth of the street segment in front of the nursery, from transit nodes, is calculated to 192.45 in a distribution with a minimum of 0 (0 value have the locations of the transit stops), a maximum of 1970.5 (the maximum value shows the point that is cumulatively the furthest from all transit stops taking into consideration distance and angle) and with a standard deviation of 260.869.

(28) The step depth of the street segment in front of the nursery, from commercial nodes, is calculated to 385.993 in a distribution with a minimum of 0 (0 value have the locations of the commercial nodes), a maximum of 2846.24 (the maximum value shows the point that is cumulatively the furthest from all commercial uses taking into consideration distance and angle) and with a standard deviation of 509.964.
Chapter 05: Case Studies

Local Exposure: The Angular Segment Choice analysis shows how much movement passes through each street segment based on the calculation of all trips between all other street segments within a ¾ mile radius from the nursery. On this analysis (Figure 5.17), areas with a higher choice (darker color) attract more vehicular and potentially pedestrian traffic compared to lower choice (lighter color). By cross-referencing this map with street-view images from Google Streets (Figure 5.19), it is evident that high-choice streets, have more vehicular traffic, wide sidewalks with pedestrian traffic, and active facades with commercial uses. Mid-choice streets seem to have mainly residential uses, but with some vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Finally, low-choice streets, are residential with low vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Grasshoppers as we know is located on a low-choice residential street, without a lot of through movement compared to other areas within a ¾ mile radius around it. Hence, the exposure of the nursery to residents and traffic is limited. People who visit the nursery, probably know beforehand where it is.

Integration: The Angular Segment Integration analysis shows how easily accessible all street segments in the area around the nursery are, highlighting segregated and well-integrated areas (Figure 5.18). Integration is different than choice, as it shows movement to a specific place rather than movement through. Hence, streets despite being low in choice and with little traffic, they can be of mid or high integration, meaning it is easy to access them. The street of the nursery is low choice, but it is mid to high integration. Thus, it is easily accessible for people who know about the nursery beforehand, and they have no problem getting there. The third Google Street view snapshot (Figure 5.19), is very close to the nursery, showing an example of the character of a low choice – mid integration street of the adjacent area.
Figure 5.17: Angular Segment Choice Analysis on a ¾ mile radius:
The map shows how much movement passes through each street segment based on the calculation of all trips between all other street segments on the map. On this global analysis, the areas with higher choice attract more vehicular and potentially pedestrian traffic. (On the legend, the black rectangle highlights where the location of the nursery falls in the area’s choice scale)

Figure 5.18: Angular Segment Integration Analysis on a ¾ mile radius:
The map shows how easy it is to access street segments in the area around the nursery; which means how segregated or integrated they are. (On the legend, the black rectangle highlights where the location of the nursery falls in the area’s integration scale)

Figure 5.19: Google Street views clippings of street locations that score as follows in choice and integration:
1. high choice – high integration
2. mid choice – mid integration
3. low choice – mid integration
Spatial Findings

Based on the interviews with Grasshoppers’ members and through the documentation of their space, there are important findings regarding the space they are currently occupying. Overall, the space is perceived positively by the members; it is protected from the noise and vehicular traffic and has a beautiful, spacious garden allowing for outdoor play. The open floor plan layout can be changed based on the group’s needs and most interviewees commented positively on the space’s coziness, which “feels like home”. Going beyond mere descriptions, it is important to highlight specific spatial findings as they relate to the cooperative and sharing nature of the practice. Findings are presented per scale of exploration: building, threshold, and urban, and with further discussion.

Building Scale Findings

01. Floor plan flexibility allows diversity of activities:

An important characteristic of sharing culture practices is that they transform through time. Practices can start small and expand or the other way around. They might change their structure and practices, or finally they might broaden and change their activities as time goes by. An example of this at Grasshoppers is firstly their need to change their space, as their group grew, but also the fact that they are expanding their activities beyond day-to-day caregiving, such as the open Friday sessions and the yoga classes.

“We’re starting a yoga class tomorrow. One of the parents is a yoga teacher, so, she’s starting yoga lessons in the evening for us, for the staff and parents to come.”

When people come together to collaborate and share, they often tend to expand the activities of their group based on participants’ available skillsets. As a result, it is important that the space can transform to best accommodate the activity taking place in it each time. The space must either be adaptable or flexible. Based on Lang, an adaptable environment is one that can afford many activities without restructuring, while flexible is an environment that with small changes can easily afford diverse activities. The nursery’s space in this case can be both. It is an open floor plan layout, that has been divided into smaller corners using furniture. The individual corners created are being used in multiple ways based on the group’s activity, thus making the space adaptable.

Consequently, the building’s open floor plan was considered by most interviewees as a benefit, mainly because its flexibility and adaptability best served their activities. Moreover, parents who volunteered for a ‘parent day’, especially novice ones, felt more comfortable with the fact that they have an overview of the whole space from all locations. The open floor space also allows for the group to host activities and gatherings of a greater capacity for larger groups, such as their Open Friday Music and Play sessions, parties, or the yoga lessons for parents.

The only challenge of the open floor plan mentioned during interviews was the lack of possibility to completely isolate specific activities and ‘little corners’ between them; something that would help with the space’s functionality. For example, the messy activities should be

able to be separated from the meals or quiet activities, allowing privacy between the two. However, this challenge is currently overcome using furniture as partitions.

02. Food preparation area & eating together:

In contrast with other nurseries in London, that might offer lower quality of food, meals and snacks at Grasshoppers are of high importance. Their large kitchen allows for the preparation of healthy snacks and meals throughout the day. It also allows for the potential to be used for food preparation for other events that might take place in the space beyond day to day necessities. The group has held a couple of parties and meals for all the families in their space.

03. Spatial Appropriation & Adaptation:

A significant aspect that was brought up by multiple participants, was the sense of ‘home’ the space evokes. That was specifically contrasted against the ambience of other commercial daycare facilities that in the interviewees opinion seemed to lack a sense of identity, are more clinical and commercial. More specifically:

“It’s a very…it’s not private based…it’s their world. If you look on the wall you’ve got pictures of themselves, their drawing activities, you’ve got activities everywhere, they’ve got all their clothes and things here. You know they come here, and they will be like home. They don’t feel like being in a clinical set up.”

Parents and staff have collaboratively put effort in the space’s adaptation to make it their own. They have constructed outdoors toys for the children and planted the courtyard, they have put drawings on the interior walls to hide the council’s signs, and they have created the nursery’s sign. This ongoing adaptation process by the group to make the space “its own”, is defined as appropriation. Space appropriation in the sphere of urban space is defined as seizing the rights of a public urban space from someone, whereas here the meaning lies on the space’s adaptation by the group to reflect its identity, similar to what one would do in one’s home. Space appropriation is the act of turning any space to a “place”. The process of spatial appropriation is “mutually transformative” both for the space, the group, and the practice. By appropriating the space, the group marks the space with a certain identity, that in return shapes and defines the group itself while changing its daily routine.

“When we moved here, because we’re renting the place from the Learning Trust, it’s a Hackney property, you know... All the signs were just so silly. So, you walked in and it had everywhere “No smoking”, “No smoking” like three times on the wall...We managed to cover it afterward with artwork, something more colorful, something more cheerful.”

The appropriation and projection of the group’s identity through the space are important as they seem to be highly valued by the group, allowing them to feel comfort and achievement at the same time. It also seemed to be one of the reasons that attracted some of the group


Chapter 05: Case Studies

Figure 5.20:
On the left: short bookcases and shelves are used to separate the big classroom into smaller corners & nooks – On the right: The little corner with all the building blocks and a round table for kids’ collaboration

Figure 5.21:
Parents and children sharing a meal together

Photo credits: Grasshoppers, from the group’s Facebook page

Figure 5.22:
Space appropriation - On the left: children’s artwork on the wall, on the right: during the nursery’s garden party in May, 2017, after they’ve set up the garden

Photo credits: Grasshoppers, from the group’s Facebook page
members in the first place. Nevertheless, it is important to mention that the spatial identity created through appropriation by a group can become exclusive to other groups that might not identify with it.

04. Access to outdoors space:

The access to a generous front yard, right in front of the nursery, played a significant role in the Grasshoppers’ decision to move to a new space. The yard allows for outdoors activities for children and relaxed get-togethers for adults. Parents have planted a small vegetable garden and constructed a play area for the children. The yard’s layout and protected location within the estate is quite appealing, as it is protected from high street’s noise and pollution. The main entrance to the nursery is through the yard, which allows people to leave their bikes and trolleys on their way in.

One of the members while comparing between the current and previous space of the nursery, describes the benefit of the garden:

“We’re just happy to be able to use a garden! To use bikes! We couldn’t use bikes in there, because of the lawn, and to move about, you know, put out whatever we want and, and the classroom is bigger, we got more stuff and we’ve got plans for little stations, woodwork and stuff. It’s all planned; it’s all happening, slowly. Well, our mud kitchen can be even bigger. So, yes! Space is essential, isn’t it?”

Threshold Scale Findings

01. One-way Visibility:

During interviews with Grasshoppers’ members, issues of visibility arose, as they relate to their interactions with the neighborhood. Three out of four interviewees mentioned that they have occasional interactions with the neighbors on their way to and from the nursery. At the same time, they acknowledged that it has been only a year since they moved in the housing estate and it will take time to establish an in-depth relationship with the estate’s residents. More specifically one of the members mentioned:

“You know, we meet some of the people who work and live here and I’m nodding “Hello” friendly to them. So, the thing again, what I’m trying to say time will hopefully alleviate that slightly.”

These encounters are a sign of friendliness in the neighborhood but is not enough evidence that neighbors are aware of the nursery and what they do. Two out of four participants spoke about the nursery’s visibility, but they believed that it was not an issue. They believed that the sociocultural differences, and lack of confidence were a greater hindrance, and that the community is aware of them and what they do. More specifically one participant mentioned:

“I think a lot of it has to do with that and the fees and some of our philosophies, are not actually appealing to them. (...) I think those are more important reasons possibly than visibility, they might be able to see it, and they know exactly what we’re doing.”

Referring to the VGA map realized (Figure 5.13), only passengers walking by towards the south part of the estate could really look inside the nursery’s garden and take a feel of what
Chapter 05: Case Studies

Figure 5.23: Looking from the housing estate's entrance towards the neighboring estate, one can see another nursery's sign placed on the main street.

Figure 5.24: Visibility & Boundaries' Porosity, as perceived from inside the nursery's courtyard (on the left; looking from the main entrance towards outside, on the right; looking from the yard's back exit towards outside).

Figure 5.25: Two stage process for entrance in the nursery (especially during the winter).
is happening, as their courtyard is fully covered by high walls towards the east and west, and vegetation towards the north. Beyond the visibility of the nursery’s façade, entrance, and courtyard, it is important to refer to any signage informing the neighbors of the nursery’s presence. The nursery has a beautiful sign – hand-made – by the members sign – on the courtyard’s fence right next to its main entrance (Figure 5.3). Yet, there are no other signs put up around the interior courtyard of the housing estate, or on the housing estate’s main street entrances. On the contrary, another nursery from an adjacent housing estate across the street – also hosted in a similar community center – has put signs beyond just their entrance (Figure 5.23). Specifically, they make their presence prominent with a sign on their estate’s entrance, right on the main street with the bus route. While walking on the main street and looking at the sign, one becomes aware of the mainstream nursery on the adjacent housing estate, but not of Grasshoppers.

Consequently, even though the group might not perceive visibility, or the lack thereof, an issue, it is interesting to observe how the spatial arrangement between the two populations might be facilitating a mental distance between them. The nursery as mentioned is in the center of the housing estate, leading to an almost amphitheatrical effect. Most residences of the estate can see the nursery and observe what is happening, but the nursery does not have a clear idea of the residents’ identity. The crystallization of an external, distant perception of the nursery’s identity by the residents and a lack of better understanding of the population of the housing estate by the nursery members can potentially deepen the distance between them. Moreover, the distances between housing blocks around the nursery are wide (often more than 20 m), and with street parking all around the courtyard, impromptu interactions between parent residents from the estate and members of the nursery are not well facilitated.

To better understand the phenomenon, the propinquity effect is taken into consideration and how it is affected by physical and functional distance. The propinquity effect claims that there is a tendency for people to form relationships and friendships with those who encounter more often. However, both physical, social, and functional distances affect the propinquity effect. Social distance refers to the perceived distance between diverse social groups, which includes many factors, among which stage of life. Although, the demographics of the estate’s families and the nursery’s might differ, there is still some connection between them, as they all have kids and are in a similar stage of life.

Functional distance refers to how likely unplanned encounters are to happen between people due to the architectural layout and how people move in it. In the case of Grasshoppers, their entrance and their yard’s visible façade is in a place with low foot traffic, hence minimizing the potential for interactions with residents from the estate. In that context, Grasshoppers might be visible, but this visibility is creating a one-way interaction that does not help create deeper local connections.


02. Porosity:

Beyond passive contacts based on visibility between the nursery and the local community, porosity refers to how easy it is for people to walk in the space or attend the open-to-public events. Porosity puts into perspective the effectiveness of the open-to-all approach often adopted by community initiatives. For instance, when the nursery offers a series of public events in their space, is it easy for outsiders to walk-in? The reason why this is important is because the events offer opportunities for higher intensity contacts between the two populations.

To enter the nursery – especially during bad weather days when nobody is using the front yard – a visitor needs to pass through two different ‘thresholds’: the first one is the courtyard fence entrance and the second is the building entrance (Figure 5.25). When someone visits the space during normal weekdays, they need to ring the doorbell. Afterwards someone from the nursery will come to the building’s door and ‘screen’ the visitor through the fence door. The screening usually consists of a simple question regarding who or what one is looking for, and then the visitor can come in. This screening process is necessary, as a nursery needs to protect the children. People without a criminal record check are not allowed to spend more than a certain period of time in the same space with the kids. Participants mentioned that they do have occasional walk-ins asking about the nursery but not too often.

Depending on the weather, the public events can take place either indoors or outdoors in the front yard. During warm days, public events are more welcoming as pedestrians passing by in front of the nursery can see through the fence that there is a children's event happening (Figure 5.25). However, during winter rainy days, it might be more difficult for people to join, as events take place inside the building and there is no relevant sign on the street or elsewhere in the estate's common area informing about the open sessions.

The inherent need for children’s protection in combination with this double entrance to the nursery might be also contributing to the neighbors’ intimidation in engaging with the nursery or attending open sessions. It should be highlighted that during interviews, two out of three participants mentioned that before joining the group, they visited the nursery with a friend who was already a member or brought a friend along to see it. More specifically:

"I did talk about this, another friend of mine came here with me, we dropped my son here and she could see this nursery."

It was also mentioned that people find the nursery through online streams and set up a meeting before they visit. Thus, it seems that walking in the nursery is always better through someone you know from the group or through a predefined appointment. Both methods are successful in attracting similarly minded people from the larger area, but it does not address the engagement with neighbors from the estate. To welcome the residents from the estate in the nursery, there needs to be more intentional outreach that takes place physically in the estate’s common spaces.

03. Issues of Territoriality & Common Identity:

Above, spatial issues relating to the nursery’s discovery through visual means and on-site visits were covered. Nevertheless, someone interested in the nursery, often has the opportu-
nity for low-commitment interactions before joining. People usually follow the sequence of visiting the nursery’s space, trying it for a while by attending their Open Friday sessions, and then if they like it they sign up properly. This three-step sequence of “visiting, trying, and joining” is proved to be successful in welcoming people in community-run spaces based on fieldwork realized in California\(^{(34)}\). However, this process assumes an instrumental approach of someone who knows of the initiative and their space, is curious to learn more about it, and feel comfortable in visiting. But that is not always the case. Potential difference in demographics and social distance might be an inhibiting reason for visiting the space in the first place. Moreover, issues of territoriality arise. Based on someone’s personality and cultural background, the nursery might seem as a territory or jurisdiction that cannot be crossed. As interviewees mentioned not a lot of residents from the estate and non-members, are coming to the open events. They attributed this to demographic differences and intimidation. Indeed, based on sociological research, groups tend to attract people who are similar before they join.\(^{(35)}\) Thus, due to perceived differences between them and the nursery population, residents from the area might find it difficult to join and specially to walk in a space they have not been before and potentially does not match their identity.

04. Potential for Expansiveness:

Because of territoriality issues, it is important to explore opportunities for meaningful encounters between the two populations beyond the space of the sharing initiative (the nursery). Jon Lang argues that a prerequisite for promoting informal interactions between people that do not have a predetermined end, is to create more opportunities for impromptu encounters.\(^{(36)}\) This is what Jan Gehl defines as ‘chance contacts’.\(^{(37)}\) Hence, if the nursery seeks for more interactions with their neighbors, they need to expand their practice beyond the territorial boundaries of their space towards surrounding neutral public spaces. Interacting with the residents from the estate in a public space will allow for friendly interactions without a predetermined end goal (e.g. joining the nursery). These interactions are of importance because they will also help achieve the nursery’s manifesto as referred in their website, which is to become “an asset to the wider community”\(^{(38)}\).

These informal encounters between the nursery and other populations in public spaces, have been proven successful with attracting new members and people joining their open sessions. The nursery visits the local park almost every day, and in many occasions, they have attracted parents through informal interactions happening there. Specifically, one of the members when asked how they learned about the nursery responded:

“\textit{I used to meet them or see them in the park, at the closest local park.}”

The interaction between parents with children doing an activity in a public space is more


\(^{(36)}\) Lang, Creating Architectural Theory.


\(^{(38)}\) Grasshoppers in the Park, “Grasshoppers In The Park Manifesto.”
likely to happen as there is a common point for discussion. Hence, the same logic could be applied to foster relationships with residents from the housing estate, and rather than the park, the mediator here would be the estate’s public spaces directly adjacent to the nursery. So, what are the estate’s spatial potentialities for interactions between the nursery and the adjacent community? The following documentation identifies opportunities of interaction between the nursery and local community based on characteristics of the adjacent urban space and the activities realized by the nursery members as reported by themselves.

Towards that end the following types of spatial potentialities around the nursery will be explored:

- spaces of vehicular access (streets & parking)
- spaces of pedestrian movement (sidewalks)
- spaces for pedestrian pause (urban furniture, seating etc.)
- public spaces with suggested use (playgrounds, markets, sports fields etc.)
- public spaces without suggested uses (green spaces, squares etc.)

Figure 5.26 showcases the findings regarding the spatial potentialities that exist around the nursery, how they are currently being used, and what potential could be unleashed in expanding their practice within the housing estate to reach out to their neighbors. The exposure of the group to the community in ‘neutral’ adjacent public spaces allows for people to learn about the group and identify ways they can engage with them. These interactions with the group in a public space could potentially build confidence, before one visits their space.

What further supports these initial interactions, are the nursery’s Open Fridays that allow for a low-threshold interaction with the group. As Manzini demonstrates, weak social ties play a significant role in how collaborative practices diffuse in an area.\(^{39}\) He highlights that even though strong social ties are necessary, the existence of weak social ties is also important, as not everyone has the capacity to participate and fully commit. In that sense, events like the Open Fridays, when the nursery is open to the public, allows for people who have briefly interacted with the group elsewhere, to join without fully committing to the group. This allows for a low threshold engagement necessary for those who can’t fully participate or who want to ‘test the waters’ before they fully engage.

**05. Strong boundaries (lack of streetscape spill over):**

Open public spaces, exactly because of their openness to the public can become fertile ground for interaction between diverse populations, as mentioned before regarding the local park. A similar potential exists in the use of the adjacent public spaces to the nursery, such as the street, the seating area, and the playground, to afford interactions between the group and the residents of the estate who use the same spaces. Through appropriation by locals, these spaces can transform into thresholds of interaction between sharing culture practices and their context, allowing for diffusion.\(^{40}\) In the case of Grasshoppers though,

---


Spaces of vehicular access / Streets (01)

• **Description & Current Interactions:** Passing by vehicles, can see in the nursery’s yard.

• **Strengths:** The streets in the interior of the estate are very low traffic and mainly serve circulation for parking, thus allowing for spillover of activities on the streets and sidewalks. The open courtyard with the wire fence of the nursery allows for passengers and passing/parking vehicles to peek inside and see what is happening.

• **Weaknesses:** The area from which a passer-by can have visual access to the nursery’s entrance and facade is limited towards the south part of the housing estate, mainly due to visual obstructions. Also extensive parking creates visual obstructions and makes the estate’s common areas unappealing.

• **Potential Interactions:** Potential activity spillover can take place in front of the nursery.

Spaces of pedestrian access & pause / Sidewalks & Urban Furniture (02, 03)

• **Description & Current Interactions:** People passing by can see in the nursery’s yard.

• **Strengths:** There is an extended pedestrian area in the center of the housing estate’s courtyard. The area toward the nursery’s back exit door and between the nursery and the basketball field is a pedestrian strip with plants and trees (2). Moreover, there are three seating areas in the estate’s courtyard that could allow for rest and encounter (3). The seating area towards the north entrance of the estate has more potential for interaction as it is an L shape that allows for people to sit in distance and look at each other, compared to the linear seating areas on the sides of the basketball field, which are meant for people to watch the game.

• **Weaknesses:** The general area within the estate’s courtyard is not very appealing to seat due to increased parking and garbage collection areas. Moreover, the green space is not enough to allow for potential gatherings, events, picnics etc.

• **Potential Interactions:** The nursery could use the L shaped seating area for a public Open Friday session out in the courtyard.

Public spaces with suggested use (04, 05)

• **Description & Current Interactions:** There are two public spaces open for everyone to use from the estate and beyond; the basketball / football field and a playground. Both are protected with a fence and have doors that are kept usually open. The nursery is only using occasionally the playground, which is located directly adjacent to the nursery. The current interactions in the playground have raised issues of territoriality and capacity.

• **Strengths:** The playground is a neutral space where parents and kids from the estate and nursery could potentially interact. The playground also has a small seating area, which can afford parents sitting and chatting while overlooking at their kids play.

• **Weaknesses:** The playground’s boundaries and size inhibit the integration of the two populations. Firstly, the fact that the playground is fenced and is located right next to the nursery it seems as a territory of the nursery. In several occasions people passing by have asked the nursery if they could enter. Secondly, the playground’s small size discourages others to use it when the nursery’s children are using it. Members mentioned that people have left as soon as they saw so many kids in the playground.

• **Potential Interactions:** As both the basketball field and playground are enclosed and ensure the security of the children, they could be used for the nursery’s Open Friday sessions in order to welcome more residents to join them from the housing estate.
this interaction has not been successful, mainly for three reasons. First, the nursery has very strong physical boundaries, which are inherently necessary for a childcare facility to protect the children, but do not allow for porous situations to take place. Porosity as defined by Stavrides, is when people themselves create porous situations where they allow their culture to diffuse into the city and at the same time always welcome newcomers.\(^{(41)}\) For safety reasons, the nursery does not overspill to the streetscape to create threshold spaces of interaction that could assist its diffusion within the housing estate. On the other hand, the strict boundaries also inhibit impromptu visits by the residents as entering the nursery involves a three-tier process; request by ringing the bell, identification by someone who comes out at the doors, and acceptance.

Secondly, the one place where the nursery gets out of their strong boundaries is the adjacent playground which is open for all. Parents from the estate and parents from the nursery could benefit from interacting within the public space of the playground, in the same manner that the nursery interacts with families from the wider area during their park visits. However, that hasn’t happened yet, because the way the playground is currently designed is inhibiting the interaction between the nursery and the estate residents rather than facilitating it, making it a missed opportunity.

Interviewees mentioned that the playground had been closed by the council for months since they first moved to the space. The council was keeping it closed, due to some minor damage, which has not been fixed. This seemingly small instance highlights how the control of physical space by external stakeholders, in this case the municipality, can affect significantly interactions between the sharing practices and the adjacent community. Even though public space holds great potential when it is appropriated by the community, it is still managed by a local authority which is defining the ways under which public space can be used, leaving little control to the community. Stavrides also discusses this in his book ‘Common Space’, and in that notion, distinguishes public space from common space, which is ‘produced by people in their effort to establish a common world that houses, supports and expresses the community they participate in’\(^{(42)}\).
Finally, the playground opened in the winter of 2017, and the nursery has used it a couple of times since then. Nevertheless, the way it is designed does not afford for interactions with the neighborhood as expected mainly because of its direct adjacency to the nursery, its small capacity, and its strong limiting boundaries. Despite the playground’s open door, people still think it belongs to the nursery as it is enclosed on three sides by a fence, and on the fourth by the wall of the nursery. Moreover, staff interviewed mentioned that when the nursery’s children are using the playground, the space seems to reach capacity. The playground’s small size, its enclosing fence, and direct adjacency to the nursery create the impression of it being a private space belonging to Grasshoppers and inhibit other families to join them. As an interviewee mentioned:

‘I mean sometimes people, I think people have left when we’ve gone in there, or people might not want to come in maybe because you see fifteen children, who would probably take over, it seems like a private thing, but another thing is that we don’t encourage that. It’s just what happens.’

Thus, a suggestion for the nursery to reach out locals would be to hold events outside of their space and the playground. They could transform some of their ‘Open Fridays’ to be really ‘open’ and take place on the low traffic residential street in front of the nursery entrance or in the seating area located towards the north of the housing estate courtyard. Signs could also be placed to inform that the playground is for everyone and that open sessions take place on Fridays. In that sense, parents from the housing estate might feel more confident joining them as it will be in a public space, they are familiar with, rather than having to transcend the entrance of their nursery.

**Urban Scale Findings**

Based on the urban analysis, the general urban context around the nursery can be defined as medium density, walkable residential area, with access to public transport and local commercial uses, and very low pedestrian and vehicular traffic. These findings are interpreted in the following ways:

**01. Exposure:**

The first finding is with regards to exposure; how easy it is for people to come across the nursery while going about their own business during their daily routine. This is a general inquiry that could apply to any kind of community or commercial service that wants to
have local exposure within a neighborhood. In this respect, the nursery scores slightly low in exposure and people find out about it either through online means or through word of mouth. As a member described it:

“Well, usually people visit our website, or, they get in touch with us. Most parents I believe come because they know somebody who is already in the nursery.”

Nonetheless, the fact that the nursery is located on a street with low vehicular traffic can potentially create a sense of neighborhood around it compared to an area with high traffic streets. This is also supported by Christopher Alexander’s work, in regards to “neighboring and visiting” and how it relates to vehicular traffic. In the case of neighborhoods with lower traffic, residents report that their neighborhood is friendlier, and people are warm to each other.43

02. Located in a Residential Area:

The above finding leads us to our second finding, which relates to the uses around the nursery. For sharing culture practices to be adopted by more people, they need to be naturally incorporated in daily life. That means that they need to be located close to their homes and be easily accessible. Most families and staff currently involved in the nursery live close by and do not have to travel from very far; they bike, walk or take the bus to Grasshoppers.

“Most of them (nursery members) live close by. Some of them walk about half an hour to get here so. They’ve got bikes and, or they walk. Some of them have a car. But yeah most of them are quite local. It’s Hackney for sure.”

The fact that the nursery is in a highly residential area with a good walking score offers the potential for people from around the neighborhood to engage with it. Moreover, as mentioned by one parent, the proximity to the nursery allows parents to be involved more easily and ad-hoc, based on unexpected needs for the nursery or group members.

“All it’s more practical, cause if people live locally, you can ask for help, if you need, if we’re short of staff, like parents to come for a bit, you know, for half an hour, you know it’s less pain for somebody, who lives next door and he’s around than somebody who’s further.”

Thus, it is important for sharing culture practices to be close to people’s homes and places they visit, so that they can embed them easily in their daily routines.

03. Proximity to Public Spaces:

One of the most important aspects of Grasshoppers is their proximity to the local park; this is where they got their name ‘Grasshoppers in the Park’ from originally. The park plays a significant role in the educational approach of the nursery, and they host there the ‘Forest School’ every Wednesday. Moreover, they visit other public spaces and local amenities in the area occasionally, within a 3 miles’ radius area, that allows for a series of activities and events that would otherwise be impossible to happen in the nursery’s space.

Conclusion & Limitations

This cooperative daycare case study highlights the value of sharing and collaborative practices within neighborhoods and provides interesting insights on how their emergence and diffusion is influenced by physical space. An open floor plan layout allows for adaptability, while outdoors areas and a food preparation area can afford diverse types of activities and events allowing for relationship building. Proximity to and use of public spaces, open versus closed boundaries, two-way visibility rather than one-way, and functional distance are physical aspects that need to be taken into consideration, to afford interactions of such practices with their contextual neighborhoods. For those interactions to take place, physical space is not enough, and issues of identity and demographics need to be accounted for as well.

There are certain limitations related to this first case that is necessary to mention. First, the nature of caregiving is tightly related to protection and thus spaces that host such practices need to be more enclosed and protected rather than open and porous to the neighborhood. However, a certain level of porosity can be achieved not only by the means presented before, such as using the public courtyard for open events and putting signs on, but also through the intent to redefine the group’s identity when more members come in. Finally, the space that Grasshoppers rent from the council comes with time limitations on the lease, as the group is not allowed to use it beyond Monday to Friday, from 8.00 to 18.00. That means that other activities beyond the daycare cannot be afforded easily.
05.02 Leisure

On Leisure

Background
Throughout time, leisure as part of everyday human life has taken a series of connotations, some of which have been tightly related to the socioeconomic status quo of each era. From ancient Greece, where leisure was considered an activity performed for its own sake and was a time for reflection and contemplation\(^1\) to the late nineteenth century, where ruling classes identified themselves through the availability of time to leisure,\(^2\) leisure had a tight relation to social class.\(^3\) This means that leisure was identified as a privilege of the few. However, in the 20\(^{th}\) century, leisure was considered part of any balanced everyday human life\(^4\). Lefebvre in his ‘Critique of Everyday Life’, identifies leisure as part of the ‘totality’ of the everyday, which consists of work, family, private life, and leisure.\(^5\) However, he illustrates the difficulty to completely differentiate leisure from the rest of everyday life activities (work and family), and defines it as ‘a social need with spontaneous character which social organization, by offering it various means of satisfaction has directed, sharpened, shifted, and modified’.\(^6\) Here I find commonalities with the Max-Neef’s Human Development, as leisure, or in Max-Neef’s case, idleness, can have different ways of how it is being satisfied. Leisure as a social need, differentiates itself from the connotations of leisure as time or leisure as activity. However, leisure as a need and part of everyday life has been difficult to define. Usually, it is defined through contradiction; based on what it is not. It is often defined as something beyond ‘the obligations of work, family, and society’\(^7\), or defined ‘in comparison to time for work and self-care’\(^8\), or finally as time freed from

\(^1\) Aristotle, Politics - A Treatise on Government (Book Jungle, 2007).
\(^3\) Daniel McLean and Amy R. Hurd, Kraus’ Recreation And Leisure In Modern Society, 10th Revised edition edition (Burlington, Massachusetts: Jones and Bartlett Publishers, Inc, 2014).
\(^6\) Lefebvre.
\(^7\) Joffre Dumazedier, Toward a Society of Leisure (Free Press, 1967).
\(^8\) Craik and Pieris, “Without Leisure … ‘It Wouldn’t Be Much of a Life.’”
other obligations, unobligated time.\(^9\)

For the purposes of this work, and without any intention to exhaust a contested field of study, leisure is defined by combining some of the aforementioned ideas. Leisure relates to human needs for ‘reflection, self-enrichment, relaxation, pleasure, and affiliation’\(^{10}\) and thus can involve activities varying from more passive ones to more active, or enriching.\(^{11}\) These activities do not create a dichotomy with work and home, but rather are in a dialectical relationship with them, are usually selected based on free will, and they create a full spectrum of everyday life.

The way the need for leisure is satisfied can vary for each one of us, it can include from relatively passive to very active endeavors, and from solitary to highly sociable activities. This is highly obvious in Max-Neef’s definition of the need for leisure\(^{12}\) with highly active and more passive or solitary words, for example: curiosity, receptiveness, imagination, recklessness, tranquility, sensuality, and as having games, and parties, but also peace of mind.\(^{13}\) Often, and especially in recent decades, we seem to have also developed technical ‘leisure machines’\(^{14}\) such as television and on demand shows, that lead towards more solitary and passive leisure. Max-Neef highlights, how such ways of satisfying the need of leisure not only can be pseudo-satisfiers that create ‘a false sense of satisfaction’ but they can also be inhibiting, which means that they can satisfy one need, but seriously restrain the possibility of satisfying others.\(^{15}\) The reason for distinguishing this point is because satisfying the need for leisure within the spectrum of this work is seen through a synergistic lens; meaning that by satisfying leisure, those involved are satisfying a whole other set of individual human needs. There are three important lenses through which I explore leisure:

**Leisure & Social Connectedness:** Leisure activities, when they are sociable, allow for relationship bonding opportunities. It is during leisure activities, that we usually develop and grow our relationships with others, may that be family, friends, or community. In the early 2000s, Robert Putnam brought attention to the connection between leisure and social capital, as well as the significant impact that the loss of social capital can have in our contemporary cities and communities.\(^{16}\) Thus, within the spectrum of this work, a synergic approach to leisure is important that involves engagement with others and becomes a way to reinforce social connectedness\(^{17}\).

**Leisure & Learning:** The second aspect of leisure to be highlighted is learning and knowledge. In Ancient Greek the word for leisure was ‘σχολή’ (scole) which meant time that

\(^{9}\) McLean and Hurd, Kraus’ Recreation And Leisure In Modern Society.

\(^{10}\) McLean and Hurd.

\(^{11}\) Lefebvre, Critique of Everyday Life.

\(^{12}\) Max-Neef uses the word ‘idleness’ and occasionally ‘leisure’ almost interchangeably.

\(^{13}\) M. A. Max-Neef, Human Scale Development Conception Application and Further Reflections (New York: Apex Pr, 1989).

\(^{14}\) Lefebvre, Critique of Everyday Life.

\(^{15}\) Max-Neef, Human Scale Development Conception Application and Further Reflections.


\(^{17}\) McLean and Hurd, Kraus’ Recreation And Leisure In Modern Society.
someone had free from hard labor. Conditionally the freedom from work led to available time for learning or engaging in a philosophical discussion, which eventually adapted to the Latin word ‘scola’, or in English ‘school’. This connection between the connotations of learning and leisure are of interest in order to pursue the exploration of a synergic satisfaction of the need for leisure through learning. In a sense, learning through leisure and play, away from a highly structured and technical environment can allow for one’s self-development.

**Leisure & Freedom:** Finally, leisure inherently involves the concept of freedom. Leisure is often defined by the availability of ‘free time’, a time when one is liberated by the practicalities of life and has available time to make use of as one pleases. Even though in our contemporary societies that might not be true, as one might never really have surplus time without anything related to work, self-care, maintenance etc., freedom can still be defined as a big part of leisure. Freedom, not in the sense of free ‘surplus’ time, but as time specifically carved out from one’s schedule and dedicated in an activity or engagement that goes beyond necessity, and which is freely selected. The ability to dedicate time in something we love and makes our lives meaningful is in a sense an act of freedom.

**Home, Work, and Leisure**

The difficulty in distinguishing between areas of our lives that relate to home, work, and leisure is also apparent in the physical spaces that we identify with each part of our lives. Before industrialization home and work were mostly one. After industrialization productive work was separated into paid work outside of the house and work related to house maintenance and family, leading to a consistent overlooking of the latter and thus women’s labor. Nevertheless, since then we have considered home as the first place, and work as the second place of our everyday lives. Ray Oldenburg in his book “The Great Good Place”, identifies places of leisure and togetherness as separate from home and work and defines them as the ‘third place’. He defines the third place as the ‘core setting of informal public life’, thus emphasizing the important relationship between leisure and social connectedness.

However, the line distinguishing between spaces of home, work, and leisure could not be more blurred than it is today. As a demonstration, tech companies turn office campuses into vast places of entertainment and recreation, creating a life culture in which is difficult to separate between work, home, and leisure. Another extensive example is the increasing communication possibilities through internet and technology (emails, social media, etc.),

---

(18) McLean and Hurd.
(19) Lefebvre, Critique of Everyday Life.
(20) McLean and Hurd, Kraus’ Recreation And Leisure In Modern Society.
(21) Ray Oldenburg, The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Bookstores, Bars, Hair Salons, and Other Hangouts at the Heart of a Community: Cafes, Coffee Shops, ... Other Hangouts at the Heart of a Community, 3 edition (New York : Berkeley, Calif.: Da Capo Press, 1999).
(22) Oldenburg.
(23) Oldenburg.
(24) Oldenburg.
allowing the diffusion of work, even after we’ve left the workplace, into our time spent at home, with family, or leisure time. Of course, this diffusion between the different parts of our lives often creates significant exhaustion, leading us to ‘live to work’ rather than ‘work to live’.26

Based on the idea of the third place as a space for leisure, social connectedness, learning, and freedom, there are certain types of spaces that people identify as third places that have the potential of bringing different people together. Places of leisure can vary based on type of use, from open spaces – such as parks and squares – which can be used differently by residents, to enclosed spaces for specific uses such as recreation and sports centers, libraries, cultural spaces, etc. They can also vary based on inclusivity and to what degree they are targeting specific populations based on a certain belief or ideology. For example, spaces of religion can be considered for some as places for leisure and social connectedness. However, in our increasingly multicultural cities, places of religion limit access to a larger population even though they might offer activities that go beyond religion. In the case of cafes, restaurants, bars, and pubs as places of leisure, they can be of limited access to those who cannot afford them. Within highly commercialized urban environments, opportunities to engage with others in leisure activities through alternative economic systems that can be affordable to all are very limited.

**The Social Center Model**

Social centers are open-to-all community spaces based on the premise of operating on a not-for-profit basis. They are self-organized and autonomous, and they differ from community centers in the sense that they are independent from the state and local government. They are run by individuals and groups based on values of cooperation and mutual care, and decisions are made through a consensus-oriented setup.27 The activities that they host tend to vary from providing support to sensitive groups, organizing cultural activities, and learning skills, to cooking and eating together. Activities are usually defined by the needs, skills, and interests of the community. Social centers have been popular mainly in Europe and as Naomi Klein explains in her article ‘Squatters in White Overalls’, they are often “abandoned buildings – warehouses, factories, military forts, schools – that have been occupied by squatters and transformed into cultural and political hubs, explicitly free from both the market, and from state control.”28 In that sense, social centers hold certain political beliefs that are anti-capitalist in nature and focus on creating an inclusive environment especially for sensitive populations.

---

Case Study: Lambidona

Quick Facts
Lambidona is a social and cultural center in the municipality of Vyronas in Athens, Greece, similar to the concept of the social café. It is a resident-led, self-organized initiative that began in 2011 and currently organizes cultural and community activities, a plethora of classes for adults and children, as well as support to sensitive groups through several initiatives such as the solidarity kitchen.

Some specific facts of special interest to this specific case study:

- two members of the social cultural center were interviewed
- a casual discussion was also realized with a third participant of the group and member of the collective kitchen crew
- all the interviews were realized in Greek
- nine additional online documents were analyzed and coded, which referred to the center; 7 articles, 1 academic paper, and the center’s website
- the center’s space was briefly sketched on site and documented through photographs while it was empty, to produce the final axonometric view
- additional photographs were collected from the center’s website and Facebook page
- the data collection process took place within the period of one year (from Spring 2017 to Spring 2018), allowing observations of changes that happened throughout time

Background
The initiative started back in 2011, when residents from the municipality decided to take over an abandoned municipal cafeteria, situated in a neighborhood park. The cafeteria was built approximately in the 2000s by the local government and operated as a public café until the economic crisis of 2008, when it was closed, abandoned, and eventually plundered.

When residents decided to take over and squat in the cafeteria, their basic mission was to turn the cafeteria into a place of collective creativity that would allow neighbors to come...
together and organize events and activities. They identified that community spaces that are open to everyone and operate outside of strictly commercial purposes were something that was missing from the neighborhood. They initially faced challenges with the municipality, who owned the space, but now they show tolerance, as long as there are activities and events that are taking place in the space.

In 2017, the initiative consisted of a group of 10-15 fully dedicated people, along with a wider group of teachers and participants from Vyronas and adjacent municipalities. The space is open daily from early afternoon to late in the night; while some days it opens up in the morning as well. The activities they host in the space can be summarized as follows:

- **Classes:** from dance, tai chi, and dramatherapy, to creative writing, photography, guitar, and foreign language classes, classes of Greek to refugees, and philosophy classes. The classes are based on an offer basis; people with certain skills or knowledge offer to teach a class. Some of the classes are more regular while others are one-offs that run for one cycle.

- **Cultural Activities:** The initiative organizes and hosts a series of events and activities related to culture, from book launches, to movie nights, group discussions, theatrical plays from local groups (e.g. plays organized by the school), and music festivals. It has also established a music band from local amateurs and semi-professional musicians, called ‘Lola’, that gathers weekly and plays Greek traditional and contemporary music.

- **Solidarity Kitchen:** Lambidona hosts a Solidarity Kitchen three days a week to support vulnerable populations that were affected the most during the years of the economic crisis. Every Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday, the space is open at lunch time offering food to those who cannot afford it. The Solidarity Kitchen is also occasionally supported by donations of local markets, businesses, and individuals.

- **Environmental Activities:** The group also organizes activities that are related to the environment. They have planted a community garden in the park next to their space, and they host weekly seed exchange events. They have also hosted sessions around composting, walks to local parks, and general environmental awareness events for residents (Figure 5.57).

- **Social Café:** The initiative has a framework, that they call ‘Social Café’, when local groups, initiatives, organizations or individuals can book the space to host one of their events for free, with the condition to clean the space after the event. Events hosted in the space range from meetings of the local football team, to theatrical plays, to children’s parties, and music festivals. The only precondition for using the space is not to use it for personal economic gain. Also, exclusive or discriminatory groups of any type are not allowed.

- **Solidarity Initiatives:** The group also occasionally supports sensitive groups and initiatives that extend beyond the limited boundaries of the municipality. On a higher level, they hold meetings and discussions about supporting similar self-organizing initiatives or causes that are important to the group. On a more direct impact level, Lambidona offers support to specific sensitive groups. Some examples are the support to refugees through donations and free classes of Greek language, and the food donations to Athenians recently hit by floods. They have also created the Solidarity Network of Vyronas that is run on a volunteering basis and provides support and resources to struggling families and individuals in any way possible.

The wider group of people around the initiative of Lambidona are quite diverse and come from different backgrounds. However, the initiative’s identity is highly defined by certain
values that prioritize solidarity, inclusiveness, participation, and democracy over profit. The group has a strong identity and considers itself part of the local social movements of Greece, that intend to re-frame the everyday through neighborhood empowerment, mutual care, and collective ways of organizing everyday life.

**Group Structure & Funding**

People around Lambidona can be identified in three non-exclusive groups; the core group, the frequent participants, and the occasional participants. The core group consists mainly of people living close-by, who are involved across all aspects of the initiative, from organizing the activities, and maintaining the space to taking part in the activities. This group is open for anyone to join but has been decreasing in size since the launch of the initiative. The frequent participants group includes people teaching or attending classes, those who run the solidarity kitchen, and in general people who visit the space on a weekly basis. This group includes people from Vyronas and adjacent municipalities. Finally, the occasional participants are people with minimal contribution to the group’s governance and management; they are those attending the events that take place in the space, and often might travel from across Athens to come to Lambidona. Whoever joins the core group, as well as some trusted individuals, who are teaching classes, hold keys to be able to open and close the space up. Whenever the space is open, there needs to be a keyholder in the space; in that way the group members must do weekly shifts, which are decided at the beginning of each week.

![Figure 5.32: Lambidona’s governance and funding structure](image-url)
The financial model of Lambidona is quite ad-hoc. They situate themselves strongly outside of monetary exchanges, with the only exception of the café-bar they operate in their space. The café-bar is open when the space is open, providing people with something to drink or eat at very affordable prices. This is the only steady income the initiative has, which barely allows for running the bar and the solidarity kitchen, maintaining the space, and providing necessary resources for events and activities. Additional to the income from the café-bar, there are occasional donations from residents, local markets and few businesses, mainly of resources and food in support of the solidarity kitchen. Unfortunately, larger grocery stores do not accept to donate food for the solidarity kitchen, as the group does not have any legal status. Finally, occasional participants who would like to support the group might take upon a shift in running the space.

**Governance & Decision Making**

The governance structure of the initiative is defined by the group’s flat hierarchical model and their main organizational structure is the weekly open assemblies held in the space every Tuesday. Assemblies are open to everyone, from people who participate often in the group to residents and anyone local who would like to drop by and raise an issue. During each assembly there are weekly selected themes for discussion, and decisions are taken through consensus decision making. Consensus differs from other decision-making processes significantly, as it is a highly cooperative and discursive process that involves everyone to contribute and allows the group to come to a common decision that everyone can live with.\(^\text{29}\) Because of its discursive nature, it is generally a slower process compared to other decision-making models, such as the majority vote. The benefit of the process is that it avoids potential group fragmentation and polarization, something that often happens with those who voted ‘for’ or ‘against’ a decision during a majority vote.

Decision-making through consensus has been highly aligned with Lambidona’s values and

\(^{29}\) Hartnett, Consensus-Oriented Decision-Making.
allowed the group to take decisions of any kind, from restructuring their group to daily operations. Usually, more significant and difficult issues demand longer periods of discussions to reach consensus, that exceed the limited time of one weekly assembly. By adopting such a process of decision making, the group also intends to expose people within their community to processes of direct democracy where everyone’s voice is heard.

Neighborhood Context & Interactions

Lambidona is in the municipality of Vyronas, which is directly adjacent to the municipality of Athens. Vyronas is small with about 61,000 residents (2011), of a median age of 37. Its population is white, and predominately Greek, with only 13% of the residents being first generation immigrants. House vacancy is quite high at 21%, and half of the total house-stock is being rented (52%), leaving owner-occupied properties at 27%. Households are mainly families (40%) or couples (31%), with a third being occupied by people living alone.

More than half of Vyronas residents, who are of working age, have finished secondary education or have a higher-level degree (60%); while one third of residents has no professional qualifications at all. The average annual salary in Athens is as low as €15,435, while the median price of a house in Vyronas is €70,090. Finally, it is important to mention that even though unemployment among the municipality’s total population is at almost 8%, the actively employed reach only at 38%.

The above shows that there is a need for a social space like Lambidona in the municipality. From the solidarity kitchen to the events and classes for children and adults, Lambidona offers opportunities for engagement to people from different backgrounds and with different needs. Indeed, the initiative initially managed to gain a lot of sympathy from the neighborhood, mainly because of its lack of a clear political position. Nevertheless, since its early days the perception of the initiative by the wider community and the ability to engage with them has not been straight-forward. In a few cases, Lambidona has been identified by the public as a place for people who are poor. Beyond those ostensible characterizations, the greatest obstacle in the interactions between the initiative and the wider community seems to be misconceptions about what a common good is beyond the public-private dichotomy. People are not used to experiences of working with others collaboratively, that operate outside a service-oriented scenario. The initiative has not managed yet to fully engage the wider public in a collaborative basis beyond the framework of service, donations, and volunteering, as these concepts are not familiar to residents. As one of the members mentioned:

“Yes, there is a difficulty for people to, I do not know, understand or be interested in what we do; There is no interest, I do not know. You know, there is generally this tendency, that everything here is ‘for free’, so people come, do stuff and leave. They are not interested in who does it, who maintains it, who does all the chores behind it to make it happen. They do not ask how this space exists so they can have access to all the things we do, that seems to be indifferent to some of them.”


664,046 PEOPLE (2011)

- **Median Age**: 36.9
- **Population**: 61,102 (2001), 61,308 (2011)

- **Age Distribution**:
  - <29: 87%
  - 30-69: 13%
  - 70+: 0%

- **13%** of Vyronas’ population was born outside of Greece, mainly from Albania, Bulgaria, and Georgia.

- **59.4%** of Vyronas’ residents at working age have finished secondary education and / or have a degree.

- **38%** are employed residents, **7.7%** are unemployed.

BUSINESSES (2011)

- **Average Salary**: €15,435 is the average annual salary in Athens (2017).

- **10%** of adults volunteered in 2012.

25,499 HOUSEHOLDS (2011)

- **Median Price**: €70,090 is the median price of a house in Vyronas.

- **27%** are owners, **52%** are renters, **21%** are vacant.

- **40%** of households are single or double parent families with children.

- **29%** of households have a single occupant.

- **31%** of households are occupied by couples.

There is 0.84 of a car per household in Vyronas.

Figure 5.34: Information on Vyronas Municipality’s demographics, Economy and Employment, and Neighborhood and Household statistics.

Data source: Hellenic Statistical Authority (www.elstat.gr)
Challenges & Sustainability

The group has been operating for more than 7 years (since 2011), despite certain challenges they faced along the way. Beyond their initial challenges of dealing with the municipality and fighting against the space’s privatization, operating for so long with limited resources has not been easy. Thus, one main challenge has been financial in nature; maintaining an old space, as well as organizing such a great variety of activities is quite costly for an initiative that consciously aspires to work mainly outside of a monetary framework.

The second main challenge they face is the group’s capacity; the core group is quite stretched thin. There are two reasons for that; firstly, the core group is decreasing in size because people are getting tired from the level of effort the initiative demands. Secondly, it has been quite difficult for the core group to engage others on a higher level that involves the governance, management, and maintenance of the space and the initiative. As mentioned in the previous section, that is mainly because it has been difficult for the group to create a common culture with the wider public around what it means to run a self-managed space as a neighborhood common. That has led to a certain gap in the levels of involvement of participants, which increases the weight of the work done by the core group. Beyond these challenges, the group identifies that the main reason for them keeping strong after all these years is mainly because of the determination of some group members, the good relationships that have formed between them, as well as the ‘brand identity’ the initiative has formed within the local social movements.

Value of Social Cultural Centers

The mission of Lambidona is to create an inclusive place that nurtures collective creativity and allows neighbors to collaboratively organize events and activities. Thus, those involved recognize that the value brought to them through their participation stems mostly from the ability to socialize, participate as equals, and learn. Interviewees were asked to identify what kind of needs they satisfy through their participation in the initiative through an engaging exercise (the results of which can be seen in Figure 5.35 and Figure 5.36), and this is what they described:

Social Network & Friendships: The idea of a dense social network is at the heart of Lambidona. The core group and some of the frequent participants, who all live close to the initiative’s space, have formed very strong relationships with each other, to the point where impromptu gatherings and events between them are the norm. As one of the participants mentioned:

“With just a phone call to people from the group, you can directly meet up with others. You know, that’s the great part of a small neighborhood, because you do not have long distances. So that’s it, you get others on the phone and you say ‘In ten minutes I’ll be there! In ten minutes at Lambidona!’”

Strong relationships within the network of Lambidona were also identified as a main reason for its sustainability.
Creativity & Learning through participation: The classes offered at Lambidona attract many people to join the initiative. The variety of classes, both physical (e.g. dance, martial arts) and intellectual (e.g. philosophy, photography, literature) allow for everyone in the neighborhood to come together, learn, and be creative. Moreover, through the non-hierarchical nature of the initiative, participants are also learning about collective decision making of direct democracy and participation. As one of the participants gracefully framed the interconnection between creativity, participation, and freedom:

“Creativity and freedom, they are entirely connected, right? What I mean is that freedom is the exercise of creativity, and obviously creativity cannot be individual; there must be participation. So, creativity is a participatory process.”

Feeling of ownership: Lambidona is not just the some of its parts, activities, and events; it’s something more. Participants spoke about the initiative with a great feeling of ownership, almost like talking about their home or family. A member of the solidarity kitchen, who was introduced to the initiative by her son, mentioned that “Lambidona is a life-long dream come true.” Another participant mentions “This place is like my home, when I get to the park I feel like home.” The feeling of belonging is also extenuated by the participants’ feeling of freedom within the group, as well as their sense of the initiative’s uniqueness. As a participant mentions:

“Freedom, I think, is a key element. For people who want to be around similar ventures, I see in them a feeling of freedom and uniqueness. Sometimes, when I talk to friends who are not part of Lambidona, and I say there is a place that does not make a profit, but it works in a different way, they answer, “this cannot exist, it cannot be done!” And I respond “Well, it can, and it does exist”. That is why I am talking about uniqueness, in the sense that now, in the world we live in, these initiatives are a minority. But Lambidona proves that they can happen in the real world.”

Solidarity & Empowerment: One of the initiative’s main goals is to offer solidarity and support to others, especially vulnerable populations, and actively be part of the social movements discourse. Thus, Lambidona brings great value both in the lives of those directly involved and beyond. Some examples of their active solidarity to sensitive populations is that (32) Svarrer.
they provide food and resources to refugees, as well as people who were affected by recent floods in Athens. Their support to refugees is also shown through the classes of Greek language they offer. Moreover, they have directly supported neighbors in need, helping homeless find homes, and providing hot meals through the solidarity kitchen for those affected by the economic crisis. Beyond the tangible actions of solidarity, Lambidona empowers residents to collectively improve their lives. The group consciously engages with others beyond relationships of mere monetary exchanges; it aspires to expose people to practical daily acts of solidarity, reciprocity, and cooperation.

Creating Inclusive Social Spaces: All the above can be condensed to the most valuable contribution of this initiative, which is to create inclusive social spaces. Spaces where neighbors can come together, be creative and interact with each other in innovative ways. In that sense, Lambidona poses itself as a counterexample to current service-focused human interactions imposed by market forces.

Lambidona’s Spatial Documentation

The building

The initiative of Lambidona is housed in an old cafeteria, which residents occupied after it was empty for 3 years. The cafeteria is in a small park in the municipality of Vyronas and due to its neighborly character, residents were inspired to turn it in a hub for learning and cultural events.

The cafeteria is 190 m² and has a main rectangular space for gathering with a full-glazed façade enclosing it on the south, east, and north. Curtains allow for adjustments of privacy levels depending on the events and activities taking place. For example, classes of drama therapy for children with learning disabilities demand higher levels of privacy compared to music events. Towards the west side, the main space leads to the cafeteria’s bar, kitchen, and restrooms. The space is covered with a wooden roof structure, with a high ceiling. The building is quite old and poorly built; issues with the roof’s water drainage leads to flooding during heavy rainfall. Also, the aging industrial kitchen infrastructure dictates a lot of maintenance effort and expenses. The building’s electricity and water come from adjacent infrastructure, an adjacent public basketball field and a church (Figure 5.37).
Chapter 05: Case Studies

The group has made adaptations to the space to better serve their activities; they have constructed a small wooden podium for their theatre and music events. They have also added bookcases and created an informal lending library in the space.

Threshold Space

Surrounding the building, there is an approximately 3-meters-wide covered porch that allows for tables and chairs outside overlooking the park. The porch is the space where children’s parties take place, making parents responsible for safeguarding rather than the initiative, as the porch is in the ‘public sphere’. During spring and summer, windows and doors are kept open, allowing for cultural events to expand from the inside to the porch as well, or even the park. Once, in a music festival organized specifically for the financial support of two young people, victims of a car accident, thousands of people gathered in the space. A stage was set outside allowing for the event to spillover from the cafeteria space, to the porch and park.

The park is quite elevated; the cafeteria is located towards the middle of it and at its highest point. There are paths across the park leading to the cafeteria’s porch. In the park, there are many seating areas, as well as playgrounds, which even old, they are used by local families. Right next to Lambidona, on its southwest side, there is a Greek Orthodox Church and a basketball field.

During the spring and summer months, a lot of people, and specifically families visit Lambidona impromptu for a quick stop and a drink to deal with the heat. In an effort to minimize the waste of plastic cups, the initiative decided to install water fountains in the park and promote a ‘bring-your-own-bottle’ policy. As one of the members mentioned:

“Everyone who came here from the park, had to get a drink of water. Especially during summer, it is hell, right? So, kids came in for water, in the meantime the lessons had to stop. We were using about 1,000 glasses of plastic every 20-25 days, which then must be collected because we were finding them scattered everywhere in the park. It was an ecological bomb! So, we just decided to put two fountains out there, because they didn’t exist anywhere in the park.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List of Rooms</th>
<th>Spatial Descriptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main Sitting Area</td>
<td>Spacious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Kitchen</td>
<td>Privileged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restrooms</td>
<td>Beautiful wooden roof</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porch</td>
<td>Postmodern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wide windows</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Another initiative of Lambidona towards making the park better, was the community garden they started. They’ve planted vegetables and flowers, which they combined with a seed-exchange program that operates from their space. Also, they have hosted composting classes in the past, to support a more holistic approach to gardening.

The space is not located at the edge of the park and is mainly hidden by surrounding trees. A Visibility Graphic Analysis (VGA) was realized in Space Syntax’s software, Depthmap, on a 100m and 400m radiuses from Lambidona’s space, that showcases intervisibility within the park. This process analyzes how visible each point in space is from every other point and creates a ‘heat-map’ highlighting high, medium, and low visibility areas. The VGA calculation was realized based on built obstacles and vegetation that reach the eye level, without considering lower obstacles or topography. Based on this analysis, the center’s facades, as well as the space’s two entrances (Figure 5.38), are of low visibility compared to the surrounding area. Moreover, the hatched areas with black lines showcases the isovists of the center’s entrances. An isovist is defined as “the area in a spatial environment directly visible from one point”\(^{33}\). The isovists of the center’s entrances highlight that there are very limited opportunities for passengers walking on the street to see what is happening inside the center (Figure 5.38). Only when one has reached close to Lambidona, one is able to look the activities inside through the glass façade.

**Urban Context**

An extensive analysis of Lambidona’s surrounding urban neighborhood has been realized on a \(\frac{1}{4}\) and \(\frac{3}{4}\) mile radiuses (5- and 15-minutes walking accordingly). The goal of the urban scale analysis is to explore potential attributes of the contextual urban space necessary for

---

Chapter 05: Case Studies

sharing culture initiatives to emerge and flourish. On the first scale (1/4 mile), four variables were explored: percentage of built area, Floor to Area Ratio (FAR) of existing built condition to highlight built density, land use and transit stops. The percentage of built area and FAR are used to showcase built density in the area. The above maps are further supported by a spatial analysis using the Space Syntax methodology on a ¾ mile radius from the practice. The space syntax methodology is described in detail in chapter 04, but the main metrics of the maps developed in Space Syntax are briefly described:

- **Step Depth from Commercial Uses:** highlights how close the practice is to a commercial core, not just by mere distance but by the actual shortest angular paths in the neighborhood. The lowest the depth of a location, the easiest it is to access the local commercial cores.

- **Step Depth from Transit Stops:** highlights how well connected is the area with public transportation and how close the practice is to transit stops based on the shortest angular path. The lowest the depth of a location from the transit stops, the better connected it is to public transit.

- **Segment Angular Choice:** highlights how likely someone is to pass through a specific street segment in an urban network compared to all other segments. Choice analysis has been shown to produce a good “correlation with observed vehicular flow” thus becoming a good indicator of street segments with increased foot and vehicular traffic. The highest the angular choice of a location, the higher its potential for vehicular and potential foot traffic.

- **Segment Angular Integration:** highlights how integrated a location is; high integrated locations are usually considered to be the core of the city with mainly commercial and communal uses, while more segregated spaces tend to be more residential.


Figure 5.39: Maps highlight the overall built area (left) & building heights (right) within a ¼ mile radius
Built Cover & Density: Based on the maps in Figure 5.39, the adjacent urban area has a built percentage of 53.3% and a built Floor to Area Ratio (FAR) of 2.74. That showcases a medium to high built density and highlights the potential of the neighborhood to create close distance situations between residents.

Land Use and Transit Access: The neighborhood is mainly residential with a mix of commercial uses and public schools. The main residential typology is multi-story block of flats (polykatikia). There is a neighborhood public square and two parks within a five-minute walk radius, all of which have playgrounds in them. The public square is located close to the commercial district, while the parks are located next to the schools. The breakdown of the land uses for the ¼ mile radius is: 56% residential, 11% commercial, 5.3% green space, and 2.7% educational institutions (Figure 5.41). The location of Lambidona within a residential area is very appropriate, as it’s convenient for residents living close by to get involved.

The area has a walk score of 96/100, which indicates it is very walkable, and most errands can be accomplished on foot. Beyond on foot trips, there are 15 bus stops within 5-minutes walking from Lambidona (Figure 5.40), while with a 10-15 minutes from the center, one can access a light rail station as well. Nevertheless, because of the area’s hilly topography, its density, and proximity to downtown Athens, the need for car use in the neighborhood seems high, highlighted by the extended on-street parking.

Based on the Step Depth analysis from commercial uses and transit stops attraction points, some brief findings are provided here. The Step Depth of the location of Lambidona from transit stops is moderately high, which means the path from the initiative to a nearby bus stop is not very direct. The location of Lambidona from transit stops is moderately high, which means the path from the initiative to a nearby bus stop is not very direct. The location of Lambidona from transit stops is moderately high, which means the path from the initiative to a nearby bus stop is not very direct. The location of Lambidona from transit stops is moderately high, which means the path from the initiative to a nearby bus stop is not very direct.

Figure 5.40: Transportation map on a ¼ mile radius (on the left) & Step Depth from Transit Stops on a ¾ mile radius (on the right. On the legend, the black rectangle highlights where the location of the café falls in the area’s scale of Step Depth from transit stops)


(37) The step depth of the street segment in front of the nursery, from transit nodes, is calculated to 7 in a distribution with a minimum of 0 (0 value have the locations of the transit stops), a maximum of 51 (the maximum value shows the point that is cumulatively the furthest from all transit stops taking into consideration distance and angle) and with...
stop is short and with few angles, compared to other areas within a ¼ mile radius. Thus, it is very easy to access a bus stop from the space, but not a subway station.

The Step Depth of Lambidona from commercial areas is high\(^{(38)}\) (but not in the highest category), which means that the path to the nearby commercial hub is short and easily accessible, compared to other areas within a ¼ mile radius. One could access a commercial street from Lambidona on foot.

It is important to mention that there are recurring, weekly farmers’ markets for food produce in the neighborhood, which have been a resource for Lambidona’s Solidarity Kitchen. The group visits the markets each Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday towards the end of the day, so that they can get leftover produce for free. The Wednesday and Saturday markets are 2.5 km away, while the Friday market is just 500m away, (7 minutes walking).

**Local Exposure:** Based on Space Syntax’s Angular Segment Choice analysis on a ¼ mile radius, we can see how much movement passes through each street segment based on the calculation of all trips between all other street segments on the map. On this analysis (Figure 5.42), the areas with a higher choice (darker color) attract more vehicular and potentially pedestrian traffic compared to lower choice (lighter color). By cross-referencing this map with street-view photos from Google Streets (Figure 5.44), it is confirmed that high and medium choice streets have more vehicular and pedestrian traffic, with active building facades and commercial uses. In contrast, low choice streets, are mainly residential with low vehicular and pedestrian traffic. It is important to mention that street parking is extended in all street types, as parking in Athens is not provided as part of neither residential or commercial buildings.

---

\(^{(38)}\) The step depth of the street segment in front of the nursery, from commercial nodes, is calculated to 5 in a distribution with a minimum of 0 (0 value have the locations of the commercial nodes), a maximum of 67 (the maximum value shows the point that is cumulatively the furthest from all commercial uses taking into consideration distance and angle) and with a standard deviation of 10.73.
Figure 5.42: Angular Segment Choice Analysis on a ¾ mile radius:
This map shows how much movement passes through each street segment based on the calculation of all trips between all other street segments on the map. On this global analysis, the areas with higher choice attract more vehicular and potentially pedestrian traffic.
(On the legend, the black rectangle highlights where the location of the nursery falls in the area’s choice scale)

Figure 5.43: Angular Segment Integration Analysis on a ¾ mile radius:
This map shows how easy it is to access street segments in the area around the center; which means how segregated or integrated they are (On the legend, the black rectangle highlights where the location of the center falls in the area’s integration scale)

Figure 5.44: Streets around Lambidona center with different levels of angular segment choice
1. high choice
2. medium choice
3. low choice
Source: Google Street views
Lambidona as we know is in a park and thus, on a low-choice residential path, without a lot of through movement compared to other areas within a ¼ mile radius. That means the exposure the center has to residents and traffic is limited. People who visit the center either probably know where it is, or they find out about it through their visit to the park.

**Integration:** The Angular Segment Integration analysis shows how easy it is to access all street segments in the area around Lambidona, highlighting segregated and well-integrated areas (Figure 5.43). Integration is different from choice, as it shows movement to a specific place rather than movement through. Hence, streets that are low in choice with little traffic can be of mid or high integration, meaning they are very easy to access. The streets around the park that lead to the center are of mid to high integration and thus are easily accessible. People who know about the center, do not have a problem getting there.

**Spatial Findings**

**Building Scale Findings**

Based on the interviews with members from Lambidona and the documentation of their space, there are some important findings with regards to the space they are currently occupying. Overall, they are quite happy with it and they admit the location in the park is quite a privilege. They enjoy the high ceiling and the wooden roof structure, while they highlighted the advantage of the porch. Their main concern regarding the space mainly focused around issues of maintenance and similar expenses as they run on a limited budget.

Beyond these general descriptions, some specific findings will be highlighted regarding the space as it relates to the cooperative and sharing nature of the practice. Findings are presented with further discussion per each scale of exploration, building, threshold, and urban:

**01. Spatial Adaptability & Flexibility:**

Lambidona’s main space includes the bar and the dining area as it was previously operating as a cafeteria. Thus, the space is quite flexible and different configurations are possible by rearranging the tables and chairs. Usually, during times without specific activities or classes, the space is operating either as a social café or the solidarity kitchen is running. For these activities, tables are arranged in a big square, with chairs around, so people can look at each other while eating or having coffee etc. (Figure 5.45, left).

When music events, shows or book presentations take place, chairs are laid out towards the wooden stand (Figure 5.47). Finally, during classes of dance, drama therapy, exercise, or any other kind of activity that needs open space, the tables and chairs are all removed and placed either on the stage, or outside under the covered porch (Figure 5.46).

From the discussions with the group’s members, it was obvious that the space’s size combined with its flexibility has allowed them to realize different types of activities in their space. When they were comparing their space to another initiative, they mentioned how they had an advantage in the possibilities they had with their open-floor space. As two members mentioned:

---

“Look, now that I think about it, yes, some activities could not happen (in another space). For example, dancing in the winter, to take place, it demands a space of certain square meters like this one. If this space was 1/5 of this size, those activities would not be able to happen. Even the foreign language classes or the live music in the winter, they could not happen in an enclosed space of 20m² or in a block of flats. Yes, obviously the space influences the types of activities we do.”

On the other hand, it should be mentioned the group also showed feelings of tiredness regarding the constant spatial adaptations, which created communication issues. They mentioned that in some cases, people organizing events in the space would not put the furniture back to the layout they found the space in, leaving the core group to be responsible for setting the space.

“...regarding the constant spatial adaptations, which created communication issues. They mentioned that in some cases, people organizing events in the space would not put the furniture back to the layout they found the space in, leaving the core group to be responsible for setting the space. As an interviewee mentions:

“There is always this issue, the space is modular, you have to constantly change it and adapt it to your needs. For a live festival to take place outside, you must get it all out. When the live ends at 2.00 am, you must put everything in... Also, the next day we might have the Solidarity Kitchen in the program, so the space needs to be washed and neat... That’s a big issue obviously.”

02. Spatial granularity, rivalry, and slack capacity:

Although Lambidona’s open floor space was commended for its ability to host both large and small gatherings, and thus diversify the types of activities the initiative organizes; it was also criticized for its inability to break down to smaller spaces to facilitate parallel events. For example, participants mentioned that for more private classes, such as the drama therapy classes for children, they have to close the space completely and dedicate it to just that one activity. That means that the functionality of the café during that time stops completely, even though people could potentially grab a drink and sit outside, weather permitting. The space’s inability to host parallel small activities, even though capacity-wise it could afford them, was mentioned as a drawback of the space and something that limits the activities that they could possibly organize. As one of the members mentions:

“For example, in Mesopotamia (another similar initiative), where they had a single space, they divided it with gypsum boards, because they only do lessons, so they created more rooms to be able to have three groups at the same time. We have a single space, so we cannot have things happening at the same time, we must work with shifts. One class at a time, even if that class has five students, it will occupy the whole space.”

These comments allow for the opportunity to explore space as a ‘shareable good’ (40), and what that means. Benkler, in his paper ‘Sharing Nicely’, (41) posits that excess capacity and functionality of goods owned by an individual, can be distributed then to a wider audience within a social group and it may be better to do so through ‘social sharing rather than secondary markets’. With that premise, he explains characteristics that shareable goods hold and how they influence the process of sharing. Here, I will use the following elements assessed by Benkler to investigate space as a shareable good, through the case of Lambidona: capacity and functionality, renewability, rivalry, granularity, and lumpiness.

(40) A good that can or is being shared.
Based on Benkler, ‘functionality is the welfare producing use that a resource enables’, while its ‘capacity is the degree to which a functionality of a resource can be used’, which can be ‘separate from, and greater than its usable capacity’.42 Space can be considered a perfectly renewable resource, as it ‘is capable of delivering exactly the same amount of functionality over time, irrespective of whether its functionality was used in full at a prior moment in time.’43 So, within the framework of Lambidona, the functionality of the space is to house

---

(42) Benkler.

(43) Benkler.
Figure 5.48: The kitchen space in action!

Photo credits: top three photos by A. Christofilopoulos (Source: Luna Svarrer, “Lambidona: How Austerity Interferes with Identity And… Trade Unions,” Medium (blog), January 5, 2017), the two bottom photos by Lambidona, from the group’s Facebook page and website.

Figure 5.49: Sharing a meal on the porch

the activities of the group, and the capacity at which its being used is one activity per slot of time in their schedule. Their space is an almost renewable resource providing the same functionality event after event with moderate alterations in its layout. The space’s usable capacity is potentially smaller than the space’s lifetime capacity; as the space could be used all 24 hours of the day, but it is not.

Beyond space’s lifetime capacity and the actual use of its functionality, there are issues regarding the relationship between its functionality and the demand for it, what Benkler describes as lumpiness. Benkler proposes that all resources are lumpy, as they tend to deliver their functionality in ‘discrete packages’, and they can be of large, mid, or fine granularity. Fine-grained goods allow for someone to acquire the exact amount of capacity they require, like a cup of coffee or tea, while mid-grained goods are small and accessible enough for one to acquire, but might provide more functionality than one needs, thus leading to issues of ‘slack capacity’.

The above issues are quite relevant to the ways Lambidona’s space is being used, as the space can be used only for one activity at any given time, as mentioned by the interviewees. That in Benkler’s terms means that the space of Lambidona is a highly rivalrous resource. At the same time, there are activities that demand full functionality of the space when they are taking place, and thus for them the space is of fine granularity. In that sense ‘the package of utility’ delivered by the space is exactly as much as it is demanded by the activity. Based on the interviews, these activities for which the space is of fine granularity are events that need ample space, such as festivals, dancing, the solidarity kitchen etc.

On the other hand, there are activities that demand smaller capacity than the one provided by the space. Small lessons or gatherings of 5-6 people do not need the whole space of Lambidona in order to take place. However, because of the space’s inability to ‘break down’ its functionality to smaller packages, they tend to occupy the whole space, and make it impossible for other activities to happen at the same time. For those activities, then, the space becomes of mid or large- granularity, leading to excess capacity that cannot be used by any other group or for any other activity.

Resultantly, it would be highly beneficial for sharing culture practices to be able to adapt the space’s granularity according to the functionality demanded by activities that are taking place at any given time. Acknowledging that sharing culture practices tend to organize a wealth of diverse activities with different demands in spatial functionality, they would highly benefit of panels or modules that would allow to break down the space to finer-grained spaces or to expand it in a larger-grained sections.

03. Food preparation area and eating together:

One of the space’s great advantages is the large industrial kitchen, due to its previous use as a cafeteria, and has allowed for the Solidarity Kitchen to take place three times a week. Moreover, it allows for impromptu gatherings of people, as a means of entertainment instead of visiting a restaurant or a pub (Figure 5.48, Figure 5.49). As one of the members mentions:

(44) Benkler.
“Let’s say, in the summer, we usually gather here, we might be 7-8 people and out of nowhere we have great fun! We put on music, bring drinks and food and we create an exceptional atmosphere here! Yeah, all this with just a phone call, you know that’s the great part about the neighborhood, you do not have long distances, you get people on the phone, and say ‘in ten minutes I’ll be there! In ten minutes at Lambidona!’.”

The kitchen has also allowed the group to operate as a café, with a menu at very low prices accessible to all. The café is also the only source of income the group has in order to meet its expenses (such as space maintenance and adaptations, expenses for events and activities etc.)

04. Transparency and privacy:

Three out of four of the space’s facades are fully glazed; this potentially allows people in the park to see what is happening in Lambidona when they’re passing by. However, due to glass reflection, the shadow from the building’s extended roof, and the park’s topography and slopes, that is not possible. People using the park can indeed see Lambidona as it stands at a high point within the park, but they cannot necessarily look inside (Figure 5.50). For someone to be able to look inside, one would need to come very close and walk around the porch that surrounds the building.

Nevertheless, interviewees felt that the peripheral glass façade creates issues of privacy, specifically during private events or activities for sensitive populations (e.g. children etc.). Thus, the curtains have become a useful tool for managing the levels of privacy needed by the activity that is taking place in the space. As a participant mentioned:

“We are visible from everywhere. For example, during dramatherapy classes, the space must be sealed. Those involved must not be in public view. And that’s a problem. (...) There is also a skills development team. Two women are facilitating it, one is a sociologist and the other psychologist, and it is for children who have learning difficulties and so on, which is again, let’s say something, which demands privacy. (...) So, we close the curtains and lock the space. And we put paper on that glass door that does not have a curtain, to make the space completely private.”
From a brief review of online photos of Lambidona’s space, it is obvious that the curtains allow a range of options between completely private space to completely transparent, depending on the nature of the activity in the space. They allow for different levels of both privacy and light.

Threshold Scale Findings

01. Visibility:

From the park’s topography, the Visibility Graph Analysis, and photos of the general park area, we can conclude that the space is not quite visible. Its location does not create conditions of visual interaction with residential buildings in the area, nor allows for people walking by on the street to discover the space organically. Moreover, the increased vegetation around the space hides it even from higher points of view, such as balconies, windows, or terraces.

The space is discovered mostly by people visiting the park. Families who visit the park and its playgrounds, they see the space, stop by occasionally, and become aware of its existence. The group members tend to believe that almost everyone in the neighborhood knows where they are and what they are doing. However, the hidden location of the space does not allow for a lot of ‘see and hear’ interactions\(^\text{45}\) with residents to take place on a daily basis, beyond those who visit the park. Even though their neighbors might know of its existence, they might have a fragmented understanding of what the space is and what the group does.

02. Porosity:

Lambidona’s space is quite porous; their doors are always open when they are operating. The space seems to almost be an extension of the park; people come and go, they sit at the porch, while kids play in the park. The open-door policy extends not only during cultural events, classes, and activities open to the public, but also during governance meetings as well. The weekly assembly usually attended by the core group to discuss the space’s govern-

\(^\text{45}\) Lang, Creating Architectural Theory.
ance issues is a testament of direct democracy in practice. The assembly is not only open to those actively involved, but anyone from the public who would like to bring an issue up for discussion. Subsequently, the initiative not only proclaims porosity and transparency on a spatial basis, but as a lived experience as well.

However, the space is not always open, and not everyone has keys to the space. A member describes the process of opening and closing of the space as follows:

“The process with the keys is a little ad-hoc as well. That is, people who attend the assembly have copies of the keys. Some teachers as well have keys, but again we select who is taking a key with ad-hoc criteria. That is, we might give a key to someone and not someone else, obviously based on the degree of trust we have built with someone. It is always an issue, if a lesson is too early, who will open, if it is too late, who will close and so on. It has happened that everyone leaves, and the space remains open overnight...”

Nevertheless, even when the space might not be open, the surrounding porch creates a sense of porosity. The porch with tables, chairs and benches acts as a protected threshold where one can wait for the space to open. And when sitting under the porch, you feel already part of the space.

03. Spatial identity, territoriality & visual communications:

Although, the space might not be visible from its surroundings, because it is in a public park and is quite porous, it seems like an easily accessible place. People visiting the park, do pass by Lambidona and might stop for a glass of water or coffee. However, as mentioned earlier, the group thinks they haven’t managed to reach out to the wider neighborhood as much as they would like and highlights that the diversity of people engaging with the space is limited. Moreover, even when people engage with the initiative, their involvement is quite transactional and does not reach higher levels of participation, such as attending the weekly assembly, taking care of the space etc.

This difficulty in engaging with a larger audience was a topic discussed in length with participants. The group is unsure why more people aren’t getting involved, and why many casual participants are not more deeply engaged in governing, managing, and taking care of the space. Many reasons presented by the interviewees as potential explanations, from
lack of confidence or interest, to difficulty of understanding the space’s culture that goes beyond the model of a typical service. Two main perspectives on the issue will be explored that arose during interviews: the first one is how the space is perceived aesthetically by the group and by the wider pool of participants, and the second is related to the visual artifacts used by the group to communicate their activities to the neighborhood.

Interviewees evaluated spatial identity and aesthetics as a potential reason why some people might not feel attracted to the space or comfortable to take care of it. More specifically:

“I do not know, maybe they do not feel the space familiar to them. Because if they did, it might motivate people to do things, or they would ask: “what can I do to help, to maintain?” Because the space needs a lot of maintenance, there are so many problems with the building from the roof, to the refrigerators, to the toilets, that someone could help with.”

Although participants are grateful for the space, they argued it is not aesthetically attractive; they described it as postmodern, decadent, and slightly kitsch. They spoke almost with a sense of guilt for not being able to afford a renovation that would make the space more appealing.

“On one hand, (with all the windows) there is no wall available to hang anything. (…) The wooden roof on the other hand is very nice. The building is a little postmodern, right? It’s a little bit all over the place, it’s a very 80s style. (…) And this creates an issue, people see it as a little decadent, which is somewhat. In that sense it does not have the glamour that you can “sell”, or an aesthetic that will attract people…(…) But we have to prioritize… we could say what if we could get curtains or change the lights or get another bookcase, but we can’t, we need to prioritize. (…) We have no financial resources!”

Beyond aesthetics, the space has also often been perceived as ‘poor’ due to some of the activities it hosts, such as the solidarity kitchen that is attended usually by people of a lower income. This proves that there are certain meanings attached to the space, which create an identity that can eventually attract some people and not others, leading to issues of territoriality. The concept of territoriality claims that people perceive “that certain places ‘belong’ to particular people”, and in extend develop a sense of personal belonging or not within a space. Thus, the identity someone attaches to Lambidona’s space and the way it relates to one’s own, defines the levels of one’s involvement in the initiative. The interviewees understand issues of identity arising, not only from the space’s aesthetics, but also from the types of events they organize. They mention how the activities they organize might be relevant to certain people, but it is impossible that everyone is interested in them. More specifically:

“Look, it has to do also with what we’re doing here. For example, we have the solidarity kitchen, and so we refer to very marginalized parts of the society that have unfortunately been completely overlooked. We are also doing cultural things, which again are relevant to a certain minority, who in a way has solved their basic needs and has the time to be interested in them. (…) But we cannot do more than that. And we will not get into the mentality of bringing famous personalities for our cultural events in order to attract as many people as possible.”

The second perspective discussed with interviewees on why some people might not engage more with the initiative, had to do with issues of ‘branding’ and communications. Of course, identity is not just perceived by people passively, but it is also actively reinforced and communicated by the group itself. Thus, the ways the group communicates itself and its activities is quite important on how the wider community perceives them. The group realizes the importance of communications and identifies they are currently doing something wrong, without really knowing what that is. As two members discuss:

“However, I am very concerned about it, because we are certainly doing something wrong with communications.”

“Yes, of course we are doing something wrong on our side, (…) There is also the problem of people not being familiar with initiatives like this, and be accustomed to service-like approaches, but on the other hand, we are doing something a little wrong on our side...”

Leaving verbal communications aside, as it is impossible to know how the group talks to the wider neighborhood; the visual communications they use to inform people about their events will be discussed. The group puts up events posters both in the park and outside of the space, as well as online on their website and Facebook page. The posters sometimes reflect the radical identity of the group, and makes it apparent that they support a left ideology. However, it is important to mention here, that the group is not formed by a political party, and that the group of people involved is not monocultural. More specifically, one of the reasons why the initiative has been well received by the neighborhood is its lack of clear political position, something that in the Greek context can be a significantly polarizing factor.

Nevertheless, the semiotics of the group’s visual communications can be misleading and result in targeting certain populations. For example, the symbol of a red carnation, which is part of the initiative’s logo (Figure 5.53), is meant to reflect people’s struggles and the self-organizing identity of the group. At the same time, in the Greek context, the red car-

nation is also tightly related to the left, and more specifically to the communist party. In that sense, people who don’t identify with those political views, will immediately feel that this space might not be for them. Moreover, the existence of such symbols in the group’s visual communications, might lead to people thinking that there is a political party involved in the initiative, and thus discouraging them from getting involved. As one of the members mentioned about the time when she was joining the group:

“How did I join? I was looking for a place to learn creative writing. And I found the classes here randomly while searching on the internet. I live (...) close by, and when I found it, okay, I knew of similar places. That is, I knew about citizens’ self-organized spaces, and what that means. When I started coming here, at first I was only attending the classes. Then slowly, and after seeing that it is really like they said a self-managing initiative and so on, and there is nothing else hidden behind, I started attending the assembly as well and participating more actively.”

This quote highlights, how even when a person who was interested in the activities offered, and at the same time identified with issues of citizens’ self-organization, was cautious when joining of what might be hidden behind the group. As a lot of the activities offered in the space address a wider audience, such as children and families, it might be useful for the group to create and use more neutral visuals and language in their communications. That might allow for a wider audience to engage with the space and encourage meaningful discussions around citizens’ self-organization.

04. Spillover & Expansiveness:

The space’s layout and location within the park have been greatly beneficial for Lambidona, as it has allowed the group to expand their spatial capacity when needed. Effectively the initiative has managed to host in their space from very small classes and events, to large festivals and concerts. In the case of the latter, the doors are usually open and the activities spillover onto the peripheral covered porch (Figure 5.52, Figure 5.55). When, weatherpermitting, larger events happen – such as festivals – the main activity is transferred completely outside and can expand on the porch, the interior of the cafeteria, and the wider park. This
has exponentially diversified the events that the Lambidona group has been able to host.

Beyond the temporary expansion during events, as described, the group occasionally extends its operation with the intention to reclaim underused public space and potentially influence the neighborhood’s culture. They have built a vegetable garden in front of the space, and they host events around gardening, composting, and seed exchange. They have also installed water fountains across the park, to encourage visitors to bring their water bottles, thus minimizing the use of plastic glasses in the cafeteria from people stopping by for a glass of water.

The practice’s spillover to the neighboring park, has allowed for interactions between the group and the wider neighborhood that transcends issues of territoriality mentioned before. When activities of Lambidona expand in the park, visitors engage with them organically, without entering the confined boundaries of the space. The group understands the important role their diffusion in the public sphere plays in reaching out to the neighborhood. In certain cases, when they had to plan cultural events, such as paintings’ exhibitions, they decided to locate them in the neighborhood streets, rather than in their space or in the park. This allowed them to interact with the neighborhood on a more neutral, non-territorial ground, and bring the activities close to where people are, rather than wait for them to come to Lambidona.

**Urban Scale Findings**

**01. Privileged location:**

The group kept mentioning how privileged their location is, especially in comparison with other similar collectives. Given the fact that collectives, especially squats, tend to occupy empty available spaces in the city, then indeed a cafeteria space located within a park can be considered quite a privilege. As the park is a destination for residents, it also allows for them to have impromptu interactions with the group.

> “Look, the space is quite privileged right? For example, other collectives do not have this kind of infrastructure, and so well located in a park, this allows us to do the festivals, which you cannot do if you don’t have space… you cannot do it in a single-family house.”

However, one occasion when the initiative’s location in the park can be considered as a disadvantage is during evening events. Although it was not mentioned by interviewees, we can assume that during afternoons and evenings after dark, the park might not feel as safe for certain people. Hence, other public spaces such as a nearby square with restaurants and cafeterias might be preferred as a leisure destination compared to Lambidona. This can be considered one of many reasons why the nearby square is more popular compared to the park, as mentioned by one of the interviewees (Figure 5.56):

> “Still, it (Lambidona) does not seem to attract people, who prefer to go to the nearby square that is packed. There is a huge square, close to the schools, that it is full of cafeterias, and it is quite enclosed as well, that is that there are cafeterias all around the square, and it is always full of people. People prefer to go there rather than come here. Some people do not see this space as an alternative to the cafeteria.”

In that sense a well-lit square, which is enclosed and protected, might feel a safer space at
night compared to the park. Moreover, the fact that there are a lot of cafeterias and restaurants with people around with “eyes on the square”\(^{49}\) can provide a greater sense of safety for those visiting. Hence it might not be just the nature of the leisure activity that people prefer, but space might also affect their decision to visit the square compared to the park.

02. Proximity to participants’ home supports thick social ties:

One of the main factors of Lambidona’s success is its location in a highly residential area. The squat was realized by residents themselves who wanted to activate an abandoned space into a place for collective neighborhood activities. Most participants live close by – within the municipality of Vyronas, or neighboring municipalities of Kesariani or Imitos. Given the small size of Vyronas municipality, the adjacent municipalities are within a 15-20-minute walking radius from the space.

During interviews, it became apparent that the space’s proximity to people’s homes plays a critical role in the collective’s viability. It allows for impromptu gatherings that lead to thick social ties. A participant specifically mentions:

“For example, in the summer, out of nowhere, we’ll gather here, 7-8 people, and we’ll put music, bring drinks and food, and we’ll have a great time! With just a phone call to people from the group, you can directly meet up with others. You know, that’s the great part of a small neighborhood, because you do not have long distances. So that’s it, you get others on the phone and you say ‘In ten minutes I’ll be there! In ten minutes at Lambidona!’”

The significance of the space’s proximity to participants’ homes becomes also evident by its absence. When the group decided to realize activities and classes of Greek language in support of refugees that came to Greece during the recent refugee crisis, they realized that they were not able to help. The places refugees are based in Athens, are quite distant from the initiative and thus they are not able to travel to Lambidona to attend any of the activities organized for them. As an interviewee described:

“We also do classes of Greek for immigrants. This, of course, is a bit difficult because as we experienced this past year, it is difficult for these people to come here and attend the lessons.”

---

Only a few can attend the classes and are mostly Albanian, who are now settled and permanent in Greece. Recent refugees from Syria or Afghanistan, because they do not live in the neighborhood, and it is risky for them to leave where they are, for example from Eleonas, and come here by public transport, they don’t. (. . .) That is, they could go somewhere near their neighborhood, but they will hardly leave to come so far.”

This illustrates that the practices’ activities are most successful when they reflect and address the needs of the neighborhood and people living close by.

**03. Local Support Network:**

Beyond the residents’ support, the collectives tend to build relationships with other local organizations and businesses. Thus, they need to be in mixed-use areas, that are not solely residential. Lambidona has built a range of relationships both local and hyperlocal. Hyperlocal relationships mostly develop with similar collectives or social movements that Lambidona is supportive of. Given the fact that the group considers itself part of the local social movements, they are in a constant open dialogue with other initiatives. They offer their support and solidarity to groups that defend human rights, refugees, people hit by the economic crisis etc.

Lambidona’s local relationships are mostly with local schools, markets, the municipality, and other groups that use their space. For example, schools are using their space for independent theatrical plays, while the local football team uses their space for their meetings. The space’s proximity to several open markets has also allowed access to excess food, providing ingredients for the solidarity kitchen three times a week, while preventing food waste. That is a relationship that they can only build with local open markets, due to looser policy structures. The initiative lacks a legal status, and thus is unable to receive food donations from supermarkets. However, being embedded within a diverse network of businesses and organizations allows the group to find different opportunities to support their activities.

**Conclusion & Limitations**

This case study of a neighborhood social cultural center highlights the value of sharing and collaborative practices within neighborhoods and provides interesting insights on how their emergence and diffusion can be influenced by physical space. The open floor plan and potential to expand beyond the confined limits of their space have been quite significant for Lambidona. Being in a quite privileged location within a park, and embedded within a rich landscape of people, organizations, and businesses has also provided them with great opportunities.

One of the limitations of this case study was that two participants were interviewed together at the same time. That might have led to interviewees being influenced by one another in their answers. Nevertheless, the three-way discussion realized between interviewees and myself, as an interviewer, allowed for a richer discussion with interesting insights, which surpassed my expectations.
Figure 5.57: Photos from Lambidona’s garden in the park, with the flower beds, a compost and seed exchange scheme.

Photo source: From Vyronas seed exchange group’s Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/TaSporia/photos/?tab=album&album_id=485185111688537)
05.03 Shelter

On Shelter

Shelter & Migration

In a recent talk about refugee spaces, Camillo Boano suggested that 'if we are to interrogate migration, we need to interrogate inhabitation in itself'. He was referring to Hannah Arendt’s question about who decides who should be inhabiting this planet and who shouldn’t. I would go further in suggesting the reverse as well, that if we are to investigate inhabitation and modes of sheltering, we need to investigate migration as well. As Tony Fry highlights in his book ‘Design Futuring’, for thousands of years humankind’s way of living and inhabiting has been nomadic; people kept migrating and only settling in certain areas where there was food and the climate was hospitable. Certain intense climatic changes about 15,000 years ago, led humankind to start settling more permanently in specific areas of the earth, which eventually gave rise to civilization and inhabitation as we know it today. Even though we might feel that settlement is now our main and only way of living, global migration trends tell a different story.

In contemporary times, migration happens under terms not quite unfamiliar to those in pre-historic times; people migrate to find better living conditions. In 2018, 258 million people have migrated from their birthplace; a number that constitutes 3.4% of the global population, and out of them, 10% are registered refugees, fleeing their homeland under difficult situations. Despite the fact that migration has been a constant global phenomenon, the current refugee wave, from 2015 until today (2019), has been presented around the world through very specific narratives. Initially, refugees coming to EU through the Mediterranean or from Southeast Europe, were treated as part of a humanitarian crisis, as they were fleeing war and persecution, or economic and natural crises. However, the global econom-

---

ic crisis combined with the rise of neonationalist parties across Europe and beyond, has changed the narrative from that of a refugee influx to one of security threat that demands extreme measures. This narrative has had substantial influence to the policies put in place by European countries to deal with the influx of refugees, such as the detention of refugees and asylum seekers in poor and inhumane conditions.

The Greek Context & Refugees

In 2015, there was an influx of migrant population traveling through the Mediterranean Sea and Greece towards Western Europe, what is known as the ‘Balkan route’, partly attributed to the hundreds of thousands of people escaping the war in Syria. Initially the response by most EU countries was positive, allowing an open border policy towards people seeking asylum. However, towards the end of 2015, several European countries set up border controls, and in March 2016 the Balkan route was gradually closed. At the same time, a statement between Turkey and the EU was signed, which was basically a swap policy. Based on the EU-Turkey statement, for each ‘irregular migrant’ returned to Turkey from Greece, EU will accommodate and settle one Syrian refugee. The scope of this agreement was to stop as much as possible sea crossings in the Mediterranean Sea and prevent deaths. Even though the deal managed to lower the number of arrivals in Greece, it also led to a geographical restriction of immigrants on the Greek islands.

The EU-Turkey deal in combination with the closing of the Balkan route, effectively entrapped more than 50,000 in Greece’s mainland, while the Aegean islands turned into a buffer between Turkey and Greece. Ergo, housing became an urgent requirement. As a

---


(8) There is no universal definition of irregular migration, IOM’s definition is: “movement that takes place outside the regulatory norms of the sending, transit, and receiving country” Mosler, Dag Tjaden, and Laczko, “Global Migration Indicators 2018.”


(10) Karakoulaki.

response refugee camps and ‘hotspots’ were created all over Greece with high concentration of people due to slow bureaucratic processes for asylum. Although refugees were not physically detained, the geographical restrictions resulting from the EU-Turkey deal, created comparable conditions in the hotspots, with overpopulation, segregation, and poor living standards. The dire conditions in hotspots combined with the increased insecurity regarding their status also led to serious mental health and well-being issues for most of the refugees.

These circumstances caused a reaction from refugee-solidarity organizations, activists, and other actors, who called out the EU-Turkey deal for the inhuman conditions it has created. Among them have been initiatives that showcased different ways of hosting refugees through activism and direct action. By doing so, their intent was to highlight that the EU approach of hotspots and camps is not an option of last resort, but rather an intentional decision reducing people to numbers by making them lose their identity, their humanity, and their individuality. One of these initiatives has been City Plaza, a self-organized refugee shelter and center in downtown Athens.


(13) Karakoulaki, “EU-Turkey Deal Two Years After.”


(15) Karakoulaki.

Case Study: City Plaza

Quick Facts

City Plaza is a self-organized refugee accommodation and solidarity space in downtown Athens, which is run collaboratively by refugees and activists. City Plaza has been a widely known initiative presenting a counterexample of shelter to EU’s crude stance towards asylum seekers and irregular immigrants. The initiative begun as a solidarity group in 2015 but formalized into an accommodation space in 2016, as a response to the EU-Turkey deal, and the closing of the borders in the Balkan route. In 2018, it hosted 400 people, migrants and activists alike, and was organizing a variety of activities in support of refugees.

Some specific facts of special interest to this specific case study:

- three members from City Plaza were interviewed on site
- two of the interviews were realized in Greek, and one in English
- twenty additional documents from diverse online sources were analyzed and coded, which referred to City Plaza; 18 articles, 1 academic article from someone involved with the space, and the space’s website
- City Plaza’s space was briefly sketched on site and with the help of photographic material found online, the final axonometric view was produced
- additional photographs were collected from the center’s website and Facebook page
- the data collection process took place in May 2017

Background

City Plaza’s story begins in February of 2016, when several initiatives supporting refugees came together under the name of ‘Solidarity Initiative to Economic and Political Refugees’. The main event that brought them together, was the actions initiated by the municipality of Athens, to move refugees settled in Victoria square. The “Solidarity Initiative to Economic and Political Refugees” argued for refugees to be integrated back to society by being located with the city rather than in remote camps. With the social and geographical integration in
mind, and after the EU-Turkey deal, the initiative decided to squat an abandoned hotel near Victoria square, previously known as City Plaza. This led to the initiative become known as: ‘City Plaza, a refugee accommodation and solidarity space’. The hotel the initiative occupied, has been empty since 2010, when the business went bankrupt and management didn’t pay employees their last wages\(^17\). These legal events created a situation in favor of the squat, as employees stood in solidarity with the initiative and the refugees.

In the first couple of days, about 150 refugees were hosted in City Plaza, reaching a body of 400 people, almost three years later. Of course, a lot more people have stayed in City Plaza cumulatively over time, before moving towards other destinations. What is unique about City Plaza—compared to refugee accommodation provided by the state or NGOs—is that residents are not discriminated based on their nationality; people from Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, and Iran live together in the hotel. This fact, combined with the numerous activists coming from all around the world to support the initiative, make City Plaza a truly international and diverse space.

The initiative does not offer only accommodation; it has created structures and frameworks to provide three meals per day, medical and pharmaceutical services, legal and mental support, activities, a lending library, children’s activities, and different types of classes from languages to dance, photography, etc. Beyond the activities related to City Plaza as an accommodation space, the group also organizes initiatives in supporting refugees on a national and international level. One of their great achievements on that front was the acceptance of the young refugee residents of City Plaza into Greek public schools.

**Group Structure & Funding**

City Plaza is an open human network rather than a specific group of people. It involves those who have been there since the beginning, those who are residents at any given moment, and those who might have moved on, but still call it home. In 2018, there were 400 people living in City Plaza, out of which half were children. Most residents are asylum seekers and a lot of people have come from across Europe to support the initiative\(^18\).

The group structure is quite loose, supporting the initiative’s moto “We live together, we struggle together”. Everyone contributes to the different teams formed around specific activities in the space; there are teams for meal preparation, cleaning, supplies and storage, communications, clinic, school, reception desk, and building security. Everybody takes turns in contributing following a weekly schedule that specifies who is responsible for each task.

As far as funding is concerned, the initiative prides itself for not receiving any support from the state or NGOs. They are completely funded through fundraising and donations from individuals within and outside of Greece. All the meals and provisions in the space are of course provided for free. Only the cafeteria sells drinks at a very low cost. The reason behind this funding structure, is to prove that it is possible to support people to stand on their feet through collective self-organization and solidarity rather than charity and philanthropy.

---


Governance & Decision Making

Given the constant transition of people and thus change of the group’s consistency, governance structures are nested and set in a way that makes it easy for everyone to participate whenever and however they want. There are two main assemblies for decision making, along with smaller group meetings. The “House Assembly” takes place every two weeks and discusses issues related to the space’s management. The House Assembly is open to all residents of City Plaza at any given moment and is complimented by smaller ‘work groups’ taking place on a weekly basis to coordinate on meal preparation, cleaning, security, clinic, school, communications, welcoming and reception etc. The second assembly is a smaller coordination assembly, taking place each week and is attended usually by people who have been involved with City Plaza for longer. Its purpose is to coordinate decisions beyond the day-to-day issues of the house assembly; it discusses the sociopolitical context around the refugee crisis, organizes solidarity activities, and in general is more political in nature. All assemblies are using a consensus decision making process, which is discursive and leads to a decision everyone accepts.

Participation in the assemblies and work groups by everyone is required to make such a large-scale initiative to work. Refugees arriving at City Plaza are informed on the initiative’s dissimilarities to camps or other state and NGO accommodation. The main objective of

---

(19) Lafazani, “1.5 Year City Plaza.”
(20) Hartnett, Consensus-Oriented Decision-Making.
this structure is to remove the aspect of dependency that is created through institutional service and allow people to stand on their own feet. Communications among the many people involved in City Plaza are taking place through the assemblies, smaller group meetings, word of mouth, as well as through visual communication in the space. Posters with information on duties and structure, as well as notice boards with announcements are found across City Plaza.

**Neighborhood Context & Interactions**

City Plaza is situated in the municipality of Athens, close to Victoria square. The municipality of Athens is home to 664,046 people (2011), with a median age of 37. The radical increase in building activity and car use between 1950-1980, without the necessary urban planning and infrastructure, led to quite low living conditions in downtown Athens. The following population flow towards suburban areas and drop in housing prices in the center of Athens, created affordable conditions for settlement to the immigrants coming in Greece in the 1990s. Hence, although the population of the municipality of Athens is predominately Greek – like in most Greek cities – it is more diverse with a larger percentage of first-generation immigrants, which amounts to about a quarter of the total population (24%). House vacancy is quite high at 31%, and one third of the total house-stock is being rented, leaving owner-occupied properties at 39%. Households are mainly families (33%) or couples (29%), with more than a third being occupied by people living alone.

More than half of Athenians, who are of working age, have finished secondary education or have a higher-level degree (59%); while one third of residents has no professional qualifications at all. The average annual salary in Athens is as low as €15,435, while the median price of a house is €66,450. Finally, it is important to mention that even though unemployment among the municipality’s total population is at almost 10%, the actively employed reach only at 39%.

The location has been a critical part of City Plaza, as its goal is to reintegrate both socially and geographically refugees back in the city. At the time the research was carried out, most of refugee camps that existed in Greece were on remote land previously used either for industrial or military purposes. Hence, City Plaza intentionally placed itself within a central neighborhood of Athens. Moreover, the high levels of vacancy in the city offer an opportunity for refugees settling at the heart of the city rather than somewhere far away and disconnected.

During early days, the neighborhood reacted negatively to the squatting of the abandoned...
**Figure 5.62: Information on Athens Municipality’s demographics, Economy and Employment, and Neighborhood and Household statistics**

**Data source:** Hellenic Statistical Authority (www.elstat.gr)

---

### PEOPLE (2011)

- **Median age:** 36.9
- **Median age:** 41.9
- **2001:** 745,514
- **2011:** 664,046

24% of Athens population was born outside of Greece, mainly from Albania, Bulgaria, and Georgia.

### BUSINESSES (2011)

- **Employed residents:** 39%
- **Unemployment:** 10%
- **35%** has no professional qualifications at all
- **60.1%** of Athens residents at working age have finished secondary education and / or have a degree
- **10%** of adults volunteered in 2012

**€ 15,435** is the average annual salary in Athens (2017).

### HOUSEHOLDS (2011)

- **€ 66,451** is the median price of a house in Athens
- **30%** are owners
- **39%** are renters
- **31%** Vacant

33% of households are single or double parent families with children

38% of households have a single occupant

29% of households are occupied by couples

There is 0.64 of a car per Athenian household
Moreover, the collective faced significant pressure from the owner of the building through the media, creating a negative image of City Plaza. However, three years after the day they moved in, the neighborhood seemed to become more tolerant towards the collective, as they have not created any problems and they were open for people to come and see what they were doing. In some cases, relationships have also been created among refugees and long-time residents. Beyond the local context, the City Plaza initiative has been widely supported by local social movements, other refugee-solidarity initiatives in Greece, as well as academics.

Challenges & Sustainability

Despite significant challenges, City Plaza has been active for almost 3 years now. Given the nature and scale of the project, we can distinguish the challenges it has faced in two main categories: external and internal. Externally, there has been a general hostility towards solidarity initiatives through media, and more specifically from the building owner herself towards City Plaza. The lack of legal ownership or even right of occupation of the building creates a precarious situation for the initiative, with the constant fear of eviction by the police. Another external threat for the initiative has been potential attacks by far-right groups, as the hotel is located 10 minutes walking distance from the central offices of Golden Dawn, Greece’s far-right ultranationalist political party, known for its hostility towards minority groups.

Beyond challenges from the sociopolitical and geographic context, there are also internal, mainly organizational, challenges that stem from the collective’s scale and complexity. City Plaza involves a large group of people, and thus gaps in engagement levels and freeloding is inevitable to happen. Freeloding refers to unintentional inequalities in effort contributed and benefits received between different participants of a collective initiative; freeloding rates have been identified to rise with larger group sizes. Moreover, a large percentage of


(26) Different academics are involved in the project and / or have wrote about it. Out of many, David Harvey visited City Plaza in 2017 and Angela Davis in 2018.

(27) C. Chen, “A Multi-Level Study of Free-Loading in Dynamic Groups: The Importance of Initial Network To-
the group is transient population moving in City Plaza from different, more service-based setups, which further exacerbates gaps in engagement levels. People coming into City Plaza from state or NGO funded camps, have been accustomed to a service-based model and thus need time to adapt to the collective, self-organized model of City Plaza. The turnover of participants in the group is quite high, not only of refugees, but also of international activists staying and supporting City Plaza, creating a constant change in group dynamics. This quick turnover has led to two main challenges. Firstly, the process of coming to a common agreement and understanding of the collective practices, the mission, and the vision of the initiative is an ongoing struggle. Secondly, even though power is shared among all those involved in the initiative, there has been a larger weight to be carried by those who have been involved since the beginning of the initiative, leading to issues of capacity and gaps in engagement levels.

Finally, given the large and very diverse group with many different languages spoken, communications can become challenging. Translation is always taking place during discussions and assemblies, while posters and message boards are written always in more than one language.

Despite the great challenges of keeping such a large initiative alive, City Plaza has managed to run for three years now. Its political nature and participants’ determination are two of the main reasons for its sustainability, as well as the large media attention received combined with close investigation by scholars worldwide.28

Value of Refugee Collective Housing

The mission of City Plaza is to create a self-organized, collective, and inclusive space for refugees and people who support them, regardless of their nationality or background. The initiative is quite political in its stance, as it argues for equity among all participants, while debunking the models of support from a position of power offered by NGOs and the state.

Thus, those involved recognize that there are different levels of individual and collective value through their participation in the initiative. Interviewees were asked to identify what kind of needs they satisfy through their participation in the initiative through an engaging exercise (the results of which can be seen in Figure 5.64 and Figure 5.65). Below, the most popular answers are being described:

**A haven with dignity, safety & privacy**: As a refugee accommodation and shelter, City Plaza manages to provide a safe place for people to live in, where they can satisfy basic human needs, have access to medical and pharmaceutical services, as well as learning and cultural activities. In some cases, City Plaza is the first place after long travels and poor living conditions, that provides not only a higher standard of living, but dignity, safety, and privacy. Being able to have a private room and a bathroom of their own for families has been a blessing, making them feel independent again, after a long time in the camps. Beyond, privacy in the rooms, City Plaza is quite spacious and thus has allowed for a private space for women to gather and hold different activities. Due to several cultural reasons, women were not able to gather before and were quite isolated, but the women’s space at City Plaza gave them the necessary private and safe space to gather(29).

**Social integration & accessibility**: The location of the space in central Athens has been intentional and pivotal for the initiative. In comparison to state and NGO run refugee camps in rural or peri-urban areas, away from necessary amenities and services, City Plaza is situated in the heart of the city. In that way it increases the potential of refugee integration both socially and geographically. Having easy access to services also means that they can deal with potential legal challenges that might come their way.

> “Here people can stand on their feet, they can integrate into society. They are looking for a job, learning languages, sending their children to school, going to other social spaces, building their own communities. All this helps a lot in empowering people, anyone who has stayed here cannot go back to a camp. They leave here to start a new life somewhere else.”

**Social network, contact & awareness**: One of the main benefits of the integration of City Plaza in the heart of Athens is the opportunity for locals to interact with the newcomers. The media attention on the refugee crisis combined with the physical distance between

(29) Camilli, “One Year at City Plaza in Athens.”
refugee camps and local neighborhoods, has created a mental distance and barrier between different populations, leading to a sentiment of ‘otherness’. By bringing people closer allows for a daily social interaction and exposure that helps dissolve potential feelings of fear. Multiple research studies showcase that personal experience, interactions, and contact can reduce potential anti-foreigner sentiments. The intergroup contact theory by Gordon Allport also supports that intergroup contact under certain conditions can minimize prejudice between majority and minority groups.

“We have managed to have a very good relationships with the neighborhood. (...) Even though in the beginning, they were afraid that we will make noise and bring trouble, now they see that we have brought them peace. When the building was abandoned and not occupied, junkies would break in and so on. But now there are families living in it and the conditions are very good. (...) People now come from the neighborhood and donate things, and even when they come for complaints, they do it out of interest for the families and the kids.”

**Learning:** There is quite a lot of learning that is taking place in City Plaza, from children’s learning activities, to language classes, music and photography lessons, yoga, football and other activities. Moreover, the initiative organizes visits to museums, archaeological and cultural spaces in the city in order to increase the sense of belonging and build a relationship with the local context. The initiative has also managed to allocate the kids living in City Plaza into local public schools, despite several challenges that it faced through this process. Finally, the initiative can be considered as a big school for collective processes and self-organization. Everyone is learning how to collaborate with others all the time.

“Surely, I can say that through the experience of Plaza, I have become better in understanding other people different from me, perceiving diversity and communicating with others to do things collectively. Finally, I have learned to live within this diversity and recognize my own otherness next to others.”

**Participation, democracy & self-organization:** Participation and democratic processes of self-organization are a critical part of City Plaza, as in any type of collectively organized living. Decision-making by consensus allows for everyone to participate. The organizational processes of City Plaza are quite open and transparent in themselves as assemblies are taking place in the common spaces of the building and are often communicated through signs and notice boards.

**Empowerment, agency & feeling of achievement:** One of the main objectives of City Plaza by design was the collective organization of the space and everyday living to empower refugees and help them stand on their feet. After having no control over their lives for too long, and being served in camps, refugees are given a unique opportunity for agency in City Plaza. Everyone can be involved in decision-making about the organization and man-

---

agement of the house, from what meals to cook to what activities to hold. This seemingly small, yet substantial difference from the state and NGO run refugee accommodation, empowers them to take once again control of their lives and become self-sustainable. City Plaza also creates a feeling of achievement shared across all participants alike; they feel a sense of accomplishment by having achieved the impossible.

“In an uncertain climate where it seems like the left is constantly losing ground, City Plaza’s perseverance in uniting people from around the world, bringing principles that challenge the status quo to actuality, is an admirable achievement.”

Collective Identity, Uniqueness & feeling of belonging: City Plaza has formed a unique collective identity that is amalgamated by many personal individual stories, identities, and the participatory interactions between them. This collective identity is also strengthened by the contrast to the general sociopolitical landscape. City Plaza considers itself as a unique counterexample to the maltreatment that Europe, the states, and NGOs have shown to the refugee crisis. However, the collective does not consider its identity as a closed one; they keep their identity open to all and open to interactions with the rest of the society.

“Collective identity is a concept that I like in general, and I think that you can discover a more personal aspect of yourself, through a collective identity, no matter what that is, wherever you place yourself. And Plaza is a collective which forms a collective identity for the people who live here. It is a community with its own codes, its own substance, but it does not want to stay closed, how to say, towards the rest of the society. It’s open beyond its collective structure.”

The collective identity of City Plaza is highly internalized by those who have participated in it, even after they leave. City Plaza has become for refugees who stayed there a home away from home, creating an increased sense of belonging. Along their journeys through Europe, City Plaza is now a point of reference, a place they would like to give back whenever they settle.

“It was one of the best experiences of my life,” writes Rabyee, who now lives in Dijon. “I live in France now, but I will try to come back home, and the City Plaza is my home.”

Solidarity & defending human rights: Finally, one of the great contributions and values City Plaza brings, goes beyond the limits of the hotel space. The initiative has been an active part of the social movement in Greece towards refugee-solidarity. They have provided support to refugees beyond the hotel’s residents, framed the political discussion around the refugee crisis, and help refugee children go to public schools in Greece. The initiative has and still plays an active role in defending refugees’ human rights, bringing visibility to cases when human rights are challenged, and engaging the Greek society into a conversation about what it means to be a refugee in Greece today.


(34) Camilli, “One Year at City Plaza in Athens.”
City Plaza’s Spatial Documentation

The building

City Plaza is housed in an old hotel that had been empty for over 7 years. The hotel is located on a central avenue with high traffic, connecting downtown Athens with northern neighborhoods of Attica. The entrance to the hotel though is located on a much quieter side street.

The hotel has seven floors, totaling to approximately 4,900 m² across all floors. The ground floor, mezzanine, first and seventh floor host mostly communal spaces, while floors 2 to 6 are reserved for residents’ rooms. On the ground floor there is only the entrance leading up to the mezzanine and the reception. At the entrance there is always someone overseeing who’s coming in, and with the exception of the police or someone looking for trouble, everyone is warmly welcomed to the space. The mezzanine has the reception, a hall, and a collective meeting room, as well as storage space for donations, and two small offices. At the back, a corridor leads towards a series of spaces transformed by the initiative to fit the needs of residents. Firstly, under the stairs there is a media room, with computers and tech available for all. Next to the media room, they have set up a small clinic with a doctor’s office and a pharmacy. The pharmacy’s medicines are provided by local social pharmacies in Athens, and several doctors offer their services pro bono. At the end of the corridor, there is a door to a small backyard, where kids can play, and adults can sit and socialize. This open space is not as enjoyable, as it is mostly made of concrete and is surrounded by the adjacent tall buildings.

Going upstairs to the first floor through the open staircase, one can enjoy artwork hanging from the walls and photos of City Plaza residents. There is also a blackboard highlighting the events, classes, and activities happening in the Women’s Space on the seventh floor (Figure 5.77). On the first floor, there are many communal spaces: the dining room next to the large industrial kitchen, the cafeteria, and a large hall. Part of the dining room has been closed off by the initiative to create a space specifically for children’s activities, learning, and play. Meals are prepared and served at the dining room three times a day. Some people gather to eat at the dining room, while others might take their meal and eat at their room with their family. Big events, lectures, or gatherings take place at the dining room. Some projections and movies take place at the hall in front of the dining room. The children’s space hosts classes for kids as well as creative play.

The cafeteria on the first floor is where people can relax or meet during the day, and kids are not allowed. Assemblies also take place in the cafeteria; chairs are set in a circle around and everyone gets to discuss. The cafeteria drinks have a small cost, to support buying supplies. The café space is often occupied by men and due to cultural restrictions; some women prefer to abstain. For that reason, they established a women’s space on the seventh floor, where women can relax and socialize.

(35) Social pharmacies and clinics have become very common across Greece since the economic crisis started. They are part of a solidarity network of doctors and pharmacies that volunteer their time and resources for those who are in need and do not have the necessary insurance. In a recent effort for documenting these efforts, about 500 solidarity initiatives were documented in the health sector, out of which 20 are in downtown Athens. (Enallaktikos.gr, “Social Clinics & Pharmacies,” Enallaktikos.Gr, 2019, www.enallaktikos.gr/kg15el_koinwnika-iatreia_t51.html.)
The upper floors, from the 2nd to the 6th, accommodate about 90-100 rooms. Each room hosts one family. In the case of individuals, they share one room with one or two more people, depending on capacity. People travelling from outside Athens to support the initiative, stay mainly on the 6th floor. A few rooms have turned into spaces for necessary services taking advantage of people’s skills; for example, one room has turned into a hairdresser’s space that offers haircuts to everyone. Going up to the seventh floor there are the women’s space and classrooms for different types of classes, from foreign languages to music and yoga classes. There are also stairs to an accessible rooftop with a bar area. The group has put plants, chairs, and tables on the roof and occasionally hosts events. As the building is quite tall, the view from the rooftop oversees the whole of Athens. The building facades are mostly covered with long balconies that go from side to side on all floors from the first to the seventh. The balconies are narrow but allow for the rooms to have a space to look out to, and for people to sit or hang their clothes to dry.

When the group moved in the space, all the furniture was still in the hotel; the furniture is owned by the hotel’s employees as a compensation after the hotel’s bankruptcy. The employees agreed to allow the collective use the furniture, expressing their solidarity to the cause. However, the situation with the services of the building (heating, water, electricity), is not quite as clear. The building has still electricity and water, but how those services are provided is still quite blurry. Because of the uncertainty of service provision, the elevators of the building are not being used, and everyone must travel up and down the building through the stairs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List of Rooms</th>
<th>Spatial Descriptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reception</td>
<td>Spacious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classrooms</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Room</td>
<td>Well located</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storage Space</td>
<td>Temporal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen</td>
<td>Unique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Rooms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dining Room</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinic &amp; Pharmacy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cafeteria</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Space</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s Space</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrace</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Threshold Space

The hotel is located on a high traffic road, but the building has access from a narrow side street. Around it, there is mostly housing, four to nine-floors-high block of flats and a couple of small hotels. The entrance on the quiet side street allows for residents to go out, sit on the sidewalk, chat, study, and play. A large dinner party was also organized, when residents put tables and chairs on the street.

The main street is lined with a few shops and features medium foot traffic, and medium to high vehicle traffic. The initiative has proclaimed its presence by hanging large banners and photos on the building’s walls. The Visibility Graphic Analysis (VGA) realized on a 100m radius from City Plaza’s space, demonstrates intervisibility of the space within the urban context. VGA evaluates how visible each point in space is from every other point and creates a ‘heat-map’ highlighting high, medium, and low visibility areas. The calculation is based only on built obstacles that reach the eye level, without taking into consideration lower obstacles or the topography. The analysis shows that the main façade of the space is visible from the main street, while the location of the entrance is slightly hidden as it is located on the side narrow street (Figure 5.67). Moreover, the hatched areas with black lines showcase the isovists of the center’s entrances. An isovist is defined as “the area in a spatial environment directly visible from one point”.36 The isovists of City Plaza’s entrance demonstrate the limited opportunities for passengers walking by to see how to enter the building, which also helps in the protection and security of the building from potential attacks (Figure 5.67). Only when standing on the corner or on the side street, one can see the entrance of City Plaza. Moreover, there is no opportunity to see what is taking place in the building without entering, creating a mystery around the space.

The only opportunity to peek into the building is from surrounding housing blocks. City

(36) Benedikt, “To Take Hold of Space”; Al_Sayed et al., Space Syntax Methodology.
Plaza has balconies along all its three free facades, from the first to the seventh floor. The rooms that have balconies towards the narrow side street, have a clear view of the balconies and windows of the block of flats across the street, as the side street is about 5-6 meters wide. That allows for visibility of the building and the initiative’s activity on higher levels. That has provided an opportunity for people to communicate through their balconies. This almost one-to-one intervisibility between windows and the rooms behind them, in a dense urban environment, contributes in dissolving potential fear and brings City Plaza’s residents closer with their neighbors.

Urban Context

An extensive analysis of the urban neighborhood around City Plaza has been realized on two scales: a ¼ mile and ¾ mile radiuses from the center's space (5- and 15-minutes walking). The goal of the urban analysis is to explore potential attributes of the contextual urban space necessary for sharing culture initiatives to emerge and flourish. On the ¼ mile radius, four variables were explored: percentage of Built Area, Floor to Area Ratio (FAR), Land Use, and Transit Stops. The percentage of built area and FAR illustrate built density in the area. The above maps are further supported by a spatial analysis using the Space Syntax methodology on a ¾ mile radius from the practice. The space syntax methodology is described in the methodology chapter, but here I briefly mention the main metrics of the maps developed:

- **Step Depth from Commercial Uses**: highlights how close the practice is to a commercial core, not just by mere distance but by the actual shortest angular paths in the neighborhood. The lowest the depth of a location, the easiest it is to access the local commercial cores.

- **Step Depth from Transit Stops**: highlights how well connected is the area with public transportation and how close the practice is to transit stops based on the shortest angular path. The lowest the depth of a location from the transit stops, the better connected.

it is to public transit.

- **Segment Angular Choice**: highlights how likely someone is to pass through a specific street segment in an urban network compared to all other segments. Choice analysis has been shown to produce a good “correlation with observed vehicular flow” thus becoming a good indicator of street segments with increased foot and vehicular traffic.\(^\text{38}\) The highest the angular choice of a location, the higher its potential for vehicular and potential foot traffic.

- **Segment Angular Integration**: highlights how integrated a location is; high integrated locations are usually considered to be the core of the city with mainly commercial and communal uses, while more segregated spaces tend to be more residential.

**Built Cover & Density**: Based on Figure 5.68, the adjacent urban area has a built percentage of 66.2% and a built Floor to Area Ratio (FAR) of 3.34. That showcases a high built density, and thus identifies that the neighborhood creates close distance situations between its residents.

**Land Use and Transit Access**: As far as land use is concerned, the neighborhood is mainly residential with a good mix of mainly local commercial uses. The main residential typology is multi-story block of flats. There is a main public square, Victoria square, a couple blocks over from City Plaza that is within a five-minute walk radius and holds a symbolic value for the initiative as it is where it started from. The practice has used the square in the past to hold events with music and food to reach out to the local neighborhood. The breakdown of the land uses for the ¼ mile radius is: 78.5% residential, 19% commercial, and 2.5% public open space (Figure 5.70). The location of City Plaza in a highly residential area with local businesses, and proximity to the hyperlocal uses of downtown Athens, is appropriate for its incoming residents.

Generally, the area scores 98/100 on the walk score, which indicates that it is very walkable, and

---

\(^{38}\) Turner, “From Axial to Road-Centre Lines.”
Figure 5.71: Angular Segment Choice Analysis on a ¾ mile radius: This map shows how much movement passes through each street segment based on the calculation of all trips between all other street segments on the map. On this global analysis, the areas with higher choice attract more vehicular and potentially pedestrian traffic. (On the legend, the black rectangle highlights where the location of City Plaza falls in the area’s choice scale)

Figure 5.72: Angular Segment Integration Analysis on a ¾ mile radius: This map shows how easy it is to access street segments in the area around the center; which means how segregated or integrated they are (On the legend, the black rectangle highlights where the location of City Plaza falls in the area’s integration scale)

Figure 5.73: Streets around City Plaza with different levels of angular segment choice
1. high choice
2. medium choice
3. low choice

Source: Google Street views
most errands can be accomplished on foot.\footnote{Walkscore, “Walkscore for City Plaza, 78 Acharnon, Athens Attica,” Walk Score, 2018, /score/78-acharonon-athens-attica-greece.} Within a 5-minutes’ walk from City Plaza, there are 26 bus stops and one subway station, which is located on Victoria square (Figure 5.69). Thus, the area is quite well connected, and the subway station makes it easier for people to travel in different areas of Attica. Nevertheless, car use and parking are still quite high in the area.

Based on the Step Depth analysis from commercial uses and transit stops, some brief insights are presented below. The Step Depth of City Plaza’s location from transit stops is moderately high,\footnote{The step depth of the street segment in front of the nursery, from transit nodes, is calculated to 7 in a distribution with a minimum of 0 (0 value have the locations of the transit stops), a maximum of 51 (the maximum value shows the point that is cumulatively the furthest from all transit stops taking into consideration distance and angle) and with a standard deviation of 5.64.} which means that the path to a nearby bus stop is very short and with few angles, compared to other areas within a ¼ mile radius from it. Thus, it is very easy to access a bus stop or a subway station from the location of the hotel. The step depth of City Plaza’s location from commercial uses is also high,\footnote{The step depth of the street segment in front of the nursery, from commercial nodes, is calculated to 5 in a distribution with a minimum of 0 (0 value have the locations of the commercial nodes), a maximum of 67 (the maximum value shows the point that is cumulatively the furthest from all commercial uses taking into consideration distance and angle) and with a standard deviation of 10.73.} which means that the path to a nearby commercial hub is short and easily accessible, compared to other areas within a ¼ mile radius. Although the land use map data provides information about the commercial uses around City Plaza, there are a lot of closed businesses in the area, so a real assessment of the situation cannot be fully made. Nevertheless, the proximity to downtown Athens means that access to commercial uses is not a problem for those who live in City Plaza.

**Local Exposure:** Based on the angular segment choice analysis of the ¾ mile radius area around City Plaza, through movement of each street segment was realized. On this analysis (Figure 5.71), areas with higher choice (darker color) attract more vehicular and potentially pedestrian traffic compared to lower choice (lighter color). By cross-referencing this map with street-view photos from Google Streets (Figure 5.73), it is evident that high and medium choice streets have more vehicular and pedestrian traffic, with some active building frontages and commercial uses. In contrast, low choice streets, are mainly residential with low vehicular and pedestrian traffic. It is important to mention that street parking is extended in all types of streets, as parking in Athens is not provided as part of neither residential nor commercial buildings.

City Plaza is located on a street with medium to high through-movement compared to other areas within a ¾ mile radius around it, while its entrance is on a low-choice narrow street, without a lot of through-movement in general. Given the big informative banners on all its facades, people passing or driving through the main street can be informed that there is something unique taking place in the building. However, its low transparency, and lack of spaces with activities on the street level, creates a mysterious feel to it. The extensive online exposure of City Plaza on social media along with numerous articles written about it in the last three years is quite opposite to its physical exposure, make up for its non-transparent physical shell. People who visit City Plaza are either residents or probably know about it beforehand and have come in contact with someone from the initiative to visit.
Integration: The Angular Segment Integration analysis, on the other hand, demonstrates how easy it is to access all street segments in the area around City Plaza; which means that we can observe segregated and well-integrated areas (Figure 5.72). Integration is different than choice, as it shows movement to a specific place rather movement-through. Hence, some streets although they might be low in choice and have little traffic, they can be of mid or high integration, meaning that it is easy to access them. The streets around City Plaza are all mid to high integration; thus, they are easily accessible, and people who know about the space beforehand, do not have a problem getting there.

Spatial Findings

Based on the interviews realized, as well as interviews and articles reviewed from online sources, and through the documentation of City Plaza’s space, there are some important spatial findings. Overall, they are happy with their space and find it unique not only because it can host many people, but also because its location is very advantageous. Their main concern is the fear of being evicted or attacked, leading to the seize of this solidarity initiative that gave hope to so many people. Going beyond these descriptions, it is important to outline specific findings about the space as it relates to the cooperative and sharing nature of the practice. Findings are presented one by one with discussion, and per scale of exploration: building, threshold, and urban.

Building Scale Findings

01. Granular Privacy – Collectiveness Spectrum:

Having previously operated as a hotel, the space of City Plaza allows for a variety of uses and activities to take place; from eating together, to large events, children’s play, and classes (Figure 5.76). It is also an appropriate spatial design to be easily turned into collective housing. Past the obvious benefits that a large hotel space offers, what allows for a sharing culture initiative such as a collective housing to flourish is its ability to host activities demanding different levels of privacy and collectiveness. As illustrated by Studio Weave with the concept of ‘spheres of sharing’, a variance in levels of sharing is necessary in any type of collective housing. Accordingly, in City Plaza the variety of spaces of different type,
size, and exposure, allow for occupants to decide the level of privacy they demand for each activity. A small gathering in the classroom of the seventh floor, chatting in the cafeteria, eating with the whole group in the dining room, being with your family in your room, or playing in the main hall are all evidence of activities that take place simultaneously, across different spaces. Depending on the background of the people involved and their culture, what privacy means can be defined at each given time. In City Plaza, women had to define their own spectrum between collectiveness and privacy, what it means for them, and create a space that meet their needs.

“For cultural reasons, many of them (women) spend the whole day in their rooms because they find it difficult to stay in spaces like the bar, that’s why it was important for them to have a private place.”

02. Food preparation & eating together

One of the many advantages of the hotel is the large industrial kitchen, which allows for many people to work together for meal preparation three times a day. The spacious dining room, located right next to the kitchen, is where people meet and socialize over food. Places to meet out of the scope of assemblies is important in bringing people together and creating thick social ties. Given the large size of the initiative, time spent eating together is also a unique opportunity when one can meet most of the residents of the hotel in one place. Apart from opportunities for collectiveness offered by eating together, cooking together is also integral. Residents’ agency to cook for themselves allows them to celebrate their cultures by cooking meals from their country of origin. Being able to cook recipes from one’s home country comes to a great contradiction to the camps’ approach of being served low-quality food and helps build people’s confidence. As reported in a TIME article, about a mother of three working at City Plaza’s kitchen preparing meals (Figure 5.75):

“She cooks alongside Kurds, Afghans and Iraqis in the kitchen, and they all say that it’s one of the best things about living at City Plaza. In camps the military and catering companies provide meals for refugees, but are often poor quality, or made from unfamiliar ingredients. At City Plaza, says Reema, “We can cook our favorite foods. A taste of home helps with missing it so much.”

Figure 5.75: People working at the kitchen. On the left three women preparing food, on the right screenshot of a promotional video prepared by the City Plaza team

Photo credits: on the left, photo by Lynsey Addario - Getty Images (A. Baker, “Greek Anarchists Are Finding Space for Refugees in Abandoned Hotels,” Time, November 2016), on the right, City Plaza’s YouTube page (Welcome to the Kitchen - City Plaza, Athens, 2016)

(43) Camilli, “One Year at City Plaza in Athens.”
(44) Baker, “Anarchists Put Refugees up in an Occupied Hotel in Greece.”
Figure 5.76: Many of the activities with different levels of privacy taking place in City Plaza. From top left to bottom right: eating with family, turning a room into a hair salon, a children’s classroom, coming together for a larger event in the dining room.


Figure 5.77: Artwork and signs on the main stairs leading from the mezzanine to the first floor.

Source: City Plaza’s twitter account.

Figure 5.78: Photos, artwork, and solidarity signage decorating the walls of City Plaza.

Photo credits: top left (https://farm5.static.flickr.com/4293/35680523980_b5355b0c65_b.jpg), top right by Mattia Alunni Cardinali (O. Lafazani, An interview with Olga Lafazani, coordinator of City Plaza, interview by M. Scampoli and M. Cardinali, November 2017), bottom left and right by malstad.
03. Constant Appropriation

For the hotel to meet the needs of City Plaza’s large community, small but necessary spatial adaptations were made. Creating a space for children on the first floor and turning the conference halls of the last floor into classrooms are two examples of such adjustments. Spatial appropriations are ongoing and necessary in any collective initiative, as the group transforms, and needs are constantly negotiated. For example, even though all the spaces of the first floor where open for everyone, due to cultural reasons, most women did not visit them and ended up staying in their rooms. As a response to the emerging need of women to socialize in a protected space, a dedicated women’s space was created (Figure 5.77). Space is constantly renegotiated and appropriated to meet the needs of a dynamic group.

The residents not only change the spatial arrangements of the space to meet emerging needs, but also to make it feel like home. The hotel’s service-like atmosphere was broken down by decorating the walls (Figure 5.78). To bring their identity in the space, occupants decorated the interior walls of the hotel with their artwork, children’s drawings, photos from their home countries, solidarity statements, and photos of current and past residents.

04. Governance through space

As a political project in nature, City Plaza tries to keep its governing processes transparent and open for everyone to join. The assemblies take place in the cafeteria, a space without doors, located right next to the stairs leading to the rooms of the upper floors. Hence, when an assembly is taking place, it is quite easy to grab a chair and join, listen to the discussions, and contribute. There are no collective discussions behind closed doors; the space and the way it is being used by residents allows for transparency of its governing processes.

However, as one can imagine, the fact that people can participate doesn’t mean they always do. Challenges in coordination, participation, and care of the space, as well as different levels of engagement are to be expected in such a large group with transient population. People who started the initiative and have been there from the beginning might feel more entitled, younger volunteers might feel left-out, while refugees who first arrive at City Plaza, might feel that this is just an in-between stop before they move on towards their destination.

As a participant describes:

“The obstacles in this point are about the relationships between the people, we have people from a lot of different places, with very different backgrounds, and also with many different ideas about how the project, how the organization should be. Sometimes, there is the common problem about the community, some people think they are working too much compared to some others, who are not working enough. (...) Sometimes it’s too difficult to involve the residents, the refugees, but I think it’s not their fault. I mean they think they are going to be here for 15 days or one month, so it’s not necessary to get involved. As I am waiting for the next stop. But the most of them remain here longer than they think.”

All these different perspectives influence the levels of engagement and contribution of each participant, which are potentially exacerbated by the physical design of the space as well. For the transient population, living in a hotel further extends the perception of the service
rather than the collective. The rooms extend across five floors, which means one could walk in and out without engaging with the rest of the initiative. To balance some of the hierarchical and service-based tendencies created by physical space, governance processes and communications are widely reflected across the buildings’ walls. Signs, notice boards, posters, and notes in different languages can be found throughout the building (Figure 5.80). Their purpose is to explain to residents how the space and the initiative works, and coordinate between participants about shifts and responsibilities. Moreover, this affords transparency in the process of the day-to-day governance of the building.

Threshold Scale Findings

01. Lack of porosity on the ground floor & Visual Identity:

As a squat and an initiative that works with sensitive populations, City Plaza needs to be cautious of potential eviction and attacks realized against it by extremist groups. Consequently, a complete open-door policy is impossible. There are always two or three people at the building’s entrance making sure people who enter are not hostile towards the initiative. The security of the initiative is further supported by the building’s spatial design, which is fortress-like. The ground floor has only one entrance, with the stairs and elevators leading up to the main building. Even the hotel’s reception is on the mezzanine—not on the ground floor. This spatial design however creates a certain distance between the initiative and the surrounding neighborhood.

Indeed, the initiative was not as warmly welcomed by the neighbors in the beginning. When they learned that the hotel was taken over by refugees, feelings for the unknown nature of the project and foreign sentiments prevailed rather than support and solidarity. As one participant describes:

“I think the first day alone was impressive. We were gathered together with the refugees to get in and the neighborhood was shouting. Their response was like a reflex rather than conscious. We built a human chain to get the refugees into the hotel. That image was unique and even more interesting is how everyone perceived it. We thought they might be afraid. Later, discussing it with them, we found out through their narrations that for them putting our bodies forward to protect them was very important. Generally, the early days were very intense. We didn’t know if there will be tomorrow.”

(46) Louka and Katsis, “The Best Hotel in Europe is in Acharnon Street and it turns 2 years old.”

Figure 5.79: Message Boards and Signs in many different languages on the walls of City Plaza

People with different beliefs and no exposure to solidarity movements, had quite strong reflex reactions to the initiative. Strongly negative coverage of solidarity movements by the Greek media could have also put the initiative under a negative light. The spatial arrangement of the hotel allows for very limited opportunities to break down those initial preconceptions held about the initiative. The lack of porosity on the ground floor did not allow for neighbors to meet some of City Plaza’s residents and debunk some of those perceptions.

02. One-to-one Visibility:

Beyond the ground floor and moving to the upper floors, one comes to realize that the building is completely changing; it turns from an enclosed cell to a porous sponge through its numerous windows and balconies (Figure 5.82). Even though these windows do not allow for people on the street level to interact with the initiative, they serve a more important role. They allow neighbors to peak through the windows and see into the lives of the individual people who inhabit City Plaza. Given the density of the surrounding urban context, some of those windows are incredibly close to each other, only six meters away. Thus, this spatial condition creates opportunities for one-to-one visibility between a neighbor and a resident of City Plaza. In one case, a neighbor got to know and chat with a woman living in City Plaza through their respective balconies. As one of the participants vividly describes the relationship:

“Lots of people have come by to donate things. They’ve also built relationships with residents from here, ok, especially with how the balconies are here. (...) I remember a woman having brought toys for a mother who lives here with her children, just because their balconies are across the street from each other, ok, I know, it’s a start. And that was from a woman that was complaining the first day we moved in the building. So, it’s important, because we see small shifts in perception, and so on. I think there’s still way to go, because Plaza can open even more towards society.”

Allowing for these one-to-one visibility opportunities is important because they help people living close to collective initiatives to see them not as monolithic groups but connect with the individuals that form them. Collective practices are formed based on relationships between people; that is how they can gain approval and diffuse.
Figure 5.81:
On the left, City Plaza’s entrance, on the right the main entrance hall with the security desk and stairs leading up to the mezzanine

Photo credits: left photo by M. Trammer and Blitz (24nmjournalism), right photo by M. A. Cardinali (Progetto Melting Pot Europa)

Figure 5.82:
Views from the windows

Photo credits: left photo by Cathi Kaiser, photo on the right by Anna (Xiaofu Wang and Claude Somot, We Are City Plaza, Photo-documentary project, February 2017)

Figure 5.83:
Meeting on the rooftop during sunset

Photo credits: Olga Lafazani (Lafazani, “1.5 Year City Plaza.”)

Figure 5.84:
On the left, evening party on the roof, on the right, meeting at the backyard of City Plaza

Photo credits: left photo by Lynsey Addario (City Plaza’s Facebook page), right photo by Mattia Alunni Cardinali (We struggle together, we live together: The Refugee accommodation and solidarity space City Plaza in Athens.)
03. Being Outdoors & Spillover to the Public Space:

The residents of City Plaza always look for opportunities to be outside and enjoy the sun whenever possible. The small backyard of City Plaza and the rooftop terrace with the beautiful view of Athens allows for people to meet outside. The initiative has been hosting events on the terrace and holding informal gatherings at the backyard (Figure 5.83, Figure 5.84). However, because these opportunities are limited, the group has occasionally expanded to the public sphere as well, taking over the side street with their activities. The street is quite narrow and quiet, and it is easy to hold activities on it without caring about traffic. There have been large gatherings and collective meals on the side street, but it is also used occasionally by younger residents to study while being outside (Figure 5.85). By expanding on the side street, the initiative is reclaiming public space and activating it toward collective use. Moreover, the street spillover affords chance encounters between the residents of City Plaza and neighbors, minimizing potential feelings of fear. The open events held by City Plaza in the hotel, on the rooftop or on the side street, allow not only for a diffusion of the initiative into the wider neighborhood, but also create access points for others to engage with the initiative for the first time. Thus, the way that the initiative uses public space allows for a porosity that the building itself might not offer.

Urban Scale Findings

01. Integration & embeddedness:

On a larger scale, the location of City Plaza was the most important aspect mentioned by interviewees. The group intentionally located itself in the heart of the city. This decision can be interpreted through three main lenses; a political, a practical, and one that speaks to the urban imaginary. The political lens relates with the fact that City Plaza is a solidarity-initiative to refugees. By locating itself within the city, the initiative makes a political stance against the current isolation of refugees in remote camps by the government. City Plaza claims that refugees should be integrated in the city and society, so that they can become independent. As mentioned by a participant:

“We wanted to oppose this (the remote camps), we wanted to resist in a more material way and show that this is not the solution, and it should not be that way. We wanted to set a counterexample. That is why we want to locate ourselves in the center of Athens, where people live, in the center, within the city, connected to the urban fabric. Because it is here that one can integrate oneself, can find opportunities to integrate, will get to know people, right? So, we chose to be at the city center.”

This political stance, beyond creating a counterexample to the state-funded camp accommodation, also reveals a practical lens as well. Collective housing should be located close to amenities and services, close to where other people live, and close to job opportunities. Moreover, the easily accessible location is beneficial to activists from Athens who support City Plaza, as they can visit and help daily.

Finally, and mostly importantly, the value of the initiative’s location in the urban center is that it presents a different urban imaginary. By urban imaginary here, I mean the way the people

---

involved with City Plaza imagine society and the city they live in, and how they act based on that vision. Their logo ‘We live together. We struggle together’ showcases the exact notion of how they imagine the city; a place where there is space for everyone to live and work together. With that motto, the initiative expands beyond the limited boundaries of the hotel, and it calls for the whole city to find ways to live together by accepting others.

02. Use of nearby public spaces:

One of the main benefits of the location of City Plaza in the city, is its proximity to Victoria square. Victoria square is where the initiative was first born, and thus had quite a significant meaning for the neighborhood. Beyond holding events on the side street next to the hotel, the initiative has also leveraged Victoria square to reach out to the local neighborhood (Figure 5.86). In the early days, the group held a big celebration with food, live music, and dance on the square and reached out to the local businesses and residents to join them. The event was an opportunity to break the preconceptions about the group and for different people from different backgrounds to come together. Moreover, it was a way to activate the square in a completely different way, by bringing together food, music, and dance, and thus completely change its image.

03. Local Support Network:

The location of City Plaza has been instrumental in integrating refugees in the city both socially and geographically. Furthermore, by using local public spaces they are being intentional in thickening those local ties between those involved in the initiative and the residents. Nevertheless, we need to understand City Plaza not only as a commoning and collective practice, but as a critical component of the social movements in Athens. Hence, the initiative beyond the support that offers through the hotel to refugees, it also operates on a higher level of trying to push for political change regarding the refugee crisis in Greece. It participates in protests against the violence and maltreatment of refugees and for their integration process in the Greek society. To be able to do that, City Plaza needs to be located within the existing thick network of initiatives that are in Athens and engage in a constant dialogue with them. A recent research, by Charalampos Tsavdaroglou on the case of Athens during the refugee crisis⁴⁸, maps the accommodation of refugees across the wider metropol-

---

(⁴⁸) Tsavdaroglou, “The Refugee Right to the City: State-Run Camps vs Common Spaces in Athens.”
itan area of Athens. His mappings make a clear case of the completely different approach between state-run initiatives and solidarity-initiatives, as the former are all located in remote areas, whereas the latter are all in the heart of Athens. More importantly, his work highlights the importance of the proximity between the different solidarity initiatives themselves. Creating a thick local network among these initiatives allows for them to be able to support and protect each other, to organize together and to make sure that they shape a common front.

Conclusion & Limitations

This case study of a collective refugee accommodation and solidarity center has provided great insights on commoning practices with groups of people that are diverse and from different walks of life. It demonstrates the possibility of people working together despite potential disagreements. More importantly it pointed the importance of the location of such an initiative in the heart of the city in order to create a different urban imaginary, provide a source of inspiration, and set a counterexample. A quite visible counterexample that shows people that there are ways of acting in more collaborative ways. In spatial terms, this case study pinpoints the importance of the appropriation by the group, the transparency of governance through space, as well as the potential granularity of the space in allowing for a spectrum of activities from private to collective ones. Finally, it shows how urban density and porosity can become a catalyst for diffusion of collective practices, by creating opportunities for one-to-one interactions between different people.

One of the limitations of realizing this case study was the lack of opportunity to spend more time in the hotel and interview a larger group of people living in City Plaza. Nevertheless, this limitation was partly overcome by the large coverage of the initiative through Greek and international media, scholars’ and volunteers’ publications and blogs. The extensive review of other people’s writings and documentation of City Plaza gave access to different perspectives that I would not have been able to cover as a single researcher.

Right at the end of this research – in July 10th, 2019 – City Plaza closed and handed over the building’s keys to the hotel’s employees, who are still waiting for their compensation.\(^{49}\)

---

05.04 Work

On Work & Economic Transactions

Background

Although work plays a critical role in human everyday life, the way we define work both today and in the past is highly contested. Based on the Cambridge Dictionary, work is “an activity that a person uses physical or mental effort to do, usually for money”.¹ This definition is related to the industrial development of certain societies, where work is at the core of both individual and societal success.² Within that framework, work is related to status, financial stability, and even personal fulfillment. Nevertheless, the definition and meaning of work, or non-work, are culturally bound, and for that reason it is difficult to describe work in a universal manner.³ The way we define work depends highly on a specific time and place. Moreover, even within a specific era and region, the meaning of work might alter based on gender or race. An example of that is the division between the work that happens outside and within the domestic sphere. In industrialized societies, the former is associated with paid employment and clear notions of work, while the latter is unpaid, invisible, and in some cases not considered work at all. Although, today men no longer work at factories while women take care of the household; a lot of these conceptions do influence perceptions we hold around what is work in industrialized societies. Silvia’s Federici’s piece of ‘Wages Against Housework’ pinpoints exactly this issue of the invisibility of unpaid domestic labor, and its impact on the feminist movement⁴. She argued that domestic labor should be paid, to be made visible as an otherwise inseparable and crucial part of industrialized, capitalist societies.

The reason why it is important to highlight the notions we hold about paid and unpaid labor, is that within the spectrum of sharing culture, services and goods that people contribute might include or not a clearly defined ‘economic exchange’. As discussed in the previous cases, people offer time, skills, and resources often without any type of exchange. That does not discount their effort and is still considered as work, meaning a mental or physical effort towards a goal. But sharing culture practices do not take place in a ‘cultural vacuum’,

³ Eckert.
and thus we need to understand them within their context. Especially for sharing practices within urban areas, which are highly focused on paid work, their interaction with strong economic forces is something that needs to be taken into consideration. Moreover, as presented below, even in practices not involving money at all, economic exchanges can still take place.

Money, Debt, and Economic Context

To better understand the field of work and what alternative models of work exist that relate to the sphere of sharing culture, we need to briefly examine money and economic exchanges. When one wants to do business with another, or to acquire goods or services from others, then the use of money is necessary. Money has mainly three functions: medium of exchange, unit of account, and store value. These functions of money allow us to be able to trade with one another. It has been argued by many economists, that money is an evolution of barter. Building on that notion, they generalized that barter between goods was too difficult to perform between different goods, and thus societies came up with money as a solution. However, as David Graeber brilliantly critiques in his book “Debt; The First 5,000 years”, there is no proof that barter preceded money, but there is rather proof to the contrary; barter followed money. What is important in Graeber’s book is the idea that our economic systems are built on the concept of debt, even before actual coins or paper money existed. Communities and societies have been keeping track of who owes whom and what for a very long time, and thus our concepts of debt and credit are not that new. Moreover, Graeber argues the concept of barter came later, after people were familiar on how to use money, and it took place either between complete strangers or in times were money were not available. A good example of the latter by Graeber is the barter systems that emerged during national economic crises, such as in Russia in the ‘90s and Argentina in ‘00s, when rubles and dollars accordingly were scarce.

The above helps us understand some historical aspects of how we have built the economies in industrialized societies, that eventually framed our markets globally. Within those markets, certain shifts are happening that influence everyday life and the way we work with each other.

---

(7) Graeber, Debt.
(8) Graeber.
other. First, we have now returned to models of economic exchanges, which do not require physical money, but are rather heavily built on accounts of debt and credit. Within such a market, speculation, credit, and debt have often led our economic systems to eventual crises (e.g. the housing bubble in US in 2006, and the following global economic downturn of 2008). Secondly, the global free market has allowed for economic exchanges and competition on a larger scale. Large global companies can minimize their costs by locating production in far-away places with low wages, but at the same time their services or goods compete with other local businesses with higher costs and wages. Furthermore, new technologies in combination with peer-to-peer systems have allowed a larger turn towards freelancing and selling one’s services, time, and goods on a global marketplace. Finally, people nowadays are working longer hours, for less money, and without sense of long-term security.

Consequently, within our current economic system, a lot of people and groups have started to reevaluate how we work and how we do business with each other. As in the case of barter when there was no physical money, people are now inventing different models to work together within the context of instability. People are trying to find solutions on how to work with each other and share profits equitably through workers’ cooperatives or how to support local economy and businesses through community currencies. Others are inventing models of local production through makerspaces and business incubators, and creating economies of scale through coworking spaces, allowing smaller business to afford professional offices. Finally, online technologies allow for crowdfunding or participatory budgeting local initiatives. In this section the idea of community currencies is explored, using an example in London, UK.

Community & Local Currencies

Community currencies are a type of alternative or complementary currencies. Alternative currency is any type of currency system that is different to the central national currencies backed by governments around the world. Alternative currencies are usually created by individuals, organizations, corporations, or even local and state governments, and they are called “complementary” when they are designed to work in combination with national currencies. These currencies work by leveraging concepts of credit and debt among participants, just like national currencies, but they are not backed by central banks or are necessarily legal. Alternative currencies can use different kinds of central or distributed peer-to-peer systems to track credit and exchanges as they take place between individuals who use it. For example, Bitcoin, a famous digital alternative currency, is using an open-source software to track exchanges, while other community alternative currencies can use physical tokens.

Community currencies (CCs) are a subcategory of alternative currencies that are tied to a specific geographical area. Community currencies have seen an increase over the last decades across the world and are mainly developed by informal groups, non-profit or non-govern-

---

(10) Shareable.
mental organizations.\footnote{Michel and Hudon.} The motivation behind CCs vary; they can provide local solutions during economic crises, a way to support declining local economies, or support environmental causes.\footnote{Michel and Hudon.} Because there are so many examples of community currencies across the world, there is a wealth of CCs typologies with different structures, ways of functioning, and motivations behind them. Based on a review realized by Michel and Hudon on the contested term of community currencies, they identified four main types: Service Credits, Mutual Exchange, Local Currencies, and Barter Markets, which are summarized below.\footnote{Michel and Hudon.}

- **Service Credits** are based on the idea of credit given to someone for the service one provides. A common Service Credits system is Time Banks, based on the premise that everyone’s time is valued equally. Thus, if one gives one hour of one’s time and service to the system, then one can get a credit for one hour of a service from someone else in the future. The goal of such a system is to build social capital and cohesion.

- **Mutual Exchange** currencies are based on exchanges of services or goods between the members of a network.\footnote{Michel and Hudon.} All exchanges are tracked, and their value can be recorded either in a national currency, in time, or a mix of the two. During any exchange, one party is credited and the other is debited the same amount, leading to the overall account of the network to be zero. Mutual Exchange systems are based on trust among members, and their goal is mostly economic, as they provide additional liquidity.

- **Local Currencies**, which constitute approximately 7% of all CCs, are paper-based or electronic currencies circulating within a specific region and can be occasionally exchanged with national currency. They aim to support local economic activities and business. The case of Brixton Pound of this section falls under this category.

- **Barter Markets** are the most limited category. Barter Markets constitute a hybrid of local currency and mutual exchange systems, with the most known case being that of barter clubs in Argentina. Their goal is to foster environmental behaviors and solidarity.

All above instances of community currencies have at their core the intention of supporting local economy, fostering social networks and relationships, encouraging people to look for local products and thus lead more environmentally sustainable lifestyles. There is yet not solid proof of the CCs’ impact on local economies and trade. However, they do tend to bring communities together, create a local identity, and support environmental behaviors and ideals.

\footnote{Michel and Hudon.}
Chapter 05: Case Studies

Case Study: Brixton Pound

Quick Facts
Brixton Pound is a Community Interest Company, based in Brixton, London, and their signature project is the local currency called ‘Brixton Pound’ (B£). The currency is one of the widely popular local currencies that started as part of the Transition Town network in 2009. The group begun working mainly on the currency, as a response to the global economic crisis and to support money that “sticks to Brixton”. Later, it expanded to projects such as local funding, a shop, a pay-what-you-can café, and as they claim a facilitator for good things happening in the area. In 2019, it completed its 10-years anniversary and has become a part of Brixton’s identity. Some specific facts of special interest to this specific case study:

- three members from Brixton Pound were interviewed on site
- two of the interviews were realized in April of 2016, while one was realized in October, 2018
- during the 1.5 years gap between the interviews, the initiative changed space, they expanded from a shop to the pay-what-you-can café
- Brixton Pound’s current café space was briefly sketched on site and with the help of photographic material found online, the final axonometric view was produced
- additional photographs were collected from social media and online sources

Background
Brixton Pound’s story begins back in 2009, when people from the Transition Town Brixton and the New Economics Foundation came together to discuss about ways to support the local economy. The Transition Town Brixton (BTT), which is part of the wider Transition Town movement, is a community-led initiative that rethinks everyday life in ways that are more environmentally sustainable. In 2009, some people from BTT started having conversations with the local council and New Economics Foundation, to find solutions to local eco-

nomic challenges. These economic challenges included increased poverty in the area, partly increased by the global economic crisis of 2008, but also the closure of local businesses on the high-street. With global chains taking over the high streets and increasing rents, local businesses still find it hard to compete and stay afloat. During those discussions, they came up with the idea of a local currency that would help money to stick to Brixton for longer and not fly out of the community. The New Economics Foundation, whose mission is to “transform the economy so it works for people and the planet”, brought to the group a more research and knowledge-based approach on how local currencies work.

The Brixton Pound group started working on the currency based in the town hall. The first version of the currency that launched in 2009 was paper-based, while two years later in 2011, they launched the pay-by text platform. The idea is that anyone can exchange sterling pounds to Brixton Pounds in one-to-one exchange rate. Then there are about 250-300 local businesses across Brixton that accept Brixton Pounds as a currency.

The Brixton Pound notes in themselves are an exceptional example of design and local identity branding. There are several editions of the notes, and they come out in values of 1, 5, 10, and 20. All of them feature celebrities that are related in some way to Brixton, as well as patterns and symbols from the urban landscape of the area as well. The notes were designed by local artists, and in some cases, people have been trading to Brixton Pound, because they want to keep the notes as memorabilia. The most popular paper note design is the one with David Bowie.

Since the early days, the Brixton Pound organization has evolved significantly and expanded...
in different ways. In 2015, they moved in a shop on the Brixton’s high street, where they could host events, offer hot beverages, and people could engage with them. In the shop, beyond the currency, one could buy as well branded material relevant to Brixton Pound, such as t-shirts, mugs, etc. During that period, they also expanded their activities for the first time beyond just the currency itself. They started the Brixton Bonus and the Brixton Fund. The Brixton Bonus is a monthly community prize job, with the top prize being 1,000 Brixton Pounds. The revenue from people entering in the Brixton Bonus, goes into the Brixton Fund, which is a grant-giving pot for local groups and initiatives. The Brixton Fund has funded initiatives such as ‘The Spacecraft’, which is reducing isolation among older generations through crafts, ‘Chaigaram’, a tea-making enterprise creating employment for refugees, and ‘BDT PressGang’, a training journalist experience for adolescents in the Brixton area. Thus, through the Brixton Bonus and Fund, the group started supporting Brixton’s local economy, businesses, and initiatives, in other ways beyond the currency.

In 2016, the initiative opened the first ATM machine for local currency at the heart of Market Row in Brixton (Figure 5.95), in order to make it easier for people to exchange sterling for Brixton Pounds (Figure 5.117). In July, of the same year, the group moved out of the shop under the arches as it was being renovated (Figure 5.92), and they opened instead the pay-what-you-can café, further down the road. The café opened a wide array of opportunities, as it is an accessible café space for everyone, where people can come, meet, work, and socialize. The café offers drinks and a vegetarian menu that is based on food donations and food that is saved from the landfill. The café space and its basement are also available for hire at low prices for events, classes, meet-ups, and private events. Thus, the space has a wide selection of weekly community events that residents can attend. Finally, the café space also hosts exhibition walls for local artists’ work.

The story of Brixton Pound over the last decade and the variety of their activities, way
beyond the local currency, showcases their resilience, but most importantly their innovating nature in attempting to keep true to their mission. Based on their mission statement on their website, Brixton Pound aims to:

- “Help protect jobs and livelihoods of community members within Brixton through developing a strong local economy
- Support and build diversity and resilience in the local Brixton economy in light of a recession and chain store dominance
- Raise community awareness of the local Brixton economy
- Encourage and facilitate a self-help model and ethos in order to protect the social and financial futures of the residents of Brixton
- Encourage local sourcing of goods to decrease CO2 emissions

• Raise Brixton’s profile regionally and nationally and contribute to positive perceptions of Brixton by drawing attention to its strong community, diverse economy and capacity for innovation

**Group Structure, Decision Making & Funding**

The Brixton Pound is formed under a Community Interest Company (CIC) legal status. CIC is a relatively new legal structure for social enterprises that started in 2005 in the UK and is targeted for companies that aim to use their profit for the general good and benefit of their community. This structure has allowed Brixton Pound to adapt overtime, but also to raise funding for the types of projects the organization is running which are all focused in bringing value to the community of Brixton.

Over the last decade of its operation, the group has been expanding in number of people involved but also in structure. People, who used to be part of Brixton Pound, are still occasionally involved with it and supporting it. However, the organization operates daily through the work of its advisory board members, a small group of staff, and volunteers who work in the café. Currently the café has a staff of three, an operations assistant, a kitchen manager, and a social media officer. People who would like to get experience in the service industry, volunteer in the kitchen. Large decisions about the organization and its role are taken by the advisory board, while day-to-day decisions about events, volunteers, and communications are taken by the organization’s staff.

One of the main reasons of Brixton Pound’s success has been the large network of collaborations it has developed overtime both with individuals and organizations. Brixton Pound’s large community of supporters are both from the Brixton area and beyond; from local business owners to academics and experts on local currencies. In the list below some of the most important collaborations of Brixton Pound are presented:

1. **Lambeth Council**: Brixton Pound has collaborated with the Lambeth Council since its conception; a collaboration that has helped overcome several policy challenges as well as create incentives for people to use the currency. For example, through the collaboration with the council, businesses could pay their council taxes in Brixton Pound, and council staff have the option to receive part of their salaries in Brixton Pound.

2. **Advising Organizations**: The Brixton Pound has also had external organizations that have been advising the team on critical structural issues, such as the New Economics Foundation. Two of the Brixton Pound founders were also part of the New Economics Foundation and thus the two organizations had been working close together since the beginning. Beyond the New Economics Foundation, Brixton Pound has also collaborated with Transition Towns Network for expertise on local and alternative currencies, as well as with tech companies that set up the electronic currency system.

3. **Local Businesses Network**: The network of local businesses who have been accepting the Brixton Pound currency form a major part of Brixton Pound’s collaborations. The currency has been accepted by more than 300 businesses over time. In addition to the currency, the Brixton Pound has also developed a community investment scheme at ‘Pop Brixton’. ‘Pop Brixton’ is a temporary development of pop-up local businesses

---

on previously disused land. The Brixton Pound’s community investment scheme has tried to strengthen ‘Pop Brixton’s’ local businesses by creating a skill-sharing program and generating over 2000 hours of free support from one business to another.

4. **London Mutual Credit Union:** The London Mutual Credit Union branch on Acre Lane in Brixton has been providing the sterling backing for the Brixton Pounds in circulation. It has also been the only bank accepting and exchanging Brixton Pound currency.

5. **Local Organization Networks:** The Brixton Pound has been quite intentional in being part of local networks that expand the values of community and inclusiveness in Brixton and beyond. Thus, it participates in a lot of events and groups, some of which are Brixtopia, Brixton Design Trail, and “81 Acts of Exuberant Defiance”, a cultural program celebrating 40 years from Brixton’s uprisings.

6. **City Harvest & Food Donations:** For the operations of the café, the group has partnered with City Harvest, an organization that salvages surplus food from the landfill. City Harvest provides Brixton Pound café with approximately 50 kilos of fresh produce every week.

7. **Residents & Resident groups:** Finally, a last but very important part of the organization’s structure is the network of people who use the currency, those who book the organization’s spaces to run community events and classes, as well as those attending them.

As far as the organization’s financial structure is concerned, there are multiple sources of funding and income. Firstly, the initiative has received funding from Lambeth Council, as well as the New Economics Foundation through the Tudor Trust. The Brixton Pound has also been funded by the Walcott Trust, Nesta, as well as London’s Mayor High Street Fund for the ATM machine. Beyond funding from organizations and local government, Brixton Pound makes some income by selling food and drinks in the café on a pay-what-you-can basis, as well as branded materials such as t-shirts, mugs etc. It also rents out its spaces for relatively low rates per hour to local organizations, businesses, and for private events. Of course, to operate the café, the food donations and time donations by volunteers play a significant role.

**Neighborhood Context & Interactions**

Brixton Pound is located at the heart of Brixton, a district of South London and part of the London Borough of Lambeth. The borough of Lambeth is home to 328,900 people (2015), with a median age of 34.5. Brixton was bombed after World War II, which led to urban decay and eventually followed by the development of council housing to meet an increasing housing demand. In the 1940s and 1950s the area attracted a lot of immigrants from Europe and beyond. In 1948, and as a response to post-war lack of labor force, the first wave of immigrants from the Caribbean was brought on the Empire Windrush ship and settled in Brixton. What eventually became known as the “Windrush Generation”,

---


Chapter 05: Case Studies

Figure 5.94: Information on Lambeth Borough's demographics, Economy and Employment, and Neighborhood and Household statistics

Data source: London Datastore, 2015
was the beginning of a multicultural British society.\textsuperscript{23} Lambeth borough still holds a multicultural profile, with 1/3 of its population having been born outside of UK, and mainly in Jamaica, Portugal, and Poland.\textsuperscript{24}

A large part of Brixton’s population is of Afro-Caribbean descent, which has also defined the area’s history and identity. One significant event in the history of Brixton has been the 1981 riots, which were triggered by the repeated use of the sus law by the police. The sus law allowed police officers to stop and search anyone on the street just with the suspicion of wrongdoing. Most of the people searched under the sus law were mainly young black men. This law and the riots that followed, exposed the deep social segregation of Brixton and British society at large, which included high unemployment, deprivation, and racial tensions.\textsuperscript{25} Following the riots, there was an overall increased black political participation\textsuperscript{26} and Brixton’s identity is still heavily influenced by activism and revolt to injustice.

One of the current issues that the area of Brixton and the Lambeth Borough are fighting is gentrification. Since the 1990s, slow redevelopment in the Brixton area and opening of pop-up cafes, bars and art galleries are slowly taking over the local businesses. In Lambeth, housing vacancy is very low at 1.2\% (2015), while 2/3 of the housing is being rented (64.2\%), which shows the popularity of the area by new and transient population. Households are mainly families (31.5\%) or couples (11\%), with a third being occupied by people living alone (31\%).

Two thirds of Lambeth’s residents, who are of working age, have finished secondary education or have a higher-level degree (65\%); while only 6.2\% of residents have no professional qualifications at all. The average annual salary in Lambeth is at £33,441, while the median price of a house is £450,000.\textsuperscript{27} Finally, it is important to mention that unemployment among the borough’s total population is at 5.9\%, while the actively employed reach 78.5\%.

The above history and demographics show some glimpses of Brixton’s strong identity, based on which the Brixton Pound emerged and aimed to support even further. Brixton’s high street and local market have been a core of Brixton’s identity and local economy. However, over the last decade, a lot of national and global retail brands have started replacing local businesses on Brixton’s high street. Thus, a rising concern for long-time residents of Brixton has been gentrification, as well as the increase in prices and the displacement that follows it. These concerns have surfaced as occasional anti-gentrification protests\textsuperscript{28} and general discussions on how urban change can be inclusive, positive, and responsible.\textsuperscript{29}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{24} London Datastore, “London Borough Profiles and Atlas.”
\textsuperscript{26} John.
\textsuperscript{27} London Datastore, “London Borough Profiles and Atlas.”
\textsuperscript{29} Binky Taylor, Shane Duncan, and Linda Quinn, Where’s there’s a Pret, there’s a ... - Brixton, interview by Ann Storr, Impact Hub Brixton, January 2018, https://brixton.impacthub.net/2018/01/24/wheres-theres-a-pret-theres-a/.
\end{flushright}
Brixton Pound emerged at the core of those concerns and discussions, and for the last decade aims to support local businesses and economy to stick to Brixton.

Challenges & Sustainability

The initiative has been active for a decade, despite the challenges it has faced, which could have easily made it disappear. Given the long history of Brixton Pound and its ongoing evolution in its activities, the challenges it faced earlier on are different to the ones it is facing now. Earlier challenges were related to the currency and its logistics, while now the group is facing larger structural changes of diversifying and being sustainable. Firstly, the challenges are explored as they relate to the currency and then present challenges of Brixton Pound as a practice altogether.

One of the first challenges of the currency was to encourage local businesses in accepting the community currency and to establish its legal status with the council. Brixton Pound worked closely with Lambeth council to overcome legal challenges and create incentives for businesses to use it. One of those incentives was the ability to pay council taxes in Brixton Pound. That allowed for a lot of businesses to buy into the premise.

Most of other community currencies have been in suburban or rural communities. In such environments, local currencies make more sense because there is not only consumption but also local production. Brixton Pound on the other hand has been one of the first currencies to operate in a highly urban area. That has been challenging as it is more difficult to operate a local currency in places like London with stronger economic forces and corporate domination. As one of Brixton Pound’s participant described:

“Brixton really shouldn’t be a place where this kind of project works, because you know, they tend to be in places where they can produce more, grow more, you know, that’s where you can really play with the economy. Here is more difficult because in London, you know, it’s like the economic forces are much bigger. There’s less potential for like local things because the corporate kind of world, kind of dominates. But yeah it was just people who wanted to do something
in, they want to show a sustainability project in Brixton, I think, they wanted to do something right in the middle of the city, which maybe didn’t make sense. But certainly it captured people’s attention.”

Working within an urban environment has also made it quite challenging to expand the network of exchange, and a lot of people see it more of a branding scheme, rather than an actual community currency with significant circulation. Even though over 300 businesses have been accepting the Brixton pound, as they say they “have not been inundated with customers using it”. Hence, even though businesses caught on the idea quite quickly because of its promotional value, it has been more difficult for individuals to buy into the community currency concept. To overcome this challenge the Brixton Pound initiative has tried different strategies, one of which was the fact that council employees are able to receive part of their salary in Brixton Pounds. Moreover, they quickly evolved the currency to adopt an electronic form as well, so that they can increase diffusion and remove barriers of people needing to access the physical notes. Brixton Pound has also experimented with the idea of using the electronic system to expand exchange between other community currencies within the Transition Town Network that are located in rural areas.

Beyond increasing circulation, another challenge is being able to measure it accurate economic terms, and thus being able to assess success or identify potential improvements. Moreover, the electronic pay-by-text system, which was established back in 2011, was proven to have a lot of technical challenges almost a decade later. To address this issue, Brixton Pound has decided to recall all their currency and slowly transition to a blockchain system. Blockchain is an electronic system that works as “an open, distributed ledger that can record transactions between two parties efficiently and in a verifiable and permanent way.” In that way Brixton Pound will operate in a more stable manner, and potentially be able to measure the success of the network.

Besides the currency hurdles, the organization itself has faced organizational challenges in the ten years of its operation. As it is common with most of sharing culture practices, one of the main obstacles Brixton Pound had to overcome was financial and spatial security. Aiming to have presence on the high street, at the heart of Brixton, has not been easy to achieve with constantly increasing rents. That becomes evident from the fact that the initiative has already relocated three times. Moreover, finding a large enough space, where they can take on more projects than just the currency has been daunting. Finally, as the group keeps expanding their operations beyond the currency, communicating what they do has been an intricate task. Getting across their goal of benefiting the community of Brixton at large, has been a difficult message to communicate in order to draw more people to engage with them.

Chapter 05: Case Studies

Value of Community Currencies

The mission of Brixton Pound, through both the currency and their other initiatives, has been to support the livelihood and resilience of local businesses and community members within Brixton, as well as to raise awareness regarding the local Brixton economy. The initiative has engaged with a large audience, from businesses and organizations, to residents. Thus, those involved recognize the diverse benefits they get from their participation in the initiative. Interview participants were asked to identify what kind of needs they satisfy through their participation in the initiative through an engaging exercise (the results of which can be seen in Figure 5.96 and Figure 5.97). Below the most popular answers are being described:

Supporting local economy & businesses: The main value of Brixton Pound, as any community currency, is to support the local economy by supporting local businesses, goods, and services. This is engraved in Brixton Pound’s mission, which aims to ‘make money stick to Brixton’. The goal of any local currency is to allow for a specific pool of money to stay within the region, and not fly in national and global markets. Nevertheless, Brixton Pound has done more than just circulate money locally; it has provided free advertisement to local businesses. Brixton Pound has put a spotlight on local businesses that are accepting the currency, by advertising them on local newspapers and through listings on the mobile application. In a time when local businesses are competing with large chain stores on the high street, bringing them visibility is crucial. As a local business owner mentioned:

“Our business has really benefited from being part of the Brixton Pound. It’s done a great thing for the community; they’ve promoted local businesses for free.”

Empowerment, agency & spark creativity: Brixton Pound has also managed to empower people and businesses in many ways. Firstly, the local currency has allowed people to be innovative and try new things by making money work for them. Based on one of the people involved with Brixton Pound:

“The beauty of local currency is that there is this space to innovate and find new ways to make it work for people. The B£ is a trailblazer and we are not going to just sit back and watch the currency do its thing. Local currencies are an adaptive behavior project as much as anything else, and it is not like there is a blueprint that we are following. (…) The B£ is perhaps more powerful as an idea than it’s ever likely to be as an economic lever. And here’s why: once you’ve bought real stuff, from a real person, in a real shop, on a real high street, with money as unreal as the Brixton Pound… What else is possible beyond that? The Brixton Pound is a wonderful totem of possibility.”

Secondly, they have provided tangible funding, through the Brixton Bonus and the Brixton Fund, to local initiatives and organizations that work on employment, social justice, and


(35) Caldwell.

communitiy benefit. Through this process several creative initiatives have managed to take off and test new ideas. Thirdly, Brixton Pound has created programs like the Pop Brixton Community Investment Scheme, through which local businesses trade skills with local community groups, organizations, and schools. This scheme has created a flow of information and skills through local community networks empowering businesses, local organizations, and individuals alike. Lastly, the more recent café space has created an affordable space for people to come, meet, exchange ideas, and organize events. This space has become an opportunity for resident groups to form, that wouldn’t be able to do so otherwise.

Creating inclusive spaces & building local networks: Even though the Brixton Pound initiative is all about the local economy and empowering residents, its core value lies on the relationships it builds within the community. The Brixton Pound is not just about the currency, it is really an opportunity for people from different walks of life to interact through transactions, meetings, workshops, exchanges. When talking about the success of the project, one of the interviewees highlighted:

“But I’d say really, it (Brixton Pound) has been very successful in building, strengthening, and maintaining relationships between all sorts of different people who wouldn’t necessarily have existed otherwise. And it plays its role in quite a contested local environment where people really don’t trust the council, for various reasons, some justified, some probably unjustified. And there’s no other institution really that has kind of stated Brixton-specific social purpose, that such a wide number of people would actually trust.”

Building on the trust and relationships it has created, having a space where people can meet, interact, and exchange ideas has been at the core of the organization. This contrasts with other community currencies in the area, which focus more on facilitating transactions rather than building relationships. Hence, creating the café and making it accessible to everyone in the community was important for the organization. The pay-what-you-can model allows anyone to walk in the café, have a drink or snack, and engage with the weekly activities. As one of the interviewees described:

(37) For example, the community currency in the London Borough of Hackney, called Coru, is just an electronic app that allows for people to trade, and has no physical aspect to it.
“I think it’s bridging a gap between one type of Brixton, and one type of community and another... I mean we’re able to allow people in (...) and there’s a lot of people, you know, that feel a bit scared going in a café that’s over, you know, really expensive and whatever, (...) and it’s another thing to come here, and we make it a friendlier space, you know, when people come in you say hello, how are you?, what are you doing today?, and that kind of thing. And we have regulars who come in everyday, who don’t feel at home necessarily in other places. And I really like that.”

Raising awareness & learning: Brixton Pound has created a space, both physical and metaphorical, where people can discuss about the economy and community. The initiative has raised awareness about how people’s daily shopping decisions can have a positive effect in their community. Moreover, Brixton Pound has given people the opportunity to democratize money and imagine things that might have thought of impossible. Beyond awareness about the economy and money, Brixton pound has also created real learning opportunities. The café offers daily new opportunities for individuals to learn new skills from others, and the business network has provided formal and informal skill-exchange educational programs.

Furthermore, the creation of Brixton Pound has also been a learning experience, as everyone involved had to come up with ideas, experiment and test them, learn, and evolve. This learning experience was not unique just to the founders and team of Brixton Pound, but to other organizations involved as well, with Lambeth council being one of them. For the council, creating a community currency, overcoming legal challenges, and dealing with social enterprises has been something new back in 2009. As one of the interviewees mentioned:

“And it was actually in about 2012, that we were invited to have an office in the town hall for free. Because of the topic, so I think they wanted to learn from us, in terms of like social enterprise and community building.”

Uniqueness & local identity: The initiative was built on strong branding and identity; the Brixton Pound notes carry symbols and personalities related to Brixton and its graphic designs have become widely recognizable. Brixton Pound has been covered by international media, bringing more attention to Brixton’s unique identity. Ergo, the identity of the area

(38) Urban, “Why Should Anyone Bother with the Brixton Pound?”
and of Brixton Pound have been in a closed loop. The rebellious identity of Brixton has been feeding the success of the community currency, and in return, Brixton Pound has been bringing even more attention to the unique area that is Brixton. As one of the interviewees mentioned:

“Brixton Pound has no doubt contributed to some of the economic notoriety of Brixton. I couldn’t take any, you know, you couldn’t take any, all the credit for that. Probably take a small amount of it, but certainly, you know, you would associate it with you know some of the businesses, you know, that have become very successful at it. And it definitely has a great success in just putting Brixton on the map. Because of its, because of its notoriety.”

Brixton Pound’s Spatial Documentation

The building(s)

Brixton Pound has changed a few locations before settling in its current space of the café.

2009 – 2015: Initially it was operating from people’s houses and cafés, and later shared a rent-free space with other Transition Town projects. Eventually at 2012, the council offered them a space in the town hall to allow for mutual learning between them. The initiative was housed in the town hall for about three years, before it moved to a space on a commercial street in October 2015.

2015 – 2016: The space they moved to in 2015, which was called the Brixton Pound Shop (Figure 5.92, Figure 5.99), was their first attempt to be visible to the community that uses the currency and expand the ways they engage with residents and businesses beyond the currency. The Brixton Pound Shop was located under the arches of the railway, taking the place of a deli. The arches were to be renovated back in 2016 by NetworkRail, and a lot of the local businesses housed in them would have to relocate in the meantime. Some of them had chosen not to return, as there would be significant increases in rent prices (between 25%-100%). During the announcement and consultations for the renovation process, the deli decided to close, leaving the space empty for a little less than a year. The Brixton Pound took that opportunity to locate its activities in the heart of Atlantic Road, a commercial street, even for a short while (Figure 5.98). The Brixton Pound Shop stayed there until the summer of 2016, when they moved to their current space of the Brixton Pound Café further down the road.

The shop was an interesting experiment for Brixton Pound, as they had the opportunity to engage with local people on a daily one-to-one basis and host public events. Their aim was to interact with people, regardless of them using the currency, discuss about their community and how to best benefit it. In the shop, one could exchange sterling for Brixton Pounds, buy t-shirts, mugs, and swag with Brixton Pound branding, but also stick around for a chat and a hot beverage, and learn how to start their own community initiative. The space, which was quite small (about 44 m$^2$), had seating and tables, for anyone who would like to stay and work from the shop alongside the staff, using their wi-fi. From the outside, the Shop was quite visible with bright-colored Brixton Pound logos and branding (Figure 5.99). There was also a bench for people to stop and sit for a while, as well as an A-frame board welcoming people in and informing about potential events. The Shop was located just around the corner from the subway station, with high foot traffic on its doorstep.

2016 – Present (2019): Following their necessary move out of the Brixton Pound Shop due to the renovation, the group moved further down the road, just a 4-minute walk away, to their current location. Even though the two locations are on the same street, Atlantic Road turns a lot quieter the further away one travels from the subway station. Hence, the new location of the Café has less foot traffic than the Shop used to have. During the move, they were also looking for a slightly bigger space. Even though the Shop was a great opportunity for them to be more visible, the space was quite small to host a wider range of activities.

The Brixton Pound Café, with its 97 m$^2$ over two floors offers a lot more flexibility than the Shop. The ground floor (56 m$^2$) is where the café is located, while in the basement there is a flexible studio space (41 m$^2$). Moving across the café and towards the back of the ground floor are the kitchen, the bar, a toilet, and the stairs that take you to the studio space. The kitchen and the bar were installed in the space by the initiative itself. They wanted to turn the space into a café, rather than keeping the previous form of the Shop, so that people have a
reason to come, visit, and hang out. The kitchen is a separate room on the back, but the bar is open with a volunteer usually serving. The café aims to save surplus food from going to the landfill and operates with food donations from a local organization, City Harvest; thus, the menu is different each day. On one of the café’s walls, there are two large blackboards; one of them shows the daily menu of the café, and the other one shows a weekly calendar with all the events taking place in the space (Figure 5.110, Figure 5.113). The opposite wall usually hosts artwork by local artists, which rotate every other month (Figure 5.113). The space is full of colors and plants, vibrating a friendly and welcoming ambiance. The basement is quite plain with white walls and a concrete floor, allowing for groups hosting events to adapt it according to their needs (Figure 5.112). Some of the activities that have taken place in the basement are life drawing classes, art exhibitions, yoga, reiki. Under the stairs, there is one of the few spaces for storage of chairs, stools etc.

Both spaces can be booked by local groups to host events. The basement studio can be booked throughout the day, while the café space is available for bookings after 6.00 pm, when the café closes. The space hosts all kinds of activities, from cultural events, such as art exhibitions, music concerts, film nights, and a community choir, to classes and learning sessions, such as knitting, food processing, jewelry making, life drawing, tech workshops, and art classes for kids. It also hosts well-being related sessions, such as yoga, reiki, community osteopathy, a healing circle, and digital wellbeing workshops. Most of the events are free or pay-what-you-can. Finally, groups can book the space for pop-up dining events, socials, and even private parties. Usually, the groups using the space will clean and lock up after they’re gone. They also have the option to hire someone from the staff to be there as a host or cater, if they’d like.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List of Rooms</th>
<th>Spatial Descriptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cafeteria</td>
<td>Spacious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen</td>
<td>Friendly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bar</td>
<td>Welcoming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toilet</td>
<td>Cozy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basement Studio Space</td>
<td>Dynamic &amp; adaptable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Threshold Space**

The café is located on Atlantic road, further south from the subway station, where it becomes quieter on car and foot traffic. It is also located towards the end of the commercial and the beginning of the residential part of the street. The entrance to the café is through a beautiful art nouveau façade, which has been complimented with Brixton Pound’s branding and logos, just like the Shop. A message on the glass façade informs people passing by, that it is a pay-what-you-can community café salvaging surplus food. An A-frame outside the door informs about the day’s menu and events, prompting people to walk in (Figure 5.114). The sidewalk in front of the café is quite small, so it does not allow for a lot of spillover from the inside out.

The café is located on a T intersection, with a perpendicular residential street leading direct-
ly on the shop, making it more visible (Figure 5.102). The Visibility Graph Analysis (VGA) realized on ¼ and ¾ mile radiuses from Brixton Pound’s space, based on Space Syntax’s methodology, showcases intervisiblity of the space within the urban context (Figure 5.101). This process analyzes how visible each point in space is from every other point and creates a ‘heat-map’ highlighting high, medium, and low visibility areas, based on built obstacles that reach the eye level, without taking into consideration lower obstacles or topography. This analysis demonstrates that the main façade of the space is quite visible. Moreover, the hatched areas with black lines are the isovists of the café’s entrance. An isovist is defined as “the area in a spatial environment directly visible from one point”. The isovists of Brixton Pound’s entrance illustrate that it is visible both while walking on the main street of Atlantic Road, and even more when you’re coming from the perpendicular residential street towards Atlantic Road. The glass façade of the space allows people passing by to pick through and see what is happening inside. During warm weather days, the door is also left open, allowing people to walk in. Even when the café is closed, it still makes itself quite present, as a large graffiti is decorating its roller shutters (Figure 5.102).

(40) Benedikt, “To Take Hold of Space”; Al_Sayed et al., Space Syntax Methodology.
Chapter 05: Case Studies

Urban Context

An extensive analysis of the urban neighborhood around Brixton Pound is realized on ¼ and ¾ mile radiuses from the café’s space (5- and 15-minutes walking). The goal of the urban scale analysis is to explore potential attributes of the contextual urban space necessary for sharing culture initiatives to emerge and flourish.

On the first scale (1/4 mile), four variables were explored: percentage of Built Area, Floor to Area Ratio (FAR), Land Use and Transit Stops. The percentage of Built Area and FAR are used to demonstrate built density in the area. These maps are further supported by a spatial analysis using the Space Syntax methodology on a ¾ mile radius from the practice.\(^{41}\) The space syntax methodology is described in the methodology chapter, but here I briefly mention the main metrics of the maps developed:

- **Step Depth from Commercial Uses**: highlights how close the practice is to a commercial core, not just by mere distance but by the actual shortest angular paths in the neighborhood. The lowest the depth of a location, the easiest it is to access the local commercial cores.

- **Step Depth from Transit Stops**: highlights how well connected is the area with public transportation and how close the practice is to transit stops based on the shortest angular path. The lowest the depth of a location from the transit stops, the better connected it is to public transit.

- **Segment Angular Choice**: highlights how likely someone is to pass through a specific street segment in an urban network compared to all other segments. Choice analysis has been shown to produce a good “correlation with observed vehicular flow” thus becoming a good indicator of street segments with increased foot and vehicular traffic.\(^{42}\) The highest the angular choice of a location, the higher its potential for vehicular and potential foot traffic.

\(^{41}\) Hillier, *Space Is the Machine*; Hillier and Hanson, *The Social Logic of Space.*

\(^{42}\) Turner, “From Axial to Road-Centre Lines.”
Segment Angular Integration: highlights how integrated a location is; high integrated locations are usually considered to be the core of the city with mainly commercial and communal uses, while more segregated spaces tend to be more residential.

Built Cover & Density: Based on Figure 5.103, the adjacent urban area has a built percentage of 38.9% and a built Floor to Area Ratio (FAR) of 1.20. That showcases a medium to low built density, and thus highlights longer distances between residents within the neighborhood.

Land Use and Transit Access: The neighborhood has mixed land uses, mainly residential and commercial. Brixton’s housing stock includes housing estates as well as Victorian buildings. There are a couple of open green spaces within the ¼ mile radius, such as St Matthew’s Garden, Windrush Square, and Brixton Hill. Right at the edge of the ¼ mile radius but within the ¼ mile radius, towards the Northeast of the café, there is also the Loughborough Park and Wyck Gardens. Wyck Gardens host the Loughborough Community Farm and Café, with which Brixton Pound has collaborated in the past. The breakdown of the land uses for the ¼ mile radius is: 56.8% residential, 17.6% commercial, 4.8% industrial (storage and railway spaces), and 3.1% public open (Figure 5.105). The location of Brixton Pound is in a highly commercial area, as well as near people’s homes.

Generally, the area scores 97/100 on the walk score, which indicates that it is very walkable, and most errands can be accomplished on foot. Beyond walkability, there are 30 bus stops within 5-minutes walking from Brixton Pound, located mainly on the high street and Atlantic road. One of the bus stops is located exactly outside the café. Within the 5-minutes walking radius, there is also a subway station and a train railway station which serves trains traveling to the southeast of UK (Figure 5.104). The area is quite well connected, and the subway station and bus stops make it easier for people to travel in different areas of greater London.

Figure 5.104: Transportation map on a ¼ mile radius (on the left) & Step Depth from Transit Stops on a ⅔ mile radius (on the right. On the legend, the black rectangle highlights where the location of Brixton Pound falls in the area’s scale of Step Depth from transit stops)

Chapter 05: Case Studies

Based on the Step Depth analysis from commercial uses and transit stops some brief conclusions are provided below. The Step Depth of Brixton Pound’s location from transit stops is moderately high, which means that the path to a nearby bus stop from the cafe is very short and with few angles, compared to other areas within a ¾ mile radius. Thus, it is very easy to access a bus stop or a subway station from the location of the cafe.

The Step Depth of Brixton Pound from commercial uses is also high, which means that the path to the nearby commercial hub is short and accessible, compared to other areas within a ¾ mile radius. That is quite self-evident, as the cafe is located at the end of Brixton’s commercial hub.

Local Exposure: Space Syntax’s angular segment choice analysis within the larger area around the cafe (3/4-mile radius) demonstrates how much movement passes through each street segment based on the calculation of all trips between all other street segments on the map. On this analysis (Figure 5.106), the areas with higher choice (darker color) attract more vehicular and potentially pedestrian traffic compared to lower choice (lighter color).

By cross-referencing the map with street-view photos from Google Streets (Figure 5.108), it is evident that high and medium choice streets have more vehicular and pedestrian traffic, with active building frontages and commercial uses. In contrast, low choice streets, are mainly residential with low vehicular and pedestrian traffic, but lots of street parking for residents.

(44) The step depth of the street segment in front of the nursery, from transit nodes, is calculated to 7 in a distribution with a minimum of 0 (0 value have the locations of the transit stops), a maximum of 51 (the maximum value shows the point that is cumulatively the furthest from all transit stops taking into consideration distance and angle) and with a standard deviation of 5.64.

(45) The step depth of the street segment in front of the nursery, from commercial nodes, is calculated to 5 in a distribution with a minimum of 0 (0 value have the locations of the commercial nodes), a maximum of 67 (the maximum value shows the point that is cumulatively the furthest from all commercial uses taking into consideration distance and angle) and with a standard deviation of 10.73.
Figure 5.106: Angular Segment Choice Analysis on a ¾ mile radius:
This map shows how much movement passes through each street segment based on the calculation of all trips between all other street segments on the map. On this global analysis, the areas with higher choice attract more vehicular and potentially pedestrian traffic. (On the legend, the black rectangle highlights where the location of Brixton Pound falls in the area’s choice scale)

Figure 5.107: Angular Segment Integration Analysis on a ¾ mile radius:
This map shows how easy it is to access street segments in the area around the center, which means how segregated or integrated they are. (On the legend, the black rectangle highlights where the location of Brixton Pound falls in the area’s integration scale)

Figure 5.108: Streets around Brixton Pound with different levels of angular segment choice:
1. high choice
2. medium choice
3. low choice
Source: Google street views
Chapter 05: Case Studies

Brixton Pound is located on a street with medium traffic and medium through-movement compared to other areas within a ¾-mile radius around it. Given the strong colorful branding on the café’s façade, people walking by are drawn to the café and can look inside to see what’s happening. However, interviewees mentioned that people who haven’t heard about Brixton Pound might still not understand what the café is, just by walking by. Nevertheless, for someone who is familiar with Brixton Pound from its online reach and strong visual branding, it is very easy to find and quickly spot it while walking down the street. People who visit Brixton Pound are either residents from the surrounding area or probably know about it before they visit.

Integration: The Angular Segment Integration analysis, on the other hand, illustrates how easy it is to access all street segments in the area around Brixton Pound, showing segregated and well-integrated areas (Figure 5.107). Integration is different than choice, as it shows movement to a specific place rather than movement-through. Hence, even though some streets might be low in choice and have little traffic, they can be of mid or high integration, meaning that they are easy to access. The streets around Brixton Pound are all mid to high integration; thus, they are easily accessible, and people who know about the café beforehand, do not have a problem getting there.

Spatial Findings

Based on interviews with people from Brixton Pound, as well as interviews and articles reviewed from online sources, and through the documentation of their space, there are some important findings regarding the space the practice is currently occupying. Overall, they are happy with their space and they appreciate their ability to be in the commercial hub of Brixton. Their main concern regarding the space is the fear of having to relocate again, or not being able to afford it in some way. Going beyond spatial descriptions, it is important to identify specific findings regarding the space as it relates to the cooperative and sharing nature of the practice. Findings are presented one by one with discussion and per scale of exploration, building, threshold, and urban.

Building Scale Findings

01. Food preparation area:

One of the core aspirations of the Brixton Pound group, even before the café, was to be able to have a space that becomes a community hub. The reason they wanted to leave from the town hall in the first place was to be able to create an inclusive space, where people can gather and interact. A place where people, who wouldn't normally meet, come together; a place, where chance encounters take place. That was the goal behind the Shop and the reason it was important to be on the high street. As they wrote on one of their blog posts back then:

“In the shop, we’re providing information about Brixton and the Brixton Pound, as well as exchanging pounds sterling into Brixton Pounds, selling Brixton Bonus tickets, mint condition Brixton Pound notes and Brixton Pound t-shirts. And, more importantly, we want the shop to be a community-focused space. We want to know what you, the community members, would like to see on the Brixton high street. Would you like to run a workshop, host an event in the space, or have other ideas for using it for community benefit? We want to show that a different
Figure 5.109: Photos of the Brixton Café’s bar

Photo credits: left, Brixton Pound website, right Mike Urban (“Brixton Buzz Recommends: The Brixton Pound Cafe Where You Pay What You Can for Delicious Food and Drink,” Brixton Buzz News)

Figure 5.110: Images from the inside of the café space from a visit in October, 2018

Figure 5.111: Different events hosted in Brixton Pound Cafe: an art making session, a pin-drop session in the café space, a blues live session in the basement studio

Photo credits: top left, Brixton Pound Facebook page, bottom left, LaLaLa Records twitter account – right, Blues Project (“Winter Party,” Hope for the Young, Feb, 2019)

Figure 5.112: The basement space

Photo credits: on the left, Brixton Pound’s Facebook page, on the right, E. Katrini
To attract people, the group hosted occasional events and offered daily hot beverages and custard tarts. Nevertheless, the shop did not have a kitchen and was limited to what they could do. Moreover, because it was not really a coffee place, people who didn’t want to acquire Brixton Pounds wouldn’t necessarily think to walk in. That was one of the main reasons the idea of the café was born.

In the new space, the kitchen and bar installation were the largest investment and adaptation the group did (Figure 5.109). The café with food and drinks offers an excuse for people to walk in casually and thus learn about all the community events, the local currency, and meet others from their neighborhood. By making it a pay-what-you-can scheme, the café becomes accessible to everyone, no matter what their financial status is. Moreover, now when a community event takes place in the space, the access to a food and drink preparation area highly complements the events themselves; groups can host socials and parties with food, while during a concert people can have snacks. Food does become a common denominator that brings people together.

Finally, the kitchen has also allowed the emergence of sharing food practices and an environmental approach to food. The café has focused on salvaging surplus food from the landfill, rather than buying food through traditional streams. By practicing this daily, the café also teaches its regulars how to save food by themselves at home. Workshops on techniques of food preservation, such as making pickles, are not rare. Sometimes, café regulars also donate fruits and vegetables that they have surplus of, expanding the network of food sharing in the area. As one of the interviewees mentioned:

“It has been really really good. And yes, for example this morning, someone, an individual who dropped us a whole bag of food that they didn’t want. I mean I really like that, that they consider us rather than let it go to waste. I think it’s brilliant.”

Moreover, people start thinking about being resourceful and meeting their catering needs locally with whatever is available, rather than buying food from national chains. The Brixton pound Café has been asked a couple of times to cater for small local events with the surplus food they are saving. Thus, by having a kitchen the organization has managed to slowly shift perceptions about food towards more sustainable habits of sharing and not wasting food. In 2019, the café’s efforts have been recognized by winning the “Good Food For All” award by the Mayor of London.

02. Capacity & granularity

One of the spatial achievements of the café, compared to the initiative’s previous spaces, is its capacity combined with the fact that it expands over two separate floors. The two floors combined can host up to 120 people, allowing for a variety of events to take place, from small to large (Figure 5.111). Most importantly, the granularity of the two separate spaces, allows for parallel events to take place, thus expanding the programmatic capacity of the...


initiative on a weekly basis. By allowing parallel events to take place, interesting synergies emerge. For example, the life drawing classes, which take place in the basement studio, can enjoy the community choir happening at the same time on the ground floor space. Furthermore, with the basement studio, the Brixton Pound can host community events throughout the day, without interrupting the operation of the café, but rather bringing more people through their door. Why not meet up with a friend for a yoga class at the studio, and then pop up for a beverage and a chat? The granularity of the space, along with the parallel activities that it affords, allows for more chance encounters to happen, and thus thickens the network of relationships within the community.

03. Appropriation & Feeling of Belonging

As a community café, which operates on a pay-what-you-can basis, Brixton Pound aims to be a space that is accessible to everyone. Towards that end, they have appropriated the space not only to meet their own needs, but also to make it feel more welcoming, friendly, and cozy (Figure 5.113). A place that vibrates the unique identity of Brixton and Brixton Pound, while making people comfortable to come in, have a cup of tea, chat or work. As one of the interviewees mentioned:

"The other thing about this space, it's still, we try to keep it as a cozy space, but it's also a space that we can have quite radical conversations still. It is still a place where you can have ideas and go with them, and you know people talking about... I mean it's not for business day, but there's all kind of stuff going on and I really like that."

To make the space more welcoming, the group has filled the space with colorful objects and plants. The furniture looks like it was brought in from someone’s living room, making visitors feel at home. The walls are decorated by beautiful works of art from local artists. When someone walks in, the staff greets them and welcomes them in.

Threshold Scale Findings

01. Strong visual identity & communication:

Brixton Pound has used visual branding as one of the main ways for communication with the local community. Starting as a local currency, it seemed logical to build a strong, recognizable visual identity that will help the currency become popular and widely recognized. However, it was also important that the currency’s visual identity would emerge from the Brixton area and places that are familiar to the locals. Indeed, the currency notes were designed in a way that drew from local culture, places, and people of Brixton. On the notes, one can find faces of famous people who lived in Brixton, such as David Bowie, Luol Deng, and Violette Szabo, to patterns of known buildings, sculptures, landmarks, and parts of popular wall murals in the neighborhood (Figure 5.91, Figure 5.116). The visual branding helped Brixton Pound become part of the area’s pop culture.

Since its conception and design, this visual identity has been used widely both inside and outside the café to inform people as to where they can access Brixton Pound. In the café, the visual branding is on the menus, on the mugs, and the wall. Outside the café, one can follow Brixton Pound by the branding stickers outside the businesses accepting it. Moreover, a funky ATM in Market Row with Brixton Pound’s visual branding can turn one’s
Chapter 05: Case Studies

Figure 5.113: Images from the inside of the café space showing different types of appropriation from plants, to notice boards, salvaged furniture, and artists’ exhibition wall

---

Photo credits: on the left, Brixton Pound website, on the right, Mike Urban (Brixton Buzz News, October 3, 2018)

Figure 5.114: Different type of signage welcoming people to Brixton Pound: top left, the door’s branding – top right, the sign on the window façade – bottom left, a seasonal sign made with stencil and spray on the sidewalk marking Brixton Pound’s entrance as part of the Brixton Design Trail – bottom, right, the A-frame outside the door

---

Photo credits: top left, E. Katrini – top right, Brixton Pound’s Facebook page – bottom left, Yelp photos – bottom right, London Design Festival Twitter account

Figure 5.115: Several images of different types of visual branding for the Brixton Pound

---

sterling in Brixton Pounds. The diffusion of the practice’s visual branding within the local area, has allowed for non-verbal interactions between the initiative and local residents, thus raising awareness about what they do. Although a lot of people might not use the currency, they most likely know it exists. As one of the interviewees mentioned regarding the brand of Brixton Pound:

“The Brixton Pound is completely meshed in relationships. Without them it doesn’t exists. So, the currency is part of that, and the currency is a very, very strong brand, like it’s actually remarkable how strong it is. It is like internationally reasonably well-known. I mean there are articles on NY Times about it, like you have people buying these things from another part of the world.”

02. Porosity & Transparency:

Brixton Pound’s café is a porous and transparent space. The large glass façade allows for people to peek in the space and see what is happening before entering. After peeking through, some of them walk in to ask about the space and the practice. Moreover, the large blackboard calendar with weekly events located right next to the entrance, allows for people to see even from the outside what is happening in the space. The ability of people to see inside the café, combined with the fact that it is located close to other commercial spaces, allows for locals to know about the space, and thus interact with it either by stopping by for a hot beverage and a snack, attending an event, or even volunteering their time.

Urban Scale Findings

01. Integration & embeddedness:

The most important aspects of the Brixton Pound lie on the urban scale findings. Even though the initiative started as a local currency, its mission transformed overtime to a broader message of “Reimagining Urban Communities” as one of the interviewees mentioned. This transition in mission aligned with the changes in location as well. Brixton Pound evolved from developing a local currency in the town hall, mostly hidden from the public eye, to having a community space in the heart of the high street. Their conscious decision of where they should be located was highly discussed during interviews and brought up important points about community spaces within the city. For example, one of the inter-
viewees pointed out:

“Yet we designed our town centers to just be about commerce, and that is, I think, a huge mistake, and has serious, kind of, implications for public health, you know, loneliness, you know all these kind of things. Uhm, creating like empathy between different people is why you know, we have a really divided and unequal, uhm, city of London. And so for us it’s like really important that we can do this work here in the middle of town because we don’t want to be somewhere which is difficult for people to come to. Why should community initiatives have to, you know, exist on the outside of where the city center should be like where people interact, come and socialize, play, all those kind of things, not just consume. So yeah we want to be, I think having a good location is important for that. And I think if I have to go somewhere else, I mean, yeah, of course it’s nice to go somewhere big. The bigger you are the more you can do, the more you can like bring people in, you can, you know. I would be happy with this.”

When sharing culture practices operate within cities, alongside neoliberal markets, they struggle to find spaces and pay rents. This reality leads them to operate opportunistically, locating themselves on the fringes, in spaces they can afford. The city has become a space of financial competition and consumption, pushing community initiatives and common spaces for all, further outside, away from the public eye. What that eventually does, is turning the majority of city into spaces of exclusion. If the majority of urban spaces and uses are destined for consumption, then eventually there will always be people excluded, people that cannot afford them. The complete lack of inclusive community spaces from the urban centers further extenuates the politics of exclusion.

Thus, Brixton Pound claims that it is part of their mission to physically be part of the high street and the heart of their community. Embeddedness then becomes of high importance for sharing culture initiatives; they need to be embedded to where the everyday life of the community takes place. They need to be part of people’s daily lives and struggles, and not be hidden away.

02. Exposure:

The location of the sharing culture initiatives is thus highly important. If one side of the coin of location is embeddedness, then the other is exposure. There is a double meaning of exposure here, with the first one being the exposure of the sharing culture practice towards the community. When sharing culture initiatives embed themselves in the center of the cities, not only do they become part of people’s daily lives, but also more exposed, and more people learn about them. How can an initiative be valuable to its community if it is hidden away? Sharing culture practices need to be visible to be able to compete with the strong advertisements and presence of commercial uses. Hence, exposure supports the evolution and amplification of a sharing culture practice. An interviewee highlights how community spaces have lost their place within the city from commercial uses, and how they need to reclaim it:

“I mean for us first thing, most important thing is location, so the fact that we’re on the high street, here. Typically, like community initiatives, community spaces they used to be in the center. And then the rents became too crazy. So now, community initiatives have to exist in inconvenient locations or away from the public eye, because everywhere in the center must be a
This quote leads us to the second and more nuanced meaning of exposure, which relates to the urban imaginary. The exposure of sharing culture practices to people and communities through a prominent and visible location, is not only important for the specific practices to grow and amplify, but also for people to imagine that an alternative way of living is possible. Jameson famously said that it is now “easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism.” A prominent location of sharing culture practice and their exposure within urban environments is trying to contradict exactly that notion. Brixton Pound as a local currency and pay-what-you-can community café shows to residents passing by in front or through its doors, that it is possible to interact with others under different terms and not just through financial transactions. Brixton Pound’s prominent location in the city tweaks the imaginary of another world possible beyond capitalism, at the heart of capitalism.

03. Creating a Local Network:

One aspect that is specifically unique with Brixton Pound is the creation of a local network as an intrinsic part of their mission. Brixton Pound is not just a community café, but it is a dynamic network of businesses and individuals who are trusting each other and the organization by using an alternative currency. Thus, to build that trust and support network, the practice needs to be in proximity to the constituents of the network and interact with them casually on a frequent basis. As one of the interviewees and part of the staff mentioned:

“It’s a huge network of lots of different organizations... So, I guess, we collaborate as and when we need to, but try to keep in mind that, you know, that I need to be going out. I mean, with businesses for example, with the Brixton Pound, I need to do a re-engagement exercise and walk around and talk to people. It’s easy, particularly since I’m here 2.5 days, (...) I just need to go out and talk to people.”

The creation of a local network is of high importance to Brixton Pound, as it also helps people interact with the initiative at different locations throughout Brixton (Figure 5.115), either through the businesses, the café, or the ATM at Market Row (Figure 5.117).

---

Conclusion & Limitations

This case study of a community currency and café has provided insights on how to kickstart alternative ways of doing business together towards the benefit of the community and the environment. It shows that it is possible for people to demand an alternative economy, but it takes a village to make it happen. Moreover, it highlighted the importance of community initiatives to be located at the heart of the city to be able to kickstart a creative dialogue about urban neighborhoods that benefit people rather than profit.

The main limitations of this case study relate to the initiative’s ongoing evolution through time in combination with the large gaps between the three interviews realized. Between the first two interviews and the last one, the initiative had changes both in spaces and staff. Thus, the last person to be interviewed was also relatively new to the initiative and did not have much insight to Brixton Pound’s legacy and history. Moreover, the first two interviews realized were part of the exploratory interviews realized in the beginning of this research, and thus did not include the whole list of questions that were asked at the last interview. Finally, the model of the initiative has changed significantly as described earlier, from being just a community currency a decade ago to an active community café and space with a series of activities today.

The above challenges and limitations in realizing this case study were overcome by reviewing significant amount of literature and articles that are publicly available online. Moreover, both spaces that the initiative held (the shop and the café) were visited and documented. Based on those two facts, I managed to represent the evolution of Brixton Pound, both as an organization and as a space, as close to reality as possible along with the forces that shaped it. The only potential caveat of this case study can be the fact that there are not as many in-depth spatial findings as in the previous case studies. This can be attributed equally to both the limitations of this case study, and to reaching a point of saturation in the research.

Finally, it should be mentioned that right at the end of this research – in July, 2019 – Brixton Pound announced it has decided to close and called for people to gather and decide on its exit strategy.
Chapter 06: Sharing Culture Taxonomy, Transitions & Spaces

06 SHARING CULTURE TAXONOMY, TRANSITIONS & SPACES

06.01 Introduction
After the findings of the individual case studies presented with thick description in Chapter 05, the goal of this chapter is to present and interpret the findings from the cross-case analysis. The findings presentation and interpretation will be structured based on the three main lines of inquiry as defined in chapter 01 of this dissertation. The individual cross-case findings are then followed by their synthesis and interpretation through significant literature presented across this dissertation, placing sharing culture into a wider theoretical discussion on sharing, transitions, and space. Specifically, this chapter is structured as followed:

- Findings on Sharing Culture Practices & Taxonomy
- Findings on Sharing Culture Transitions
- Findings on Sharing Culture Spaces
  + Building Scale Findings
  + Threshold Scale Findings
  + Urban Scale Findings
- Setting Sharing Culture, Transitions, and Space into existing theoretical frameworks

06.02 Findings on Sharing Culture Practices & Taxonomy
In this section I present the findings from the case studies as they relate to the first line of inquiry of this dissertation regarding the nature of the sharing culture practices and the value they bring. The are three major findings, which will be presented below one-by-one: the sharing culture practices spectrum, the porous boundaries of sharing culture taxonomy, and the synergistic value of sharing culture. These findings build on the framework of sharing culture taxonomy developed in Chapter 02, and expand on how sharing culture can be part of everyday life and what value it brings.
Sharing Culture Practices Spectrum

Sharing culture practices have been defined through nine identifying principles, which are: sharing, co-management, social relationships, sustainability, resourcefulness, social incentive, local economy, accessibility, and physical presence. These principles were intentionally defined in a way that the terminology of sharing culture could include practices and initiatives that operate within, alongside, and outside of market boundaries. This diversity of sharing practices intentionally uncovers and demonstrates a wealth of economies and ways of collaborating with others in everyday life.

This rationale for sharing culture diversity follows Gibson-Graham’s reframing of the economy as an iceberg (Figure 6.1). The concept of ‘the economy as an iceberg’ visualizes the fact that there are many economic activities within communities that remain invisible-to-economic-theory, and which go beyond the typical wage labor within a capitalist market. According to Gibson-Graham’s framework, everyday life in communities around the world is based on a variety of market, non-market, and alternative market practices. Sharing culture’s diversity expands from non-market to alternative market practices, which can still be true to the not-profit objective, and based on solidarity and reciprocity. Through the diverse economies’ lens, the analysis of the four cases studied, and short investigations of further cases around the world, a spectrum of sharing culture practices becomes evident.

To explore the diversification of sharing culture practices, all cases studied were mapped on a table with the nine identifying criteria of sharing culture (Table 6.1). What becomes apparent is that even though all nine identifying principles of sharing culture are fully or partly fulfilled by the models of the four cases studied, there are two that provide more variation than others. These two principles on which cases varied, were co-management and accessibility. The cases that were more informal commoning practices were more widely accessible to all, with a flatter governance and focus on co-management. In the more formalized collaborative services, accessibility and co-management were important, but conditional on hours of operation, organizational structure and norms. This leads to the conclusion that sharing culture practices expand between commoning practices and collaborative services, based on the following definitions:

- **Commoning practices** can be understood as activities realized for the maintenance and co-production of common resources, and they are inherently flat and more open.

- **Collaborative services** are “structured services that rely on a greater collaboration of individuals” in order to satisfy various daily procedures.

---

1. The description of the identifying principles can be found in detail in chapter 02.
Even though these two typologies are not contradictory to each other, they have certain aspects that vary in the way they operate, which are important to identify. As mentioned above, commoning practices and collaborative services differ between them on two basic identifying principles of sharing culture: co-management and accessibility. Commoning practices aspire to always be accessible to everyone and are intrinsically open to newcomers. Institutions for co-management and co-governance\(^6\) are part of their nature to be able to operate. Thus, they have a flat hierarchy with everyone involved in the decision-making process and at the same time everyone responsible for the practice. On the other hand, in collaborative services the level of access can vary based on the operational structure of the service; hours and days of operation might vary based on the model of the service. Moreover, even though collaboration is also present in the decision making and management of the services, it tends to be more structured. Collaborative services usually operate with staff, and thus operate with a certain level of hierarchy and structure among participants. A service – even a collaborative one – defines specific roles and interactions between the service provider and the recipient.\(^7\) Based on these two principles, we can see that the cases studied as part of this dissertation can expand along a commoning – service spectrum as presented in Figure 6.2.

\(^6\) Ostrom, Governing the Commons.

It is important to mention that sharing culture practices do not stay fixed but can slide along this spectrum in different ways over time. I will explore this notion of the practices' transformation below in the relevant section of findings on transition.

**Sharing Culture Taxonomy**

In chapter 02, the Sharing Culture Taxonomy helped illustrate that sharing culture practices are an internal part of everyday life and helped build a structure for identifying different options, from sharing to non-sharing ones, for satisfying everyday needs. The main taxonomical categories of sharing culture identified are food, shelter, work, caregiving, knowledge, well-being, resources, mobility, and leisure. To further expand on the use of the taxonomy as a tool for identifying different sharing potentials, I will combine it with the sharing culture spectrum, to map different practices across the taxonomical categories on one axis and differentiating them between commoning practices, collaborative services, sharing economy, and mainstream market. This mapping allows us to explore different pathways through which everyday life needs and desires can be satisfied (Figure 6.3).

---

(8) After the case studies analysis, the last taxonomical category of 'other services' is eliminated as the practices included in it can be distributed to all previous categories, leaving the taxonomy with nine categories rather than ten.
This use of the taxonomy supports further understanding and definitions of the nature of sharing culture practices as part of a larger network of economies which one can use to satisfy daily needs. The comparison to mainstream markets and sharing economy highlights the ways in which sharing culture practices differ. Combining the taxonomy with findings from the case studies illustrates that sharing culture initiatives overcome the boundaries of the taxonomic categories to a large extent. Although sharing culture practices might begin with a practice that falls within one of the taxonomic categories, they tend to do a lot more and eventually expand to more than one category. This is a significant difference between sharing culture practices and the mainstream market, which tends to specialize and individualize the market services and goods it offers. Service specialization in the market sector is something quite common as it achieves efficiency on the production side and thus increases profit. However, this can create gaps, externalities, or missed opportunities on the consumption side. Sharing culture initiatives do not have profit and efficiency as their main drivers and tend to negotiate and diversify their activities based on the participants’ needs and desires, thus expanding beyond one single taxonomic category.

To better demonstrate how sharing culture practices expand across taxonomic categories, Table 6.2 documents how the four case studies, realized as part of this research, expand through different taxonomic categories based on their activities.
Synergistic Nature of Sharing Culture

The way sharing culture practices expand across taxonomical categories leads us to a critical finding regarding the first line of inquiry, which is the synergistic value of sharing culture. With Manfred Max-Neef’s framework of Human Scale Development\(^9\) as a springboard about basic human needs, I investigated the potential of sharing culture practices to be synergistic satisfiers. This original hypothesis that sharing culture practices tend to satisfy more than one need at a time has been confirmed through this thesis.

Max-Neef’s framework goes beyond the tangible practices that are identified in the taxonomic categories of this thesis. Max-Neef argues that there are nine non-hierarchical, basic human needs: subsistence, protection, affection, participation, idleness, creation, understanding, identity, and freedom. Moreover, he separated human needs themselves from the way they are being satisfied. The way in which people satisfy their needs are called satisfiers, with each need having more than one satisfier. Max-Neef argued that there are satisfiers of different nature, which can have different outcomes on an individual and collective level. One type of need-satisfiers he identifies are the synergistic ones. Synergistic satisfiers are usually grassroots and tend to satisfy more than one need at a time.

Based on Max-Neef’s framework of satisfiers, I developed the cultural probe of the colorful wheel (described in detail in chapter 04), allowing interviewees to evaluate if and what types of needs they are satisfying through their involvement in the sharing culture practices. The goal of this exercise with the colorful wheel was to identify if sharing culture practices are synergistic satisfiers to human needs or not. Through this creative exercise, participants not only selected from the different pool of needs, but also explained their rationale behind their selections. The outcomes for the human-need satisfaction from these exercises for all four case studies can be seen below in Figure 6.4.

These diagrams showcase clearly that sharing culture practices are indeed synergistic satisfiers to human needs and that social needs such as participation and affection are one of the major needs they tend to satisfy, no matter under what taxonomic category they fall. This synergistic nature

\(^{(9)}\) Max-Neef, *Human Scale Development Conception Application and Further Reflections.*
of sharing culture is also one of its greatest value propositions, as it allows for ‘surviving-well’. Because of the synergies they create, sharing culture practices usually meet most of the essential elements of well-being. The five essential elements of well-being have been identified as material, occupational, social, community, and physical well-being. Participating in a sharing culture practice provides access to resources through sharing to meet one’s needs, provides enjoyment in what one does, builds personal relationships, and becomes part of a community activity, while feeling part of a safe environment. Consequently, the synergistic nature of sharing culture practices significantly contributes to well-being and human happiness.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case study 01 (daycare coop)</th>
<th>Occasional meal sharing among families</th>
<th>Main activity / taxonomic category of the case study: taking care of the children</th>
<th>Parents &amp; staff sharing parenting techniques, but also gardening, building, and other skills</th>
<th>Yoga classes for parents &amp; kids</th>
<th>Parents tend to socialize in and out of the space</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case study 02 (social center)</td>
<td>Impromptu meal sharing &amp; solidarity kitchen</td>
<td>Informally helping people develop skills while they are unemployed</td>
<td>The 2nd main activity of the initiative as they organize many classes, book readings, skill-sharing</td>
<td>Health &amp; exercise activities and classes, as well as gardening</td>
<td>Main activity / taxonomic category of the case study: coming together and socializing with neighbors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case study 03 (refugee housing)</td>
<td>Meal preparation and sharing among participants</td>
<td>Helping refugees to acquire their paperwork and enter the job market</td>
<td>Childcare included in the space and provided for children and families</td>
<td>Realizing classes of languages, music, photography, and other creative activities</td>
<td>Providing medical and pharmaceutical services, organizing sports events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case study 04 (alternative currency)</td>
<td>The pay-what-you-can café service offered affordable food and drinks to everyone &amp; organized meal sharing events</td>
<td>Main activity / taxonomic category of the case study: working &amp; doing business together</td>
<td>Classes of many types of skills &amp; knowledge, as well as informal skill sharing are integral part of this case</td>
<td>Yoga and other well-being classes are part of the café’s activities</td>
<td>Social events, festivals, movie screenings, and daily informal socializing are part of the daily life of this case</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.2: Mapping the four cases studied across the sharing culture taxonomy and showcasing the ways they expand across many taxonomic categories creating synergies
06.03 Findings on Sharing Culture Transitions

Sharing culture practices, just like any other social practice, are neither rigid nor stable in their structure, and they tend to transform over time. Here, I introduce two main categories of findings relating to the second line of inquiry regarding sharing culture practices' transition. The first relates to a type of transformation practices undergo over time, while the second refers to challenges they face in their evolution. These findings are further interpreted in the synthesis section (06.05) of this chapter.

Scaling from within

As previously discussed, sharing culture practices are quite diverse in their activities and tend to expand beyond their initial scope and taxonomic category. This diversification of activities in sharing culture practices is not necessarily part of their initial scope but rather takes place over time. Initially, groups form under a specific scope and negotiate the structure and organization of the practice. As time goes by and the practice solidifies, formalizing its procedures, the group tends to expand their scope and thus satisfy more individual and collective needs.

For example, the case of Brixton Pound started with the scope of an alternative currency to support local identity and economy. The alternative currency has been the group’s main scope for several years. Nevertheless, because they wanted to expand the way they are benefiting the local community, the group created a pay-what-you-can café and is now hosting classes and community events. The diversification in the case of Brixton Pound café seems quite radical, but it can also happen at smaller scales. In the case of the daycare coop, even though the main scope was to take care of the children, the interaction between the parents and staff has also allowed for spin-off activities, such as parties, shared meals, and yoga classes.

The diversification of the practices’ scope is usually an outcome of the interactions between the participants, and the constant renegotiation of their needs and the needs of the wider community. As people become more invested in the practice, they tend to expand its scope and thus leading to a ‘scaling from within’. Identifying ‘scaling from within’ as one of the many ways in which sharing culture practices can evolve is one of the main contributions of this dissertation.

Factors challenging sharing practices’ sustainability

Sharing culture practices – as niche and innovative enterprises – often face significant challenges in diffusing to the wider social landscape, or even just being sustainable over time. Below, I am summarizing the major challenges faced by the cases studied, as well as by a review of a wider pool of cases over the last six years of this research:

- **Spatial precarity within a neoliberal capitalist context**: The greatest challenge faced by sharing culture practices is their precarious position of operating within neoliberal capitalist cities, where there is limited spatial provision for non-profit uses and rents are constantly rising. All the cases studied – that were not squats – struggled with paying rents and had moved several times because of rising rent prices. Nevertheless, even for the squats, maintaining a space is a quite costly. The lack of policies supporting non-profit and collective practices within cities also challenges individuals and groups involved in sharing culture
practices. Moreover, a changing sociopolitical landscape and transient local governments often exacerbate spatial precarity for a sharing practice.

- **Limited policy for cooperative models:** Beyond the lack of spatial provision for cooperative and sharing models, there is also lack of policy regarding the operation of such initiatives. Moreover, in operating within cities, sharing culture initiatives often need to comply with local policies that are mostly relevant to businesses; for example, safeguarding or third-party liability insurance. These limitations stifle the practices’ operations, which rely on shared liability within a cooperative model, where responsibility is distributed. Steps are being taken towards expanding our understanding of laws for sharing, cooperative enterprises by academics\(^\text{11}\) and local governments.\(^\text{12}\)

- **Cultural perceptions:** Beyond challenges to the emergence and sustainability of the practices, there are cultural perception barriers that affect the diffusion of sharing culture within neighborhoods and urban contexts. People are used to service-based modes of exchange in their cities and daily lives, but not used to collective care and shared responsibility. The wider public’s lack of education and exposure to collective and sharing modes of interaction can cause confusion and tension within existing sharing culture practices, becoming a barrier to their diffusion.

- **The strong group identity trap:** Many sharing culture practices owe their sustainability over long periods of time to a dedicated group of participants, who believe in the practices and want to keep them going. In that sense it is the strong identity and dedication of the group that ensures their sustainability within a not always friendly context. However, the strong group identity can become a significant barrier to their diffusion, as it might discourage the participation of others. The typical narrative of ‘local heroes’ driving a practice, which could bring change within a neighborhood, can actually become a barrier to the diffusion of that practice in a wider audience. This notion was also explored, referring to Manzini’s argument about collaborative organizations’ need to have weaker social ties in order to expand, be open, and invite others (chapter 03). Manzini demonstrates how the social tie strength between participants can thus define both the stability of a practice, but also how closed or open it will be.\(^\text{13}\)

### 06.04 Findings on Sharing Culture Spaces

In this section I present the findings from the case studies as they relate to the third line of inquiry of this dissertation regarding the spatial characteristics of sharing culture practices. The individual findings per case study have been documented in chapter 05, but the goal here is to present briefly the cross-case spatial findings based on commonality and importance. The findings will be presented by scale of operation: building, threshold, and urban. These findings become the basis for the synthesis of the spatial patterns of sharing culture in chapter 07.

---


\(^{13}\) Manzini, “Part 2. Collaborative People: 5. Collaborative Encounters.”
Spatial Findings on Building Scale

On the building scale, the spatial findings from the cross-case analysis identify how the space that sharing culture practices occupy, influence them, and in return, how the practices adapt the space. There are five main themes on this bi-lateral relationship between the practices and the spaces they occupy and how it influences their evolution. These themes are presented one by one below:

Building 01 | A food preparation area facilitates social-relation-building

In all cases studied, a food preparation area was documented, and seemed to play a significant role in the development of the sharing culture practices. Even, in cases where there was no kitchen in the space when the group moved in, one was eventually installed. First, having a food preparation area offered the possibility to host a small affordable café-service to contribute to the space’s operational costs, while bringing people through the door to engage with the practice’s overall scope. The café-service becomes a starting point for people, who have not engaged with sharing culture practices before, and are used to more service-like experiences. More importantly, having a kitchen in the space allows people to gather around food – in a formal or informal manner – creating opportunities for social bonding. These encounters over food tend to signify and thicken social relations. As Mary Douglas points out ‘Drinks are for strangers, acquaintances, workmen, and family. Meals are for family, close friends, honored guests. (…) Those we know at meals we also know at drinks. The meal expresses close friendship.’

Building 02 | An open-floorplan, adaptable space enables activity diversification

All cases studied had a main open-floorplan space, that was able to change and adapt to different needs. Since one of the main characteristics of sharing culture practices is the tendency to diversify their activities over time, an adaptable space of a certain capacity is a necessary condition for accommodating their changing spatial needs. The space changes based on the activity, from children classes and skill-sharing sessions, to parties, shared meals, and decision-making assemblies with everyone sitting around in a circle. The more adaptable and flexible the space is, the wider the diversification.

Building 03 | The existence of support spaces can help overcome spatial rivalry

A singular adaptable space for sharing practices, however, is not enough. It often creates scheduling conflicts and prevents different operations from taking place at the same time. The practices that had more than one open-floorplan space – with additional support spaces – were capable of doing more and diversify even further their activities. Moreover, in certain cases the additional support rooms allowed for incubation and testing of ideas by smaller groups that were complementary to the operations of the main sharing culture practice.

Building 04 | Constant spatial appropriation is key to maintain an identity ‘always in the making’

When a group occupies a space for a sharing culture practice, it tends to appropriate it and

make it its own. Spatial appropriation is manifested in the practices studied in different ways. In some cases, participants appropriate the space by putting their photographs, drawings, and pieces of art on the walls. In other cases, plants, art from local artists, as well as branding based on local neighborhood symbols help build an identity for the space that is rooted in its context. Spatial appropriation by the groups aims to make the spaces reflect their identity but also seem welcoming and inviting. However, one of the challenges with spatial appropriation is creating too strong of an identity, which leads to a territorial definition of space, discouraging others from engaging with the practice and leading to an enclosed practice and space. Looking back into Oscar Newman’s principles for creating defensible space, by appropriating a space, people can transform it to a territory, in which others might not feel welcomed. As Lang argues, people experience their environments ‘as a pattern of meaningful relationships’ and thus they tend to interpret new situations and spaces based on past experiences. Hence, the spatial identity created through appropriation might make sense to some people but not others. To overcome the enclosure of common spaces through identity building, Stavrides proposes ‘transient identities’, that become ‘meeting grounds rather than identifying areas of belonging’. Stavrides argues for identities ‘in the making’, within which people develop a culture of accepting otherness.

**Building 05 | Making governance visible through space supports the practice’s transparency**

Another way the sharing culture practices change their spaces is by making their governance processes visible. The groups usually put up posters and signage on the walls informing occupants regarding the processes and institutions that govern the space and the practice alike. The signs offer different levels of information; they can be from merely informational, to probing or – in some limited cases – prohibiting certain actions. For example, informational boards can notify space occupants about recent decisions made during meetings and assemblies or explain the practice’s governing structure and principles. In other cases, a probing signage can invite people to engage long or short-term, by filling in their name or taking up a certain task. Moreover, a spatial arrangement in combination with the activities taking place inside it can be invitational and promote transparency of governance, such as an open door or a group assembly set in a circle of chairs. Finally, in limited cases, signage can inform participants of certain activities that are not allowed in the space, such as hostility towards others, smoking, shoes etc. Signs on the walls are not only valuable to those interacting with the practice for the first time, but for ongoing participants as well. They become critical artifacts that physically manifest and remind the group about the governing transparency that is critical to sharing culture practices.

---


Spatial Findings on Threshold Scale

On the threshold scale, the spatial findings from the cross-case analysis identify how sharing culture practices use their contextual urban space and how that space can influence the practice’s potential to interact with its neighborhood. There are five main spatial conditions at the threshold scale that, under circumstances, influence the evolution of sharing culture practices.

Threshold 01 | Using visual communication to interact with the context before verbal interactions

As sharing culture practices emerge within neighborhoods, they interact with their contextual communities to build mutually beneficial relationships. Initially, the practices inform them about their existence, but later build rapport and engage with them in meaningful ways. One of the ways they kick-start the interaction is through non-verbal, visual communication. Posters, signs, and boards in front of the groups’ spaces inform about their scope and ways of engagement. The visual material can also develop a branding identity for the practice, although it may only be appealing to some in their contextual neighborhoods. Ergo, the way the sharing culture practices use visual communications can influence their potential interaction with their contextual neighborhoods.

Threshold 02 | Having access to an outdoor space elevates the quality of participatory gatherings

A common spatial characteristic of the cases studied, regardless of location, was the desire to meet outdoors. In three out of four cases, having a porch, garden, balcony, or even a terrace significantly elevated the experience of meetings and gatherings. E. O. Wilson and Stephen Kellert identified the importance of biophilia as ‘humanity’s innate affinity for the natural world’, and illustrated how access to the outdoors, its sounds, smells, and textures, can have significant physiological and psychological benefits on people. Within that framework, having access to the outdoors is not specific to sharing culture practices, but it can significantly elevate collective gatherings and thus contribute to the overall sustainability and diffusion of sharing practices. The combination of meeting with others — with whom you have built a sharing culture practice together — under the sky or closer to a natural setting can be a highly valued experience.

Threshold 03 | Expanding beyond the space’s boundaries creates threshold conditions for interaction

Sharing culture practices tend to expand their activities to adjacent public space, e.g. streets, sidewalks, and even adjacent parks and squares. This is a tendency that stems both from the need to be together outdoors, as mentioned earlier, but also the need to reclaim underused public space. Practices reclaim public space either through temporary use and activities on

---


adjacent open spaces, or through more permanent interventions. For example, practices can temporarily host a large communal lunch outside by taking over a street for a day. Meanwhile, they can also have more permanent interventions on public space by creating gardens, water fountains, wall paintings etc. Based on Stavrides, such acts can be considered ‘thresholds’ both materially and mentally, by serving as ‘representations for the act of passage’ to a new condition or situation. These material and mental thresholds represent how people imagine their own neighborhoods. Moreover, they also create opportunities for sharing culture practices to engage with their contextual neighborhood beyond their own space, in a more ‘neutral’, non-territorial, or as phrased by Stavrides, threshold space.

**Threshold 04 | Spatial porosity can minimize enclosure and inclusion barriers**

The tendency of sharing culture practices to expand their activities to the public sphere and create opportunities of interaction with their wider neighborhood is highly related to the idea of porosity. If expansiveness is one side of the coin, porosity is the other; the practices tend to expand outwards, but also need to retract and invite others in, almost like a heartbeat. Thus, spatial porosity becomes of high importance. A porous space reduces the number of physical boundaries that should be passed to enter it and creates a sense of openness and accessibility to all. In two out of four cases, being located on the ground floor and having an open-door policy allowed people to feel more comfortable walking into the sharing culture practice’s space, with minimized issues of territoriality.

**Threshold 05 | Spatial transparency allows for awareness-building through ‘see and hear’ contacts**

Transparency, both literal and figurative helps sharing culture practices build trust with their contextual neighborhoods. Practices that aim to be open and accessible to all can significantly benefit from a space that allows for maximum visual transparency. Transparency affords ‘see and hear contacts’ between the initiative and the neighborhood, as defined by Jan Gehl, that can minimize potential practices of othering and fear. Nevertheless, transparency should not be interpreted as a unidirectional visibility of the practice by its context, but rather as a variety of opportunities for bilateral visibility. For example, as seen in one case, one-to-one visibility between sharing culture participants and residents can create meaningful interactions for the resident to interact with individuals rather than the practice as a whole.

**Spatial Findings on Urban Scale**

On the urban scale, the spatial findings from the cross-case analysis identified the ways sharing culture practices are influenced by the wider context’s characteristics such as density, land use and values, transportation, accessibility, foot and vehicular traffic. There are five main themes regarding the spatial conditions on the urban scale that influence the evolution of sharing culture practices, which are presented one by one below:

---

(20) Stavrides, “Chapter 3: Shared Heterotopias: Learning from the History of a Social Housing Complex in Athens.”

(21) S. Stavrides, _Towards the City of Thresholds_ (Athens, Greece: Professionaldreamers, 2010).

(22) Gehl, _Life Between Buildings_. 
Spatial precarity is one of the most challenging characteristics across practices of sharing culture. The spaces the practices occupy are not a given, neither are they designed for them. It is a difficult resource to acquire, expensive to maintain, and usually the state of ownership or access to the space is precarious and can be lost at any moment. Spatial temporality is something quite common among sharing culture practices and community initiatives in general. In the process of citizens coming together and self-organizing, they occupy any space available that can provide a shelter for their practice. Acquiring access to a space, even temporarily, can become quite an empowering opportunity in the initial stages of a sharing practice. Because of the overall insecurity regarding the practices’ future at the early formation stage, considerations regarding access to space and its permanence are not quite relevant. It is as soon as practices formalize, relationships are built, and space has turned into a place of togetherness, that the struggle for spatial permanence becomes more relevant and tangible.

At the same time, temporary use of space has become quite popular over the last decade to encourage urban regeneration, supporting short-term activities in urban spaces. Encouraging temporary practices stems from the ever-increasing abundance of vacant space, a result of a ‘broader urban development process embedded in the global market economy’. Through the temporary use of excess vacant space by local community initiatives, it is argued that low-cost, low-stakes, localized experiments can happen, which can potentially lead to wider societal transformations in the long run. Within that framework a rise of pop-up shops and projects, urban gardens, block parties, food-tracks and other temporary uses with limited scope and impact are being promoted as a way of alternative urban regeneration ‘from the bottom-up’.

These regimes combined with the vulnerable state of sharing culture practices – during early stages – make spatial precarity and temporality part of their narratives. Their temporal status affects the ways the sharing practices use and operate in their spaces and becomes an integral part of their identity. This identity focuses heavily on staying in place, advocating for what they do, and keeping the social networks they have built alive.

In all cases investigated – apart from the unique case of the collective refugee shelter – participants involved in sharing practices were living relatively close by. They were either a short walk or bus ride away from the initiatives’ spaces. Proximity to the practice is a highly important spatial characteristic, as it allows for the practice to be fully supported.


(24) Madanipour, “Temporary Use of Space.”


culture practices’ spaces that are embedded in people’s daily lives and homes, allow participants to support them in an impromptu and ad-hoc manner. When practices are close to where people live or work, daily sharing and collaboration as part of everyday routines can be accomplished with as minimum effort as possible.

**Urban 03 | Building a support network of organizations can reinforce sustenance and diffusion**

Sharing culture initiatives cannot sustain themselves only with the support of individuals; they flourish also through the support of local organizations, groups, and businesses. Thus, it is not only important to be in close proximity to where people live and work, but also close to other organizations and businesses. All the cases studied were situated in a rich mixed-use urban landscape, rather than a single-use residential one. This context allowed them to interact and build relationships with other organizations. The support network practices build can help them both during the initial formation period, but also contribute to their sustainability over time. Thus, sharing culture practices tend to embed themselves in larger networks, which can become a form of nested systems, a critical factor for successful commons as reasoned by Elinor Ostrom.  

**Urban 04 | The exposure of sharing practices in the urban sphere demonstrates an alternative urban imaginary**

Being in a highly visible place with high foot traffic allows people to discover sharing culture practices as they go about their daily routines. Beyond solely discoverability and access, the presence of sharing practices at the heart of daily urban activity and commerce is almost a political act. Instead of being hidden and tucked away, sharing culture practices aim to locate themselves at the heart of commercial areas – high streets, squares, and entertainment areas – to demonstrate to citizens that an alternative path for doing daily exchanges with each other is possible. Sharing practices aim to spark the urban imaginary and reinvent people’s image of the city and neighborhood. Although it can be economically straining to be located at the heart of the city, the sharing practices’ need for exposure – even for a short period of time – often transcends the need for stability.

**Urban 05 | Using public spaces to reach out to more diverse audiences**

Beyond the threshold scale, sharing culture practices tend to spill beyond the boundaries of their physical space and into the public sphere. This provides the opportunity for the initiative and the community to come together on neutral ground. In many cases, sharing practices extend their activities to public spaces further away and in the wider urban context. Their aim is to intentionally reach out to populations that they wouldn’t interact with on a daily basis. They organize events in public squares, parks, and streets that extend way beyond the limits of their adjacent public spaces. The goal behind this practice is two-fold; to reclaim underused public spaces in their cities, but also to reach out to a wider audience and meet them on the ground, in places they use in their daily routines.

---

(27) Ostrom, *Governing the Commons*. 

Spatial Findings & Sharing Culture Taxonomy

The spatial findings reported above are the basis for the spatial patterns of sharing culture that will follow in Chapter 07. It is important to mention that some patterns might be more important to certain sharing culture practices rather than others, depending on the practice’s size and scale of operation, as well as the taxonomic category they are operating on. For example, porosity might play a more significant role in a practice of a social center compared to a daycare coop, where protecting children is of utmost concern.

One of the taxonomic categories that is quite dissimilar to all the rest is mobility. Shared mobility operates in a different way compared to other taxonomical categories, as physical space is not specific, but distributed. By the same token, Chan and Zhang outline in their work three vectors for sharing space, where they separate urban sharing for mobility from sharing a living space or social spaces. Practices such as ridesharing, car or bike sharing can operate as a distributed network rather than a specific point of reference. However, when combined with other practices such as collective housing, libraries of things, or work coops, then spatial patterns might become more relevant again.

(28) Chan and Zhang, “Sharing Space.”
06.05 Setting Sharing Culture, Transitions, and Space into existing theoretical frameworks

In this section, I set the cross-case findings of this research into a framework by offering further interpretations and links to relevant literature on sharing, space, and transitions. Specifically, I introduce Gibson-Graham’s concept of ‘new commons’ for understanding space and property beyond its spatial dimensions, and I explore sharing culture practices’ transitions through the lens of multi-level perspective by Geels et al.

Common, Enclosed, and Unregulated Space

Sharing culture expands on a spectrum between commoning practices and collaborative services based on distinction on two identifying criteria: accessibility and management. Nevertheless, these distinctions are not always clear cut, and neither remain constant throughout time. Management and accessibility are two variables relevant to the group’s organization and participants’ relationships, and thus they are constantly in flux. As Manzini mentions, the strength or weakness of social ties between people involved in the practices influences their stability or fluidity over time, as well as their openness and closure towards their context.

What he means is that weaker relationships make practices more fluid, and at the same time more open for people to plug in. Meanwhile, stronger social ties lead to more stable practices but with fear of becoming enclosed. The findings presented in section 06.04 introduce spatial manifestations of everyday sharing and collaboration, as well as spatial opportunities for openness and inclusion of a wider social fabric. A further understanding is needed on how space can become open not only by spatial design, but by practice.

To understand processes of making spaces more open and accessible through practice, I use Gibson-Graham et al. framework of the ‘Commons Identi-Kit’ from the book ‘Take back the Economy’. The Commons Identi-Kit can be used to assess the way a space is being maintained and shared as a resource by a certain group of people, based on five variables: access, use, benefit, care, and responsibility – which transcend the specificity of the type of property. Based on the Commons Identi-Kit, a space can be defined as a common space, when a. access is shared and wide, b. the use is negotiated by a community that maintains it as a resource, c. the benefit is widely distributed to community and beyond, and d. responsibility is assumed by the community. Figure 3.9 (pg. 63) – from the book ‘Take back the Economy’ – differentiates between what common space is (in the middle row), from enclosed commons and open-access unmanaged spaces. Enclosed commons differ from common spaces in that access, use, benefit, care, and responsibility can be limited to and by those who own the property. On the other hand, open-access unmanaged space has unrestricted access, while no one is responsible for it or tasked with its care. This framework of unregulated, common, and enclosed space will be a useful lens to analyze and evaluate sharing culture practices.

---

(29) Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy, *Take Back the Economy*.
(30) Geels, “From Sectoral Systems of Innovation to Socio-Technical Systems.”
(32) Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy.
(33) Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy.
Transitions over a ‘Practice – Space’ Field

To better understand how sharing culture practices transform over time, I use the following two lenses: the first one being the sharing culture spectrum introduced in section 06.02 and the second being Gibson-Graham’s differentiation between unregulated, common, and enclosed space. I use these two variables to create a field with the sharing culture spectrum on the x axis and the spatial differentiation on the y axis. For the purposes of this work, I call this the ‘practice-space field’.

The mapping of different sharing practices across the practice-space field (Figure 6.6) reveals specific qualities and dynamics that define them. First, the practices that fall at the bottom left corner – where there are commoning practices, but the space is enclosed – are enclosed commons, such as gated communities or private clubs. The bottom right corner – where the space is enclosed but the sharing practice is a collaborative service – includes sharing economy practices that operate within privatized spaces, such as Airbnb, Task Rabbit etc. On the top right corner, one can find collaborative services that use and operate in unregulated space. A representative example of this would be ridesharing like Uber, or bike sharing services, which use public spaces such as streets, sidewalks, and bike lanes for their operation. Finally, on the left top corner, one can find commoning practices that operate in unregulated spaces – usually public spaces or vacant buildings, and in that sense can be more sensitive and precarious in nature.
sharing culture practices that operate in this quarter are commoning practices that use public, open, unregulated space and thus tend to be more opportunistic and more precarious.

sharing economy practices that use the public space in order to operate, such as Uber, Lyft, shared bikes etc.

This field becomes a useful tool to better reflect on the four cases studied (chapter 05) and their transition over time. In Figure 6.7, I have mapped how the four case studies expand across the field; with distinctions being made on the x-axis mainly based on the level of accessibility of the practice to its wider social fabric and the way the practice is managed. On the y-axis, issues of access, use, benefit, responsibility, and care of the space itself define the variation of where the four case studies fall. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that this visualization depicts a moment in time – the moment when the cases were studied. If we were to better understand how practices evolve over time, then we would have to trace their path across the field, and highlight not only how the practices themselves have changed, but also the spaces they occupied.

In Figure 6.8, the four cases are mapped across the practice-space field along with their transitions over time. The two cases that fall towards the commoning practice half of the diagram – the social center and the collective refugee shelter – have minimum shifts on the x-axis, as structurally they have remained the same. On the contrary, the other two cases have seen a greater shift towards collaborative service, as they started as niche groups of people but further formalized to a more service-like model with staff, semi-hierarchical decision-making structure, as well as certain rules around the practice and its spatial accessibility. These two cases – the daycare coop and alternative currency – are also depicted as purple in this diagram to illustrate that they have gained some kind of legal status over time.
The practice has remained structurally the same throughout its trajectory.

The space has moved from an unregulated - abandoned space to common space through the practice.

The practice started as a more informal open project through Transition Town Brixton, and formalized to a CIC, with some service-like features.

The space(s) the practice operated initially were enclosed non accessible spaces such as individual homes and the town center, and has now moved to common spaces open to everyone.

The practice started as a more informal practice of people collaborating/sharing from their homes, & formalized to a non-profit service with staff.

The space(s) the practice operated initially were enclosed non accessible spaces such as individual homes - it has now moved to a space that is occasionally open to the wider community.

To further investigate the transitions over time of sharing culture practices, a series of other practices – that fall across the sharing culture spectrum – are mapped on the practice-space field (Figure 6.9). The findings of this exercise can be summarized in four major points. First, sharing culture practices – even when they seem stable and sustainable over time – are constantly under transformation, as niche practices heavily based on social relations. In his work on the urban commons, Stavrides illustrates this situation as a threshold and an eternal state of becoming. By the same token, Shove et al. in the theory of social practices reveals their fluid image as an integral part of their nature. In addition to the practices’ general transitioning nature, the second point to be highlighted is their structural transformation when they gain legal status. In an effort to gain more stability and potentially scale, certain compared to the other two. All four case studies, which seem to have had different transitions in regards to their structure, have nonetheless transformed their spaces into common spaces. Despite the nature of the space before the occupation by the practice – unregulated or enclosed – the initiatives have managed through their practice and appropriation to make their spaces more accessible, open, collaboratively managed and cared for, as well as a benefit to their greater social context.

(34) Stavrides, Common Space; The City as Commons.

(35) Shove, Pantzar, and Watson, The Dynamics of Social Practice.
initiatives might seek to formalize and gain legal status. This shift from niche practices to more formalized groups can lead to an increase in hierarchical structures with the employment of staff and imposition of rules around accessibility, leading to a move of the practice towards the collaborative service end of the spectrum.

The other two findings with regards to the mapping across the practice-space field relate to the spatial transitions on the y-axis. In general, through sharing culture practices, the spaces they occupy tend to evolve to common spaces, as they become more accessible and benefit a wider audience than before. This transformation towards common space can happen through the practice no matter the initial nature of the space – unregulated or enclosed. However, as the practices shape and transition over time, it is important to acknowledge the risk of enclosure. As highlighted by Manzini, the stronger the social ties and the identity of the group, then the harder it is for the initiatives to open and diffuse, leading to enclosure. Thus, one of the main challenges for the sharing practices and their spaces is to avoid becoming enclosed commons.
Transition models towards diffusion

Sharing culture practices are constantly under transition, but what types of transitions lead them towards amplification, adoption, or diffusion to a wider social fabric? In literature, we can find three main types of amplification of social innovation and collaborative practices: scaling-up, scaling-across (or out), and scaling deep. All three approaches will be briefly described below:

**Scaling-up:** refers to the expansion of existing sharing practices by including more people.\(^{36}\) This is something that happens naturally as practices establish and grow. Through existing social networks in place, people learn about the practices and decide to engage. However, there are limits to how much certain models and practices can grow. Issues of scale have been identified as a main challenge regarding participation and the management of the commons\(^{37}\), making this option limiting after a certain scale (size depending on the group, practice, context etc.). Moreover, when initiatives scale-up they might have to change structurally or get themselves codified in the policies and institutions of a place, by transforming its laws.\(^{38}\)

**Scaling-across** (or out):\(^{39}\) refers to the replication – mostly intentional – of successful sharing practice models in a different context. This can happen both internally from the practice or externally. For example, Trade School, which is a self-organized learning school based on barter, after creating a successful model that works in New York, they supported teams across the world who wanted to replicate the model. Today there are 30 Trade Schools in cities across the world. Based on that model of replication, the DESIS Network’s research on sustainable ways of living,\(^{40}\) the work of Ezio Manzini on collaborative services,\(^{41}\) and Ana Meroni’s research on creative communities\(^{42}\) operate under the same premise. The premise is that practices, proven to be successful in specific contexts, feature certain universal design elements that should be documented and showcased to act both as inspiration and an easy-to-follow guide for other communities in different contexts. The documentation of existing practices – which can be fleeting – and the experiences of “heroes”\(^{43}\) that brought them to life, is valuable towards potential replication. Nevertheless, this model has its limitations, as it mostly provides alternative models for people who are already motivated to change their lives toward a more sustainable and collaborative way of living. Moreover, it should not be assumed that a successful model can be easily and effectively replicated within a different context and culture. These practices are highly contextual and often enough, the transfer of a model to a different cultural context might need increased levels of adjustment and ‘translation’ to be successful.

---


(37) Ostrom, Governing the Commons.


(39) “Scale out” as a term was presented by Ezio Manzini in the first IASC conference on the Urban Commons, in Bologna, Italy, in November 2015. Scaling out is also referenced and as scaling across.


(41) Jégou and Manzini, Collaborative Services.

(42) Meroni, Creative Communities. People Inventing Sustainable Ways of Living.

(43) Terminology used by Ana Meroni in her book on Creative Communities.
Scaling deep: Both scaling-up and scaling-out are types of transitions whose main impact is the engagement of wider audiences in numbers, either by expanding and impacting policy or by replicating. Nevertheless, there are different types of impact that go beyond numbers and relate to cultural shifts. The ability of social innovation practices to shift cultures, relationships, values, and beliefs has been identified by Riddell and Moore, who coined the term ‘scaling deep’. Strategies that have been used from practices to intentionally scale deep relate to ‘spreading cultural ideas using stories’ or ‘investing in transformative learning and communities of practice’.

The above three types of impact – scaling up, out, and deep – is relevant to the way sharing culture practices evolve and transition, but they can also become intentional pathways towards amplification and diffusion. This research’s findings identified (section 06.03) that sharing culture practices can also ‘scale from within’, which means to diversify their activities and thus bring a wider value in many aspects of the participants’ lives. Scaling from within refers to the evolution of an initiative’s model over time in a way that includes a diversity of practices but also engages people in different ways and capacities. This model of change and transition for sharing practices is important because it impacts participants’ lives in a more holistic way, as it influences a larger part of their everyday life. Moreover, it allows practices to become more inclusive and relevant to a wider audience. Unfortunately, not everyone can afford to engage in sharing practices for different reasons; lack of time or resources, different cultural background etc. Practices that are more diverse and allow people to engage in different capacities, become relevant to a wider audience; something that can eventually assist in their diffusion.

Towards Spatial Patterns of Sharing Culture

In this section, I summarized all the findings of this research following the structure of the three main lines of inquiry I set out for this dissertation. First, I provided further insights to the definitions, taxonomy, typologies, and value of sharing culture. Afterwards, I investigated the transition of sharing culture practices, and I provided a detailed list of spatial findings of sharing culture practices on the three scales of exploration, building, threshold, and urban. Finally, I synthesized the findings into a framework of understanding sharing culture practices, transitions, and space. This chapter thus become the foundation for the spatial patterns of sharing culture presented in the following chapter 07.

Having the findings of this dissertation as a springboard, the spatial patterns of sharing culture aim to provide an actionable tool for both designers and non-designers working in sharing practices. The patterns provide the reader with a tool to identify ways of using space to catalyze sharing culture practices.

(45) Riddell and Moore.
07 SPATIAL PATTERNS OF SHARING CULTURE

Introduction to the Patterns

Sharing culture practices are the result of local social networks that grow informally within a region and aim to co-produce, manage, and share resources, time, services, knowledge, information, and support based on solidarity and reciprocity rather than economic profit. Sharing culture practices provide an alternative pathway for citizens to serve their daily needs in a more sustainable, resourceful, and socially engaging manner by tapping into resources within their region.

The relationship between sharing culture practices and physical space, and the way one influences the other is a topic that has not been investigated comprehensively. Thus, there was a need for a spatial language for sharing culture. The spatial patterns for sharing culture provide designers and practitioners alike with a new spatial vocabulary that can be used to interpret the sharing practices they’re involved in. The patterns are an actionable tool that helps readers use the space as a catalyst for sharing culture practices.
Using the Patterns

The patterns are formulated as actionable propositions for those engaged in sharing culture practices on how to catalyze space and are structured on three distinct scales: building, threshold, and urban. The building scale describes patterns in regards to the space hosting the practice. The threshold scale describes patterns in regards to space and interactions with the contextual neighborhood. And finally, the urban scale describes patterns that operate on a larger city-scale around the practice. The tone of the patterns remains dialectical, bringing to the attention of the reader several spatial issues and their impact on sharing culture practices, while allowing them to explore the many conditions – spatial and non-spatial – that influence each pattern.

The patterns can be used by communities, designers, and even local government that are involved in sharing culture practices or would like to use them to support them. They are meant to be used in groups and through participatory processes in order to provide inspiration for catalyzing space. The list of patterns is not exhaustive. The readers can select a different combination of patterns to support sharing culture practices depending on the context and their applicability. For clarity and usability, all patterns have been documented with the same layout.

Pattern Layout

Each pattern follows the same layout, which includes the following:

Pattern Name:
A short title describes the pattern, starting with an actionable verb and prompting the reader to take a form of spatial action in supporting sharing culture practices

Pattern Image:
A representative image showcases the spatial manifestation of the pattern preferably through the space of an actual sharing culture practice

Relevant Patterns:
Patterns are interconnected and can be combined in bundles; thus, each pattern has a list of relevant patterns that it can be combined with

Description:
One or two paragraphs describe and discuss each pattern

Spatial Arrangements Diagrams:
Each pattern is illustrated with a series of diagrams and drawings that visually represent it, while highlighting its important elements

Creating the Conditions:
Each pattern has a section that presents some of the conditions that can afford and reinforce the pattern; some of these conditions can be implemented by the sharing culture practitioners themselves, while some operate on higher levels of government, policy, market, and technology.
Scale:
the pattern’s scale of operation is defined through a highlighted pictogram between the three potential options: building, threshold, or urban

on the building scale
spatial patterns are explored that relate to the relationship between the practices and the spaces they occupy, building on a better understanding of the inward spatial arrangements of the sharing practices

on the threshold scale
the patterns presented explore the spatial conditions of opening the practice to its context. This scale includes spatial patterns influencing the interaction between the practice and the broader neighborhood.

on the urban scale
spatial patterns that operate on the wider urban area around the practice are presented, addressing issues of urban dynamics, land use, exposure, and local networks

Impact on Practice:
the pattern’s impact on the sharing culture practice is defined through one or more highlighted pictograms between 4 potential options: scaling up, scaling out, scaling deep, scaling within

scaling up
relates to the increase in number of people involved in the practice, and thus leads to structural change as well - either by connecting to larger organizations and institutions or by impacting law & policy

scaling out
relates to the replication of practices across time and space: replication of the same model, practice, or idea in a different context

scaling deep
means that practices have deep impact on the culture of those involved - cultural shifts can happen by changing relationships and cultural values; influencing social ties

scaling within
refers to the diversification of sharing practices over time; expanding activities and satisfying more participants’ needs through the same capacity and space
Building scale

patterns

on the building scale, one can find spatial patterns that relate to relationship between the practices and the spaces they occupy, building on a better understanding of the inward spatial arrangements of the sharing practices.
sharing culture practices tend to form and be formed by both strong and weak social ties. This is because, they afford social interactions that go beyond the typical market service. Thus, people involved tend to interact with each other through different types of social events, activities, and situations. One of the social activities that allow for relationship and community building is eating together; preparing and sharing meals. Having an industrial or big enough kitchen affords meal sharing events to happen in an impromptu manner. Meanwhile, a kitchen provides the opportunity to operate an informal café-service on site, offering a starting point for new people to join in and thus benefiting the wider community.

The spatial arrangement between the kitchen and the area used for dining can influence how people interact and what agency they have. A bar and serving area set-up creates the sense of service, prompting people to wait until they are served. An open floor setup without barriers between the kitchen and the dining area affords more agency for collective work, as everyone can reach the meal preparation area without barriers. Eating outdoors can further elevate the meal sharing experience and the social interactions taking place alongside it.

creating the conditions

what can the practice do?

• consider operating in spaces with a food preparation area such as residential space or former hospitality facilities

• if the space lacks appropriate infrastructure for meal preparation, create conditions for eating together, such as informal food prep, potlucks, bringing food from home etc.

• intentionally plan for a process of eating together that is collaborative throughout: from meal preparation, to setting the tables, and cleaning up afterwards

• further enhance the sharing meals process by sharing excess food through a people’s fridge, growing food on site, sharing kitchen tools through a library of things, and sharing recipes through trade school cooking sessions

• if operating from a space that was previously set-up for a service with an enclosed kitchen or bar counter, be aware that the setup can create barriers for everyone to collaborate equally and foster power dynamics of some people hosting, while others being served

considering the broader systems

• if the space lacks the necessary facilities take advantage of local food businesses

• create local networks of food production and processing that initiatives could tie onto or be part of

• develop policies that support food waste recovery, by allowing initiatives to use food close to expiration date

• eliminate local food safety regulations that might create barriers to locally grow and process food on site

• in case the group wants to have a commercial cafe and sell food on site, local policies regarding restaurant and cafe licenses should be considered to fit the purposes of these non-profit practices
Sharing culture practices demand a main space for daily operations of a certain capacity, in order to be able to host the diversity of activities that they organize. An open-floorplan space of a certain capacity is necessary, and thus being in spaces originally designed for residential uses will probably become problematic as the group grows.

More importantly, a large enough space that allows for whole-group assemblies to take place needs to be considered early on. Assemblies realized with everyone sat around a circle promote a flat hierarchy. Thus, for sharing culture practices to have a flat hierarchy, a space that can facilitate whole-group assemblies and decision-making meetings in a circle that include everyone is necessary.

---

Photo Credits: Hugh Hill, 2016
(www.artscouncil.org.uk/news/future-leaders-announced-2016-clore-fellowship-programme)
local governments can create programs that allow for local initiatives to get access to a space — even temporarily — that fits their spatial needs

necessary policy and land use changes are needed to secure spaces for non-profit uses at the heart of urban environments

using 3D model visualizations and design expertise early on can help identify spatial needs for the initiatives as well as potentials for future expansion

creating a local network of businesses and organizations that the initiative can expand to for different activities when needed

• identify the minimum capacity by making sure the space allows for the whole group to gather around a circle and discuss in an inclusive manner

• in initial phases consider working from homes, coffee places, and other occasional spaces, until the group’s activities stabilize, and becomes easier to gauge the practice’s spatial needs

• if the group has access to a space that is too small, investigate its potential to expand in adjacent open public spaces to increase capacity

• if the group has access to a space that is too big, do not try to appropriate and occupy it all at once - occupy it in phases as the initiative progresses
An open floor space of a certain capacity can indeed allow for different types of activities and interactions to take place as part of a sharing culture practice. Nevertheless, it is a necessary but not sufficient condition to allow for the diversity of activities to grow. What is additionally needed for the initiatives’ activities to diversify is that the space is either adaptable or flexible. An adaptable environment is one that can afford many activities without changing or restructuring, while flexible is an environment that has an easy-to-adapt layout to afford diverse activities.

The increasing diversity of activities – supported by adaptability – is important for two reasons: a. the sustainability of the practice, and b. meeting the group’s emerging needs. As the group changes or grows, the space can adapt to meet the current needs of the transitioning group, and thus become sustainable over time.
in some cases, local government provides opportunities for sharing culture practices to operate – even temporarily – from dormant spaces found in public buildings, such as town halls and libraries. these spaces, as they are found in public buildings, tend to be like a canvas for activities – larger and more adaptable.

lack of provision for non-profit uses in the city leads practices to operate from spaces that are fragmented into smaller rooms (e.g. residential spaces) and thus do not allow for great adaptability – necessary policy and land use changes are needed that secure quality spaces for non-profit uses at the heart of urban environments.

what can the practice do?

- ensure that there is one main open floorplan space for daily use, which allows for diversity of activities to take place with minimum effort
- use furniture that are easy to move and store, in order to be able to quickly change the space
- set the chairs in a circle when hosting assemblies and decision-making groups to help minimize hierarchy and make everyone feel included
- keep in mind that being adaptable can also become time and energy consuming for those involved due to the constant changes in layout
- put in place easy-to-follow guidelines on how one should leave the space after the end of an activity; this can help alleviate potential tensions that might arise between participants occupying the space at different times

considering the broader systems

changing the layout of the space by rearranging the furniture allows for different type of activities to take place in the same space.

let’s not forget to change the layout back to what it was - they have a class tomorrow morning in here!

creating the conditions
ensuring spatial granularity

Capacity and adaptability allow for sharing culture initiatives to diversify their activities and engage with larger groups of people. However, if the number of activities increase beyond the space’s capacity to accommodate them at different times, then different groups and activities can start competing between them for the same space at the same time slot. This can turn the initiative’s space into a highly rivalrous commodity. Consequently, the space’s granularity or the ability of an open-floor space to ‘break-down’ to smaller ones is necessary to alleviate issues of spatial rivalry that might arise by allowing different activities to take place at the same time.

The potential granularity of a space creates the necessary conditions for both smaller simultaneous activities to take place, as well as larger events. Moreover, it can allow for smaller incentives to be incubated in the space in collaboration with the main practice, which may eventually scale out to independent projects.

Chidori-Bunka, Community Space, Osaka, Japan | Photo Credits: Dot Architects (https://worldarchitecture.org/article-links/epeff/chidoribunka_a_new_community_space_by_dot_architects.html)
depending on the activities hosted in the space, certain policies might apply for the way spatial division is realized, e.g. workshops and makerspaces need better sealing and ventilation and thus need a specially designed space if there is access to only one open floorplan space with limited opportunities of spatial division, developing a local network of collaborations with other businesses, local government, or organizations can help use their spaces while they are not using them the use of group messaging and scheduling apps, can help with the coordination of scheduling and booking different parts of the space
Sharing culture practices change and transform their spaces to satisfy emerging needs and facilitate different activities; but they also tend to change their spaces in a more permanent way. Through their daily practices, the group both consciously and unconsciously appropriates the space to make it ‘feel at home’, and thus ensure that the space reflects the group’s identity. The spaces that sharing culture initiatives occupy tend to become colourful, green, and cosy, welcoming more people in. Moreover, spaces tend to be left incomplete, and unpolished, showcasing that the initiative is a work in progress and inviting others to make their mark on it.

However, one of the challenges that groups need to pay attention to, is how the identity reflected by the space can also become a barrier. The spatial identity can have a significant effect on sharing practices’ ability to engage with their wider context, as it might encourage some people to interact with the group while others not, creating issues of territoriality. Overcoming this barrier means that the space’s identity needs to be transient, open, and always in the making as new people join.

building a network with local businesses and organizations can help in the appropriation and development of the space through donations and reclamation of old and new furniture and artifacts.

work with local artists and designers to develop a spatial and branding identity that reflects the wider neighborhood’s identity and not just the group’s

use social media and online streams to invite local residents to co-building sessions of the space and its identity.

what can the practice do?

- use low cost materials such as color, plants, and posters to express the group’s identity through the space’s walls.
- gather items, artifacts, and furniture to decorate the space that have personal and collective meaning to those involved.
- hang on the walls portraits and photos of those who have participated in the initiative as a tribute, that helps form a collective identity over time.
- provide a wall surface as an exhibition space for the artwork of participants and local artists.
- consider the space and its appropriation as a work in constant progress, leaving space and opportunities for newcomers to contribute and build on the initiative’s identity.
- be aware that a very strong spatial identity can create a territory that might make others feel excluded.
- ensure that the space and its identity – just as the practice – is always open to new contributions and interpretations.

considering the broader systems

building a network with local businesses and organizations can help in the appropriation and development of the space through donations and reclamation of old and new furniture and artifacts.

work with local artists and designers to develop a spatial and branding identity that reflects the wider neighborhood’s identity and not just the group’s

use social media and online streams to invite local residents to co-building sessions of the space and its identity.
The spaces of sharing culture practices, as shared assets of a potentially ever-changing group of people, tend to reflect how the practice is collectively governed. The spaces can be a manifestation of the procedural transparency that sharing culture practices aspire to maintain.

Posters, signs, and notice boards inform newcomers and remind current participants how the space and the initiative are collectively managed. The signage should, and usually does move beyond cautionary messages of what one should and shouldn’t do in the space. The messages are a visible reminder of the collective governance rules that the initiative abides by. They also provide past traces on decisions made, and information of how one could engage and contribute in the future. The information provided can vary from operational shifts and schedules, to general rules of the group’s decision-making processes and informing when the next meeting is going to be. The appropriation of the space through tangible artifacts relating to governance reinforces the idea of transparency these initiatives try to live by and emulate.

City Plaza Refugee Center & Shelter, Athens, Greece | Photo Credits: Alberta Aureli (https://openmigration.org/en/analyses/one-year-at-city-plaza-in-athens/)
additional to the transparency of governance and institutions in the physical space, use emails, group messaging apps, and social media to disseminate information and updates on governance in the online world as well.

make sure that both online and physically in the space, the way that information is being distributed does not trample individual rights of privacy and is within local data protection policies.

Creating the Conditions

What Can the Practice Do?

- Consider having a designated wall – in a highly visible space – with all the information both participants and newcomers need to know about how the space and the practice work.
- Posters informing about the values the practice aspires to have, can be a visual reminder to the participants using the space.
- A notice board area that provides information on updates, meeting minutes, events, etc. can become useful.
- Ensure that there are not too many prohibitive signs on the walls, defining how to use and behave in the space, as they can create a hostile environment.
- Instead, use furniture and spatial arrangements to support behavior in the space, e.g. a round table with chairs around it can promote a flat hierarchy among those sitting around it, while a shoe rack and a hanger next to the door can afford a more homely environment, where people can take their shoes and coats off before walking in.

Considering the Broader Systems
Threshold scale patterns

on the threshold scale, one can find patterns relevant to the spatial conditions of opening the practice to its context. Thus, this section presents spatial patterns of interaction between the practice and the broader neighborhood.
**communicating visually**

Sharing culture practices use a series of visual communication artifacts to convey to their contextual communities and beyond what it is they are doing. They use posters, murals, or signs as major means for communication, especially on their street facades. A very common visual tool is a blackboard showcasing the events of the week, or posters and A-frame boards outside that communicate what the initiative is doing.

Most of these tools are used to engage with the wider neighborhood in a non-verbal manner. Thus, how those artifacts are designed, what semantics they use, where they are located and if they are visible can significantly influence the way the practices will eventually interact with their context. In certain cases, graphic design can be used as a tool to make the visual communication artifacts appealing to a wider audience. Beyond physical space, the same visual branding tools can be used for online engagement through social media.

Library of Things, London, UK | Photo Credits: Alanna Kettler
(www.collective-evolution.com/2017/02/24/can-a-library-of-things-solve-our-peak-stuff-problem/)
being part of a local network of businesses and organizations can allow for the practice's visual branding material to expand to their spaces, outside of the practice's own space and in that way reach out to a wider audience of people going about their daily lives

keep signs, graphics, and messages constant between the physical space and the online presence on the website or social media

creating the conditions

- the first interactions realized with the neighborhood are not verbal, but visual – using signs, posters, and messages on the space's facade can help people understand what it is that the practice does and provide them with the initial pathways of interacting with it
- make sure the signs, posters, graphics, and messages used are inclusive and welcoming
- having a calendar poster outside the space informing about the events and programs happening in the space can help provide people with information on how they can initially engage with the practice
- take-away printed material that people can pick up, allows them to learn more about the practice alone at their own space and time, before deciding to engage

what can the practice do?

considering the broader systems

branding graphics and signage that can be used both in the physical space as well as online

posters & banners can be used in other places around the neighborhood beyond the initiative's facade

posters and signs on the space's facade, as well as an A-frame outside can allow for messages explaining what the initiative does

using take-away flyers, leaflets, newspapers, and booklets help people learn about the initiative at their own time and space
Having an outdoors space – such as a porch, a garden, or a rooftop – where it is possible to meet, and organize events and activities, significantly advances the experience of coming together and collaborating with others. Moreover, outdoors spaces become an opportunity for creative practices such as gardening, which is both a collaborative and productive activity, and allows for informal skill sharing and discussions.

An outdoors space can also seasonally increase the space’s granularity. When the weather allows it, activities can take place both indoors and outdoors, enabling different activities to happen at the same time. Weather and climate permitting, an outdoor area can also increase the space’s capacity by leaving doors open and connecting the inside with the outside.
• a garden, porch, or terrace can become another space where activities can take place - use chairs, tables, and seats to facilitate them and create a covered corner to protect from sun and rain accordingly

• with an outdoors space, the group's activities can expand to growing food and composting organic waste on site by using simple planter and composting boxes – these activities can also become great learning opportunities for a larger audience

• when gathering outdoors, a play area for kids is always a great idea – it can also allow parents to be engaged in another activity or group meeting while their kids play

what can the practice do?

considering the broader systems

if there is access to a large garden but no expertise or will within the group to develop a garden, take advantage of the opportunity and create an allotment scheme for those who would like to grow food within the neighborhood

in the case of a rooftop, pay attention to load limitations if developing a garden and realize a safeguarding assessment for kids and adults alike

in case of urban agriculture, pay attention to local policies and laws about growing and distributing food

if gathering outside for a larger event within a dense urban environment, consider local policies regarding noise levels and hours of occupancy
expanding beyond enclosures

Sharing culture practices benefit from spilling their activities over to their adjacent public space, e.g. streets, sidewalks, and even adjacent parks and squares. This is a practice that stems both from the need to be together outdoors, but also the need to expand and reclaim underutilized public space. Practices expand to the public sphere through their temporary presence and activities on public space that was originally designed for other uses; for example, expanding activities temporarily over a sidewalk or hosting a large communal lunch in the middle of their adjacent street. In other cases, they can act more permanently on underutilized public spaces, for example by creating gardens, water fountains, wall paintings etc. as a way to collaboratively advance the image of their neighborhoods.

Expanding towards the adjacent public sphere, creates the potential for the practices to engage with their contextual neighborhood in a more ‘neutral’, and non-territorial space, outside of their own.
what can the practice do?

- expanding beyond the enclosure of the practice’s space might mean taking over the sidewalk or adjacent pedestrian way, by temporarily setting tables and chairs, painting the sidewalk, installing a sharing library, or a planter box.
- expansion can move beyond the sidewalk and take over a couple of parking spaces - in that case there is more space for sharing, play, and planting.
- occasionally, the group can further expand its activities on the street - a quiet side street without a lot of traffic is preferable, but even a busier road can be blocked for a day and let the activities take over.
- expanding beyond the enclosures of the practice’s space can take place both permanently through the installation of small infrastructure, or temporarily for a day or two leaving permanent marks in people’s imagination - make sure to reach out to neighbors beforehand to achieve a collaborative effort of taking over the streets.

considering the broader systems

- in the case of expansion, especially for parking spaces, and streets, take into consideration the necessary procedures and permits as defined by your local government.
- if the group installs permanent infrastructure in the public sphere, they might need an insurance towards third parties or follow relevant safeguarding policies.
- for temporary expansion, there are several larger festival and events that a practice could tie into or learn from, such as Parking Day, Big Lunch, and Play Streets
Transparency, both literal and figurative, can help build trust between sharing culture practices and their contextual neighborhoods. Since sharing practices aim to be open and accessible by all, they can be significantly benefited by a host space that allows for maximum transparency. Transparency affords ‘see and hear’ interactions to take place between the group and the neighborhood. People from the contextual neighborhood, by being able to see and hear what activities are taking place within the practices’ spaces, can learn about them in a more passive way. Those interactions are important in minimizing situations of othering and fear specifically during early days of the practice’s emergence.

Nevertheless, a mere one-way visibility from the outside context towards the inside of a practice’s space is not always enough to break the barriers between itself and its context. A two-way visibility is important, as well as opportunities for one-to-one visual interactions between individuals, such as through windows, balconies etc.
combine spatial transparency with online presence and transparency about the practice and its activities.
use social media groups, forums, and websites to allow for people to better understand – through online interaction – what the group is doing, before and after the interactions in the physical space.

- a space with large windows and open doors helps practices become transparent to their context by allowing people passing by or from adjacent buildings to look into the space.
- if a space is too transparent, maybe it hinders some of the practice’s privacy – curtains and blinds can be used to adjust the levels of privacy and transparency depending on the activity taking place inside. make sure to keep your curtains open and become transparent when possible.
- a space on the ground floor that features a façade on the street provides opportunities for transparency to pedestrians and ‘hear and see’ interactions.
- even if the practice’s space is on a higher floor, windows, balconies, and a dense urban environment can create opportunities of transparency to adjacent buildings, and more specifically create conditions of a two-way visibility between the group and its neighbors.
- use opportunities of transparency to reach out and talk to neighbors, build rapport and trust.
enabling porosity

Sharing culture practices aim to be as open and accessible as possible for the benefit of their wider communities. Depending on the type of practice and the openness of the group, their spaces can vary from completely open to open under certain conditions. Nevertheless, the openness of the practice is highly influenced by the porosity of its space.

How porous or enclosed the space is influences the opportunities of interaction between the practice and the neighboring context. Spaces with too many thresholds and boundaries tend to be more enclosed. On the contrary, a porous space, lacking excessive number of physical boundaries that need to be surpassed to enter it, creates a sense of openness and accessibility to all. For example, being located on the ground floor and having an open-door policy or loosely defined boundaries allow for people to overcome spatial thresholds and help minimize issues of territoriality.
when operating from open spaces that are porous and open to all, considering issues of safety at night is important and thus good lighting plays a critical role in outdoors spaces that are appropriated by the practice and are accessible by a wider audience, issues of safeguarding may arise, and attention needs to be paid to local insurance policies in the public sphere.

- when operating from enclosed spaces, minimizing boundaries and having an open door policy — when possible — can create a porous building shell that allows for interactions and the flow of people in and out

- when operating from outdoors, instead of using hard enclosures to define the initiative’s place, such as gates and fences, use soft boundaries such as plants, planter boxes, furniture, soft surfaces, or artifacts to demarcate areas of entrance while allowing for people come in

- when spaces are porous and allow for a wider audience to come in and feel welcome, the pattern of ‘making governance visible’ becomes even more critical — people who come in the space need to become aware of how the space operates even with no verbal communication

creating the conditions
Urban scale

patterns

On the urban scale, one can find spatial patterns in regards to spatial conditions of the wider urban area around the practices, including issues of urban dynamics, land use, exposure, and local networks.
achieving spatial stability

One of the greatest challenges of sharing culture practices is spatial precarity. As non-profit initiatives, the practices occupy spaces in an opportunistic manner, and the spaces are usually not designed for them. It is a difficult resource to acquire, expensive to maintain, and usually the state of ownership over the space is precarious and can be lost at any moment. This is true for most initiatives, no matter how they got access to the space in the first place. In the cases of groups who occupy their spaces legally, fluctuations in rent or misalignment of interests between the group and the owner of the space can lead the group to move out. In the case of squats, the constant conflict between the group, the owner, the police, and in some cases the local government can force the group’s eviction. Temporality, and the struggle for achieving spatial stability then becomes part of how sharing culture practices use and operate in the spaces they occupy, and almost part of their own identity. Ensuring spatial stability becomes of great importance for sharing culture initiatives, as they try to build support networks and maintain relationships.
Community Land Trusts are non-profit entities formed by residents that can maintain control of a real estate property and keep its value protected outside of the conventional market.

Land use policies and schemes can play a critical role for providing access to land for non-profit uses, but also for securing real estate property out of speculative markets. A great scheme towards community control over property outside of the market are the Community Land Trusts (CLTs) local government can also play a significant role in allowing citizens to have access to urban land and develop sharing initiatives. A great example of that is the ‘Regulation on Collaboration Between Citizens and the City for the Care and Regeneration of Urban Commons’ by the City of Bologna.

What can the practice do?

• Before investing time, energy, and resources in appropriating and occupying a space, consider and speculate on how long the practice will be based in that space, and allocate your resources accordingly.

• Even if the practice is required to move from one space to another, ensure proximity to the former location, so that the local relationships and networks are not broken.

• When trying to identify a new space, consider operating temporarily from openly accessible spaces such as public buildings and libraries, squares, parks.

• Another potential is leveraging temporal stays within an urban region by gaining access to vacant spaces through sweat equity - a great example is that of Stad in de Maak in Rotterdam.

Creating the conditions

Considering the broader systems

• Land use policies and schemes can play a critical role for providing access to land for non-profit uses, but also for securing real estate property out of speculative markets.

• A great scheme towards community control over property outside of the market are the Community Land Trusts (CLTs).

• Local government can also play a significant role in allowing citizens to have access to urban land and develop sharing initiatives. A great example of that is the ‘Regulation on Collaboration Between Citizens and the City for the Care and Regeneration of Urban Commons’ by the City of Bologna.

• Working with local market forces to ensure spatial stability within an urban region through multiple temporal occupancies.
maintaining exposure

Usually, non-commercial, non-profit spaces have a hard time maintaining a strong physical presence that is highly visible, for example in commercial areas and streets with high foot traffic. However, being in a highly visible place with pedestrian activity is of great importance for the practice and beyond. Firstly, it allows for people to discover the initiative while going about their daily routine. Instead of being hidden and tucked away, sharing culture practices need to be part of daily urban activity. They need to be situated in areas where commerce takes place, providing an alternative option of daily exchanges between residents. And in order to compete with other commercial uses, one of their main tools is exposure and visibility. Secondly and most importantly, the exposure of the sharing culture practices to people through a prominent and visible location, is not only important for the practices to grow but for people to imagine that an alternative way of life and economy is possible. Thus, exposure of sharing culture practices contributes to an alternative urban imaginary.

Cineroleum, London, UK | Photo Credits: Assemble Studio (https://assemblestudio.co.uk/projects/the-cineroleum)
local government can play a significant role in allowing citizens to have access to urban land within urban centers and develop sharing practices. A relevant example of this is the support of residents through the ‘Regulation on Collaboration Between Citizens and the City for the Care and Regeneration of Urban Commons’ by the City of Bologna working with local market forces to ensure spatial stability within an urban region through multiple temporal occupancies.

- being located on the ground floor on a busy street with high foot traffic will allow for greater exposure and visibility to a wider audience.
- location is a quite important aspect in gaining exposure, and thus a space at the heart of a commercial district or street can be highly beneficial – to overcome challenging rent values, consider even temporary presence on a high foot-traffic area.
- do not hesitate to locate the practice among a group of typical businesses and for-profit uses, as it allows for people to imagine a diverse spectrum of exchanges and ways to serve daily needs.

**Creating the conditions**

- **What can the practice do?**

- **Considering the broader systems**
In order to be fully supported, sharing culture practices need to be relevant to people living close by. Sharing culture practices tend to be more sustainable over time when initiated by residents themselves within their neighborhoods and serve their daily needs through collective action.

Thus, in order for them to be successful, the initiatives’ spaces have to be embedded in people’s daily lives, routines, and locales. For the practices to operate successfully and be sustainable, their spaces should be located in close proximity to the participants; ideally walking distance from their homes or places of work. Proximity allows participants to support and care for the practices and spaces in an impromptu and ad-hoc manner, thus making daily sharing and collaboration part of their everyday schedules with as minimum effort as possible.
land use policies that dedicate a percentage of space within residential and mixed-use areas to non-profit uses will allow for sharing culture initiatives to be embedded to people’s everyday life (e.g. Community Levy Infrastructure) - or can support occasional temporary use of existing neighborhood public spaces and buildings rising land values or the changes in the sociopolitical landscape might lead to the practice’s undesirable migration after being embedded in a locale, which can lead to breaking up relationships of the social network and destroying morale group messaging apps and social media can foster discussion and coordination between participants who are both close by or live further away

- being located in a space close to where participants live, work, and socialize can significantly help the initiative to flourish and get embedded in people’s lives
- building more relationships with local residents from the neighborhood will further engrave and embed the initiative in the neighborhood’s identity
- in situations where the initiative has not identified a space yet, the use of participants’ homes, local businesses and cafes can be considered
- it is impossible that everyone participating in the practice will be in close proximity to its space, or will have a loose enough schedule to engage often – thus it is important to allow for different types of interaction to take place through phone calls, emails, and message groups

creating the conditions

what can the practice do?

considering the broader systems

- land use policies that dedicate a percentage of space within residential and mixed-use areas to non-profit uses will allow for sharing culture initiatives to be embedded to people’s everyday life (e.g. Community Levy Infrastructure) - or can support occasional temporary use of existing neighborhood public spaces and buildings
- rising land values or the changes in the sociopolitical landscape might lead to the practice’s undesirable migration after being embedded in a locale, which can lead to breaking up relationships of the social network and destroying morale
- group messaging apps and social media can foster discussion and coordination between participants who are both close by or live further away
reclaiming public space

On the threshold scale, the pattern of ‘expanding beyond enclosures’ highlighted the tendency of sharing culture practices to spillover their activities beyond the boundaries of their physical space and on to the public sphere around their practice. Through this practice, sharing culture initiatives aim to expand their activities, but also to reclaim underutilized public space.

Often enough, the practices expand their activities to public spaces that are not necessarily adjacent to their space. The practices can temporarily use public spaces of certain significance to them and with different semantics as a way to interact with their wider communities on a neutral ground, outside of their own space. Moreover, through their expansion in the wider urban context, the initiatives intentionally reach out to populations that they wouldn’t normally interact with on a daily basis. They organize events in public squares, parks, and streets to reach out to a wider audience and meet them in the places they use in their daily routines.
creating the conditions

**what can the practice do?**

- hosting events at a local park can be a great way to get the group outdoors, but also meet local people from the neighborhood and allow for chance encounters to take place
- blocking traffic and turning a street into a space for pedestrian activity for a day can be really empowering - great examples are play streets, block parties, and street lunches
- occupying public squares that have certain semantics to the wider neighborhood and transforming them through a day event can be quite provocative of people’s imagination of what is possible in our cities
- as public spaces can be contested spaces, when reclaiming them for temporary use, take into consideration and respect the needs and expectations of other users as well

**considering the broader systems**

- local rules and regulations might exist regarding the allowed use of public spaces
- permits from local government might be needed for the use and appropriation of public spaces - such as blocking the traffic on a street for a day
- using online streams - such as social media and forums to publicize organized events in local public spaces can help build support from the local community of residents, businesses, and organizations

Hello, if you’re looking for us, we are out & about this month! We’re activating underused public spaces in our neighborhood. Come find us!

Here is where we’ll be:
- 01/05: street
- 15/05: square
- 20/05: park

Hello, if you’re looking for us, we are out & about this month! We’re activating underused public spaces in our neighborhood. Come find us!
building a support network

Sharing culture practices cannot be sustained just with the support of individuals; they also flourish through the mutual-assistance and collaboration with local organizations, initiatives, groups, and businesses. Thus, it is paramount for them to be situated not within fully residential areas, but in mixed-use contexts with organizational wealth, allowing them to build strong supporting networks.

By building a strong local support network, sharing culture practices are able to share knowledge, experiences, and even pool together and share their resources. By collaborating with local businesses, they can help support the local economy and build circular networks. Moreover, knowing that sharing culture practices usually emerge from the bottom-up, the organizational support and lessons-learned by other similar groups are of high importance. The local networks the practices build can influence positively how the wider local community perceives them, and thus help them become more rooted in a place.

Photo Credits: Google Earth, (https://www.thepolisblog.org/2012/12/urban-morphology-in-mexico-city.html)
land use policies can influence the extent of the local support network a sharing culture practice can build; mixed-used landscapes can allow for a wealthier network with local businesses, groups, organizations, non-profits etc.

building strong relationships with local government can have both advantages and disadvantages; advantages can be an organizational and resource-based support, while disadvantages can be the instability during change in leadership or distrust from community based on political preferences

finding ways of working with local businesses can help towards building a circular economy

creating the conditions

- when looking for a location to settle, consider locations close to organizations and networks that the group has already built rapport with
- when settling in a location, mapping local organizations, businesses, and groups can help in creating a plan for outreach and collaboration
- when building a local support network, find ways to build reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationships with other groups and organizations - make sure to effectively communicate the ways the collaboration can be mutually beneficial
08 CONCLUSION

08.01 Research Overview & Contributions

Overview

This research is motivated by the potential sharing practices have in building social capital and contributing to the transition towards environmentally sustainable futures. Moving away from cultures that are solely based on individual needs and consumption, but rather towards sharing and collective actions can become one of the many pieces for solving the climate change puzzle. This thesis aspires to contribute to existing work on understanding, documenting, and finding ways to scale sharing practices, collaboration, alternative economies, and the commons.

Nevertheless, within the field of sharing, three main issues were identified as gaps in knowledge needing further research investigation. First, sharing has been a contested term in the recent years with the rise of ‘sharing economy’, creating a confusion regarding which sharing practices can contribute towards sustainable and socially engaging neighborhoods. Secondly, there was a need for a more detailed investigation of how sharing practices can become part of everyday life and what are the barriers towards a sharing culture. Finally, and most importantly, there has been limited comprehensive research on the influence space has on sharing culture. Space is an aspect widely discussed within the spectrum of sharing and the urban commons from a geographical and political perspective. However, space has not yet been studied comprehensively from an architectural and urban design point of view as one of the many factors influencing sharing within urban neighborhoods.

To address these gaps, this dissertation developed an exploratory framework to investigate sharing culture and identify spatial patterns that influence it by combining interdisciplinary research methods. This framework was developed through semi-structured literature review on sharing practices, their value and diffusion in everyday life, as well as spatial theories and architectural designs for sharing. This framework was applied on a series of four real life cases of sharing culture practices along the three main lines of inquiry of this research: What types of sharing practices can benefit citizens’ everyday lives and urban communities at large? What are non-spatial barriers that influence the transition towards sharing culture? What are the spatial patterns of sharing culture?

Through a semi-structured literature review, this dissertation defined sharing practices that
can be beneficial in urban neighborhoods, identified their value, and developed a taxonomy for their diffusion in everyday life (Chapter 02). An additional literature review investigated the relation between sharing and space from two perspectives; the first – more deterministic in nature – explored designs for sharing and collaboration, whereas the second – more theoretical in nature – identified important spatial aspects of sharing as discussed in the fields of urban commons, community economies, and urban design (Chapter 03). From this literature, the methodological approach for studying sharing culture practices and identifying spatial patterns that enable them was developed by combining interdisciplinary research methods. The specific research methods, as well as the procedures used to collect and analyze data from real life cases of sharing culture practices on the field, are described in Chapter 04, while the cases are documented with thick description in Chapter 05. Chapter 06 presents the cross-case findings along the three main lines of inquiry and sets them as part of the wider literature on sharing practices, commons, transitions, and space. The spatial findings of Chapter 06 become the basis for the spatial patterns of sharing culture in Chapter 07. As a conclusion to this dissertation, this chapter will summarize its main contributions and will identify limitations and future research directions.

**Contributions to Knowledge**

This dissertation has four main contributions:

**01 | A theoretical framework and taxonomy of sharing culture based on everyday life**

This dissertation developed a fine-grained theoretical framework and a taxonomy on how sharing culture practices can be part of everyday life and identified the value they can bring. It contributed to existed literature, through a more fine-grained analysis of sharing practices, developing a taxonomy for their relation to everyday life, and explored their synergistic value using Max-Neef’s framework of Human Development.

The sharing culture taxonomy is a useful tool for understanding not only the scope of sharing culture practices and how to make them part of one’s everyday life, but also the ways in which the practices are scaling from within as they evolve. This dissertation identified ‘scaling from within’ as a distinct way in which sharing practices evolve, in that they tend to expand their activities, satisfy more than one human need at a time, and embed themselves in people’s life. Ergo, this analysis proposed a new lens for looking at the sharing practices’ transformation over time, in relation to their spatial evolution. Finally, using theories of social change, this research identified barriers in the transition towards sharing culture.

This analytical work aims to contribute to the wider discussion around sharing and its transformative potential towards a more sustainable future. This thesis can be valuable to academics and researchers working on the field of sharing and the urban commons, as well as practitioners involved in sharing practices on the ground.

**02 | An interdisciplinary research framework for investigating spatial patterns of sharing culture**

An important contribution of this dissertation is the development of an interdisciplinary research framework for investigating space as it relates to sharing culture practices. Given the limited comprehensive research that existed on studying sharing and space, this disser-
tation proposed an exploratory approach that brought together research methods from different disciplines, such as social sciences, geography, architecture, and urban design. This approach combines ethnographic research methods, such as interviews, observations, and qualitative data analysis, with mapping, space syntax, and spatial representation, in order to capture spatial patterns of sharing culture through an intersubjective inquiry. Furthermore, cultural probes were developed, such as the human needs’ colorful wheel and the sharing cards game, which can become useful tools for researchers doing fieldwork relevant to sharing culture.

This interdisciplinary research framework is a significant contribution and resource for academics, researchers, and designers who want to further investigate and identify spatial patterns of sharing culture.

03 | A documentation of cases of sharing culture practices with thick description

By applying the interdisciplinary research framework on the field, this dissertation documented four cases of sharing culture practices in Athens, Greece and in London, UK. The cases were documented through thick description and with an etic approach, but at the same time providing the different perspectives of the interviewees. These case studies provide fine-grained information on sharing culture practices, their emergence, organization and evolution over time, as well as insights on their relationship to space.

Through these cases, what becomes evident is that space is a resource of high concern for the practices, but at the same time they lack a conscious understanding on how spatial attributes specifically influence them. The interdisciplinary investigation explored the perceptions of the practices’ participants regarding their spaces through semi-structured interviews that allowed for more fine-grained information. This study also tested actual spatial characteristics and behaviours, through mapping, spatial documentation, and observations. These in-depth case studies revealed a series of spatial insights in the form of discussion, which highlight how space can influence positively or negatively sharing culture practices on three different scales: building, threshold, and urban.

On the building scale, the spatial insights provide information on space as a shared resource and its relationship with the sharing practice. On the threshold scale, the spatial insights provide information on how the public space adjacent to the practice influences its relationship with the wider contextual community. Finally, on the urban scale, findings regarding location, land use, accessibility, and density of the wider context were identified, as well as their influence on sharing culture practices. The cases provide an in-depth investigation that can be useful to both researchers and designers working on the field, but also practitioners of sharing culture who can learn from the experiences of other practices.

04 | Actionable spatial patterns for sharing culture

The last contribution of this dissertation are the spatial patterns for sharing culture. The patterns are an actionable tool that help both designers and communities on the ground to use space as a catalyst for sharing practices. The patterns are a synthesis of the cross-case analysis findings and can help identify ways of acting spatially and creating the conditions that enable sharing culture practices on a building, threshold, and urban scale. The patterns are designed in a way that is easy to use and can be read independently by a wider audience.
Each pattern describes and action that has spatial manifestations, along with its wider conditions and the impact that it has on the practice.

The patterns are not exhaustive — they can be described as proto-patterns — but they aim to provide an initial spatial vocabulary for sharing culture and frame space as one of the many variables influencing the practices. The patterns are meant to be used by a wide audience of researchers, designers, and communities.

08.02 Limitations & Future Research Directions

This research has certain limitations, which have been identified and are described below. These limitations relate to the newly developed research framework as well as lessons learned from its application on the field. Each limitation is concurrently a proposition for future research directions that need to be considered within the field of sharing and space.

01 | Limited range in the taxonomic categories of cases studied

The theoretical framework of this dissertation identified nine different taxonomic categories of sharing culture as they related to everyday life as follows: food, shelter, work, caregiving, knowledge, well-being, resources, mobility, and leisure. The exploratory research framework was designed in a way to intentionally uncover spatial patterns that work across taxonomic categories of sharing culture. However, the cases studied were only four and thus limited in their range in general, as well as in relation to the taxonomy. Regardless of their limited range, a certain saturation of spatial findings was achieved through these four case studies. It is argued, though, that in order for the patterns to be fully substantiated and tested for a wider range of sharing culture practices, more cases should be realized across all taxonomic categories.

02 | Mobility differs spatially from other taxonomic categories of sharing culture

As a result of the limited range of case studies, the research framework was not tested across all taxonomic categories of sharing culture. This becomes a great limitation, with regards to the category of mobility as identified earlier in this dissertation, in section 06.04. Shared mobility is quite unique as it operates as a network in a higher scale compared to other taxonomic categories, and thus its research investigation and spatial findings might vary significantly. Thus, by attempting to study shared mobility, the methodological approach might need to change and adapt to the taxonomic category’s specificities.

03 | Some Space Syntax analysis methods are potentially redundant

For the urban scale analysis, a series of analysis map were realized based on the Space Syntax methodology to identify visibility, step depth from commercial uses and transit stops, choice to uncover foot and vehicular traffic, as well as integration. Even though these mappings operated as a great heuristic in understanding the wider context of the area around a sharing culture practice, I argue that some of them can be considered redundant as they did not offer new information or data. Specifically, the analyses of step depth from commercial uses and transit stops, integration, and choice did not significantly contribute to the case studies, as the information provided could be captured through GIS data mappings and street view clippings. Moreover, they add to the complexity of the case study as they use
complicated terms that might be confusing to a novice-to-Space-Syntax reader. As such, it is proposed that in future application of the research framework, these mapping analyses could be eliminated. One of the Space Syntax analyses that should be kept though, is that of the Visibility Graph Analysis (VGA), as it significantly contributed to issues of intervisiblity around the practices.

04 | Building a mutually beneficial research process

When this research begun, I already knew the limitations and struggles that sharing culture initiatives faced and understood that being part of my research would potentially add an additional burden. Moreover, I understood the position of power I had as a researcher and the extractive dynamics my position created in relation to the research subjects. However, as a novice researcher in the beginning of this journey, I did not know how to best make the research process mutually beneficial for both parties involved, beyond offering a small monetary compensation for their participation and casually offering my skills as a researcher and designer if needed. This of course led to limited benefits back to the groups who participated in this study, and to being turned down by a lot of other groups invited to participate in the research. Since the early stages of developing the exploratory research framework of this dissertation, I was exposed to a lot more ways of doing research that are situated and more participatory in nature. Consequently, I believe that moving forward, the incorporation of action-based and participatory research methods in the existing exploratory research framework presented as part of this dissertation would hugely benefit future researchers and sharing culture practices alike.

05 | Case studies realized were only from western context

The cases studied as part of this dissertation are both located within a western, and more specifically European context. Even though Athens and London differ in culture, history, and economy, they still fall within a European mentality, and thus the patterns developed are context and culture bound. Moving forward, the spatial patterns of sharing culture would greatly benefit from a decolonization and a wider investigation in different contexts, cultures, and even languages. Studying sharing culture practices in diverse cultural contexts in combination with more situated and participatory research methods would be greatly beneficial and will offer an opportunity for decolonized spatial patterns of sharing culture.

06 | Design participatory processes to facilitate the use of patterns in groups

Finally, the spatial patterns of sharing culture are designed in an easy-to-understand way and are meant to be used by groups in a participatory manner. The patterns can be used by groups that are already involved in sharing culture practices or individuals and stakeholders that are looking to develop new practices. Thus, the patterns are best used as a tool that can facilitate a participatory process and a discussion within a group. However, the participatory processes that will make the best use of the patterns are not defined yet. Future research that seeks to further develop the patterns should consider developing and testing participatory design processes that will complement them with relevant interested groups.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


for-refugees-in-abandoned-hotels/.


Bibliography


———. Welcome to the Kitchen - City Plaza. City Plaza, Athens, 2016. https://www.you-


Gillette, King Camp. The Human Drift. University of California Libraries, 1894.


Harvey, David. Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution, 2013.


Bibliography


———. This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate. Penguin, 2015.


Squat, City Plaza. “#18M Banner at #CityPlaza #18M #MarchAgainst: #Fascism, #Racism, #Austerity and #EU-#Turkey! #CityPlaza Did the Call & Participating!Pic.Twitter.Com/K54jRvd0VH.” Tweet. @sol2refugees (blog), February 18, 2017. https://twitter.com/sol2refugees/status/832972732337942528.


———. “The First Day of the School for the Kids of #CityPlaza. Happy #school Year for All the Kids! #Solidarity Win!Pic.Twitter.Com/YQUOl=k5zl.” Tweet. @sol2refugees (blog), September 11, 2017. https://twitter.com/sol2refugees/status/907156969768865792.


tive-preschools.


GLOSSARY

affordance: properties of an object – or space – both material or immaterial that enable individuals to use it in a specific manner

appropriation (spatial): spatial appropriation is the change of a space to make it one’s own. It can be considered as an act of domination over a space by an individual or a group of people. Appropriation has a reciprocal character; the way a space or an environment is appropriated by people, influences how they operate in it.

collaborative services: structured services based on the premise of greater levels of collaboration between individuals involved in order to satisfy various daily procedures

commoning: is a term introduced to identify an actionable verb in regards to the commons. Commoning as a verb goes beyond the simple management and appropriation of commons, to the constant reproduction of both the space and the process.

commons: natural and cultural resources – both material and immaterial – that are managed collectively by a community

commons identi-kit: is a tool developed by Gibson-Graham et al. in the book ‘Take back the Economy’. The Commons Identi-Kit can be used to assess the way a space is being maintained and shared as a resource by a certain group of people.

cultural probe: a design research technique using designed artifacts to prompt research subjects to share inspirational information about their lives, aspirations, and values.

degrowth: a sociopolitical and economic movement that aims for equitable social and natural well-being. It advocates for “equitable downscaling” of overall production and consumption achieved through strong cultural shifts and deep economic structural change to achieve socio-ecological transformation.

diffusion (of a practice): is when a practice spreads widely and gets adopted by more people. Diffusion signifies that an initially niche practice becomes accepted and part of the mainstream. It is a term used widely in the field of social innovation, but the ways of how practices diffuse, and spread are loosely defined.

enclosure (enclosed spaces): enclosed space can be considered a space that is physically bounded by fences and barriers. However, a space can be enclosed without physical barriers, but by limitations put in place through privatization and the market. Spaces which are not open to everyone and do not allow for people to self-organize in them, are enclosed spaces.

functional distance: is defined as the degree to which a spatial, architectural arrangement will afford unplanned encounters between people who live, work or operate within certain urban areas.

multilevel perspective (MLP): MLP is a framework of understanding and analyzing socio-technical transitions towards sustainability. Exploring socio-technical transitions to sustainability involves addressing complex societal challenges by taking into consideration multiple levels of both social and technical systems that make up our societies today.
peer-to-peer (P2P): referring to sharing, P2P is a network of individuals, who are sharing resources both material or immaterial between one another; every sharing transaction happens between two actors within the network. It can be contrasted to the common pool sharing, where there is a common pool of resources to be shared among a group of people.

practice (sharing): the term practice is used in this dissertation quite extensively, and mainly when referring to sharing practices or sharing culture practices. Thus, sharing practices in the context of this work are defined as the situated practices of active sharing including the individuals involved, the activities they engage with, their space, and resources. The terms ‘practice’ or ‘initiative’ are intentionally used to present manifestations of sharing culture in a way that is more holistic and goes beyond just the ‘group’ or ‘collective’ of individuals who are practicing it.

propinquity (effect): is a theory that states that people who encounter each other more often tend to form social relationships and kinship

satisfier: satisfiers are defined by Max-Neef as ways of satisfying a human need. In that sense, human needs are separated from the way that they are being satisfied, leading to a variety of options.

scale across: replication of a model or a practice and translation to the model in a new context

scale deep: the impact that a practice or model can have on those involved and their wider context by creating cultural shifts or shifts in people's values and relationships

scale up: expansion of a model or a practice by increasing the number of people involved in it. Scaling up might also lead to structural transformation of the practice or change in wider policies.

scale within: diversification of a model of a sharing practice over time, by doing more activities and satisfying more needs of those involved while using the same or steady amount of resources and infrastructure.

segment angular choice analysis: is a type of street network analysis based on the Space Syntax methodology. It analyzes the ‘movement-through’ street segments of an urban network taking into consideration distance and angle change. The analysis is based on the theory that people are more likely to prefer least angle change routes compared to just shortest-length routes.

segment angular integration analysis: is a type of street network analysis based on the Space Syntax methodology. It demonstrates how close each street segment is to all others within an urban network and is considered as the “to-movement”. Integration describes how easy it is to access a specific location in the network from all other segments within a network, how integrated or segregated it is.

sharing culture: social networks that grow informally within a region and have as their main goal to co-produce, manage, and share resources, time, services, knowledge,
information, and support based on solidarity and reciprocity rather than economic profit. Sharing culture creates an alternative pathway for citizens to serve their daily needs in a more sustainable, resourceful, and socially engaging manner by tapping into resources within their region.

**sharing economy**: an economic system which allows assets to be shared or services to be delivered between individuals peer-to-peer, usually by using technology and online platforms.

**social capital**: relates to social networks built on mutual support, reciprocity, and trust. The more people interact and build relationships daily across different spheres of their life, the more social capital increases.

**social change**: refers to significant shifts in social behavior patterns, culture, norms, and values that happen over a period of time.

**social practice**: here the model of studying social practices by Shove et al. is used in understanding different practices as a combination of necessary materials, skills (competences), and meanings. For any social practice to emerge all three elements need to be present within a group or available to an individual.

**spatial pattern**: is an abstraction of a spatial design solution taking place over and over again in different contexts and forms. Spatial patterns are descriptive of spatial conditions and situations taking place currently but can also be normative providing good examples to follow.

**spatial precarity**: the lack of spatial stability in the face of market forces, e.g. increasing land use and rent prices.

**step depth analysis**: is a type of street network analysis based on the Space Syntax methodology. It showcases the shortest paths from selected points of attraction to all other segments within a street network by taking into consideration angular change not just distance. The way it is calculated is through the change of angle of street segments from one node to another. The steps are cumulative as you move from node to node further away from the point of attraction.

**sustainable community movement organizations (SCMOs)**: are social movements driven by citizens collaborating at the local level with the aim to influence consumption shifts for environmental reasons through their role as conscious consumers.

**thick description**: is a term used in social sciences and ethnography to highlight a method of observing, understanding, and documenting behaviors and events not alone, but as part of their context, with the intention to holistically explain why they happen.

**threshold space**: threshold spatiality is defined by Stavrides as a condition that allows different communities, commoners, and individuals to share with each other openly and not in an enclosed manner. Threshold space is contrasted to enclosed commons and provides and opportunity of passage and engagement among different groups.

**transition design**: a new design approach and framework developed at Carnegie Mellon University’s School of Design which aims at using design to facilitate societal transi-
tions towards more sustainable futures.

**urban commons**: identifies cities as commons – both their physical spaces and infrastructure, as well as the human activity they facilitate. By doing so it places citizens as having a key role in the reproduction of the city as commons that goes beyond just the typical stakeholders of local authorities and private market.

**usership**: within the field of sharing usership identifies the action of sharing or acquiring access to use a resource or asset instead of owning or having complete control of it. It is contrasted to ownership, the act of owning and using a resource by oneself.

**visibility graph analysis (VGA)**: VGA is an inter-visibility analysis of space based on the Space Syntax methodology. This process analyzes how visible each point in space is from every other point within an area and creates a ‘heat-map’ highlighting high, medium and low visibility areas.
A: Recruiting Study Participants & Ethics Review Application

Human Subject’s Contact Emails

Initial Email: The group will be initially contacted via email at the general email address of their organization. The email address will be found publicly available online. The email sent to them will be the following:

“Subject: Participation in Research on Sharing Culture and Cooperatives

Hello,

My name is Eleni Katrini and I am a PhD researcher at the School of Architecture of Carnegie Mellon University. My research focuses on sharing culture within urban neighborhoods and their relationship to physical space. It is an ethnographic research heavily based on a collection of case studies. Within the range of my work is also (appropriate category of Sharing Culture Taxonomy). During my research I came across your organization and I was very intrigued by the work you do in this field and the way your group is organized.

I would be glad given the opportunity to meet with someone from your organization in order to provide you with further information about this research and discuss the potential of participating in my research study. Please do not hesitate to contact me either via email or at my cell phone _______.

Looking forward to hearing back from you.

Best regards,

Eleni Katrini”

Secondary Email: When someone from the group replies to the initial email, the following email will be sent as a response with an attachment of the consent form as an introduction to the study:

“Subject: Participation in Research on Sharing Culture and Cooperatives

Hello ______,

I am glad you have accepted to meet with me to discuss about the possibility of you participating in the research. The available times for me to meet are: __________

During our meeting I will give you an introduction to the research procedures, potential risks and benefits as well as compensation.

I am looking forward to hearing back from you.

Best regards,

Eleni Katrini”
Case Studies Contacted

Cases were identified and invited via email to participate in the research. The invitation emails were sent to contact information regarding the practices, found online. After being contacted, only four out of ten cases were willing to participate in the research as highlighted in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Study</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Taxonomic Category</th>
<th>Response to Invitation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grasshoppers in the Park</td>
<td>London, UK</td>
<td>Caregiving</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brixton Pound</td>
<td>London, UK</td>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lambidona Social Cultural Center</td>
<td>Athens, Greece</td>
<td>Knowledge, Leisure</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Plaza refugee center &amp; shelter</td>
<td>Athens, Greece</td>
<td>Shelter</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Field</td>
<td>London, UK</td>
<td>Knowledge, Leisure</td>
<td>Denied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library of Things</td>
<td>London, UK</td>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Did not follow up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metropolitan Community Clinic</td>
<td>Athens, Greece</td>
<td>Well-being</td>
<td>Did not respond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade School</td>
<td>London, UK</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Did not respond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loughborough Farm</td>
<td>London, UK</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>Did not respond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bromley by Bow</td>
<td>London, UK</td>
<td>Well-being</td>
<td>Did not respond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our Kypseli</td>
<td>Athens, Greece</td>
<td>Leisure</td>
<td>Did not follow up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agrocite</td>
<td>Paris, France</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>Underwent significant structural changes at the time of invitation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Human Subjects’ Consent Form

Carnegie Mellon University

Consent Form for Participation in Research

Study Title: Creating the Everyday Commons; Sharing Culture and Collaboration within Urban Neighborhoods and their relationship with Physical Space
Principal Investigator: Eleni Katrini, PhD Candidate, School of Architecture, Carnegie Mellon University
Faculty Advisor: Cameron Tonkinwise, Associate Professor, School of Design, Carnegie Mellon University
Sponsor: GuSH Grant, Carnegie Mellon University Graduate Student Assembly and Provost’s Office
Contact Information: ekatrini@andrew.cmu.edu | +1 412 482 7491

Purpose of this Study
Creating the Everyday Commons is a research project on sharing culture practices within urban neighborhoods and the goal is to create a better understanding of their mutual cause-and-effect relationship with physical space. It explores specific case studies where people have come together to collaboratively develop an alternative way of meeting their everyday needs. There are initiatives in 10 different categories of everyday needs to be explored in this research, which are the following: Shelter, Utility, Mobility, Food, Chores, Knowledge, Health, Leisure, Work and Care-giving. One example (case study) will be documented for each category.

Procedures
The case study documentation includes three components, all of which will take place in the initiative’s space: Interviews, Space Documentation and Feedback on documentation. If you decide to participate in the research study, then you will be asked to participate in the following procedures:

1) A free flowing interview that will last 30-40 minutes and will take place at the space of your group. The discussion will be focused on the following topics regarding the group you are part of:
   a. History and evolution of the group through time. Challenges it faced, successes it has achieved and plans for the future.
   b. Current organizational structure of the group & the initiative.
   c. Your role in the group. Limited personal information on how the initiative is part of your everyday schedule, e.g. how do you commute there and how long does it take, how many hours do you participate etc.
   d. Self-reported benefits the initiative has offered to you on a daily basis. Insights on what you believe is the greater impact of the initiative on a neighborhood scale.
   e. Information regarding the spaces that have housed their initiative. Information on how the current space is serving your group, how it is being used daily, what they like about it and how it could become even better.

The interviews will be audio recorded in order to be transcribed and revisited. The identifiable research data will only be available to the researchers listed at the top of this consent form. The recordings and transcripts will be de-identified and will be made accessible only to members of the Principal Investigator’s PhD committee who are also CMU researchers.

2) Spatial documentation of the spaces of the initiative will take place in order to understand how they facilitate or hinder the initiative, as well as what resources each initiative needs to be successful. You, or someone else from your group that has accepted to participate in the study
Carnegie Mellon University

Consent Form for Participation in Research

will be asked to open the doors of your space to the main researcher for her to be able to document the space when the space is not being occupied. The researcher will take photos of the space without any occupants. The process of documenting the space will take about 30-90 minutes (depending on the size of the space) in order for the researcher to realize the measurements and sketches.

3) Feedback on documentation will conclude your participation in the study. You will have the opportunity to review the documentation material produced for this research study and provide feedback during a group discussion with other participants of the study from your group. The group meeting will last 60 minutes and it will be audio recorded if all of the participants have given consent to audio recording.

The objective of this final part of the study is for the researcher to present back to you the documentation material she has put together and collect feedback, comments and thoughts. You will have the opportunity to reflect on the initiative and share insights that will further inform and validate the documentation of the group as a case study. This process will also confirm if you are comfortable with the information to be shared publicly about the initiative.

Participant Requirements
All participants of the study need to be above the age of 21 years old.

Risks
There is minimal risk to participating in this study. There is a slight risk of breach of confidentiality, however, the researchers take every precaution to protect all study data. The case studies will be documented as a group. Names will not be included, and comments will be de-identified. Any pictures taken of the space and publicized will not include people in them, just the space vacant.

Benefits
There is no direct benefit to participating in this study. However, there may be benefits to society and to future research in this area. One of the main goals of this research is to inform other similar future cooperative initiatives with insights from the selected case studies that have achieved certain sustainability through time. A structured documentation of all groups documented will be made available freely to the public in order to help other similar existing sharing culture initiatives to learn from each other and provide a starting point for new ones to break ground.

Compensation & Costs
There will be no cost to you if you participate in this study. There will be a compensation of $15 dollars for your participation in the research study.

Confidentiality
By participating in the study, you understand and agree that Carnegie Mellon may be required to disclose your consent form, data and other personally identifiable information as required by law, regulation, subpoena or court order. Otherwise, your confidentiality will be maintained in the following manner:
Carnegie Mellon University

Consent Form for Participation in Research

Your data and consent form will be kept separate. Your research data will be stored in a secure location on Carnegie Mellon property. Sharing of data with other researchers will only be done in such a manner that you will not be identified. By participating, you understand and agree that the data and information gathered during this study may be used by Carnegie Mellon and published and/or disclosed by Carnegie Mellon to others outside of Carnegie Mellon. However, your name, contact information and other direct personal identifiers will not be gathered or mentioned in any such publication or dissemination of the research data and/or results by Carnegie Mellon. Note that per regulation all research data must be kept for a minimum of 3 years.

The only identifiers gathered will be the consent forms and audio recordings of personal interviews and feedback discussion. No personal information will be gathered aside from that which the participant willingly shares during the interview. Please note that you should not say anything identifiable and private during audio recording that could be detrimental to yourself or to others. The recordings will be assigned numbers and will not be identified with participants’ names. More specifically, the researcher will take the following steps to protect participants’ identities during this study: (1) Each participant will be assigned a number; (2) The researchers will record any data collected during the study by number, not by name; (3) Any original recordings or data files will be stored in a secured location accessed only by the principal researcher.

Optional Permission
I understand that the researchers may want to use quotes from or audio recordings for illustrative reasons in presentations of this work for scientific or educational purposes. I give my permission to do so provided that my name will not appear.

Please initial here: _______YES _______NO

Rights
Your participation is voluntary. You are free to stop your participation at any point. Refusal to participate or withdrawal of your consent or discontinued participation in the study will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits or rights to which you might otherwise be entitled. The Principal Investigator may at his/her discretion remove you from the study for any of a number of reasons. In such an event, you will not suffer any penalty or loss of benefits or rights which you might otherwise be entitled.

Right to Ask Questions & Contact Information
If you have any questions about this study, you should feel free to ask them now. If you have questions later, desire additional information, or wish to withdraw your participation please contact the Principal Investigator by mail, phone or e-mail in accordance with the contact information listed on the first page of this consent.

If you have questions pertaining to your rights as a research participant; or to report concerns to this study, you should contact the Office of Research Integrity and Compliance at Carnegie Mellon University. Email: irb-review@andrew.cmu.edu. Phone: 412-268-1901 or 412-268-5460.
Carnegie Mellon University

Consent Form for Participation in Research

Voluntary Consent
By signing below, you agree that the above information has been explained to you and all your current questions have been answered. You are encouraged to ask questions about any aspect of this research study during the course of the study and in the future. By signing this form, you agree to participate in this research study. A copy of the consent form will be given to you.

PRINT PARTICIPANT’S NAME

PARTICIPANT SIGNATURE DATE

I certify that I have explained the nature and purpose of this research study to the above individual and I have discussed the potential benefits and possible risks of participation in the study. Any questions the individual has about this study have been answered and any future questions will be answered as they arise.

SIGNATURE OF PERSON OBTAINING CONSENT DATE

***************************************************************************
Institutional Review Board (IRB) Application Approval

Carnegie Mellon University

APPROVAL OF SUBMISSION

August 24, 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Review:</th>
<th>Continuing Review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title of Study:</td>
<td>Creating the Everyday Commons; Sharing Culture within urban neighborhoods and the relationship with Physical Space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigator:</td>
<td>Eleni Katrini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Team Members:</td>
<td>Vivian Loftness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRB ID:</td>
<td>CR00000431: Continuing Review for Study STUDY2016_00000262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding:</td>
<td>Name:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prime Funding Source:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Carnegie Mellon University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed and granted APPROVAL under EXPEDITED REVIEW on 8/24/2017 per 45 CFR 46.110 (6 & 7(b)) and 21 CFR 56.110. This APPROVAL expires on 9/24/2018.

If continuing review approval is not granted before the expiration date of 9/24/2018, approval of this study expires on that date, unless suspended or terminated earlier by action of the IRB. Note that submitting for continuing review in a timely manner is the responsibility of the PI.

Unanticipated problems and adverse events must be reported to the IRB within three (3) working days. Any additional modifications to this research protocol or advertising materials pertaining to the study must be submitted for review and granted IRB approval prior to implementation.

The Investigator(s) listed above in conducting this protocol agree(s) to follow the recommendations of the IRB of any conditions to or changes in procedure subsequent to this review. In undertaking the execution of the protocol, the investigator(s) further agree(s) to abide by all CMU research policies including, but not limited to the policies on responsible conduct of research and conflict of interest.

Sincerely,

John Zimmerman
IRB Chair
B: Interviews Guide

Description of Interview Process
The subjects’ interviews will slightly vary among participants. There are two main types of interviews that will be realized during this research:

Primary Contact Person – First Exploratory Interview
For the primary contact person of the case study, with whom the first exploratory interview will be realized, the format will be unstructured and based on a free-flowing conversation. That will allow for more rich information to arise regarding the case study, beyond the preconceptions of the researcher. However, a certain set of information will be gathered during those first interviews for all case studies, regardless the specifics. The goal of these interviews is to set a general understanding of how each case study functions and how space serves the group’s mission and activities. A sample of the topics to be discussed are the following:

Background Information:
• How do people usually find out about the group and what is the process of getting involved?
• How many people are involved in the group?
• How long do people stay with the group? Is there a turnover rate?

Organizational Information:
• How much do people get involved and in what ways do they participate?
• How are decisions being made about the group? Details on how the organizational structure of the group works.
• What are the measures of success for the group? Are they keeping track of them over time?
• Have any friendships / networks formed through the group that go beyond and outside of the activities of the group?
• Is there ongoing interaction with older members of the group and new ones? (not always applicable)

Information about the beginnings of the group
• How did the group start? Was it out of some kind of necessity, availability of space, activity that already was taking place?
• How has the organizational structure of the group changed since then? Where there any official paperwork needed to be completed to formalize the group?
• Where did the first activities of the group take place?

Spatial Information (Large - Urban Scale)
• How far away do participants live? Are they within walking distance?
• Describe the surrounding neighborhood. What is its general character?
• Do people from the neighborhood knock on your door to find out what you do?
• What other close-by amenities do you use / visit apart from your own space?

Spatial Information (Small – Building Scale)
• Describe the space that you are currently housed in and how was this space selected.
• What spaces are you allowed to use within the general building? Are there other tenants?
• What types of activities take place within the space(s) you are allowed to use? In case there is an outdoors space, how and how often does the group use it?
• Are there spatial attributes that help you attract new participants?
• Are there any other activities facilitated in the space by you or others that are not directly related to your group’s primary mission?
• If the group was housed in another space(s) previously, please describe the previous space(s) and the reasons why did the group decided to move out.
• Please describe what the ideal space would look like for a group / organization like yours, especially based on the fact that is run collaboratively.
• Does this current space fulfill your group's activities and vision? How?

Secondary more in-depth Interviews
For these secondary interviews, the goal is to get a clearer understanding of how the group works and how individual stakeholders are involved in it. Finally, the main goal is to gather self-reported benefits and added value that being part of this group offers to participants. These interviews will be more structured and have a clearer survey-like approach. Below are the main questions to be asked:

General Information (in order to grasp general group's demographics)
• Age range and work set up (full time, part time, work at home)
• How long have you been involved with the group?
• In which area do you live? How do you commute to the group’s meeting?

Information on Being Part of the Group
• How did you first got involved in the group?
• How many hours do you dedicate / spend for the initiative?
• What roles do you usually take up in the group?
• In what types of meetings / activities, organized by the group, do you participate the most?
• Have you formed friendships with other participants? If yes, what kind of other activities do you participate outside of the group?

Self-reported benefits
• Why did you decide to be part of this initiative? (Give some examples to kick off the discussion, e.g. cost savings, activities, people involved, ideology, location etc.)
• Describe in your own words what are the greatest benefits of being part of this initiative for you on a personal, daily basis.
• What types of your everyday basic human needs are you satisfying through this practice? (subsistence, affection, freedom, identity, participation, creation, protection, idleness, understanding)

Spatial Information
• Are you satisfied with the space that you are currently occupying? Does it serve your group’s mission?
• Name 2 things that you like about the space and 2 that still need improvement and why.
• Please describe what the ideal space would look like for a group / organization like yours, especially based on the fact that is run collaboratively.
C: Case Studies Qualitative Data Analysis Networks

Case 01: Caregiving
Case 02: Leisure

Appendices: Appendix C
Case 03: Shelter
Case 04: Work