



# The sharing economy in social media: Analyzing tensions between market and non-market logics



Christofer Laurell<sup>a,\*</sup>, Christian Sandström<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Stockholm School of Economics Institute for Research and Jönköping International Business School, Box 6501, SE-113 83 Stockholm, Sweden

<sup>b</sup> Chalmers University of Technology and the Ratio Institute, Vera Sandbergs Allé 8B, SE-412 96 Göteborg, Sweden

## ARTICLE INFO

### Keywords:

Sharing economy  
Market logic  
Non-market logic  
Collaborative consumption  
Platform capitalism  
Social media analytics  
Institutional analysis  
Uber  
Airbnb

## ABSTRACT

How is the sharing economy framed and who are the main actors driving current developments? Utilizing Social Media Analytics (SMA) for institutional analysis, we track the formation of the sharing economy in Sweden, its actors and their impact. Our findings reveal that the sharing economy in Sweden currently encompasses a wide variety of both non-market and market practices. Discussions concerning commercial exchanges, the role of profit-driven firms such as Uber and Airbnb, and the emergence of a market logic has created a state of instability. Our results point at several unresolved issues, such as taxation and regulation. Based on these findings, we suggest an expanded definition of the sharing economy which incorporates both market and non-market logics.

## 1. Introduction

Sharing-economy platforms are gaining momentum in several industries, offering the potential of efficient utilization of resources, novel value creation, and technological disruption whilst also generating institutional turbulence.

Being in its infancy, the field is still riddled with controversies and ambiguities. On one hand, previous research has documented how the notion of a sharing economy and the related term collaborative consumption emerged as descriptions of online activities such as content sharing, collaborative encyclopedias like Wikipedia, file sharing and open-source software, where people are driven by a combination of financial and non-financial motives (Hamari et al., 2015). On the other hand, the term sharing economy has become increasingly associated with a form of platform capitalism where profit-driven entrant firms create two-sided markets (Dreyer et al., 2017) and monetize the interaction between buyers and sellers (Murillo et al., 2017). This form of sharing economy is a truly disruptive force, not only for established firms but also for current institutions, as issues such as tax evasion and regulatory compliance remain unsolved (Laurell and Sandström, 2016, forthcoming). Still being in a fluid state, it is presently unclear how the sharing economy is framed. Additionally, more empirical data is needed regarding ongoing developments within this rapidly transforming area of society.

In this paper, we explore how the sharing economy is framed in

Sweden whilst also pointing out the main actors driving current developments. Utilizing Social Media Analytics (SMA) for institutional analysis, we conceptualize the sharing economy as an organizational field and describe its current state in Sweden, its actors and their impact. Our findings reveal that the sharing economy in Sweden currently spans a wide variety of both non-market and market practices and that the field is currently characterized by instability and tension. Moreover, discussions that concern the framing of the sharing economy are currently dominated by profit-driven firms, most notably Uber and Airbnb. Our data points at several ambiguities that remain unsolved, e.g., taxation and regulation. In view of these findings, we contribute to extant literature by providing a structured analysis of the state of the sharing economy that illustrates its diverse character. Our findings show the importance of incorporating both market and non-market logics into the conceptualization of this phenomenon, and therefore we suggest an expanded definition of the sharing economy toward the end of the paper. As popular accounts on the sharing economy in other countries indicate similar patterns regarding unsolved ambiguities, the results in this paper can, to a certain extent, be utilized to approach other national contexts.

The paper begins with a brief background concerning the contemporary state of the sharing economy and the conceptual approach employed throughout the article. Subsequently, the method is described. Next, our results are presented and analyzed. Finally, we provide a concluding remark together with directions for future research.

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: [christofer.laurell@hhs.se](mailto:christofer.laurell@hhs.se) (C. Laurell), [christian.sandstrom@chalmers.se](mailto:christian.sandstrom@chalmers.se) (C. Sandström).

## 2. Elements of the topic and conceptual approach

The notion of the sharing economy has become subject to a lot of attention and even hype in recent years (Felländer et al., 2015). The term sharing economy and the related notion of collaborative consumption both have their origins in Information and Communication Technology (ICT)-enabled interactions between users on the internet (Botsman and Rogers, 2010; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Wang and Zhang, 2012) which offer the potential of transitioning societies into a post-ownership economy (Belk, 2014). Whilst the sharing economy and collaborative consumption still tend to be vaguely defined, one of the recently suggested definitions of how the two notions can be related to each other was presented by Möhlmann:

*“Collaborative consumption, often associated with the sharing economy, takes place in organized systems or networks, in which participants conduct sharing activities in the form of renting, lending, trading, bartering, and swapping of goods, services, transportation solutions, space, or money.”* (2015, p. 193)

The term sharing economy has also been used to advocate the shift toward a more sustainable economy and the emergence of a collaborative commons (Parguel et al., 2017; Bauwens and Kostakis, 2014). This conceptualization of a sharing economy adapts a non-market logic where exchanges are not primarily coordinated via the price mechanism and where actors are largely motivated by factors other than profit, e.g., altruistic values related to sharing, helping others, and contributing to a more sustainable way of life (Prothero et al., 2011; Sacks, 2011).

The social movement described above stands in contrast to current developments of the sharing economy. In recent years, a form of platform capitalism has emerged, using the notion of a sharing economy. Firms such as Airbnb, Uber, and TaskRabbit enable individuals to exchange services via a platform. These firms have received hundreds of millions in venture capital (Alsever, 2013), are driven by profit (Slee, 2016), and compete with established firms, often by creating turbulence and possibly redefining notions of work and employment in the long run.

Taken together, the notion of a sharing economy seems to be riddled with tensions between non-market logics of idealism and a form of platform capitalism driven by for-profit firms (Murillo et al., 2017; Schor, 2014). With this tension in mind, more knowledge is needed about how the sharing economy is framed and which actors are driving current developments. Therefore, the research question we set out to answer is formulated as follows: *How do online discussions in social media reflect market and non-market logics in the field of the sharing economy?*

To explore how the sharing economy is framed whilst also pointing out the main actors related to this framing, we conceptualize the phenomenon of the sharing economy as an emerging organizational field that, based on extant literature, encompasses two institutional logics that continuously contribute to redefining the boundaries of the field. The underlying rationale for doing so is that many of the developments of the sharing economy identified by previous literature resemble the evolution of organizational fields (Mair and Reischauer, 2017). Based on this conceptualization, the sharing economy is approached as an organizational field that seems to be depicted in extant literature as a set of organizations displaying diverse approaches (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983), operating within a seemingly nested system (Holm, 1995) and, based on issues related to the non-market or market logics (Thornton and Ocasio, 1999), potentially functioning as a basis out of which the field forms (Hoffman, 1999, cf. Bourdieu, 1984, 1990).

More specifically, extant literature illustrates that the introduction of novelty, such as a new technology, frequently results in the emergence of new business models as well as institutional upheaval (Bohnsack et al., 2016; Ernkvist, 2015; Laurell and Sandström, 2014). When this occurs, institutions, i.e., formal and informal “*humanly devised constraints that structure human interaction*” (North, 1990, p. 3), are

subjected to change. Those actors which are constrained by the same institutional set-up are together referred to as an organizational field (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). The process of organizational field formation is dynamic, as fields over time aggregate specific compositions of actors, a certain degree of opposition among them, their relative position within a given field, and their functional weight or extent of power within that field (Bourdieu, 1984, 1990). The degree of stability of a given field depends upon the extent of power and potential influence an actor has upon other actors to change the rules of the game or impose a new set of conditions that change behavior within a given field (Bourdieu, 1984, 1990). Thus, actors' actual behaviors depend upon every part of the field, because the respective parts of a specific field are mutually interdependent (Lewin, 1939). Organizational fields are, therefore, subject to what scholars refer to as the paradox of embedded agency (Seo and Creed, 2002).

When analyzing a specific organizational field at a certain point in time, three dimensions are usually studied: (1) the state of the field in which actors operate; (2) how meanings among actors are diffused; and (3) relations between actors (Hardy and Maguire, 2008).

First, the coexistence of multiple institutional logics in an organizational field, as seems to be the case for the sharing economy, usually represents an enabling condition for changes within organizational fields (Clemens and Cook, 1999; Sewell, 1992). Additionally, institutional change is more easily accomplished in fields that are emerging as institutionalized practices have not yet been established or stabilized. This is particularly the case for emerging fields characterized by fluid relationships, conflicting values, and absence of norms. Under these circumstances, actors can engage in actions which can transform the structure of organizational fields (Fligstein, 1997).

Second, institutional change has been shown to manifest as ongoing and complex struggles over meaning among actors (Czarniawska and Joerges, 1996; see also Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Phillips and Malhotra, 2008). From this perspective, institutions are created and formed as meanings are shared and taken for granted, but also “*emerge from novel interpretations and ensuring struggles over meaning, although it also recognizes that, because meanings of existing practices are supported by existing logics, myths and discourses, they may not be easily displaced*” (Hardy and Maguire, 2008, p. 205). In this context, Munir (2005) argued that the way in which events and changes are interpreted and given meaning is one of the central aspects of processes of institutional entrepreneurship.

Third, actors who benefit from a certain structural arrangement will be more likely to act to change organizational fields (Maguire et al., 2004). Moreover, being in the periphery of an established field usually implies less embeddedness in an institutional arrangement (Leblebici et al., 1991). Other scholars have regarded institutional change as largely a social challenge (Fligstein, 1997) where actors' abilities to motivate and orchestrate is crucial in accomplishing change. In this context, the discursive dimension has been highlighted as particularly important (Creed et al., 2002; de Holan and Phillips, 2002; Dorado, 2005).

When taken together, these three dimensions—the state of the field, how meanings among actors are diffused, and relations between actors—can be utilized to guide the structure of institutional analysis and, by doing so, study the framing of an emerging organizational field and how institutional logics redefine the boundaries of that field.

## 3. Method

To explore how the sharing economy is framed and identify which actors are driving current developments, SMA was employed for institutional analysis. Online data collection has been utilized increasingly in recent years, and this development has resulted in the emergence of SMA, an interdisciplinary approach that seeks to combine, extend, and adapt methods for analysis of social media data (Stieglitz et al., 2014). As social media represents “*a kind of living lab, which*

enables academics to collect large amounts of data generated in a real-world environment” (Stieglitz et al., 2014, p. 90), it is ideal for studying a contemporary phenomenon such as the sharing economy in which considerable institutional change takes place (Laurell and Sandström, 2016), as this form of data contains expressions that reveal how a specific field is framed and which actors contribute to this framing. Moreover, the unobtrusive character of SMA makes it highly suitable for analyzing how transformations take place, as discussions continuously add to the framing of a studied object.

### 3.1. Data collection

In terms of data collection, the fragmented social media landscape and lack of standardized ways of gaining access to social media platforms is one of the main challenges facing SMA researchers. Due to increased interest among researchers, however, a plethora of services offering structured access to user-generated content across platforms has emerged in recent years.

We used a service called Notified to collect data. The service captures user-generated content published on a diverse set of social media platforms. When using the tool, the researcher first enters a set of keywords along with the language or set of languages for data collection. This becomes an important issue to consider as particular keywords can have either a narrow or broad set of associated connotations in different languages. Whilst a broad set of languages provides a potentially richer data set, filtering the data collection process to a specific language and user origin allows for a more focused approach that can be of particular relevance for studies of emerging phenomena. When keywords and language settings have been entered, all publicly posted user-generated content from Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, blogs, forums, and YouTube is collected in a real-time database. The tool therefore allows researchers to collect data in a structured manner from a relatively broad set of social media applications found in the social media landscape. This also means the researcher does not need to rely on often inaccurate digital data collection methods, such as scraping techniques (Stieglitz et al., 2014). The use of external services to collect data when applying SMA does, however, come with its own set of challenges. This is especially the case regarding how data is imported from each respective social media platform to a certain service, as no common standard for the export of data across social media platforms has yet emerged (Stieglitz et al., 2014).

For this study, the Swedish words for “sharing economy” and “the sharing economy” were used, both of which are direct translations from English. The keywords were entered into the service on March 14, 2016. Thereafter, data was collected up until May 14, 2016, generating a data set of 1034 social media posts over a two-month period. The data set only comprised user-generated content written in Swedish. The rationale for this was twofold: first, the Swedish word for the sharing economy has relatively few associated or alternative connotations. Therefore, user-generated content including these two keywords was assumed to have a relatively high degree of relevance to the phenomenon in question; second, Sweden is one of the countries that frequently tops the global rankings of digital technology usage as well as high-speed internet access, making its social media landscape vibrant (Findahl and Davidsson, 2015) and, therefore, particularly suitable for SMA.

### 3.2. Data analysis

After data collection had been completed, the data set was analyzed by applying content analysis (Silverman, 2006). This was carried out by using the collected user-generated content as the object of analysis. More specifically, only structured (i.e., account details) and unstructured (i.e., textual content) data associated with the collected user-generated content were analyzed.

In the first step, the data set was reviewed to exclude user-generated

**Table 1**  
Collected and publicly posted user-generated posts per social media platform.

| Social media | Frequency | Share |
|--------------|-----------|-------|
| Blog         | 32        | 3.2%  |
| Facebook     | 75        | 7.5%  |
| Forum        | 1         | 0.1%  |
| Instagram    | 31        | 3.1%  |
| Twitter      | 855       | 85.6% |
| YouTube      | 5         | 0.5%  |
| Total        | 999       | 100%  |

content relating to phenomena other than the one in question. This review identified 35 user-generated posts in the data set that concerned other issues. These posts were, therefore, excluded from the data set, resulting in a total of 999 remaining user-generated posts. Table 1 presents the distribution of these posts across social media platforms. As the table illustrates, a considerable share of the material was generated from Twitter over the studied period, whilst other major social media outlets generated a relatively modest material in comparison. In alignment with the aim of this paper, to explore how the sharing economy is framed in Sweden, combined with the underlying principle of SMA relating to the study of natural occurrences in real-world environments (Stieglitz et al., 2014), no action was taken with regard to the distribution of data across social media platforms. This decision was taken because of our ambition to capture ways in which the sharing economy was framed throughout the social media landscape, regardless of which specific social media platforms were utilized. Using the same rationale, no specific action was taken concerning reposts (such as retweets on Twitter or “regrams” on Instagram), as these instances also contribute to the framing of the phenomenon at hand.

In the next phase, a sequential analysis model in four steps guided the institutional analysis of the data set. More specifically, this sequential analysis framework was developed in line with the identified characteristics related to institutional changes of organizational fields presented by Hardy and Maguire (2008), including the following four dimensions:

- (1) the state of the organizational field
- (2) institutionalized practices
- (3) meanings diffused among actors
- (4) actors and their position.

First, the state of the sharing economy as an organizational field was explored by reviewing thematic categories concerning how the sharing economy was discussed and framed in the data set. All user-generated content included in the data set was analyzed by focusing on written text only in an effort to make the collected content comparable across platforms. This meant that text from, for example, Twitter and Instagram were treated equally across platforms, as the study of inter-platform variances of how the sharing economy is framed on different platforms was outside the scope of this study. Based on a first review of the data set using this text-based approach, five main thematic categories were identified: (1) the sharing economy as a phenomenon; (2) user experiences associated with the sharing economy; (3) the sharing economy in relation to specific actors; (4) sectors of the sharing economy; and (5) societal consequences of the sharing economy. After these dimensions had been identified, the material was coded accordingly throughout the data set.

Second, institutionalized practices were analyzed to address how the development of the field might give rise to conflicting values (Maguire et al., 2004). We operationalized practices utilizing components of Möhlmann’s definition which suggests that common practices found in the sharing economy encompass “renting, lending, trading, bartering, and swapping” (2015, p. 193). The initial review generated three practices that the definition encompasses in terms of renting,

lending, and swapping and three additional practices in terms of gifting, selling, and sharing. Based on these six identified practices, the material was reviewed again by coding user-generated content that articulated either one specific practice or a set of specific practices.

Third, meanings diffused among actors taking part in framing the sharing economy, that could function as a source of institutional change (cf. Czarniawska and Joerges, 1996; Munir, 2005; Phillips and Malhotra, 2008), were analyzed by identifying specific issues being discussed in the material. In total, 21 issues were generated in a first review which covered such issues as taxation, job creation, and consumer protection. Based on these issues, user-generated content that contained references to the identified issues was coded thereafter.

Fourth, actors and their position play a central role in institutional change (cf. Hardy and Maguire, 2008; Munir, 2005). Actors that are considered part of the sharing economy by social media users were identified by initially reviewing the material for references to specific sharing-economy actors. This review identified 31 individual sharing-economy actors in total. Thereafter, all user-generated content was reviewed to identify content containing specific references to the identified actors. In so doing, and by coding instances where references to these actors were present, it was possible to assess the relative importance of each identified actor in the wider framing of the sharing economy carried out by social media users.

Having identified which actors were referred to as part of the sharing economy, this analysis was followed by an interrelated review of which actors took part in framing the sharing economy (cf. Czarniawska and Joerges, 1996; Hardy and Maguire, 2008). In total, 676 unique actors who had posted user-generated content were identified in the data set. When carrying out the analysis, a cutoff was used, set to a minimum of three user-generated posts published over the studied period per unique actor. This generated 73 unique actors that, in total, had contributed 337 user-generated posts. Thereafter, these 73 unique actors were categorized into actor groups, with the purpose of analyzing which group of actors contributed most to the framing of the sharing economy over the study period. Some individual actors seemed to play multiple roles, thereby creating ambiguity about accurate categorization. In these cases, the main role the actor played, as stated by an organization's mission statement for example, guided the final categorization.

#### 4. Results and analysis

Our results are presented in two steps. First, results on the state of the organizational field of the sharing economy are presented, along with institutionalized practices of the sharing economy and various issues being discussed. This is followed by results concerning which actors are perceived as part of the organizational field of the sharing economy by social media users, and which actor groups contribute the most to its framing.

**Table 2**  
Identified thematic categories.

| Dimension             | Frequency | Share         | Data example   |
|-----------------------|-----------|---------------|--|
| Phenomenon            | 318       | 31.8%         | "Having a lot of stuff that is rarely used will no longer be a status symbol. Instead, we rent, borrow, give away, replace, or buy second-hand. It is a phenomenon that goes by many names." (Facebook, April 9, 2016)   |
| User experience       | 16        | 1.6%          | "A week ago, I took my first ride with Uber Pop. I have previously been a bit of a semi-opponent. [...] But I had a good friend visiting me and she made me download the app and order my first ride with Uber. It worked just fine. The driver was nice. It went smoothly. The car did not smell like cigarettes. I was simply more than satisfied." (Blog, May 11, 2016) |
| Organizational Sector | 63<br>102 | 6.3%<br>10.2% | "Bonsai is growing with the sharing economy in Sweden!" (Twitter, May 11, 2016)  |
| Societal              | 500       | 50.1%         | "Now that the sharing economy is emerging, condominiums and rental apartments will disappear. Instead, you will do a search using an app when you need a roof over your head." (Twitter, April 8, 2016)  |
| Total                 | 999       | 100.0%        | "The sharing economy might very well be good, but do we want venture capital firms to control the economy without paying taxes?" (Twitter, May 2, 2016)  |

#### 4.1. Framing and defining the sharing economy

Table 2 presents the five main thematic categories around which the sharing economy is discussed and framed. Contents regarding the sharing economy as a phenomenon and the societal consequences together represent a considerable share of the total material (81.9%). This indicates that the sharing economy is, arguably, considered a novelty and that the societal consequences of this emerging organizational field are still unclear. In addition to the examples presented in the table, two more examples regarding the sharing economy as a phenomenon and its societal consequences were published in a blog on May 11, 2016 and on Twitter on April 4, 2016:

*"We live in exciting times. Technology is advancing at a furious pace and at the same rate change our behavior and our opportunities. It is no longer strange to take a taxi with someone who is not really a taxi driver or to live with a stranger in a foreign country."*

*"The sharing economy needs rules that make it easy to do right, but it must fundamentally be seen as an opportunity to create a better society."*

Of the 999 posts analyzed, 314 concern various sharing-economy practices. As Table 3 illustrates, there is a relatively wide variety of practices that are interrelated to the sharing economy from the perspective of users of social media. Two examples of how practices such as swapping and renting are articulated in the data were published on Instagram on March 22, 2016 and in a blog on May 2, 2016:

*"New collection in the shop every week! Here, 300–400 garments are swapped per week."*

*"As the sharing economy becomes increasingly popular, almost every fourth car owners today are willing to rent out their own car. But for anyone who rents and are renting out, there are several things that are important to consider."*

Almost two-thirds of these posts (64.6%) concern selling and 24.8% deal with renting. In total, almost 90% of the content about sharing-economy practices are, therefore, related to commercial exchanges. Sharing, swapping, lending, and gifting only make up around 10%, which indicates that discussions are dominated by market exchanges. Therefore, our results suggest that informal institutions (North, 1990) related to the sharing economy—in the real sense of the term—are currently in a state of instability as tensions exist between market and non-market logics. Furthermore, the presented results illustrate that the sharing and sharing-oriented practices identified by Möhlmann (2015) do not dominate the field. Instead, the total set of practices included in the sharing economy has expanded, and one of the novel practices included in this expanded set, selling, is also the most dominant practice (Table 3). We also observe that gifting and sharing are included in our sample, albeit only at very low frequencies.

Whilst the content regarding practices suggests a shifting consensus about actual behavior, the fact that 96 posts in Table 4 are concerned with the definition of the sharing economy indicates that vibrant



**Table 3**  
Identified practices.

| Practices | Frequency | Share  |
|-----------|-----------|--------|
| Giftng    | 1         | 0.3%   |
| Renting   | 78        | 24.8%  |
| Lending   | 8         | 2.5%   |
| Selling   | 203       | 64.6%  |
| Sharing   | 14        | 4.5%   |
| Swapping  | 10        | 3.2%   |
| Total     | 314       | 100.0% |

**Table 4**  
Identified issues.

| Issue                   | Frequency | Share  |
|-------------------------|-----------|--------|
| Taxation                | 158       | 28.8%  |
| Definition              | 96        | 17.5%  |
| Political               | 64        | 11.7%  |
| Regulatory evolution    | 49        | 8.9%   |
| Environment             | 31        | 5.6%   |
| Economical evolution    | 25        | 4.6%   |
| Competition             | 21        | 3.8%   |
| Regulation              | 21        | 3.8%   |
| Entrepreneurship        | 13        | 2.4%   |
| Job creation            | 10        | 1.8%   |
| How to                  | 9         | 1.6%   |
| Working conditions      | 9         | 1.6%   |
| Consumption behavior    | 7         | 1.3%   |
| Legislation             | 6         | 1.1%   |
| Sustainability          | 6         | 1.1%   |
| Technological evolution | 5         | 0.9%   |
| Ownership               | 4         | 0.7%   |
| Policy instruments      | 4         | 0.7%   |
| Resource utilization    | 4         | 0.7%   |
| Black jobs              | 3         | 0.5%   |
| Consumer protection     | 2         | 0.4%   |
| Equality                | 2         | 0.4%   |
| Total                   | 549       | 100.0% |

discussions about the meaning of the term are ongoing. Several posts in this category express discontent over how the term is used to describe activities that are not really related to sharing, and several other posts deal with what should be included in the notion, and who should be considered part of the sharing economy. The following examples from Twitter, published on May 11 and 12, 2016, are illustrative:

*“UberPop is not part of the sharing economy, but part of the tax fiddler economy. Society does not need organized illegal taxicabs.”*

*“New services such as UberPop need to meet with new laws that allow the sharing economy.”*

There are also examples where users argue that the notion of the sharing economy has become hard to apply due to ambiguity. Two such examples from Twitter were published respectively on May 9 and May 11, 2016:

*“Sharing economy/carpooling are loaded words, should not be used perfunctory.”*

*“Words matter. [...] Scrap the word sharing economy.”*

Turning from informal to formal institutions (North, 1990), we can see in Table 4 that a large percentage of the analyzed content concerns formal institutions associated with the sharing economy. The fact that more than 50% of all content published about the sharing economy is concerned with issues such as regulation and taxation indicates that plenty of social media attention is focused not only on informal institutions but also on formal institutions. The following three posts, published on Twitter and Facebook on March 15, 2016 and May 12, 2016, exemplify ongoing discussions about formal institutions:

*“The problem basically is that the legislation has not caught up. It needs to be adapted to the sharing economy.”*

*“At one time the Social Democrats wanted to ban satellites. Now they do their best to ban off the new sharing economy, with services like Uber and Airbnb. But technology always wins over politics.”*

*“The sharing economy must be embraced, and the biggest threat is passive politicians.”*

Therefore, we can conclude that the emergence of a market logic has instilled controversies. As a field, the sharing economy is presently characterized by tensions between market and non-market logics. Concerning formal institutions, it is difficult at this point to discern any emerging consensus. The results above, therefore, illustrate the diversity and associated tensions of the sharing economy. The discussions reviewed above also show that there are conflicting values and norms which, in turn, indicates ongoing institutional change (Clemens and Cook, 1999; Fligstein, 1997).

#### 4.2. Actors and positions in the sharing economy

Table 5 presents those actors identified by social media users as part of the sharing economy and those actors' associated frequency and share of the material. Two examples of how this integration of sharing-economy actors by social media users is manifested in the data were published on Twitter on March 22, 2016 and April 24, 2016:

*“More Uber to the people! #sharingeconomy.”*

*“Really nice! - > Their startup Tipp Tapp will help you to get rid of garbage #sharing economy.”*

As the table illustrates, from the perspective of users, the dominating sharing-economy actors are private, profit-maximizing firms (Uber and Airbnb), together making up more than 60% of the content.

**Table 5**  
Identified actors considered to be part of the sharing economy by social media users.

| Actor       | Frequency | Share  |
|-------------|-----------|--------|
| Uber        | 189       | 47.4%  |
| Airbnb      | 69        | 17.3%  |
| Tinder      | 22        | 5.5%   |
| Workaround  | 16        | 4.0%   |
| Hoodifood   | 12        | 3.0%   |
| Delbar      | 11        | 2.8%   |
| Airdine     | 10        | 2.5%   |
| DriveBack   | 8         | 2.0%   |
| Airpnp      | 6         | 1.5%   |
| Bonsai      | 6         | 1.5%   |
| Budbee      | 4         | 1.0%   |
| Rentl       | 4         | 1.0%   |
| Tipptapp    | 4         | 1.0%   |
| Gigamunch   | 4         | 1.0%   |
| Car2go      | 2         | 0.5%   |
| Bubbler     | 2         | 0.5%   |
| Gomore      | 2         | 0.5%   |
| KeyPit      | 2         | 0.5%   |
| Meetred     | 2         | 0.5%   |
| MöbLerum    | 2         | 0.5%   |
| Onefinestay | 2         | 0.5%   |
| Retoy       | 2         | 0.5%   |
| Taskrunner  | 2         | 0.5%   |
| TaskRabbit  | 2         | 0.5%   |
| Tori.fi     | 2         | 0.5%   |
| Huuto.net   | 2         | 0.5%   |
| Kimppakyyti | 2         | 0.5%   |
| Urb-it      | 2         | 0.5%   |
| Instawork   | 2         | 0.5%   |
| Selfiejobs  | 2         | 0.5%   |
| Grannaker   | 2         | 0.5%   |
| Total       | 399       | 100.0% |

**Table 6**

Actor groups contributing to the framing of the sharing economy, their frequency, and share of published user-generated content compared to the total material.

| Actor  | Frequency | Share  |
|--|-----------|--------|
| Sharing-economy actors                             | 58        | 17.2%  |
| Politician   | 31        | 9.2%   |
| Research institute                                 | 23        | 6.8%   |
| Non-professional                                   | 20        | 5.9%   |
| Professional expert                                | 17        | 5.0%   |
| Municipality official                              | 13        | 3.9%   |
| User   | 13        | 3.9%   |
| Governmental agency representative                 | 12        | 3.6%   |
| Researcher   | 11        | 3.3%   |
| Entrant representative                             | 10        | 3.0%   |
| Newspaper  | 9         | 2.7%   |
| Political party                                    | 8         | 2.4%   |
| Science park                                       | 8         | 2.4%   |
| Incumbent employee                                 | 7         | 2.1%   |
| Interest group representative                      | 7         | 2.1%   |
| Media monitoring service                           | 7         | 2.1%   |
| Governmental agency                                | 6         | 1.8%   |
| Innovation advisor                                 | 6         | 1.8%   |
| News service                                       | 6         | 1.8%   |
| Municipality initiative                            | 5         | 1.5%   |
| Think tank   | 5         | 1.5%   |
| Research institute representative                  | 5         | 1.5%   |
| Enthusiast   | 4         | 1.2%   |
| Professional institute                             | 4         | 1.2%   |
| Business park                                      | 3         | 0.9%   |
| Conference   | 3         | 0.9%   |
| Employers' organization                            | 3         | 0.9%   |
| Employers' organization representative             | 3         | 0.9%   |
| Environmental advisor                              | 3         | 0.9%   |
| Federation of business owners                      | 3         | 0.9%   |
| Incumbent representative (Employers' organization) | 3         | 0.9%   |
| Journalist   | 3         | 0.9%   |
| Municipality representative                        | 3         | 0.9%   |
| Sustainability advisory                            | 3         | 0.9%   |
| Sustainability advisory representative             | 3         | 0.9%   |
| Sustainability magazine                            | 3         | 0.9%   |
| Union representative                               | 3         | 0.9%   |
| Insurance company                                  | 3         | 0.9%   |
| Total  | 337       | 100.0% |

With regard to the presented actors and their associated practices, only 1 (Delbar) of the total number of 31 identified actors can be defined as providing a sharing-practice-based operation (cf. Table 3). The 11 references to this actor corresponded to 2.8% of the total material. When taken together, these findings illustrate the diverse character of the sharing economy whilst at the same time providing strong indications of how sharing-economy actors using a market logic are subject to most attention in the field.

Table 6 presents the actor groups identified as contributing the most to the framing of the sharing economy during the study period, along with the frequency and share of the user-generated content these actor groups produced in relation to the total material of 999 user-generated posts. The table identifies sharing-economy actors as the dominant group contributing to meanings and values associated with the organizational field of the sharing economy. Parallel to their dominance, however, actor groups from other sectors also contribute to the framing of the field. Two examples from the data were published on Twitter on April 3, 2016 by a politician, and on May 12, 2016 by a sharing-economy actor:

*“Seems like it blows up a political dispute over the sharing economy and Uber between the right and the left. Good. The left will lose.”*

*“We need transportation, not owning vehicles!”*

#### 4.3. The framing of the sharing economy

Taken together, the presented results illustrate the varying ways in which the sharing economy in Sweden is framed and which actor groups contribute to this framing. More specifically, considerable attention is devoted to the phenomenon as such but also the implied societal consequences (cf. Tables 2 & 4). Among the issues characterizing the discussions, a relatively wide range of societal issues can be identified (Table 4).

One underlying reason for this framing seems to be that Uber and Airbnb on the one hand are perceived and framed by social media users as part of the sharing economy. On the other hand, these actors are subject to resistance by social media users who argue that they should not be understood as part of the phenomenon in question. Taken together, this pattern illustrates the varying meanings and values that encompass the term sharing economy from the perspective of social media users and, consequently, the ways in which the sharing economy is framed. For instance, the empirical examples provided in Table 4 illustrate how these actors have met resistance as they are perceived to represent a market-oriented logic and because these users seem to be proponents of non-market connotations and origins of the phenomenon. Even though this may be the case, another illustration is found in Table 5 that shows how these perceived market-oriented actors still occupy a dominant position vis-à-vis actors who engage in non-market-oriented practices, based on the overall perception of social media users (see also Table 3).

Regarding actor groups that contribute to the framing of the sharing economy, however, Table 6 shows that the field is currently scattered in the sense that many actors take part in the collective framing. This observation suggests that an important reason why the exhibited ambiguity exists is related to the plethora of actor groups who, together, are perceived as part of the sharing economy (Table 5) as well as among actor groups who contribute to the framing of the sharing economy (Table 6). An additional explanation is probably that actors who are perceived as part of the sharing economy (Table 5) might have incentives to enact a discursive strategy aimed at building legitimacy for their respective organizations (Creed et al., 2002; de Holan and Phillips, 2002; Dorado, 2005). As described in Section 2, the term sharing economy and the related notion of collaborative consumption seem to have encompassed two opposite forces, hence two institutional logics have coexisted which, in turn, seems to have been an enabling condition for this plethora of sharing-economy actors to take part in the framing of the sharing economy (Sewell, 1992; Clemens and Cook, 1999).

When taken together, and considering the definition suggested by Möhlmann (2015) on the interplay between collaborative consumption and the sharing economy, our findings are only partially compatible with this definition due to the considerable variance of how the sharing economy is framed and the diverse set of actor groups that influence that framing. Therefore, we propose a new and expanded definition of the sharing economy, which explicitly captures both market and non-market logics and practices:

ICT-enabled platforms for exchanges of goods and services drawing on non-market logics such as sharing, lending, gifting and swapping as well as market logics such as renting and selling.

#### 5. Concluding remarks, limitations, and directions for future research

This paper has explored how the sharing economy is framed whilst also identifying the main actors driving current developments. In addition, this paper has provided a structured empirical contribution, revealing that the sharing economy in Sweden includes a plethora of practices relating to both non-market and market logics. Our findings also highlight several issues which remain unsolved and which, in this

context, remain controversial, e.g., taxation and regulation. Therefore, our results suggest that the contemporary sharing economy should be regarded as an emergent and fluid field where tensions between market and non-market logics create a state of instability. In view of these findings and extant literature, we provide an expanded definition of the sharing economy that takes this dynamic into account and focuses explicitly on both market and non-market logics.

We acknowledge four limitations of our study. First, the collected data set only contains publicly posted user-generated content. Even though this is one of the main challenges associated with SMA (Stieglitz et al., 2014), it still implies that this study is only centered on the public framing of the sharing economy and not the private discussions that also characterize the social media landscape. Second, the data set contains only user-generated content published in Swedish. This means that the study is limited to the framing of the sharing economy as discussed in the Swedish language and, therefore, restricts the scope of potential generalization. Third, the fragmented social media landscape and challenges associated with analyzing multiple social media outlets still represent an ongoing discussion for SMA researchers in terms of how procedures should be designed to manage the complexity this brings. Even though this paper has utilized the existing framework for carrying out SMA (Stieglitz et al., 2014), nonetheless, these challenges should be acknowledged. Fourth, the collected data set is limited to two months, which also reduces its potential with regard to assessing the continuous evolution of the sharing economy.

We identify three directions for future research. First, the emergent and fluid state of the sharing economy and the observed tensions between market and non-market logics found in the presented results provide ample opportunities for future research. More specifically, attempts to capture the process by which the development of the sharing economy is influenced by these tensions would be welcome. This could be achieved either by drawing on longitudinal data or by replicating the analysis carried out in this paper at different points in time.

Second, the presented results also show how societal consequences of the sharing economy permeate the current discussion and that the sharing economy often is understood to manifest a source of institutional pressure. As the field might settle on either a non-market or market-oriented logic, this can potentially provide stability regarding the character of the phenomena which could in turn facilitate re-structuring of current regulatory frameworks. With this potential scenario in mind, it would be relevant to conduct studies of the regulatory processes and related agency among various interest groups as the sharing economy continues to evolve.

Third, specific strategies that sharing-economy actors utilize vis-à-vis the respective practices that the sharing economy integrates (cf. Table 3) can encompass institutional entrepreneurship pushing the sharing economy increasingly toward a market or non-market logic. Because of this potential, research which explicitly addresses strategies related to institutional entrepreneurship implemented by different actors perceived to be a part of the sharing economy are welcome and thus we echo the conclusions of Mair and Reischauer (2017). Such studies could provide indications for the general direction the sharing economy might take in coming years, but also reveal the ways in which the notion of “sharing” becomes utilized by sharing-economy actors drawing on non-market and market logics.

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**Christofer Laurell** is Jan Wallander postdoctoral researcher at the Center for Sports and Business, Stockholm School of Economics Institute for Research, and an assistant professor at Jönköping International Business School. His research interests focus on institutional pressures created by the rise of social media and its implications for marketing.

**Christian Sandström** is associate professor in innovation management at Chalmers University of Technology and the Ratio Institute in Sweden. His research concerns the interplay between technological and institutional change.